

**WRITING EXPERIENCES OF B.ED HONOURS STUDENTS  
REGISTERED FOR THE LANGUAGE IN LEARNING AND  
TEACHING (LILT) MODULE: A CASE STUDY**

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the writing/ literacy practices of a small group of first year Bachelor of Education Honours students, who registered for the Language in Learning and Teaching module, as first year students, in 1998. The primary sources of data were (a) questionnaires (focusing on existing literacy practices with which students engage outside of the university context), (b) Literate Life Histories, and (c) individual interviews. The purpose of the research was to consider the 'fit' between students' literacy practices outside of the university and those demanded within the university. Explicitly linked to this was a consideration of the extent to which assessment processes could or should be modified to accommodate this 'fit'.

Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1965,1972,1991,1992), and his notions of habitus, field and capital, Critical Linguistics and Critical Pedagogy, the study explores the concept of 'difference', notions of literacy and institutionalised power. It also offers suggestions for a pedagogical framework that might effectively foreground a critical position in relation to these issues.

Findings from this study indicate that very few literacy practices with which student engage 'fit' directly with those demanded of them by the university. Despite this, students 'take on' the academic literacy demands of the university relatively uncritically and do not attach undue emphasis to this aspect of their performance. What is of particular significance to them are the experiences of empowerment they enjoy during their studies, and the 'capital' they take with

them in the form of a recognised university qualification. Staff, on the other hand, tend to foreground the need to master academic discourse in order to 'succeed', and rate general student performance as low and inadequate against this criterion.

These discrepancies and contradictions between what students perceive their sojourn in the B.Ed Hons programme to be about, and their notions of what constitutes 'success' vis a vis that of staff, make for thought provoking and important considerations, particularly with regard to future research possibilities.

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## Chapter 1: The context of the research

### 1.1 Setting the scene

The primary focus of the research reported on in this thesis is the range of writing/ literacy experiences of five students who registered in 1998, for the module *Language in Learning and Teaching*, one of the modules in the Bachelor of Education Honours (hereafter referred to as the B.Ed Hons) degree. This post-graduate degree is run by the School of Education, Training and Development (hereafter referred to as the SETD) at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. This is a two year, part-time programme designed to allow INSET (In-service) teachers to upgrade their qualifications (to at least REQV level 13<sup>1</sup>), whilst remaining in full time teaching posts. This programme consists of eight semesterised modules, with students registering for two modules per semester. Prior to 1996, the B.Ed Hons was offered only on the Pietermaritzburg campus. In 1996, an additional 'satellite campus' was established in Madadeni, outside Newcastle, and the B.Ed Hons delivered there too.

In the 1998 Student Handbook, the following were offered to students as good reasons for doing the B.Ed Hons.

1. To help you participate in educational decision-making  
The B.Ed course is designed to help teachers ... join in policy discussion and decision-taking. It aims to increase their awareness of change possibilities, give them opportunities to discuss topics in a critical and analytical way, and improve their skills in decision-taking.
2. To improve your work performance  
To improve our work performance, we need to:
  - a. Observe accurately both our performance and its consequences;
  - b. Critically analyse what happened, why it happened, and then work out how to improve it.
3. To improve your theoretical understanding of education  
Many people over the years have made helpful analyses that give teachers extra insights into what happens in education. This course will introduce you to some of this knowledge. (Student Guide, 1998:3)

Though the above were not phrased in outcomes-based terms then, they can be taken as the

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<sup>1</sup> REQV: Recognised Education Qualification Equivalent

‘intended outcomes’ of the programme. And while the way in which these ‘reasons’ have been slightly reworded in handbooks since 1998, they essentially remain the same.

The *Language in Learning and Teaching* module (hereafter referred to as LILT), “provides an opportunity for teachers in all learning areas to develop an informed understanding of how learners use language for thinking and learning, and how teachers can facilitate the development of communicative skills in talking, listening, reading and writing” (LILT Learning Guide, 2000: cover page). It also has as a quite specific agenda, that of awareness raising of the role of language in issues of identity and power, although the extent to which these latter issues are addressed remains relatively limited. Plans are underway, however, for the 2001 academic year, to extend and develop opportunities for students to engage at a much greater depth with power relations, particularly those embodied through language. Finally, the applied/practical application of language teaching and learning processes and principles are an explicit focus of the module.

The following learning outcomes, taken directly from the Learning Guide, indicate the range of issues addressed and what we hope students will be able to demonstrate by the end of the course:

- Explain key concepts from applied language research, orally and in writing.
- Recognise opportunities to apply these concepts in your classroom.
- Use a range of techniques to assess your learners’ language development.
- Understand different theories of reading.
- Develop effective reading programmes in your classrooms based on the theoretical understandings acquired in the module.
- Explain the link between writing and learning, orally and in writing.
- Develop effective writing programmes based on the theoretical understandings covered in this module.
- Use a theme-based, whole language approach to address language development.

Partly in response to the National Committee on Higher Education (NCHE) Report of 1996, in which ‘growth’ in the Higher Education sector in South Africa was identified as a key element of the new framework for transformation, but also in keeping with world wide shifts in perceptions concerning the role of Higher Education institutions, and the University of Natal’s Mission Statement which commits the University to “grow so that it satisfies both national and community needs for high quality academic and professional tertiary education”, the SETD, in 1998, changed its admission policy to the B.Ed Hons programme. The call in the NCHE Report for “an expansion of student enrolments, feeder constituencies and programme offerings” in order to address the “principles of equity and redress, as well as the imperatives of demography and development”, prompted the SETD to open access to the B.Ed Hons programme to any teacher with an appropriate, four year education qualification, acquired through degree/ university studies *or* through a teacher training college diploma. This change in admission requirements impacted immediately on the size and shape of the B.Ed Hons programme (See Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1**

	<b>Entrance requirement</b>	<b>No. of students</b>	<b>Lecturers/tutors</b>	<b>No. of RLCs<sup>2</sup></b>
1995	Degree	60	Lecturers only	1
1996	Degree	163	Lecturers only	2
1997	Degree	312	Lecturers only	2
1998	Degree/ 4 year Diploma	750	Lecturers/tutors	2

In addition, and most crucially, the make-up of the student cohort changed. Prior to 1998, all students on the B.Ed Hons programme had already completed an undergraduate degree. By implication, all were secondary school teachers, since the structure of teacher training in those days dictated that universities prepare students for secondary school teaching, and teacher training colleges prepare students for primary and junior school teaching. Furthermore, the majority of these students were English first language speakers.

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<sup>2</sup>RLCs - Regional Learning Centres

These factors, a university experience of tertiary training, instruction in the primary language, and a secondary school teaching context, were critical ‘influences for success’ for many of these students, in subtle but powerful ways. Having come through a university degree programme already, these graduates were familiar with the discourses associated with a university context, and had to a large extent, already ‘proved’ themselves in a number of areas, one of the most significant being ‘able to write’ what was so unproblematically labelled, in those days, ‘the academic essay’. Since, as indicated earlier, the majority of the students on the programme prior to 1998 were English first language speakers, they had had the privilege of having all their reading and writing, and social and pedagogical interactions conducted in their primary language. Even those students who were not English first language speakers, had had sufficient exposure to it through their degree, and their secondary school teaching context, to achieve more than a minimal or mediocre pass.

All of these students therefore, can be said to have entered the B.Ed Hons programme armed with a critical measure of ‘embodied capital’ which gave them enough, and relevant, ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu, 1965, 1972, 1991, 1992) to manage - and *match* - the discourse demands and expectations of the programme. They had experienced, in other words, extensive exposure to the ‘Situated Practice’ (The New London Group, 1996, Kalantzis et al, 2000) of ‘The Academy’. They knew, albeit very often incompletely, what was meant by ‘critique’ and ‘analysis’, and how to articulate conceptual understandings in writing. They knew enough not to feel alienated by the academic ‘discourse community’ (Fairclough, 1995, Swales, 1990, Rafterth,1975).

The majority of students who entered the B.Ed Hons programme in 1998,’ however, did not have the educational (schooling and tertiary) backgrounds described above. Almost without exception, the primary language of the ‘new’ students was not English. In addition, having come through teacher training colleges, many of which were the ‘bush colleges’ of the apartheid era, they were the products of an ideology grounded in Fundamental Pedagogics, and thus very unfamiliar with the kinds of academic discourse and approaches characteristic of an historically white, western university. They were also predominantly *primary school teachers*, a crucial factor in issues of English language use. In the primary school context, the

mother tongue quite rightly dominates classroom practice and parent/ school interaction. If English is used at all, it is generally in the form of key words, or short, simple sentences. Learners and teachers also have no real cause to read beyond the immediate needs of classroom teaching and learning, again short and/or one word flash cards and sentences. Outside of the school grounds, it is likely, particularly in the rural areas, that English usage is kept to an absolute minimum. All these factors impact considerably on these teachers' capacity to cope with the demands made on them once they embark on post-graduate university study, through the medium of English.

By 1998, the year in which this research began, the B.Ed Hons programme began to move to a mixed-mode model of delivery (that is, text-based with limited face-to-face teacher/ tutor/ lecturer contact), a model that approximates very closely to 'distance learning', an important consideration to bear in mind, given the background of the majority of the students now registering for the B.Ed Hons programme.

The LILT module, by 1998, had already undergone two cycles of revision in response to student performance and our own sense of where changes needed to occur. Both these revisions related directly to the assignments set, and drew, with each revision, on what we considered to be more 'common' genres, such as letter writing and 'talks to colleagues' - as opposed to the 'straight' academic essay which characterised earlier assignment and examination questions. Interestingly, students seemed suspicious of these changes. They subscribed to these new demands in only the most superficial way - providing 'addresses' and 'welcomes' for example, but then lapsing into poor academic discourse, and weakly structured writing for the body of the assignment. Though the majority of them passed their assignments, it was usually with 3<sup>rd</sup> class passes. I was convinced that there was a way for students to perform better, to realise their full potential in the programme, and that this 'way' was linked to the discrepancies between the literacy practices of students outside the B.Ed Hons programme i.e. the academic context, and those imposed on them in their assignments and examination questions.

Since the student cohort had undergone such ‘majority’ change, I believed that we could no longer make assumptions about the writing skills and experiences, and levels of English language competence, inherent in our students. But, every one of the students who registered for the programme, was already a qualified and practising teacher. They were also all adults, most with families, who for 30 or 40 years, had functioned very successfully in the world. Thus, whatever we thought students could not do, there was clearly masses they could do, and it was with a great desire to find out more about the *enabling* life and literacy experiences of our students, that I began this research. I felt that a greater understanding of the literacy experiences students brought to the B.Ed Hons programme i.e. their ‘literacy capital’ on *entering* the programme, would provide me, as the Co-ordinator of the LILT module, with information which I could use positively to modify assignment demands so that they more closely matched students’ existing writing skills, experiences and strategies. If the ‘fit’ was close, I hypothesised, student performance would improve.

Though I hoped originally to work with approximately 20 students, this proved impossible. Through a slow process of attrition, for reasons outlined in Chapter 3, the subject group eventually comprised only five students, prompting me to construct the research reported on in this thesis as a case study. However, it should be seen to take its place within an ongoing cycle of an action research approach to the continuing development and improvement of the LILT module. Though this study seeks to augment the previous revisions made in the module, it will be some time before any real changes can be implemented in the Learning Guide as the published form of the material mitigates against textual changes for three years. However, through insights gained from this research, I do hope to develop and refine further, the assessment processes used in the LILT assignments and examination questions.

## **1.2 Framing a response**

The wider context of the Bachelor of Education Honours degree is clearly that of teacher education. So while a study such as this might foreground one particular element of it, and one small group of students within it, we should never lose sight of the broader imperatives which drive it, viz. how, and to what extent, this particular programme (and the individual modules

within it) contributes to the social and educational transformation South Africa so urgently needs, and about which so much debate rages. To what extent, in other words, are the intended learning outcomes of the programme, and each module within it, achieved?

The SAIDE report on Open Learning and Distance Education (within the context of the draft Policy Framework for Education and Training), commissioned by the ANC in 1994, noted that the Policy Framework:

“sees teacher preparation and development at the cutting edge of educational reconstruction. .. It wants teachers who will ‘enquire into and reflect on their work and their roles’. It wants them to deepen their specialised knowledge, improve their effectiveness as facilitators of their students’ learning, and prepare themselves for positions of greater responsibility and leadership.” (1995:125)

The challenge to teacher education units such as the SETD, to effect even the beginnings of the development outlined above, is very great indeed. And of course we do sorely need to find ways to redress the conditions in schools so distressingly well described in the concluding chapter of the PEI Report ‘Getting Learning Right. Here, Nick Taylor and Penny Vinjevold say:

Our researchers found that what students know and can do is dismal. At all levels investigated by PEI projects, the conceptual knowledge of students is well below that expected at the respective grades. Furthermore, because students are infrequently required to engage with tasks at any but the most elementary cognitive level, the development of higher order skills is stunted. Books are very little in evidence and reading is rare. Writing is also infrequent and, when practised by students, hardly ever progresses beyond single words or short phrases. (PEI Report, 1999: 231)

The aim of those of us who teach in, and are involved in the ongoing development of the LILT module, is to offer our students an experience of ‘transformative learning’ i.e. a

quality of learning which will assist them with spearheading the type of changes, the classrooms described above, require. A transformative perspective “seeks the emancipation of learners from the paradigm which dominated teaching over the last century” - namely, the transmission model.(Burge & Haughey, 1993:89). It seeks to provide contexts which engage learners in discovering the meaning of their learning in their own lives. The epistemology this perspective espouses, therefore, is one which accepts “the influence of past experiences on the individuality of the knowing we call learning and highlights the importance of a transformative rather than a passive construction of knowledge”(Ibid:89). I am well aware that this view of the purpose of teaching is not new, but I like the use of the word transformative - it suggests an active, negotiated process which, at any given point along a continuum of development, looks different from the point just passed. So something new is constantly being created, transformed on the basis of the known to the still waiting to be known.

Burge and Haughey say that:

Transformation in learning, then, is not about mere additions to existing knowledge schemata, or about faster performance, nor is it about tacking on ideas that are discrepant to one’s basic knowledge ... Rather, it is about the challenge, creativity and risk (Gore, 1989,p.2) that are necessary and inevitable for confronting the strength of the traditional or taken-for-granted. (Ibid:93)

Minnich (1990) says:

We are challenged to immerse ourselves again in what we are studying, to suspend judgement for a while, to learn to hear new voices, and hence to emerge with new definitions and concepts and judgements that are, again, finer, more complex, more subtle, and much more adequate to the interrelated world in which we must, now, live. (1990:185)

]



When I began this research, I constructed my own experience of it as one where I would engage with ‘transformative learning’. I knew that I wanted to ‘suspend judgement for a while, to learn to hear new voices’ and ‘emerge with new definitions and concepts and judgements’. I wanted answers to questions such as: Were our perceptions of students’ problems the same as students’ perceptions of their problems? How did these students view their position in ‘The Academy’? Were they intimidated by it? What factors already existent in the LILT module, contributed positively to students’ academic writing development? Did prior literacy experiences play any role in advancing writing competence in the academic context? And very importantly, how ‘transformational’ could we assume their experience of the B.Ed Hons degree to be? Though I intended to focus quite specifically on literacy experiences, both within and outside of the LILT and wider B.Ed Hons context, I anticipated that other issues, particularly those related to identity, power, empowerment and emancipation, would emerge. But I was alert to, and very conscious of the seductive influence of talking power and that its relationship to ‘empowerment’ was neither direct nor simple. There are also subtle interplays of meaning and consequence between emancipation and empowerment. Whereas both relate to issues of power, one needs to make the distinction between the ‘power to’, that is, ‘ability’, and ‘power over’, that is, exerting control. The latter is very often perceived as the more seductive, yet in neither should ‘critical consciousness’ necessarily be taken as implicit. And though if one experiences a sense of emancipation, one also experiences a sense of empowerment, not every experience of empowerment necessarily leads to emancipation.

So I began the research process with what I thought were eyes wide open - to contradictions and complexities. But as the research proceeded, engaging with students at the level I wanted to engage, became increasingly difficult. I was frustrated by my seeming inability to ask questions that would evoke the kinds of conversations I was hoping to have. The responses I thought I would get in relation to feelings of ‘disempowerment’ and/or ‘alienation’, or ‘poor’ performance and mediocre results, I did not get. Only one out of the five students stated explicitly that she felt ‘foolish’ when she first began the programme, all the others entered it ‘excited but nervous’. All articulated a sense of empowerment and success at achieving the qualification they set out to achieve.

Coming to grips with notions of ‘difference’, what constitutes ‘capital’, institutional power and the potential of educational processes to inhibit rather than promote social change, led me to the work of the French social theorist, Pierre Bourdieu and his concepts of habitus, field and capital and I have drawn considerably on this theoretical framework. In addition, and because the focus of this study is predominantly ‘literacy’, and the extent to which ‘issues of literacy’ are simultaneously ‘issues of power’, I have drawn on the work of a range of critical linguistic theorists and critical pedagogues. In seeking to provide an applied ‘model for transformation’ within the context of what has now become a mixed-mode (resource-based learning with limited contact) B.Ed Hons programme, I consider the ‘Pedagogy for Multiliteracies’ framework developed by the New London Group.

power.

In my original research design, I posed the following two questions:

- What is the difference (if any) between students’ writing experiences and skills outside of the LILT module, and the written discourse demands made of them within the module?
- To what degree does the nature and extent of this difference (if it exists), impact negatively on student’s written academic performance?

As a result of the difficulties and constraints of the research process itself, however, it soon became clear to me that the second question could not be fully answered in this research context. A considerable number and range of student writing samples, together with extensive discussions with students around each written assignment, would have been necessary before a response to this question could have been formulated. Clearly, working with substantial samples of student writing is the next, critical step in the greater LILT action research process. However, without this extensive data to hand for this study, I saw no alternative but to reformulate the second question so that it read:

- To what extent does the nature and extent of this difference (if it exists), impact negatively on students’ academic performance?

In many respects, since this study is so small, this slight shift in emphasis in the second research question has loosened the boundaries of the conversation the original question might have imposed. Instead of binding the discussion to *written* performance, that is, one based solely on a critical discourse analysis of student texts, it has allowed me to consider the issues of ‘academic performance’ and ‘negative impact’ from a more ‘socially-grounded’ perspective, and to take into account the views both of the students themselves, and that of lecturers in this regard.

### **1.3 The structure of this thesis**

In Chapter 2, I explore in some detail the concepts of habitus, field and capital, as articulated by Bourdieu (1977, 1991, 1992), and relate them to the research reported on here. In addition, I trace the history of approaches to ‘literacy’, showing how changes in understandings of what constitutes ‘literacy’ reflect wider ideological paradigm shifts. The ‘multiliterate’ approach is identified as the most appropriate in terms of its contribution to understanding the context of student writing as evidenced in the LILT module specifically, and the B.Ed Hons programme specifically.

In Chapter 3, I describe the research methodology I adopted when carrying out this research.

Chapter 4 consists of a presentation of the data and a discussion of the findings, set against the theoretical concepts and applied framework of Bourdieu’s work outlined in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 5, I consider the shortcomings of this piece of research, and make certain recommendations for future studies of this nature. In addition, and contextualised within the changes in the B.Ed Hons and LILT experience since 1998, I comment on our present position in the SETD, and suggest a way forward for the development of the kind of curriculum that both takes into account, and allows for, a more critical and conceptually coherent approach than presently exists.

## **Chapter 2: Establishing a theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

As stated earlier, it was with the express intention of discovering what literacy ‘capital’ my students brought with them to the LILT module, that first prompted this research. As my research and data analysis progressed, coming to grips with a deeper understanding of how one individual’s construction of her/ his reality can be so differently interpreted by another - despite the most well intentioned and empathetic efforts to ‘see’ the same reality - became a driving need. That both these concerns formed a central focus of the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and that his approach and philosophical underpinnings resonated so closely with my own, was indeed fortuitous. In the first section of this chapter then, I discuss in some detail, Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field and capital and relate them to issues I encountered in this research.

### **2.2 Field, Habitus and Capital: Ways to understand difference and relationships of power**

Pierre Bourdieu, the French social theorist, has always been particularly concerned to develop a social ‘Theory of Practice’ that is grounded in concrete, empirical studies, rather than abstract, philosophical suppositions. The task of sociology, as he sees it is to “uncover the most profoundly buried structures of the various social worlds which constitute the social universe, as well as the ‘mechanisms’ which tend to ensure their reproduction or their transformation” (Bourdieu, 1992:7). To do this, one cannot avoid grappling with the ‘real’ in its own context, which means, in effect, going into ‘various social worlds’ and experiencing the worlds of the ‘other’ as intimately as it is possible to do as an outsider. In the 1960s he began a long-term study of ‘modern’ French society and ‘traditional’ Kabylia society (in Algeria), with a view to finding what might constitute ‘transhistorical invariants’ or “sets of relations between structures that persist within a clearly circumscribed but relatively long historical period” (in Calhoun, 1995:137). In Calhoun’s evaluation of Bourdieu’s work, Bourdieu has not set out anywhere to critically foreground a theory of ‘difference’. Implicit in the exegesis of his long-term ethnographic/ anthropological studies, however, is a theoretical

framework of certain ‘profoundly buried structures’ which can be applied ‘transhistorically’ and cross-culturally to wrestle with issues of ‘difference’ and how these both construct and are constructed by the ‘mechanisms’ which reproduce and/or transform societies.

Bourdieu’s theoretical framework which attempts to identify and define these ‘profoundly buried structures’, relies predominantly on an understanding of the concepts of habitus, field and capital which he proposed as analytical tools for talking about the ‘other’, and the power relations that exist within every society. I have found these concepts particularly relevant and useful as analytical tools for this piece of research, since not only have they helped me formulate perceptions about my students, but also of myself, and how the varying forms of ‘capital’, to which we can lay claim (particularly ‘literacy’ capital in this instance), play a critical role in the scope for ‘social mobility’, which, depending on our ‘capital’ stakes, is or is not open to us.

I will now discuss the concepts of habitus, field and capital in detail, demonstrate their relevance to the purpose of this research, and include how they might relate to social change and transformation. Despite critics of Bourdieu claiming that he neglects issues of change and struggle, agency and transformation, I believe his framework is durable and inclusive enough to consider this an implicit agenda of it.

The following very brief definition by Wacquant (1992:16) of these concepts should help readers anticipate the broader discussion:

A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital), while habitus consists of historical relations “deposited” within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action.

### **2.2.1 Field**

In Bourdieu’s terms, a ‘field’ can be conceptualised as a social ‘space’, but with none of the connotations of ‘space’ as ‘empty’ or ‘vacated’ or ‘undelineated’ with which we might be tempted to associate the term. In fact, this space or field is very full, firmly defined and very

powerful - in social terms. Bourdieu (1991), in explaining his use of the word 'space', talks of 'a religious space' and 'a political space' and says:

“I call each of these a *field*, that is, an autonomous universe, a kind of arena in which people play a game which has certain rules, rules which are different from those of the game that is played in the adjacent space.” (1991:215)

So, similarly, there are fields of education, fields of philosophy, fields of science and so on. Within these fields, there are other, perhaps one might call '*sub*' fields, (my thought, my emphasis). In the field of education, for example, schools and higher education institutions each constitute their own field, but share certain common characteristics which one could variously identify perhaps, as sites of learning and teaching, sites of production and reproduction, sites of established forms of 'capital'. Fields then, are 'structured social spaces'

... constructed and maintained in a state of continuous reconstruction, both as the result of the historical evolution of its specific properties and the agentive activities of the individuals operating within it (Carrington & Luke, 1997:100).

In many respects, Bourdieu's 'fields' are similar to 'orders of discourse', particularly with regard to the central role language plays in determining and sustaining individual and social relationships. But this is a point upon which I will expand at some length in the next section of this chapter. For now though, I would like to flag this potential similarity for the reader.

Returning to Bourdieu, it is how the structuring of these social spaces occur, and their relational nature - especially with regard to the way in which identities are constructed, and power is distributed and maintained within and across them - that is of particular interest to me, and where I see the relevance of this theory to the context of this research.

Within every field, 'objective' social conditions prevail. But the nature of this 'objectiveness' and how it is achieved is critical to how fields maintain their definition, structure, power and so on, and come to be accepted as 'natural' or 'God-given'. It is through the 'naturalness' of certain key 'objective conditions' that, for example, the processes of production and reproduction (in the Marxian sense) can function so successfully. Bourdieu argues that the source of these objective conditions or 'social practices' is so historically embedded, that we

(the relevant collective memory) have long since forgotten their roots, and thus act out at a level which is uncritical, habitually formed, and cyclical. He says:

... in each of us, in varying proportions, there is a part of yesterday's man; it is yesterday's man who inevitably dominates in us, since the present amounts to little compared with the long past in the course of which we were formed and from which we result. Yet we do not sense this man of the past, because he is inveterate in us ... Genesis amnesia is also encouraged by the objectivist apprehension which, grasping the product of history as an opus operatum, a fait accompli, can only invoke the mysteries of pre-established harmony or the prodigies of conscious orchestration to account for what, apprehended in pure synchrony, appears as objective meaning ... Each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, willy nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning. Because his actions and works are the product of a modus operandi of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery, they contain an 'objective intention' ... which always outruns his conscious intentions. (1977:79)

Bourdieu's ideas about the depth and 'length' of the origin of social fields resonates with my own apprehension that the certain 'ways of being' and 'ways of knowing' that are manifested in cultural and individual 'difference' are so very deeply sourced that the 'other' is never completely 'knowable'. That no matter how conscious we think we are of our intentions, there is an 'objective intention' influencing our choices for action of which we are utterly unaware.

The 'objective' conditions or structures which constitute fields, despite their historical and apparently objective origins, nevertheless do have their roots in human behaviour, for how else could it be otherwise? How then does one describe exactly what it is in every human being, that both constructs and is constructed by fields? What is this inner dynamic that makes me, me, and you, you, and transposed to the collective, makes for group 'difference'? Why, in other words, and in the very localised context of this research, is it so very difficult for me to access and understand my students' life worlds? And why do we in 'The Academy' represent certain world views which are not only radically different from that of our students, but one which we believe they should adopt, despite the fact that we are there, largely, to serve them, and not they us? Bourdieu's concept of habitus provides one possible tool of analysis for this complex and enduring interplay of collective and individual formation and difference.

## 2.2.2 Habitus

Perhaps the most critical tenet of the concept of habitus is that, while it is used to describe the dynamic constructs which swirl within each individual and shape her/him, it nevertheless represents a 'socialized subjectivity' (Bourdieu, 1992:127), a 'socially constituted system of cognition and motivating structures' (Bourdieu, 1977:76). In the following paragraph, Bourdieu gives a very thorough, and somewhat poetic, explanation of the concept. He says:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. (Bourdieu, 1977: 72)

In defining habitus as 'systems of dispositions', Bourdieu has, in my view, effectively articulated the complex, 'co-operative' and in many ways, 'ordered' (as systems are 'ordered') nature of human behaviour. It is indeed our varying 'dispositions' (associating Bourdieu's use of the term with the more common one) which account for how we respond to the myriad of experiences we encounter on a daily basis, minute by minute, hour by hour. That these dispositions, these 'structured structures' are transposable, is what makes it possible for us to function - sometimes optimally, sometimes minimally - within and across fields. The structures which constitute habitus are both 'regular', that is, they happen often enough to be inherent to the structure, and 'regulated', that is, controlled or directed, by the unconscious, and open to being regulated by external forces. They become part of the 'collective' through a symbiotic relationship between the subconscious of the individual and that of the group. And it is out of this constant 'movement of structures', that new structures are continually formed, and both continuity and change accounted for.



Carrington and Luke (1997:101) say:

The particular features of the habitus are formed via a process of inculcation which begins at birth. One develops distinctive class, culture-based and engendered ways of 'seeing', 'being', 'occupying space' and 'participating in history'. The concept of habitus, then, serves to connect the biologic being with the social world via physical and psychic embodiment, a structured and structuring durable, yet flexible, disposition.

The concept of habitus is a powerful signpost to the extent to which we are the sum of our lived experiences, as individual and social beings, and as the 'products of history'. It also, in my view, accounts for different 'ways of knowing'. However, understanding exactly what 'different' or 'alternate' ways of knowing there are, is a much more difficult task and one with which most mainstream educational contexts choose not to engage. This reluctance to engage with 'different realities' was the subject of a symposium entitled 'Alternative Ways of Knowing' held at the University of Brighton in 1995. Here, Dave Baker, Carol Fox, Shirley Brice-Heath and John Clay (amongst others), all working respectively in the fields of numeracy, literacy, and science, noted that when the literacies and numeracies used by a range of communities on a daily basis were compared with those demanded by educational contexts, the latter introduced 'strange' and 'inaccessible' (Baker, Fox et al, 1996:1) 'ways of knowing' quite at odds with many community processes. In the context of this research, I thought I might be able to identify quite specific, and different, 'ways of knowing' with which my students engaged in their lifeworlds, and draw on these to amend and modify the teaching, learning and assessment processes in the LILT module. Despite consciously looking for these 'ways of knowing' however, I cannot say that I was able to identify any - at least not at this stage of my experiences as a researcher. To a very great extent though, I attribute this inability on my part to recognise possible, existing differences in 'knowing' to the deeply ingrained nature of my habitus and *my* ways of knowing, which quite simply preclude me 'seeing' another's reality in the way it needs to be seen.

Thus, the reason Bourdieu's thinking makes so much sense to me, is of course, because it explains some of my own perceptions and uncertainties about the difficulties I faced during this research process. My frustrations at always feeling that I simply could not ask the 'right' questions to get at the understandings I wanted about my interviewees and their literacy

experiences, can I believe, be linked to this notion of habitus. My 'structured structures', formed over centuries by western, middle class, feminist, now white South African, 'values' and experiences, could not fully comprehend or fully access the 'structured structures' of my students, formed in their case - and I find myself immediately on uncertain ground here - by traditional (or not?) African values and experiences, and the socio-political experience of pre- and post-apartheid South Africa. The mere fact that I cannot speak with any real confidence of what *does* constitute the habitus of my students, is a sharp and powerful reminder of how 'profoundly buried' 'difference' can be. Their 'codified knowledge', objectified as 'culture' therefore, is different from mine. This gap between me and my students, in the context of this research, will have affected all aspects of it - the way in which they responded to the questionnaires, interviews and request for literate life histories, and my interpretation of the 'meanings' of these various data.

So far I have not spoken of power relations - how certain fields conspire to be more powerful than others in society, which by definition means that those groups and individuals inhabiting those fields are also more powerful than others. And whether, if the habitus of each individual is so deeply and formatively ingrained, there is any scope for change and social transformation, within the individual and across groups. And if there is scope, how does it come about?

I am conscious as I write, that the relevance of all this interrogation of issues may begin to seem, for the reader, to be losing its explicit relevance for the context of this research. So let me re-establish my 'conscious intentions' of what I perceive the connections to be.

