

TITLE: Testing the waters: Exploring genres in two English classes at a multilingual Cape Flats primary school.

By

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A mini-thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master's in Applied Linguistics/Language Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa

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Declaration

I declare that this mini-thesis is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Michelle van Heerden

November, 2008



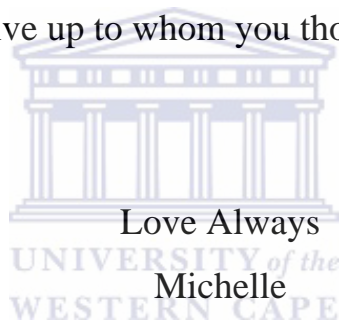
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Dedication

To

My mother and father, my first teachers who instilled me the curiosity to know and to learn but most importantly that knowledge should lead towards better understanding of not the knowledge but of humankind, humaneness, humility and compassion

Thanks Mom and Dad, for moulding me into what I have become and may whatever I am yet to be, always live up to whom you thought I would be...



Love Always

Michelle

Acknowledgements

I firstly acknowledge our Almighty for deeming me fit to go forth on this journey, for blessing me with the honour to tell the story of Adam and Eve of Eden Primary and what lies beneath.

Secondly, I want to thank Adam and Eve with whom I had the privilege to travel on life's journey for a while, for answering my questions, for allowing me to observe their classes and for giving me permission to understand their world and their stories from their own perspectives. During the drawn-out process of fieldwork you remained helpful, supportive and tolerant. Without your permission this thesis would not have been possible, so I owe you a great debt of gratitude. Thank you, Adam, Eve and staff at Eden Primary for sharing your stories with me.

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Acknowledgement for this achievement should also be expressed to all those who touched my life. First, to my colleagues in the Education Faculty, thank you for your mentoring, support and guidance, for providing me with opportunities to learn from you and to those kindred spirits who made this journey worthwhile through constant encouragement, a kind word or even just a smile and yes the copies, and coffee and tea especially towards the end, I thank you all.

Last, but most important to my family and friends, thank you for believing in my ability and for inspiring me to always go that extra mile. Love to you always

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of current writing practices in the intermediate phase at a multilingual primary school on the Cape Flats and then to explore the possible benefits of a genre-based approach in this context. The study focuses on the development of learners' writing skills in two Grade Six English classes. The aims of the study are to understand the writing curriculum as plan and as practiced by two teachers with different levels of exposure to current approaches to the teaching of writing and different class profiles. It explores participants' underlying beliefs and theories about the development of writing skills in English as an additional language. It then investigates the outcomes of a genre-based unit of work intended to improve writing skills. As such, the primary research question is: 'To what extent could a genre-based approach strengthen the teaching and learning of English writing skills in the intermediate phase?'

Research studies and systemic evaluations, both nationally and internationally, highlight that intermediate phase learners are rapidly falling behind in comparison with their international peers (PIRLS 2001, 2006; TIMSS, 2003). Although there are many possible reasons for this situation, one of the most easily investigated is the approach taken to the development of writing skills. Therefore, the scope of this study is limited to the writing curriculum and how two teachers interpret and enact it. This is a small-scale study and as such, the findings cannot be generalised; instead they point the way to more in-depth investigations on genre theory, its impact on pedagogy and practice, and what genre-based approaches could offer teachers and learners in South African primary school contexts.

My literature sketches the broad parameters of the three main approaches to genre but focuses in greater detail on the Australian Framework. Firstly, this approach appears to offer the greatest scope for South African contexts given its attention to issues of equity and access which are also central principles of our Constitution (1994) and Curriculum 2005. Secondly, the challenges faced by Australian aboriginal learners from disadvantaged, working class communities learning in English second language contexts resonate with those of the majority of our learners who learn through English as an additional language. A third important reason for this focus is its potential for informing the teaching of writing in multilingual contexts and future teacher training frameworks.

This is a qualitative study, divided into two parts. The first part describes participants' worlds from their own perspectives and draws on observations, interviews and document analysis. The second part outlines an explorative unit of work which was implemented in both the Grade Six classes in order to gain insights into the extent to which a genre-based approach could strengthen the development of

writing skills. Here the analytical tools provided by Systemic Functional Linguistics are used to analyse learners' writings.

The findings suggest that knowledge of genre theory and associated pedagogies could provide teachers with a sound basis for scaffolding the development of writing skills but, most importantly, that explicit instruction into the genres valued at schools could significantly improve the writing skills of learners in the intermediate phase, particularly those learning through English as an additional language.



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ACRONYMS

SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
LIEP	Language in Education Policy
PIRLS	Progress of International Reading Literacy strategy
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Study
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
C2005	Curriculum 2005
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
LoLTS	Language of Learning and Teaching
MOI	Medium of Instruction
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
DOE	Department of Education
OBE	Outcomes based Education
DSP	Disadvantaged Schools Project



CHAPTER I

Unknown Waters

INTRODUCTION

TITLE: Testing the waters: Exploring genres in two English classes at a multilingual Cape Flats primary school.

Keywords

Teaching writing

English as a second language

Process Approach

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

English for Academic Purposes

Genre

Pedagogy

Text-based approach

Language across the curriculum

Scaffolding



Introduction: The journey

It was a bright and sunny day, yet my first journey through the area was depressing and disturbing. This supposed clinical journey of research sparked an unforeseen pensive mood. I began to reflect on my own every day context where I am usually confronted with crowds of people, some driving on their way to work, others going somewhere with some purpose or destination in mind. However, on this road, my journey was a constant crisscross with crowds of people, some still dressed in nightclothes, laughing boisterously and drinking coffee, some listlessly chatting, others aimlessly wandering, seemingly unaware of world events outside of the microcosm that they have been [mis]placed into after democracy.

And on this journey, I am struck by how easy it has become to forget the [mis]placed, until you travel on their road on any given day. [Mis] placed, [dis]placed, might be another case of semantics, for them it might mean being given a long-awaited concrete space, from a shack to a brick house. Yet, has anything changed in this new space, but for a little brick box? And so sadly, this road, literally less travelled, is a bleak sight and a stark reminder of the effects of poverty in South Africa.

And on this road, I am mostly confronted with a sea of cluttered, dilapidated houses, waves of informal businesses ebb and flow creating tides of poverty and scatterings of rubble and rubbish on open spaces. And the people resemble congregations of rags littered along the streets, some hoarding on pavements or sitting on makeshift contraptions in front of their houses. And strangely, a song taught by a teacher in grade 9 reverberates in my head, *'Little boxes... little boxes made of ticky-tacky, little boxes all the same...there is a green one and a pink one and a blue one and a yellow one and they all look just the same...'* and in this context it reminds me of the reality of unemployment in our country.

Other than through the media or reading and listening to issues relating to poverty, my world was never really touched by it. So, this was a real confrontation with the almost lethargic, yet ravaging indicators of unemployment. As the taxi sluggishly continued on its journey towards the school, it took me deeper into the debris of poverty. Despondent feelings gushed forth into non-stop questions resonating in my head; what are learners' chances of success in communities such as this one? How does the depressing journey to this school influence teachers' day by day attitudes towards teaching and their learners? How do such learners view their chances of success? What role does schooling in such a context play to facilitate

successful access, equity and democracy as espoused in our Constitution of 1994 and the subsequent principles of our National New Curriculum (C2005)?

As a novice researcher, this journey reminds me of what I will gain, yet another degree, more knowledge but knowledge for whom and what purpose? Strangely, as I am about to explore the world of the chosen subjects, ‘the insiders’, this journey to the research site switched the lens of the microscope onto myself, reminding me that I must not forget my ethics and must guard against academic superiority. And so, with each visit to the school, I find myself desperately searching for the littered rags congregated and *the little boxes made of ticky-tacky* because this reminded me that I am working with real people and issues touching their world. This research journey now reminds me that nothing has changed for many learners since 1994 and I wonder whether perhaps it could even be worse now? But most importantly I begin to wonder, do they have teachers teaching them about possibilities beyond the borders of their *little boxes made of ticky-tacky, little boxes all the same*? I wonder...

1.1 Setting the scene

The participants forming an integral part of this unknown journey are Eve and Adam both mother tongue Xhosa speakers. Eve is a female teacher between forty and forty nine years old. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree combined with a Higher Diploma in Education, which she has obtained during 1980 and 1990. Her major subjects include Xhosa as a language and African Thought and Literature. She is currently receiving in-service training at a university doing an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) and has since been assigned the additional responsibility as a language coordinator. Adam, currently a postgraduate Bachelor of Education Degree student at the same university, the Assessment Coordinator and Head of Department at the school, is a male aged between forty and forty nine years old. He received his three-year teacher’s diploma at a teachers’ training college during 1990 and 2000 and his major subjects were English and Biology. Since then he has been exposed to in-service training at school cluster and district level

1.1.1 The School

My study was conducted at a township school in the Western Cape, which opened its doors of learning in 2004 with a learner total of 836. The school consists of primarily Xhosa- and Afrikaans-speaking learners and serves a community from a predominantly informal settlement. As an outsider, entering the school, I was confronted with a modern pale-grey

brick building. The colour grey and the modern architecture reveal that this is a fairly new school. However, the surrounding area indicates the socio-economic circumstances of the community and the effects of poverty are evident in the school, for example, most learners are part of a feeding scheme providing breakfast and lunch.

Once inside the walls of this school, I was confronted with the little children who live in the little boxes surrounding the school building. No green grass, no trees, but a grey slab of concrete to play on and a desert of white sand. And on the sand, some bare feet, only some dressed in worn school uniforms, while they were on their way to the feeding scheme for breakfast. From the outside, so many odds appeared to be stacked against these learners' chances of success in a meritocratic education system, for example, socio-economic circumstances, unemployment and crime.

Yet, when Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was launched in 1997, it promoted hope and aspirations for change as the principles on which it was based represented a dramatic break away from apartheid education (Chisholm, 2003). Whereas apartheid education was rooted in principles such as segregation, inequality and racism, C2005 entrenched principles such as equity, democracy and redress. However, several contextual factors limit the potential of C2005. First, unemployment and poverty in communities influence payment of school fees at disadvantaged schools. This results in learner-teacher ratios being affected, for example, classrooms consisting of more than 50 learners. On the other hand, schools from advantaged areas charging higher school fees have additional funds to employ more teachers, maintain low learner-teacher ratios, obtain better resources and thus ensure better quality teaching. Fleisch (2002), referring to findings of the Presidential Education Initiative (1995), argues that the requirements for implementing C2005 successfully could actually increase the challenges that working class and rural learners have in accessing formal knowledge.

Second, Wray, Medwell, Poulsen and Fox (2002) cite Harrison (1996) who suggests that a child's background contributes 85% to what is learnt at school, with only 15 % being contributed by the school. They argue that this is a gloomy estimation especially in the light of the varying quality of literacy experiences that learners could get at schools. For example, learners from this cape flats school could enter school with limited literacy experiences compared to a peer in a suburban school who enters school with extensive exposure to print. As a result, school settings could enable those learners who are already rich in literacy

experience to get richer while those who are poor in literacy experience simply get poorer (Wray et al., 2002). For example, this modern grey school has to rely on private funding in a disadvantaged community and this might contribute to the challenges in implementing C2005. Harley and Wedekind (2004) maintain that the new curriculum has been put into practice inefficiently in the schools because it reproduces social class divisions that have widened the gap between the historically advantaged and disadvantaged schools.

Finally, some problems with C2005 itself appear to have influenced the literacy development of learners in the current schooling system. Macdonald (2002) gives details about the perplexing pedagogical intent of C2005 that initially paid no attention to the processes of early literacy. As a result, learners and teachers in the intermediate phase (grades 4 to 6), which is the focus of my research, might be experiencing challenges relating to deficient literacy and numeracy skills in the Foundation Phase. As it turns out, this is the case at this school. For example, the results of the 2007 systemic assessment done by WCED classifies the school as 'very weak' as the majority of grade six learners were placed at grade three level for both numeracy and literacy and therefore three years behind grade level (see Circular number 20080414-0036, WCED). These schools and community level challenges are framed by broader policy tensions as outlined below.

1.1.2 Tensions created by policy formulation post-democracy

The shift from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), with its socialistic ideals of redress and equity, towards the stringent monetary policy of the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) meant less government spending, thus a decline in the education budget. These and other macro-economic policies had a significant influence on the education budget and on educational policies (Nicolaou, 2001). One example is that government spending and the decentralisation of power to governing bodies appear to have perpetuated inequalities between races, communities, schools and provinces. Therefore, policies such as the Schools Act (1996) which decentralised the education system by giving powers to governing bodies, the norms and standards for funding, assessment, White Paper 6, Curriculum 2005 (C2005) and the Language in Education Policy (LIEP, 1997) appear to be perpetuating and recreating new and further imbalances and inequalities. Therefore, the most important challenge for educational policy development in South Africa continues to be to bridge the divide between the rich/poor and urban/rural, that is, to obliterate the inequalities in terms of race, class and social status.

For the purpose of this study, C2005 and LIEP 1997 are considered as the most influential policies in relation to the current constraints, challenges and dilemmas which teachers, learners and communities such as the above face in their classes. It could be argued that post-democracy educational reforms such as these two policies are pivotal stumbling blocks in our pursuit of democracy, redress and access as they further widen the gap between disadvantaged and the privileged communities. The next section gives a brief overview of C2005, its implementation and some challenges for teaching and learning.

1.1.3 The much debated Curriculum 2005

On April 24 1997, the then Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, launched C2005 with the release of two thousand and five balloons painted in the colours of the national flag. This set the scene for extensive and controversial debates concerning C2005 and its pre-dominantly outcomes-based education (OBE) approach. Although transformation was desperately needed, Curriculum 2005 and its implementation were highly problematic in a context where less government spending caused constraints with regard to financial resources that could impact on equity and quality in schools. The implementation of C2005 was further hampered by constraints such as inadequate training of teachers, fragmented levels of understanding of what the new curriculum entailed, and the overwhelming demands made on teachers by the new curriculum (Report of the Review Committee on C2005, 2000).

In the context of language teaching internationally, Richards (1989) argues that most shifts to new syllabus design and curriculum changes have failed because insufficient attention was given to prepare teachers for change. This could be a factor in South African language classes and the results suggest that teachers might lack sound theoretical understandings of how to teach writing (Barkhuizen, 1993).

Furthermore, the progressive theoretical and pedagogical model underpinning the new curriculum has fundamental implications for the English additional class, and particularly for the teaching of writing skills. Whereas the old system advocated traditional theories of writing with a focus on the end product, teachers in the new curriculum, as facilitators of learning in the English class, have to take the writer as a point of departure rather than the form (Hyland, 2003b). This means major shifts in teachers' beliefs and values about writing with perhaps limited understandings of discipline knowledge with regard to teaching writing.

