THE USE BY STUDENTS OF FORMATIVE FEEDBACK FOR IMPROVING THEIR WRITING: A STUDY OF STUDENT SELF-OBSERVATION REPORTS IN AN ACADEMIC WRITING MODULE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND

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Abstract

This study analyses students' use of formative feedback through a case study of a foundation-type academic literacy module at the University of Zululand. The research paradigm incorporates both a critical and a constructivist perspective, and a qualitative approach. The data collected were transcripts of interviews conducted with students towards the end of the third term, 2004, for the module. During the interviews the students described how they used respondent feedback on short, draft pieces of writing. They referred to their portfolio of writing which was with them.

Students write short pieces, or endnotes, after each lecture in order to show their understanding of academic concepts based on the content of Political Philosophy; they must rewrite after carefully noting respondents' comments on their work; and they, with tutor supervision, write group endnotes for responders. The meta-level understanding underpinning the modules is an academic literacies approach.

The transcripts were analysed using discourse analysis. Findings are that the students interviewed tend to use the feedback as if they are corrections, rather than what the feedback ideally aims at, which is by a writing dialogue, to help students to develop students' awareness of the discipline's conventions for academic writing, together and through construction of coherent meaning in their writing. The students' interpretive framing of their use of the respondent

feedback are perhaps aligned with dominant institutional practices which tend to understand apparent student problems in learning in the university in terms of problems with student language, where language merely carries meaning, rather than being integral to the construction of meaning. The variable quality of the respondent feedback for the students interviewed also suggests some responders might also understand student writing in terms of problems in language as separate from construction of meaning.

The implications of this study are to encourage an institutional understanding of the importance of using formative feedback to assist student access to the university and to success. Further, it challenges the dominant institutional and wider understanding of student difficulty as primarily stemming from lack of language proficiency. Finally, it recognizes the complexities of student self-reflexive understanding of the role of using formative feedback in their writing.

Acknowledgements

Declaration

This dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted for examination in any other university.

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1 Chapter One: Introduction

Higher education internationally has seen massification and increasingly diverse student intake (HEQC, 2004: 4). In South Africa there has been significant attention to increasing participation of previously disadvantaged, and currently disadvantaged, students in higher education. These students are mainly African students with English as an additional language. Enhancing access of disadvantaged and underprepared students can be confounded by dominant understandings, or misunderstandings, of the problems the students face. One such understanding arises from the "language as an instrument of communication" discourse (Christie, 1989). A discourse can be described as socially accepted ways of thinking, communicating and valuing (Boughey, 2002), within a particular context. This particular discourse, "language as an instrument of communication," has been identified by Christie (1989) and, in the South African context, by researchers such as Boughey (1999) as a powerful and entrenched discourse in higher education. This discourse can pathologise the difficulties students with English as an additional language face in their higher education studies in South Africa. It encourages the understanding of these difficulties as stemming from student deficits in the language of learning, which is typically English at South African higher education institutions, including the University of Zululand. Further, it can appoint responsibility for failure and solving problems to the individual student to improve his or her language proficiency (M[c]Kenna, 2003).

The alternative position, as suggested by, for example, Boughey (2005) and M[c]kenna (2003), is that student difficulties are better addressed by "bridging the gaps between the respective worlds students and lecturers draw on" (Boughey, 2005: 240). Further, the rules and conventions of academic learning, including those specific to disciplines, should be made explicit to students (Boughey, 2005). This approach is an academic literacies approach, discussed in Chapter Two. Bock (1988) and Nightingale (1988) argue that student learning is inextricably bound with access to academic literacy. Formative feedback on student writing is crucial to enhance that access. Feedback helps students move from their everyday, home discourses to the required specialized, academic discourse, or the role and accepted ways of writing, speaking and thinking in the specific academic context (see Chapter Two) (CHE, 2004). The implications of this study are, then, to encourage an institutional understanding of the importance of using formative feedback to assist student access to the university and to success. Further, it challenges the dominant institutional and wider understanding of student difficulty as stemming from lack of language proficiency. Finally, it recognizes the complexities of student self-reflexive understanding of the role of using formative feedback in their writing.

This study analyses students' use of formative feedback through a case study of a foundation-type module at the University of Zululand. The data collected were transcripts of interviews conducted with students towards the end of the third term, 2004, for the module, Critical and Creative Writing. In the interviews the students described their experience of how they used respondent feedback

on short, draft pieces of writing while referring to their portfolio containing these pieces of work that they had in front of them during the interview. A discourse analysis was performed on the transcripts. Findings are that the students interviewed tend to use the feedback as if they are corrections, rather than what the feedback ideally aims at, which is by a writing dialogue, to help students to develop students' awareness of the discipline's conventions for academic writing, together and through construction of coherent meaning in their writing. The students' interpretive framing of their use of the respondent feedback is aligned with institutional practices which tend to understand apparent student problems in learning in the university in terms of problems with student language.

The Critical and Creative Writing module is one of four foundation modules taken by Science, Social Science, Commerce and Law students at the University of Zululand. Students write short pieces, or endnotes, after each lecture in order to show their understanding of academic concepts based on the content of Political Philosophy; they must rewrite after carefully noting respondents' comments on their work; and they, with tutor supervision, write group endnotes for responders. The respondents are degreed persons from outside the university and are trained to provide formative feedback on student writing. Formative feedback in the Critical and Creative module is aimed at encouraging students to understand academic writing as different to speaking, as being dialogical and as having contextually specific academic conventions. The underlying learning approach is constructivist, emphasizing the student's

construction of meaning. The meta-level understanding underpinning the modules is an academic literacies approach (Street, 2001): the conventions of academic discourse need to be made explicit to students; these conventions are not generic but contextually specific, such as specific to each academic discipline. How students understand and actually use the feedback is important in understanding the interactional practices of the student in the course, and institution.

I am one of the teaching team for the Critical and Creative modules, and give face-to-face feedback to students on their writing, and assist with the assessments. I became interested in how the modules worked while I was still teaching in the English Department at the University of Zululand. The approach taken in the Philosophy modules, which were originally designed by Chrissie Boughey when she worked in Academic Development at the university, together with Eldon Wait of the Philosophy Department, seemed to have useful explanatory power in understanding student learning. It challenged the dominant notion of framing the student problems in terms of their language deficiencies. Chrissie Boughey had also been involved in attempting to develop some of the English Department courses towards an academic literacies approach, with some resistance to this. Currently working in the Quality Promotion and Assurance Unit, I still try to maintain involvement in the Critical and Creative Writing modules, as their pedagogic approach is valuable in the institution, and supported by national guidelines, such as developed by the HEQC, even if the approach has not been taken up at an institutional level.

In the next chapter, Chapter Two, I discuss a theoretical overview of relevant concepts and research findings, including formative feedback, discourse, and academic literacies. Chapter Three describes the overarching research paradigm for this study. The paradigm incorporates both a critical and a constructivist perspective. I then describe the research methodology process of interviewing six students about their using respondent feedback while they have their portfolio of work in front of them, and discourse analysis of the interview transcripts, and I address issues of ethics. Chapter Four describes the contexts for the students in the Critical and Creative Writing modules, the findings of the study, from initial emergent themes, to discussion of implication of discourses in the students' understandings of their practices. The students tend to understand their use of respondent feedback in terms of language issues. The variable quality of the respondent feedback is also an issue. Chapter Five concludes the study.

2 Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter gives a theoretical overview of relevant concepts and research findings, including formative feedback; discourse, especially as defined by Gee (1990) as involving an association of ideas, values, actions and beliefs that identify one as a member of a certain social group; how discourses are implicated in power relations in society; and how writing is understood in academic learning from an academic literacies perspective.

Feedback by a lecturer can be seen as a "genre" in teaching on its own, and is a significant constructor for students of what is an academic discourse. It can, however, also maintain or re-order power relationships between the lecturer and student (Lea & Street in Archer, 2000: 160).

Quinn (2002) suggests the value of formative feedback: it is not marking, nor simply editing but assists in students' development of academic discourse, including: making meaning, developing a voice and differentiating it from others; awareness of context; awareness of the reader; and cohesion. It is an important way of orienting students to disciplinary academic discourse, both explicit and implicit. Formative feedback, or at least an iterative responding and drafting writing process, may not necessarily be seen as immediately essential to good practice in developing writing. Leibowitz (1995) lists essential parts of a writing strategy to enhance learning as including: aligning writing development with the rest of the curriculum; allowing more time to writing; appropriacy of

level; careful task design; practising writing; and modelling writing and other learning activities. These are likely to imply using formative feedback, but it might not here be foregrounded. As Boughey (1999) suggests, if students are not encouraged to perceive writing as central to their learning, then they will be unlikely to use feedback in redrafting in a process of constructing knowledge.

Van der Riet, Dison and Quinn (1998) study the use of process writing in a second-year Psychology course at Rhodes University. Their study argues that students do not easily, on their own, self-reflexively monitor their own work or actively develop knowledge. They do, however, suggest that respondent comment, or formative feedback, for drafting essays helps develop students' metacognitive skills (their awareness of their own learning strategies) and assists them to differentiate different textual "voices" and develop their own voice or perspective. Looking at this from a constructivist viewpoint, the feedback can assist in the student moving from a position of "common sense" understanding, or a pre-existing construction of particular knowledges, to redeveloped mental structures that integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge, and challenge existing knowledge in the process (Boughey, 1999).

In the United Kingdom, Higgins, Hartley and Skelton (2001; 2002) argue that formative assessment is essential for students to construct meaning rather than passively accepting it. Using interviews and structured interviews for students in two northern England universities, the researchers' initial findings were that students value formative feedback. The students used feedback to improve

their grades but also to enhance their higher order thinking and construction of knowledge. The authors note possible problems in using formative feedback such as heavy workloads in modules and feedback without enough explanation.