I am particularly concerned to establish the 'depth' of the difference between the life worlds of the subjects of this research and my life world, not only as an individual, but also as an academic and representative of a particular 'field', historically and socially constructed as all fields are. That each of us as individuals within that field, are also 'agentive' does not take away from the fundamental existence of a 'structured space' with its own distinctive 'logic, rules, and regularities', different I believe, in this case, from the 'logic, rules and regularities' which have governed the fields within which my students have lived. I wanted therefore, to explore the differences in habitus and field between me and my students, and my students and the academic environment. In the analysis of my data (Chapter 4), I give concrete examples of

how this difference in habitus and field manifest themselves.

However, despite the historical groundedness of the individual habitus, Calhoun (1995:149) reminds us that “one of the crucial features of Bourdieu’s account of the habitus is that it allows for a process of continual correction and adjustment”. But more than this, the habitus, while integrating past experience, “functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks”(Bourdieu, 1977:79). Thus the habitus is also a dynamic construct. This is critical to processes of production and reproduction, and the possibilities for resistance and change. But by the very act of engaging with ‘perceptions, appreciations and action’ , ‘capital’ in its various forms is accumulated in the habitus. It is thus, to the Bourdieun concept of capital that we must now turn, to fully understand the role of power in society, the relational nature of fields and fields as sites of struggle.

### **2.2.3 Capital**

The use of the term ‘capital’, particularly in discourses related to social mobility (or lack of it) has become commonplace. Nevertheless, given the complexity of the context which this research aimed to explicate, it is appropriate to engage with Bourdieu’s original use of the term, and complete the theoretical framing with which I began this chapter.

Bourdieu’s use of the term ‘capital’ reflects the economic discourse he makes use of so often in his writings, yet should not be understood automatically as a reference to capitalist societies. Much of Bourdieu’s work was conducted in ‘traditional’ societies where the number and constellations of fields were relatively contained, and sources of ‘capital’ less differentiated. However, having said that, it is exactly within ‘modern’, highly differentiated capitalist societies, that the concept of ‘capital’ finds its most varied and complex expression, and since I and my students live within a capitalist society, it is important to understand the role of capital in its most sophisticated form, and as it might pertain to the context of this research.

In defining 'capital', Bourdieu says:

The social world can be conceived as a multi-dimensional space that can be constructed empirically by discovering the main factors of differentiation which account for the differences observed in a given social universe, or, in other words, by discovering the powers or forms of *capital* which are, or can become efficient ... in the struggle (or competition) for the appropriation of scarce goods of which this universe is the site. It follows that the structure of this space is given by the distribution of the various forms of capital, that is, by the distribution of properties which are active within the universe under study - those *properties capable of conferring strength, power and consequently profit on their holder*. (My emphasis) (In Calhoun, 1995:140)

Carrington and Luke (1997:101) describe the notion of 'capital' as an "index of social power" and say:

Although each field may recognise the value of differing forms of capital and may contain differing institutional configurations, within each, particular powers are recognised and their accumulation sought.

What does this mean in practice? What are the effects of this differential valuing? Put very simply, it means that our social positions are dictated by the amount of capital we 'own' and, most critically, to what extent this capital is valued in the particular field or fields we inhabit. As Carrington and Luke (1997:103) say: "Capital is not capital unless it is recognised as such authoritatively in a particular social field." What this points to as I see it, is that that which we label 'capital' is in fact intrinsically of its own value, that is, the 'resources' or 'properties' with which our habitus has endowed us and which manifest themselves in the real world as knowledges, relationships, competences, skills, attitudes etc., in and of themselves can be construed as neutral. It is only the relational and subjective positioning of fields which result in the attachment of a positive or negative index to these resources. Which simply underscores what we know already about the arbitrariness, but inherent power, of social constructs, but which it is critical not to forget.

Bourdieu identified three broad arenas of capital or 'fundamental social power' (in Calhoun:140), namely, economic, cultural and symbolic, and within these recognised that both material and immaterial forms of capital could be identified. Although I will define each of

these forms of capital separately, it will soon become apparent that one can scarcely talk of one without mention of the others, since each exerts forces of influence over the others. It is, however, the weighting and distribution of each of these forms of capital between individuals or close 'collectives' that determine relations of power.

Economic capital is "immediately and directly convertible into money" (Bourdieu, 1986:243). So it is invested in all things material - property, luxury goods, tangible, physical assets. In a capitalist society, and in the context of globalisation, it is the capital which commands 'market logic'. The more you have of it, the more you are likely to get. Conversely, and brutally evident in the increase in the levels of poverty and deprivation in most developing countries, the less you have of it, the less you are likely to get. Economic capital, therefore, contributes to symbolic power, since it ensures, and often buys, a particular kind of social status and prestige.

Cultural capital is a composite construct. It is directly linked to the 'embodied' (literally, 'of the body') knowledges, skills, experiences etc. that together constitute the habitus - of the individual and group to which s/he belongs. It is also constituted by the 'codified' cultural and institutional practices that 'authorise' these practices and give them recognition and value. 'Language' practices, therefore, and attitudes to, and perceptions of, 'literacy' are central to cultural capital. Educational qualifications are an example of cultural capital, so too, are 'civic awards', professional certificates and credentials.

Symbolic capital describes the "social phenomenon of prestige, status and reputation which accompanies the accumulation and recognition of other forms of capital" (Carrington and Luke, 1997:103) *within particular fields*. These are all the 'things' that reflect 'legitimated authority', institutional recognition, and entitlement. What is accorded the status of symbolic capital will vary across fields, but it is the relationship between that which is recognised as symbolic capital in one field, and that which is recognised as such in another field, which creates the tensions and struggles for power which characterise most modern societies.

One of the most contested and critical forms of cultural capital, but one which is integral to symbolic power and its recognition across fields, is that of 'literacy' capital. Although it is critically the 'linguistic' capital of our students under question, it is difficult to discuss this form of capital without first establishing how it relates to the concept of 'literacy' as 'social practice', and the shifts that have occurred in how 'literacy' or 'being literate' (or illiterate) is defined.

### 2.3 Defining 'literacy'

Reaching a particular definition of 'literacy' is central to this thesis, governed as it is by a principle of 'plurality', that is, that no single construction, perception or definition can ever apply to any aspect of human experience. I take the position that all human experience of 'reality' is *a priori* social, multiple, varied and inherently, in and of itself, of value. My own definition of 'literacy' therefore, and obviously echoing much contemporary thinking around this concept, is framed by multiplicity. There is, in other words, no one way to 'be literate'. But adopting a multiple perspective on literacy ushers in certain complexities, most notably that "clear cut definitions elude us" (Baker et al:1996:2). But, as Baker et al go on to say:

... once literacies are seen as located in social practices, they become ideological, containing within them, often in ways that are concealed or taken for granted, embedded relationships between readers and writers, relationships that usually have much to do with the relative power and status positions of those participating in literacy events. Nowhere are the ideological implications of literacy practices more apparent than in educational contexts (Ibid:2)

The view of literacy established above frames this thesis, and is one to which I will return in greater detail later in this chapter. Now, however, I want to take a recursive step and consider earlier definitions of literacy, the reasons for changes in perceptions of it, and how linguistic 'competence' - in the dominant language, which in our context is English - has come to be synonymous with linguistic 'capital'.

Since 'being literate' traditionally meant, *in societies governed by western, capitalist norms*, 'being able to read and write', and one conventionally learnt 'how to read and write' in school, it is not difficult to see how people immersed in oral traditions, and within which a particular

form of habitus and capital evolved, and/or those deprived of formal schooling (for whatever reasons) came to be constructed as 'illiterate' within societies governed by a 'literate' ruling class. Nor is it difficult to see how the 'common sense' connections between a lack of formal schooling, educational success and social advancement were made. James Gee (1996) describes this 'common sense' connection to which I have just referred as the 'master myth' of literacy. That is "literacy = functional literacy = skills necessary to function in 'today's job market' = market economy = the market = the economy" (1996:122).

This treatment of literacy as "an independent variable, supposedly detached from its social context" (Ibid), Brian Street (1984) labelled the 'autonomous' model of literacy. Inherent in this model is the belief that the 'consequence' of literacy is a person who is logical, rational and objective - and destined for 'success'. By implication, someone who is 'illiterate' is often taken to be 'illogical' and 'irrational' - and consigned to a status of incurable inferiority. He notes the popular misconception that sees the acquisition of literacy, that is, reading and writing skills, as 'autonomously' leading the illiterate 'out of darkness'.

But it has not only been those in the dominant power structures who have dictated and dissembled this subtle and controlling 'reasoning' for so long, it is also the 'dominated' who have colluded to entrench and sustain it. Ogbu (1987) notes how minority groups build up 'distinctive plausibility structures about success, schooling, employment and access to wealth' to account for their position in society. These 'folk theories of success' have an enormous influence on people's thinking and actions - from those who are 'illiterate' to those whose job it is to 'enliterate', especially in formal educational contexts e.g. teachers and teacher educators. This view of literacy, however, also mirrors a particular view of language as a basic set of skills and rules which can be learnt. It sets language aside from the social, and becomes yet another material 'asset' which one 'gets' and then can flaunt as evidence of status and privilege - or cultural and symbolic capital. Carrington and Luke (1997:97) observe how:

"In the public gaze, literacy is frequently defined as a neutral, identifiable package of skills, or alternatively, as a set of moral traits or features, the acquisition of which are seen to ensure social access and success. ... It would appear, then, that literacy per se has become equated with the advancement and overall well-being of individuals, communities and entire societies."

While this view of literacy as an 'objective' structure (in the Bourdieun sense) still persists in many quarters, the ideological role that literacy plays in social, political and economic power relations has, since the 1960s, become increasingly foregrounded as one of the key mechanisms employed by ruling classes to maintain existing, and unequal, class structures. This 'ideological' model of literacy (Street, 1995:89) highlights the centrality of the role that language plays in issues of social dominance, submission and emancipation. Antonio Gramsci (1982) articulates it this way:

Each time that in one way or another, the question of language comes to the fore, that signifies that a series of other problems is about to emerge, the formation and enlarging of the ruling class, the necessity to establish more 'intimate' and sure relations between the ruling groups and the national popular masses, that is, the reorganisation of cultural hegemony. (in Giroux, 1989:147)

Paulo Freire, too, through his work with rural communities in Brazil in the 60s, challenged the established notion of literacy, and through his determination to help the people in these communities 'read *their* world' (as opposed to the one imposed on them), addressed "the issue of literacy as an emancipatory political project". Freire aimed to get his students (all adults) to a place where they could 'decode and demythologize' their own traditions, and critique and challenge those who sought to control and marginalise their different ways of knowing. This approach has helped later 'cultural workers' (Giroux,1992:5) begin to formulate clearer understandings of the relationship between 'empowerment', 'emancipation' and 'power', and laid the ground rules for the integrated fields of Critical Literacy and Critical Pedagogy.

Giroux (1989), in *Schooling for Democracy*, and following Freire, pays particular attention to the issue of the approach to literacy in American schools in the 80s, and the role of schools in reproducing class structures. He writes ascerbically of the flawed 'radical' approach to literacy, which, in openly stating its intention to redress inequality, simply exposes its 'deficit' model origins, and makes nothing of the role that schools and schooling can play in contesting, and transforming power relations. In the place of a 'radical' approach, he urgently proposed a critical view of literacy that "revolves around the importance of naming and transforming those ideological and social conditions that undermine the possibility for forms of community and



public life organised around the imperatives of a critical democracy” (1989:151). Giroux’s view of literacy, therefore, is another that eschews language learning as simply to do with “functional reading and writing skills, or to learning rules and codes of a narrowly defined cultural context” (1992:243). Though he does not make use of the same terminology, it is clear to me that Giroux ‘thinks into’ the legacy of human experience in a similar fashion to Bourdieu. Apprehending the depth of the habitus and the power of ‘capital’ (though articulating it differently), he says:

Literacy as part of a broader politics of difference and democracy points, at the very least, to two important considerations. First, it makes visible the historically and socially constructed strengths and limitations of those places and borders we inherit and which frame our discourses and social relations. Second, literacy is a form of ethical address that structures how we construct relationships between ourselves and others. It marks out the boundaries of difference and inscribes them in borders that ‘define the places that are safe and unsafe, [that] distinguish us from them’<sup>1</sup>. Borders signal in the metaphorical and literal sense how power is inscribed differently on the body, culture, history, space, land and psyche (1992:244)

### **2.3.1 The contribution of Critical Linguistics**

While I have spent some time drawing on the early critical pedagogues such as Gramsci, Giroux and Freire, it has been to establish the socio-political context in which Critical Linguistics as a ‘field’ has grown, and to move to the point where the link between ‘literacy’ and ‘linguistic capital’ can be firmly established

The work of Critical Linguists such as Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995), Janks (1988/89), Street, 1984,1995), Gee (1996), the New London Group (1996) Kalantzis et al (2000), and many others, turns on the axis of an understanding of language as social practice, and terms such as ‘discourse’, ‘Discourses’, ‘orders of discourse’ and ‘multiliteracies’.

It is not easy to offer definitive interpretations of each of these terms as they are not always used in exactly the same way, yet implicit in all of them is a view of ‘literacy’ as multiple and

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<sup>1</sup> Gloria Anzaldua,(1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco, Sisters/Aunt Lute

ideological. Their close relationship is illustrated in the following discussion.

Gee defines 'discourse' as any 'stretch' of language (conversations, stories, essays), and 'Discourses' as being composed of "ways of talking, listening, (often, too, reading and writing), acting, interacting, believing, valuing"(Gee, 1996:128), 'identity kits' as it were, which also *indicate membership of a particular group or groups* (my emphasis). Discourses are therefore 'deeply political matters' (Gee,1996:138). Commanding dominant Discourses - for there can be a number of these in any one society - gives an individual a particularly significant power. Gee notes that 'Bi-' or 'multi-Discoursal' people are the 'ultimate sources of change' as they can enjoy membership of more than one Discourse and hence work 'from the inside'. This has relevance for this research, since the students in the study are all 'Multi-Discoursal', a point which will be taken up again later.

'Orders of discourse' - Fairclough's term - refers to "the totality of discursive practices of an institution, and relations between them" (Fairclough, 1995:135), or "the particular configurations of conventionalized practices (genres, discourses, narratives etc) which are available to text producers and interpreters in particular social circumstances" (Fairclough, 1999:183). My sense that it is quite feasible to map Bourdieu's concept of 'fields' onto 'orders of discourse', should now be apparent.

The New London Group say that "as an abstract noun, discourse draws attention to use of language as a facet of social practice that is shaped by - and shapes - the orders of discourse of the culture, as well as language systems (grammars)" (Kalantzis and Cope, 2000:25).

The following give a further indication of how the concepts of 'discourse' and/ or 'Discourse' occupy a central platform in Critical Linguistic approaches to language and literacy. The degree to which 'the social' (and its associated relationship to power) is inherent in the Critical Linguistic position on language use is also illustrated.

Discourse constitutes the social. Three dimensions of the social are distinguished - knowledge, social relations, and social identity ... Discourse is shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies. (Fairclough, 1992:8)

Discourses are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society (which is why they are always and everywhere ideological). Control over certain Discourses can lead to the acquisition of social goods (money, power, status) in a society (for example, the Discourse of successful 'mainstream', 'middle-class' interviewing ...) These Discourses empower those groups who have the least conflict with their other discourses when they use them. (Gee, 1996:132)

Discourses are norm-governed practices and involvements around and within which forms of human living are constructed and identities and subjectivities are shaped. ... Discourse, therefore, is often hidden and implicit. The discourses that police the body, shape desire, and mobilize consent will necessarily have a direct and discernible bearing on the process through which ideologies develop ... 'Discourse', then, is a large concept. (Lankshear and McLaren, 1993:11)

The further distinction made by Gee (1996) between Primary and Secondary Discourses, offers an explanation of the social dynamics and differences that exist between discourses. Drawing on Krashen's (1985) understandings of the difference between acquisition and learning, Gee maintains that one *acquires* (a 'natural', unconscious process) a Primary Discourse, and *learns* (a formal, conscious process) Secondary Discourses. Of Primary Discourses, Gee says that:

... [they] are those to which people are apprenticed early in life during their primary socialization as members of particular families within their sociocultural settings. Primary Discourses constitute our first social identity, and something of a base within which we acquire or resist later Discourses. They form our initial taken-for-granted understandings of who we are and who people 'like us' are, as well as what sorts of things we ('people like us') do, value and believe when we are not in public. (1996:137)

If we are to try and link Bourdieu with Gee here, I believe that Primary Discourses can also be constructed as key players in the formation of the habitus. In Gee's view, each of us has only one Primary Discourse and clearly, the closer our Primary Discourse is to that of any ruling group, the greater our cultural capital, and hence symbolic capital, will be.

Secondary Discourses are those to which people are 'apprenticed' as they move out of the contexts in which the Primary Discourse is acquired, and into wider social contexts. There are an indefinite number of Secondary Discourses to which we can be exposed and which we

might be motivated to master. A child moving out of a primary school in rural Zululand for example, and into a city primary school where the medium of instruction is English, immediately has to learn a whole range of Secondary Discourses - those of the school, the city, English as a 'language of learning' and so on. In the context of the B.Ed (Hons) programme, my students have to learn such Secondary Discourses as that of theoretical enquiry, academic writing and participatory learning.

For Critical Linguists then, words are not neutral, and language not an artefact, or 'natural' or 'God-given' as early views of literacy would have it. 'Literacy' is inherently social and subjective, and as such is intimately related to issues of identity and power. In this way, the close relationship between social theorists such as Bourdieu, the proponents of critical pedagogy (Gramsci, Giroux, Freire, Kanpol and others) and the field of critical linguistics is clear. 'Linguistic capital' therefore is embodied in the language and Discourses deemed powerful and prestigious in any given 'field'. The extent to which one can command the 'language of power' and manipulate it to serve one's own ends, is the extent to which one can claim to have significant linguistic capital or not. However, as Bourdieu says:

The competence adequate to produce sentences that are likely to be understood may be quite inadequate to produce sentences that are likely to be *listened to*, likely to be recognised as *acceptable* in all the situations in which there is occasion to speak. Here again, social acceptability is not reducible to mere grammaticality. Speakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence. (1991:55)

Thus the degree of linguistic capital attributed to an individual is determined by the degree to which his/ her Discourse competence approximates that of those in the 'field' the individual would like to access. The dominant or ruling class/ body of every field determines the rules and conventions which will govern that particular Discourse or 'order of discourse' or 'field'. "Linguistic relations are [therefore] always relations of power"(Bourdieu,1992:143).

### 2.3.2 Academic literacy

The ‘order of discourse’ or the ‘field’ or the ‘Secondary Discourse’ relevant to this study is that of ‘academic discourse’ - and what it means to be ‘literate’ in this discourse. However, defining ‘academic discourse’ and ‘academic literacy’ is not simple. It is not a unitary or homogeneous notion. If it were, students would stand a greater chance of mastering it in the relatively short period of time the majority of them spend in the university. If it were simply about learning a set of grammatical rules and their realisation in the format of one genre, the task would be quickly accomplished.

Writing in response to Brian Street’s paper on ‘Academic Literacies’, David Russell usefully sums up his findings on what constitutes academic literacy by pulling out common themes around the topic. These are:

that “academic writing” is not a single thing but an aggregation of literacy practices that make and are made by the epistemologies and practices (including the use of power) of specific disciplines and other institutional formations; that it mediates identity struggles; that it is largely transparent to instructors socialised in a discipline, assumed; that technical solutions such as “study skills” do not get at the problem. (In Baker et al,1996:118)

Thus the task facing students on entry into academic courses such as the B.Ed Hons is one of accessing a type of discourse, a ‘language’ which has acquired a very high degree of contextualised ‘legitimacy’, and one of which they have very little, and often no, previous experience.

In Ballard and Clanchy’s view, “Most forms of literate behaviour in fact fly in the face of the rules by which the university culture is bound” (1988:12), implying, it seems to me, that the literate behaviour exhibited *outside* of the ‘university culture’ is the one at fault, the rebellious one. I would be much more comfortable transposing Ballard and Clanchy’s claim so that it reads: “The rules by which the university culture is bound, flies in the face of most forms of literate behaviour”, since the ‘literate behaviour’ of the *majority* of people, particularly in South Africa, and probably globally too, while both extensive and varied, is not weighted in

favour of academic discourse, however much it would be useful for academics were this to be the case.

In *Academic Discourse* (1964), Bourdieu et al examine what they consider to be the complex and manipulative processes with which academics in universities collude in order to maintain their dominant position in the teacher-student relationship. The use of ‘professorial language’ (for which we might safely read ‘academic language’) they say, is integral to this dynamic, and affords the academic his ‘ultimate protection’. So powerful do Bourdieu and his colleagues perceive this particular kind of language, that they believe “one can say with Plato, ‘He is not man, he is speech’.” (1964:19)

Later, in 1991, Bourdieu again addresses this theme, reiterating the sleight of hand work implicit in creating and sustaining a ‘legitimate language’, and how it is *deviation* from the ‘common’, the ‘ordinary’ that gives certain literacy practices value. Thus, whether deliberate or not,

Language that is ... ‘well chosen’, ‘elevated’, ‘lofty’, ‘dignified’ or ‘distinguished’ contains a negative reference to ‘common’, ‘everyday’, ... ‘colloquial’, ‘familiar’ language’. ... It follows that the legitimate language is a semi-artificial language which has to be sustained by a permanent effort of correction, a task which falls both to institutions specifically designed for this purpose and to individual speakers. Through its grammarians, who codify and fix legitimate usage, and its teachers who impose and inculcate it through innumerable acts of correction, the educational system tends, in this area as elsewhere, to produce the need for its own services and products i.e. the labour and instruments of correction. (1991:60/1)

It is quite feasible, in my view, to suggest that those who determine the nature and substance of what counts at universities, might not want to have vast numbers of students inducted into academic discourse rapidly and skilfully. If this happens, too many people would have command of this dominant discourse, that which characterises “the culture of knowledge” (Ballard and Clanchy:1988:7) inherent to universities. The effect of this would be to have more people producing messages than there are to consume them, and thus destroy, or at least begin to upset, the balance of power invested in The Academy, for as Kress notes:

The causes of the unequal distribution of active writing are of course social, deriving from the economic, political and ideological structures of any given society. It has economic, political and ideological effects: those able to produce meanings and messages are few by comparison with those who consume meanings and messages. Hence the control of messages and meanings is in the hands of a relatively small number of people (Kress, 1982:3)

In other words, I am suggesting that sound and subtly powerful reasons exist for the complexity and diversity which characterises what is now commonly termed ‘academic discourse’. It is critically important that the process of knowledge generation, the ‘core business’ of universities, remains in the hands of the few for that is the only way to retain power. It is not by accident or ‘natural’ that the literacy practices one encounters in universities are uniquely different from most other forms of literacy. What is even more significant is that this has come about despite the very diverse meanings attached to what is meant by academic literacy by academics themselves. These can range from a purely instrumental approach to language (‘grammatical correctness’), to one that is particularly discipline-based (‘literacy in the subject’), to one that “appeals to an older, broader notion (‘the literate man’)” (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988:7). Yet out of these vastly differing views of language, has emerged sets of ‘cultural understandings’ which academics broadly agree on as constituting the ‘deep rules of the culture’ and which shape ‘the entire process of student writing’ (Ibid:8).

One way to accommodate these diverse understandings which nevertheless have given rise to ‘deep rules’, is to talk of them in terms of ‘discourse communities’ or ‘communities of practice’. Since subtle differences are seen by some to distinguish the former from the latter, I will start with Raforth’s definition of discourse communities:

If there is one thing that most of [the discourse community definitions] have in common, it is an idea of language [and genres] as a basis for sharing and holding in common: shared expectations, shared participation, commonly (or communicably) held ways of expressing. Like audience, discourse community entails assumptions about conformity and convention. (1990:140 in Johns (1997:51))

Swales (1990) ratifies this understanding of discourse community, foregrounding genres as the expressive tool which signals a shared recognition of classes of communicative events, and a shared understanding of communicative purpose. He says: “These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre” (In Johns, 1997:58). He goes on to list, what he considers the six defining characteristics of a discourse community to be. They are:

1. [It has] a broadly agreed set of common public goals.
2. [It has] mechanisms of intercommunication among its members (such as newsletters or journals).
3. [It] utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
4. [It] uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
5. In addition to owning genres, [it] has acquired some specific lexis.
6. [It has] a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursal expertise. (In Johns, 1997:52)

‘Communities of practice’ differ from ‘discourse communities’ only in so far as they extend the boundaries of ownership beyond just ‘texts and language’, to include “the many practices and values that hold communities together” (Johns, 1997:52). These communities “share genres, language, values, concepts, and ‘ways of being’” (Ibid). Implicit in ‘communities of practice’ therefore, is a gatekeeping role, since those who do not share the same ‘values, concepts, and ‘ways of being’, will struggle to gain access, and should they do so at all, are likely to be there on sufferance. But this same gatekeeping role is also a key element of ‘discourse communities’. If, in defining this concept, ‘a threshold level of members’ is determined as central to the very nature of a ‘club’, the premise from which it works is fundamentally exclusionary.

In attempting to widen the ‘brief’ of definitions of ‘academic discourse’ - to accommodate the reality of the diversity it reflects - I perceive an interesting dynamic to have emerged. If one ponders on who these broader, no doubt more honest, assessments of ‘academic discourse’



serve, then I am tempted to say that they serve academics very nicely, but mystify and obscure the context students must access, in a way that labelling what they must master simply as ‘academic discourse’, does not. This is not to say that implicit ‘values and practices’ do not exist. It is rather that if academics overtly and explicitly construct themselves as members of a club which can only offer ‘true’ membership to those who are willing and able to assume a *complete* identity within it, and this message is *overtly conveyed to students* (and it often is), the effects of this on them is severe and powerfully disabling.

It is profoundly intimidating for anyone outside of a ‘community of practice’ to think that it is only by taking on all the values and practices of that community that acceptance by it, is assured. When that ‘community of practice’ is particularly powerful, as the academic community is, then the risk of failure is simply too great for many people, and instead of challenging it and forcing an entry, they turn away from it. If, however, academics were to explicitly and publicly construct their students’ ‘success possibilities’ in terms of the degree to which they master a particular range of literacy practices only (given that these are already socially and politically loaded), then it is possible that, with a lowered affective filter in place, students might stand a better chance of becoming at least junior members of the academic community. However, such has been the subtle and lengthy historical formulation of The Academy, that I would hazard a guess that most academics seldom engage with critical appraisals of their ‘community’ and the ways in which it operates to exclude, and their personal contribution to this process. In fact, most academics are themselves the product of such effective social engineering, that the ‘deep rules’ which govern their practice, no doubt seem completely ‘natural’ and God-given, making it quite unnecessary to reflect critically on them.

### **2.3.2.1 The ‘deep rules’ in practice**

As much as I would like to continue interrogating academic literacy practices and their relationship to issues of dominance, power, and the reproduction of institutional values, I believe that the constraints of this thesis dictate that I move now to a consideration of the reality of student experience vis a vis the ‘academic discourse community’ and The Academy as a ‘community of practice’, taking the subtle distinction between these into account. In other

words, let us accept that certain rules, conventions and values do indeed govern the discourse of the academic community, and that students must learn them if they want to enjoy any measure of success at all. What are these rules, conventions and values?

In the ensuing discussion, I have chosen to foreground the rules, conventions and values attached specifically to ‘academic *writing*’ since this is the primary mode of assessment in the LILT module, and indeed the whole B.Ed Hons programme. Although the students in this programme spend a great deal of contact time in group/ interactive discussions, these spoken articulations of knowledge and the negotiations of meaning they embody and engender, never contribute in any way to the formal assessment process. It is their performance in *written* assignments only, which determines their success or failure.

This emphasis on writing in formal education, particularly as the primary method of formal assessment, is not new, as everyone knows. And the power invested in writing is not limited to that of academic contexts. Clark and Ivanic (1997) make the pertinent observation that one only has to look at how governments and institutions react to oppositional writers, to understand the power of writing. They note how:

“... all writing is located in the wider socio-political context; this means that issues concerning writing, the values attached to it, and its distribution in society, are all essentially political and bound up with the way in which a social formation operates”. (1997:20)

Applied to an academic context, it makes perfect sense, therefore, that linguistic capital is largely measured by writing competence and conformity to the language rules and conventions historically associated with academia. Writing is the one medium of expression which allows “socially prestigious forms of knowledge, information and codes of social behaviour to be recorded, stored and handed on in permanent form, unchanged by inaccurate and mischievous memory” (Clark and Ivanic, 1997:39).

But not all writing is ‘socially prestigious’, least of all, that of students new to university contexts. And while student writing does indeed encode information and social behaviour, it is very often not that which reaps the rewards students hope for. The kind of writing they are

expected to master is rife with unfamiliar conventions and subtle variations across and within disciplines which, together, represent a complex but powerful maze of literacy practices which they need to learn and negotiate. Yet learn it they must, if they want to do more than just “go for the ‘people’s mark’ (50% - just a passing mark)” (Hewlett, 1996:94)).

But what can I explicitly teach my students to identify as key elements and understandings of writing in the context of the LILT module that will induct them into the wider academic ‘community of practice’?

Governing all writing practices, that is, their structure, content and style, is their communicative purpose. It is the ‘primacy of purpose’ (Swales, 1990: 46) which defines the linguistic and structural features of a genre, and which distinguishes one genre from another. Academic writing is no exception. But as the vast majority of students on the B.Ed Hons programme have come through a schooling system driven by a fundamental pedagogics approach to language and language teaching, I cannot assume a knowledge of the term ‘genre’, let alone an explicit understanding of the concept. This is not to say, that these students do not engage with a range of different genres in their lives. They do. They write letters, keep minutes, write school reports, keep personal journals and so on. But *usage* is not the same as *knowledge*, and until these students ‘own’ a knowledge of how genres are constituted and sustained, they cannot begin to understand the parameters and demands of academic discourse.

Although the primary communicative purpose of all academic writing can be said to be ‘to inform’, this can really only be said to authentically apply to academics writing for academics. It does not apply, authentically, to students’ efforts. When students write for academics they enter, as Bourdieu puts it, “the unreal world of linguistic exchanges demanded by the academic game” (1965:90). Students ‘inform’ someone of something they already know a great deal about, since in most instances, the lecturer can be considered the ‘expert’. So while the *communicative purpose* might be tagged as ‘to inform’, the reality, the *real* purpose, is to allow the lecturer/ reader to make judgements of the student writer’s academic literacy competence. As Baudelot (1965) notes: “The essay [assignment] is the sole means of expression officially reserved to the student to respond to the professorial lecture. It is also the

only evidence open to the professor to assess the student. The seriousness of this enterprise, at once a rejoinder, a plea and an exhibit in proof, escapes none of the protagonists.” (Ibid:80) But what is it exactly that is being tested and why should an explicit teaching of the academic genre benefit students? What are the ‘commonly held ways of expressing’ academic understanding? How can we help students ‘first crack the basic code’ (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988:10) so that they can penetrate what some would simply consider the ‘gratuitous formalism’ of rhetorical conventions?

One way to identify the key elements of academic writing, is to analyse the type of comments lecturers make in student assignments. Work done by Ballard and Clanchy suggest that there are four main areas ‘about which academics hold clear expectations’ (1992:4). They are - apart from basic accuracy of content:

- relevance and adequacy to topic
- evidence of wide and critical reading
- demonstration of a reasoned argument
- competent presentation.