This lack of disciplinary knowledge is further compounded by the effects of desegregation: democracy was the gateway which provided learners of other languages access to former Coloured, Indian and model C schools, as the different education systems based on racial divides were integrated into one National Department of Education (DOE). Therefore, whatever the current racial make-up of urban schools, most have one thing in common: there are learners in their classrooms that speak English as a first language (L1) and those who speak it as a second (L2) or even third language (Barkhuizen, 1993). The result is that most urban schools have become multilingual spaces where learners with different mother tongues are suddenly sitting in the same class, learning the same curriculum through English as medium of instruction. Yet, teachers have not been adequately trained to teach in a multilingual setting (Barkhuizen, 1993) and as such, language in education policies are of critical importance.

1.1.4 The Language in Education Policy 1997 (LIEP 1997)

During the colonial and apartheid eras in South Africa, Afrikaans and English were defined as languages, whilst indigenous African languages were viewed as tongues or vernaculars (Mda, 2004). More significant was that approximately 75% of the population speak African languages and as such the Apartheid language policy was designed to favour the minority languages, that is, Afrikaans and English. Such designations of the official languages raised the power of these languages and resulted in attitudes towards African languages as inferior in power and status.

However, in an attempt to shift and raise the status of African languages the current Language in Education Policy (LIEP) of 1997 included nine other indigenous African Languages as official languages of South Africa. Nevertheless, due to global influences and foreign aid by agencies such as the World Bank, English remains dominant in the public and media sectors. Additionally, a good command of the English language is viewed as the entry ticket into social mobility and a middle-class job that would yield middle-class salaries, leading to economic prosperity. As a result, many parents in South Africa, especially in disadvantaged areas, have deeply held beliefs about the benefits of English.

Consequently, the drive for English as language for learning and teaching has increased; in fact research has found that South African classrooms at previously disadvantaged schools

mostly adopt English as medium of instruction (MOI), which is the second language of most learners and teachers (see De Klerk, 2002 and Barry, 2002).

1.1.5 Tensions as schools become multilingual spaces

For this reason, the medium of instruction at most schools is and to some extent remains fraught with challenges for both teachers and learners, which is indeed the situation at Eden Primary. Teachers as well as learners in these new multilingual spaces could have different levels of proficiency in the MOI. This has pedagogical implications for teachers who could have language barriers in terms of explaining abstract concepts and in turn learners could have difficulty understanding these abstract concepts not only in the Language learning area but also in Social Science, Maths and Science. One result is an over-reliance on code switching even in the English language classroom (Probyn, 2001). Therefore, learners wanting to learn English might experience less English, which could in fact impact on the development of writing proficiency in the intermediate phase at schools such as Eden Primary. Consequently, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the medium of instruction in the intermediate phase at Eden Primary School, where the MOI in the English class is the mother tongue neither of learners nor of teachers

1.2 Context of the study

Kress (1994) argues that there is a close relationship between language, social structures and writing. This means that those who can write well and eloquently would be perceived as more powerful than those who do not master the skill of writing. As a result, learning to write at school is powerful in either granting access or being a gatekeeper in terms of political, economical and ideological structures in society. Hence 'the control and messages of meaning is in the hands of a relatively small number of people' (Kress, 1994:3).

1.2.1 Are children still swimming up the waterfall?

In this regard, Macdonald (2002) reviewed literacy development in the new curriculum and posed the question, '*Are children still swimming up the Waterfall? A look at literacy development in the new curriculum*'. She argues that more than decade after the Threshold Report (1990), research consistently illustrates lower literacy levels than to prior C2005 and that these results could directly be linked to the new curriculum.

Additionally, The President's Education Initiative Report (1999) found minimal extended writing in grades 4 to 6 classes where observations were conducted. The results showed that

learners sat in groups discussing everyday experiences with few attempts by teachers to deepen and consolidate these discussions systemically in their classes through explicit teaching of reading and writing (Taylor, 2001). These findings illuminate the potential for pedagogical disarray in South African classes due to teachers' confusion about progressive learning-centred approaches as stipulated in C2005. These findings also highlight the impact of C2005 notably in the intermediate phase and draw attention to the potential in sites such as Eden Primary to evaluate the success or failure of our educational reforms after democracy.

It is notable that at more affluent schools teachers who felt confident in their professional capabilities did not hesitate to critique C2005 and continued to follow a structured literacy programme, teaching basic reading and writing. As a result, the foundation phase learners in these classes continued to learn to read and write with no erosion of good standards (Macdonald, 1999). Moreover, an uneven standard of teaching between affluent and township schools widened the gap between learners in the former Model C schools and those learners at disadvantaged schools (source).

1.3 Situating my research

The focus of my research is writing and specifically writing in the English additional language classroom. The rationale for focussing on English is: In spite of our multilingual language education policy, a tendency toward monolingualism and the hegemony of English still appears in public life; it is frequently used at various levels of national, provincial and local governments, it dominates the print media, and thus it is still perceived as the language of the social elites and the language of power.

Additionally, due the demands of the workplace, where reading, writing and speaking are mostly conducted in English, parents frequently insist that access to the English language should not be denied to their children. This scenario has clear implications for the English additional language classroom and in particular for writing as learners would have to demonstrate English proficiency in writing school-valued texts. As a result, such school-valued texts become the genres of power, as many of these learners need explicit instruction in both common-sense language and technical subject knowledge in a language that is not the same as their home languages.

1.3.1 Reflections on my own writing experiences

My own experience of writing at primary school exposed me to tests and examinations of

speaking, reading and writing skills. These normally covered topics that were far removed from my everyday context. Furthermore, the teacher listening for grammatical errors and the correct use of the variant of Standard English added to my anxiety and lack of motivation. However, during my secondary schooling we were encouraged to plan, draft and edit our own writing, but in retrospect our language teachers remained structural in their approaches. For example, they continued with the teaching methodology that an essay consists of an introduction, a body and a conclusion, with a focus on form and grammar. Since the implementation of C2005, systemic evaluations and media reports continuously state on the literacy levels of the learners in the foundation and intermediate phases as well as in grade 8. As such, my interest has intensified to analyse how teachers currently teach writing in the intermediate phase, especially against the backdrop of rapid policy formulation and the forceful implementation strategies that have characterised our new democracy since 1994.

Furthermore, being at a higher institution for the past four years has made me question whether changes have occurred in the way teachers teach writing at schools. For example, many first year students in our faculty, who are predominantly second languages speakers of English, lack critical reading and academic writing skills. Accordingly, working with these undergraduate students who face numerous challenges in adapting to writing at tertiary level, also significantly influenced my focus to analyse the existing practices of teaching writing and to explore an alternative approach in the intermediate phase.

As a Masters student undertaking studies in language education and applied linguistics, I have developed an avid interest in genre-based approaches to teaching writing. As a result, a fundamental issue in this research study is to explore genres in the English class. More importantly, the purpose of the study is to evaluate to what extent a text-based approach could strengthen the development of writing proficiency in the Intermediate Phase at Eden Primary School.

1.3.2 Systemic evaluations of literacy progress post C2005

After the implementation of C2005, numerous assessments - provincial, national and international - were conducted to ascertain the extent of educational quality in relation to learner attainment. Examples of such assessment are systemic evaluations done by departments of education provincially, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). However,

these assessments highlight that our new curriculum appears to fail our primary school learners, as the findings are strikingly similar both nationally and internationally. For example, during the 2001 national Grade 3 systematic assessment reported on average scores of 30% for numeracy and 54% for literacy (Department of Education, 2003:24). A pattern of exceedingly low levels of competence was achieved for numeracy and literacy (Soudien, 2007).

Similarly, Howie (2001) showed that TIMSS 2001 placed grade 8 South African Learners at 44% below the mean scores of all participating countries therefore scoring the lowest out of 39 participating countries. Furthermore, TIMSS 2003 revealed that there were no dramatic changes in average scores for maths and science since TIMSS 2001. Interestingly, the grade 8 of TIMSS 2003 were the first cohort of learners who first experienced C2005 and it appeared then already as if our new progressive curriculum was not producing the dramatic results it aspired to.

Evidence of this downward spiral in our education system is supported by the results found during the PIRLS (2006). PIRLS too found that South Africa's grade 5's scored dismally, in fact our learners scored the lowest results out of 40 countries. It highlighted that learners in grade 5 have limited basic reading strategies and skills. Learners could not even retrieve basic, literal information contained in the text, therefore more advanced reading tasks were impossible and, most embarrassing, is that South African learners scored below the international benchmark of 400 (PIRLS, 2006). The scoring results and learners at grade 5 not having basic reading skills could be viewed as an indicator of learners' writing proficiency as well. Effective teaching of writing in our current context is crucial for the success of all learners but more so for learners learning through an additional language.

1.3.3 Western Cape Education Department: The Language Transformation Plan

In response to the low scores of learners in provincial, national and international comparative analyses, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) finally acknowledged and took cognisance of international and local language research that illuminates the benefits of prolonged mother tongue instruction. It introduced a Language Transformation Plan in 2007.

This plan recognised that all the school-based systemic evaluations and testing at primary schools indicated that the education system is failing our learners and that it has not in fact

achieved what it set out to do in policy documents. The failure of learners tested in a language other than their mother tongue in grade 12 and the high drop out rate focused the department's attention on the impact of the languages of learning and teaching (LoLTs) and challenged their responsibility towards communities and schools. As a result, the Language Transformation Plan supports the use of the mother tongue as LoLT till the end of grade 6.

This Transformation Plan has set certain priorities and, of importance for this study, is the focus on teacher training, support for language medium changes and languages as subject shifts. These priorities resulted in a two-year post-graduate programme, the Advanced Certificate in Language Education (ACE) offered to teachers by the University of the Western Cape, which is financed and sustained by WCED. The first cohort of sixteen in-service teachers came from pilot schools identified as possible lead institutions to implement the language transformation initiative. Therefore, an added advantage of the study is that it would be able to evaluate one ACE participant's understanding of a text-based approach.

1.4 Description of the study

Given the situation highlighted above, the intermediate phase, as the phase in which advanced literacy skills and the ability to use language and literacy across the curriculum become central, has become an area of concern. For this reason, I decided to explore the teaching of writing and writing practices in the intermediate phase in the English class.

A central outcome in language teaching is to develop writing competence in learners, as this can enable access to higher education, better career options and well-paid jobs. C2005, our new curriculum, advocates an approach to the teaching of writing that combines 'process and text-based approaches' (NCS, 2003:78-81). However, in reality teachers and learners from schools in disadvantaged areas are faced with sometimes insurmountable odds to implement such approaches. For example, a lack of resources, lack of teacher and learner motivation, and low literacy levels at the end of Foundation Phase. Consequently, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding the relationship between the official, intended writing curriculum and the curriculum as practiced in the English classroom at this specific school.

Most importantly, I want to investigate current approaches to teaching writing in the Intermediate Phase and explore an alternative approach. My pre-theories are that the methodologies of teaching writing have not changed much in the South African school

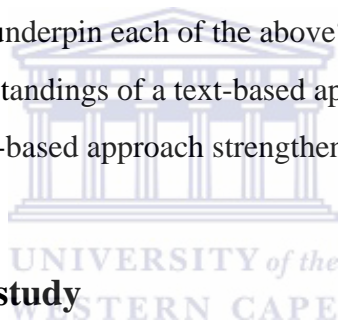
contexts, that teachers might not have had adequate pre service or in-service training for teaching writing in English in a multilingual setting, and that a genre-based approach to teaching writing might be a viable option to explore in such a setting.

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to explore the teaching of genres in the English class, specifically in the intermediate phase at a multilingual primary school. The primary research question is:

To what extent could a text-based approach strengthen the teaching and learning of English writing skills in the intermediate phase?

My critical questions are:

- What is the English writing curriculum as plan?
- What is the English writing curriculum as practiced in this school?
- What theories of writing underpin each of the above?
- What are teachers' understandings of a text-based approach?
- In what ways could a text-based approach strengthen writing in the intermediate phase?



1.5 The significance of the study

The teaching of language and specifically the teaching of writing in many under-resourced South African schools appear still to be reflecting a strong influence of behaviourist or technocratic approaches to learning and teaching (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2004). Such approaches have implications for the teaching of writing, which remain rooted in notions of control or guided composition writing. Such approaches stress the importance of the end product based on perfect execution of rules of grammar, vocabulary and correct spelling. However, based on literacy and numeracy evaluations (see PIRLS, 2006 & TIMSS, 2003) it does not appear as if this approach is supporting learners to think and write more clearly: although the topics that learners have to write about have certainly changed and this approach has in some cases become more learner-centred, these changes appear to have paid few dividends in learner achievements based on systemic evaluations done by the DOE (see Circular number 20080414-0036, WCED).

This study proposes an alternative approach to teaching writing in the intermediate phase, focusing on the process of learning about, and producing genres, rather than one that focuses

solely on the end product. It operates on the assumption that learners' chances of success in education will be considerably enhanced if they are given access to the linguistic resources that enable them to produce the sorts of texts and discourses which are valued in a variety of educational and other contexts. It is a fairly new area of research internationally and more so in South Africa even though the NCS (2003) proposes a text-based approach.

A genre approach to literacy teaching involves being explicit about the way language works to make meaning. It means engaging students in the role of apprentice with the teacher in the role of expert on language system and function. It could furthermore supply teachers with much needed skills and mechanisms to present learners with explicit and systematic explanations and to guide them on how writing works as a means of communication.

Therefore, this study aims to highlight teachers' current practices of teaching writing in the intermediate phase, and then to explore the impact of exposure to genre theory on one teacher's approach to teaching writing. It is hoped that this might contribute to strengthening the teaching of writing for both teachers and learners, be valuable for academics involved in language teacher training and support the writing of textbooks.

1.6 Scope of the study

The study thus focuses on the development of learners' writing skills in the intermediate phase. Although, it acknowledges the importance of listening and speaking as well as reading, the rationale for focusing on the writing proficiency is due to learners' eventually being assessed against evidence that they produce on paper. Therefore, the scope of this study is limited to the writing curriculum in the intermediate phase and how two teachers interpret and enact the writing curriculum in Grade Six.

The study focuses on a particular type of school, that is, a multilingual primary school where teachers and learners speak two different mother tongues, Afrikaans and Xhosa. However the majority of staff and learners are Xhosa mother tongue speakers. This was a small-scale study, and relatively short because I could only manage to do observations at the school for half a day, once a week for six months. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised; instead they offer possibilities for exploring in greater depth the possibilities that genres could offer teachers and learners in a South African primary school context.

1.7 Chapter Outline

This thesis consists of five chapters. Each chapter is metaphorically referred to as a journey associated with water. This water metaphor was an indicator of the research question but more importantly served as a means of symbolising the ways in which this research journey impacted on the thoughts, emotions and beliefs of a novice researcher such as myself.