Feedback tends to cluster around four main areas: defining terms; organising the overall shape of the writing; grammar and editing; and formal academic conventions of referencing (Archer, 2000). Using responders, however, is most likely to be useful in developing the student's voice in employing academic discourse, or a proto- academic discourse, rather than a specified focus on, say, formal conventions. Here, feedback is not understood as editing, which typically happens much later in the writing process, where students redraft in response to formative feedback. Responders need to avoid merely correcting grammatical errors and should try to emphasise what is valued in academic writing, and in the discipline specifically. As Paxton (1995) suggests, responder tutors can tend to respond according to what Hingle terms "English teacher reading", or correcting grammar errors. Quinn (2002) describes how tutors are trained and prepared to actively respond to students' attempts to make meaning, and the improvements this can achieve in the students' writing. In the respondent programme at the University of Zululand, students would typically be required, through feedback prompts and comments to: explain and clarify, think through more carefully the implications of their arguments and be more exact and specific (Boughey, 1999).

Feedback is part of task design, such as an academic writing task and should be explicitly part of curriculum development and alignment. Ideally, formative feedback would aim at encouraging a deep approach to learning from the student, and discouraging a surface approach to learning. A deep approach to learning might include an attempt by the student to explain a concept using his or her own voice, to relate it to examples or analogies, and possibly to personal experience. A surface approach might involve reproduction of memorized information without understanding (Entwistle, 1988).

The way in which a student interprets the process of using feedback to improve his or her writing, and how this affects the approach to learning can be understood using the concept of "discourse". Discourses can be thought of as patterns or systems of statements and ideas that operate in and inform speech and other communication (for example, academic discourse, racist discourse, medical discourse, legal discourse). The communications studied in a discourse analysis are often called texts and can include recorded conversations, interviews, letters, transcription of a class interaction, news articles and programmes, books and internet pieces (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Boughey (2002), however, following Gee (1990), uses the concept of 'discourse' more specifically as involving socially accepted ways of thinking, communicating, valuing and feeling. Gee conceptualises a discourse as far more than a piece of patterned language, but rather an implication of complex combinations of expressing (through, for example speaking or writing), acting,

valuing and referring to beliefs. Gee refers to these complex combinations involving identity, roles, attitudes and beliefs as Discourses (with a capital "D") to differentiate them from coherent pieces of language such as a story, or report, referred to as "discourse" (with a small "d").

Gee (1990: 143) offers a definition of a discourse, then, as a

> ...[s]ocially accepted association among many ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'.

The group has certain, usually implicit, rules and conventions about who is a member and who is not. Mastery of a discourse is through acquisition, which is a kind of apprenticeship, including practice within the group and its relevant setting, rather than through formal, overtly conscious learning. Examples here might be a student acquiring an academic discourse (at a level of undergraduate, rather than immediately as an "expert"), or more specifically, a disciplinary academic discourse in Science or History. The "rules" of such a discourse would not be overtly stated but would be acquired through practices such as modelling from the lecturer, through expectations of academic reading and writing, and experiences of assessment.

Gee (1990) further notes that there are many discourses, including primary and secondary discourses. A person's primary discourse develops through

everyday interaction with a fairly intimate group, including family. A secondary discourse is usually acquired through gaining access to, and being "apprenticed" in secondary institutions such as schools, universities and the work place. Discourses can interfere and conflict with each other, can support each other, and aspects of one can transfer to another discourse. Boughey (1999; 2000) suggests particular allied, competing or conflicting discourses involved in teaching and learning at the University of Zululand: a discourse, for example, that blames students' failure on poor English usage is allied with a discourse that blames students for failing to use readily accessed "skills". These can be opposed by an alternative discourse which emphasises how apparent student failure can be usefully explained by discussion of differences between the expectations arising out of the powerful, dominant institutional discourses and the students' discourses they bring with them into their student career.

Boughey (2000) challenges assumptions relating to teaching English as a second language. Such assumptions support the view that problems in understanding academic texts and producing meaning are primarily or only linguistic problems for students who are speakers of English as an additional language. Using analysis of student writing and of interviews with students, Boughey argues that, as discussed above, problems in student writing are because of their unfamiliarity with the rules and conventions of academic discourse, rather than simply because they are speakers of English as an additional language. As Street (2001: 21) suggests, student difficulties with

academic writing can be seen in terms of "the gaps between faculty expectations and student interpretations of what is involved in student writing".

These dominant discourses, where, for example, student difficulties are pathologised, are problematic and need interrogation. An example is a discourse of "language as an instrument of communication": language is here constructed as merely carrying meaning neutrally, without reference to different socio-cultural contexts (Christie, 1989; Boughey, 1999). Using this discourse, academics can express problems that disadvantaged students face as primarily language problems, or deficiencies in language that require, for example, grammar teaching. The discourse appeals to common sense, and assumes a neutral rather than an ideological base. These discourses do not actually help the student to gain access, or "membership" to the university through acquiring the appropriate discourse(s), i.e. developing academic literacy (Boughey, 2002). They can pathologise students instead of critically examining the construction of what learning and literacy means. Rather, approaches to teaching should look to making explicit the rules and conventions of academic discourse for disciplines in the mainstream curriculum. Beasley in Taylor et al (1988: 50) similarly argues that students require "initiation" into academic discourse, rather than remediation of apparent deficits.

Gee's (1990) perspective on discourse is useful for this study because it can help in understanding how students use formative feedback. This understanding involves analysing what discourses students employ in

negotiating the feedback as well as analysing dominant discourses at the institution that students must negotiate. Finally, Gee's perspective helps emphasise how discourses carry power in society, and carry power unequally.

Fairclough (1989) examines connections between how language is used and unequal relations of power in society. The social references are to British society. He describes Critical Language Study (CLS) which emphasises that language is a social practice and not somehow ideologically neutral, and that language is implicated in discourse. Fairclough (1989: 163; 24) reiterates the dialectical nature of effects of discourse: social structures shape Members' Resources (these include a person's language knowledge, representations, values, beliefs and assumptions) which in turn shape discourses, which also shape Members' Resources, which shape social structures. The primary issue here is the effects of discourse practices, particularly as they relate to relations of power; how they are ideological. It is involved with what the texts do (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 160), not merely what they say. To begin, one can ask why particular oppositions, other language features, and subject positions are used; why these have been chosen from a larger repertoire (Fairclough, 1989).

Assumptions that inform peoples' linguistic interactions are ideologies and such ideologies legitimize differences of power. Gee (1990: 23) understands ideologies as sets of generalizations that allow for consistent descriptions and explanations of social phenomena, crucially generalisations about *"the ways in*

which 'goods' are distributed in society". "Goods" include what is generally valued, such as wealth, status and power. A critical approach to language studies analyses linguistic aspects of social interactions in order to show their hidden or ideological underpinnings, and the effects that they have on people or society. Standard approaches to the study of language and literacy are limited because they are uncritical. They tend to focus on surface features and grammar, without acknowledging literacy as a social practice and thereby eliding the intimate relation between literacy, or literacies, and ideology, and thus social power (Street, 2001). These limitations can sometimes include conversational analysis or discourse analysis because these forms of analysis, while answering "what" questions, can avoid asking critical "how" and "why" questions. Boughey (1999; 2002) explicitly uses a critical approach, also referred to in Quinn (2000). In this critical approach, Boughey (1999; 2002) distinguishes between autonomous and ideological models of literacy (see below).

Literacy has traditionally been thought of as being able to read and write and thus communicate effectively in a modern world. Street (1984) describes literacy as involving the social practices and understandings around reading and writing. Street makes an important distinction between conceptions of literacy which see it as a set of ideologically neutral, decontextualised skills and conceptions of literacy which see it as contextually and culturally specific. The decontextualised perception of literacy, especially writing, is valorized over illiteracy (not being able to write), and literacy is associated with development,

modernity and progress. This "autonomous" model (Street, 1984: 1) of literacy sees literacy as autonomous or independent of discourse, or discourses, and ideology, and therefore implication in unequal relations of power. Street (1984: 1) critiques the autonomous model with an alternative "ideological" model which recognises that the autonomous model supports a form of literacy practices which are linked to a very specific context and culture, especially the essay-text form of literacy found in western schools and higher education. The autonomous model, then, understands texts and literacy practices as neutral, they are without social context and are acultural; the ideological model emphasises how texts and practices are socially embedded and involve unequal relations of power. Rather than assuming there is only one literacy that is taken to be the only possible form of literacy, there are many literacies. Some are more powerful than others because of their use by more powerful groups in society (Boughey, 1999). The ideological model is sceptical about the claims made for universal benefits of the essay-text literacy in increasing rational, logical critical thinking skills and also recognises the interaction of oral and literate practices, rather than placing orality as a more basic and limited mode out of which all should progress through developing literacy.

Describing literacy as socio-culturally specific practice relates to understanding literacy as mastery over a discourse other than a 'home' or primary discourse (Gee, 1991; Boughey, 1999). Academic literacy means being able to understand and work with the rules and conventions required at the university for writing, thinking and so on. Ballard and Clanchy (1988) describe academic

literacy as the student's ability to use writing to perform tasks required in the academic culture, when that writing is judged acceptable by the reader. Academic literacy involves being able to create meaning and show understanding within the academic culture, not simply using a few general skills. Acquiring academic literacy is a gradual process that includes the whole of the student's academic career. Importantly, Street (2001) argues that the most useful model for discussing student writing is the academic *literacies* model. This model is distinguished from the study skills model which understands student writing as depending on using a set of technical, decontextualised skills. The study skills model develops out of the autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984) briefly described above; the academic literacies model out of the ideological model. The academic literacies model does not suggest, like the academic socialisation model, that students should be uncritically inculcated into the culture of the institution; rather, it emphasises the implication of discourses, through ideology, in the distribution of power. Also, it sees academic literacy practices as being context-specific, such as specific to each academic discipline. Hence, the use of academic literacies, rather than a single literacy. The student who becomes literate in different specific contexts is gaining mastery over a number of secondary discourses: the student is able to "deploy a repertoire of linguistic practices appropriate to each setting, and to handle the social meanings and identities that each evokes" (Street, 2001: 20).

The Critical and Creative Writing course at the University of Zululand uses process writing for students which is underpinned by an academic literacies

approach. A fairly similar approach in an English Language for Academic Purposes (ELAP) course at Rhodes University is discussed in Quinn's thesis (2000). The ELAP course is aimed at making access to academic discourse easier for students. For the process writing there, as in the Critical and Creative Writing course, students received constructive and formative feedback from the tutor and then rewrote drafts before handing in a final essay.