What they emphasise however, is that most lecturers’ *comments* relate to the first of these three areas, yet it is the third that is taken as the indicator of academic discourse competence. Argument, therefore, from Ballard and Clanchy’s research, can be considered central to academic discourse.

Street (1996) identifies “abstraction, structure, analysis” (In Baker et al:105) as the shared expectations of all disciplines. ‘Positioning’ and ‘distancing’ are also recognised as features of academic writing.

But what compounds mastery of these areas for students, is, as I have already established, that they very often differ in their realisation, from discipline to discipline. How one articulates ‘relevance’ in a scientific report for example, will be realised linguistically very differently from how one might articulate ‘relevance’ in an article on curriculum change in state schools. Ballard and Clanchy believe that it is only by understanding the ‘distinctive modes of analysis’

of a discipline, that is, the different ways of questioning (knowledge, assumptions) within it, that discipline-appropriate ‘academic literacy’ is developed. They say that it is the “failure to grasp or be able to manipulate the appropriate disciplinary mode of analysis [that] commonly leads to problems of literacy” (1988:14). Despite this discerning recognition that it is much more than just surface features of language that account for a high level of academic literacy, we still need to talk in far more concrete ways, and provide examples to students, of how this manipulation is considered to be achieved by the ‘experts’ in the field. If we want our students to ‘write like us’, then we have to make our expectations clear and we have to undertake explicit teaching of the ‘codes, conventions, concepts, values and canons’ (Hutchings, 1998:112) particular to our discipline.

Perhaps one of the most practical examples of a truly useful guide to writing in the humanities, and one which would serve the students in this study very well, is one developed by the Department of Applied Language Studies, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. This guide, drawing on the work of Martin and the Australian school of genre teaching, forms part of the material given to students doing Applied Language Studies 110 and Writing and the Media 130. Securely located within the genre approach to writing development, this particular text foregrounds the ‘academic argument’ as the primary genre of rhetorical writing in the humanities. And the teaching is very explicit. It offers students a ‘scheme’ (see Figure 2 below) which leads them very explicitly through a number of stages, each of which, if followed, channels the piece of writing closer and closer to a soundly presented and defended position.

Figure 2: Schemes for Academic Argument

<i>Scheme for Academic Argument</i>	
<b>Stage 1: Introductory of Thesis Stage</b>	
<i>Moves</i>	
<i>Optional</i>	Making a controversial statement. AND/OR
<i>Optional</i>	Giving background information.
<i>Compulsory</i>	Stating the writer's point of view ( <i>Thesis Statement</i> ) and setting the boundaries to the topic.
<i>Optional</i>	Providing brief support for the writer's point of view. AND/OR
<i>Optional</i>	Introducing a list of the content to follow.
<b>Stage 2: Development of Argument Stage</b>	
<i>Moves</i>	
<i>Compulsory</i>	Signalling the claim (idea in support of the thesis) and relating it to the thesis. Usually the first sentence of a paragraph.
<i>Optional</i>	Restating or rephrasing the writer's thesis statement
<i>Compulsory</i>	Providing support/explanation for the claim. This entails supporting the claim that develops the writer's thesis.
<b>Stage 3: Conclusion Stage</b>	
<i>Moves</i>	
<i>Optional</i>	Providing a signal/marker to indicate the start of a conclusion.
<i>Optional</i>	Restating the writer's thesis.
<i>Compulsory</i>	Relating the whole argument to the writer's thesis. This would mean summing up briefly all the major points of the argument.
<i>Optional</i>	Relating the author's thesis to wider issues

Students are told that the purpose of an academic argument is “to persuade that a judgement is correct” (Ibid:33). For this reason, the “‘conclusion’, or ‘judgement’, is given first and then an argument assembled to show that that judgement is based on sound evidence or explanation.” But knowing that it is not enough to simply say ‘do’, the writers spend considerable time and effort on setting this particular academic genre against other ‘factual’ genres, such as the editorial, the information report and recounts, those genres, in other words, that students might well have encountered in their everyday lives. Through a gradual, and explicitly guided induction into the ‘strange’, it is expected that where proper ‘immersion’ contexts exist and ‘knowing what’ and ‘knowing how to’ can converge, the academic argument will become familiar, and ultimately mastered.

Clanchy and Ballard also emphasise the necessity for explicit teaching of the ‘key elements’ of academic writing, those that reflect the ‘deep rules’ of the academic community. They identify “*Analysis* (‘I want analysis - not mere description) ... *Argument* (‘I want an argument, not a polemic’) ... *Assertion* (‘What is the evidence for this claim?’) ...[and] *Assumption*” (1988:10). (Italics in the original.) They list other elements which influence perceptions of whether someone is academically literate or not. These include the ability to evaluate, voice an opinion, think originally, reference honestly and accurately, or conversely, avoid plagiarising. Again, however, there will be differences across and within disciplines, as to how these elements are realised linguistically i.e. through the texts that students write and those which they have to study.

Thus, initiating students into the ‘culture of knowledge’ which the university represents, and the various discourse communities and communities of practice within it, is a complex and socially bound process. All pedagogical practices engaged with by university staff are potentially instruments of social reproduction. Withholding explicit teaching of the ‘codes, conventions, concepts, values and canons’ of disciplines, or addressing one or two of these, but not all, opens academics to quite justified accusations of collusion to retain their elitist positions, and of subverting the processes of social transformation. What behoves them, is to adopt a theory of pedagogy which is ‘critical’ - in the Critical Pedagogical sense - and make explicit to students, the views of ‘mind, society and learning’ which inform it.

#### **2.4 A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies**

One such theory of pedagogy, though acknowledged by its authors not to be ‘the answer’, is that developed by the New London Group (Kalantzis et al, 2000). As the wider context of this research is teacher education, the NLG’s ‘Pedagogy of Multiliteracies’ has particular value, not only as a possible model for the courses we run in the SETD, but also as a model for teachers themselves to consider in their own school contexts. Its theoretical ‘appropriateness’ to the key areas discussed at the beginning of this chapter i.e. the notions of field, habitus and capital, is also self-evident, as the following expansion on key elements of the pedagogical framework will show. The limitations and constraints related to implementing this framework in its entirety, in the context of the LILT module and B.Ed Hons programme in general, will

not be discussed here, but in Chapter 4.

The view of ‘mind, society and learning’ which informs the NLG’s pedagogical framework is:

based on the assumption that the human mind is embodied, situated and social ... human knowledge is initially developed as part and parcel of collaborative interactions with others of diverse skills, backgrounds and perspectives joined together in a particular epistemic community, that is, a community of learners engaged in common practices centred on a specific (historically and socially constituted) domain of knowledge. (2000:30)

While not using Bourdieu’s language explicitly, the NLG in my view, works from a similar premise to Bourdieu. The ‘historically and socially constituted’ nature of a ‘domain of knowledge’ resonates well with the notion of habitus and field. Both are deeply ingrained and the site of both production and reproduction. Inherent too, is the scope for agency and change - the ultimate goal, surely, of any critical pedagogy?

The NLG propose four components “that relate in complex ways” (Ibid:32). That is, they are not linear, but may be experienced recursively, simultaneously and to varying degrees, depending on the particular context. The four components are:

- Situated Practice
- Overt Instruction
- Critical Framing
- Transformed Practice

In order to fully understand how the NLG envisages these components ‘at work’, it is necessary to set them against their notion of ‘design’, the conceptual organiser as it were, of their multiliterate position. Concerned to address the rapidly changing shape of ‘fast’ capitalist societies, and what are emerging as the ‘new intelligences’ necessary to them, the NLG has chosen to use the term ‘Design’ with a clear agenda in mind. The increasing demands for innovation and creativity in the workplace and schools - in fact in all educational institutions - calls for a new way of speaking about social processes and dynamics. In their view, “the notion of design connects powerfully to the sort of creative intelligence the best practitioners need”. It also “is free of the negative associations for teachers of terms such as ‘grammar’ ... and a



sufficiently rich concept upon which to found a language curriculum and pedagogy.” Finally, the term “also has a felicitous ambiguity; it can identify either the organisational structure (or morphology) of products, or the process of designing”. All ‘semiotic activity’ (including language) therefore, the NLG treats as ‘a matter of Design’. To this end, they identify three elements of the ongoing processes of meaning-making which characterise all human endeavour: “Available Designs” (the resources available to every individual - the habitus would play a considerable role here, together with all other accumulated experience), “Designing” (the process of working with Available Designs), and “The Redesigned” (the resources that are produced and transformed through Designing).

Although I find this conceptualisation of the meaning-making processes in terms of ‘Design’ , interesting, this aspect of the NLG’s work captivates me less than their explicit identification of the four components related to applied practice. Bringing our actions into conscious awareness is the first step to becoming reflective and critical practitioners. Thus, being able to analyse one’s practice in terms of the stages one is going through, and labelling them as one does so, could be a useful strategy for securing authentic transformative learning experiences for students.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to briefly outline how the NLG interprets the purpose, and key processes of each of the four components.

Importantly, the NLG do not claim to be offering anything startlingly new in their multiliteracies’ pedagogy. They know, as do most of us in the teaching profession, that certain literacy teaching practices constitute ‘good practice’, and others ‘bad’ or ‘poor’ practice. They know too, that most of what we consider to be aspects of good literacy teaching, are grounded in a range of pedagogies - the very teacher-centred, transmission type, the progressive, and the critical. So what they offer is intended to be perceived as supplementing and complementing much of what already exists. However, by finding ways to articulate key aspects of literacy teaching anew, they hope to make them more explicit, more consciously part of the cognitive processes of educators, and believe that “when all four aspects are put together in various combinations each is, at least, softened and, at best, enhanced and transformed by the others” (Kalantzis and Cope, 2000:240).

Situated Practice relates to “the immersion in meaningful practices within a community of learners who are capable of playing multiple and different roles based on their backgrounds and experiences” (Ibid:33). The ‘backgrounds and experiences’ of learners is the source of the ‘Available Designs’ mentioned earlier in this chapter. In the context of this research, my understanding of ‘Situated Practice’ is that it refers to my students’ engagement during contact sessions, and in study groups, with the LILT module, and their school-based teaching experiences. In both instances, they are being immersed in literacy teaching and learning contexts, but take on different roles - they are ‘learners’, and as the semesters progress, ‘expert novices’ (in the B.Ed Hons context), and the “experts ... serving as mentors and designers of their learning processes” (Ibid:33) in the school context. It is the responsibility of the ‘expert’ in both pedagogical contexts however, to ensure that the climate of the learning space fosters risk-taking behaviour, trust and confidence.

But immersion in a multicultural context does not necessarily lead to critical or cultural understanding, if by ‘critical’ we mean “conscious awareness and control over the intra-systematic relations of a system” (Ibid:32). Overt Instruction has as its main aim, this level of critical consciousness. It cannot, therefore, be interpreted in any way as being primarily about drills and rote memorisation, although the uninformed very often make this association with the term. It is much more about a sort of Vygotskian mode of learning - tasks slightly beyond the present level of competence of the learner, but achievable with the help of scaffolding processes, by a ‘more expert other’. So it is about collaboration and guided instruction which leads learners closer and closer to ownership of the information and knowledge they experience.

A defining feature of Overt Instruction, is that it aims to teach learners metalanguages, “languages of reflective generalisation” (Ibid:34) that allow the learners to critique and talk about the discourses they encounter. These metalanguages, in other words, give learners a vocabulary to talk about the “Design elements of different modes of meaning making” (Ibid:246). Cope and Kalantzis identify three types of questions which learners can ask of a particular situation in order to penetrate all the possible meanings implicit in the context. They are:

- Representational - What do the meanings refer to?
- Social - How do the meanings connect the persons they involve?
- Organisational - How do the meanings hang together? (Design as morphology)

(2000:246)

The goal of Critical Framing is to ‘denaturalise’ the familiar and the taken for granted, and make it ‘strange’ for learners/ students. It is this component of the NLG’s framework, together with that of Transformed Practice, that shifts it forcefully and directly into a critical pedagogy. Critical Framing enables learners to see their ‘growing mastery in practice’ (derived from Situated Practice) and ‘conscious control and understanding’ (articulated as a result of Overt Instruction) against an ideological, socially constructed, value-driven backdrop. Critical Framing requires that learners distance themselves from their own very subjective experiences. It aims, over time, to teach learners to abstract and theorise the conditions which determine individual and social action. Ultimately, it is about attempting an objective interrogation of one’s context with a full understanding of why the task verges on the impossible.

The influence of Michael Halliday (1978,1994) on the NLG’s work is obvious, but most particularly so in the questions they suggest learners ask. In addition to those listed above (in the context of Overt Instruction), are the following Kalantzis and Cope offer with regard to the Critical Framing component:

- Contextual: how do the meanings fit into the larger world of meaning?
  - Ideological: whose interests are the meanings skewed to serve?
- (2000:247)

They go on to say that asking the above two questions might involve asking “how Design fits in with local meanings and more global meanings”, suggesting that learners should also ask:

- what is the immediate function of the Design? (what’s it doing: to whom? for whom? by whom? why?)
- what’s its structure and immediate context of the Design? (situation, connections, systems, relationships, effects)
- what’s the larger social and cultural contexts of the Design? (culture, history, society, politics, values) (Ibid).

Thus, Halliday's 'texts' and the NLG's 'Available Designs' are conceptually comparable. And the purposes of texts, as defined by Halliday, namely, their ideational, interpersonal and textual functions, clearly map very comfortably onto the NLG's 'Design' questions above.

Lastly, and demonstrating circularity, is Transformed Practice - the 'Re-Designing' element described earlier, where learners are able to return to their Situated Practice, and redesign - and transform - original elements of meaning-making. Re-designing is the critical element of this pedagogy since without it, its social purpose is lost. But transferring learning to contexts other than the one in which it originated is notoriously difficult, the more so if it is culturally different. And the goals of Transformed Practice are sophisticated. Learners need to have a conscious awareness of a range of issues. These include developing and articulating a 'voice', recognising intertextuality and hybridity in Designs i.e. "making the connections, recognising influences and cross-references of history, culture and experience - including different degrees and types of transformation of meaning, from close reproduction to significantly creative change" (Ibid:248), and significantly, 'becoming a new person'.

The overview that I have given here, of the NLG's contribution to Critical Linguistic Pedagogy, is just that - an overview. In terms of the full scope and reference of their theoretical and pedagogical framing, there is much more that can be said. However, for the purposes of this thesis, and the context of this research, I believe the above discussion pinpoints the most salient features. As indicated earlier, a critique of their relevance to the context of the B.Ed (Hons), will be given in Chapter 5.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The theoretical discussion in this chapter has been relatively wide ranging, moving from the socio-historical framework of Bourdieu's thinking on habitus, field and capital, to a consideration of literacy as an ideological construct firmly defined in terms of 'social practice', to a discussion of a pedagogical framework formulated within, and applicable to a critical pedagogical and critical linguistic context. My choice of this particular type of theoretical framing was deliberate. Not only did it resonate with my own world view of a number of issues related to identity, power, history and literacy, it also indicated to me just how wide the

window onto my data interpretation process should be thrown open. Since the research base for this study was by definition small, recognising the multiplicity of issues that could nevertheless be addressed, and to which theoretical references could be linked, made the interpretative stage of the process stimulating and rewarding.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Establishing a research orientation**

The research reported on in this thesis falls predominantly within a naturalistic/ qualitative, as opposed to a rationalistic/ quantitative research paradigm. Much contemporary research, particularly in the human and social sciences, validates eclectic approaches, and elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches clearly live increasingly compatibly (for many researchers) within single research designs. It is the position of the researcher on key epistemological issues, however, that signals the real ‘home’ of a researcher within the one broad paradigm, rather than the other. Positioning myself as I do, firmly in a qualitative paradigm therefore, indicates that I have a particular understanding of, and attitude to, the nature of knowledge as dynamic and constantly changing, as relative and subjective and thus with very few ‘absolutes’ and certainly no One Truth. I hold a general world view, in relation to what constitutes meaningful reality, that can accommodate ‘messiness’ and ambiguity and ambivalence.

In keeping with these views of knowledge and reality as subjective, socially constructed and always in flux and ‘re-coordination’ (Lankshear, 1997), I have quite deliberately chosen to work within a research paradigm that explicitly favours investigations characterised by the holistic, the social and the political. I favour a paradigm that foregrounds human interaction and the complex, inter-relationship between individual, group and institutional power relations, one that can offer ‘fuzzy generalisations’ and still remain confident of the value of the exercise.

I am conscious, however, that there might be a risk involved in articulating such a strong adherence to a qualitative paradigm. It is one that relates to perceptions of the ‘worth’ or ‘value’ of naturalistic research initiatives, by researchers steeped in a rationalistic paradigm. With the weight of an historical dominance behind them, it is often too easy for quantitative, ‘scientific voices’ to subdue or subvert the richness of social, interpretive studies. Wolcott, (1990:26) however, comments encouragingly that “In the last two decades, qualitative

methods ... have come to be widely known and accepted. There is no longer a call for each researcher to discover and defend them anew.” But while this may be so, I believe there is little room for complacency by anyone oriented towards qualitative research. As recently as 1994, American researchers Guba and Lincoln, posited that it is those in sympathy with the rationalistic paradigm who “tend to control publication outlets, funding sources, promotion and tenure mechanisms, dissertation committees, and other sources of power and influence” (In Edge and Richards, 1998). Edge and Richards, also American, caution that “as financial pressures on research capacity increase, and research direction falls more and more under the influence of ideologically motivated politicians, one might even predict a strengthening of this [rationalistic] position” (Ibid:337). Pat Sikes (1999:ix), in the Editor’s Preface to Bassey’s work, says of the British research community that “Recently, however, for those concerned with and involved in research in educational settings, and especially for those engaged in educational research, it seems that the positivist model, using experimental, scientific, quantitative methods, is definitely in the ascendancy once again”.

It is my belief that the unease expressed by Guba, Lincoln et al in the above paragraph can quite legitimately be felt in South Africa too. Announcing the radical restructuring of Higher Education on 5 March 2001, Minister Kader Asmal revealed the government’s five year plan to amalgamate all teacher training colleges, distance education institutions and technikons, with universities, and increase student numbers. He also announced the government’s intention to place more emphasis on science and technology. This last point is particularly relevant to the context of this discussion, since the increased emphasis on science and technology (which includes business and commerce) comes at the expense of the humanities, not in addition to them. Over the next five years the government intends to reduce the ratio of humanities’ students to business and commerce, and science, engineering and technology students from the current ratio of 49:26:25 to 40:30:30. I believe that the combined influence of a 60:40 ratio of university faculties historically grounded in rationalistic approaches to research, and the government’s capitalist stance on economic growth and globalisation, is likely to emerge as an increasingly formidable force for naturalistic, qualitative research endeavours to match or counter. Minister Asmal’s comments in the Natal Witness (6 March 2001) that “further adjustment to the ratio is not possible in the short to medium term because of the low number

of students leaving the school system with the required proficiency in maths” and “the desirability of shifting the humanities below 40% is debatable, given the continued need for skills in education, law, private and public sector management, social services and art” are hollow comfort. These comments imply that at some future moment, further reductions in the humanities could well take place, and that this would indeed be a strategic and intelligent route to take. These comments also reflect a technicist, skills-based view of the role of education (in fact the humanities in general), which is easily underwritten by the model of outcomes-based education recently adopted in South Africa. With its origins in Labour, rather than Education, the strain it is putting on teachers grounded in fundamental pedagogics, and often ineffective and confusing implementation strategies, it is quite feasible to project to a time when outcomes-based education is all about measurable and quantifiable learning outcomes. Proponents of the qualitative research paradigm would do well, it would seem, to remain in a permanent state of ‘red alert’.

### **3.2 Methodology: The case for the Case Study approach**

The assessment process in the LILT course has already gone through three cycles of revision (1998, 2000, 2001) in response to student performance and our own sense of where changes needed to occur. In addition, the Learning Guide and Reader (the core learning texts for the course) that students are using in 2001, reflect the culmination of five years of extensive revision and rewriting, in response this time to student and tutor evaluations, and again our own sense of where change and/or development was needed. This study augments those revisions, and though it has been defined as a case study in its own right, it should be seen, as stated earlier, as reflective of the action research approach which informs the ongoing development of the LILT module.

Though I am confident of calling this piece of research a case study, exactly how one defines a ‘case study’ is open to varied interpretations. In December 1975, a conference was held at Cambridge on ‘Methods of case study in educational research and evaluation’. The hope of the conference was ultimately to produce a handbook on the use of case studies in educational research, but it soon became apparent that there was no consensus on a single explanation of a



case study. What did emerge from the conference were two broad definitions viz. ‘the study of an instance in action’ and ‘the study of a bounded system’, both of which I consider the most appropriate, *in broad terms*, to my understanding of the use of the case study approach in this particular research. The ‘instance in action’ can be seen, for example, in the short duration that the students in this study spent in the LILT course i.e. one semester, and the relative brevity of my personal interaction with them. The ‘bounded system’ can be seen from several perspectives. Firstly, there is that of the B.Ed Hons programme itself, a system ‘bound’ by the academic and administrative structures of the university of which it is a part. Then there are the individual modules within the B.Ed Hons programme, each of which is its own ‘bound system’ of selected content, ideological positioning, assessment processes and so on, all set against the constraints of what constitutes ‘the curriculum’ for the whole programme (another ‘bounded system’). And then there are the students themselves, firmly bound within all the structures, limitations, constraints, definitions and expectations implicit in the levels of ‘boundedness’ identified above.

However, in the years following the conference, understandings of the case study have continued to be debated and developed and there is value in giving a brief overview of some of the definitions which now form the ‘currency’ of the case study approach. Kemmis (1980) for example said:

If someone asked, ‘what is the nature of case study as an activity?’ then a response would be, ‘*Case study consists in the imagination of the case and the invention of the study*’.

He goes on to elucidate:

Such language might seem odd, but it makes explicit the cognitive and cultural aspects of case study research. It reminds us of the role of the researcher in the research: s/he is not an automaton shorn of human interests and programmed to execute a design devoid of socio-political consequences. It reminds us that knowledge is achieved through objectivisation: much as we might prefer to think otherwise, research is not a process of thought going out to embrace its object as if its object lay there inert, waiting to be discovered. ... The imagination of the case and the invention of the study are cognitive and cultural processes; the case study worker’s actions and his/her descriptions must be

justified both in terms of the truth status of his/her findings and in terms of social accountability (In Bassey, 1999:24/25)

Stake (1995) had this to say about the 'case' of the study:

The case is an integrated system. The parts do not have to be working well, the purposes may be irrational, but it's a system. Thus people and programs clearly are prospective cases. (Ibid:27)

Stenhouse's (1985) contribution to this debate is an interesting one. He identifies four broad 'styles' of case study, namely, ethnographic, evaluative, educational and action research case studies. The first of these he located in the social sciences, while the latter three he saw as related to 'educational action'. However, when reading the defining characteristics of the use of the case study in each of these categories, and trying to apply them to my own particular study, I found it impossible to say that I was clearly making use of one style rather than another. Stenhouse articulates subtle differences which in practice, I believe, would often not be realised. In my own case, for example, there are elements of all four 'styles'. The 'single case [is] studied in depth by participant observation supported by interview', and the calling into question of the 'apparent understandings of the actors in the case ... from the outsider's standpoint, explanations that emphasise causal or structural patterns of which the participants in the case are unaware' (the ethnographic 'style') are there. There is also an indepth study of a 'single case [or collection of cases] ... with the purpose of providing educational actors or decision makers ... with information that will help them to judge the merit and worth of policies, programmes or institutions' (the evaluative 'style'). And while it is not my aim to develop any profound educational theory in this case study (one of the goals of the educational 'style'), it is to 'enrich the thinking and discourse of educators ... by refinement of prudence through the systematic and reflective documentation of evidence' (another characteristic of the educational 'style'). Lastly, while I can clearly distinguish between the use of the case study as 'method' and that of action research as 'method', I, like Stenhouse, can see that a single case such as mine, could be contextualised within one or more cycles of action research, and contribute to the 'revision and refinement of the action' (the case study in action research - the fourth of Stenhouse's 'styles').

The playing fields of case study use and interpretation are thus wide and potentially confusing. Brown and Dowling (1998) for example, have great difficulty in talking about case studies at all, as a particular method of enquiry in qualitative research. Preferring to use the term ‘Opportunity Sampling’, they say that most of what are called case studies, are more honestly ‘seized opportunities’. They say:

Educational researchers attempt to put a gloss of deliberation onto their opportunity samples by referring to them as case studies. ... Essentially, all research is case study research insofar as it makes claims about one or more specific cases of or in relation to a broader field of instances of phenomena (1998:30).

Despite Brown and Dowling’s comments, however, and for my own purposes here, I am comfortable that by foregrounding notions of ‘instance’ and ‘boundedness’ and ‘singularity’ and ‘particularity’ in my research design, I can call what I have used, a case study approach.

I found the following list of what Adelman et al (1980:59-60) called ‘possible advantages of case study’ to closely match my conceptual framing of what I was attempting to do and expected to experience through opting for a case study approach. As points of reference, therefore, they have been very useful. I quote Bassey’s use of Adelman et al in full here.

- (a) Case study data, paradoxically, is ‘strong in reality’ but difficult to organise. In contrast other research data is often ‘weak in reality’ but susceptible to ready organisation ...
- (b) Case studies allow generalisations either about an instance or from an instance to a class. Their peculiar strength lies in their attention to the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right.
- (c) Case studies recognise the complexity and ‘embeddedness’ of social truths. By carefully attending to social situations, case studies can represent something of the discrepancies or conflicts between the viewpoints held by participants. The best case studies are capable of offering some support to alternative interpretations.
- (d) Case studies, considered as products, may form an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent reinterpretation ...
- (e) Case studies are a ‘step to action’. They begin a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use ...
- (f) Case studies represent research or evaluation data in a more publicly

accessible form than other kinds of research report, although this virtue is to some extent bought at the expense of their length. (1999:23)

Many of the critics of the case study approach, hone in on issues related to the generalisability of findings and how ‘isolated, one-off affairs’ (Atkinson and Delamont, 1985), and mere social ‘reflections’, characterised by researcher participation and subjectivity, can possibly claim to say anything else to anyone outside of the ‘limited’ study itself. But matters relating to validity and reliability also come under the spotlight. Broadly speaking, it is the ‘rigour’ of the research (in scientific/ rationalistic terms) that is called into question.

In response to these critics, it is important to signal at the outset, that researchers involved in qualitative and participant observer studies are as concerned about ‘rigour’ as any other research community. But issues of validity and reliability and generalisability are approached from slightly different perspectives, ones which distinguish the latter kinds of studies (some of which may use the case study approach but not necessarily), from those grounded in qualitative, scientific approaches. These issues of validity and objectivity, and matters relating to research ethics, are raised again towards the end of this chapter.

### **3.3 Data collection**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

I would like to be as honest as possible in my report on this research process, as to do otherwise might suggest that I have no insight into the flaws precipitated by my own actions. That my process of data collection became a long, drawn-out affair is something for which I take responsibility. I also recognise the impact of this process on the study. However, in terms of any future research that I conduct, the lessons have been invaluable. Please note that while I may ‘tag’ issues relevant to this chapter here, I extend the discussion in Chapter 5 where other difficulties and observations of the entire research process are addressed

Let it be said at the outset, that the original *formulation* of my research design was rigorous and thorough, and met the expectations that just such a small, qualitative case study approach

demands. That is, there was a big enough, but ‘bounded’ subject group, twenty-three in total, and while ‘control’ groups were not appropriate to this study, triangulation was to be established through the administration of several data collection processes identified below. Claims of reliability did not form part of the agenda since the context of the research was only one module in the B.Ed Hons programme, but it was anticipated that trends and patterns would emerge, upon which I could base certain recommendations.

### 3.3.2 Sources of data collection

The data for this piece of research was gathered primarily from the first three of the following sources. An explanation for the minimal use of the last source (cyber conversations) is offered further on in this chapter.

1. Questionnaires
2. Short literate life histories
3. Interviews
4. ‘Cyber’ conversations

The procedure for data collection from the first three sources above, went as follows:

- a first questionnaire, developed in collaboration with, and administered to, a ‘resource’ group of students doing LILT in the *second* year of the B.Ed Hons programme (23 in total)[Appendix A].
- interviews with a minimum of five of this ‘resource’ group to refine the questionnaire on the strength of their engagement with it.
- a second questionnaire (Part One), refined after the collaborative exercise with second year LILT students, and administered to the *subjects of the research*, namely the *Pietermartizburg campus intake of 1998 1<sup>st</sup> year LILT students*. [Appendix B]
- a discussion with a focus group of 6 1999 LILT resource group to collate possible interview questions [Appendix C].
- Literate Life Histories (Part Two) gathered from 5 students in the subject group [Stimulus for Literate Life Histories: Appendix D]

Although each of the steps outlined above did indeed take place, the process itself began to drag and thin out very soon after the administration of the second questionnaire to the subject group. Lulled into thinking that because the students in the subject group would remain in the B.Ed Hons programme through 1999 (and thus 'be around' and easy to access), I would have plenty of time to follow through on the data collection process as planned, I did not put pressure on the subject group to return questionnaires and literate life histories, or on myself to begin the interviewing process for many months. As I was carrying a full workload in the SETD during 1999, I had little choice but to foreground work commitments ahead of everything else, including this research. This proved to be a very serious mistake as by the time I felt ready and able to pick up on this study, all the students in the original subject group had graduated and left the University. Finding the students again was extremely difficult and setting up interviews a nightmare. In addition, in November 1999, Margi Inglis, my supervisor at the time, died. Her death impacted hugely on me personally, and the Department of Applied Language Studies. A new supervisor was appointed in January 2000.

Thus, time, or rather the far too extended period of the entire research process, became a critical determiner of what I would call the 'status' of my data. With too little time to vigorously pursue the data collection processes originally planned, I had to accept fewer questionnaires, even fewer and, for the most part, relatively superficial literate life histories, and individual, instead of focus group, interviews. Subsequently, however, and in order to try and boost the amount of data I could work with, I made a relatively late decision to approach colleagues in the SETD for their views on student performance. Via a 'cyber' communication, that is, through email correspondence, I invited six members of staff who had all been intimately involved in the B.Ed Hons programme to forward their definition/ description of the 'successful B.Ed Hons student'. Though I would have preferred extended face-to-face interviews with these colleagues, and a group interview to consolidate individual findings, such was the pressure on staff in the SETD at the time, that I did not feel I could ask this of them. Finally, with a view to substantiating my use of Literate Life Histories as a source of data in this study, I believe it to be quite legitimate to draw on the findings of another study which a colleague and I had previously undertaken into the use of Literate Life Histories (also

with B.Ed Hons students), together with the results of a similar exercise I undertook with LILT tutors at the beginning of the 2001 academic year, as my role in both these two additional sources of data, was central to the process.