1.7.1 Chapter 1: Unknown Waters

Chapter one introduces the study. It highlights the purpose for the research and it attempts to situate the importance of the study in relation to the background and context. A description of the study as well as the scope and limitations of the study are included. Consequently, the first chapter serves as an introductory explanation of the main research question, the background, context and limitations within which this study was situated.

1.7.2 Chapter 2: Travelling Uncharted Waters

Chapter two reviews the literature and focuses particularly on the literature of genre-based teaching. Firstly, it frames the problem in terms of writing, both for the researcher and in relation to the importance of writing skills in our social contexts. Three schools of thought pertaining to genre theory is explored, that is, New Rhetoric Studies, English for Academic Purposes and the Australian framework based on Systemic Functional Linguistics. Each school of thought is analysed in turn for definitions of genre, purpose, teaching and learning context as well as approaches to analysis. Literature on second language teaching and learning is also reviewed and explored to support the importance or interest of the study.

1.7.3 Chapter 3: Discovering what lies beneath the Waters

Chapter three focuses on the research paradigm and the methodology that was chosen. It outlines the qualitative approach and provides theory to substantiate the choice for the methodology and design of the study. Furthermore, it gives details of primary and secondary data collection as well as providing an outline of the intervention undertaken as part of the study. Furthermore, it provides details of an experimental unit of work and how it was implemented in order to explore the extent to which a genre-based approach could strengthen the teaching of writing.

1.7.4 Chapter 4: Drowning in the Ocean of Data

In this chapter, I describe through an interpretive analytical framework the observations, interviews and document analysis that formed the basis for the first phase of my design. Thereafter, I present the experimental unit of work and identify themes that could highlight

the potential of a genre-based approach in the intermediate phase at this multilingual primary school.

1.7.5 Chapter 5: A droplet into the Ocean of Knowledge

Chapter five concludes with recommendations and highlights possible future or additional research in genre-based teaching approaches.



CHAPTER II

Travelling Uncharted Waters?

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction: Storm in a teacup

This part of my research journey was fraught with anxiety, distress and a sense of being lost. Reviewing the literature became my own storm in a teacup, as I found myself dizzily spiralling, being flung between not knowing on the one side, on the verge of knowing at the other, yet continuously feeling out of control, not being here nor there, caught somewhere between locating, analysing, synthesising and reviewing the expert knowledge.

Searching for literature and locating the literature, even with support, was a lonely road. Never have I felt that the more I began to read and know, the less I felt I knew, lost and alone amid so many theories, expert knowledge, data and findings. And so this genre journey became a rumbling of thoughts, ideas and theories to be summarised, referenced and sometimes even violently tossed aside.

Reviewing the literature and writing up summaries was a cup of tea, yet I was slowly dissolving, losing my own voice and experiencing a sense of losing of my own identity. In robot-like fashion I found myself speaking and quoting studies done by experts in the field and then became aware of another storm brewing in my teacup: what miniscule contribution could I make? Would I be able to negotiate meaning for an expert audience in this genre field? Would I successfully structure the information according to issues pertinent to my research, and would I be able to identify themes that are linked to my research question?

As I attempt to write, my teacup torments and reminds me again that I have become the echoing voice of experts. So during this process I am riding a storm of emotions, wondering whether I will remain a voiceless, writing wanderer, I wonder... Yet, strangely losing my own voice, reminds me of our learners and teachers at school who face so many challenges with this process called writing.

Reflecting on my literature, I pondered putting to practice my knowledge of genre theory and this became one of my storm lanterns. Surely, researching the merits of such a theory should provide me with tools to deconstruct and conquer this silly storm brewing in my teacup?

And so finally, as I begin to let go, embracing this brewing cup of storm, I am steadfastly sensing that many storm lanterns have and will guide me in finding a way to indicate to an expert audience my ability to identify, search, locate and present a coherent review of the literature. At this point the storm is still brewing, at times even raging, never fully abating but it is becoming lesser in intensity. And so, I am realising that this willy-nilly writing storm brewing in my teacup is someone else's tornado and maybe both of these could be another writer's cup of tea.

This chapter attempts to draw on literature from genre theory, specifically genre theory based on Systemic Functional Linguistics. Hyland (2002) refers to a genre-based approach to teaching writing as being concerned with what learners do when they write. This includes a focus on language and discourse features of the texts as well as the context in which the text is produced. My primary intention is to explore the literature on different approaches to teaching writing and more specifically in what ways a genre-based approach to teaching writing could facilitate the development of writing skills at a multilingual primary school.

2.1.2 Framing the problem

Success after school, whether it is at a tertiary institution or in the world of work, is largely dependent on effective literacy skills. To succeed one has to display a range of communicative skills, for example, listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks. But, most importantly, the quality of one's writing determines access to higher education and well paid jobs in the world of work. In these scenarios, success or entry is dependent on either passing an English writing proficiency test or on the skill of writing effective reports. However, writing skills are even essential in the most general forms of employment, for example, waitressing necessitates writing down customer orders and working at a switchboard implies taking messages, writing down memos or notes. Therefore, learning to write at school should be synonymous with learning and acquiring the formats and demands of different types of texts necessary in broader society.

On this point, Kress (1994) argues that language; social structures and writing are closely linked. The written language taught at school reflects the more affluent social structures and

thus the standard written variants are deemed more acceptable by society. However, the kind of writing taught and valued at school, that is, poetry, literature and essays is mastered by a very few learners and the control of written language is in the hands of a relatively few people. As a result of this uneven access to the types of writing valued in society, the ability to use and control the different forms of writing brings about exclusion from the social, economic and political advantages connected with writing proficiency.

Consequently, in the push for greater equity and access, writing instruction globally has become a field of increasing interest in recent years. There have been numerous approaches to the teaching of writing in the history of language teaching for English as a first and second language, where first language refers to English mother tongue speakers and second language to learners who have English as a second or an additional language (see Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Hinkel, 2006; Canagarajah, 2006; Celce-Murcia, 1997) Not surprisingly, this magnitude of approaches has resulted in many paradigm shifts in the field of language teaching and in developing countries like South Africa, these international trends, approaches and paradigms shifts impact on local educational trends, as encapsulated in educational policy documents.

Ivanic (2004) argues that historically from the 19th and 20th century formal discourses have influenced a great deal of policy and practice in literacy education. Such discourses focused primarily on teaching of formal grammar, patterns and rules for sentence construction (pg 227). As a result, these discourses viewed language as a set of skills to be taught, learnt and mastered, and valued writing that demonstrated knowledge about language such as rules of syntax, sound-symbol relationships and sentence construction. Therefore, those writers that conformed to the correctness of grammar, letter, word, and sentence and text formation were viewed as competent writers. Furthermore, Dullay, Burt and Krashen (1982) state that the earliest work in the teaching of writing was based on the concept of controlled or guided composition and that language was seen as something that could be meaningfully visualised in taxonomies and rationalised into tables arranged across the two-dimensional space of the textbook page.

This focus on the conscious acquisition of rules and forms meant that teachers were focusing on parts of speech, demanding standards of correctness, and being prescriptive about what were ostensibly language facts. However, such an approach was found to be extremely

limited because it did not necessarily produce speakers who were able to communicate successfully. Therefore, although learners might master the lists, structures and rules, this might not lead to the development of language fluency or to the ability to transfer such knowledge into coherent, cohesive and extended pieces of writing in school or beyond it.

During the late 1970s more functional approaches developed. These were more concerned with what students can do with language, for example, meeting the practical demands in different contexts such as the workplace and other domains. Examples of writing tasks included filling out job applications, preparing for interviews, and writing applications. However, these involved minimal writing other than completing short tasks 'designed to reinforce particular grammar points or language functions' (Auerbach, 1999:1). Moreover, such tasks were taught in classrooms and out of context of issues that could emerge in real contexts.

As the limitations of a formalist approach to language teaching became increasingly obvious, teachers and researchers turned to a more process-oriented methodology. This focused more on the writing process than on the product and advocated expressive self-discovery from the learner/writer through a process approach to writing. Such a writing approach 'focus[ed] on meaningful communication for learner-defined purposes' (Auerbach, 1999:2). As a result, the learner is taken as the point of departure, and goes through a process of drafting, editing and redrafting; the teacher's role is less prescriptive, allowing learners to be self-expressive and explore how to write. As such, the process approach won favour with those who were of the opinion that controlled composition was restrictive, viewing a liberal-progressive approach as more suited for first language classrooms (Paltridge, 2004). This approach was taken up by researchers interested in Second Language Acquisition (see Krashen, 1981; Ellis, 1984; Nunan, 1988), and in second language classes' learners were also encouraged to develop ideas, draft, review and then write final drafts.

On the other hand, Caudery (1995) argues that little seems to have been done to develop a process approach specifically for second language classes. Therefore, it appeared that the same principles should apply as for first language learners, for example, the use of peer and teacher commentary along with individual teacher-learner conferences, with minimal direction given by the teacher who allows learners to discover their voices as they continue through the writing process.

This lack of direction was highlighted by research in different contexts carried out by Caudery (1995) with practising teachers of second language writing. Based on questionnaires, findings showed that teachers in second language classes had differing perceptions and methods of implementing a process approach. This could however be ascribed to the different contexts that these second language teachers found themselves in, for example, large classes and different ways of assessing writing. One finding of the study was that teachers could easily dilute the process of writing into disconnected stages where both L2 learners and teachers could perceive it as steps to be followed towards an end product. As a result, the writing process became viewed as a means to an end. In addition, learners understood the process but did not explicitly learn the language features associated with different types of writing.

A third approach that has gained prominence in recent decades is the socio-cultural practices approach which seeks to affirm the culturally specific literacy practices that learners bring with them to school. Social practice advocates argue that literacy is not a universal, solely cognitive process but that literacy varies from context to context and culture to culture (Street, 1984, Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000). As a result, if literacy varies from context to context and culture-to-culture, then it follows that learners would bring to school different ways of writing. Accordingly, educators in multilingual classrooms should value learners' cultural knowledge and ways of writing or use them as a bridge to new learning (Auerbach, 1999). Furthermore, the manner in which writing is taught transmits profound ideas to learners about who they are, what is entailed in the process of writing, and what they can do with writing. Therefore, the way in which writing is taught and learnt is a powerful tool for shaping the identities of learners and teachers in schools (ibid, 1999).

Proponents of a fourth approach, the genre-based approach, have argued that both the socio-cultural and the process approaches to teaching writing result in learners being excluded from opportunities and that these approaches are in fact disempowering them (Delpit, 1998, Martin & Rose, 2005). They contend that certain domains, contexts and cultures yield more power than others and that if learners only tell their stories, find their voices and celebrate their cultures; would not be enough for them to gain access to these more powerful domains. Therefore they suggest that learners should be empowered through access to writing the discourses of power,

focusing on culture, context and text. Such approaches also enable an analysis of how identities, cultures, gender and power relations in society are portrayed in texts.

Genre research done in Australia (see Disadvantaged Schools Project Research, 1973) where the additional language is the medium of instruction for aboriginal learners had major educational rewards for teachers and learners participating in the project. Singapore too moved towards a text-based approach with the introduction of their 2001 English Language Syllabus (Kramer-Dhal, 2008). This approach has paid dividends for the Singapore education system, for example, continuous improvement in examination scores and achievements in international league tables, compared to the learners' past underachievement in literacy tests (see PIRLS 2001, Singapore results) and this is maintained in the 2006 PIRLS testing of literacy and reading.

The next section will draw on literature from genre theory, providing a brief overview of the notion of genre and how it has evolved as a concept. Then, literature on three different scholarly genre traditions New Rhetoric Studies, English for Academic Purposes and Systemic Functional Linguistics and their different educational contexts, purposes and research paradigms is explored and discussed. However this chapter mainly investigates literature relating to the Systemic Functional Linguistic perspective on genre, the history of genre theory and research done in Australia, the implications for schools and classrooms and how genre theory has impacted on the pedagogy of teaching literacy in disadvantaged multilingual settings. A brief overview focusing on critiques of Systemic Functional Linguistics is also provided.

2.2 Defining Genre

Johns (2002) argues that the term 'genre' is not new and cites Flowerdew and Medway (1994) who state that for more than a century genre has been defined as written texts that are primarily literary, that are recognised by textual regularities in form and content, are fixed and permanent and can be classified into exclusive categories and sub-categories. However, a major paradigm shift has occurred in relation to notions and definitions of genre, and texts are now viewed as purposeful, situated and 'repeated' (Miller, 1984). These characteristics mean that genres have a specific purpose in our social world, that they are situated in a specific cultural context and that they are the result of repeated actions reflected in texts. Similarly, Hyland (2004) defines genre as grouping texts that display similar characteristics, representing how writers use language to respond to similar contexts. Martin and Rose (2002)

place more emphasis on the structure of genre, seeing it as a ‘staged, goal oriented social process. Social because we participate in genres with other people; goal oriented because we use genres to get things done; staged because it usually takes us a few steps to reach our goals’ (pg 7).

2.2.1 An Old Concept revisited

As stated above, traditionally the concept of ‘genre’ has been used to define and classify literary texts such as drama, poetry and novels in the fields of arts, literature and the media Breure (2001). For example, a detective story, a novel or a diary are each regarded as belonging to a different genre. In recent years interest in the concept of genre as a tool for developing first language and second language instruction has increased tremendously (Paltridge, 2004; Hyon, 1996; Johns, 2002). In second language writing pedagogy in particular much interest has been focused on raising language students’ schematic awareness of genres as the route to genre and writing development (Hyon 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Johns, 2002; Paltridge 2004).

However there are various theoretical camps and their different understanding of genre reveals the intellectual tensions that are inherently part of the concept (Johns, 2002). These intellectual tensions arise from the divergent theoretical understandings of whether genre theory is grounded in language and text structure or whether it stems fundamentally from social theories of context and community. Hyon (1996) argues for three schools of thought: Systemic Functional Linguistics, New Rhetoric Studies and English for Academic Purposes whereas Flowerdew (2002) divides theoretical camps into two groups: linguistic and non-linguistic approaches to genre theory. Genre, in short, continues to be ‘a controversial topic, though never a dull one’ (Dudley-Evans & Hopkins, 1998:308).

I have chosen to follow Hyon’s (1996) classification for reviewing the genre literature because this classification makes it easier to highlight the similarities and differences in definitions, purposes and contexts, and allows for a greater understanding of various approaches to genre in three research traditions. As a result, three schools of thought New Rhetoric Studies, English for Academic Purposes and Systemic Functional Linguistics and their approaches to genre will be discussed.