The drafting-responding process helps in developing students' academic literacy for a specific context, for example, essay writing within a particular discipline, as well as for the larger university context. The respondent comments helped to make some of the rules and conventions of academic discourse more accessible to students. Students in the ELAP course are beginning this process of becoming academically literate, but the process should continue across all disciplines and involve all lecturers for the further steps in the students' careers. An important way to develop writing is to emphasise the process of writing: how writing is a complex, active process involving discussion with others and rewriting, and is not simply an end product. Academic literacy, or attaining mastery of an academic discourse, then, centrally involves writing as a process of acquiring and demonstrating that acquisition of academic discourse. How students use feedback on their writing can be analysed to show how that process takes place, for this study, in the particular context of the writing modules at the University of Zululand; and how particular institutional and student discourses (such as described by Boughey, 1999) might shape the process.

Nightingale's chapter, as adapted for South Africa by Archer, in Makoni (2000), emphasises process writing, and writing as learning. A principle underlying this approach includes that writing is a social practice; it is part of discourses in the institution. Following from this, effective writing must be shown to be part of the practices of a particular discipline in order to help students to enter into and master the discourse of that discipline. Writing is not a decontextualised skill. This approach to reflecting on student writing at the tertiary level is incorporated in the academic literacies model as described by Street (2001).

Henning, Mamiane and Pheme (2001) examine academic writing as part of academic discourse, and how new masters students from Historically Black Universities cope with writing requirements. The study by Henning et al (2001) suggests that difficulties for developing research expertise were not so much from lack of specific skills but rather from unfamiliarity with conventions for scholarly writing and thinking. The educational histories of the students made for particular problems as their experience of research writing was problematic, for example, they were not required to use coherent arguments. Henning et al (2001) conclude that discrete language skills are not enough to develop academic literacy. Following Street's (2001) perspective on models for student writing, the academic literacies approach holds greater explanatory power than the study skills approach, but also reiterates how discourses are implicated in and shape academic practices, and so how those practices empower or disempower. A more anthropological view of student life should be used, i.e.

the students need to have a place and identity within the academic community, while also building a critical ability. Suggestions from the research by Henning et al (2001) are that discipline-based language and writing courses are used that are closely aligned to the particular discourse of the discipline and that staff are made aware of the complexities of teaching writing in each discipline. The Critical and Creative Writing modules do attempt to develop student literacy in the specific discipline of Philosophy. Understanding how students use formative feedback on their writing is integral to reflecting on the teaching and learning practice in the modules. The conventions of academic discourse, then, are made as explicit as possible for the students, while there is the awareness that helping students to gain access to academic discourse should not be uncritical of the discourse.

Writing in a discipline is a process of development, not the starting point for students. Ballard and Clanchy in Taylor et al (1988) emphasise that academic literacy needs to be understood in particular cultures of universities. The student needs to be made aware of "deep" rules and values of the academic discourse because these are used to judge the student's writing. The rules of particular disciplines must also be made explicit.

The discussion of findings of this study in Chapter Four will suggest how student discourses would seem for the students interviewed to be different to both the dominant discourses of the university, as well as the academic literacy discourse operating in the Philosophy modules.

3 Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter examines the overarching research paradigm for the research, the means of eliciting and analyzing data, and the assumptions underlying the processes.

3.1 Constructivist—Critical Paradigm

A paradigm frames the whole research project and design; it shapes the research question and all aspects of the conduct of the study (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 36). Further, the research should show coherence in relation to the paradigm it is aligned with and not show, in its design, a confusion by mixing elements that are inappropriate to the paradigm used. It can be possible to draw on different paradigms, but this interaction must be very carefully explained and justified (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 7).

A paradigm involves describing the overarching approach to, here, research that coheres and ultimately defines all aspects of the research process, including what type of questions are asked, the research method, and ways of analyzing data. Guba (1990: 17) describes a paradigm as a "basic set of beliefs that guides action" in any field, here specifically the research field. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1990: 481) suggest that a paradigm, as a "system of practice and thinking" shapes or refracts the researcher's perspective.

A useful framework to help understand these kinds of overarching beliefs and systems of thinking is Jurgen Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests, as discussed in Grundy (1987). The basic interests are rational means that humans use to achieve self-preservation. The interests are not only approaches to knowledge but shape and structure knowledge itself. The three basic knowledge-constitutive interests are: the technical, the practical and the emancipatory. The technical interest involves an attempt to control the environment through rule-based action that follows empirically tested laws (Grundy, 1987: 12). The practical interest is on understanding the environment rather than controlling it (Grundy, 1987: 14). The understanding comes through interaction with the environment, including other people, with that interaction based on mutual, intersubjective and consensual understandings and norms. The final interest is an emancipatory interest which moves towards empowerment, or a person's or group's ability to autonomously determine their own lives. It involves using critical perspectives on the social construction of society. These knowledge-constitutive interests are valuable in discussing research paradigms because they emphasise the construction of knowledge and each interest can be related to and help explain the development of certain paradigms. The technical interest can be related to empirical, analytical sciences; the practical to interpretivist or hermeneutic and constructivist approaches; and the emancipatory interest to critical theory and research, where unequal relations of power are analysed and actively challenged.

Guba (1990: 18) offers three main areas of questions through which each paradigm can be described: ontological (concerning the nature of knowledge and reality); the epistemological (concerning the nature of the relationship between the inquirer and what is being investigated); and the methodological (concerning how the inquirer goes about the research). The technical interest, then, can be linked to the positivist paradigm, as described by Guba (1990: 20). The positivist paradigm ontologically, holds for an objective reality out there; epistemologically it is objectivist, where the inquirer does not interact, and is distanced from the object of inquiry; and methodologically it aligns with experiments using hypotheses tested empirically. A modified form of positivism, called postpositivism moves to "critical realism" (Guba, 1990: 20) where an external reality outside of a person's perceptions and discourses is still held to exist but it is acknowledged that the reality cannot be completely understood. Alternative paradigms are the constructivist and critical frames (Guba, 1990). Constructivism is relativist (reality is a social construct); subjectivist (findings emanate from interaction between researcher and participants, or what is investigated); and is aligned to hermeneutic or interpretivist methodologies (understandings are constructed and refined through achieving a common understanding). Constructivism, then, can broadly be related to the practical interest described by Habermas. The critical paradigm can be linked to the emancipatory interest. Paradigms can co-exist, however, if followed through carefully (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 7), for example a constructivist approach can also be critical, as with this study.

I suggest this research is in the constructivist paradigm (Guba, 1990; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Ontologically, it recognizes the social construction of knowledge; and how that knowledge is shaped through discourse. Epistemologically it emphasizes how the research is an interaction between researcher and participants. The findings generated are produced out of that interaction. Methodologically, discourse analysis is one of the methods aligned to the constructivist approach. The constructivist paradigm recognizes the "context of discovery" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 11). Rather than discovering a universally applicable truth, the research is investigating student constructions of how they understand and use feedback on their draft endnotes; and how the discourses students use shape this understanding, within a particular institutional context. This research attempts to make underlying assumptions explicit.

However, the study also acknowledges issues of power, and unequal relations of power in society: social constructions or reality associated with more powerful groups in society can become dominant, appear as natural, as the ways things simply "are". The study, then, also has a critical stance.

Finally, issues of validity and reliability are related to the paradigm and their meanings differ under different paradigms. In this study, using a constructivist—critical paradigm, validity does not refer to how the study reveals the "truth", as it would under a positivist paradigm. Rather, validity for this study refers to how rigorously it is contextualized and how evidence supports the conclusions of the

study. Reliability, as it refers to, for example, replicability, for a positivist study, is not relevant to this study.

The results of the research are not assumed to be universally generalisable; rather the institutional context is significant. However, it can be possible to make suggestions from the results regarding previous research such as Boughey (1999), in the same context, as well as similar contexts in other institutions.

3.2 Interviews and Discourse Analysis

The research is based on 6 interviews conducted with students in the Critical and Creative writing modules at the University of Zululand. The students were selected from the class list to show a range of performance. The selection included at least one student who did well in the rewrites (for example, getting "well done" comments) but who still rewrote at least several of the endnotes. It also included at least one student who was required to rewrite most of his or her endnotes. Finally, the selection included at least one student who had to see a lecturer at least once because the writing appeared confused.

All interviewed students are speakers of English as an additional language. The data sources are taped, transcribed verbal reports from the students obtained during the interview. The reports were collected by asking students to describe how they negotiated feedback to pieces of their work in front of

them from their portfolio of work. The students were asked prompt questions such as: "How did you use this comment?" or "Did you think this comment was important for you to help rewrite? Why was it important for you?" The students were encouraged to relate their whole experience of rewriting using the respondent feedback. One practical problem with using tape-recorded transcripts was noise interference: the central airconditioner came on intermittently during my initial two interviews, and made parts of the interviews inaudible on playing them back. I changed the venue for the interviews, and had to discard those first two interviews, doing eight interviews in total.

Cohen (1987) suggests using writing protocol analysis, or self-reporting, on how a student performs a particular task can elicit useful insights. Cohen makes an interesting distinction between "unconscious" processes that are unlikely to be elicited in the student self-reports and by implication, "conscious" explanations and decisions. However, the emphasis in this research project is examining how students use the feedback on their work, this being mediated by the discourses the students use to help them make meaning in the activity. In other words, the student self-reports are not taken as self-evident "truths", but rather should be analysed in the frame of the discourses that they bring to their context, as well as discourses that emerge out of the institutional context.

The transcribed interviews were analysed using discourse analysis. Discourse analysis seems like it comes out of an interpretivist tradition, but as Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) argue, it is actually from a social constructivist

framework. It involves analysis of communication and can focus on the person's intent and how the communication is structured. This sounds like it is more interpretivist where the communication (for example, what is said in an interview) can reveal subjective (the individual's) meanings and perceptions. A more theoretical definition is that it shows how discourses lead to certain effects or positions in specific contexts. For example, in analyzing the transcripts of the interviews with the students, I considered the ways in which students tend to frame the feedback as a form of correction, rather than a dialogue. Discourse analysis, then, looks at what texts "do" (how they construct meaning in a social context) rather than attempting to elicit a hidden truth.