Despite the problems cited above, I do believe that I can give a perspective on a specific set of events which will be in keeping with Novak and Gowin's (1984) comments on 'knowledge claims' in educational research. They say:

We cannot say that this or that is true; what we can say is that, based on the educational events observed, the kind of data collected, and our data transformations, our knowledge claims are valid, and that we recognise that a different structure of educational events and/or the use of different data or the use of different data transformation procedures may have led to different (perhaps diametrically opposing) knowledge claims. (In Edge & Richards:171)

### 3.3.2.1 Questionnaires

The use of a questionnaire as an 'entry' point to data collection was determined by my need to gather, as quickly as possible, some sense of the 'nature of existing conditions' (Cohen and Manion,1994:83) - the most common reason for utilising questionnaires. In this context the 'existing conditions' I needed to define were the types of writing - genres and discourses - that students in the subject group engaged with outside of the LILT module (or any other B.Ed Hons module for that matter). Since my two key research questions focussed on the *differences* between the writing experiences of students outside of the LILT module, and those demanded of them within the module, and the possible impact of these differences on 'success', I had clearly first to identify what writing students already did in their 'lifeworlds'. This then became the key purpose of Part One Section A of the questionnaire [Appendix B].

Struggling to resist my sense that I already 'knew' exactly what kinds of writing students did outside of the university context, I invited the 1999 LILT students to collaborate with me on drawing up a list of 'short' or 'minimal' examples of writing tasks which they engaged with over a period of a week of 'ordinary' living. I was interested in the *spread* of writing tasks that constituted students' 'literacy practices', and in particular, those which were non-expository,

such as lists, notes and memos, and therefore devoid of extended discourse features. How much of the writing students did outside of the B.Ed Hons, I wondered, did not demand structural organisation, coherence and grammatical accuracy? Working with this group, we reached consensus on what should go onto the list. [Appendix A]

When it came to drawing up a list of examples of 'extended' writing, I went through the same process with the same resource group. The lists, therefore, in Part One Section A1 and A2 of the questionnaire, reflect the original and authentic contributions of LILT students. In each section of the questionnaire, additional space was provided for students to enter examples of writing not included in the lists.

Section B of the questionnaire contained four open-ended questions for students to answer [In Appendix B]. I must say here, that I did not collaborate with my resource group in compiling these questions. As I had already taken up a considerable amount of their lecturer's teaching time with these students when developing Sections A1 and A2 of the questionnaire, I did not feel comfortable asking for any more. Thus I did them on my own.

Though Cohen and Manion warn of the dangers of open-ended questions in self-completion questionnaires, saying, "they cannot probe respondents to find out just what they mean by particular responses' (Cohen and Manion, 1994:94), I was concerned that students would find a questionnaire which only contained 'list and tick' items, so impersonal that they would not bother to complete it. Since I was not teaching my subject group, I was worried that the 'affective distance' between us - already a reality - would only widen if reflections on their lived experiences were reducible to ticks. What I certainly did pay attention to, was the wording of these open-ended questions. In keeping with Van Vuuren, Maree and De Beer's (1998) checklist of 'errors to avoid when drawing up questions', I believed that:

- the words I used were 'simple, direct and familiar to all respondents' (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999:294)
- there were no 'double-barrelled' questions i.e. one question asking two different things
- there were no leading or loaded questions
- the questions were applicable to all respondents



- the way in which the questions were worded could not have led to developing ‘response styles’ in students
- no questions were vague.

These of course, were *my* perceptions of the questions. However, when analysing the responses to these questions by the *subject group*, it is clear that some of the respondents did find certain questions vague, and some did not find the wording ‘simple, direct and familiar’. Reasons for this ‘discrepancy in response’ will be elaborated upon in Chapter 4.

A word needs to be said here about the distribution, and return, of these questionnaires. By the time these questionnaires had been discussed, refined, redesigned and ready for distribution to my subject group, this group had completed the LILT module and were now in their second year of the B.Ed Hons programme. Tracking them down, therefore, involved finding out which modules they were now registered for, where and on what days of the week their classes took place, and who their tutors were. I also had to request the co-operation of a number of people, mainly tutors, whom I had not expected to have to co-opt to accomplish this task. All of this took time. Importantly, however, 21 students agreed to participate in the research exercise and took, or were posted, the questionnaire (which included a stamped, ‘return’ envelope so that students bore no costs).

I asked every student if, when they returned for their next B.Ed Hons class the following week, they could bring the completed questionnaire with them, and whether at that point, I could give them Part Two [Appendix D] of the data gathering process viz. how to go about writing a Literate Life History for me. All agreed. However, nothing like this materialised. The following week, only 7 students returned Part One to me. I gave these students Part Two and offered them a month in which to complete this aspect. They agreed.

In the meantime, I tried to follow up on all the other students who had taken Part One. Though I managed to speak to every one of these students over the course of the next two weeks, either by phone or in person, I was met, for the most part, by a complete resistance to further co-operation or interest in the process. Numerous phone calls were not returned,

'problems' were experienced with items in the questionnaire, I was accused of asking 'trick' questions, and so on. I found the negativity and suspicion with which I was greeted, disheartening and disappointing. Again, I was forced to reassess what I thought I understood my relationship to be with the students - and accept that there were certain aspects of our relationship I would never understand.

I can only hypothesise about the reasons so little interest was shown in participating in this study by the majority of students first identified. It is possible that the primary school teachers in the class (the increased sector of the B.Ed Hons student cohort) felt their level of English language competence was inadequate to the task, and/or they could not risk exposing themselves in this regard. Perhaps many women, as is so often the case, simply lacked the 'gender' confidence to come forward. Perhaps some of the men, rather than expose their limitations as 'leaders' and 'dominant males', preferred not to participate at all. Perhaps it was simply a case of not being able to cope with any further demands on personal time and energy.

What this meant in practice, however, was that I was left with no choice but to redefine my research process and work with a smaller group of students. In the event, five out of the seven students who returned Part One, also returned Part Two and agreed to be interviewed. The final 'formal' subject group, therefore, comprised only five students. Three of the students who formed part of the original 'resource' group agreed to continue in the process as if they were 'subjects'. I am indebted to all eight of these students for their selfless and willing participation.

The table on page 59 indicates the profile of these 8 students. The first five students formed the subject group, the last three (*italicised*) formed the resource group. The formal analysis of the data further on in this chapter is restricted to that gathered from the subject group only i.e. Students A, B, C, D and E.

Student	Age (1999)	Gender	Ethnic group	First language	Teaching phase	LILT result: %	Final B.Ed (Hons) result: %
A	42	Male	African	Zulu	Secondary	69	63
B	32	Female	African	Zulu	Primary	58	61
C	32	Female	African	Zulu	Secondary	73	62
D	52	Female	African	Zulu	Secondary	60	51
E	39	Male	African	Zulu	Primary	55	53
F	37	Female	Indian	English	Primary	76	76
G	40	Female	White	Afrikaans	Secondary	83	69
H	30	Male	African	Zulu	Secondary	67	63

### 3.3.2.2 Literate Life Histories

Part Two of the data gathering process involved students writing a short Literate Life History (hereafter referred to as LLHs). My use of LLHs in this context was motivated by my previous experience of them as one of the [ungraded] assignments in the 1996/1997 version of the LILT module. Then, and in order to contextualise our students' learning about factors which influence school-based reading and writing development, and to raise language awareness, we asked them to write their own LLHs. We explained a LLH as being a narrative which "relates all the factors and experiences that shaped a person who can speak, read, write, and interpret language and visual symbols". The purpose, we said, was to "get in touch with past literacy experiences, both good and bad" (LILT Learning Guide, 1999:86).

Students who wrote their LLHs during these years, found the experience illuminating and profound. In many cases the exercise proved cathartic, and released students from painful memories. In others, it reawakened significant experiences which they had forgotten they had had, but which they now recognised as having contributed to the person they now were. In all cases, students wrote much more (length-wise) than was asked of them, and were willing to share their thoughts and reflections on the process. In essence, we considered this a fruitful and validating exercise which underscored Sondra Perl's comments on the value to the individual of being invited to tell her/his own story. She says that "rubbing up against these

stories creates an edge in us, one we can use to sharpen our understanding of the tale already told or of the new one waiting to be written” (1994:430).

It was after all Paulo Freire’s own experiences of learning to read and write that contributed to the perspective he had on ‘literacy’ as an adult (See Chapter 2 of this thesis). He said:

In an effort at recapturing distant childhood, trying to understand my act of reading the particular world in which I moved, permit me to say again, I re-created, re-lived in the text I was writing, the experience I lived at the time when I did not yet read words ... It was precisely my parents who introduced me to reading the word at a certain moment in this rich experience of understanding my immediate world ... it was not something superimposed on it. I learned to read and write on the ground of the back yard of my house, in the shade of the mango trees, with words from my world rather than from the wider world of my parents. The earth was my blackboard; sticks my chalk. (1987:31)

Stein (1998) also makes important observations about the power of the autobiographical narrative - in her case, written or performed - as a ‘pedagogic practice’. She says:

The use of the autobiographical narrative as a pedagogic practice can be a powerful device for interpreting, renaming and validating one’s experience. Feminist researchers have focussed attention on the narrative autobiography technique as a significant means of ‘recovering’ the voices and social experiences of silenced women and marginalised groups. ... Much has been written on the important role of narrative enquiry and autobiography in teacher education as a way to link our past history as students in school, to our present experiences as teachers ... (1998:523)

And in terms of the particular relevance of LLHs to *language* teachers, our experience in 1996/1997 mirrored that of Oxford and Green’s (1996) findings that language histories “can be a tool for increased self- awareness on the part of the learner and greater understanding of each learner by the teacher” (1996:20). By writing about how they were taught to write, students saw more clearly how critical their role (as teachers) can be in young people’s literacy development. On the basis of these previous experiences, I was thus quite convinced of the efficacy of LLHs as another way in which I could try and access the lifeworlds of my students and hear their voices.

### 3.3.2.3 Interviews

My intention with regard to the use of student interviews was two-fold: one, to provide for triangulation, and two, to provide another opportunity for students to ‘speak their own experience’. The type of data generated through interviews, while often constructed as ‘natural’ is in fact in most cases, far from it. Carspecken (1996) observes that

subjects will often talk during interviews in ways they seldom talk in everyday life. Why? Because very often people are not listened to as intently as the researcher listens to them, taken as seriously as the researcher takes them, and supported in the exploration of their feelings and life as much as a skilled researcher will support them (1996:154).

This ‘non-naturalistic talk’, Carspecken prefers to call ‘dialogical data’, and indicates that, despite their very often artificial context, interviews can nevertheless, provide an opportunity for the research process to become ‘democraticised’, one of the purposes I had in mind in deciding to use it.

Brown and Dowling (1998), in discussing the advantages and disadvantages of interviews, note how they mirror - but in reverse - the advantages and disadvantages of questionnaires. Interviews, for example, allow for in-depth explorations of issues and positions that questionnaires don’t. Questionnaires, however, can be administered to large numbers of people with very little time spent by the researcher. Both, however, have their place in research processes.

Much of the literature on interviews identifies three broad forms they can take i.e. unstructured, structured or semi-unstructured. In Brown and Dowling’s view, however, there can be no such thing as an *un*structured interview - for research purposes that is, since the interviewer “always brings some agenda or general purpose to bear on the activity and will generally impose some theoretical and/ or methodological selection in terms of the location and conditions in which it takes place” (1998:73). Cohen and Manion (1994) on the other hand, distinguish between four kinds of interviews viz. the structured interview, the unstructured interview, the non-directive interview and the focussed interview. These four

types differ according to the degree of flexibility or ‘freedom’ the interviewer has in relation to the pre-planned format of the interview, that is, the scope there is to alter the direction or questions as the interview progresses.

In the light of the possibilities for ‘types’ of interviews, the interviews I conducted leaned more towards Brown and Cowling’s ‘structured’ interviews, and Cohen and Manion’s ‘focussed’ interviews, though still with some level of hybridity implicit in them. Cohen and Manion describe the focussed interview as one which “focuses on the respondent’s subjective responses to a known situation in which she has been involved and which has been analysed by the interviewer prior to the interview. She is thereby able to use the data from the interview to substantiate or reject previously formulated hypotheses” (Ibid:274). Broadly, this reflects the context of my student interviews. On the basis of the students’ responses to the questionnaires, and the LLHs they had submitted, I planned interview questions which I hoped would substantiate or elucidate aspects not fully covered in these other data. The interview questions which I initially formulated, and which were refined on the basis of ‘trial runs’ with the three 1999 resource group LILT students who had agreed to stay in the process [Appendix C], were modified, or their order altered, in one way or another during each of the five interviews. These modifications were always in response to the uniqueness of the particular interaction that constituted the interview, making my role as interviewer ‘active’ and ‘expedient’ (Merton and Kendall, 1956), that is, when it suited me to do so, I could actively intervene and manipulate the discussion to take the direction I needed it to go, rather than leave the student to direct it.

### **3.3.2.3.1 The ‘interview-as-event’<sup>1</sup>**

Of the various methods of data collection I used in this piece of research, the student interviews were, in terms of an ‘event’, the most interesting. I have already stated that I was very conscious of the strength of my sense that I ‘knew’ my students and that it was critical to the process that I intellectualise this dangerous position and consciously hold back on it. My very real desire was to gain a perspective and understanding of the writing experiences of my

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<sup>1</sup> This term is borrowed from Brown and Dowling (1998:75)

students from an *emic* perspective i.e. from *their* perspective as active creators of, and participants in, their own meaning-making processes. While an in-depth engagement with emic-etic perspectives is characteristic of long term ethnographic studies, I believe the principles informing these two perspectives are important for any naturalistic, qualitative study - even one as limited as this one. Thus I saw the interview as an opportunity to create a space in which emic perspectives could be realised. To do this, my construction of the interview was that of a 'social' context in which issues of power, identity and culture would be as central to the interaction as they are in any, possibly more conventionally defined, 'social' context.

Though interviews have been conceptualised from different viewpoints, they all share certain characteristics. Since they are essentially a means to exchange ideas and information, they resemble in the most obvious ways, ordinary everyday encounters. For this reason, "no matter how hard an interviewer may try to be systematic and objective, the constraints of everyday life will be a part of whatever impersonal transactions she initiates" (Cohen and Manion:275). Trust, curiosity and naturalness are as central to the research interview as they are to any interpersonal transaction. Cicourel (1964) identifies five 'unavoidable' features of interviews. While often constructed as problems, they are better responded to when seen as simply inevitable and natural to this type of communication. Being alert to their possible presence, and adjusting one's interpretation of the process accordingly, rather than despairing because they are there, is the only sane and intelligent response to them.

These five features are:

1. Many factors make one interview different from another. These factors include "mutual trust, social distance and the interviewer's control".
2. Interviewees may become uncomfortable "and adopt avoidance tactics if the questioning is too deep".
3. Both parties inevitably will hold back "part of what it is in their power to state".
4. Meanings are not always mutually understood even when the intention is there.
5. It is quite simply not possible to "bring every aspect of the encounter within rational control". (In Cohen and Manion, 1994:275)

In the case of the interviews I conducted, I had to acknowledge that a clear power differential existed between me and my students, however much I would have liked, and tried, to have it differently. Not only had I never personally taught them, they knew me as the module coordinator, a 'lecturer', and as one of the writers of the course material - all 'authoritative' roles in the eyes of students. My own subjective assessment of myself as a 'good teacher' and someone who can establish a safe and unthreatening learning environment, has always depended on having the *time* to establish these processes. In this instance, I had none of this kind of 'track record' on which to build, something which I knew from the start would seriously inhibit the depth of what I could expect out of the process.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, setting up the interviews was an extremely time-consuming and often utterly frustrating task. I made the decision early on that, as I was relying entirely on voluntary participation, I would conduct interviews at times and venues to suit my students, not me. I still believe that this was the right approach to take, but it did lead to some very taxing, but at the same time, unique encounters and experiences. Misunderstandings were rampant with regard to times and places to meet. One student, for example, accompanied by an irate and suspicious husband, and two young children, arrived two hours late for the interview on a Saturday morning. Having driven all the way from Wartburg, the family immediately decided that it was too late to start the interview, and rescheduled the appointment to the following Saturday - this time outside the Police Station in Camperdown. Fortunately, this meeting took place, on time, and with only the student present - but in my car in temperatures in the upper 30s.

Another interview with a principal of a primary school also took place in my car since there were so few rooms in the school (classes were held in two burnt out buses), that he did not have an office, and nor was there a staff room in which we could meet. I quote these two examples, not only to foreground how 'human' the enterprise actually was, but also to indicate the degree of co-operation given me by the students in the study, and for which I was immensely grateful. The remaining three interviews with the subject group, took place in my office at the university.



If we can assume that I had clear objectives for this particular study and that my questions in the interviews related directly to these objectives, then my responsibility, as I saw it when I planned the interviews, was to ensure that the responses I got to my questions were relevant, valid and reliable. Thus, before the interviews took place, I was sure that I could control the flow of questions and the direction responses would take. I based my planned process on Gorden's suggestions for what would constitute 'relevance-related' tasks, and what would constitute 'validity-reliability' tasks. Where 'relevance-related' tasks were concerned - and paraphrasing Gorden - I a) had a clear understanding of the purpose of the interview, b) in my view, my questions communicated this purpose clearly, c) I was sure I would detect and be able to correct misunderstandings by the respondent, d) I had a keen sense of what would constitute 'very relevant', 'slightly relevant' and 'completely irrelevant' responses, and that e) I would be able to guide and convert the 'irrelevant' comment to something relevant (1998:70).

Though I had had no previous experience of research interviews, I was aware of how critical my attitude/ demeanour would be to how the interviewees responded. Gorden's 'validity-reliability' tasks depend largely on the interviewer establishing and maintaining attitudes and interpersonal relations that lead to the conclusions being drawn from the information gathered at the interview, being sound. But given the paradoxical task of ensuring consistency within a context of variables, it is the capacity of the researcher to maintain 'sameness' in terms of attitudes and interpersonal relations *across* interviews that I see as the only way in which to factor in any talk of reliability, or 'soundness', in a study such as this one. I did try very hard to maintain a high degree of 'sameness' in how I engaged with each interviewee - setting them at ease, working consciously to construct the meeting as one between colleagues, establishing myself as also a learner in the process, but if reliability must relate fully to 'dependability' i.e. the "extent to which the instrument yields the same results on repeated trials" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:483), then I do not think that this aspect of data testing can possibly apply to this study.

### 3.3.2.4 Cyber conversations

As indicated in Chapter 1, I attempted to boost the data for this study by initiating cyber discussions with colleagues around the issue of ‘success’ and how this concept (as it relates to the B.Ed Hons programme) is defined by academics. This process, however, only took place very late in the research process. While email communication facilitates quick responses, the ‘genre’ of cybercommunications has increasingly become one where extended, in-depth correspondence is difficult to elicit. Thoughts are often articulated in short, staccato bursts, or in point form, or in stream-of-consciousness style where grammatical conformity plays no part.

Cyber conversations as sources of data have raised interesting perspectives for me. Unless the parameters of the conversation are clearly defined, and the nature of the task consensually reached, habitual ‘email behaviour’ continues to dominate. What could constitute rigorous discussion and debate is very often diluted to one or two line responses and what may or may not be interpreted as frivolous remarks. As a method of data collection therefore, it can be a fragile and uncertain one. In this particular study, as I did not want to intrude on academics’ time too much, I invited ‘short’ responses, which indeed I got. But given their brevity, they have not served the purpose for which they were intended. For this reason, though I do include a reference to this aspect of the data collection in Chapter 4, I have not indulged in a deep reliance on them as making substantive contributions to this study. The use of cyber discussions as sources of data, is however raised again in Chapter 5, where the issues targeted for their use in this study, are better considered as possibilities for further research.

## 3.4 Conclusion

Can a questionnaire such as the one I used, the questions guiding the writing of the LLHs, those directing the cyber conversations, and my interview questions, *ever* yield the same results, if each one of these elements of data collection relied solely on subjective responses? I have already highlighted the influence that the habitus of each of my subject group, and my own, would have had on the process. So ‘sameness’ can seldom be part of the equation,

except perhaps at the extremely superficial levels discussed above.

Validity in this study, however, can be considered more confidently. In Terre Blanche and Durrheim's words, validity refers to the instrument "doing what it is intended to do" including both the fact that the measure should provide a good degree of fit between the conceptual and operational definitions of the construct, and that the instrument should be usable for the particular purposes for which it was designed" (Ibid:480). I do believe that the instruments used for data collection had an inherent capacity to do what they were intended to do i.e. they were "usable for the particular purposes for which they were designed". When *designing* the instruments, I believed there was a good degree of 'fit' between the conceptual and operational definitions of the construct, otherwise I would never have made use of them. That it is now clear that they could also have been even further refined, and done an even better job than they did, should not, I believe, detract from anyone recognising an implicit degree of validity in the study. However, much *more* could have been extrapolated from the data had certain aspects been done differently, they do offer a great deal of exactly the kind of information I was hoping to find. And having made use of a range of data collection methods as indicated, I also believe that a sufficient degree of triangulation was established to further validate the findings.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the analysis of the data and a focussed discussion on possible interpretations of it.

## **Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of data**

### **4.1 Introduction**

As this piece of research is a case study, and a particularly small one, it is not possible or appropriate to generalise too liberally from it. However, this does not mean that the data gathered from it, does not contain great depths of interest and richness, or raise questions and problems related to a wider context. Since one of the key aspects of this study relates to assessment and how (or whether at all) the 1998 assessment strategies in the LILT module should or could be further refined in the light of its findings, I have included a brief description and synopsis of the assessment strategies used to assess the students in this study, at the outset of this chapter. Samples of the reading quizzes, copies of the three assignments and the examinations set for the 1998 LILT students, are included as Appendices E to H. Without this information to hand, the reader will find it difficult to position her/himself in relation to the position I have taken.

With regard to the actual presentation of the raw data, I have chosen to first present each student's full 'canvas' of responses to the questionnaires, the request for a LLH, and the interview, in turn, before commenting on broad commonalities and differences. My decision to do this is based on a sense that this is the best way to foreground the uniqueness and humanity of each student in the study, before considering them more impersonally as research subjects. It also assists in presenting a more coherent view of the data, as with such a small subject group, reporting on each item separately simply fragments the overall picture.

The purpose of Section A1 and A2 of the Questionnaire (Part One of the full data collection process), was to gather information on the types of writing - the genres - with which students engaged outside of, or prior to, their participation in the B.Ed Hons programme. Section A3, as I saw it, would give me some idea of how the students constructed themselves as writers - in the widest sense. My motivation for the four open-ended questions in Section B of Part One was to begin to loosen the framework of my enquiries into their lives. I felt that students might construct the rigidity of the 'list and tick' items as arrogance on my part - that this is all they

are up to, and/ or that this is all that constitutes the role of literacy in their lives. Hence, the questions in Section B are oriented to the affective. They invite students to articulate their needs and feelings about aspects of the LILT module, which I believed could impact on their performance in formal assessment, and which related to linguistic competence. I deliberately limited the questions to only four, since I did not want students to cite ‘overload’ as the reason they could not participate in the process.

As I worked through each subject’s contribution to the total data collection, I searched for all those features which, even in the most tangential way, might be said to ‘speak’ to the two main research questions, viz:

1. What is the difference (if any) between students’ writing experiences and skills outside of the LILT module, and the written discourse demands made of them within the course?
2. To what extent does the nature and extent of this difference (if it exists), impact negatively on students’ academic performance?

In the second part of this chapter, I have formulated tables that re-present the original questionnaires given to the students i.e. Part One of the data collection process, and used them to then reflect the *summative* responses of the five students involved in the study. Making use of the questionnaires for this purpose has the additional advantage of providing the reader with immediate access to them. A clean copy of Part One is however included as Appendix B.

To conclude this chapter, and drawing on Domain Analysis as an additional tool for a wider contemplation of issues emerging from the data, I present an interpretation of selected aspects of the data and set them against the theoretical understandings articulated in Chapter 2.

#### **4.2 The discourse demands of assignments and examination questions in the LILT module (1998)**

What follows here is a brief description of what I believe the key features of these assessment demands to be, and what level or degree of academic literacy is required if first class passes

are to be awarded.

#### **4.2.1 Reading quizzes/ Multiple Choice Questions [Appendix E]**

Reading quizzes were implemented primarily to encourage students to read. It had become increasingly apparent that our students had very little experience of reading academic texts, the reading strategies necessary for coping with these, or in fact, the motivation to engage with anything that might constitute ‘difficult’ reading. But many students found these quizzes very difficult, mainly because of the reading demands they entailed. Many also resented their use because they could not rote learn the answers. And though they themselves obviously did not have to write academic discourse here, having to access it via the readings proved nearly as difficult. Despite these negative responses to the quizzes, however, once students realised that we were taking them very seriously, they slowly began to do the necessary reading. Though marks were often low, the quizzes emerged as unexpectedly powerful teaching and learning tools. Students answered the questions individually (high security measures ensured no-one saw the relevant quiz ahead of a contact session) but responses were peer marked under the guidance of the tutor who led the whole class through the marking process. The debates which arose around justifying one response rather than another, served perfectly to intensify the conceptual understanding implicit in a mastery of the quizzes.

#### **4.2.2 Assignment 1: A ‘reaction’ to the series of lessons modelled in the LILT Learning Guide [Appendix F]**

In contextualising this assignment as a ‘reaction paper’, I believed we loosened the discourse and genre demands considerably for the students. The assignment was intentionally tightly structured so that students would not have to ‘write to the rules’ of academic discourse, and since none of the assessment criteria foregrounded any formal discourse feature beyond the paragraph, I felt this was a gentle, but effective induction into some of the elementary features of the LILT module. 50% of this assignment called for students’ ‘own’ experience, something all identified in the interview as one of the ‘empowering’ features of their B.Ed Hons experience.

#### **4.2.3 Assignment 2:** A report back on a workshop where key applied linguistic principles and processes were addressed [Appendix G]

In line with our efforts to ‘mirror’ real world writing and professional contexts, this assignment was contextualised as a report back on a (hypothetical) workshop attended by the students. Again, by identifying for students the steps they should take in their writing, the assignment effectively gave an example of how students could structure their response. This time, however, the assessment criteria included several common academic discourse conventions, namely referencing, ‘good organisation and structure’, relevance, an absence of generalisations, and a clear articulation of conceptual understanding.

#### **4.2.4 The examination paper** [Appendix H]

As can be seen, the examination paper did not introduce anything new to the students. Multiple choice questions, short explanations of concepts with a small applied and ‘own’ experience component, and one ‘long’ question framed by a ‘real life’ context constituted the academic demands. In our view, this was an emanently fair examination paper as all aspects of it had been experienced by the students during the course of the module.

#### **4.2.5 Comment**

The majority student responses to these assignments and examinations is what prompted this study and its focus on literacy practices. Despite what we believed to be such a thorough and well-considered approach to assessment i.e. with its focus on a graded and authentic orientation to real world literacy practices, while at the same time introducing academic discourse, the majority of students still performed very poorly. It was as if they did not trust this new, ‘caring’ accommodation of existing experience. The call for ‘own’ experience very often meant that they ignored the ‘content’ demands, or offered an unbalanced response. In Assignment 3, and the ‘long’ question in the examination, lip service was paid to the context and relevant genre e.g. a letter would have the conventional address, ‘Dear ...’ and so on, a newspaper article would have a subheading labelled ‘The Editor’. Having ‘covered’ this aspect of the assignment, students simply lapsed into the familiar, flawed discourse of the untutored

and unskilled academic ‘illiterate’. It was thus with a ‘what more can we do’ air of despair, that I began to consider that perhaps we did not understand enough about our students’ prior literacy experiences and practices.

### 4.3 Student profiles

The following portion of the table which first appears in Chapter 3, is reproduced here to allow the reader easy reference to each student’s broad profile as s/he reads this chapter.

Student	Age (1999)	Gender	Ethnic group	First language	Teaching phase	LILT result: %	Final B.Ed (Hons) result: %
A	42	Male	African	Zulu	Secondary	69	63
B	32	Female	African	Zulu	Primary	58	61
C	32	Female	African	Zulu	Secondary	73	62
D	52	Female	African	Zulu	Secondary	60	51
E	39	Male	African	Zulu	Primary	55	53

**Note to reader:** When students are quoted verbatim, the use of the following ellipsis: ... i.e. *three dots*, indicates that a word or phrase has been omitted by me. This is done if I have considered certain words and phrases to be irrelevant or extraneous to the statement being made. If however, only *two dots* are used i.e. .. , this indicates a pause in the students’ own vocalisation processes. It is important to take note of these as they very often show how students struggle to find the words they want, or how the repetition of certain words and sounds are used as a strategy to fill what would otherwise be silences.

In my discussion of Student A, I have included a focus on several generic points and issues which, while first encountered or pondered on in relation to this student, nevertheless also have relevance for the other students in the study. In terms of the structure and organisation of this first section of the chapter therefore, the reader will find a number of discussion points flagged here rather than being raised separately for each student. Where these same discussion points relate to Students B,C, D and E, the reader will be directed back to points made in this first section.



### 4.3.1 Student A

This student took his participation in the study seriously from the start and provided the most substantial data. All aspects of the questionnaire were completed within the time frames set by me, and he submitted a thoughtful, though relatively short (one and three-quarter page), literate life history. Arranging an interview with him was simple too, as not only was he more than happy to be interviewed, he is currently studying towards a Masters in Adult Education in the School of Education and Training, and so was regularly in the building. There was a quiet maturity about this student, and it was evident from his participation in the study that he is a committed, concerned and insightful educator.

In terms of my first research question relating to the differences in kinds of writing or genres students engage with outside of the LILT module, Student A's responses on the questionnaire indicate that the only *daily* writing he does is to note appointments in a diary, and the only '*regular*' 'extended' writing (i.e. every 1 or 2 months) he engages with is poetry writing and the creation of comic strips. However, within the full framework of Section A of the questionnaire ('short' forms of writing), he does indicate that he engages with a range of other factual genres over one or two week periods, limited as some of these might be in terms of their expression. (See section 4.3 of this chapter for composite representations of all the students' writing activities). Significantly, this student indicated that *all* his writing is done in English. He also described himself as a confident, successful but nervous writer.

When first reading this student's response to Section A, the immediate impression I formed was that his daily 'literacy practices' involved virtually no extended writing. 'Extended writing' in this context, as stated in Chapter 3, is intended to denote those genres which are recognised as demanding patterned structure, organisation and coherence - those which generally take focussed attention to master and time to complete. However, although entered under the 'not often - less than once a week' column, he does indicate that he makes notes for Bible study classes and writes Union reports from time to time. Furthermore, in his response to question 1 of Section B of the questionnaire (the open-ended questions), he says: "I am often involved in setting tests, exam papers, marking essays for learners, making summaries for learners who often experience shortage of literature works". For any classroom-based educators, especially those who teach languages, these last literacy practices are very likely to

be almost daily practices. In addition, by the time this interview was held, this student was already engaged in Masters study and writing 15 page assignments.

In total then, and despite the initial impression of a limited engagement with writing, Student A enjoys exposure to, and participates in, a considerable range of writing demands. However, when asked if he thought of himself as a writer before he entered the B.Ed Hons programme, he responded with: “To tell the truth, no.” When this question was followed up with one that asked: “Do you think of yourself as a writer nowadays at all?”, he replied:

I think of myself as a writer when circumstances force me, say if there's a need to write something [like an assignment], then, but if I don't need to do it, I don't. ... it's like forced kinds of situations. I haven't really started to really do writing as perhaps .. an interest which I need to captivate.