2.3 The Three Schools of Thought

During the last two decades, a number of researchers who were disillusioned with process approaches to teaching writing saw genre as a tool to develop both first language and second language instruction (Hyon, 1996; Johns, 2002; Feez, 2002). Hyon (1996) in her analysis of 'Genre in Three Traditions and the implications for ESL' argues that three dominant schools of thought, English for Specific Purposes, North American New Rhetoric Studies and Australian Systemic Linguistics have resulted in different approaches, definitions and classroom pedagogies of genre (see also Hyland 1996, 2002, & 2004). As Cope and Kalantzis (1993: 2) put it, '...genre has the potential to mean many things to many people'. Paltridge (2002) calls it a 'murky issue'. An understanding of the theoretical roots, analytical approaches and educational contexts of the different schools of thought is thus essential.

2.3.1 New Rhetoric Studies Genre Theories

The first school of thought is the New Rhetoric approach to genre (Dias & Pare, 2000; Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Pare, 1999) that recognises the importance of contexts and the social nature of genres but it is rooted in Bakhtin's notion of dialogism. This notion of dialogism means that language is realised through utterances and these utterances exist in response to things that have been said before and in anticipation of things that will be said in response, and thus language does not occur in a vacuum (Adams & Artemeva, 2002). As a result, genre is a social phenomenon born by the specific goals and circumstances of interaction between people. Therefore, advocates of New Rhetoric Studies argue that genres are dynamic, relational and engaged in a process of endless utterances and re-utterances (Johns, 2002). As such, the focus of this theoretical camp is on the communicative function of language. Consequently, their perspective on genre is not primarily informed by a linguistic framework but draws on post-modern social literary theories. Accordingly, for these proponents, understanding genres involves not only a description of their lexico-grammatical format and rhetorical patterns but that also that genre is 'embedded in the communicative activities of the members of a discipline' (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995:2).

This view of genre as a flexible instrument in the hands of participants within a community of practice has meant that the use of text in the classroom situation has not been a major focus (Johns, 2002). Theorists concentrate on how 'expert' users manipulate genres for social purposes and how such genres can promote the interest and values of a particular social group in a historical and/or institutional context.

Context

Hyon (1996:698) states that, as with English for Specific Purposes (ESP), genre teaching within this framework is predominantly concerned with first language university students and novice professionals. It is concerned with helping first language students become more successful readers and writers of academic and workplace texts. Unlike, ESP and SFL, therefore the New Rhetoric Studies refers to first language development. One consequence of this is that their focus is much less concerned with formal classroom instruction.

Purpose

The focus of writing in this framework is thus on making students aware of the contexts and social functions of the genres in which they engage (Bazerman, 1988) and not on their formal trimmings. Proponents view genres as complex, dynamic, ever changing, and therefore not amenable to explicit teaching (Johns, 2002; Coe, 1944; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). They argue that it is through understanding of context that students can become more successful readers and writers of genres.

2.3.2 English for Specific Purposes Genre Theories

The second major school of thought in relation to genre is English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The potential to perform competently in a variety of diverse genres is frequently a pivotal concern for English second language learners since it can be a determining factor in admission to higher paid career opportunities, higher educational studies, positive identities and life choices. As a result, ESP theorists 'scrutinise the organisation and meaning of texts, the demands placed by the workplace or academic contexts on communicative behaviours and the pedagogic practices by which these behaviours can be developed' (Hyon, 1996). Advocates of this paradigm are concerned with genre as a device for understanding and teaching the types of texts required of second language English speakers in scholarly and specialized contexts (Bhatia, 1993; Flowerdew, 1993; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Swales, 1990). They propose that genre pedagogy could assist non-native speakers of English to master the functions and linguistic conventions that they need to read and write in disciplines at higher institutions and in related professions.

According to Paltridge (2004), ESP genre studies are predominantly based on John Swales's (1981, 1990) work on the discourse structure and linguistic features of scientific reports. Swales's work had a strong influence in the teaching of ESP and more so on the teaching of academic writing to non-native English graduate students at higher institutions. Swales (1990)

defines genre as ‘a class of communicative events with some shared set of communicative purposes and a range of patterns concerning structure’ (pg 68) Furthermore, Swales argues that the communicative purpose of a particular genre is recognised by members of the discourse community, who in ‘turn establish the constraints on what is generally acceptable in terms of content, positioning and format’ (Paltridge, 2004:11).

Context

Given the focus on scientific and other kinds of academic writing within this framework, genre teaching occurs mostly at universities teaching English for academic purposes and in English classes for specific writing needs, such as professional communication, business writing, and other workplace-related writing needs. However, Hyon (1996) argued that, at the time of writing, many ESP researchers had managed to present their descriptions of genres as useful discourse models but had failed to propose how this content could be used in classroom models. For example, Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988) presented their analysis of cyclical move patterns in scientific master’s dissertations as a teaching and learning resource but did not describe how this model could be converted into materials, tasks and activities in the classroom (Johns, 2002).

Purpose

As the focus of this theoretical camp is on international students at English-medium universities in Britain and abroad, their focus is on demystifying rather than on social or political empowerment (Paltridge, 2004). Due to the concern in this paradigm with English for academic and professional purposes, they focus on the formal aspects of text analysis. In fact, many ESP researchers particularly emphasise the teaching of genre structures and grammatical features (Hyon, 1996) or ‘moves’ in texts as to referred by Swales (1990). The purpose of genre teaching in this framework is therefore on teaching students the formal staged, qualities of genres so that they can recognise these features in the texts they read and then use them in the texts they write, thus providing access to ‘English language academic discourse communities’ (Paltridge, 2004:16). As a result, in their approach to textual analysis ESP theorist have paid specific attention to formal elements of genres and focused less on the specialised functions of texts and their social contexts (Hyon, 1996).

2.3.3 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) Genre Theories

The third school of thought, Systemic Functional Linguistics, takes up this underplaying of the social context which analyses the formal features of text in relation to language function

in social context. SFL, referred to as ‘the Australian school’ in the United States of America, is rooted in the theoretical work of Halliday (Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Johns, 2002). As a result, this theoretical camp is based on systemic functional linguistics and semiotics from which emerged the register-theory (Breure, 2001). Halliday developed his linguistic theory in order to give an account of the ways in which the English language functions as social practice (Halliday, 1985; Hasan & Halliday, 1989). As a result, this theoretical paradigm focuses on the systemic function of language from which choices are made to convey meaning within a specific context and with a specific purpose. Therefore, proponents within this framework propose that when a series of texts have similar purposes, they will probably have similar structures and language features. They are thus grouped as the same genre.

Building on the work of Halliday, the idea of Systemic Functional Linguistics as a basis for language teaching emerged from the work of theorists such as Martin (1989, 1992). Christie (1991) and Rothery (1996) made attempts to take genre and grammar analysis a step further by providing and expanding scaffolds which bridge systemically between grammar and genre. They argue that texts need to be analysed as more than just mere sequences of clauses and that text analysis should focus on how language reveals or obscures social reality. Such an analysis can illuminate the ways in which language is used to construct social reality.

Educational Context

Cope and Kalantzis (1993) state that genre-based teaching started in Sydney as an ‘educational experiment’. The reason is, because by 1980, it seemed clear that the newly introduced progressive curriculum did not achieve the educational outcomes that it professed to (pg 1). As a result, researchers became interested in the types of writing and texts that learners in primary schools were expected to write as part of the process approach (Martin, 1989, 1991). These researchers were concerned that learners were not being prepared to write a wide enough range of texts needed for schooling, for example, findings showed that teachers mostly favoured narratives and recounts. So, genre-based research has predominantly been conducted at primary and secondary schools although it has also begun to include adult migrant English education as well as workplace training programmes (Adult Migrant Education service, 1992). As a result, in the Australian framework, the efforts of research are mostly centred on child and adolescent contexts unlike their ESP and New Rhetoric counterparts (Drury & Webb, 1991).

A group of researchers in the late 1980's started the Literacy in Education Research Network (LERN) (Cope, Kalantzis, & Martin, 1993:239). Their aim was to develop an instructional approach to address the inadequacies of the process approach for teaching writing. For researchers in this paradigm, learners at school need explicit induction into the genres of power if they want to participate in mainstream textual and social processes both within and beyond the school (Macken-Horarik, 1996). Those learners who are at risk of failing fare better within a visible curriculum and this applies particularly to learners for whom the medium of instruction is not a home language.

Purpose

Systemic genre analysts contend that genre pedagogy should focus on language at the level of whole texts and should also take into account the social and cultural contexts in which texts are used (Martin, 1985, Rose & Martin, 2005). Furthermore, genres are viewed as social processes because '...texts are patterned in reasonably predictable ways according to patterns of social interaction in a particular culture' (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993:6). Consequently, SFL genre approaches see social purpose, language and context as interrelated in texts. Textual patterns reflect social conventions and interactions and these are executed through language. Therefore, genre teaching should move from linguistic description to an explanation and an understanding of why texts are shaped the way they are and how they achieve their particular goals (Paltridge, 2004). As a result, the basic principle underlying all such language approaches is that learners must learn not only to make grammatically correct statements about their world, but also develop the ability to use the language to get things done.

The purpose of the Australian framework is to assist learners at school become more successful readers and writers of academic, school and workplace texts (Hyon, 1996). Their goal is to help primary and secondary school learners 'participate effectively in the school curriculum and the broader community' (Callaghan 1991:72). Their focus is on learners learning to write in English as a second language and the challenges these learners might experience when writing and learning in a language that is not their mother tongue. Therefore they argue for explicit teaching through a cycle that 'models and makes explicit the dominant forms of writing or text types valued in schools' (Gibbons, 2002:52). Writing in an American context of disadvantaged students, Delpit (1998) strongly argues for the teaching of the

genres of power, stating that if a learner is not already part of the culture of power, explicitly teaching the rules of this culture through genre makes access easier.

Consequently, research on genre theory has been both politically and pedagogically motivated: a pedagogical project motivated by the political project of allowing equal access to social, economic and political benefits of Australian society through an explicit and visible literacy curriculum (Kress, 1994). As a result, Australia is often referred to as the place in which practitioners have been most successful in applying genre theory and research to pedagogy (Johns, 2002). My intention is to explore the use of SFL genre-based teaching as an alternative approach to teaching writing in grade six at a multilingual primary school. However, approaches to research and pedagogy of SFL have not been accepted without critiques. These critiques originate from advocates of progressive literacy approaches (Lankshear & Knobel, 2000) and also from within genre camps practicing genre theory from different theoretical understandings. In the next section, I provide details of these critiques and a personal response to each critique.

2.4 Critiques of genre of SFL

There have been many critiques of SFL genre-based approaches, as mentioned in the previous section. Here I discuss three of the most telling: liberal progressive critiques, socio-cultural practice theorist critiques, and critical discourse analysts' critiques about teaching the genres of power.

The liberal progressivists claim that genre literacy entails a revival of transmission pedagogy. It seems to mean learning formal 'language facts' again. It is sometimes claimed that genre literacy teaching is founded on a pedagogy that will lead us back to the bad old days of authoritarian classrooms where some students found the authority congenial and succeeded, while others found the authority uncongenial and failed (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). However, in contrast to transmission approaches that often treated texts in isolation and grammar as separate and external from the text, a genre-based approach views text as closely linked to social context and uses linguistic analysis to unpack the choices that are made for social purposes. Rather than unthinkingly replicating rules, learners are assisted towards conscious control and can be encouraged to exercise creativity and flexibility on an informed basis. The 'authority' provided acts as a scaffold and is gradually withdrawn, thus shifting responsibility towards the learner.

A second major critique has been raised by social practice theorists such as Lave and Wenger (1991) whose research focus is from a situated learning perspective. These advocates of situated learning view genres as too complex and diverse to be detached from their original contexts and taught in a non-natural milieu such as the classroom context. Also, they argue that learning occurs through engaging with authentic real world tasks and that learning to write genres arises from a need in a specific context. Therefore, in authentic settings, writing involves the attainment of larger objectives, which often involve non-linguistic features, and thus the disjuncture between situations of use and situations of learning is unbridgeable. However, although this theory offers a persuasive account of how learning takes place through apprenticeship and mastery roles, especially how an apprentice becomes a fully literate member of a disciplinary work group, it does not propose a clear role for writing teachers in the language classroom (Hyland, 2004). In a SFL genre approach by contrast, the selection of topics and texts can highlight how cultures are portrayed as either negative or positive. It can help learners become aware of how language choices in texts are bound up with social purposes (Lankshear & Knobel, 2000). This awareness is necessary for entry into intellectual communities or social discourses and practices, and can help make learning relevant, appropriate and applicable to the context in and outside of the classroom. It can also include a critical element as it provides learners with a linguistic framework to analyse and critique texts.

A final important critique is that teaching of the genres of power will not automatically lead to social and economic access in a fundamentally unequal society (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). While this may be true, the consequences of not teaching these genres could lead to English second language speakers' from poor working class backgrounds being disadvantaged in perpetuity. The discourses of scientists, doctors and lawyers, for example, are often incomprehensible and obscure, denying access to many, particularly second English language speakers and those not familiar with the conventions of their associated genres. These social exclusions are marked linguistically (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993). Therefore, SFL genre theorists' notion of genres as textual interventions could provide access and equity to those not familiar with a particular discourse in society. Consequently, genre teaching in this framework has the intention of empowering disadvantaged and underprivileged students by providing them with the linguistic resources to critically analyse and become more proficient

writers of different text types, thus potentially providing access to the socio-economic and political domains currently denied to many learners at schools.

A related point is that a genre-based approach runs the risk of reproducing the status quo (Luke, 1996). However, a genre approach should be able to include issues of inequality and power relations in the teaching context by adopting a critical education theoretical perspective, which strives to unveil existing deep-rooted ideologies within society with the intention of empowering students to question and change the status quo. If teachers are made aware of such aspects in texts, how meaning is constructed and negotiated in texts, and how this shapes our thinking about the world, they might be able to raise awareness and consciousness about power inequalities through the development of effective critical literacy skills in English additional language classes. At the same time, ‘functional ways of talking and thinking about language facilitate critical analysis’ (Hyland, 2004: 42). As a result, it may assist learners to distinguish texts as constructs that can be debated in relatively accurate and explicit ways, thus becoming aware that texts could be analysed, evaluated, critiqued, deconstructed and reconstructed. Such awareness is crucial for further education or academic studies at higher institutions of learning. Thus a genre-based approach to teaching writing might bridge the gap between writing required at school and the academic writing skills essential for undergraduate studies.

Having sketched the broad parameters of the three main approaches to genre and how genre approaches have developed in different ways and with different underlying goals, I now focus in greater detail on the Australian Framework. This approach appears to offer the greatest scope for South African contexts given its intention to provide equity and access to social and economic spheres in society, which is also a central principle of the South African Constitution (1994) and C2005. Furthermore, the focus on English second language learning contexts and aboriginal learners from disadvantaged, poor working class communities is similar to learners from disadvantaged communities who learn mostly through a medium of instruction which is not their home language. Another important reason for focusing on this approach is that this genre-based approach could inform the teaching of writing and future teacher training frameworks that aim to improve the literacy outcomes of learners in the intermediate phase in South African contexts.