Discourse analysis requires familiarity with the context related to the texts and the ability to reflect on the text, rather than to, say, react to them. Some strategies to use in identifying discourses include: finding binary oppositions (for example, stupid versus clever; love versus hate); recurrent themes or metaphors and identifying the subjects spoken about (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). I have used such strategies in analyzing the transcripts with students. Discourse analysis also involves trying to interpret the texts to understand possible effects. This is a bit like, say, imagining the effect of another person's communication when you are in conversation with them. Effects of discourse can include, for example: convincing others that you speak the "truth"; convincing the reader that the author is reliable; and persuading the reader or listener to act in a certain way. Discourse analysis can involve a further step of explanation where the use of particular discourses is shown to

support unequal relations of power in society, with reference to particular theories of society. The analysis and explanation, often called "critical discourse analysis" (see Gee, 1990; Fairclough, 1989; and Wodak, 1996) can help to address social problems. This can include recognizing how mastery over a particular discourse can give privilege and create a sense of those who do not share that discourse as being less worthy. For example, as related to this study, failing students at the University might be described as inadequate or unsuited for higher education, but their failing might be more to do with their lack of access to powerful discourses in the university, rather than individual limitations or deficits.

The context can be described at a number of levels, such as the "micro-context" (for example, in a conversation) or a "macro-context" involving institutions and ideologies (for example, the consumerist or market discourse in higher education) (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The context of this study is multiply layered: the immediate context, or micro-level context, is the interview. The meso-context is the Critical and Creative Writing module. The macro-context is the institution and the pedagogic values and beliefs of staff and students in the institution. There is also the meta-context of research related to this study. The study has to shift between these different layers of context without losing coherence. The analyst is also part of the context, and his or her choices have effects on the study. As researcher, I decided on the research question, on the texts to be analysed, how they were to be analysed, and have decided on the conclusions reached. The position of the researcher also has

effects: I am part of the teaching team for the Critical and Creative Writing modules.

Discourse analysis can fall prey to common errors, such as: only summarising or identifying themes rather than showing what the text does; contesting the argument or position in a text rather than showing the effects of the text; and stating the obvious or making unlikely claims without giving convincing evidence from the text (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

One means of attempting to avoid these pitfalls is to consider, for this research, arguments about and descriptions of, discourses that students use to described or explain their experiences from research such as Boughey (1999), as well as Quinn (1999). Further, the data elicited from the interviews might suggest different, or changing discourses from the kinds of discourses analysed in these studies. Finally, the framework for discourse analysis adapted from Fairclough (1989; see below) for this study encourages a "dialogue" between theory and the process of interpreting the data (Brown & Dowling, 1998) and also encourages a "laminating" of discourses, rather than a simple listing (Silverman, 2005: 55).

Some researchers view discourse analysis as unprogressive, unlike action research which aims to make a difference to, say, disempowered learners. This can be because it can seem to deal only with language and ideas, rather than actual conditions of inequality or disempowerment. On the other hand,

discourse analysis can demonstrate and be critical of how discourses can limit a person's possibilities and actions, as in critical discourse analysis.

Fairclough (1989) describes how critical discourse analysis can be employed. There are three main stages of the analysis. The first is description of a text, involving formal properties of a text. The second stage is interpretation, which is an interactive process involving texts and "Members' Resources" (Fairclough, 1989: 24), or "interpretive procedures" (Fairclough, 1989: 141), including a person's "knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds they inhabit, values, beliefs, assumptions, and so on" (Fairclough, 1989: 24). For this research, it will be useful to examine how the student interprets or understands contexts such as the institutional context; how students represent or "frame" key topics or themes, such as success, or audience, or understanding; and to what extent these interpretations and representations change across the student interviews (Fairclough, 1989: 162). The interpretation of texts is part of discourse analysis, but is also always what participants do (Fairclough, 1989: 141). The formal features of a text help as cues to interpret, the interpreter using his or her Members' Resources.

The third stage concerns the explanation of the interactive processes in interpreting and producing texts in relation to the social context. This involves giving an account of how power relations might influence and shape a discourse; how discourses can be ideological, and how the discourses are involved in struggles or resistances at various levels (Fairclough, 1989).

For the steps of data analysis, I initially examined the student interviews to code for themes that emerged. The themes elicited from the student interviews included, for example: Correctness: (1) the respondent shows what is right or wrong; and (2) the feedback helps improve grammar (see Chapter Four). This is perhaps more of an interpretive approach: coding for themes (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 143). It would be geared to interpreting the student accounts in order to get an understanding of how they use formative feedback, possibly in a linear narrative way. I then also read through the interview transcripts several more times for a sense of a description of how the students used the feedback, and noted the themes for how the students went about using the feedback to rewrite.

The use of discourse clues such as binary oppositions is somewhat like Fairclough's (1989) description part of discourse analysis, or more specifically, critical discourse analysis. For example, Fairclough suggests describing what metaphors are used as a part of description of the text, or describing the formal properties of the text. However, this study does not depend on a fine analysis of linguistic features, but rather on emergent themes and how they relate to discourse.

The danger from this part of the analysis is to simply produce a list (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999) rather than "laminating" discourses (Silverman, 2005: 47), or understanding how they interact and produce effects, or how

discourses "dialogue" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Brown & Dowling, 1998), as discussed above. The framework for discourse analysis from Fairclough (1989), however, helps to move away from a simple listing to a more contextually situated explanation of discourse effects.

I have found difficulty in attempting to understand the multiple discourses operating in the student talk about their use of feedback comments. At first, I looked to frame their discussion using discourses possibly still dominant at UZ, as discussed by Boughey (2000), and some similarly elsewhere (for example, McKenna, 2003).

Another difficulty in analysing the interviews is attempting to understand the different "levels" of discourse, or how these can be understood in different contexts. In other words, the discourse is not "free-floating" but always produced and reproduced in a particular context by a certain individual whose identity is partly (depending on the context) shaped by that discourse, or discourses. A dominant discourse, as described, by, for example, Boughey (1999) is described at a meta-level arising out of a particular perspective shaped by its own context: the academic discourse of critical systemic linguistics and the academic literacies approach (see, for example, Street, 2001). This meta-level perspective is used to describe discourses operating in the higher education institution, the University of Zululand. The discourses described, such as "language as an instrument of communication" (Boughey, 1999: 147), have a long history in education and other fields, as argued by, for

example, Christie (1989) for this dominant discourse. These, then, can be dominant in the institution. Here, however, the discourse does not operate at the level of, say, an academic literacies discourse. The assumptions and beliefs of the lecturers are not necessarily reflected on, but are taken as self-evident or "common sense" (Fairclough, 1989) and as such, they resist questioning. This is an ideological effect: their resistance to interrogation can mask how "natural"-seeming practices actually support unequal relations of power. There could even be, for example, a reversion to practices that the lecturer was exposed to at school because the demands to "solve" the "language problem" of students at the University of Zululand could overwhelm English lecturers with literature studies backgrounds (Boughey, 2000).

At another level, but also not immediately self-reflexive, are the discourses evident in the student interviews conducted as part of this study. As suggested above, there is the tension between applying discourses discussed previously in the literature, which have been shown to have a long and influential history as dominant discourses, such as the "language as an instrument of communication" discourse, and attempting to understand discourses emerging out of the student explanations of how they utilised the respondent feedback.

One aspect of description that might be relevant is to do with the interactional conventions (Fairclough, 1989: 135). The interviewing style possibly constrains the student through, for example, pressing for explicitness, controlling the topic. These interview strategies were meant to elicit more of a flow from the student,

but could have enhanced the sense of the researcher as in an unequal position of power, who is somehow more like an assessor than an interviewer. The important point here is that the choices of words or phrases are related to the students', and the researcher's beliefs, the relational situation (here the interview) and social identities (Fairclough, 1989: 140). One student, Ntombi, did describe me as an "assessor" because of my involvement in the course. This might have led to her expressing, in detail, her knowledge of the content of the course.

Another constraining issue might be where the student tends to evaluate the module, approximately like they had already done by answering an evaluation on how "fairly" they thought the work was marked. There was also an earlier evaluation on the fairness of paying a small amount (R30) to pay the respondents. An example from Ntombi reflects this near the beginning of the interview:

> The responding programme is effective in terms of timeframe because it's a script, where a script was marked by Philosophy lecturers it will take them longer to attend to the number of students. As a result the students will not know the material in their work that they need clarify in their work. So as much as we appreciate the responding programme, or as much as I appreciate the responding programme, it is getting heavy on the students' financial and I believe the university knows the background, the kind of community, they are serving here. Therefore I have no doubt they know the students come from the poor families. Therefore I would

suggest another way of funding this programme should be obtained, but it is an excellent responding programme. (1)

This aspect of analysis is somewhat aligned to accounting for the effects of discourses on how participants understand and interpret their context, and how they express that interpretation. An example is the use of a "script" (Fairclough, 1989: 158). The student Ntombi might be said to have begun to employ a script for evaluation of the module, or of the respondent process (see above). But it is not here only the interview situation that is interpreted, although the effects of that interpretation impinge on others; it is also the students' interpretation of the feedback comments, and their interpretation of how they used them. Here, the discourses the students employ affect these interpretations.

I would suggest, then, that the students tend, especially at the beginning of the interview, to use the interview to speak back to the course, to evaluate it from their perspective, rather than simply giving information about their own practice. Nevertheless, the process of encouraging the students to refer to their own work in front of them, and prompting the students to describe their use of the respondent feedback did help focus the interviews on the students' interpretations of their use of the respondent feedback.

Texts are embedded in contexts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 163). The immediate context is the interview. This context has some constraints, as suggested above. The students might tend to interpret the interview as a form

of assessment of their performance, rather than understanding how they use the feedback, as influenced by and influencing discourse. Further, the relative power difference between interviewer and student might add to this perception. The researcher's technique might have been interpreted as constraining, rather than allowing the student to expand on their narrative on how they employ the feedback. However, the students had finished the module, and were aware that their assessment was finished. Also, the purpose of the interviews was carefully explained to the students beforehand.