Thus this student makes a clear distinction between ‘doing writing’ - as a creative act, an ‘interest’, which entitles one to consider oneself a ‘writer’, and writing ‘under certain pressures’. The latter kinds of writing appear to barely constitute ‘writing’ - “I haven't really started to do writing” - a startling and fascinating construction of the literacy practices with which he engages.

Student A's LLH reveals that he came from a highly literate home. His parents helped him with homework, as did his friends, for whom he regularly wrote letters. Although he does not say what work his mother did, he does say that: “... my mother, for instance, will ask me to read her speech and then make comments before she could present it”, suggesting that she held a prominent enough position in her work context to be called upon to deliver speeches.

When questioned about his secondary school writing experiences, Student A acknowledged that he was fortunate enough to be “in a school where mostly there are very intelligent students ... and good teachers.” He was constantly motivated and encouraged to do well. Reading was foregrounded, as was literary criticism, debates and critical thinking skills across all content subjects. The “leadership as such were people who were also .. who were encouraging us to go further, rather than relying on the syllabus and things.” Student A's diploma years, however, involved a “lot of reproducing”, in contrast to the university where

“there was a kind of style, it was very meaningful, where one learnt theory and one was then able to use that theory in a particular situation, and we were also allowed to reflect on your own experiences, so what perhaps we have learnt .. you could relate to your own real life situation, an authentic situation ...”

One of my key purposes in the interviews, was to find out what understanding these students had of what constitutes ‘academic discourse’, the ‘kind of style’ associated with academia, given that it is in reality an often illusive and variously defined concept. (See the discussion in Chapter 3.) What emerged was that all the students recognise that there is an animal called ‘academic writing’, with quite specific characteristics of its own, that sets it apart from other kinds of writing. Student A was able to articulate his understanding of it particularly well, and I would like to quote him at length.

In response to the question, ‘What is academic writing?’, he said:

With academic writing, the way I understand it .. one is .. we are given say a topic and .. they ... having been given that topic, one must analyse it and then um, you’ve got to sort of strategise and see what approach you are going to use, and you’ve got to sort of now plan, and think of what resources you need .. articles .. and what have you, and put them together and sort of map your .. your .. the whole essay, knowing what is the .. what is relevant, what is needed, where you’ve got to display your understanding. But then with academic writing, what there is like ..um .. there is a format that needs to be followed. You can’t just write ..

[What is that format?]

I mean even the type of language, for example, you can’t just say .. this will happen before you have put say the evidence, you sort of put an argument and make some .. you don’t quickly arrive .. you are not judgemental or make a decision. You’ve got to first introduce the topic showing that you understand and .. for example, the idea of one idea per paragraph, eh .. you must show that .. I mean it is reflected in either paragraph to the previous one and um .. there should be a pattern right through, which need to be followed .. which the reader is got to follow .. shouldn’t take for granted that the reader .. I mean .. knows what you are writing about in a way .. try to be convincing, persuade and .. and .. use words like modality .. that there’s a genre ..

Later on in the interview, he added the following:

... because another crucial thing in academic writing is being aware that um some situations you got to make some quotations, I’ve got to write

bibliography, got to write to .. to .. referencing in the correct way ...

Thus, Student A has a very sure grasp of some of the dominant features of a generic understanding of academic discourse. The question to ask of course, is how he came to 'know' these and which of these literacy practices constituted linguistic capital (in the Bourdieun sense) once he entered the university.

If we cast our minds back over Student A's experiences, we can say that his schooling experiences do appear to have been positive and motivating and may have engendered an early competence in aspects of writing in formal contexts. His diploma years, however, certainly did not. Given that at the time the research was conducted, he was 42, there are many years unaccounted for in terms of possible academic discourse development. I would like to suggest that there were probably no conscious or explicit teaching and learning experiences in these intervening years that had academic literacy as their primary goal. Rather, via a slow and possibly uneven process of immersion in a range of educational and personal contexts, his literacy experiences equipped him with enough schemata to make the transition to the formalised demands of academic writing a relatively obvious and painless one. If I am indeed right about this, then I would say that this process, together with what I perceived to be a healthy measure of self esteem and confidence, are the key factors which contributed to his sound understanding of the demands of academic writing and his experience of them as completely unintimidating. In fact, more than being unintimidating, they stimulated and excited him enough to make him pursue Masters studies. Furthermore, since according to the data, he writes only in English, his command of the language is extensive and sophisticated, something which comes across in the interview transcription quite clearly.

Thus, it would seem safe to say that he did not *enter* the B.Ed Hons programme and the LILT module with a high degree of relevant 'linguistic capital', but influenced by a very high degree of 'Self capital', reinforced as it constantly was by the leadership position accorded him in his B.Ed Hons contact groups, his construction of his experience is one of success and growth. Primary school teachers particularly "would come up with no, this one is too much, can you help us .. they will know you that you come from high school, so they rely much to tap your experience ...". Most significantly of all - and this issue will be revisited in Chapter 5 - he did not fail any assignments or examinations, thus there was no reason in his view, to perceive

himself as inadequate or a failure.

In summing up a response to the two (amended) research questions with regard to Student A therefore, I believe that though there are differences between the writing experiences he engages with outside of the LILT module and those demanded of him within it, he nevertheless has engaged with, and continues to engage with a sufficient number of varied writing experiences to have contributed to a relatively smooth assimilation of the generic demands of academic discourse. In addition, there appears to be no evidence that irrelevant or minimal academic literacy experiences *prior to his entry to the university*, have impacted negatively on his performance - if 'performance' is measured by his results. As indicated earlier, without samples of his writing, it is not possible to know whether his knowledge of what constitutes academic discourse was realised in practise in such a way that his lecturers too would describe him as academically literate.

#### **4.3.2 Student B**

The LLH this student submitted was very short (no more than 500 words). The first half focussed in a very literal way, on her first two days at school (being taken there, made to draw a picture, coming back the next day and so on). Her LLH did reveal that she came from a poor and semi-literate family. About this she says: "... my mother was illiterate. My father can read and write but he didn't teach me to write because he was working in Durban. He was visiting us once a month. We were not a well to do family, we were having no television. If I was used to televisions I was going to have an experience of reading the words from adverts."

The second half of the LLH - 'my writing now' - emphasises the value of her experience of being "a student of the University of Natal" and the LILT module. Despite the brevity of this section, an unexpectedly forceful 'writer persona' emerges. She notes first how learning about the purpose of writing several drafts of an assignments before reaching 'final copy' was a key new learning and influenced her performance very positively. She says: "Before studying the LILT I was able to write the assignments but I was not aware of the importance of making a draft. I know that if you write an assignment, literature etc. you should make more than one drafts. You should read it in order to find the mistakes." She then goes on to say: "Writing is very important, as I am a life long-learner I do much of writing. As an educator again I do an

administrative role e.g. collection of fees, taking of the minutes. I fill bank statements. I write the curricular [sic] vitae for promotion posts. I do applications. I keep the records of my learners' academic work." Most encouragingly, she concludes by saying: "I don't feel angry when they [her learners] make some mistakes because I know that we learn by the mistakes."

In addition to all these genres identified by Student B in the LLH, in Section A of the questionnaire, she also indicated that she makes notes for Bible study classes everyday, and regularly (every 1 or 2 months) keeps a personal diary and writes children's stories. Like Student A, the only other *daily* writing tasks she indicated she does are those which require only a short, key word application, such as signing children's homework books and taking down messages.

My construction of Student B, on the basis of the LLH and her questionnaire responses was an uncertain one. I could not decide whether her high praise of LILT was genuine, or given to me because she thought that would be what I wanted to hear. On the other hand, there were strong indications that she engaged with writing very 'consciously' and that she experienced it as important and integral to her personal and professional life. I felt that not only was she not shy to foreground her present 'writing persona', but that it was important that I be made aware of it. Her use of the word 'literature' intrigued me too: "I know that if you write an assignment, literature etc. ..." and later, "I have tried to make several drafts of a literature I am trying to write."

Student B agreed to be interviewed in my office on a Saturday morning. However, since she had not arrived an hour after the arranged time, I prepared to leave the university, at which moment she arrived, with her husband and two children. At first she did not speak to me at all. Instead her husband announced that it was too late to be interviewed that day and that we would have to make another arrangement. He was very suspicious of my intentions with regard to the interview, and wanted to know my home phone number and address. Since I could not see the relevance of this information for this context, I declined to give it to him. His hostility clearly made his wife uncomfortable, since she suddenly said that she would meet me the next Saturday outside the Police Station in Camperdown. In a culturally traditional manner, she kept her voice low and did not meet my eyes. Within minutes of arriving, they had left.

The turn this encounter had taken disturbed me considerably - not because of the husband's negative and aggressive response to me, but because of how submissive and inarticulate his wife was. The woman sitting in the car seemed so remote from the writer in the LLH and questionnaire that it was difficult to see them as one. I began to doubt the veracity of her LLH and questionnaire responses and wondered what the following Saturday would bring.

Contrary to my suspicions that no-one would arrive the following Saturday, Student B met me as planned and the interview took place - in my car, outside the Camperdown Police Station, with only she and I present. (Her husband dropped her and went shopping with the children!)

This interview proceeded at a slow, halting pace. Student B was in fact very shy, spoke so quietly at times that it was difficult to hear what she said, and often requested that I repeat a question. There were long silences and hesitant pauses between questions and responses. In retrospect, I know that I was so concerned to establish a safe context, that I too often 'led the witness', completing her sentences for her and putting words into her mouth. Nevertheless, the interview confirmed that here was indeed, an accomplished and highly motivated writer and educator, despite very disadvantaging school literacy experiences and unhelpful College experiences.

In response to the question: 'In your high school years, was there anybody who encouraged you, who inspired you?', she replied: "No, I was having bad luck. I remember when I was in Standard 8 [Grade 10], my teacher was very lazy. She was not teaching us at all and I was having a problem in the second language ..." And when I asked if in high school she wrote History and/or Biology essays (working from the premise that these forms of writing could have provided early exposure to the structure and organisation of academic writing), she responded with: "Ya, I wrote it but unfortunately I didn't passed it because I was taught by the Principal. The Principal was not coming to the school daily." Of her school experiences, she also said that her "high school teachers didn't encourage me. I was .. they were using rote learning. I was reading things without understanding." At Training College, however, things seemed to begin to change, with the lecturers here offering more help than she had ever received before. This help though, remained within the context of fundamental pedagogics. When asked whether the LILT assignments demanded a more critical approach than those done at College, she said: "Oh, yes, I find it .. there was a difference because in B.Ed I was put

to more effort. I was to be critical and creative. I think the kinds of assignments I was writing was criterion referenced, unlike in the College their aim was to test knowledge. ... Rote learning was the most used.”

Thus, despite College being the place where at an affective level, things began to shift for her, the pedagogy did not. In terms of preparing her for the B.Ed Hons programme, therefore, these earlier educational experiences had not contributed much.

As with Student A, I probed her understanding of what constitutes academic writing. Her first response was: “According to my own point of view, I can say academic writing is something which is formal, yes, like when you’re writing an assignment - if you write an assignment you should use formal language.” When pushed a little harder to explain what the difference between formal and informal language is, she simply sighed and said “Hmmm” - nothing more. Struggling to decide whether my level of English language use was causing the problem, I rephrased the question. This time I asked: “What are the kinds of things we ask you to do in the B.Ed Hons assignments?” This clearly made more sense to her as she then responded with: “Ok .. we should be .. we should be able to express ourself and make a link between what we have read in the textbook and our own knowledge”. Prompted further with: “And when you are required to analyse, or criticise .. be critical .. um, isn’t that very different from anywhere else where you use it?” (‘it’ being formal language), she added: “Ya. We should be critical when we are writing in an academic way. We should be able to support ourself .. if you say anything you should be able to support yourself and say why it is so and so.” She also identified structuring and organising assignments as another difficult aspect of academic writing. Thus, like Student A, this student could identify certain characteristics of academic discourse which make quite specific demands on a writer.

The most striking revelation about this student’s literacy practices came at the very end of the interview. Mindful of the fact that our interaction was not entirely comfortable for her - or me, in fact - I decided to close by simply confirming aspects of the questionnaire she filled in. It was a legitimate move, but also quite mechanistically motivated. I felt that since she had given the information herself, she should be in a position to elaborate on it if she wanted to. Alternatively, she could answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’.



She did indeed confirm that she still keeps a personal diary. But to my question: “And what other writing do you do in your personal life?”, she responded with: “I tried to write stories ... for young learners.” As I questioned her further, the writing persona I had detected in her written submissions began to re-emerge, and with it, a new kind of confidence to speak directly to me. “Most of my stories,” she told me, “are based in Aids ... I want to pass this message which is in my heart because I am worried. .. It’s terrible and particularly with blacks, we are dying.” Very significantly, these stories are all written in English. Suddenly the inherent contradictions I initially sensed in Student B made more sense to me. Despite her apparent strong conformity to cultural norms, there was a highly individualised and literate woman in there too, capable of articulating her identification with the agony of ‘her people’, and opening up the HIV/ Aids debate to the young people in her school and community. Although her stories had gone no further than her immediate school context, I now understood why she had labelled herself as a ‘skilled’ and ‘confident’ writer in the questionnaire. It also became clear why her response to the question: ‘How can the writing demands in the LILT module be changed so that you can use the writing skills and experiences you already have?’ had been: “It should demands learners to publish their own books.”

It seems that this student only needed to learn about the Process Approach in the LILT module, to feel that her writing skills had become fine tuned. She said that after studying this module that: “ ... I have become aware that you should make more than one draft before you make the final draft. You should make the first draft and then give it to someone to read it, ya .. and to find the mistakes, and then after that then write the final draft.” On the strength of this LILT experience, she now gives her AIDS stories to colleagues to read and correct. She also attributes her success in LILT to this new approach saying: “I feel confident because after doing LILT .. I scored high marks in all assignments.” She also now considers herself a “life-long learner”, and at the time of the interview, would have liked to continue studying.

What does all this say about Student B in relation to the two research questions? Firstly, it suggests to me that, like Student A, a sense of being ‘skilled’ and ‘confident’ as a writer has its source *not* (at least overtly) in prior experiences of academic discourse, but in experiences which impact directly on the affective level of the psyche. If experiences outside of the university context have conspired to create a deep level of self worth and value, then sufficient self confidence to engage with academic demands translates into a positive experience inside

the university. Perhaps, if one develops an identity as a writer through deeply ‘meaningful’ processes, that is, one in which one’s voice comes to be heard and validated in its own right, then that writer identity is one which will command with confidence, all other writing contexts. That the kinds of writing engaged with inside and out the institution may be very different, is not then the critical factor.

### **4.3.3 Student C**

Student C presented another interesting case. Unfortunately she had not submitted an LLH, but given her extensive responses to Part B of the questionnaire and her willingness to be interviewed, I decided to include her in the subject group.

Her primary motivation to register for the B.Ed Hons programme was, it seems, to improve her own teaching practice. In the interview she said that it was a “big decision” but she wanted to “learn more”, to help her own learners. “I thought how can I teach .. improve my teaching, develop certain skills that I can use in my class? So it was really a big decision .. because at times you try to use certain methods and at the end of the day you find that there’s this problem of failing, the failure .. of matrices .. are not doing well .. so I was just trying to find out how much I can improve myself.”

Bearing in mind the inherent artificiality of interview ‘conversations’, and the uneven distribution of power in the interview context, I admit to slight misgivings initially with regard to this student’s contribution. Was she presenting immediately as the ‘concerned and committed educator’ so as to win some kind of approval from me, I wondered? She was very articulate in describing her learners’ difficulties, saying: “I was more concerned about .. my learners .. because at times you find they cannot even make decisions on their own. They cannot even integrate what they know and what I have to teach them .. because they have to see what we are teaching as something which really happens in their lives .. to integrate their life and also what they learn at school.” The influence of the ‘applied ideological’ position of the LILT module continued to be foregrounded by her. She talked about the need for her learners to value their primary language and how the cognitive skills developed during the acquisition of this language would enhance the learning of a second language. She talked about the value of group work, and learners being motivated by free writing exercises and peer

assessment.

My own response to all this positive feedback on the effects of the LILT module suddenly struck me as highly questionable. Why is it, I thought, that when I finally meet a student who can articulate all the key learnings the LILT module promotes, and locate their relevance in her own teaching context, do I doubt the student's integrity? My interrogation of my own actions led me along a complex path of thought, ending ultimately with a consideration of the degree to which my, and Student C's responses, could be linked to the notion of *habitus*. Given the deep-seated nature of the *habitus* - as defined by Bourdieu - I came to the conclusion that I could not, with any legitimacy, answer for Student C's responses at all, only my own. I could surmise and suspect, and have what I might think are informed opinions about her responses, but I could not, with any certainty, claim that my impressions and opinions were accurate - even after a dialogue that explicitly sought clarification.

But where did my responses come from? Could they be construed as racist? Had my apartheid era upbringing been much more of a critical and formative feature of the development of my *habitus* than I had ever imagined? Or was it all much less dramatic than this and simply an appropriate response given my extensive experience of students' overt 'paper chasing' motivations? Though I did not come to a final and fixed answer to these questions immediately, the investigative exercise rang warning bells for the remainder of the interview. Which was as well, since Student C emerged as an insightful and useful critic of the B.Ed Hons programme. It was her capacity to offer negative criticism of the programme and the university that obliged me to reconsider my initial impression that she was telling me what she thought I would like to hear. I have included comment on this area of our discussion as it relates to the notion of 'communities of practice' as outlined in Chapter 2. This discussion however, is at the end of the section devoted to Student C.

In Part One number 3, of the questionnaire, she indicated that she was a 'confident' and 'successful' writer, but also added 'managing'. In exploring the inherently contradictory nature of this response, it became clear that Student C *became* 'confident' and 'skilled' as her participation in the LILT module and B.Ed Hons programme in general progressed. In the early period of the programme, however, she really was just 'managing' i.e holding her own but without much confidence. She recognised that she came into the university unprepared for

the demands that would be made of her. In tracing the source of this unpreparedness, she said: “Maybe the [College] where I was studying was not good, or they didn’t teach me enough skills, or I didn’t understand. ... because in these [Colleges] where we used to study, some of them are not concerned with the way you understand the question that is given.”

Once in, however, not much changed. Although Student C articulated similar characteristics of academic writing as Students A and B - “you describe, you explain, you criticise ... also you have to support [what you say] .. and give your own view”, it was clear after we had discussed the difference between ‘composition writing’ and ‘academic writing’, that at least in her first year of the B.Ed Hons programme, she had not been able to realise the discourse in practice.

Most students who have come through Colleges of education, talk a lot about ‘composition writing’ as the dominant genre in writing assessment practices. When asked to define it, and Student C’s response is similar to others I have been given, she said: “A composition is just a topic given and we have to say .. you have to say .. not basing on the subject concerned.” By ‘not basing on the subject concerned’ is meant that no sources or references outside of the topic are intended to be analysed or synthesised into a response. The composition “can be something which .. eh .. has not been proven which may not be true, something which just comes from your mind.” In other words, the emphasis on ‘composition writing’ in Colleges is the same as that placed on it in schools, with the same perpetuating consequence of disempowered students. ‘Academic writing’ demands therefore, are inevitably quite alien and hence very difficult to access.

In Student C’s view, in an academic essay or assignment, one is “more concerned about that subject you are dealing with.” When asked which constituted the more difficult task, she replied: “The more difficult one is the academic one because you have to refer to what you have learnt .. you have to refer to certain things.” Peer study groups played an important role in Student C’s experience of the B.Ed Hons programme. When confronted with an assignment topic, she and her group would get together and discuss what was required. Then, she said: “... when it comes to writing, you just need the ideas. You just need .. you just need everything which comes, unlike when you are writing a composition .. because when you are writing a composition, you have to follow it step by step, like when you are writing a narrative .. you have to follow things as they happened. So now you find that in the academic you just .. what

comes you put it down, before you forget it. ... At times you don't even .. you .. it becomes difficult to plan because you mix the ideas at the end .. because what we did .. as I say .. we were not even sure how we have to write the academic essays .. so we just wrote what comes at that particular time without organising all the ideas up to the end .. and we didn't even edit." It was only the LILT module which she did in her *second* year which taught her about editing and gave her the confidence to go on: "When I did LILT, I learnt a lot. Most of the things which made me to be able to continue with the course .. a lot of the concepts that were used there, the methods that were used there .. I enjoyed it."

In terms of whether Student C's prior literacy experiences groomed her sufficiently to cope with the demands of a university context, the answer is a resounding no. She brought, in other words, no literacy capital recognised by the university. In terms of whether this lack of a foundation competence impacted negatively on her experience and performance, the answer is a qualified yes. Clearly her first year in the B.Ed Hons programme was so difficult that she considered dropping out. That she did not is commendable, and probably stems from the support she received from her family, and her husband in particular. He had recently completed the B.Ed Hons degree himself. However, her engagement with the LILT module seems to have played a key role in changing her attitude and hence, mastery, of the demands of the context, and kept her in the programme. In addition, her general disposition clearly worked in her favour. That is, it is one which rises to a challenge, is alert to power dynamics and social interplays, and acts strategically. As with Students A and B, Student C can also be said to have 'Self' capital, the form of capital I have identified as significant to this study and about which more will be said later. Of the five students in the subject group, Student C scored the highest result for LILT - 73%.

But the nature of Student C's first encounters with academic writing reflect poorly on the institution. They speak of indifference to the plight of under-prepared students and hint at a community of practice seeking to preserve its distance and status. Though she herself never used the term 'community of practice', in my view Student C's experiences reflect such a construct. For example, although her lecturer in the LILT module gave her the kind of feedback she needed in assignments, others did not. Of her LILT lecturer she said: "... they were not much concerned with the use of language, and also the spelling mistakes, but they were able to show us how we had to put our work, or how we have to have answered the

questions. Because what was important was for us to know where we went wrong .. not minding the grammar mistakes ..”,. In other modules in the programme, it was different. Of these she said: “At times you would find the problem that the concepts that were used were not further explained. .. the marker comments that you had to evaluate [but] they don’t tell me how to evaluate, how should I do it. So now they just write those comments, and you had to ask each other .. and we have to go to the other person who has it, then what did he mean, what was expected of me when they say I have to evaluate. ... So now at times we ended up not knowing what we were supposed to do.” And along similar lines: “The problem that I used to see was that you just write everything .. maybe there’ll be just those small mistakes, and at the end the mark you are given does not correspond with the comments that are written.”

It would possibly be unfair to label all lecturers’ inadequate responses in student writing as ‘deliberate strategies intended to preserve power relations’. Many stem from a simple ignorance of pedagogic practices that can enhance student learning, and/or those which can explicitly address power relations. But the consequences of even the unintentional attitudes and behaviours of academics is a negative impact on students, and the entrenchment of unequal power relations - as Student C’s experiences show.

#### **4.3.4 Student D**

Student D is the oldest subject in the group (52) and comes from illiterate parents. She had a positive primary school experience, finding writing as a young child, “so exciting”, and motivated by success in writing periods, “got high marks”. Her high school experience however, like so many other adolescents’, was not good. She said in her LLH that “in high school it changed because after writing my exercise book would come back with comments written in a red pen and nearly the whole work underlined. So in this time writing was discouraging.”

However, there were people who played a significant role in her literacy development: her eldest brother, neighbours, her granny “who always tell us stories”, and an “old lady [who] helped me a lot in high school level, in idioms and expressions she was very good. She knew Zulu very well.” The drive to be ‘educated’ led her to a teacher’s diploma through Vista University, and finally, the B.Ed Hons degree. Her construction of her experience in the

University of Natal is one of undiluted empowerment. In answer to the question: 'When you started the B.Ed Hons, did you feel disempowered? Did it worry you that the university seems such a powerful place?', she replied with: "Well, I think I was not sorry for my time for coming here because I was aware that I would be empowered, that I would gain a lot from the university, because the university which I started before was also empowering me. ... Some of my colleagues motivated me about this university so I came here with that knowledge that I would be empowered." Even her principal said "you have learnt in a good university, the University of Natal."

This powerful foregrounding and insistence on her B.Ed Hons participation as empowering, intrigued me as it could not have had its source in high grades. Although she achieved a 60% pass in LILT, she exited the degree with only a 51% aggregate. Clearly she had passed her diploma at Vista, but I wondered how this experience had differed from those in the B.Ed Hons. When asked if she could succeed in the Vista courses by rote learning, she replied in the affirmative, yet when asked which institution's writing demands were the easier, she said those of the B.Ed Hons programme. When asked to explain why she said this, she answered: "... we were just writing things we learnt about. It's unlike reading a book on your own, and then write. So here we have to tackle that point .. or task .. we have to do that first .. and after we have to write." Still unsure of the difference, or which place 'here' referred to, I asked: 'In the Vista assignments, did they ask you to talk about your own experience? What is the difference between B.Ed Hons learning and Vista learning [methods]?' Her response to this was: "There is a difference because I feel that Vista was using the old method .. not like this OBE method which we have used here." Her prior literacy experiences, therefore, did not equip her with much that could be considered 'capital' in the university.

In the interview, I also experienced her often as uncertain of a question and/or misinterpreting what I had asked *when it related to 'academic' issues*, suggesting that English could be construed as a factor pertinent to her participation in the B.Ed Hons programme as a whole. She found it difficult, for example, to articulate her understanding of 'academic writing'. Academic writing she said, "is something that is formal, more formal." When I asked how I would recognise a piece of writing as formal, she answered: "I think you can recognise it by looking at my .. what can I say .. how I begin .. look at my audience .. my audience .. who I'm addressing .. eh .. and then the formality. ... I think the academic .. although it's not the same

[as an article to a newspaper or a letter to parents] .. I think .. but it has to do with those people you are addressing .. yes .. who you are talking about .. yes .. to make it academic .. something that is good for .. for .. maybe for .. for .. school or classroom .. something like that .. good for teaching.” Despite this halting analysis, and in line with the pattern emerging from each subject, that is, that certain characteristics of writing in the university make it ‘academic’, she did say that academic writing required one to “collect the information, read here and here and then when the questions come out .. you have to just combine on your own to make .. an argument.”

In addition to Student D’s unqualified admiration for the university, there was what I perceived to be, a strong need to ally herself with a Western, English speaking ‘culture’. Despite her hesitant analyses of academic writing and her Vista vs University of Natal experiences, it is also true to say of her that when a question was clearly understood and could be responded to by drawing on personal experience, she became fluent and eloquent. When asked how she had become so fluent in English, she identified her husband, an advocate, as the person who has done the most to help her. Sensitive to the fact that I should not position English as a ‘necessary’ language, I hesitantly queried whether her family speaks English at home ‘sometimes’. Her response was very enthusiastic: “Ya, ya, we do. My youngest son who is at ..... [a local ex-Model C school], he’s very good at English.” And the community in which she lives “like English very much .. because they are aware that it is the language they going to communicate with ...” . When she told me that she was a member of her church and that she regularly wrote the minutes of church meetings, I asked if these were done in isiZulu or English. Acknowledging that these were done in isiZulu, she quickly added: “... but in English I can write .. and somehow if there are other meetings I used to write .. and at home I used to write .. when I’m alone I used to write because writing is something that comes from the heart. So I used to write.” And as a result of the B.Ed Hons programme “here I think I’ve improved .. ya, I’ve improved.”

Formulating a summative response to Student D has been difficult. My efforts at ‘making meaning’ from her data have led me to the conclusion that very few prior literacy experiences can be said to have influenced her B.Ed Hons *writing* experiences in any constructive way. Without actual samples of her module assignments to hand, I cannot say with any certainty that even in the B.Ed Hons programme her academic literacy skills developed significantly.



Her results suggest a very mediocre student. Her inability to articulate an understanding of what constitutes academic writing reinforced this perception of her. In terms of the two research questions therefore, there seems to be little or no 'fit' between her prior literacy experiences and those of the B.Ed Hons or LILT module, and this absence of 'fit' can be construed as impacting negatively on her performance. Had she come into the programme with a sound mastery of academic writing conventions, experience suggests that Student D's exiting result is likely to have been higher even though she is an English L2 speaker.

#### **4.3.5 Student E**

Student E did not submit an LLH either, but because he was willing and able to be interviewed, I pursued contact with him. On completing his B.Ed Hons, he had got promotion to Principal of a very under-resourced primary school. In a school of 400 learners, there were four 'teaching spaces', two in conventional classrooms, and two in burnt out buses. There was no staffroom or Principal's office. Our interview took place in my car under a tree.

Student E registered for the B.Ed Hons programme for two reasons; a) "to get more information concerning with the new challenges .. concerning for this new dispensation", and b) "to be a principal of the school". Of the LILT module, he said that it "was exciting .. it was useful .. because it gave me more information concerning with the language .. something like that. You see .. to understand the problem of learners concerning with languages .. something like that." He was refreshingly candid about why he chose the module however, saying: "... actually I mean I didn't ask. I mean to anybody. I mean I have seen the allocations of courses and then I have seen .. no .. I must take LILT. So I mean .. I think LILT is talking with languages .. so I assumed .. no man .. to .. to .. to .. make my things to be easier. So it is good to choose LILT in order to get [pass] my course."

What made Student E's responses in the interview interesting, was his framing of what constitutes 'formal' writing and 'informal' writing, and the way his particular interpretation of these constructions influenced his perceptions of the demands made on him in the university vis a vis those made on him in his College courses.

When asked which kinds of writing he found the most difficult in terms of structure and organisation, he replied: “I mean the most difficult things is formal you see .. but informal is not a difficult thing.” Since I expected this response, it was more as a formality that I asked him to define ‘formal’ writing, believing that he would equate it with academic type discourse, or discourse characterised by formalised conventions relating to structure, coherence, cohesion and so on. The following explanation from him, therefore, came as a surprise. “In fact,” he said, “if I can look at de de de de formal writing .. so if we are given a thing .. for instance .. eh .. just write a letter to your maybe to your friend or whatsoever .. you see that is a formal writing because you have to think of the address .. something like that. How are you going to to to address this letter? Something like that .. that is a formal thing. But de de de informal thing, is to say .. how are you going to view with your own opinion concerning for this thing? Do you see, that thing is easy because it is your own view. Ya, ya.” And when asked the question: ‘Was the writing in your training college years easier than in the B.Ed Hons’ programme?’, he answered: “No, no, at the colleges .. sometimes things were so difficult. It was no longer easier .. eh .. at all times .. we used to do the formal things, you see. So there was no longer informal things. So in .. I mean .. in training colleges when you write something, it comes from your mind .. so you didn’t get marks because the lecturers .. most of the time .. needs to be guided by .. by .. what do you call these things? .. the memorandum.” Interestingly, while this emphasis on ‘formal’ writing made his College years “so difficult”, he experienced the B.Ed Hons as “challenging because most of the things were from your own view .. you see .. how are you going to view these things?”