2.5 A Closer look at The Australian Framework

It was Michael Halliday (1975) a professor of Linguistics at the University of Sydney, who was the founding father of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and provided the catalyst for the development of genre theory in Australia (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993). Halliday and his theory of systemic functional linguistics introduced the theme of ‘learning language, learning through language, learning about language’ (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993:231). As discussed above, SFL focuses on language and how it functions or is used in cultural and situational contexts and argues that language can be described or realised by means of a framework comprising cultural context, situational context and linguistic features. The Australian framework is therefore rooted in a text-context model of language (Lankshear &Knobel, 2000; Gibbons 2002; Derewianka 2003).

Furthermore, SFL interprets the context of situation and the context of culture as two interrelated domains (Christie & Unsworth 2000). The context of situation is the immediate context in which language is used. However this context of situation can vary in different cultures and as such it is culture-specific. This situational context is described in three main categories of semantic resources, field, mode and tenor, and collectively this is referred to as the register of a text (Lankshear & Knobel, 2000) The field describes the subject-matter of the social activity, its content or topic; tenor focuses on the nature of the relationships among the people involved; mode refers to ‘medium and role of language in the situation’ (Martin, 1997: 10) Therefore, it is the register (field, tenor and mode) which influences how language is used because it provides the social purpose of the text through answering ‘what is going on, who is taking part, the role language is playing’ (Martin & Rothery, 1993: 144). Hence, SFL explores the relationship between language and its social functions.

The earliest work on applying this framework to education was carried out by Martin and two of his students Rothery and Christie who started a research project in 1978 using the field, tenor and mode framework to analyse writing produced in schools (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Kress, 1994). In 1980 Martin and Rothery examined student writing that had been collected over numerous years (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993). Their findings indicated that most school valued texts were short and limited to a few genres for example, labelling, observation, reports, recounts and narratives, with observations and recounts being the dominant genres (pg 233). Furthermore, they found that the texts produced in textbooks lacked development, even within story genres, were extremely gendered, and irrelevant to the needs of the

community or secondary schools. They then developed the hypothesis that genres at schools should be explicitly taught by teachers. This research resulted in the development of a curriculum cycle providing scaffolding and explicit teaching through setting the field, deconstructing a text, modelling writing, jointly constructing a new text and culminating with individual writing (Feez; 2002; Paltridge, 2004; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Martin & Francis, 1984). Building field and setting context is critical to each phase of the cycle and this refers to a range of activities which build up content for the genre and knowledge about the contexts in which it is deployed (Martin & Rose, 2000). In this way, learners move from everyday, common sense knowledge towards technical, specialist subject knowledge, and are gradually inducted into the discourse and field knowledge of school subjects. As a result, this approach can strengthen and promote learning language and about language across the curriculum.

The logic of the curriculum cycle is based on the notion of 'scaffolding'. Hammond (2000) and Gibbons (2002) refer to this as 'scaffolding language' based on Vygotsky's (1976) zone of proximal development (Derewianka, 2003). In this process the teacher takes a more direct role in the initial phase, with the learner in the role of apprentice. As the learner develops greater control of the genre, the teacher gradually withdraws support and encourages learner independence (Derewianka, 2003). Therefore, genre literacy has the intention to reinstate the teacher as professional, as expert on language, whose role in the classroom should be authoritative but not authoritarian as opposed to the teacher as facilitator in more progressive teaching models (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993).

As a result, the curriculum cycle and its scaffolding approach could be valuable in activating the schemata of English second language learners as opposed to a context where English teaching approaches are traditional and narrow. Such approaches could have negative educational impacts on disadvantaged learners.

2.6 The Disadvantaged Schools Programme

Luke and Kale (1989:127) argue that monolingual and monocultural practices permeated official language and education planning in Australia prior 1970. Similar to South African apartheid policies, Australia practiced a 'White Australian Policy' (Luke & Kale, 1989:127). However, in the early 1970s the Australian government recognised that aboriginals and islander learners should be integrated into mainstream schools (Luke & Kale, 1989). As a

result, the need to acknowledge Aboriginal and migrant languages became a priority in educational policies.

Furthermore, Diane Russell (2002) states that up to 1967 very few Aboriginal students in South Australia entered secondary school unless they were wards of the state and, given this history of disadvantage, much of the literature about the education of Aboriginal students since then refers to the poor retention and attainment rate of Aboriginal students compared to their non-Aboriginal peers. As a result, the Disadvantaged Schools Programme (DSP), an initiative of the Interim Committee of the Schools Commission (1973), was initiated to reduce the effects of poverty on learners at school (McKenzie, 1990) and participation was based on the social and economic conditions of the community from which the school draws its learners. Thus the intention of the DSP was to improve the learning outcomes of learners from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds in Australia to increase their life choices (Randell, 1979). Therefore, a fundamental aim of the DSP was to equip disadvantaged learners with power, through education, to enter and share fully in the benefits of society as a matter of social justice.

Furthermore, a majority of Aboriginal people grow up in homes where Standard Australian English is at most a second dialect, sometimes first encountered on the first day of school. Accordingly, accepting the language children bring to school and using that to build competence in Standard Australian English is the 'key to improving the performance of Aboriginal students' (www.daretolead.edu.au). Genre theorists have been concerned with equitable outcomes, thus discourses of generation, ethnicity and class have been a preoccupation. These theorists argued that progressive pedagogies were marginalising working-class Aborigine and other disadvantaged learners (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). For Burns (1990) progressive curriculum approaches led to a confusing array of approaches and methodologies and failed to provide a well-formulated theory of language. Further, Cope (1989) argued that an 'authoritative' pedagogy for the 1990s was needed to replace the progressive curriculum of the mid-1970s as this had neglected to make explicit to learners the knowledge they need to gain to access socially powerful forms of language.

Due to the above kinds of debates in the SFL genre theory camp, a literacy consultant, Mike Callaghan, working with the DSP in Sydney, decided that SFL might be a viable theory and this resulted in the Language and Social Power Project. Teachers who were disillusioned with

progressive teaching methods became eagerly involved in this project (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). Additionally, Cope and Kalantzis (1993) report that teachers discovered that genre theory did not dismantle all the progressive language approaches; in fact, it enhanced progressive language teaching and highlighted that there is a social purpose in writing. This, however, meant teachers' knowledge and skills about language in social contexts had to be developed through extensive in-service training and in-class support

2.7 Research originating from the Disadvantaged Schools Programme

Scholars like Martin and Rothery (1986) began to analyse texts using SFL theory. This took the form of linguistic analysis with each text being deconstructed into its structural features, or schematic phases, and then being analysed for its typical language features. Most of these projects aimed to link theory and practice (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). As a result, teachers gained knowledge and an ability to critically analyse the texts that they used in practice. Research identified factual genres such as reports, expositions, discussions, recounts, explanations, and procedures, which could be used in classrooms. Furthermore, as this project progressed, the data were translated into classroom practice using a pedagogical model developed by project members that resulted in a major breakthrough for the classroom, that is, the curriculum cycle or the teaching and learning cycle (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988).

The National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research was commissioned in 1990 to evaluate the effectiveness of projects like the Language and Social Power Project and was asked to report on improvements in learner writing as well as on the impact of genre pedagogy on teachers' knowledge of the social function of language and their ability to assess the effectiveness of learners' writing (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). The findings of the report highlighted an 'overwhelmingly' positive response from participating teachers (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). Teachers praised the in-service and the in-class support of the demonstration lessons as well as the backup support material, both printed and audio-visual. Furthermore, in terms of evaluating the learners' written texts, it was found that learners from participating schools wrote a broader range of genres, that these included more factual texts, and that these learners had a higher success rate than learners from non-participating schools (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993).

2.9 SFL and the School Writing Curriculum

Kress (1994) states that until recently 'writing has been regarded as an alternative medium of language, giving permanence to utterances' (pg 7) and attention on writing was thus focussed

on mechanical aspects. However, increasing evidence indicates that speech and writing have distinct grammatical and syntactic organisation, and further that writing and speaking occur in distinct social settings that have significant effects on the syntactic and textual structures of speech and writing (Kress, 1994). Literacy in many Western schools presupposes that learners have developed spoken language skills in the relevant language but this may not be the case for second language learners (Gibbons, 2002). As a result, these learners would have even more to learn about writing because learners initially use their knowledge about spoken language to bridge the divide between speaking and writing (Kress 1994).

The school writing curriculum and its teachers are then powerful in developing or hindering the writing development of learners in primary school. As discussed above, writing curricula drawing from progressive theories which stress the process of writing over content, see the teacher as a facilitator of writing, and no focus on linguistic rules for speaking or writing could result in English second language learners being denied access to development as writers. Therefore, writing curricula that focus on the teaching of genre are potentially powerful in that they could provide ‘generic power’ to learners. ‘Power to use, interpret, exploit and innovate generic forms is the function of generic knowledge which is accessible only to members of disciplinary communities’ (Bhatia, 2002:67).

Accordingly, the teaching of SFL genre approaches and their linguistic frameworks could provide a scaffold for English second language learners to be inducted into social contexts, purposes and linguistic features of both spoken and written dominant discourses. Such approaches might lead towards opportunities for equity and access for non-native speakers of English.

A writing curriculum rooted in genre theory would have implications for the classroom and the next section discusses some of these implications for pedagogy.

2.9.1 SFL Genre in the classroom

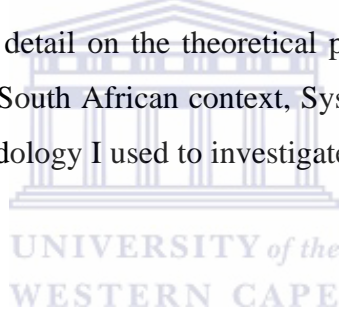
The teaching of genre in the classroom requires explicit teaching of language at text level and of the interdependence of language use and context (Paltridge, 2004). Halliday and Hasan (1985) state that SFL deals with language in context:

'The context of situation, the context in which the text unfolds, is encapsulated in the text, not in a kind of piecemeal fashion, not in the other extreme in a mechanical way, but through a systemic relationship between the social environment on the hand, and the functional organisation of language on the other. If we treat both text and context as semiotic phenomena, as modes of meaning, so to speak, we can get from one to the other in a revealing way.' (Pgs 11-12)

Such an approach implies that language teachers in primary and secondary schools should not only have English subject knowledge but also understand and have knowledge of linguistically informed genre-based literacy pedagogy.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the three main schools of thought in relation to genre and then focused in more detail on the theoretical perspective that seems to offer the most productive insights for the South African context, Systemic Functional Linguistics. The next chapter describes the methodology I used to investigate the potential of such an approach in one primary school.



CHAPTER III

Discovering what lies beneath the Waters

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction: Through the looking glass

The intention of the study is to gain an understanding of the writing practices in grade six at a specific school and to explore an alternative genre-based approach to teaching writing. In order to understand the writing practices at a specific school, it became necessary to ‘test the waters’. Therefore, the school or site became like a transparent bowl of water and to best understand this water bowl implied that I be there, observe the water bowl and then immerse my hands therein. And so, the transparent water bowl became my looking glass. Through this looking glass I simply search for knowledge and an understanding of those who swim inside, what happens to them, and how they understand and experience their world or, as Merriam (1998) refers to it, I ‘...simply seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process or the perspectives or worldviews of the people involved’ (pg 11).

Denscombe (2003) refers to this process of seeking to understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives or worldviews of people as ‘interpretivism’. He explains that the social world is constructed and interpreted by people and that it does not just exist or have material qualities to be measured, judged or observed objectively. In addition, Vierra and Pollock (1988) refer to interpretivism as ‘...a social setting as it is experienced and practiced by the people in it’ (pg 174). In this way the school as an institution can be understood as a distinct social world that is constructed and interpreted by the people involved in education. As such, the practice of teaching is constructed in the minds of teachers, learners, school management teams, and so on, and reinforced, maintained or changed through their interactions with one another. Teaching writing at schools is a social practice that also has a tradition and values that these participants understand and adhere to. Therefore, it is the intention of the study to discover and understand some of the deep-rooted values and beliefs that teachers hold about their practices of teaching writing at school. An interpretive paradigm thus provided the study with a reflective lens to try and explore such beliefs or values.

This interpretive paradigm is often contrasted with more positivist approaches characterised as a 'strong science or as the view from nowhere or God's Eye view' (Harraway (1988) cited by Atkinson, 2005:51). This view is seen as absolute scientific objectivity, and knowledge in this framework allows 'Godlike control' of the people or phenomenon under study. Therefore, I could either have stood at the periphery and provided a 'Godlike' account of the phenomenon or have dived into the water to try and understand the worldview of those that swim there. The intention of the research was not to give a recount of teaching practices from the periphery or an expert 'Godlike' perspective but to describe and explain teachers' understanding of what they did in the context in which they found themselves. This process of immersion allowed me to describe or explore the particular practices of participants involved in producing school-valued texts and therefore this study rooted in a qualitative research paradigm.

Furthermore, Merriam (1998) states that one of the characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher becomes the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. As part of this role, the researcher should physically visit the setting, the people or institution if they want to understand and describe the phenomenon through the window of the participants. In order to enhance the validity or trustworthiness of his/her study, the researcher should provide rich descriptions of the context, the people involved and their practices, including participants' words, direct quotations from documents and field notes that support the findings of the study (Merriam, 1998). As a result, interpretive approaches call for rich descriptions when interpreting the patterns of behaviour, beliefs and underlying values of teaching writing by learners and teachers. However, swimming with those in the water bowl makes the researcher ethically responsible to the people being studied: observing and being at the school could deeply connect the researcher with the people and phenomenon under study.

This deep connection does, however, pose several threats to validity. For example, personality traits and social background influence the way a person interprets the behaviour of another (Vierra & Pollock, 1998). To counteract these threats, researchers can make use of various processes and methods to ensure that the interpretations and findings of their studies are valid and trustworthy reflections and interpretations of the participants' practices and understandings. In this study, these methods include an attempt to triangulate findings through observations of participant practices, reflective interviews with participants, and analysis of documents such as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Language

(2003), NCS Language Assessment Guidelines (2006), third term lesson plans, tasks and assessment samples of learners writing.