3.3 Ethics

For each interview with the students, the overall purpose of the study was briefly described. The students were informed that the interview would be taped, and that their anonymity would be ensured, and the letter of consent (see Appendix A) was carefully explained, especially if the students had any queries. The students were assured that the interview was not any form of assessment that would be linked to their work for the module. This assurance was important because I was one of the teaching team that assisted the disciplinary experts in teaching the module, including the assessment of the students. The student completed the letter of consent.

To ensure anonymity for the students, pseudonyms have been used. Where students referred to members of staff by name, those names have been removed. The co-ordinator of the modules did give consent for the research.

4 Chapter Four: Discussion

This chapter describes the context for the students in the Critical and Creative Writing modules. The description of the context includes the module itself and the process writing approach used in the module. The description looks at the course co-ordinator's vision of the module and finally, the institutional context. The chapter then goes on to discuss the findings of the study, from initial emergent themes, to discussion of implication of discourses in the students' understandings of their practices. The students tend to understand their use of respondent feedback in terms of language issues, but these language issues are significant markers of the students' acquisition of the target academic discourse and as such are valued by the students. The variable quality of the respondent feedback is also an issue.

4.1 Context for the Critical and Creative Writing Modules

The Critical and Creative Writing modules take an academic literacies approach. An academic literacies approach is described in Street (2001). I would suggest this approach is still a resistant approach to the dominant approaches in the institutional context which call on dominant discourses such as the "language as an instrument of communication" discourse identified by Boughey (1999) as one of these dominant discourses. I suggest there is a "dialogue" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 165) between the dominant discourses, then, and the alternative, academic literacies discourse operating in the Critical and Creative Writing module. Examples of the dominant discourses

running through the curriculum can be seen in the study guides of the English Department. These are for "service" modules deployed in most programmes across the faculties at first year level, and deal with English language and communicative skills. I suggest they operate with an autonomous text approach rather than an academic literacies approach (Street, 2001); for example teaching skills that are seen to transferable, or teaching formalised grammar that will allow the student to convey his or her understanding of a disciplinary module's content in English.

Further, the broader social context is of underprepared students, almost all speakers of English as an additional language who attend the University of Zululand. I would suggest that the students, here, first-years, might experience a dissonance between the methods of the Critical and Creative Writing module and most of the other modules which tend to reproduce the pedagogic dominant discourses such as suggested above.

The Critical and Creative Writing modules act as foundation-type modules for a range of programmes, and can have between 400 and 900 students in the four modules in the year. In 2004, the staffing included: two philosophy experts; a team of 3 co-teachers, including myself; several student consultants and tutors; and about 8 respondents. The class was split into two, each with 3 lectures of 1 hour each per week in an 8 week module; one lecture per week was used for writing of endnotes. The Critical and Creative Writing modules typically do not use textbooks or study guides. This is to discourage students from rote learning

from the textbook without understanding. The content and key concepts for the third-term module included: Systematic Philosophy, of Freudian theory; African Cosmology, and Behaviourism; developing an analogy to help your audience understand your explanation better; related concepts; strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical approaches; and applying the concepts to contemporary issues or the student's own experience. The primary student activity in the modules is process writing: students wrote weekly formative "tests" consisting of short pieces called endnotes.

The feedback on these endnotes is part of a process writing approach that scaffolds students' writing through a series of short writing tasks that support more complex questions that the students deal with in a summative test and in a summative oral assessment. The feedback aims to establish a conversation or dialogue between student and responder, rather than instructing or correcting the student. The responders are required to read through an introduction to responding, including Quinn's (2000) guide on responding. Samples of the responding would be checked by the course co-ordinator, and any issues that arose were brought to his attention during the running of the module.

The students benefit through the respondent process writing because it makes for a better understanding of disciplinary knowledge and how it is constructed, makes writing conventions more explicit, encourages students to view writing as a means to construct meaning rather than to demonstrate reproduction of

knowledge, makes students more aware of criteria for assessment, and increases student self-reflexivity on their own writing practice (Quinn, 2000: 2).

In this Critical and Creative Writing module, in the third term of 2004, the students did four endnote "tests" where they wrote the endnotes during an hour-long lecture period. This was handed in and returned the following week with responder comments. The students had to rewrite, or consult a lecturer if there were serious issues picked up in the writing, or they received comments such as "OK" or "good" for which they were not required to rewrite. The students were also required to write at least seven practice pieces that had questions supporting the endnotes. The practice pieces were not responded to, but the students were encouraged to discuss these, as well as the endnotes with a "buddy". A "buddy" is a designated peer that the student had to engage in dialogue with about the writing, asking, for example, if the "buddy" understood the writing or not, and why. All the endnotes and rewrites and practice pieces were put together for the student's portfolio of work (see Appendix B for examples of endnote questions and Appendix C for the summative test questions). The summative assessment consisted of demonstration of a complete portfolio of endnote short essays with rewrites and self-reflections on the responding process; a summative written test; and an oral test.

In several discussions conducted in 2004 and 2005 with the co-ordinator for the Critical and Creative writing series of modules it was suggested that the course is continually developing through reflection on teaching development, through

engagement with academic development researchers, discussion with fellow teachers, and student evaluations of the course. Some of the perceived themes explicitly taken up include reducing content in a modular system; encouraging increased understanding by students; encouraging students to be self-reflexive; encouraging students to be aware of audience in their writing. The modules are perceived by the lecturers as using a student-centred approach where students are actively engaged in making meaning, rather than passively repeating transmitted knowledge.

The co-ordinator suggests that the effects of teaching are only seen year by year; changes to the curriculum can only be brought about in an incremental fashion after close reflection on the teaching and learning experiences of the modules. Teaching, then, should be a more reflective and considered approach.

4.2 Emergent Themes

I will discuss the dominant discourse of "language as an instrument of communication" in relation to the analysis of the interview transcripts, and discuss a number of issues that arose out of this analysis.

As discussed in Chapter Three, I initially coded for a list of interpretive themes: what seemed to emerge as significant for the students, and their concerns. This begins a broad thematic analysis, in a similar manner to Boughey (1999). The initial list incorporates how the students seem to interpret the function and value

of the respondent feedback, as well as what the students do with the feedback. These student interpretations will be later discussed in terms of how they are shaped by discourses the students use.

Themes of what the respondent feedback does include:

1) Correctness: the respondent shows what is right or wrong

2) The feedback helps improve grammar

3) The feedback helps the student to write more clearly

4) The respondent is encouraging

5) The feedback will help the student to improve; the comments will influence the student's marks

6) The feedback encourages the student to check his or her own mistakes.

Issues that the students thought were significant, or problematic, included:

7) The students don't easily understand the comments

8) There should be more detail in the comments

9) There are different expectations of acceptable work between students and responders

10) The feedback should also show how to construct the work, for example, into paragraphs

11) The feedback is the same as the notes taken in class; this is good.

I read through the interview transcripts several more times for a sense of a description of how the students used the feedback. Although there was not a

clear, linear picture of a "narrative" of how each student went about using the feedback, some prominent themes did emerge here:

1) Students discussed the feedback, together with their endnotes, with their designated "buddy" (all students were required to do this discussion with their "buddy"; not all students did this consistently).

2) Going through the endnote and then comparing their endnote with its feedback with other students' endnotes (other than the "buddy's").

3) Students went to tutors because they sometimes seemed more helpful than using the respondent feedback.

4) Students went to tutors who knew the "correct" way, or how the student was "supposed" to write the endnote.

5) The students would correct the mistakes as highlighted by the respondents.

6) If the feedback comment was unclear, it could be left aside and not attended to.

7) Sometimes the student would simply "start afresh" with his or her endnote.

8) One student explicitly mentioned practising improving understanding by explaining the endnote to other students.

9) The same student would think about how and why a respondent wrote the comment that he or she did.

10)Students would speak to a lecturer (this was a requirement if the note on the endnote was to: "Please see a lecturer"). Only one student mentioned going to a lecturer; she was required to do so.

11)To revise for the summative test, a student would rewrite the endnotes

12)Students didn't rewrite if they didn't have to, but one student acknowledged that rewriting did help improvement.

4.3 Mapping Discourses

Terre Blanch and Durrheim's (1999: 154-155) outline of discourse analysis suggests ways to glean clues about discourses and dialogues between discourses operating in a text. These include binary oppositions, recurrent terms, phrases and metaphors, as well as constructed subject positions.

The most prominent oppositions or recurrent phrases were:

1) Mistake or incorrect or wrong versus correct or right (all students)

2) Improved English language and grammar as means to understanding (4 students)

3) Should write or do (should follow the exact instructions from the responders (4 students)

4) Understanding versus confused (the content and for the feedback) (4 students)

5) The importance of improving, especially improving marks (all students).

These cues for analysing discourses overlap with the interpretive themes and activities the students describe for using endnote respondent feedback.

An example from Bongi suggests the significance of even basic fluency in English as an additional language for understanding the concepts introduced in the module, and more specifically, the respondent feedback on the students' endnotes:

JV: And were any of the comments difficult to understand, say in the other students' work?

BONGI: No.

JV: Or unclear, or unhelpful?

BONGI: Ja, but I think the main problem is, um, our students at this university, most of them don't understand Eng-, like basic English, you know, so that's what makes this Philosophy even more difficult, for some of us, you know, because it's hard to try and understand something like this when you don't even understand the language, you know what I mean?

JV: OK, but do you find that a problem?

BONGI: Uh, no, not that much.

JV: But don't you think students or the people you discuss the work with, do they not, do you think they improve by using the feedback and rewriting?

BONGI: Ja, because we try to break down and, and, and make use, um, and break down the comments so that the other students understand them. Sometimes we even explain it in Zulu.

JV: OK. So, do you find some of your friends, they find it difficult to understand what the comments mean?

BONGI: No, I, I, but with the help of somebody who understands it, all is fine, because the person tries, you know it's better when tries to break up something in your own language, then it's easier for you to translate it into English, you know.

JV: And when you talk about these do you normally talk Zulu?