This unexpected ‘twist’ to my own interpretations of ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ writing contexts, influenced my management of the rest of the interviewing process. Unpacking Student E’s formal vs informal, and easy vs difficult perceptions suddenly seemed too complex to process in this context, and I let them go. However, the discrepancy between his construction of what constitutes formal and informal writing, and what kind of task he might consider easy or difficult, and mine, is worth reflecting on. It seems to me that the distinction he drew was between a prescribed, fairly rigid (and hence ‘formal’) macro-structure, and a strong writer (i.e. personal and therefore de facto ‘informal’) control over content and perspective. *My* interpretation of ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ on the other hand, relates much more directly to the Hallidayan notion of ‘tenor’ i.e. the relationship between the writer and reader (or speaker and listener) and the degree to which the language used (embedded in the choice of vocabulary and

the discourse/ genre features) reflects the ‘distance’ between these two (or more) parties. So while my sense of ‘informal’ does also relate to the ‘personal’, it is much more about the ‘ordinariness’ of the relationship I enjoy with my reader/writer (speaker/listener). In the context of this kind of personal relationship, power is more equitably distributed, allowing me, with confidence, to use ‘ordinary’ language - colloquialisms, abbreviations, and so on.

From a very recent observation of a lesson in which a Grade 9 educator was teaching the ‘formal’ letter, the only indicator emphasised by the educator as that which made the letter formal, was the presence of ‘two addresses’. At no point in the hour long lesson, was attention drawn to the type of language one might use in this context (an application for a job). With this kind of language pedagogy in place, it is possibly not surprising that the interpretations by our students (predominantly the products of the teaching just described) of what constitutes ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ writing, should differ from mine. Although it is not within the scope of this study to pursue this thread of ‘difference’ any further, Student E’s response here raises interesting questions, which could provide the basis for another piece of research. Finding out exactly how, for example, Zulu speaking students construct schemata for formal/informal in their *primary* discourse would be one such question and an excellent starting point.

What remains significant in terms of Student E’s progression through his tertiary studies is the difference individuals made to his levels of confidence and self esteem i.e. those affective factors which, whatever his ‘academic’ performance might have been, positioned him in such a way that he constructs his B.Ed Hons experience as challenging and rewarding. His first three year diploma seems *not* to have done much to accelerate his academic development, or his self esteem: “So in, I mean in training colleges, when you write something, it comes from your own mind, so you didn’t get marks, because the lecturers, most of the time, needs to be guided by .. by .. what do you call these things? .. the memorandum.” However, his fourth year at College and one student in particular during his B.Ed Hons years, made all the difference. Of his fourth year, he said; “... to get M+4 was I mean, so good, it was there at the College of Natal, so things were no longer the same as we .. as .. as we were at our colleges, the training .. ah, your fourth year was better.” And the student who had a significant impact on him “was a very, very brilliant guy. Actually, he was my friend. .. I used to ask him, and sit down with him .. and he used to help me in many things. So really .. that’s why I used to manage my B.Ed Hons. ... Really, he was a very good man .. I mean I used to organise .. I used to help many

students through ... because he was my friend.”

In making some assessment of Student E in relation to the two research questions, I believe he entered the B.Ed Hons programme with a considerable amount of confidence and prior experiences of what I would call *related* literacy skills. Despite there not being much evidence of literacy practices directly comparable to those demanded of him in the LILT module, my engagement with Student E persuades me that the fit was sufficiently close to pose no significant problem to him - or his lecturers. It was clear in the interview that issues related to academic literacy per se, had never reared a conscious or ugly head for Student E. That he should exit a post-graduate degree with a construction of the writing demands of the programme as ‘informal’, suggests to me that the disjuncture between prior literacy experiences and those encountered by him in the B.Ed Hons programme, was so minimal as not to grab his attention at all, or in any way impact negatively on him. Since subsequent to achieving his B.Ed Hons degree, he has been made a principal, the fact that he exited the programme with no more than the ‘people’s mark’ has obviously been of no consequence to him whatever - he did not mention it, and neither did I raise it. The B.Ed Hons for this student, therefore, had very particular and positive payoffs which had nothing to do with outstanding performance or overt academic literacy competence.

#### **4.4 Tabulated and collated data**

Before proceeding with any further comment and analysis of the data, I present the data collected through the questionnaires and LLHs, in a collated and tabulated form. This depiction of the data provides a more detailed view of the literacy practices the subjects did engage with, their indication of the languages they use when engaging with these practices, and their attitudes to aspects of the LILT module. What was of particular interest to me, was the amount of English that the students indicated they used. Whether this is an accurate reflection of their literacy practices is of course difficult to tell. It is possible that because I am obviously an English first language speaker, and a lecturer, that they felt some obligation to foreground a use of English. On the other hand, and drawing on my own experience of students here on campus, and educators in schools, it is clear that more and more African language speakers are making extensive use of English in their own personal, shared cultural contexts. Pursuing the reality of English usage (for personal communication) by educators

whose first language is an indigenous language, would constitute another very interesting study.

The reader should note that the use of the letters A - E refers to the same Student A, Student B etc., discussed earlier in this chapter.

#### 4.4.1 Section A1: 'Short' or 'minimal' types of writing

The following re-presentation of **Section A1** gives the composite responses of all five students to the 'short' or 'minimal' types of writing/ genres listed:

Kind of writing/ genre	Not often (less than once a week)	Often (two to five times a week)	Every day	Language choice	
				Eng	Zulu
Filling in bank/claim forms	A,B,D,E			A,D,E	
Making a shopping list	E,A	B,C,D		A,C,D, E	
Signing homework books		A	B,D,E	A,D,E	
Writing Union reports	A,B			A	
Sending emails to friends	B				
Making notes for Bible study classes	A,E	D	B	A,D	E
Writing invitations to prize giving/ birthdays/ weddings	A,B,D,E			A,D,E	
Writing out cheques	B,D,E	A		A,E	
Filling in donation forms	A,B,D	E		A,E	
Writing personal letters to friends	A,B,E	C,D		A,D	C,E
Drawing up a family budget	A,B,E	C,D		A,C,D, E	
Recording tel. numbers and messages	A	B,C,D		A,C,D	
Appointments in a diary		D,B	A,C,E	A,C,D, E	

Taking down messages		A,C,D	B	A,D	C
<i>Recording savings</i>		C	D	D	
<i>Balancing cash</i>		C	D	D	
<i>Recipes</i>		C		C	
<i>Filling in stokvel journals</i>		C		C	C

Notes:

- If a student is not represented in a column, this indicates that this kind of writing/ genre is never used/ engaged with *in the contexts defined by this questionnaire*.
- Student B did not indicate any language choice for any item.
- Italicised genres are those added by students.

#### 4.4.2 Section A2: 'Extended' or 'longer' types of writing/ genres

The following re-presentation of **Section A2** gives the composite responses of all five students to the 'extended/ longer' types of writing/ genres listed:

Kind of writing/ genre	Never	Not often (1 or 2 times a year)	Regularly (every 1 or 2 months)	Language choice	
				Eng	Zulu
Poetry	B,E	D	A	A	D
Children's stories	E	A	B,D	D,A	D
Short stories for adults	B,E	A,D		A	D
Comic strips	B,D,E		A	A	
Letters to the personal column in magazines	A,B,D,E				
Letters about social and/or political issues to newspapers or magazines	A,B,D,E				
Letters to educational magazines/ newspapers	A,B,D,E				
Words for songs	D	A,B	E	A	
Music	D,E			A	
Textbook writing	A,B,E				
Personal journal/ diary	A		B,C,D,E	D,C	D

<i>Condolences</i>			D	D	D
<i>Programmes</i>			D	D	D
<i>Writing minutes</i>			D	D	D
<i>Talks/ workshop sketches</i>			D	D	D

Notes:

- The ‘Personal journal/diary’ is the only genre that Student C indicated as one which she uses - no other items were ticked.
- Student B and Student E did not indicate any language choice for the items in this list.
- Italicised items are those added by students.

#### 4.4.3 Section A3: Description of oneself as a writer

The following table indicates how the students in this study described themselves as writers - **Section A3** of Part One. They were told to tick the box that best describes them, and to add any words they would like to.

Attribute	Student
Skilled	B
Confident	A,B,D
Struggling	E
Successful	A,C,D
Unsuccessful	
Nervous	A,E
Frightened	
<i>Managing</i>	C

Note:

- The italicised item was added by Student C.

#### 4.4.4 Section B (of Part One): The four open-ended questions

The following gives a brief summary of how students responded to the questions in Section B (Part One) , together with a brief comment on their responses.

Question 1: *Which kinds of writing that you do privately/ personally have helped you cope with assignments in the LILT module? Please explain why you think this is the case.*

Only Student A and Student E interpreted this question as I intended. These students indicated that the following school/ teaching experiences had positively influenced their ability to cope with the writing demands in the module:

- setting tests and exam papers
- marking essays for learners
- making summaries of literary works for learners
- writing minutes of meetings
- writing Cvs

Students B, C and D *inverted* the question and said in what ways the LILT module had helped them cope with other kinds of writing demands and/or helped them approach writing differently in the classroom. These included:

- now reading with a purpose
- making use of keywords
- using the process approach in the classroom
- teaching learners to structure essays better

#### *Comment*

A deeper reflection on the wording of this question led me to think that it should have been phrased in such a way as to give students more guidance on how or what 'private and personal' writing could have helped in assignments. Since four out of the five students indicated in Section A2 that they keep a personal journal/ diary, I should have formulated a question that encouraged them to consider the ways in which this kind of writing, or the activity itself, assisted their assignment writing. Perhaps keeping a personal journal or diary teaches one to think more freely, to foreground one's own thought processes, to take risks with language, to put a value on one's own processes, to focus on meaning rather than form -



all elements that contribute to a strong writer persona. For the students I was dealing with in this study, and the issues I intended to explore, this question now seems to me to have been too thin.

*Question 2: How can the writing demands in the LILT module be changed so that you can use the writing skills and experiences you already have?*

Students A and D were quite satisfied with the nature of the current writing demands and saw no reason to change them.

Student B opens with: “it should demands learners to publish”, and concurs with Student E’s recommendation that students be allowed to write draft versions of assignments and have them checked by tutors before submitting the final copy.

Student C recommends that “students who do LILT write their essays on any topic” so that lecturers/ tutors can assess what skills students have before setting formal assignments.

### *Comment*

The very varied responses to this question again suggest that the fault lies in the wording of it. This is not to say that Students B, C and E’s comments lack value. In fact, quite the opposite pertains. Significantly, they all point to processes which, if instituted in the LILT assessment processes, would considerably enhance lecturers’ understanding of students’ inherent abilities, and students’ attitudes to the module. Student B’s belief, for example, that LILT ‘should demand learners to publish’, makes great sense in the light of her experience of writing short stories and *not* getting them published. Being published is, after all, usually considered to be the ultimate validation of one’s skill as a writer. But prior to this student’s comment, I had not given any thought to ‘publishing’ in the context of assignment writing. Now, however, I feel I ought to consider ways in which the conventional effects of ‘being published’ can be incorporated into our assessment process.

Students B and E’s response that students should be allowed to write draft versions of assignments and submit them for checking before handing in a final copy, is a very valid

comment. One of the many things LILT tries to do, is to encourage students-as-educators to frame school writing tasks with ‘real writer’ approaches. So we tell them that ‘real writers’ make many, many drafts before the final one, and that learners should be allowed to do this too. However, though the process these two students recommend here used to be a feature of LILT assignment writing, it no longer is. With the present model of delivery in the B.Ed Hons programme, it is generally accepted that there is no scope for draft submissions. However, the fact that these students raised the issue here, has reminded me of the importance of this process and prompted me to go back to the drawing board and seek out ways to incorporate at least some elements of it, in the present model.

And finally, Student C’s suggestion that ‘students who do LILT write their essays on any topic’, is a pedagogically sound recommendation, and based on her own experience as a language teacher. In the interview with this student, she told me that, when introducing a new aspect of written language to her learners, she gives them no help in the initial stages of the exercise. In groups, learners are given a topic - “maybe to write to the editor of a newspaper” - and told to get on with it. “I say they must just write it .. and they write and write. And they’re writing in groups, they have to think first, what are we going to write? If they put the sentence wrongly, the other one correct them ... no, put it like this .. and the other one will come with an idea .. let’s put this in our letter .. so .. by that they are improving .. and I make sure that I go around the groups and see how much they communicate and how much they can contribute in their writing. .. Before I even begin, I just want to know how much they know first.” Clearly then, she sees scope for this same process in the LILT assessment process, namely, that LILT assignments might have a more developmental value if they were based upon a class specific written language needs analysis. This suggestion too, is one I will take very seriously.

*Question 3: How would you have liked your understanding of the key concepts and principles of the LILT module to be assessed i.e. what method (or combination of methods) of assessment would you have liked us to use? Please give as much detail as possible here.*

Students D and E indicated that they are satisfied with the present methods of assessment i.e. written assignments, although Student E said that he thought the multiple choice quizzes “should not be used because they encouraged memorising.” This last comment strikes me as odd as initial resistance to the quizzes, as stated earlier, was grounded in their *lack* of scope

for memorisation. In fact how, or rather what, one would actually go about memorising in preparation for an unseen multiple choice quiz, is difficult to fathom.

Student C would have liked us to include role-play “to see if they [concepts] can be employed in the classes where we teach and be successful”. Student B would have liked an oral component included.

Student A would have liked ‘short tests’ as well.

### *Comment*

Of particular interest to me in these responses is the suggestion that role play and an oral component should be included in assessment processes. We have all known the happy experience of making ourselves thoroughly understood through a negotiated, verbal exchange, even when language differences presided between ourselves and the ‘other’. Supported by facial expressions, body language and gestures, we can compensate for the possible dearth of necessary vocabulary. The majority of the students I have had the privilege to teach over the years, have always been able to demonstrate their intellectual grasp of module content, verbally. It is being forced to demonstrate this knowledge *in writing* in order to have their intellect validated, that has so ruthlessly undermined their ‘competent adult’ self perceptions. It is no wonder, therefore, that the students in this study have identified role play and orals as important methods of assessment to consider. Within the constraints of the present model of delivery, this matter too has now been put on the LILT assessment process agenda.

*Question 4: Do you think some kind of special writing skills development programme should be included in the first year of the B.Ed Hons programme? If yes, please explain your answer, giving examples of what you think should be covered. If no, please explain your answer too.*

All 5 students were unanimous in agreeing that a writing skills development programme should be offered to students at the start of the B.Ed Hons programme. However, only one (Student E) gave examples of what should be taught. These were: “the writing of a report, how to write a talk, an argument”.

## *Comment*

Only once I had interviewed students did I recognise how much more should have gone into this question. Had I perhaps, given examples of what I meant by ‘special writing skills’, for example, students might have responded more constructively. The one response (quoted above) suggests to me that this student had identified that at least three *different* genres had been targeted in his B.Ed Hons assignments (the first two were explicitly called for in LILT assignments and/or examination questions), and that getting help with writing to these genres would be of benefit to him. The fact that all five would welcome a writing programme, but that four out of five could not articulate exactly what should go into such a programme, seems to me to underscore the reality that the majority of students in the B.Ed Hons programme do not ‘own’, at least at the outset of their studies, pertinent levels of academic literacy.

### **4.4.5 Literate Life Histories**

This section offers more specific comment on the role the LLHs played in this study, and the difference in contexts between this study and my first use of LLHs in the LILT module.

When first used, in 1996 and 1997, students wrote their LLHs in class, during the second two hour contact session of the course. Lecturers/ tutors therefore, had already had two hours of ‘orientation’ time with the students the previous week, during which time a substantial amount of ground work was laid with regard to what the LILT module was all about, our expectations of the students and their expectations of us. A considerable focus of this first session was also devoted to establishing a safe, unthreatening and empathetic language environment where students’ past educational and linguistic experiences were explicitly ‘honoured’. When students arrived for the second contact session, they were given up to an hour in which to write their LLHs, having already had time to think about the responses to the questions which we gave them to guide their writing. The LLHs were constructed as part of the formal writing programme, but never ‘marked’ as part of any formal assessment process.

As indicated in Chapter 3, students’ responses to this writing task were extraordinarily positive. And as a way to validate the students’ experiences as recorded in their LLHs, I selected one or two ‘items’ from every students’ writing, wrote them up as a composite

picture, and gave each student a copy. Though many students had put their names to their writing, they had been given the space to remain anonymous. In the final version which I pulled together, I did not include any names at all. From discussions around the whole task, students were also able to recognise the critical role that teachers play in the language and personal development of young learners, as many of their most negative and painful 'literacy' memories related to teachers. Thus, the use of LLHs in this context was a rich and rewarding experience for all concerned.

The LLHs which formed part of the data in this study were, however, very different. Despite using the same set of questions to guide students' responses as were used in 1996/ 1997, the LLHs produced for this research were very short and often thin. Of real concern was the fact that only three out of the five subject group submitted LLHs viz. Students A, B and D. Despite several requests from me to the remaining two, and many promises from these students, they never did submit them. After close on two months of hounding them, I decided to drop the issue. Fortunately two out of the three resource group i.e. the three 1999 students who stayed with the process, did submit LLHs. While I have not based any of my analysis on these two LLHs, I was glad to be able to ponder on the substance of five, rather than three, LLHs.

The fact that students did not submit LLHs despite agreeing to participate fully in the research process, and that those submitted were 'thin' and devoid of any deep-level reflection, suggests to me that my contextualising of the task, and my ability to secure the students in it, was possibly inadequate. Asking someone to interrogate their past, *and make it public*, especially with regard to sensitive and formative experiences relating to literacy development and competence, is, at the best of times, a brazen exercise. In my earlier use of LLHs, I had been critically conscious of this and responded accordingly. In the context of this research, which, as I mentioned earlier, became such a long drawn out affair, I recognise now that certain steps I took were in fact short cuts. In the case of the LLHs, I contextualised the activity on the handout I gave students, believing that this was all they needed to engage with the task. It is clear to me now, that this was not enough and that very much more personal contact and discussion with the students should have preceded the task.

That significant time and preparation should inform the process of eliciting LLHs from people was underscored by my use of them again in 2001, this time with LILT tutors. Because of our

decision to reintroduce the writing of LLHs into the LILT module in 2001, as Assignment 1, tutors during tutor training were taken through the same process they would have to follow with their students. Tutors were given an hour in which to write their narratives, but only after extensive discussions about its purpose, the ways in which it can be incorporated into classroom based teaching, the different modes in which LLHs can be created i.e. written, drawn or performed, the sensitivities involved, and the rights of each individual not to reveal his/her writing. On completion of the task, all tutors acknowledged the value of the exercise, some expressing shock, others pleasure, at what memories had been evoked, and how, on mature reflection, early literacy experiences had determined critical attitudes and directions in their life 'trajectories'.

Perhaps it is important to indicate that Assignment 1 in the present B.Ed Hons assessment structure, is not allocated any marks, but is peer evaluated. In the LILT module in 2001, given the sensitive nature of LLHs, students were invited to highlight aspects of their LLHs for class discussion, but no-one was asked to submit the full narrative to either peers or staff for review. It is worth noting that this process worked very well and was highly valued by the students.

#### **4.5 The search for commonalities**

If the five students in this study are to be allowed to speak entirely for themselves, then the preceding discussions around each one show that certain experiences vis a vis their perceptions of the B.Ed Hons, are common to them all. They have, for example, all exited the programme with a construction of themselves as having been successful. They have a B.Ed Hons degree behind them and the paper to prove it. One, as indicated earlier, has earned a principalship as a result of his studies, and another has entered the Masters programme.

All subjects indicated that they were fully supported in their studies by their families and spouses - even Student B's husband (despite his attitude to me), supported her and took her 'to and fro'. Although other studies indicate that many women who study further are not supported by husbands - mainly because they feel threatened and marginalised by the process - these subjects appear to have had a different experience. Of course, one can never know whether this was genuinely their experience, but if I stay with students' voices, I must accept that this was the case.

Another commonality related quite specifically to literacy development, is the presence of one or more 'significant others', people who either served as a dynamic role model, and/or inspired the subjects to engage quite consciously with reading and/or writing. The significance of this 'mentor' presence was also apparent in the LLHs of the 1997 LILT students (the other study referred to earlier), and the LLHs written by the LILT tutors in 2001 (as part of their tutor training activities.), and can thus, I think, be safely flagged as a critical component of general literacy development. Significant others, generally, not only had a direct influence on literacy interest and development, but also on the way in which each individual came to perceive themselves. An increase in self-esteem, confidence and belief in one's own value, are all attributed to the interest and support provided by this person/s. Interestingly, a positive influence was not always exerted at the same time in the lives of the subjects. For Student A, it was his high school teachers, for Student B, it was her College lecturers, for Student C it was the LILT course, for Student D her advocate husband, and for Student E, his 'brilliant' friend. Students in the 1997 study said things like: "The peers became our first teachers at home ... we learned playful writing which was called 'Kwagogo' (Granny's Place)"; "My grandmother would respond to my funny writing with praise ... so learning to write at home was an enjoyable experience because it was coupled with love and encouragement.", and "My mother was a teacher ... she spent much of her free time teaching me to read and write."

The LILT tutors in 2001, perhaps because the exercise was integral to 'training', gave extended thought to the role of significant players, particularly teachers, in their literacy development. The following comments give some idea of the richness of the influences they experienced.

I was fortunate [in Grade 10] to have an exceptional teacher of English who loved the language, was good at it and loved teaching it. ... During that period my passion and consequently competence in English language soared to greater heights.

My sister was writing poems and making good money. ..She is well known for her humourous, sympathetic and interesting Xhosa poems. ... She used to tell me about good writers which are currently recognised world wide and who are free to have their voice. I felt motivated to be one of them.

I admired and adored my English and Afrikaans teachers in high school. I began reading more novels, doing more work in class ... my interest in the languages

set alight interest in other subjects.

The importance of these experiences lies in the fact that no matter how 'brilliant' or not one believes oneself to be, it is external validation and recognition that is critical to the focussed actualisation of this belief. And once a strong enough measure of self-esteem is in place, the confidence in one's ability to 'succeed' seems to naturally 'issue forth'. Definitions of 'success' vary considerably of course (an issue addressed more extensively in Chapter 5), but clearly always reflect 'positive impacts' on the psyche.

A final commonality is that all students in the study described their experience of the B.Ed Hons as empowering and would recommend the programme to friends and colleagues. This was the case even if, on entry or along the way, there were moments of anxiety, intimidation and despair.

#### **4.6 Understanding the 'cultural setting': The Use of Domain Analysis**

In the previous sections of this chapter, I attempted to speak to each student's responses in relation to the two research questions which govern this study, while at the same time painting a picture of each individual subject. Though I offered some commentary on aspects of their responses during this discussion, I elected not to extrapolate to wider issues which link to the theoretical framing of this study, believing this could be more effectively managed in a separate discussion. As a tool to help me construct legitimate components of this further discussion, I have drawn on Domain Analysis, a data analysis approach developed by the ethnographer, James Spradley (1979a, 1979b).

A domain, as defined by Spradley, is 'the basic unit in a cultural setting' which is identified as an organising idea or concept. In any one context - this research for example - a range of domains can be identified. Establishing the relationship between these domains, and ordering them according to different criteria, can lead to the development of taxonomies and themes which finally allow for an overall interpretation of a particular cultural 'scene'.

Domains have three parts to them: a 'cover term' (the name of a particular domain), 'included terms' (the 'subtypes' of a domain), and a 'semantic relationship' (that which indicates how



the 'included terms' relate to the 'cover term'). There are also three kinds of domains: *folk domains* which include only the colloquial language used by the members of the research group, *mixed domains* which include 'folk' terms and those of the researcher in her/his search for matching concepts and ideas, and *analytic domains* containing, predominantly, terms from the researcher and social theory. Here, "the researcher infers meaningful categories and identifies patterns from observations and artifacts, then assigns terms to them" (Neumann, 1997:430).

Domains arise from data notes and are embedded in them. As the researcher works with the data notes - in my case, this included the questionnaires, the literate life histories and my interview transcripts (but *not* the cyber discussions, for reasons indicated in Chapter 3) - she looks for common semantic relationships. For example, when working through my interview notes, and having identified 'academic writing' as one domain central to this study, I looked for ideas and perceptions, articulated by the students, that expressed the semantic relationship: 'is a characteristic of' (this domain). Because of the numerous ways in which my subjects defined 'academic writing', my list of 'included terms' became quite extensive, yet every 'term' related directly to a what emerged as a commonly understood perception amongst the students, of what constituted 'academic writing'.

I have spent a considerable amount of time reflecting on which type or types of domain (of the three described above) are manifested in my analysis, and have come to the conclusion that they are predominantly analytic domains, but bolstered by authentic 'folk' language. While it is also possible that 'mixed domains' might be considered a better label for them, I am not convinced that 'mixed' is intended by Spradley to be quite so simplistically interpreted. That is, if it is a bit of 'folk' and a bit of 'analytic', it automatically becomes a mixed domain. The *language usage* which was channelled between me and my students, via all aspects of the data, was not, in my view, "the language of historical actors" i.e. that of the students' in their own deeply structured cultural settings, but rather that of a 'common language' devised/ negotiated and accepted by both parties i.e. me and the students, *for the purpose of this exercise*.

The following six steps, common to most qualitative data analysis processes, pertain equally to Domain Analysis. They are:

A researcher (1) rereads data notes full of details, (2) mentally repackages details into organising ideas, (3) constructs new ideas from notes on the subjective meanings or from the researcher's organising ideas, (4) looks for relationships among the ideas and puts them into sets on the basis of logical similarity, (5) organises them into larger groups by comparing and contrasting the sets of ideas, and (6) reorganises and links the groups together with broader integrating themes. The process builds up from specifics in the notes to an overall set of logical relationships. (Neuman, 1997:431)

As a new researcher, I found my initial engagement with my data fragmented and frustrating. I was overwhelmed by what suddenly seemed to be so much superficiality - in the questions I had asked in the questionnaires, in the students' responses, in the LLHs, and in what the interviews gave back to me. Although I knew that step one was to 'reread data notes full of details', I was not prepared for how *many* times I had to do this before anything began to emerge as significantly important and relevant to the two questions driving the whole research process. The fact that the interviews provided the most substantial amount of text with which to work, seduced me initially into ignoring the potential of the other two sources of data to inform, and support or contradict, the interviews. Thus, coming to grips with my data, was a slow, but increasingly challenging and fascinating task. And it really was only after rereading my data countless times, that I began to 'mentally repackage details into organising ideas' - step two of the Domain Analysis process.

Steps three to six (identified above) became a very integrated and constantly recursive process. Looking for relationships, organising and reorganising them according to constantly shifting criteria, linking them to newly formalized 'groups' of ideas, and so on, was a messy and long-winded affair. 'Logical relationships' often took a long time to present themselves. And despite the effort put into analysing the data as comprehensively and relevantly as possible, I am aware that I might well have overlooked aspects of it that leap out at a different, more objective observer.

In my view, the most legitimate 'cultural scene' to construct in this case study is the academic 'community of practice' as experienced by the subjects of this research. This means that although the LILT module is the 'core business' of this research, it is only one component of

my subjects' 'academic' experience. In any discussion of the impact of this experience on these students, therefore, I cannot ignore the wider context of the B.Ed Hons programme as a whole, and its place in the 'University of Natal'. I use the term 'community of practice' in preference to 'discourse community' as the points arising out of this study which I wish to debate, go beyond the ownership of just 'texts and language' to include "the many practices and values that hold communities together" (Johns, 1997:52).

In constructing the 'cultural scene' under debate i.e. the academic community of practice, I have identified the following domains as those which have arisen out of the data and which relate directly to a discussion of this 'cultural scene'.

- Academic writing
- High self esteem/ confidence
- Institutional power
- Validation (as opposed to empowerment)
- Feelings of empowerment
- Symbolic and/or cultural capital
- 'Academic' linguistic capital
- 'Generic' linguistic competence

The 'Domain Analysis Worksheet' below represents the relationship between the domains listed above, and the other two components of Domain Analysis, namely, 'included terms' and 'semantic relationships' as identified by me as relevant for this study.

Included terms	Semantic relationship	Domain/ cover terms
analysis and critique/ facts/ logical structuring/ 'formal'/ audience/ evidence of theory and practice/ supporting one's position/ arguing/ illustrating/ drafting/ reading/ displaying knowledge/ referencing/ planning/ strategising/ multiple genres	is a characteristic of	Academic discourse

Being supported/ motivated/ encouraged/ successful/ relied on/ recognised	is the reason for	Adult high self esteem/ confidence
Feeling inadequate Fear of challenging status quo Unquestioning acceptance of tutors' judgements Drawing on peers rather than staff for support Willingness/ desire to participate in writing workshop Stories of empowerment (through studying at NU)	is evidence of	Institutional power
Being asked for own opinion Quoting own experience Being relied on Being complimented	leads to	Validation (as opposed to empowerment)
'Teaching colleagues' Studying through a university Changing classroom practice 'Advance-notice' knowledge about new educational developments	results in	Feelings of empowerment
A B.Ed Hons degree Studying at the University of Natal	is synonymous with	Symbolic/ cultural capital
[Selective] prior literacy experiences	contribute to	'Academic' linguistic capital
All literacy experiences	influence	'Generic' linguistic competence

The domains identified above, in my view represent the 'set of logical relationships' which, together, make it possible to explore some of the more complex dynamics the students in this study were exposed to. These dynamics include not only those which they themselves identified (and which I believe I have discussed in sufficient detail in the first section of this chapter), but also those which I perceive to have impacted on their experience. As I returned over and over to my data, and the interview transcripts in particular, I experienced a growing

awareness that what underlay a whole range of the student data was a relationship to institutional power. Student C stated this most explicitly by saying that “at times you think about your future, you think maybe I won’t be able to continue with my studies. Maybe I will be suspended. But there are things that people wanted to .. at times you will find that people wanted to challenge .. So now, you just kept quiet, and do what you came here for.” But the comments and experiences articulated by the other subjects also evoked a strong sense in me that this was indeed the case. Establishing a domain for ‘institutional power’, therefore, seemed a very necessary step to take.

The first two ‘included terms’ in this domain encapsulate what I interpreted Student C’s comments above to mean, but the others are what I perceive to be strong indicators of the effects of the very unequal power relations that existed more generally between these students and the ‘institution’. Of course this is entirely to be expected i.e. that unequal power relations exist, but the significant part for me was that only one out of the four students even identified it, despite all being asked quite explicitly whether they had been intimidated by the university context. The additional ‘included terms’ for this domain, therefore, are my reading of the attitudes and positions articulated by the students in the interviews, that reflect a locus of disempowerment, despite claims of being empowered. That these indicators of uncertainty and disempowerment, and their effects, may not be explicitly measurable in this study (or at all), is not the main issue for me here. I simply want to demonstrate that, as with Alice, ‘all is not what it seems’.