There are further threats to validity associated with qualitative research. A central threat is the so-called 'observer effect' in which participants could 'act' differently than under normal conditions. That is, they might become self-conscious and alter their behaviour to take account of the purposes of the research study (Denscombe 2003). Accordingly, during the process of collecting the data, the participants could become aware of being studied and being looked at, disturbing their natural practice or ways of doing, and this could distort the issue under the microscope. I spent over six months in the school and therefore feel that the observer effect was not a major threat to the validity of my findings. A second major threat to validity is the appropriateness of data analysis techniques, for example, the link between the conclusions drawn and the data collection techniques. I tried to overcome this by discussing emerging themes with my participants and my supervisor.

Overall qualitative research is characterised by eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of field work, an inductive orientation to analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, the intention is not to make generalisations about a population but to carry out an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon and, to best understand this phenomenon, the qualitative researcher purposefully selects individuals or a site which will help him/her to better understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2005).

3.2 Research Site

The data was collected at a multilingual primary school that I have described in chapter one. I visited the school on every Wednesday for approximately six months, from April 2008 to September 2008. Initially I was interested in immersing myself in the context so as to be perceived as non-threatening to the normal practices at the school. I did not speak much about the purpose of my research then and was merely interested in understanding how the school operated. Also, during conversations I frequently reminded teachers that I was merely there to understand and gain knowledge about their practices and ways of doing and what they have to do in the context in which they find themselves.

My research supervisor identified the school as a possible site in which to conduct my study. Creswell (2005) mentions the notion of gatekeepers as being helpful in qualitative research. He defines a gatekeeper as someone who could have an unofficial or official role at a site, providing entrance into a sight and assisting the researcher locate people. For example, it could be a teacher, a principal, a group leader who usually has 'insider' status at the site. As a result, entry into this site was negotiated by my supervisor and a teacher who participated on the Advanced Certificate in Education (Language Education) Programme in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. Permission was also obtained from the Director of Research at the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). Through these gatekeepers, my entry into the school was easily accepted by the principal and other staff members.

In order to take account of ethical considerations, I informed the principal and the two participating teachers of the nature of the research. They were also told that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage. Secondly, I informed them that I would take the utmost care to ensure their identities were protected, that they would remain anonymous and not be referred to by name. I also drew up a letter of consent for the parents of the learners participating in the study. In this letter, I informed parents of the nature of the research, that they had the right to refuse permission for their child to participate in the study, that the learners' identities would be protected and that the research would have no negative repercussions for the learner in terms of academic progression. Furthermore, the letter was translated into Xhosa by one of the participating teachers.

The teacher mentioned above, henceforth known as Eve, became a key research participant. As she was a student at the time, I was keen to work with her as, firstly, it would allow me to observe how suggested writing practices were implemented after the teacher had been exposed to genre-based teaching theories and, secondly, the intermediate phase at this school had been classified as very weak by WCED after provincial systemic assessments (2006/2007). I hoped to gain insights as to the reasons for this classification. Eve's involvement resulted in another grade six teacher, Adam, indicating a keen interest to participate in the research study. So I amended my intention to study only one grade six class in order to include this teacher as it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding through exposure to the 'world' of two grade six classes. As a result, the site became more 'information rich' (Creswell, 2005), as I would be able to present multiple perspectives of

individuals based on varying traits or characteristics (Creswell, 2005). The scope of the study thus became multifaceted as it also provided a space to explore the impact of the ACE course on Eve's understanding of a genre-based approach and to compare some differences and similarities in the English classroom in the intermediate phase as Eve began to implement a new approach to the development of literacy skills.

Besides English, Eve teaches five other learning areas to a multi-grade class consisting of grade 5 and 6 Afrikaans- and Xhosa-speaking learners, whilst Adam teaches English and Mathematics to 51 Xhosa-speaking learners. Both teachers teach other learning areas through the medium of English because these classes were created at parents' insistence that their children be instructed in English. Due to budgetary constraints, another teacher could not be employed for the seventeen grade 5 learners who had to be instructed through the medium of English and as such it was decided that these learners be combined with the twenty one grade 6 learners in Eve's class.

3.3 The research methodology of the study

The purpose of my study was to obtain an understanding of writing practices in the intermediate phase and therefore I wanted to explore how the teaching and learning of writing occurred in grade six, what teachers and learners did when writing was taught, and what challenges teachers and learners faced in grade six, especially in relation to teaching and learning about writing. As a result, I chose a qualitative design to try and gain a holistic understanding of writing practices in grade six.

3.4 Qualitative Design

The introduction to this chapter explains the rationale for my choice of an interpretive paradigm. This section describes in detail the design of the study. Sherman and Webb (1988) describe qualitative research as fundamentally being concerned with practice as it is lived, felt or undergone. As each context is different, Patton (1985), cited by Merriam (1998), explains the purpose of qualitative research as an endeavour to:

...understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting, what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives' are

like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting... (pg 1)

As this study was conducted at a specific township school in the Western Cape, with the intention to understand that particular context and the interactions of the participants there, it is as such primarily rooted in a qualitative paradigm.

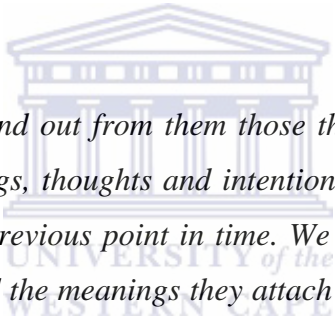
Likewise, Richards (2003) describes characteristics of qualitative research as the study of human actors in their natural setting and in the context of their everyday world. Such research seeks to understand the meanings and significance of social practices from the perspective of the individuals, group, or those involved in the setting. Merriam (1998) refers to this as an 'emic' or insider's perspective, versus the 'etic' or outsider's perspective. My primary research question was to explore the extent to which and means whereby a genre-based approach could strengthen the teaching of writing in grade six. In order to explore a genre-based approach to teaching writing, I had firstly to understand the insiders' perspectives on the challenges that they experience when teaching writing, what they value when teaching writing, and observe the ways in which they teach writing. Accordingly, another fundamental concern of this study was to 'listen to the views of participants' (Creswell, 2005) at the school where the research was conducted. Therefore, it was the study's intention to gain a deeper understanding of writing practices at the research site, through observing the background or context in which practitioners found themselves and through listening to their views on how they experience the phenomenon.

One of the intentions of the study is to describe the relationship between the writing curriculum as plan and the writing curriculum as practiced by teachers. Therefore, I firstly observed, listened and 'swam' with a group of teachers and learners in their institutional setting over a period of time. I saw this as an opportunity to tell their story from their perspective, which could lead to some understanding of why they made the choices that they did.

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) state that 'qualitative researchers are concerned with process as well as product'. My interest was to discover or uncover writing practices in grade six and as such the types of texts and learners' ability to write those texts were of utmost importance for my research. However, classroom-writing practices are intricately bound up in pedagogy and

so I tracked the development of these skills over a period of six months. I was interested to observe what kinds of interactions occurred in the English classes in grade six, how questions were phrased and answered, how activities were sequenced, what types of writing activities learners were exposed to and how teachers assessed writing. Although I observed how teachers taught writing, at times observations did not yield the answers to questions that arose during these observation sessions. As a result, I also included interviews into my research design.

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993:385) define interviewing as ‘the careful asking of relevant questions’ and argue that it is an important means for researchers to check the accuracy of observations and to verify or refute the understandings gained through observations. The purpose of interviewing in qualitative research is then to ‘find out what is on [participants’] mind - what they think or how they feel about something’ (ibid.). They cite Patton who remarked that,



We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe how people have organised their world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things.

Therefore, interviewing participants was a necessary and valuable tool for understanding in greater depth my observations of lessons, teachers’ choices of texts, and how they taught writing in grade six at a specific school. Furthermore, Merriam (1998) and Nunan (2005) refer to an interview continuum and state that interviews could move between the continuum depending on the researcher’s intention and the phase of the research project. On this continuum, interviews could move between informal, unstructured and structured interviews. Therefore, I have included both unstructured and semi-structured interviews into my research design: during the phases when I was more of a non-participant observer, I used unstructured, casual interviews and then as I gradually became a participant observer, I moved towards semi-structured interviews.

Furthermore, Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) state that qualitative data are collected in the form of words or pictures rather than focusing on numerical statistics. Therefore, qualitative data

could for instance include interview transcripts, field notes, audio recordings, personal comments, official records and anything else that could convey the actual words or behaviour of the people being studied. Thus, following this tradition in qualitative research, I collected primary data by means of fieldwork, observations of practitioners, questionnaires, casual conversations and semi-structured interviews as well as audio recordings of conversations and interviews, both unstructured and semi-structured.

The data collection process was cyclical in nature as I moved back and forth between methods of collecting data. This allowed me to explore emerging questions and possible themes that shaped the study while the data was collected. For example, my initial thought about the frequent code switching in the English class was that the learners have limited English proficiency. However, casual conversations and observations revealed something quite different. Therefore, moving back and forth between methods of collecting data allowed me to gain insights that could have otherwise been obscured.

In addition, the research design includes secondary data in the form of document analysis. Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) define document analysis as 'the analysis of the written or visual contents of a document' (pg 389). My secondary data included the analysis of teachers' lesson plans, assessment schedules, assessment tasks, and the types of texts that teachers value, as well as learners' written texts.

3.4.1 Document Analysis

The first component of my design was document analysis. I used three levels of document analysis that were the NCS (2003) and Assessment Guidelines Language (2006), teachers' lesson plans and learners' writings. These documents were analysed to understand the relationship between the official writing curriculum and teachers' understanding, knowledge and practices of teaching writing.

National Curriculum Statement (2003) and Assessment Guidelines (2006)

In analysing these documents, I firstly intended to gain knowledge about the writing curriculum and the theory of language that underpins it. Secondly, I was interested in examples of types of writing and purposes for writing as encapsulated in the NCS assessment guidelines (2006). Thirdly, I hoped that the above information would lead towards some

understanding of the link between the curriculum as plan and the writing curriculum as practiced by teachers in the intermediate phase.

Teacher's Lesson Plans

Four lesson plans of each teacher were analysed to understand the link between teachers' preparation and planning for writing in the intermediate phase and the NCS for writing. It was envisaged that this might highlight what teachers valued in the teaching of writing in Grade six and the extent to which this was aligned to the writing curriculum. Of particular interest was, the types of genres used by teachers. Of further interest were the subsequent writing tasks: I wanted to analyse whether these were at word, sentence or paragraph level. Furthermore, I was interested to understand the extent to which being inducted into a genre-based pedagogy influenced Eve's planning and preparation of teaching literacy skills. This would allow for a comparative analysis of the two teachers' practices as well as highlight the impact that a genre-based approach could have.

Assessment

Both formative and summative assessment activities were analysed as I wanted to ascertain what kinds of writing activities were valued for assessment and progression purposes, whether these were extended writing tasks, and whether these were at word, sentence or paragraph level.

Samples of learner's written work

Samples of learners work were also analysed to assess the general level of competence with regard to writing, in Class A and Class B. These were analysed during the sampling stage, discussed later in this chapter, to see which students the teachers regarded as successful or competent writers. I was interested in gaining an understanding of the types of writing activities to which teachers exposed their grade 6 learners as this could lead to some comparison of the written work done by learners in each of the two grade six classes at this school. Of importance was their exposure to genre and control of genres before the start of this project.

An analysis of the documents outlined above allowed me to understand such issues as the views of language that underpin the NCS (2003) writing outcomes and assessment standards for the intermediate phase, the writing activities to which teachers exposed their learners and

the extent to which these supported the views of writing development as encapsulated in the NCS (2003). As a result, the analysis of these documents highlighted the relationship between the implementation of the official writing curriculum and the curriculum as practiced by the teachers in grade 6 this school.

3.4.2 Observations

However, analysing documents would not provide me with an in-depth understanding of what participants do in the classroom and as such observations of participants was the second component built into my design. Creswell (2005) defines observation as ‘..the process of gathering open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site’ (pg 211). However, Richards (2003) states,

...that observation is more than a mechanical process to be gone through; it is a commitment to apply the full range of our perceptual and analytical skills as intensely and extensively as we are able, in the pursuit of understanding (pg 106).

Therefore, in social research, observation is more than a mere superficial looking at actors but can in fact be seen as searching or delving into that which actors do but do not ‘see’ anymore. Therefore, my aim was to use observations to discover what everyday practice was for the actors. As a result, I observed sixteen lessons of each teacher. At the beginning of my data collection at the school, I observed Adam and Eve teaching English as an additional language as well as the other learning areas taught by both of them. I was interested in observing trends in code switching, language across the curriculum events, scaffolding and strategies to teach in general. This created a sense of ease with both teachers and their learners. However, Silverman (2003) argues that ‘...in order to understand the world firsthand, you must participate yourself rather than just observe people from a distance’ (pg 45). Therefore, as staff members became accustomed to my presence on Wednesdays, I was at different times asked for advice and ideas to school related issues, I was asked to manage a class when the teacher was called away, as well as consulted on academic issues relating to Adam’s studies at UWC. It was during these times that I was afforded the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of participants’ perceptions of teaching writing, their assessment practices and classroom strategies. However, remaining on the periphery whilst being viewed as an insider led to a fear of boundaries being crossed. Richards (2003) for example, refers to possible consequences that observing could have on the observer, especially in participant observation

where the observer forges a relationship and gradually becomes part of the group being observed.

During this period of participant observation, I firstly used broad general observations of how each teacher enacted the curriculum, what types of texts they valued and how they assessed those texts. This allowed me to make a comparative analysis of how the two teachers planned and appeared to understand their own practices in the new curriculum. After a few of these general observations, I began to focus on more detailed aspects of the English class such as how they introduced lessons and how learners were scaffolded towards writing, the kinds of writing learners were expected to do, and the criteria used to assess such writing. This provided me with some understanding of the writing practices in grade six as well as teachers' beliefs about teaching writing.

During the process of observation, there were certain practices in the intermediate phase and in school in general that I did not easily understand. I was not a true participant and had no knowledge about certain procedures and processes. For example, before first break the teacher would accompany learners to get breakfast and as an outsider I did not know what this process entailed or how teachers experienced teaching and learning at a school where many learners had a lack of basic nutrition. Therefore, I had to ask questions and speak to teachers about practices foreign to me. I also needed to get their perspectives on their day-to-day practices.

3.4.3 Interviewing

During the initial phase of this study, interviews consisted mainly of conversational interactions or 'informal interviews' (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993:385). Informal interviews are classified as unstructured interviews, which do not involve any specific type or sequence of questions or any particular form of questioning, are of interest to both the participant and the researcher, and are intended to find out what people know and how the views of one individual compares with the views of another. (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). During the initial phase of this study, interviews consisted mostly of such conversational interactions or 'informal interviews' and moved along the continuum towards semi-structured interviews.

During the informal phase, questions focused on the knowledge, opinions and feelings of both teachers. The focus was to discover factual knowledge about the school, classroom

practices, assessment and general issues regarding the curriculum, and how those impacted on the views of respondents and affected their feelings towards issues such as classroom practices and education in general.