BONGI: Pardon?

JV: When you talk about the, the endnotes, do you normally talk in Zulu?

BONGI: Talk in Zulu and in English.

JV: Both?

BONGI: Ja.

Further, the suggestion from Bongi is that when the students get together and translate the comments into isiZulu, these are more accessible. The suggested problem, then, is the lack of proficiency in English as an additional language; if the course and the feedback were in isiZulu, then understanding would be greatly facilitated. Note that this student, Bongi, does not find lack of proficiency in English as a problem for herself; she defines it as a problem for other students (Bongi is an articulate student; she also scored highly in the module).

The example from Bongi suggests the significance of knowing the language. It suggests the dominant discourse of English as an additional language discourse. This is closely related to the "language as an instrument of communication" discourse (Boughey, 1999). The problem, as defined by this discourse, is lack of language that gets in the way of understanding.

An example from Deli suggests the significance of grammar, as well as of the respondent feedback as a form of corrections:

> DELI: OK. The feedback I get from the responders it encourages me to...to know and to improve my weak points where I am weak and strong.
> JV: OK. Just remember to speak up a little bit. OK, um, it helps you to identity where you are stronger and where you are weaker. Is that right?
> DELI: Yes.
> JV: How do you use the feedback to find out your stronger and weaker points?...Can you give an example?
> DELI: Example, if I've made a mistakes...
> JV: Yes?
> DELI: They correct me and that, that's mistake...
> JV: Ja.

DELI: ...I've made before, I, I've never make it again.

JV: OK, what's an example of that mistake?

DELI: ...Mistakes when I say...a person...maybe...if I, if I say she, she eats. "Eats" has an "s" at the end then put "s" which means at, which means next time if I write I must be careful. The feedback is encourage me to, to know what exactly I do, not to just write as if, as if I, I'm not ready to...(1)

And later:

DELI: uh, the first time maybe endnote number one, the second endnote I, I make sure that I, I'm not getting "rewrite" again. Instead I rather get "good" or "excellent". Because of that feedback they give to me, I, I correct the mistakes. (1)

This extract suggests that Deli interprets the responding as showing what the strengths and weaknesses of the students are. A "weak" point, she suggests, is an error in subject-verb concord. It might be useful to note here that the student gives her own example of a concord error. This suggests that she understands the grammatical rule, yet still seems to want to rely on the responder to point out, to perhaps edit for this mistake. Deli, however, does seem confident that, after the mistake has been corrected, she will seldom make a mistake with that rule again. Examining Deli's endnote writing in her portfolio, however, I would suggest that she makes relatively few grammatical errors. Her writing is fairly coherent and contextualized for the reader. The respondent feedback quality on her endnotes is variable, from responder to responder. The responder for endnote three focuses on editing surface issues, including grammatical errors, punctuation and spelling. The responder for endnote two seems to attempt to encourage contextualization for the writer's audience, and uses comments such as: "What do you mean?", "Not true," and "Not clear". These respondent

comments, however, might rather partly suggest a true, correct blueprint for the student to reproduce. They are also probably not helpful in establishing a dialogue between student and responder (Quinn, 2000).

Another example of the correct/incorrect opposition is from Ntombi:

> NTOMBI: I read it [the endnote] through - because some of the things as I have mentioned, my grammar wasn't correct and my spelling wasn't correct so he corrected me there like when I said "what is an ancestor." (5)

Here, however, there seems to be a distinction between correcting surface errors in grammar and spelling and reproducing the content correctly.

The student, Jabu, however, indicates that the correctness isn't simply at the level of surface errors but is to do with structuring his writing. Jabu suggests that the relevant conventions of structuring his writing are important to him: the responders don't give enough on "exactly how, how did I construct my work." (1)

> JV: So you found it was difficult to improve your writing because, because there wasn't...?
> JABU: Like on the last one you see, and other one has got errors, about my paragraphs, about how I should put my paragraphs, should have put the last paragraph, that one made me understand how I must put my work, in the exam, the final exam. (1)

Just before this, he had made this distinction more clearly:

> JV: Say what you did, how you went about using the feedback to improve your writing.
> JABU: If I can say the feedbacks they are not enough.
> JV: Sorry, the feedback is not enough?

JABU: Ja, if I can say they only make corrections and say how must I put this, they didn't say exactly how, how did I construct my work. (1)

4.4 Quality of Responding

The students interviewed tend not to use language that suggests an emphasis on construction of knowledge though that would be more consistent with the academic literacies approach supported in the Philosophy modules. One possible explanation for this is the quality of the feedback itself: it might focus too much on surface features. There do seem to be instances of this, for example in the feedback on Deli's endnotes. There are numerous underlinings on her endnote two which appear to point to surface errors, but these are not explained. From the interview with Deli:

JV: Is it helpful to just have a line, with, is that, is that useful for you? Can you understand what the problem is?

DELI: No...I don't understand these words where I am wrong. I was supposed to go to...to anyone...or the lecture[r] to...ask where I am wrong but I didn't do that which is, which is not correct. (3)

There are, however, some comments which attempt a dialogue, to encourage the student to construct meaning through the process of writing, for example: "What do the living do when ancestors are angry?" This begins to suggest that the student consider audience, and explication for her audience. But the overall impression in Deli's portfolio does tend to be that underlinings, ticks, and some comments on surface errors predominate over dialogical comments. The quality of the responding, then, seems to be uneven, and may contribute to the student here giving more focus to surface errors at an early stage of the writing process,

and less to contextualizing her work for her audience. This is somewhat at odds with the responding guide (Quinn, 2000: 5) that responders were given, which emphasizes that the feedback should focus "on the meanings being expressed by the writer." Editing for surface aspects is a later part of the writing process.

4.5 Critical Discourse Analysis

Using these clues, and also a framework based on Fairclough's (1989) critical discourse analysis, the researcher can begin to understand how the discourses shape the students' use of the responder feedback. Fairclough (1989: 24) emphasises how analysis should look at underlying values, beliefs and assumptions that are woven through social interaction, and on which participants base their interpretations.

I would suggest, then, that the students interviewed seem to offer an interpretation of the feedback as involving correcting their mistakes. This may be at different levels, including the surface level. There is often a valuing of correcting surface features. But the correction is also at the level of, for example, paragraph structure. Students tend to see corrections as important because they can lead to better marks, or better performance in the summative test. This might be characterised as a strategic approach to learning. The discourse types the students draw upon, I suggest, are not necessarily the

dominant discourses, but are related to success, partly defined by determination to acquire the target discourse and to "telling" discourse practice.

Fairclough's (1989) framework for discourse analysis can help "laminate" (Silverman, 2005: 47) discourse practices. Laminating, in other words, involves attempting to account for links and interrelationships of discourses out of the complexity of the social situation and its different contexts, as also suggested by Lillis (2001).

At the level of description, the initial stage of Fairclough's framework, I have suggested that for the students interviewed, significant themes around their using the respondent feedback are: the feedback helps them in correcting their work, especially at the level of surface errors. The students do, however, use discussion with peers to compare their work and the feedback they have received. The feedback is also perceived as helping them to get the story right; this may be at the level of reproduction of knowledge, rather than students actively constructing meaning.

The context of the course is that it aims at developing the students' awareness of the discipline and the academic conventions associated with it; the student is apprenticed into the discipline. From informal discussions in 2004 and continuing in 2005 with the co-ordinator of the course, also a disciplinary expert in Philosophy, the suggestion is that the course has a student-centred approach where students actively engage in making meaning, rather than passively

repeating transmitted knowledge. The course, then, I suggest, aims at encouraging a deep approach to learning. The student use of the respondent feedback, however, suggests there might be more of a strategic approach to learning adopted by some students. The institutional context, I suggest, does not necessarily support the aims of the Critical and Creative Writing module, but might rather be aligned with the students' valuing of correcting surface errors. I have relied on Boughey's (1999) analysis of the pedagogic discourses operating in the institution, as well as my own experience as lecturer and in quality assurance in the institution, my experience as part of the teaching team for the Critical and Creative Writing module, the module co-ordinator's interpretations of the institutional context, as well as reference to a small sample of study guides in use in other modules.

In terms of the level of interpretation (Fairclough, 1989; Blommaert, 2005)), the interviewed students tend to frame, or interpret the feedback from responders and how they explain using it in terms of their own beliefs, assumptions and values. I suggest that students interviewed tend to interpret their use of respondent feedback through a frame aligned with the "language as an instrument of communication" discourse, as described by Boughey (1999), and Christie (1989). The emphasis on correcting, including for grammar, discussed by the students that they might understand the feedback as facilitating the communication of ideas by improving the students' language. Aligned in turn with this discourse, the interviews suggest that the students also explain their errors, or lack of understanding, using a frame from the discourse, as described

by Boughey (1999), which constructs such lack of understanding because the students are speakers of English as an additional language. Further, the repeated use of oppositions such as right/wrong, or correct/incorrect, suggest the students tend to operate a "telling" discursive practice (Boughey, 1999). The telling discourse emphasizes reproduction: the student tries as accurately as possible to copy or memorise the explanation or description from the teacher or expert. I would suggest this is partly from the students' schooling experience, as well as from their experiences in other courses. In my position in the Quality Promotion and Assurance Unit, I have come across numerous assessments, such as tests or essay questions which rely on reproduction of facts, rather than construction of meaning. Such frames, I suggest, at least partly determine the student interaction with the respondent feedback.

At the level of explanation, Fairclough (1989) argues that unequal power relations in society and in the university are important in shaping the students' discourses. This level is particularly where the "critical" aspect of critical discourse analysis is apparent (Blommaert, 2005). The discourses of "language as an instrument of communication", and English as an additional language as discussed above can be described as dominant discourses, following Gee's (1990) analysis of the relation between power and discourse; and they are dominant discourses in the university (Boughey, 1999). Further, these discourses can be subsumed under the "autonomous" model (Street, 1984: 1) of literacy. This model describes texts, and literacy as autonomous or independent of discourse, or discourses, ideology, and therefore implication in

unequal relations of power. The "ideological" model recognises that the autonomous model supports a form of literacy practices which are linked to a very specific context and culture, especially the essay-text form of literacy in western schools and higher education. Such a form of literacy is supported by unequal relations of power in society.