Having discerned a dynamic ‘unseen’ by the students, I began to question more closely what might be understood by their use of the term ‘empowerment/ being empowered’. In the interviews, they tended to group all those aspects of their experiences that made them ‘feel good’ as empowering. Mindful of how easy it is not to problematise ‘power’, I felt it important to tease out what seemed to be much more about ‘personal validation’ than empowerment for the students. Hence the domains ‘validation’ (as separate from ‘empowerment’), and ‘*feelings* of empowerment’ (rather than ‘empowerment’ and/or ‘emancipation’). The ‘included terms’ for the domain ‘validation’, reflect, in my opinion, that need in all of us to be ‘seen’, to be ‘visible in the world’ - they speak of individual identity and existence, they are evidence that we have something valuable to offer and that what we do is liked by some, but they do not necessarily lead to being powerful in the world.

In a similar way, I have labelled the domain following ‘validation’, ‘feelings of empowerment’, rather than ‘empowerment’ per se, since I believe there is a continuum along which what some might consider ‘empowering’ is so far removed from what others might consider empowering, that one definition of it can never suffice. Without a longitudinal study lasting several years, I cannot, for example, be absolutely sure of what and/or how students are ‘teaching colleagues’, or what changes have occurred in classroom practice, or how effectively advance notice of new educational developments has been disseminated to colleagues at schools. All these ‘empowering spin-offs’ of the B.Ed Hons programme, and the LILT module specifically, *as articulated by the students in this study*, might be being so inaccurately and dangerously passed on that their participation in the B.Ed Hons has ultimately done more damage than good to the state of education in their respective schools and communities. If so, can we still speak of empowerment?

Given the constraints of the context of this study, and the data gathered for it, debating understandings of empowerment further is inappropriate in my view. There is simply not enough hard data available. And though mounting a discussion around what might be said to constitute emancipation, and how this concept can or does differ from empowerment, is tempting, again I do not believe there is sufficient data available to be able to locate it legitimately in this particular group of students’ experience. It is for this reason alone that I have not done so, but again, would flag it as an issue worthy of further research.

The next two domains simply reflect the ‘core business’ of this research, and as with the first two domains, have I believe been thoroughly addressed earlier on in this chapter. To repeat the discussion here, therefore, is unnecessary.

The final domain ‘Symbolic/ cultural capital’, while only occupying a single cell in the table, is obviously of great significance. It is placed at the end because it reflects a cumulative moment, an end point. Despite the complexities and inherently contradictory nature of many of the elements of the earlier domains, they nevertheless have not hindered the creation of this symbolic/cultural capital.

Whatever the degree of ‘empowerment’ or ‘emancipation’ authentically experienced by the students in this study, the symbolic/ cultural capital attached to the B.Ed Hons as a

qualification, *by the students themselves*, and their association with the University of Natal, is unquestionable. The fact that the prior literacy experiences of the subjects provided either a minimal and/or only selective ‘fit’ with the academic literacy demands made of them in the programme, did not mitigate against them passing their modules and being awarded the qualification. Had this ‘mismatch’ between what they entered the programme with, and what they needed to master in order to achieve ‘good’ passes - as defined by lecturers i.e. upper second or first class passes - been more ruthlessly foregrounded, there is every likelihood that their perceptions of the ‘empowering’ nature of their experience would have been very different. But this did not happen. Despite never being fully inducted into the academic ‘community of practice’, or fully mastering academic discourse, or achieving outstanding results, these students enjoyed the crowning glory of a glittering graduation ceremony. Through the deft delivery of a single, glossy piece of cardboard, all the inadequacies, incompetences, fears and struggles of the previous two years, were forgotten. A powerful moment indeed.

#### **4.7 The theoretical framework revisited**

In the final section of this chapter, I have worked to link the discussions I have started here to aspects of the theoretical framework established in Chapter 2. The primary focus will be on Bourdieu’s work. Elements of the NLG’s work will be addressed again in the concluding chapter of this thesis as it relates more appropriately to considerations of ‘the way forward’. In the first instance, and central to the theoretical position adopted early on in Chapter 2, is support for the notions of habitus, field and capital, as defined by Bourdieu. Important to remember here is the position that ‘capital’ - whatever form it takes: social, economic, symbolic or cultural - can only be considered capital if it is recognised as such “authoritatively in a particular social field” (Carrington and Luke, 1997:103). Thus different forms of capital maybe valued differently and differentially as one moves from one sociocultural field to another. In the context of the students in this study, just such a situation exists.

On entry to the B.Ed Hons programme i.e. the *academic field*, these students brought very little with them that was recognised as ‘capital’ (of any sort) by anyone in the university. The cultural/ social capital valued by the academic field i.e the linguistic practices, ‘knowledges’, skills and values, academic qualifications, membership of institutions, social practices and so

on, which characterise the academic community of practice, was not that which these students embodied. And despite all five students in this study being able to offer some descriptors of academic writing, I am not convinced that either LILT, or their two year sojourn in the B.Ed Hons programme, exposed them to sufficient ‘Situated Practice’ for them to learn the ‘deep rules’ of the academic literacy game. Even though we within the LILT module, modified the demands of assignments and examination questions to incorporate what we considered to be the genres with which students would have some familiarity, and hence competence, (letters to parents, reports on workshops etc.), the responses remained weak and disordered. Thus, though they brought with them literacy *experiences*, I do not believe that these experiences were ever transformed into the linguistic capital necessary for active trading in the academic market place. Furthermore, their ‘personal power’ was never sufficient to warrant any claims to social, cultural or symbolic capital *within the academic community of practice*.

However, the notion of ‘capital’ in relation to these students, needs to be considered in contexts beyond, and unrelated to, the institutional borders of the university. What emerges quite clearly from this small study is that, simply by virtue of their participation in the B.Ed Hons programme, and passing it, they have accrued what counts for significant social, cultural and symbolic capital within their own families and communities. Irrespective of the grades of passes, or the quality of the assignment and examination responses - conceptually or in terms of academic literacy competence - the ‘capital output’ of these students, as embodied in the ‘Degree Completed’ certificate, is enormous. What reinforces the sense of success and a quite legitimate claim to ‘empowerment’, is that the various provincial and national Education Departments, recognise their qualification as ‘authoritative’. Thus, while there may be very little place for students such as these in the more rarified contexts (i.e. establishment appointments and doctoral studies) of the academic *field*, there do exist other personal and ‘professional’ *fields* where what they embody is highly valued and an index of importance and upward mobility.

Furthermore, because in most western, capitalist societies, “high scholastic capital is cashed in for high levels of material capital” (Fowler, 1997: 82), and within the context of South African education this holds true for qualifications up to the M+5 level (i.e. matric plus five years of additional study), these students will have gone on to accrue a new degree of economic capital *relative to their previous positions and their communities*.



My perception of the students in this study therefore, is that they stepped outside of at least two 'sets' of 'communities of practice' i.e. their families/ 'home' communities, and their professional/ teaching contexts - where all the 'rules' (including discourse rules) for what constitute a community of practice pertain, for the duration of their time in the B.Ed Hons. By doing so, they added another experience of a different community of practice. Their 'membership' of this latter community of practice, though embryonic, tentative and not especially empowering in the 'power to' i.e. 'able to control' aspect of empowerment, nevertheless has endowed them with a construction of themselves as successful, and given rise to strengthened self esteem, social and bureaucratic status. In real terms, and because they have 'returned' to communities of practice who view qualifications and university experience as embodiments of authority, they are indeed the proud owners of significant capital.

#### **4.8 Transformation or reproduction? Concluding thoughts**

It is inevitable that a study framed by an ideological view of literacy, should also consider issues of social reproduction. It is particularly appropriate for this study since, by accepting the notion of 'communities of practice' and their implicit exclusionary dynamics, I have already established my belief that certain practices within the academic field, work effectively to retain and reproduce the status quo. Given the constraints and limitations of this study, however, a wider discussion on the forces of social reproduction can only be at a theoretical level, and then only briefly. Since Bourdieu's work informs much of this thesis, it is a further consideration of the concept of habitus that most usefully allows me to mount a concluding discussion around whether, and how, social transformation can occur, and to what extent the students in this study have a role to play.

One cannot talk of 'reproduction' in the context of Bourdieu, without revisiting his notion of 'objective structures' and 'objective conditions' (See Chapter 2). And integral to the creation and continued existence of these objective structures and conditions is the habitus. The importance of Bourdieu's apprehension of a truly 'objectivist' position then, is that reproduction is de facto the inevitable and unavoidable consequence of the habitus. This is not to say that the individual or the collective cannot participate in action and change, only that in doing so, one should never delude oneself that one is engaging with an objective position, simply by 'standing back' and thereby, viewing a context, or one's role in it, 'from the

outside'. In other words, "the objective meaning of practices or works" are often confused with the "purposes of the action of the producers of those practices or works" (Bourdieu, 1977:30). However, remembering that the habitus is "a socially constituted system of cognition and *motivating structures*" (my emphasis), which function as "structuring structures, that is, as principles of *generation*" (again my emphasis) (1977:76), it is clear that it is possible for the individual and collective habitus to both evoke and move towards change.

A Bourdieun interpretation of my work context might see 'us' i.e. academics, as much more inherently 'yesterday's man' than our students, and highly susceptible to the insidious processes of reproduction that will keep us as 'academics'. Our students, however, (and speaking only about those in the B.Ed Hons programme), for all the reasons this thesis has tried to elucidate, remain on the fringe of the 'structuring structures' of the academic field, simply by virtue of their 'uninitiated' status. Thus, while they may not perceive or understand anything about objective conditions and structures, they probably have a greater potential to withstand the reproductive mechanisms of the Academy, than academics themselves, despite the latter's intimate association with it. But of course, the mere fact that one is not shackled to a particular field does not automatically lead to transformative action in another. That one has the potential and the scope to do so, therefore, is only one part of the equation. Given this context, all that I can legitimately suggest is that the students in this study show signs of the kinds of awareness that very often lead to a more aggressive participation in, and contribution to, social transformation. They have been exposed to new ways of knowing and new ways of being. Only time, and intense further research, will show whether these experiences have in any way been repackaged in favour of agentive social action.

## **Chapter 5: Significance of the Findings and Suggestions for Further Research**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this final chapter, I begin by offering some comment on what this study reveals in relation to the original intentions of the research. This is followed by an overview of what I consider the problems associated with this study to have been. Thereafter, I consider the extent to which the Critical Pedagogical framework devised by the New London Group can be said to be applicable to the rapidly changing shape and structure of the B.Ed Hons programme. I conclude by offering possibilities for further research based on my experience of this study.

Despite its limited framework, this case study has I believe, been the source of a considerable number of issues worthy of discussion. However, in a study as small as this one, it is also clearly dangerous, and quite inappropriate to extrapolate too much to contexts beyond its boundaries. In my 'search for commonalities' in Chapter 4, therefore, I was very mindful of their constrained source. However, given my own position in the B.Ed Hons programme, and my particularly intimate involvement with the development and teaching of the LILT module, both prior to this study and subsequent to it, I believe I am in a position to comment in an informed way on the extent to which the students, and the findings in this study can be said to be representative of a greater majority. Furthermore, as one of the primary motivations for doing this study was also to see to what extent the LILT assessment processes could be further refined in response to findings from the study, and three years have passed since this study began, I must move outside of the study itself and into the 2001 context in order to comment on this. This concluding chapter is therefore also partially framed by the developing context of the last three years.

### **5.2 Key findings**

In essence, the following aspects of this study have emerged for me as key findings. They are:

- that students' prior literacy experiences seldom provide any significant 'fit' with the academic literacy demands made on them in the LILT module.

- that the genres foregrounded in LILT assignments over the last few years, may well be hindering academic literacy development rather than advancing it.
- that students' perceptions of 'success' in the programme are not linked overtly to becoming academically literate.
- that students' perceptions of what constitutes 'success' in the B.Ed Hons programme differs in very interesting ways from that of staff perceptions.

The discussion which follows is a response to these key findings, and starts with a brief restatement of the initial impetus for this study, by way of contextualisation.

My primary motivation for this study (stated in Chapter 1) was the sense that if we only knew more about what literacy skills students' owned and practised outside of the LILT module, we could somehow capture, extend and exploit those skills *to the students' advantage*, in assessment processes. Linked to this was my belief (based primarily on results), that the imposition of rigorous and traditional academic literacy demands on students (which I perceived to be happening in other B.Ed Hons modules), was seriously retarding their progress. In response to this belief, we in the LILT module introduced genres into assignments and examinations which we felt would make fewer 'straight' academic writing demands on students, and offer greater scope for students to use writing skills they already had. The genres we employed therefore, reflected 'workplace' type genres rather than the straight academic essay.

Now, however, through the processes engaged with in this research, I am no longer so sure that the position LILT has taken over the last few years should be continued. It is not because I have lost confidence in my belief that it is critically important for an effective pedagogy to provide closer 'fits' between students' worlds and that of the content and processes they engage with in courses, nor is it because I no longer believe that assessment processes should mirror the same principle. I still hold both these positions very strongly. Rather, it is because the LILT assignments we have been setting, though *framed* as 'real world' writing tasks are quite simply *not* authentic writing tasks. Our efforts to temper the negative effects *we* believed students experienced when faced with conventional academic discourse type assignments, seem not to have been perceived in the same way by the students. Certainly the students in this

study show very little evidence of negative and angry reactions to the discourse demands made on them in the B.Ed Hons programme. While they did all articulate an enjoyment of LILT, it was never attributed to the ‘tender treatment’ of genres they experienced. It was much more because LILT gave them new ideas for language teaching in the classroom, validated their own language and educational heritages, and offered levels of support and encouragement not given by other modules.

Armed with these new insights, and coming back to the basic principles of the Communicative Language Teaching approach, the Genre Approach to writing development, and a Critical Linguistic position, it is clearer to me now that asking students to engage with academic discourse can after all, be considered quite appropriate in the university context - but with ‘conditions’ attached. It will not be because ‘that is what universities have always done’ that we in the LILT module may now alter how we approach writing genres in assignments and examinations. Rather, it is because I see more clearly now, that what constitutes an *authentic* writing task *in the university* is one which engages with the discourse of the institution. This does not mean that every writing task should conform to this pattern. Certainly in 2001, with the reintroduction of the LLH, this has not been the case. But given the comments made by students in this study, it is clear that they have a good idea of at least the ‘technicalities’ of academic writing, and had no expectation that they should not have to engage with them. Perhaps the onus on us in the LILT module is to *expand* their repertoire of discourse skills, rather than let them stagnate as conceivably, we may now be constructed as doing. Being powerful in the modern world relies significantly on being able to use language for one’s own ends, and particularly in western societies, in its written form. Writing about language, Francis Christie, for example, says:

... those who are wise in its ways, capable of using it to shape and serve important personal and social goals, will be the ones who are ‘empowered’ ... able, that is, not merely to participate effectively in the world, but also to act upon it, in the sense that they can strive for significant social change. (Christie, 1989:x)

But if we in the LILT module now consider it appropriate to reverse our earlier position, we must be very clear about what discourse skills we are going to promote, and we must make our

motivations to do so explicit to our students. It is perfectly apparent, for example, that ‘the argument’ is central to academic writing. But it is also central to powerful social and political discourses outside of the university. Those who can argue logically and convincingly, particularly on paper, become formidable opponents, with potentially lasting influence. So we should teach ‘the argument’ quite explicitly - not only because it is one of the Academy’s ‘practices’, but because it has currency in the real world. And while we teach this particular discourse skill, and any others we identify as important, we need to constantly contextualise why we are doing so, from a critical perspective, so that the Academy is positioned, along with all other social institutions, as open to contestation and resistance.

Further responses to the findings of this study which relate to assessment practices suggest that more creative and innovative teaching and learning processes need to be adopted in the LILT module. The discussion held towards the end of this chapter under the heading ‘A possible pedagogy?’, identifies some of the constraints which will mitigate against implementing some of the changes students have recommended (oral, role play, draft submissions). Efforts will, however, be made to incorporate some of these processes into contact session activities, on a small scale, in the hope that they will have positive spin-offs for students in the formal components of assessment.

Another very interesting finding for me has been around the notion of ‘success’. I have already indicated earlier in this thesis, that the students in this study share a common perception of their experience of the B.Ed Hons programme, and the LILT module particularly, as ‘successful’ and ‘empowering’. I have also related this, at a theoretical level, to the notion of ‘capital’ and indicated that ‘success’ for these students is intimately tied to their association with the University of Natal, and the ‘piece of paper’ which represents the new qualification awarded them on completion of the B.Ed Hons degree. It was never suggested by these students that ‘success’ or a ‘lack of success’ depended on their command of academic writing skills, the pivot upon which this research turns. While all the students in this study indicated that new light had been shed on old practices, and new educational directions perceived, difficulties with ‘writing assignments’ were not constructed as key obstacles in their strivings for success viz. to pass the various modules. Since 80%-85% of students pass, this is not surprising. In summary then, one can say that the criteria for being a ‘successful B.Ed Hons student’ from a *student’s*

*perspective* is in essence, passing the modules in the programme and getting the qualification. And while these observations can be made on the basis of the students in this study, my extensive experience of similar students over several years' participation in the B.Ed Hons programme, substantiates these conclusions. What I have always imagined *would* concern students was that the vast majority of them scored no more than 'the people's mark' viz. 50%-58%, and that there would be an intense desire to improve on these results (in order to be truly 'successful'). And the key to improving these results (in my view), lies in paying focused attention to academic literacy competence. And though I still believe this to be the critical factor in student performance, if students themselves are not driven to find ways to score higher results, and link this quite explicitly to a greater mastery of academic discourse skills (and why would they if they continue to be passed?), it is going to be very difficult to mobilise the necessary student support and energy to achieve it.

It was precisely the findings above which prompted me to enquire more explicitly how staff in other modules perceived the 'successful B.Ed Hons student'. In the LILT module, we have always paid attention to academic literacy skills. There are many in-text activities in the Learning Guide which have academic development as their focus. These include tasks which promote reading strategies, note taking, topic analysis, coherent and logical structuring of thoughts and so on. In assignments too, we have always allocated a percentage of the marks (admittedly a relatively small percentage - between 10% and 15%) to features of student writing which relate directly to broad-based academic 'skills and competence' viz. structure, coherence, logic, and referencing.

In this context, a successful LILT student is one who can exhibit a range of conceptual *and* linguistic skills, and were I asked to describe such a student, I would make it quite explicit that competence in the *written* articulation of conceptual understanding is integral to my construction of 'success' in the LILT module.

In the cyber conversations held by me with various members of staff who teach, or have taught, on the B.Ed Hons programme, however, there is a noticeable absence of any explicit references to academic literacy skills and the role competence in these skills might play in student performance.

Five out of the seven academics whom I invited to share their thoughts on this i.e. how they might describe 'a successful B.Ed Hons student', responded on email as follows. The first two paragraphs reflect one email response.

A successful student is one before she enrolls. If one enrolls only/primarily to get the piece of paper so that you can get out of the classroom/ be promoted you cannot be a successful student. Students who have the attitude that 'I am not going to do this because it does not count' will never be successful students. If there is not a measure of study for the sake of study, forget it. If conquering a difficult reading, after sweating and cursing, does not make your toes curl, if suddenly, during discussion, seeing the point does not give you goose flesh - forget it.

A successful student is one that not only passes well (on our programme this would mean a mark of 70%+, just as a starter), but can actually phrase and express, **and adjust**, (original emphasis) her own views on the curriculum, the role of language, the environment etc. (Preferably slightly critical of the 'truths' she had been 'taught').

For me a successful B.Ed Hons student has learned new concepts and ideas which enable her to see education and her own practice in a new way. She has developed some skills of reflecting on her own practice, and asks 'Why do I do what I do, and are there ways I could do it differently?'. She can transfer and apply concepts she learns to her practice and to her school context. She has a deeper understanding of education policy in SA. She has grown in confidence with regard to speaking about education in an informed way (rather than at a rhetorical and common sense level).

A successful B.Ed Hons student is one who can not only understand the concepts in the modules and do the assignments, but also use the ideas to discern in depth, problems they see in their own experience of the education system and set about working out solutions to them. The student should be able to take an impartial view, see problems emanating from structural situations rather than just from personalities and protagonists.

I think a successful B.Ed Hons student is one who can use the knowledge he/she gains in our B.Ed Hons modules to reflect on her classroom practice, and use it to adapt/ change/ improve it. Of course the students must pass our exams and get a diploma [sic]. Ideally she should continue researching and improving her practice.



And lastly:

A really successful one (in academic terms) would be able to actually do the reading required on our Master's programme and be able to write reasonable responses to assignments requiring critical understanding of these readings. And practically, they should be able to recognise different methods/ ways of teaching, maybe have a go at saying what theory or assumptions underlie what method, and also be able to tell the difference between good and bad teaching practice. And they should be able to critically reflect on their own practice.

What I see in these various descriptions, is a virtually exclusive emphasis on what I would like to term 'conceptual competence'. There are passing references to being able to 'do assignments', 'write reasonable responses to assignments', and 'of course ... pass our exams and get a diploma', but no-one explicitly flags academic literacy as a critical component of success. Other than the remarks just quoted, all other comment relates to 'concepts and ideas' and what students ought to be able to do with them. And if one reads these comments carefully, the expected *level* of 'conceptual competence' is very high indeed - far higher, I would like to suggest, than the current pedagogic model of the B.Ed Hons programme can possibly realise. Furthermore, the level of linguistic competence (which includes, but is not exclusively a command of English) critical to the articulation of the conceptual understanding described here, appears to go unremarked and unproblematised.

There are other aspects articulated by my colleagues here, which also bear scrutiny. Beyond the sophisticated cognitive and linguistic dimensions of competence alluded to here, is also an almost esoteric view of how students should approach this programme if they in any way want to consider themselves successful. The first response for example, implies that only people with a very particular type of disposition should consider the possibility of success. Implicit in this remark is that anyone with a less 'pure' motive than a desire for sustained, unadulterated moments of intellectual enlightenment and bliss, should expect to fair poorly. And if 70%+ ('as a starter') really is where we should only locate successful students, then we have no choice but to acknowledge that we do not run a successful B.Ed Hons programme at all.

Given the above context, I am left troubled, faced with a number of apparent contradictions, and unable to arrive at any satisfactory conclusions in this study, as to how to more closely

align staff and student perceptions of what the B.Ed Hons programme is actually all about. Clearly there are vast quantities of further research opportunities embedded in what has emerged through what I would consider to be the ‘dis-articulations’ above. The substance of the emails sent to me by colleagues I now feel hold the kernel of a whole new, incredibly necessary research exercise which the B.Ed Hons programme cannot afford not to undertake. If in anyway the key stakeholders (staff and students) have different agendas, or are completely unaware that different agendas exist and the exact nature of them, then there can be no claims made about the efficacy of what we do in the programme, and its impact on social and educational transformation.

However, and simultaneously, while my colleagues have not made explicit references to issues of language competence and academic literacy, I am quite ready to accept that this may only be a reflection of this particular set of cyber conversations, rather than a reflection on their real attitudes to these issues. So long as written assignments and examinations form the dominant mode of assessing conceptual understanding, I believe that students’ academic literacy needs should remain a central concern of our educational endeavours in the B.Ed Hons programme, and hopefully all those colleagues who contributed to this study, hold the same belief. The way in which we need to approach this task, and as established earlier, is from a critical pedagogic position. In the next section I consider possibilities for this.

### **5.3 A possible pedagogy?**

In Chapter 2 I discussed at some length, the NLG’s ‘multiliterate’ position and the Critical Pedagogical Framework they propose. The thinking that informs their approach is, as noted earlier, a response to what they see as the rapidly changing shape of education everywhere as it struggles to absorb the globalising impact of ‘fast’ capitalism.

The most relevant features of their framework for the context of this study, and what has emerged as the ‘delivery structure’ of the B.Ed Hons programme since 1999, are the four components they identify as integral to a critical pedagogy. Couched within the conceptual notion of ‘Design’, these elements can be seen as quite distinct from each other, but all are intended to reflect the growing awareness of the need for ‘new and creative intelligences’.

The present 'model of delivery' of the B.Ed Hons programme consists of three and a half contact sessions per module per semester. Each contact session is officially scheduled to run from 9.00am - 4.00pm. All contact sessions take place on Saturdays and in nine Regional Learning Centres scattered across Kwa-Zulu Natal, with one in Umtata in the Eastern Cape. For two years, 1999 and 2000, as a result of the partnership between the SETD and the South African College of Education (SACTE) in Pretoria, the B.Ed Hons was delivered in twenty seven Regional Learning Centres. A considerable number of these however, were in Gauteng and the Northern Province. Since the absorption of SACTE into UNISA as part of the national restructuring programme for Higher Education, the partnership between the SETD and SACTE has dissolved. Present enrolment on the B.Ed Hons programme (2001) is 1500 students.

This current 'model of delivery' is labelled 'mixed-mode', meaning that it is a mixture of contact and self-study. Students are given learning material (a Learning Guide and Student Guide) written by members of the SETD - the LILT Learning Guide is one such example. This material is 'interactive' i.e. it contains numerous tasks which require the student to engage actively with the main text in order to respond to it, and considered by staff to be 'well written and accessible'. Each 'Learning Guide' is in the form of a glossy, commercially published book which also contains a select number of 'readings' - these may or may not all be of a 'pure' academic nature. The Student Guide is printed by the SETD and contains general information about the relevant module, assignment topics, and all the activities which will form the focus of contact sessions.

Though we have come to refer to the way in which the B.Ed Hons modules reach the students as the 'model of delivery', we seem to interrogate the notion of 'pedagogy' only within the context of what goes on in contact sessions. From the most critical position possible, it seems to me that by doing this, we are in very real danger of splitting off the 'deep purpose' of our programmes, namely to contribute to educational and social transformation in South Africa. In all fairness to the programme though, and clearly I am in there too, we do work very hard in an exhausting, massified context. We 'train' tutors to become 'facilitators', distribute 'high quality' material to students, visit Regional Learning Centres, set 'applied' assignments regularly, and monitor the process the best we can. We are worried about the high failure rate in examinations (40% - 45% in July, 2001) and the extent to which this present programme is

truly at Honours level. But increasingly my perspective on this enterprise is changing.

In my opinion, the ‘structural’ concerns of the programme, by which is actually meant ‘*infrastructural*’ concerns, are steadily seducing us, in the most subtle manner, away from a concern for the ‘pedagogical structuring’ of the programme. We have lost perspective on the *totality* of what we are doing, and as far as I can see, have no macro theoretical position informing the pedagogy of the whole programme. The NLG’s pedagogical framework, theorised as it is in the concept of ‘multiliteracies’, offers possibilities for a new understanding of how the B.Ed Hons programme, in its entirety, could be constructed. What follows is some discussion on this.

In restructuring the B.Ed Hons curriculum, a process currently on the SETD agenda, it would be useful if we could establish the four components of the NLG framework, namely, Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing and Transformed Practice (see Chapter 2 for detail on these), as the ideological cornerstones of the curriculum. This is to say, we could commit ourselves, through a range of avenues to making the ‘Critical’ intentions of the curriculum explicit and public. That way, students and academics could come together with a shared and explicit understanding of what the pedagogical intentions of the whole programme are. More importantly, by formalising the framework, a greater degree of curriculum coherence is likely to emerge than presently exists.

I acknowledge that it is probably not possible to implement a ‘strong’ version of the NLG framework in massified, and ‘distance’ education contexts such as the B.Ed Hons. The time necessary for authentic ‘immersion’ learning simply is not available, and the SETD lacks the staff capacity to do follow-up research into the nature and quality of Transformed Practice. This is to be seriously lamented. However, the NLG framework can be adopted as the overarching conceptual structure of the B.Ed Hons curriculum. Selected aspects can then be implemented in practice.

Let me offer some ideas of how this might be done. While the literal ‘model of delivery’ (six hours on three Saturdays, spread across a whole semester - the half day session is always allocated to exam preparation) mitigates against what at first glance might be interpreted by

‘Situated Practice’ for example, the NLG’s use of the term suggests to me that this concept can be addressed even within the present model of the B.Ed Hons programme. To do so, however, requires us to think more laterally, and perhaps to alter our attitude to how things have ‘always been done’. The old belief that we shouldn’t ‘fix’ what ‘aint broke’ can blind us to new ways of seeing how things can work better. The fact that *students* seem quite satisfied with the qualification and are keen to recommend it to colleagues and friends, should not, I believe, lull us into the complacent view that what we offer is fine as it is, simply because we ‘know’ that it is the ‘best available’.

If I take the LILT module as an example, and consider how I could apply an understanding of the four components listed above i.e. *implement* aspects of the framework, I would have to make changes to it. I would have to explicitly contextualise the whole module from a multiliterate position. Though we have always ‘talked literacy’ in the LILT module, it has not been from an explicit multiliterate position. So I would start by doing this, which would be relatively easy to do, but would take time and effort. I would have to make considerable changes to the Student Guide (the cost of the commercially published Learning Guide means that no changes can be made to this book for at least five years). It is here that I would induct students overtly into the NLG framework, thereby committing myself publicly to a critical pedagogical process. By implication, I open myself to criticism and challenge - an essential thing to do if I take ‘Overt Instruction’ seriously. This is the kind of ‘instruction’ that “explicitly uncovers and contrasts the hidden rules of meaning in various cultural contexts” (Kalantzis and Cope, 2000:240). It is here, within this ‘curriculum space’, that I could address issues of academic literacy.

Coupled with Overt Instruction, where we identify the “underlying system and structure” (Ibid:241) of academic literacy, will be Critical Framing, that component which “interrogates contexts and purposes, adding breadth to one’s perspective on the lifeworld” (Ibid). Students would be encouraged to ask and find answers to the following questions: “What cultural alternatives might there be? Which approach is taken in which context? Why? Whose purposes and interests does this approach best serve?” (Ibid). It will be Transformed Practice, as indicated above, that will be difficult to ‘make happen’.

But none of the implementational problems should prevent us from adopting the ideological and conceptual stand implicit in the work of the NLG, and using this to frame the development of a coherent curriculum. It is this, I am arguing, that makes their ideas relevant for the context of this study, and the structure of the B.Ed Hons programme that has evolved subsequent to it.

#### **5.4 Problems with the research process**

Many of the problems associated with this study have been noted in earlier chapters. What I present here is a summary of the most salient ones - those which, were I to do a similar piece of research again, might dictate that I do things differently.

The first of these concerns the use of the Case Study approach itself. The inherent 'boundedness' of a case study is very useful in so far as it 'legitimises' a limited and limiting context of research. Without the time and opportunity to engage with wider issues and longer, genuinely ethnographic studies, the Case Study is a good alternative. Certainly for my purposes in this context, I am satisfied it was the best approach to take. I am not convinced, however, that I would want to repeat a study where the database is so small that what emanates from it runs the risk of being considered irrelevant to any context beyond it. With the grievously fierce attitude to qualitative research held by so many academics, applauding the research process and findings of a single case study seems a remote likelihood - despite the very flexible way in which case studies can be defined. Their 'singularity' sits too uncomfortably with those conditioned to a quantitative research orientation. Which is a pity in my view, but nevertheless a reality I have come to recognise as particularly powerful in the research 'community of practice'. Notwithstanding this lobby, my experience with the case study approach prompts me to want to engage with a more 'collectivised' experience (as opposed to that of the discrete individual) the next time round, and over a longer period of time.