These unstructured interviews were conducted both with teachers together and with each teacher individually, and were recorded by means of field notes initially and thereafter audio-recorded with the permission of the participants. The questions emerged from the immediate context and were asked while events or incidents occurred both inside and outside of the class. Therefore, these interviews were mostly done when I wanted to understand reasons for and to gain knowledge about processes in context.

As a result, this phase served mostly to set both participants and myself as a novice researcher at ease regarding the interview process but also to shed light on what the participants consider as factual, how such facts were evident during classroom observation and their how their experience versus their professional knowledge influenced their thinking and feelings about teaching and learning. These casual conversations thus contributed to making a comparative analysis of the two teachers' understandings, knowledge, opinions and feelings regarding their practices in the English class and also of teaching and learning in general.

However, the purpose of my research was to focus on writing and these unstructured interviews would not yield sufficient data to uncover and understand teachers' values and beliefs. Therefore, I decided to include semi-structured interviews as part of my design.

Nunan (2005) states that with semi-structured interviews the researcher has a general idea of where he or she wants the interview to go and what should emerge from it but that the researcher does not go in with a set of pre-determined questions. As I was foremost interested in understanding the research question from participants' perspective, the unstructured interview allowed for responses from the participants' viewpoint and was thus not only focused on the agenda of the researcher. Broad questions were asked so that participants could recount experiences, opinions and knowledge about writing and their writing practices. They were encouraged to use examples and prompted for further explanations when I was unsure about the understanding that the participant wanted to convey. Examples of these broad questions are as follow:

- Describe a typical day at school for you.
- Describe how you start an English lesson.
- Describe what kinds of challenges your learners face in the English class.
- What do you think are some of the reasons for such challenges?
- Could you give me some examples of writing activities that you expose learners to and why?
- Describe some challenges that emerge during these writing activities.
- Describe how you assess writing.
- What do regard as important when you assess the learners written texts (what do you look for)?

It was anticipated that these interviews would either support or refute data collected during the other phases of the research study. They also led to a deeper understanding of why teachers made the choices that they did and whether such choices reflected their own understanding of their practices. For example, during one of these sessions one teacher responded by saying that he did not start an English lesson in a specific way, but after much explanation and probing, both the researcher and the teacher came to the realisation that he did in fact start every lesson in a fixed manner. Therefore, the advantage of semi-structured interviews could be seen as valuable for both the researcher and the researched as it allowed for deeper reflection and introspection about practices that were deeply imbedded.

3.4.4 Questionnaires

To supplement the interviews I administered two questionnaires to triangulate the responses of the teachers during the informal and semi-structured interviews as well as the behaviours displayed by participants during the observation phase. One questionnaire focused on background or demographic information including questions such as age, educational background, types of training, experience and professional development. This questionnaire was given to participants during the casual conversation phase, as it was easier to answer background questions.

The second questionnaire focused on respondents' feelings about teaching writing and this was given towards the end of the data collection phase, so as not to lead the participants into particular ways of thinking about writing. The aim was to observe whether there was a link between what participants said, their actual practices in the classroom, and what they valued

when assessing writing. Participants were asked to tick off the written activities to which they mostly exposed learners, to mark mock written samples, develop their own criteria and to indicate which sample text they thought was more appropriate and why. It was anticipated that this questionnaire would support or refute what the respondents claimed during the other phases of data collection.

3.5 Telling the stories of the participants

As described above, the research design used instruments such as document analysis; interviews, questionnaires and observations to tell the story of how two teachers taught writing in grade six at a multilingual primary school. However, Denscombe (2003) argues that, ‘...research is intrusive and disrupts normality... [and is] likely to produce distorted results’ (pg 106). Subsequently, during the data collection process researchers have to be aware that individuals could act differently as a direct consequence of their awareness of being studied. Additionally, Denscombe (2003) refers to this as the ‘halo’ effect and explains that ‘normal’ practices can be temporarily amended to accommodate the researcher and the information that might the researcher might need. For example, during the initial observation phase at the school, Adam initially felt the need to plan and prepare a lesson before he felt comfortable in allowing me to observe in his classroom, clearly indicating that the research purpose was intruding and disrupting his ‘normality’ or every day practice. On the other hand, Eve carried on with her normal classroom procedures and practices.

In order to minimise this ‘halo’ or ‘observer’ effect, I decided upon adopting a changing observational and interviewee role (Creswell, 2005) where I could adapt my role to the situation. Initially I first looked at issues in general until teachers, learners and staff grew accustomed to my presence at school. Furthermore, this allowed me to help participants understand that I was merely there to get an understanding of writing practices from their perspective. It also assisted me with the unstructured interviews where the participants felt comfortable to ‘speak’ about issues and practices impacting on learning and teaching in grade six. In the end, this method of observing and asking general questions allowed for easier access into the classes of teachers, to conversations with insiders, and subsequently inclusions into meetings with staff and officials at school and district level.

However, Blanton (2005) advises about ‘...mucking around in the lives of others’ and about ‘how the stories of the vulnerable are told’ (pg 149). She argues that one should choose your

population carefully and be aware of what you are getting yourself into. Furthermore, she contends that for novice researchers like myself there are a myriad of books and other information available to assist with planning, designing and conducting research. However, the general literature does not warn about the complication of negative findings and the effect of mucking around in the lives of others. Blanton (2005) cautions that telling the stories of the vulnerable should be more than a superficial following along a tradition without reflecting on the impact this could have on participants

Also, Edwards (2006) posed the question, ‘Who wins with sociolinguistic research?’ Therefore, even the stories of the vulnerable in sociolinguistic research consist of actors who are part of the research story, with each one having different positions of power which could create and perpetuate imbalances in minority group settings as our research might not alter their context, they might not have access to the results of research, and in addition their lack of knowledge and understanding of academic research could lead to them perhaps being the losers in the end. As a result, Blanton’s advice regarding the stories of the vulnerable and how they are told highlights the importance of including reflexivity into the methodology. This could shed some light on the personal attitudes, values and ideals of the researcher and how these could have impacted on the study or research questions.

3.6 Reflexivity

Willig (2001) in chapter one, *From Recipes to Adventures* in her book, *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology* refers to reflexivity as,

...an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining “outside of” one's subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity, then, urges us to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research (pg 10).

As a novice researcher, I was drawn to this concept of reflexivity and included it in my design as I found myself experiencing this study as a journey both outward towards the participants and their world and also as an inward journey towards the self.

Furthermore, Willig (2001) states there are two kinds of reflexivity, personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. Personal reflexivity involves reflecting upon the ways in which one's own 'values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life, and social identities have shaped the study' (pg 10). Therefore, personal reflexivity also involves thinking about how the research may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers. During the process of research, as an ex-teacher, I found myself being caught between my natural inclination to assist the vulnerable and the danger of contaminating the study. As such, personal reflexivity both during and after observations assisted me in containing myself during moments when I disagreed with practices of teachers and in reflecting on how I phrased questions to avoid leading participants into a particular way of thinking about an issue.

On the other hand, epistemological reflexivity requires an engagement and reflection with questions such as, 'How has the research question defined and limited what can be found? How have the design of the study and the method of analysis "constructed" the data and the findings? How could the research question have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation?' (Willig, 2001). Thus, epistemological reflexivity encourages us to reflect upon the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge) that we have made during the course of the research study and the implications of such assumptions for the research findings. As a novice researcher, my initial question when I embarked on this research journey was 'knowledge for whom and for what purpose?' and I have realised that fieldwork involves interactions which could lead to a variety of issues such as who gains by it, how it is perceived by the various role-players relating to issues of power and whether it leads to some form of empowerment, change or growth. The most devastating realisation during the analysis process was that my findings would not save the futures of these learners. Consequently, I have learnt that it is not always clear how and whether research will change the lives of the researched and, most importantly, how and whether my conclusions and recommendations will alter mindsets. The above are all questions with no clear cut answers, thus implying that even in the researcher-researched context imbalances of power may be perpetuated as the powerless continue to be powerless and the powerful become more so through inequality of knowledge, status and access amongst the players in the research-researched context.

3.7 Exploring the impact of an experimental unit of work

The second phase of this study I decided to explore the extent to which a genre-based approach might strengthen the teaching of writing in the intermediate phase. I decided to do explore ‘action research’ as a component to evaluate how or in what ways this alternative approach could or could not strengthen the development of writing skills. However, this was not a rigorous, scientific experiment but a preliminary exploration of the possible impact that such an approach on teaching writing in English in the intermediate phase.

As part of this preliminary exploration, I designed a unit of work based on the curriculum cycle proposed and developed by Jim Martin and David Rose (2005) and others using Vygotskian approaches to pedagogy and SFL approaches to textual analysis. The aim of the unit was to evaluate whether this approach to teaching writing could have benefits for teaching writing in this multilingual primary school. Based on the curriculum cycle, the unit of work consisted of an information text and a range of activities that were sequenced in such a way as to provide a scaffold for grade six learners in the English additional language classrooms. These sequenced activities were structured into the stages of the curriculum cycle, that is, setting the field, deconstructing the text, modelling writing, then jointly constructing and finally individually constructing a similar text. Below is a brief outline of the curriculum cycle:

Setting the Field

In this phase teachers should build the field or content knowledge about the text, identify and use prior knowledge of students, introduce new subject-specific terminology, and concepts through various approaches. For example, to set the field, the first section of the unit of work consisted of listening and speaking, reading and viewing tasks where learners had to use skills such as locating, extracting and organising information to prepare them through familiar and technical language (see Appendix number: Unit of Work 4). The text was an information report on ‘The Elephant’. The textual stages in the information report i.e.

Deconstructing texts

In this phase, teachers should use the text to guide the learners to recognise the following: the purpose of the text, the intended audience, the stages of the text and the language features. This can be done at whole text level by cutting the texts into paragraphs and cutting paragraphs into sentences. In the designed unit of work,

teachers had to do focused reading and develop skills such as skimming, scanning and reading for information. This was followed with modelled and paired reading and the after reading task was a comprehension assessing the content and technical language understood by learners. The final tasks were a focus on the language features, in this case, on descriptive factual language and the timeless present tense.

Modelling Writing

During this phase teachers should do explicit teaching about the stages and language features. This should be achieved through questions, drawing learners attention to features previously discussed, explanations and reminders. A writing frame was developed which learners then used as a model to jointly construct a similar text. Learners were asked to write their own information report for the grade four learners at the school on 'The Elephant'. Therefore, learners in groups had to first decide on possible subheadings and then use the language features and stages in the text to write a model text.

Individual Construction

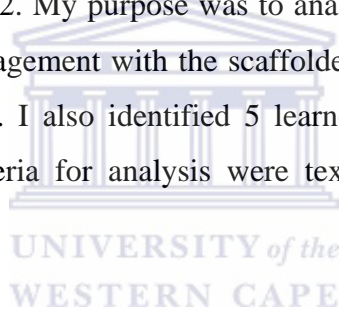
This is the phase in which learners use the acquired knowledge of the stages in the text, the language features, the purpose and the intended audience and the modelled writing text about 'The Elephant' to write their individual text about 'Cheetahs'. Learners received a fact sheet on cheetahs and had to use these facts to write their own texts.

In implementing this unit of work in CLASS A with fifty-one Xhosa-speakers, Adam had no or limited knowledge of genre theory and the curriculum cycle. As a result, he used his normal approach to implement the unit of work and to teach writing. Consequently, apart from following the setting the field activities, Adam implemented a traditional approach to teaching writing: he did not follow the deconstruction, modelled and joint construction phases of the unit of work.

In contrast, Eve had twenty-one grade six learners, that is, fifteen Xhosa- and six Afrikaans mother tongue speakers, and showed evidence of an understanding of using genre theory in the English additional class after having been inducted into genre-based approaches via the ACE programme. In addition, assessment schedules for CLASS B showed that these learners were already reaping some rewards from Eve's exposure and induction to genre-based

approaches, and, as such, these learners in CLASS B had an advantage above learners in Adam's class. The primary intention of this study was therefore to establish in what ways genre theory could strengthen the teaching and learning of writing.

To answer this question, ten of the learners from Class A were selected to be put with Class B and thus exposed to a genre-based approach to teaching writing within a scaffolded curriculum cycle. These ten learners were randomly selected based on the codes that they scored in general in the English additional class. In this coding system, 1 means that the learners are not competent, 2 means learners are competent with support, 3 means competent and 4 means the learner is excellent. In Class A all the learners had very low scores: on average learners scored between 1 and 3, and only two learners scored 4. Of the ten selected to move into Class B, five scored 3, three learners scored 2 and two learners scored 1. On the other hand, from the 21 learners in Class B the overall scores were much higher: six scored 4, eleven scored 3 and four scored 2. My purpose was to analyse the changes in the writing of the ten learners during their engagement with the scaffolded text-based cycle as taught by a relatively well-informed teacher. I also identified 5 learners from Class B to be used for comparative purposes. The criteria for analysis were textual and topic development and appropriate language structure.



3.7.1 Pre-sampling

This was done before the implementation of the unit of work: I provided the teachers with a factual recount genre and asked them to use this text to plan a lesson. As a result, this stage of the study consisted of both teachers jointly planning and developing a lesson plan and activities for their grade 6 learners. However, the assessment task was a comprehension and we then decided to use the samples for extended writing of a previous lesson that they prepared and planned together. In this lesson the learners had to write an essay on the South African government, past and present. These essays were used as samples for the analysis of the ten learners from Class A and the five learners from Class B. The criteria used were schematic development, topical development and the use of appropriate language features. We decided that the samples of extended writing of this specific lesson would be used to analyse the learners writing skills in the different classes. The samples of the above ten learners from Class A and the five learners from Class B were used for analysis to determine their proficiency in textual and topical development and the use of appropriate language features.

3.7.2 Intervention

Thereafter, the unit of work was implemented and, in consultation with both teachers, possible challenges in relation to context were identified and discussed before the planned intervention. We decided on two periods per day per class so that the school's normal timetable would not be disrupted and the teachers felt that between eight or nine periods was sufficient to implement the unit of work. After this consultation, we identified a week to implement the intervention as well as allocating the anticipated number of periods on their timetables. As a result, implementing the unit would provide us with information about the time or the number of periods that a unit of work would take under normal conditions. Finally, I asked the principal for permission to implement the unit of work. The genre that was chosen for the unit of work was an Information Report and the topic focused on elephants. The reason for choosing an information genre was because teachers appeared to favour stories and personal recounts when choosing texts for their English additional language classrooms so this would provide exposure to a less-used but important genre. Also, there are distinct differences pertaining to stages in the texts, purpose and language features between the factual recount and the information genre.