The student interpretation of using respondent feedback, however, I suggest, is not simply reproducing the dominant discourses. It can be seen as possibly resisting pedagogical meta-discourse of the modules, an academic literacies meta-discourse, in a similar way argued by Boughey (1999). The students interviewed tend to value acquisition of the target discourse, as signified, by, for example, the surface features of the discourse. The students value getting it, possibly because of the "goods" that they understand as being attached to acquiring a powerful academic discourse. Improving is to do with improving marks and passing the course; passing at university allows for access to jobs (see Boughey, 1999). Gee (1990: 146) argues that some meta-awareness is developed through conscious learning, but not through acquisition, or apprenticing into a discourse. But performance, or getting the right identity (acquiring the discourse) is only really through acquisition, not learning. The learning process can only happen later. So, especially for first years, like these in the Philosophy course, the focus is on the acquisition of an academic discourse, which is valued by students. Perhaps the interpretation of some of the students in the interview of their use of the respondent feedback, where there is an insistence on getting the grammar right, is not only an interpretation

shaped by the "language as instrument of communication discourse" but is also a "realpolitik" awareness that getting the basic grammar errors, or surface errors, right is essential to be recognised as having the "right" identity, as determined by the academic, disciplinary discourse (Gee, 1990: 149). The module, in a way, might be helping the students to begin to "mushfake" (Gee, 1990: 159) the powerful academic discourse, for example by including a focus on some surface errors, without losing the emphasis on process writing. "Mushfaking" is a term used to describe how prisoners "make do" from the limited resources that they have, such as building craftwork out of matchsticks. Students can "make do", for example, by enhancing partial acquisition of the academic discourse through developing their meta-knowledge and using strategies like getting their work edited. In this way, the students do, can, develop meta-knowledge, and can become resistant, and are not "colonized" into the mainstream discourse.

The student discourses deployed, then, I would suggest, are both "normative" (Fairclough, 1989: 166) and resistant, but not necessarily "creative" (Fairclough, 1989: 166), or transforming of the "order of discourse" (Fairclough, 1989: 29) in the institution.

5 Chapter Five: Conclusion

The students interviewed appear to describe their use of the responder feedback in terms of surface errors, such as grammar errors. This can be understood perhaps in terms of the meta-discourse of "language as an instrument of communication". Some of the students, however, rename their errors in terms of construction and coherence, perhaps better understood in the terms of the meta-discourse of essay-text discourse. Both discourses construct texts as autonomous objects. The students might develop their language of referring to their own practice from their experience of learning and the dominant discourses that are important determinants of that experience. The understanding, however, tends to reside at the "telling" level, but this varies from student to student. I suggest students' ways of talking about their own experiences might be influenced by an extrinsic motivation, or related to improving marks, which does not necessarily include a deep approach to learning, but is more likely to suggest a strategic approach to learning. The students, then, can be said to be sometimes resistant to the academic literacies approach of the module.

Part of the experience of the university should be to grant a space, or clear a space for students to change, to develop their identity, or identities. Improving students' self-reflexivity for their own learning processes, and encouraging students to compare different discourses such as indigenous discourse practices, not only western academic discourses, can encourage students to

develop their own interpretations and choices out of a wider range and complexity of possible discourse choices.

A limitation of this study is that detailed analysis of the institutional context was not part of the research. The study, as suggested, has relied on the researcher's own experience, as well as other research for fuller description of the institutional context. Another limitation of this study is that because it attempts to deal with contextualized investigation of particular cases, the findings are not generalisable, as discussed in Chapter Three. However, this research can provide insights into the continued improvement of the Critical and Creative Writing modules, as well as research into teaching in the institution as a whole. One aspect that could be further investigated is responder perceptions of their role in process writing approach. Another possibility, from the perspective of Quality Assurance issues, is how such research into teaching and learning can be integrated into the development and implementation of Quality Assurance policies at the University of Zululand, particularly those dealing with teaching and learning.

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Appendix A: Students' Participation Request and Letter of Consent

May I interview you for my research?

Please first read this whole page carefully before deciding whether you are interested.

I am doing research with students on how students use respondent feedback on their endnotes in the Critical and Creative Writing Modules. The interview will last about half an hour. I will pay a small amount (R20) to each student that I interview, on completion of the interview. I will only be interviewing a small sample of students. I appreciate the time you have spent completing this form.

Name:

Phone number:

(Please indicate what time would be best for me to call if this is a home number)

Degree:

Date:

(If you are contacted to do the interview you will be asked to sign the letter below at the interview.)

Consent to participate in research study and to publication of results:

1. I understand that Julian Vooght is doing research on how students use respondent feedback on their endnotes.

2. I have been asked to take part in this research study. I understand that Julian Vooght will interview me and he will tape record the interview.

3. I accept that the results of this research study will be used towards a Masters degree through UKZN. In addition, the results may be used for writing papers for presentation at conferences or publication in academic journals.

4. I understand that if I wish, my real name does not need to be used in any report describing the research study. But if I want to, I can be acknowledged in the preface to the thesis.

5. I agree to participate in the research study but I understand that if at any point I change my mind, I am entitled to withdraw my agreement to participate.

Name: Date:

Course of study: Year of study:

Wish to be acknowledged by name (thanked) in thesis (no data will be linked to your name):

YES / NO

Signature:

(adapted from McKenna, 2003: 291)

Appendix B: Endnote Questions for Critical and Creative Writing Module (third term, 2004)

1) According to Freud, what are the Id, Ego and Super Ego? Which of these is unconscious and which is conscious? How do Freud's ideas compare with those of Christianity?

2) Describe Pavlov's experiment to condition dogs. How is it similar or different to Dr Brodsky's conditioning of Alex in the movie, *A Clockwork Orange*? Compare the unconditioned stimulus and the unconditioned response, and the conditioned stimulus and conditioned response for both. Why was the minister against the "cure" used on Alex? What is your view of this "cure"?

3) According to the African worldview, what is an ancestor? How do ancestors communicate with the living? Why do they communicate with the living? What is your view on the African perspective on dreaming?

4) According to the African worldview, how are the ancestors the custodians of morality in society? Give an example of how the ancestors might restrain unacceptable behaviour and an example of how the ancestors might encourage acceptable behaviour.

Appendix C: Summative Test for Critical and Creative Writing Module (third term, 2004)

TEST for Critical and Creative Writing module APCWC3 (third term, 2004):

Critical and Creative Writing APCWC3

Answer only one question. Indicate clearly which question you are answering.

1. What are the functions of the Id, the Super Ego and the Ego? Using one example, explain how a conflict can arise between the Id, the Super Ego and Reality. Using the concepts 'repression', 'gratification ' and 'sublimation', indicate briefly what the Ego can do about this conflict.

2. Describe step by step the conditioning used on Alex by Doctor Brodsky in the movie 'Clockwork Orange'. Compare this with the conditioning Pavlov used on his dogs. Compare the unconditioned stimuli and the unconditioned response and the conditioned stimuli and the conditioned response in each case. Why was the minister in the movie 'Clockwork Orange' against the 'cure' performed on Alex?

3. What is the African explanation of the phenomenon of dreaming? On this perspective or view of dream causation, what reasons can you give why ancestors come through in the dream? On the other hand when do the living approach the ancestors? In what way are the ancestral spirits the custodians of the morals in the African community?

Appendix D: Example of Interview Transcript

Transcript of interview with Bongi:

JV: OK, as it says here [points to consent form] we're looking at respondent feedback on endnotes but your endnotes, particular endnotes are, you've got comments like "OK", or "good", two "good" comments and so on, and you did well in the test, and in the, I think in the, uh, oral as well, so there's not much to look at in terms of rewriting, but maybe even if you just look through your work, could you just say something about, any comments that were there or the lack of comments, the lack of comments/

BONGI: Um, the lack of comments

JV: /that is frustrating or was that useful or...?

BONGI: Um, regarding the respondents?

JV: Ja. Um, ja just say what, how you found the process, just talk about it.

BONGI: No, um I wasn't pleased especially with this endnote because I felt that I did my best/

JV: So which endnote was that?

BONGI: This one here [points to endnote].

JV: The first one. Endnote 1?

BONGI: No, ja. Endnote 1, ja. Yes. Because I felt that I did my best and like I don't understand what "this" means.

JV: What does it say? "OK"?

BONGI: It says "OK, you have"...

JV: "An idea"?

BONGI: "An idea". I mean so I was puzzled, I mean I thought I knew the, you know, the appropriate work but having an "idea" makes me feel like no, you're wrong somewhere but you just have an "idea".

JV: So what did you expect?

BONGI: I expected "very good" or "good" at least. Ja. Sometimes I feel like these responders don't like take time to read our work properly. Just go through the work and write whatever they feel like writing sometimes.

JV: What, what gives you that impression?

BONGI: Because here it's, it's, I really don't think she or he read the whole thing.

JV: Why, what, what makes you say that? Because of the com-, you thought you should have got a "good".

BONGI: Yes. Because I don't actually see where the problem is here.

JV: How do you, how do you, how can you be so confident of the, um, you know, that it's very good from your preparing your work to what was said in the lectures? Or...discussing it with other students, or...?

BONGI: Ja, it is and I know that I have a thorough understanding of the work, and here she, he or she doesn't state where exactly the problem area is, you know. It's just "OK, you have an idea" and doesn't actually state "OK, you should do this" in order for your work to be like appropriate.

JV: OK, so the, the comments, or lack of comments, doesn't match the, the kind of lukewarm comment. OK.

BONGI: It's just an ambiguous comment.

JV: OK. And the other endnotes? There's not much comment. Are you satisfied with?...

BONGI: [looks through endnotes] OK, I made a mistake here but, um, I was really concerned with this in particular. I think the respondents should, like, be more specific in their comments. And they should like actually tell you where your problem is, you know, instead of just writing "Rewrite, please see a lecturer".

JV: But if they feel there, there isn't a problem, what...?

BONGI: They should write whatever you deserve then [laughs]. Ja.