Secondly, and as indicated earlier, the use of Literate Life Histories as a data gathering tool should be used far more cautiously and sensitively than the way in which they were used in this study. Their use does not always have to be the same as, or even approximate to my first use of them in 1996, but given the often cathartic - and hence potentially painful and frightening - effect they can have, they should always be handled with the utmost care. That they do provide

profound insights into individual experience is evident, and the reason they usually constitute such rich and valuable data. Respecting and protecting individual experience, however, should always dictate the way in which they are used.

Thirdly, that follow-up interviews with students should have been conducted is also now quite apparent. Many of the ‘silences’ and gaps in the transcripts of the interviews in this research, could have been ‘filled’ and explored through another round of interviews.

The fourth significant problem relates to the time frames which became the ultimate reality, and which posed a huge problem. I had not bargained for the unevenness of the process, the delays and the sheer complexity of the exercise, and the role these factors would play in the study as a whole. Though I would clearly recommend much more clearly defined deadlines for any study, they must be brutally realistic, and take into account not only the variables which may pertain to the subjects in the study, but those which pertain to the researcher as well. Either ‘party’ is equally capable of derailing the process.

Lastly, it is also quite apparent to me now that the data provided by the cyber conversations in this study, raised more questions than they answered, and that cyber conversations are possibly not very effective vehicles for extended, in-depth interrogations of the sort I tried to establish here. While they maybe useful for linking and/or sustaining ‘research conversations’, I realise that the energy and vibrancy of face-to-face interviews, and the scope these provide for immediate feedback and negotiation, make interviews a source of much richer and more substantial data. Email correspondence between colleagues who are also friends, often lends itself to frivolous comment. In the case of the emails quoted here, I hesitate to take everything that was said at face value. Were I to challenge some of the comments made, my guess is that positions might shift and change as debates continued. Which is why I have offered these reservations about the reliability of the data captured on the emails, and problematised the impact it has had on what this study has thrown up.

## **5.5 Possibilities for future research**

As stated earlier, it is important for the discussion around future research options in relation to this study, to track some of the developments that have occurred in the B.Ed Hons

programme since 1998. As the model of delivery which the subjects in this research enjoyed is no longer the one in use, any recommendations relating to ‘improving student performance’ and/or ‘developing academic literacy’ must be framed by the current model of delivery. To do anything different would render the discussion meaningless.

Implicit in any recommendations is the subjective position of the ‘recommendee’, and while this may seem obvious to some, I believe it worth stating. In this instance therefore, the recommendations I make reflect my values, beliefs and experiences, and have their source in my habitus. That they may not suit, or honour the habitus of my students entirely (or at all), I recognise as an inevitable consequence of the different ‘ways of being’ which our respective ‘historical’ selves have given rise to. For the same reasons, they may also not resonate with my colleagues. Despite my belief that I am forwarding a well theorised, democratic and socially responsible position, I welcome the thought that it must remain open to contestation, debate and redefinition.

It is not a simple task to unravel the knotted threads of factors linking literacy to student performance, as this study shows. What this research has evoked for me however, are a number of concerns and questions which relate to the students who participated in this study (in Year 1 in 1998), those currently on the programme (2001) and the changing context of the programme itself as described in the previous section. Each of the following five questions therefore, encapsulates an issue which could form the focus of further research, and concludes this thesis.

- What has been the ‘literacy trajectory’ of the students who formed the subject group in this study, since their return to their professional contexts?
- How would the students evaluate the value of the LILT module, and the B.Ed Hons in general, three to four months after completing the course?
- What impact would use of the primary language in assignment writing, in this case isiZulu, have on students’ capacity to articulate conceptual understanding?
- What areas of comparability exist between what constitutes academic discourse in isiZulu and that of English?
- To what extent are the literacy competences of the changing student cohort impacting on the established ‘deep rules’ of the academic community of practice?



- If the four components of the NLG's Critical Pedagogical Framework informed the restructuring of the B.Ed Hons curriculum, how could the 'success' (or otherwise) of this approach be measured?

## 5.6 Conclusion

It remains to be said that however important 'literacy matters' are considered to be in the academic community of practice, they should also be constructed as only one of many factors influencing student performance in the changing face of Higher Education in South Africa today. While being tempted to continue to hold firmly to established modes of writing and knowledge articulation, the following cautionary note sounded by Popkewitz should not go unheard by the academic community. He says:

The call for prescription is both to limit the debate (about what is an appropriate world) and to alter the character of the struggle (of our society). Further, those who offer prescriptions seem to offer only new (or old) banalities and introduce glibness. (1984:199)

With the ever increasing numbers of students previously excluded from tertiary education now entering universities, we should expect - and welcome - the potentially explosive dynamic their presence will evoke. Academic literacy practices are going to undergo change, that seems certain. That this will necessarily be a bad thing is something we should not assume.

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- 1c. Has your confidence as a writer changed at all since your participation in the B.Ed programme? Please explain your response.
2. At school, what kinds of tasks require you to do *extended, structured* writing? Examples might be: letters to the Governing Body, or a report to the unions. Please write down the THREE that you do most often.
3. At home, what kinds of tasks require you to do *extended, structured* writing? Examples might be: letters to friends, a scripture lesson for Sunday school, a programme for a youth service. Please write down the THREE that you do most often.
- 4a. Which language do you use the most often to write at:
- \* school?
  - \* home?

## LITERACY PRACTICES

Please will you make a list of ALL the kinds of writing you do:

- a) IN school - on an average kind of day
- b) OUT of school - including the weekend

When we talk about 'kinds of writing' here, we mean literally any time you use a pen/ pencil or piece of chalk. So in school, even writing comments on learners' work, or filling in the register, or writing notes on the chalkboard would count as 'kinds of writing'. Out of school, making a grocery list, signing for a parcel at the post office, writing personal letters or poetry, signing a child's homework book would all count as 'kinds of writing'. So it doesn't matter how small or short the piece of writing is - it all counts as 'writing'!

IN SCHOOL

OUT OF SCHOOL



# LANGUAGE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING (LILT) RESEARCH PROJECT - 1999

## PART ONE: QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is divided into two sections. In Section A you simply put a tick in the boxes which apply to you. Section B has four questions which require a short written response from you.

Although this questionnaire is written in English, please write your responses in whichever language you would like to. Your responses will be translated by mother tongue speakers of the language/s you use. In the group interview you will be able to check that your written responses have been accurately interpreted.

STUDENT NAME: .....

SECOND SEMESTER MODULES (1999)

a. ....

b. ....

POSTAL ADDRESS:

.....

.....

.....

.....

CONTACT NUMBERS: (Including code)

Home: .....

Work: .....

Cell: .....

Fax: .....

1. Which of the following kinds of writing do you do most often outside of your work or university context ie. at home and over weekends? Please put a tick in the appropriate boxes. There are extra boxes for you to add any other examples that are not here. If there is still not enough space, write on the back of this page.

Kind of writing	Not often (less than once a week)	Often (two to five times a week)	Every day	Language choice
Filling in bank forms/ claim forms				
Making a shopping list				
Signing children's homework books				
Writing Union reports				
Sending e-mail messages to friends				
Making notes for Bible study classes				
Writing invitations to a birthday party/ wedding/ prize giving				
Writing out cheques				
Filling in donation forms				
Writing personal letters to friends				
Drawing up a family budget				
Recording telephone numbers and addresses				
Appointments in a diary				
Taking down messages				

2. The following are examples of *extended/ longer* kinds of writing. How often do you do these? Again, please put a tick in the boxes which apply to you, and add any other examples not listed here.

Kind of writing	Never	Not often (1 or 2 times a year)	Regularly (every 1 or 2 months)	Language choice
Poetry				
Children's stories				
Short stories for adults				
Comic strips				
Letters to the personal column in magazines				
Letters about social and/or political issues to newspapers or magazines				
Letters to educational magazines/ newspapers				
Words for songs				
Music				
Textbook writing				
Personal journal/ diary				

3. Which of the following *best* describe you as a writer when you write LILT assignments. You can tick more than one box, and add any other words you would like to.

- skilled
- confident
- struggling
- successful
- unsuccessful
- nervous
- frightened
- 
- 
- 
-

## SECTION B

1. Which kinds of writing that you do privately/ personally have helped you cope with assignments in the LILT module? Please explain why you think this is the case.

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2. How can the writing demands in the LILT module be changed so that you can use the writing skills and experiences you already have?

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3. How would *you* have liked your understanding of the key concepts and principles of the LILT module to be assessed i.e. what method (or combination of methods) of assessment would you have liked us to use? Please give as much detail as possible here.

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4. Do you think some kind of special writing skills development programme should be included in the first year of the B.Ed programme? If yes, please explain your answer, giving examples of what you think should be covered. If no, please explain your answer too.

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Many thanks for your time and effort!

## Interview questions

1. How would you describe the kind of writing that the B.Ed demands of you? Descriptive/ narrative/ argument/ report/ procedural? Are these demands consistent across modules?
2. When you started the B.Ed, did you feel powerful/ confident as a writer, or inadequate?
3. Did this change as the course went on? In what way?
4. Did you think you would be penalised if you didn't write in exactly the way your lecturers wanted you to? Were you in fact penalised? How?
5. What are your feelings on how assignments were marked in LILT? The other modules you did? Where did markers put their emphasis - on grammar, spelling etc. or meaning, or organisation and structure? Was this the 'right' emphasis?
6. How many of your markers 'coached from the margin'? Or did you get comments like 'tease out'/ 'elaborate'/ 'make explicit'/ 'put more structure'? What kinds of comments were completely meaningless/ unhelpful to you? What kinds of comments would you have liked?
7. Were there clear indications of the standard of work and style of writing expected of you in LILT? In the other modules? How were these conveyed to you? How would you have liked them conveyed?
8. Did you ever feel 'falsely encouraged'? - in LILT? In the other modules? As in, the lecturer making comments to you - either verbally or in writing - that you were 'on the right track'/ 'doing well', only to discover in assignments that your grades contradicted this? What are the issues at stake here? What is happening?
9. What 'cultural issues' impacted on your performance/ university writing - in LILT? In the other modules? Were you aware of power relations which had their source in cultural difference? Is there a way round these?
10. What 'conditioning' within you, either stops you challenging the university 'writing norms', or makes you feel confident to ignore/ manipulate/ deny them in order to make your own voice heard?
11. What is the most difficult thing you had to face when you did LILT? Any other B.Ed module?
12. In your own view, what areas of your writing need improvement? Are you clear on how to improve these?
13. When you think about it now, which writing context (school/ home) prepared you most for university writing? Which school writing experiences contributed particularly negatively/ positively to the kind of writing expected of you at the university?
14. What do you understand the term 'academic discourse' to mean? How is this different from the kind of writing you do outside the university? How would you interpret the term 'academic literacies'? Is this a more accurate reflection of what goes on in the academic context ie. that each discipline/ module has its own way of doing things? So what is common to them all and makes us able to say that one student 'writes well' and another 'writes badly'?
15. How many discourse communities do you belong to?
16. Which genres dominate here? Which of these intimidate you, which are you confident of?



# LANGUAGE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING (LILT) RESEARCH PROJECT - 1999

## PART TWO: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE (LITERATE LIFE HISTORY)

Part 2 of this research project requires you to think back to the time when you first learnt to write, and later events and people who influenced your development as a writer. Of course, as you know, it's almost impossible to separate writing from reading, so if you suddenly find yourself writing about both, please don't worry. My particular concern is writing, but I will sift out what is of special relevance to this research - so respond freely to the questions I have posed here.

Although the questions are written in English, please write your responses to them in whichever language you would like to. As with the questionnaire, your responses will be interpreted by a mother tongue speaker of the language/s you have used, and returned to you for checking. If you participate in the group interview, you will have a further opportunity to clarify what you have said.

The following questions should be seen as only a *guide* to the kind of reflecting I would like you to do. You do not have to answer them one by one. If you would rather write freely, paragraph-style once you've got a general idea of what I'm looking for, please do. *I'm looking for your story about writing*, so please write it as a *narrative* and not an academic essay. I hope that you will enjoy thinking about your past and the experiences you have had. Write as much as you like - all of it will be of interest to me.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR YOUR PERSONAL WRITING NARRATIVE

**1. What has writing been like for you from the time you first remember until the present?**

- What do you remember of writing before you began school? How did you learn to write?
- What was writing like for you in primary school?
- What was writing like for you in high/secondary school? Had anything changed? If so, what? And why?
- Did your parent/s help you with writing? How was that? Difficult? Enjoyable?
- Who else helped you with writing (neighbours, grandparents, siblings, peers)? When was the help useful? Was any of it upsetting?
- What kind of writing did you see your parents/ siblings doing?
- Tell me about where you lived and what your schools were like?

**2. What is writing like for you now?**

- I'm trying to imagine you at home writing. If I had a picture, what would it look like?
- Where do you write, when, how, with what?
- What makes writing easy for you? What gives you a problem with writing?

**3. What sense do you make of your experience with writing?**

- What things are important to you in life? Does writing have a place to play in these things? How does it connect with what is important to you?
- Have you come to realise anything about your school writing experiences and the effect/s they have had on you? Talk about this.

Adapted from Cleary L. (1991) *From the Other Side of the Desk*. Portsmouth: Boynton Cook/ Heinemann.

Please return these personal narratives to me as soon as possible. If you are doing a module that is being run each week, I will collect yours the next time you attend a class. If you are doing a Friday/Saturday module, I will collect it at the next contact session. If you have any queries about this part of the research project, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Many thanks once again.

Warm regards

Carol

The LILT course aims to raise awareness about a number of language related issues. Study the following combination of issues. Which set *best* reflects important areas of focus in the LILT course which help to realise its aims?

The relationship between identity and power; form in preference to meaning; bilingual language contexts.

'Meaning' before 'form' in writing; issues of identity, language and power; the role language plays in the learning process.

The relationship between language, motivation and attitude; monolingual teaching contexts.

The role language plays in the learning process; form rather than meaning; the relationship between identity and power.

The LILT course promotes the notion that *learning is a social activity*. Which one of the following statements *best* supports this notion?

Knowledge is best understood as a constantly changing and dynamic process.

A context in which one learns on one's own reflects the most common and natural learning process.

New understandings are mostly achieved through the constant negotiation of meaning between two or more people.

Rote learning and memorisation of fact are the most effective methods of learning.

There are good reasons for using group work to promote language development. Which of the following combination contains the *best* selection of reasons for group work in the context of the LILT course?

Promotes interactive learning, gives an authentic language learning context, saves on textbooks. Develops communication skills, can reflect a real world language learning situation, lowers learners' levels of anxiety about language use.

Encourages learners to share ideas, helps in the collective construction of knowledge, promotes social skills.

Enhances intercultural tolerance, makes the classroom a more interesting space, allows learners to engage with 'natural' talk.

In the *Introduction to LILT*, we have identified five key features of learning programme planning. Which of the following groups contain these five features?

Assessment possibilities, chalkboard skills, tasks, learning outcomes, media resources.

Knowledge, skills, values, opinions, beliefs.

Learning outcomes, organisation around a theme, a stimulus/ stimuli, tasks, assessment possibilities and criteria.

Learning outcomes, knowledge, skills, values, assessment possibilities and criteria.

The *main* purpose of Assignment 1 is to:

provide a fixed framework within which to work in the language development classroom.

ensure that students use the modelled lessons series in the *Introduction to LILT* and abandon their own experiences and practices as they are irrelevant to the context.

c. give students an opportunity to respond to principles of lesson planning in practice, before engaging with them at a theoretical level.

d. encourage student to develop comprehensive lesson plans which detail each language development activity and desired outcome.

6. The *main* purpose of Assignment 2 is to give students an opportunity to:

a. display their knowledge of the *Course Readings* in a context which focuses primarily on theory.

b. challenge and evaluate their colleagues practice by presenting them with theoretical concepts.

c. write academic essays.

d. connect language theory to practice in a relevant, authentic context.

7. The home or first language of a child plays a critical role in cognitive and language development. For this reason, we as teachers should:

a. never introduce a second or third language to a child until they are well into adulthood.

b. draw on, validate and integrate the first language into the second language teaching and learning classroom.

c. allow learners to excuse themselves from second language learning classrooms if they feel strongly that the second language will destroy their first language.

d. only use the home or first language of the child when we are speaking to them in a school context.

8. Theme-based teaching gives teachers and learners the space to achieve a number of effective language development goals because it:

a. restricts teacher and learner input and thus allows the teacher to control the language learning process very tightly.

b. allows teachers the opportunity to teach about *plot* and *character* in a highly structured way.

c. provides opportunities for teachers to link different learning areas in ways that are meaningful and relevant to the learners' lives.

d. encourages learners to master content-specific vocabulary.

9. The tasks which a teacher designs for language development should do two *main* things, namely:

a. encourage group work and social skills, thereby teaching learners conflict management and cultural sensitivity.

b. start with the 'unknown' and move to the 'known' and allow for group work.

c. link concrete stimuli to concrete tasks and promote writing skills in preference to reading, speaking and listening skills.

d. encourage learners to be active in their own learning and achieve outcomes which reflect whole language development.

10. Which of the following pairs reflect one of the most critical relationships in OBE assessment practices?

a. Tasks and stimuli.

b. Learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

c. Group work and learning outcomes.

d. Assessment criteria and stimuli.

READING QUIZ B: BASED ON UNIT 1, CHAPTERS 1,2, & 3

STUDENT NO:

TUTOR'S NAME:

1. In the debate about the effectiveness of learner-centred classrooms and teacher-centred classrooms, the question is not that one kind is always more effective, but rather that
  - a learners should be able to decide which suits them better
  - b the style that has always been used is the better one
  - c teaching based on learner outcomes must always be learner-centred
  - d different classroom tasks will require different classroom styles
2. If learners are strongly motivated to work hard at a task which is going to form part of the learner assessment for that subject, such assessment is known to have
  - a negative backwash
  - b positive backwash
  - c reliability
  - d predictability
3. According to Krashen, to learn a second language requires conscious knowledge of the second language, and the ability to talk about the rules of that language. while to acquire a language requires
  - a an anxiety-free learning environment
  - b motivation and hard work
  - c natural use of the language for communication
  - d proficiency in the first language
4. Teachers use the IRE (initiate, response, evaluate) pattern of interaction in the classroom to
  - a check that the whole class understands the content of the lesson
  - b check whether everyone is paying attention
  - c identify those who have weak language ability
  - d evaluate the success of the lesson
5. The three important aspects of any course (Learner Outcomes, Assessment and Classroom Interaction) are related in such a way that
  - a they form three points of a triangle
  - b a change in the Learner Outcomes has little effect on the Assessment procedures
  - c a change in the Assessment procedures will result in changes to the Classroom Interaction
  - d the subject content affects all other aspects
6. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aims to develop the communicative competence of learners by focusing on
  - a the provision of many classroom opportunities to use the language
  - b the use of authentic tasks outside the school situation
  - c the accurate spelling of words
  - d the use of grammatically correct utterances
7. BICS is the short form of
  - a Basic interpersonal communicative skills
  - b Bilingual interactive communicative skills
  - c Basic interactive coping skills
  - d Bilingual interpersonal cognitive skills
8. When learners write a history essay based on their class notes and their textbook they are engaged in a task which is
  - a context-embedded and cognitively undemanding
  - b context-reduced and cognitively undemanding
  - c context-embedded and cognitively demanding
  - d context-reduced and cognitively demanding
9. A person's knowledge of the rules of language use and the ability to use the language appropriately is a definition of the concept
  - a sociolinguistic competence
  - b grammatical competence
  - c critical language awareness
  - d communicative language teaching
10. According to Krashen, the ability to learn new language through being exposed to language that is slightly beyond our present level of competence, is termed
  - a The natural order hypothesis
  - b the monitor hypothesis
  - c the input hypothesis
  - d the affective filter

## Assignment 1 (30%)

This assignment takes the form of a **reaction paper**. A reaction paper in the context of this course, is a *written response* to a particular experience. The experience which you have to respond to for Assignment 1 is the modelled lesson series in Section 6 of this booklet, *Introduction to LILT*.

### Length

2-3 pages

### Topic

To what extent are the ideas and processes modelled in the series of lessons on the theme 'Patterns' in Section 6, Putting principles into practice, of this *Introduction to LILT*, relevant to the language development of the learners in your teaching situation? Develop your response under the following five headings:

- Theme
- Learning outcomes
- Collaborative/Group work
- Use of the mother tongue
- Writing tasks

You must indicate which **grade** and which **learning area** you teach, as well as the **number of learners** in your class.

The following questions should be answered under each heading:

### Theme

What is the rationale given in this lesson series for the choice of the theme 'Patterns'?

How appropriate and relevant is this theme to *your* teaching context?

What would you change or adapt?

Indicate the Grade and Learning Area in which you teach when you answer these questions.

**Learning outcomes**

Study the list of outcomes which we identified for learners doing the lessons on 'Patterns'. Choose **one** outcome (and write it down) for each of the following categories: *knowledge, skills and values / attitudes*.

Which of the outcomes in your list would be particularly relevant to the language development of **your** learners? Give reasons for your choices.

**Collaborative learning/ group work**

In your opinion, how useful is group work? Give good reasons for your response.

Explain how the way in which we have used group work in these lessons contribute to the language development of the learners.

**Use of the mother tongue**

What reasons are given in this unit for encouraging the use of the mother tongue as part of the second language development process?

What is the attitude to the use of the mother tongue *in the English classes in your school?*

**Writing tasks**

Does *written* or *spoken* English make the most demands on our learners' English language competence? Support your answer.

Do the task which requires that *topic sentences* be matched with appropriate paragraph content in Thomas Mvabaza's letter.

### **Assessment Criteria for Assignment 1**

You should have noticed that, under each heading, there is one part that draws directly on your reading and understanding of the modelled lesson material in this unit, and one part that draws on your own thinking and experiences.

#### **Criteria for Part 1**

Information should be accurate and *expressed in your own words* where appropriate.

All words and phrases taken from the this Introduction or any other unit must be acknowledge and *page referenced*. You will be penalised heavily if you quote other people's work without acknowledging it. This constitutes **plagiarism** and is unacceptable.

#### **Criteria for Part 2**

Responses should reflect a serious attempt to engage with the questions posed

#### **General**

Only that which is **relevant and necessary** to the topic under discussion.

One idea, one paragraph!

Clear evidence of final editing.

## Assignment 2 (40%)

The purpose of the LILT course is to raise language awareness. We have introduced you to a number of principles and processes, all grounded in sound theory, but practically researched and applicable in most of our classroom contexts. In this assignment, you are required to demonstrate the understanding you have acquired.

### Length

4-5 pages (approximately 1200 to 1500 words)

### Topic

You have just attended a two day in-service workshop on the role of language in learning and teaching. At this workshop you were introduced to the following principles and processes:

- comprehensible input
- the affective filter
- BICS and CALP
- the link between writing and learning
- reading as the negotiation of meaning

Prepare a report which will be circulated to all members of your staff, including HODs and the principal, (your *audience*) in which you report back on this workshop (your *purpose*). Your report must focus on **BICS** and **CALP** and **one other** concept in this list. In your report, **for each concept that you choose**, you must:

- Explain the concept
- Promote its use (that is, give reasons for the value of all teachers *understanding the concept*)
- Provide your colleagues with **five** questions which will help them challenge/interrogate their own practice in this area.

When you write this assignment you must:

- **not** use subheadings
- **not** plagiarise
- **reference** (in the text and at the end).



<b>Assessment Criteria for Assignment 2</b>	
<b>Assessment criteria</b>	<b>Evident from:</b>
1. Sound understanding of concepts	the way in which the concepts are explained and the reasons given for the value of all teachers (regardless of learning area) understanding them
2. A sensitivity to the current practice of colleagues and the problems raised by introducing change	the types of questions set for colleagues to use when challenging/ interrogating their own present practices
3. An awareness of <i>context</i> , <i>audience</i> and <i>purpose</i>	the choice of language, style and form of address, i.e. the choice of <i>genre</i> (an academic essay would be inappropriate!)
4. Adherence to instructions	an <i>absence</i> of subheadings  an <i>absence</i> of plagiarism  full references in the text and at the end.
5. Good organisation and structure	the way in which sentences are organised, in paragraphs, around key ideas.  the <i>absence</i> of generalisations and the <i>use</i> of qualifiers (where appropriate).  the <i>total relevance</i> of every word on the page!

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

EXAMINATIONS : NOVEMBER 1998

B Ed : LANGUAGE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING : PEDS7LJ2 : PMBURG  
B Ed : LANGUAGE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING : PENS7LJ2 : MADADENI

PAPER : P

DURATION : 3 HOURS

TOTAL MARKS: 120

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Internal Examiner: Ms C. Thomson  
External Examiner: Ms C. Boughey

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STUDENTS ARE REQUESTED, IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS, TO WRITE LEGIBLY.

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**PLEASE NOTE:** THIS QUESTION PAPER CONSISTS OF SEVEN PAGES.  
PLEASE SEE THAT YOU HAVE ALL THE PAGES.

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**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THIS PAPER**

1. This examination consists of 3 sections. You must answer **Section A** ON this examination paper and hand it in with your answer-books.
2. You **MUST** write your Student Number on this examination paper as well as ALL your answer-books.
3. **Please read the questions CAREFULLY** and spend some time planning before you write.

STUDENT NUMBER:.....

**Section A: Multiple-choice questions.**

The answers to the multiple-choice questions **MUST** be recorded below by circling your choice of the correct answer.

1 : a b c d	6 : a b c d	11 : a b c d
2 : a b c d	7 : a b c d	12 : a b c d
3 : a b c d	8 : a b c d	13 : a b c d
4 : a b c d	9 : a b c d	14 : a b c d
5 : a b c d	10 : a b c d	15 : a b c d

**Multiple-choice questions**

1. **The monitor hypothesis suggests that speakers make use of an internal monitor to:**
  - a. Edit their responses to learners' written work.
  - b. Learn the rules for grammatical accuracy in a second language.
  - c. Measure whether they have achieved the required learner outcomes.
  - d. Regulate the use of rules when speaking a second language.
  
2. **Getting learners to write their own Literate Life Histories is:**
  - a. Beneficial because it validates learners' own experiences.
  - b. Detrimental because learners will get unrealistic ideas about their writing abilities.
  - c. Inhibiting because learners always feel threatened by writing about personal events.
  - d. The only way of teaching learners how to write narratives.
  
3. **If learners do not know very much on the subject they are reading about:**
  - a. They will read easily because it is new information.
  - b. They will read slowly because their schema for the subject is rudimentary.
  - c. They will tend to be too assertive of the text and accept everything it says.
  - d. They will tend to be too submissive and reject everything the writer says.

4. **Writing has a metacognitive function. This means that:**
- People who cannot write do not have the ability to think logically.
  - You can do a lot of thinking about the subject as you decide how to write about it.
  - You can only write down something that you understand thoroughly.
  - You need to know why you are writing something if you expect to remember it.
5. **The model of communicative competence in language teaching has been criticised because it does not take account of:**
- Learners' prior knowledge of their own mother tongue.
  - The role of authentic communicative tasks in the classroom.
  - The role of the monitor in learning a second language.
  - The unequal power relations that always exist in social interaction.
6. **Widdowson distinguishes between Language *use* and *usage*. This distinction draws attention to:**
- The difference between appropriacy and grammatical accuracy in using a language.
  - The difference between language acquisition and language learning.
  - The notions of competence and performance.
  - The problems of first language interference in learning a second language.
7. **Mercer theorizes that learners need to talk together in groups in the classroom to solve problems because:**
- A group will always solve a problem.
  - Group work helps the teacher to hear the learners' ideas.
  - One learner will be able to convince the rest of the group.
  - Talking helps to clarify people's thinking.

8. **Widdowson defines communication as a negotiation of meaning. If we think of reading as an example of communication, this means that:**
- Shared meaning has to be the goal of both the writer and the reader.
  - The negotiation of meaning is difficult to achieve because the reader and the writer are not present together.
  - The reader can only share the writer's meaning if they know each other well.
  - The writer has to be completely sure who the readers of his/her writing are.
9. **Chall's research shows that readers who can read but do not get a lot of practice in reading, lose interest in reading at about age 14 years because:**
- They are under the influence of their teenage peers.
  - They cannot manage to decode the many increasingly unfamiliar words.
  - They come from low income homes.
  - They have many other interests at school and home.
10. **When the writers of a Grade 5 geography textbook create a text that will be accessible to the readers, they need to:**
- Explain any diagrams or maps very carefully in relation to the written text.
  - Use the same vocabulary as they would use in a Grade 10 geography textbook.
  - Write about geographical concepts that the readers already know about.
  - Write only in a narrative genre.
11. **By classroom discussion of texts that learners are reading, teachers will be able to:**
- Ensure that learners get the correct interpretation of the text.
  - Give learners an excuse not to do the reading before class.
  - Model the behaviour of avid and critical readers to the learners.
  - Produce learners who are passive consumers of text.

12. The main reason that readers resort to *guessing* the content of a text is because:
- Of immature cognitive development.
  - They have limited previous experience.
  - They have poor decoding skills.
  - They lack memory skills.
13. The term 'genre' in language contexts means:
- The different ways people use language to establish their identity.
  - The different ways we use language to achieve social purposes.
  - The way language is used to achieve different relationships.
  - The way society determines what language we use.
14. The connection between writing and power is more real than between speaking and power because:
- Those in control depend on the written traditions of society to maintain power.
  - Those in control determine the forms of speaking to maintain power.
  - Those in control determine the forms of writing in order to maintain power.
  - Those in control determine the oral tradition of society.
15. The best way to teach higher order reading skills is to:
- Ensure that the readers understand every word of the text.
  - Expose the readers to graded, text-based decoding exercises.
  - Help the readers to actively reconstruct the writer's meaning.
  - Help the readers to extract all meaning directly from the text.

15 x 2 marks = 30 marks

**SECTION B:**

Choose **TWO** out of the following **FOUR** topics. For each topic explain the concept as fully as possible (including its relevance to language learning and teaching). You should write between one and two pages on **EACH** topic.

1. The relationship between learning outcomes, assessment and classroom interaction.
2. Theme-based teaching for language development.
3. The way in which writing and talking facilitate learning.
4. The affective filter hypothesis and the comprehensible input hypothesis.

2 x 15 marks = 30 marks

**SECTION C:**

Answer **TWO** out of the following **THREE** questions. You should spend about 45 minutes on each question, and write between three and four pages in each case.

**Question 1**

You have been invited to write an article for a newsletter produced by your regional Teachers' Association in which you explain the value of the process approach to teaching writing. You will need to explain fully the steps in the writing process as well as some of the techniques for generating effective writing

**Question 2**

One of the ways in which schools can promote enjoyment of reading by learners is to ensure that the timetable makes provision for a reading period. Write a letter to your school principal in which you ask for a decision that twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays for half an hour from 12 noon, the whole school, including the principal and all the teachers should sit at their desks and read. In your letter you must explain why so many learners have reading difficulties, and how the reading period could be used to motivate them to read.

**Question 3**

The principal tells you that she has had complaints from other teachers that your learners make a lot of noise in your classroom. Prepare a talk to give to the teachers at a staff meeting explaining the communicative approach to language development which often requires learners to work together in groups. In your talk you must focus on:

- authentic communication
- interactive learning
- teaching grammar in context

2 x 30 marks = 60 marks

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