JV: OK. This one, there are a few, this is endnote test 4, there are a few comments. "Try to discuss oral personality" and so on.

BONGI: Ja, this has helped me a lot, actually. Ja, this is the one that I was pleased with 'cause the comments explained thoroughly what I should be doing or how my work should be structured, and with this one I really understand, ja, what I should do in writing this essay, or this type of question.

JV: OK.

BONGI: Ja.

JV: So, how did you use those comments, did you...?

BONGI: Um, I, I wrote another one but it wasn't a practice piece. I just wrote it on a separate piece of paper and I was preparing for this, um, final test and I found that it is better to, to, like, dwell on one particular psychosexual stage, rather than saying all, you know, the psychosexual stages, just like the responder said, um, "discuss oral personality," so it's better to focus on one.

JV: OK.

BONGI: Ja. Or two, that you understand better.

JV: So tell me, just, can you just brief-, or can you go through whatever you think is important about, you said you wrote the, uh, um, practice, that kind of extra piece on this, on this psychosexual stages.

BONGI: Yes.

JV: How, how did you go about that? What did you do?

BONGI: Um, I tried, um, I used this information and I tried to do it as said here, and I found that it makes more sense, you know.

JV: What makes more sense?

BONGI: My, um, my discussion of the psychosexual stages, when I, like, write down, name the, all the psychosexual stages and then try to discuss one in particular.

JV: OK.

BONGI: Ja.

JV: And what did you do, so did you write, how did you write that, that, that practice piece, that extra practice piece? Have you got it? You haven't got it here.

BONGI: No, I didn't put it there. I put it in my separate work that I just do, you know, in my scrap book.

JV: How did you do that? Did you sit, and what, did you sit with the, this or did you write this and put it away?

BONGI: [laughs] No, I sat with this and I tried to like read it again and then I, I wrote this new one and I found that it makes more sense rather than this. Because this is just like jumbled info.

JV: OK.

BONGI: Ja.

JV: OK. And the practice?

BONGI: And, and the, and the, and the structure of the work I, I tried to do it in, like, paragraphs, ja, and not, like one, you know, straight thing like this here.

JV: but why do you think they said, they said, um, what are some of the comments from, uh, "new paragraph"; "try to break your work into paragraphs". Why do you think they said that?

BONGI: See they, uh, um, when somebody reads my work I shouldn't, they should see that, OK, this is a new topic or this is a new theme, you know.

JV: OK.

BONGI: Because like, if there's, like, all the work is following each other like this here [indicates on endnote] it's not easy to understand what this person is trying to say, and the work is not neat, and I think that has an, an impact on a person who reads your work, especially when it's, it's easier to understand, and paragraphs will make it easier to read, you know and understand.

JV: OK. So, do you think you, you going to apply the "use paragraphs more often"?

BONGI: Yes, I will.

JV: I see you have used some in your, your test.

BONGI: Ja, I have tried my best to.

JV: OK. But now…how confident are you in these comments, even though there are only a few, if you perhaps, uh, concerned that the other ones, especially the first endnote, there weren't enough comments to explain why it was only "OK".

BONGI: I appreciate…

JV: So, are you confident in these com-, that these comments are useful, or…?

BONGI: Ja, they are useful and I know that 'cause this person, I know with these ones, I know that this person has my best interests at heart, because like when I tried to apply this on, on my final test I got a 100%, you know.

JV: OK.

BONGI: Ja, so I feel that it did this endnote and the, these comments did have an impact on my final results, you know.

JV: OK.

BONGI: Ja.

JV: …And what about the, uh, about using a buddy? Do you use the buddy and to look at the work, to think about the comments?

BONGI: Um, actually, um, there are a few students in my block where I stay. They usually come to my room and we discuss it as a group. I don't like have a particular buddy, but we, they always come into my room at 6 o'clock

everyday, then we try to discuss the work of the whole day, what is going on in the lectures and so on.

JV: And do they show you any of the comments that they got on theirs?

BONGI: Ja, they do, and, and we try to, and we try to, like analyse their work and we try to, to do it in, in a better way using these comments that we have on our, the endnotes.

JV: In a better way?

BONGI: Ja.

JV: How?

BONGI: Like, we, we try to, to structure the work in such a manner that, that, um, prior to this, to the comments, ja…

JV: Sorry, prior to the comments?

BONGI: Yeah, we tried to structure the work like using these comments, ja.

JV: And were any of the comments difficult to understand, say in the other students' work?

BONGI: No.

JV: Or unclear, or unhelpful?

BONGI: Ja, but I think the main problem is, um, our students at this university, most of them don't understand Eng-, like basic English, you know, so that's what makes this Philosophy even more difficult, for some of us, you know, because it's hard to try and understand something like this when you don't even understand the language, you know what I mean?

JV: OK, but do you find that a problem?

BONGI: Uh, no, not that much.

JV: But don't you think students or the people you discuss the work with, do they not, do you think they improve by using the feedback and rewriting?

BONGI: Ja, because we try to break down and, and, and make use, um, and break down the comments so that the other students understand them. Sometimes we even explain it in Zulu.

JV: OK. So, do you find some of your friends, they find it difficult to understand what the comments mean?

BONGI: No, I, I, but with the help of somebody who understands it, all is fine, because the person tries, you know it's better when tries to break up something in your own language, then it's easier for you to translate it into English, you know.

JV: And when you talk about these do you normally talk Zulu?

BONGI: Pardon?

JV: When you talk about the, the endnotes, do you normally talk in Zulu?

BONGI: Talk in Zulu and in English.

JV: Both?

BONGI: Ja.

JV: OK. Um…do you think you, do you think you use anything you use here in other courses?

BONGI: Yes, um, in Psychology, uh, we were doing, um, today's test was about memory, and I, I found that there was a piece, um, of information in the book that was about Sigmund Freud, about, a, the, the repression of memories, you know. So I found that it was easy to answer that question, even came up in

the question paper, that, um, the, the term that Freud used is for the person, for the people who, who don't remember certain memories that were painful, repression, so it came out in the Psychology paper. Ja. So it was, I knew that I'm definitely right in this one. Ja.

JV: OK. Good. And thinking back to the, previous term to the previous module, Critical and Creative writing, OK, um, how did you find the feedback there? Did you get lots of comments or not many or were they helpful, or what did you do with them.

BONGI: I can't remember clearly, but I think, um, the comments, they were also helpful because I passed well last time as well.

JV: did you get many comments, or did you just get, say, "good"?

BONGI: No, um there weren't many comments last term. There weren't many comments.

JV: OK.

BONGI: Ja.

JV: So, do you, you said you wrote something for the endnote, practice rewrite for endnote, uh, what's this? Endnote 4. Do you normally write or rewrite the endnotes?

BONGI: Um, when I, I get it back? No, not normally, but I felt that it, it was significant for this one because, I, I, I didn't actually have an idea how to go about answering question like that. I just put in my luck [laughs].

JV: OK.

BONGI: Ja.

JV: And the practice pieces? Do you find them helpful, or useful?

BONGI: Ja, they are helpful.

JV: And there no, you don't get any comments on them, eh?

BONGI: No.

JV: You don't show them to anyone?

BONGI: No.

JV: OK. Did you get any other comments from anyone else, from the student assistant perhaps made any comment on any of your work? I don't see any.

BONGI: No.

JV: And did you speak to, did you speak to, or ask questions from anyone, like [name of Philosophy lecturer], or [name of another Philosophy lecturer]?

BONGI: Yes, um I did ask...

JV: Anyone else? Me or...?

BONGI: [Name of lecturer] was giving us extra lessons just before we wrote this final endnote test and I went to attend, and I asked him about, um, the way we should structure our work. Ja so he explained it clearly how we should structure our work, and he said something that is already stated in this fourth endnote, that we should try to break up our work into paragraphs so that it looks neater and is easier to understand. And I, I also asked [name of another lecturer] about my final, my last paper, when I received it, about this comment. Where's my-?. Oh, this one here.

JV: The test?

BONGI: Ja, my test. I just, I'm just curious, that's how I am. Um, of this, here, that's where, explain clearly to me how I should use, how this sentence is supposed to be structured.

JV: Did you go, did he write that, did you go and see him, or did..?

BONGI: No, I just asked him as soon as I received my paper when I looked at it in, in the classroom.

JV: Did he, had he made that comment already, when you got it back, or did, did he make that comment in the...?

BONGI: No, I, the comment was already here, so I just asked him, like to elaborate more on this comment.

JV: So what did he say?

BONGI: He said I should use "because of", instead of [inaudible]. Ja.

JV: OK.

BONGI: So, it was a grammatical mistake.

JV: And this comment: "Do you have any idea of the latent content of this dream?"

BONGI: Yes, I think I do. I don't know, actually. This dream was quite strange.

JV: OK.

BONGI: It was the strange dream I ever had in a long time.

JV: So you didn't, uh, you didn't write that down in your test?

BONGI: No, I, I just was telling them about, um, the dream that I had which proves that, that Freud's theories is right when he says that dreaming does reduce tension, so I used a practical example of a dream that I had, an how I felt when I had that dream, so the respondent was just curious to know whether I have any idea of the latent meaning of my dream.

JV: OK. Is there anything else you wanted to say about the, the, especially using the respondents' comments and feedback?

BONGI: No, I, I have nothing more to say, but I think that, um, they should more, be more specific in their comments.

JV: Specific in what way?

BONGI: Like they shouldn't just give ambiguous comments, like "You have an idea." They should actually state where the problem is. If the problem is with your, your grammar, they should say, um: "Grammatical mistakes. Please take note of them," or something like that, you know. If it's, your work is untidy, maybe they should say: "Your work is untidy. Try to make it more neater." If there's a problem in your sentences they should just write something like, um: "Write full sentences," or something like that, you know, so that you actually know where the main problem is. Because we can use, um, the, the respondents', the respondents' feedback without going to the lecturers, you know. So when they write comments which are about, a bit ambiguous, you just have to go to the lecturer and ask him: "What does this mean? What does the responder mean by saying this?", you know, and it's a waste of time by doing that, you know.

JV: OK. OK, [name of student], thanks very much.

BONGI: You're welcome.

[end of transcript]