3.7.3 Post-sampling

For the final stage, I developed a worksheet that contained random facts about the cheetah, which learners had to use to write their individual information reports for the grade four learners at their school. The learners in Class A did not do modelled writing on the elephant, were not exposed to jointly constructing a text but were asked directly after the reading, comprehension and language tasks where I developed the comprehension and Language tasks, to write an essay about cheetahs using the information sheet. On the other hand, learners in Class B and the ten learners from Class A were exposed to all the phases of the curriculum cycle. The researcher then compared the results of the class exposed to genre theory against the results of the learners in Class A. The criteria to make the comparison focused on schematic development, topic development, appropriate language and use of visuals or pictures.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the methodology, design and tools used in this study. The study followed a qualitative paradigm and included observations, interviews, document analysis and questionnaires. The first part of the study focused on describing the

world of participants from their viewpoint and as such it merely describes writing practices as they were observed in the two grade six classrooms at a multilingual primary school.

The second part of this chapter gave an outline of an explorative unit of work implemented to gain insights into the extent that a genre-based approach to teaching writing in the English additional language classroom could strengthen the development of writing of grade six learners. The next chapter will present and provide analysis of the data that has been collected.



CHAPTER IV

Drowning in the ocean of Data

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

In Deep Waters

I find myself surrounded with waves of data churning, swirling, becoming more and more, and holding my head above the water became the challenge during this part of my research journey. It seems that the entire journey taunts, torments, and validates that the pursuit of knowledge comes with a price. For just as I am drowning in the data, I am drowning in an ocean of tears as I am about to leave the research site but more movingly, I am cutting ties with the learners and their little boxes. And this reminds me of an initial thought when I embarked on this journey, ‘knowledge for whom and what purpose?’ I am realising that my research findings might not change their world; I can only pray that teachers will somewhere find the guidance they need to achieve their aims.

Nonetheless, as I am reaching the end of this journey, I am realising that this research path is indeed not for the faint-hearted. It challenges my thinking about the world, my thinking about myself, and shows me aspects of tenacity and rigour that I had not noticed or thought that I possessed before. I realise that I will have to take the utmost care to bracket myself out in the analysis, my thoughts and ideas as I attempt to describe meaning from the perspectives of the participants involved in the situation or context. So, although I am drowning, the emerging character throughout this journey amazes me and I am realising that this will help me to negotiate my way around this vast ocean of data.

In this chapter, I firstly present data from observations of classroom practices in the two grade 6 classes. I shall attempt to discuss the patterns that emerge during the analysis of this data to show the extent to which these impact on teaching writing in the intermediate phase.

Secondly, I present data obtained during interviews, both unstructured and semi-structured, to gain an understanding of writing practices from the perspectives of the two teachers involved

in the study. This is followed by an analysis of two questionnaires to deepen my understanding of the relationship between teacher experience and professional training and how this relationship shapes their writing and assessment practices.

Thereafter, I analyse a set of documents including the National Curriculum Statement (2003) and Assessment Guidelines (2006) and then lesson plans of two teachers in grade 6.

Finally, I present an analysis of the learners' writing in Class A and B. Together these four sets of data serve to triangulate my findings and are designed to contribute to greater trustworthiness. In each section, the presentation of findings is followed by an analysis section that draws out the broad categories that emerged. These will then be categorised into overarching themes to highlight the factors that could impact on or influence the teaching of writing in the intermediate phase.

4.1 Observations

Classroom observations reveal two different landscapes in the English classes where I was collecting my data. Firstly, Adam has 51 Xhosa first language speaking learners while Eve is teaching a class which combines both grades five and six consisting of Afrikaans and Xhosa first language speakers. These differences result in different practices and strategies. These classroom observations have also revealed other categories that appear to impact on the teaching and learning of writing in the intermediate phase at this school. Therefore, although classroom portraits appear to be the same and framed in a similar manner, the resultant landscapes might be different. A description of each classroom is preceded by a brief profile of each teacher.

4.1.1 Constructing landscapes from Class A

Adam, currently a postgraduate Bachelor of Education Degree student, and the Assessment Coordinator and Head of Department at the school, is a male aged between forty and forty nine years old. He received his three-year teacher's diploma at a teacher training college during the 1990s with majors in English and Biology. Since then he has been exposed to brief periods of in-service training at school, cluster and district level. Adam felt that in-service training had been particularly useful as it provided him with very useful grammar knowledge. He has been teaching grade 6 and 7 for more than five years. He currently teaches English as an additional language and Mathematics through English as medium of instruction (Questionnaire 1A).

His Grade 6 class consists of 51 Xhosa-speaking learners being instructed in the medium of English at their parents' insistence although it is not the language spoken at home. Adam is not their class teacher, he does not have a classroom and he teaches these learners Mathematics and English Additional Language. The seating arrangement is traditional, with learners sitting in rows facing the chalkboard.

Description of a lesson

The teacher gave the learners the handout of the reading to be done, *Androcles and the Lion*, copied from a Maskew Miller Longman textbook of 1984 and told learners that his focus would be on English. He gave instructions in Xhosa and the learners responded in Xhosa. Noticeably, it was only a handful of learners that responded and showed an interest in the lesson. The teacher introduced the lesson by saying that he would read a story to them. He firstly gave them an overview of the story and then read the story. He also said that he would read the story slowly so that they would understand the story. The teacher stopped at random sentences and prompted learners to repeat after him.

He read the story but stopped every time when he thought that the learners were not following or when he encountered some difficult word in the text, then he would ask learners to repeat such words after him. Learners were mostly asked to repeat a sentence twice after the teacher. This was done randomly so learners could not really get an understanding of the logic of the texts. It took the teacher about 15 minutes to complete reading and then he asked for the meaning of some words, for example, emperor, slave, especially words that learners might not encounter in their everyday lives and these meanings of words they had to repeat after the teacher.

The lesson consisted of 5 minutes chatting and 15 minutes of the teacher reading and asking questions such as what is an emperor, who is Androcles, what did he do, who helped him, that is, literal factual retrieval questions.

Thereafter the teacher asked the learners to read silently and reminded them that silently means on your own and not that you must speak to the person next to you. He then came over to speak to me while learners read 'silently'. After 10 minutes the class became noisy but this did not appear to bother the teacher.

The lesson plan for this session is given on the next page.

Class A lesson plan

LESSON PLANS

Grade:
Learning area: English **Date:** 24.10.8
LO: **Duration:** 2 weeks
Context: **Ass:**
Content:
Intergration:
Resources: Books

Knowledge	Skills	Attitude & value
Grammar	Identify	Positive behaviour


Activities / Assessment

The learners will be given the story to read for enjoyment, but while reading they must be able to identify the nouns in the text and write them down. Later Verbs, Adjectives.

Strategies: Educator

Tools: Worksheet

Barriers to learning:


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As described above, during this English lesson, Adam read the story, asked questions, asked learners to repeat phrases, checked for correct pronunciation and then continued reading. Silent reading followed this activity. The outcomes identified in the plan were: 'to identify the noun in the text, and write them down. Later verbs and adjectives' were concentrated on. The knowledge section indicates 'grammar' and the skills indicate 'identify' which although vague do reflect the focus of the lesson.

The text came from a 1984 textbook and the teacher appeared to rely heavily on it for direction. The textbook focused on traditional approaches to teaching English and was oriented towards memorisation of content as facts to be recalled. It could be these aspects that the teacher valued about the textbook (see excerpt of content page on page 63). The text, the textbook and the teaching method resembled elements of a traditional approach and it

appeared as if those learners who best recalled content facts, grammar and sentence level rules were deemed successful by the teacher.

The text used in this lesson (Class A)

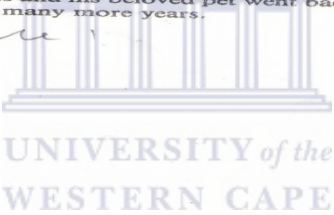
NAME: _____ CIR: _____ DATE: _____

READ THE PASSAGE BELOW

ANDROCLES AND THE LION

Androcles, a slave, had been badly treated by his cruel Roman master, so he decided to run away. He waited until it was dark for he did not want the soldiers to see him. That night he slipped out of town. He ran as fast as he could until he reached a big forest. Soon he came to a cave which seemed safe, so he lay down and fell asleep at once. Androcles was woken by the loud roar of a lion. He jumped up and saw a huge lion coming towards him. To his surprise the lion did not attack him but only moaned softly. He saw that the lion was limping and carefully took the great paw in his hand to see what was wrong. He then removed a large thorn from the lion's paw. The lion did not go away but stayed with him and the two of them shared the cave and cared for each other. One day, while Androcles was walking in the forest, he was caught by some soldiers. He was put into prison and told that he would be cast to the lions in the arena. He knew that he had to prepare for his death. On the day when Androcles was to be cast to the lions, all the people gathered at the arena and waited excitedly for the great moment. When Androcles was thrown into the arena, a fierce lion ran towards him, but stopped in front of him, sniffed at him and rubbed his big head against his side. Two old friends had met again. When the emperor saw this he wanted to know what was going on. Androcles told him the story and the emperor set him free. So Androcles and his beloved pet went back to their cave where they lived for many more years.

Speaking to Me



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After learners read this story, they had to firstly underline all the verbs in the text, then underline the nouns, and build five sentences using the words forest, slave, soldier, master, and lion. No explicit instruction was given to the learners: they were asked to either copy a sentence containing the word from the text or to build their own sentences. Therefore, the knowledge focused on grammar and the skill of identifying nouns and verbs.

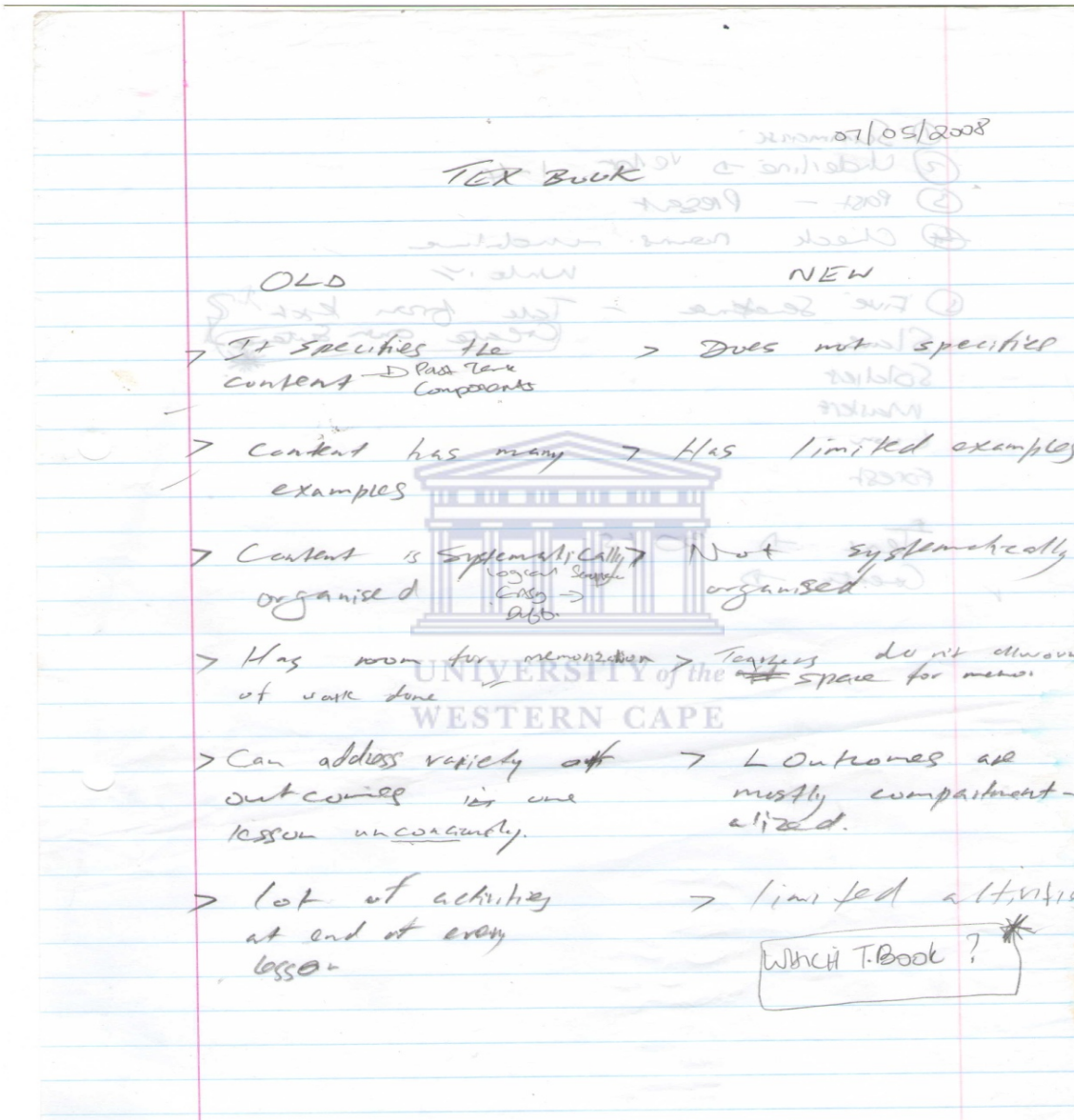
Content page of the textbook

CONTENTS	
Good Friends	1
<i>Capital letters</i>	
<i>The full stop</i>	
<i>The comma</i>	
<i>The question mark</i>	
<i>The exclamation mark</i>	
Painting a word picture of somebody you like	
The Golden Windows	9
<i>Sentences</i>	
Your house and the furniture in it	
Time	11
<i>Using nouns in sentences, singular and plural</i>	
Your school	
A Real Princess	19
<i>Using nouns in sentences, masculine and feminine gender</i>	
The seasons	
Do Animals Talk?	23
<i>Things that happen every day</i>	
Pets	
A Game with a Shiny Stone	27
<i>Things happening at this moment</i>	
Games that we play	
The Crow and the Fox	31
<i>Things that happened some time in the past</i>	
At table	
Jack, the Faithful Baboon	37
<i>Things that happened in the past</i>	
People and their work	
A Special Birthday	41
<i>Things that will happen</i>	
Birthdays and presents	
Androcles and the Lion	45
<i>To play, to run, to eat and to sleep</i>	
Sport	

The textbook contained a range of topics but all the texts were story/narrative/ or recount genres. Also, each story focused heavily on word and sentence level activities such as punctuation, nouns, verbs and vocabulary, and each story dealt with a specific element of grammar. Adam relied extensively on this textbook, mostly copying a specific text for the learners and following the tasks as set out. He used it for reading development and learners

either wrote comprehension, vocabulary or summary tasks. Furthermore, he used this textbook to focus on parts of speech, grammar and sentence level activities.

Adam's views about the textbook



This teacher wrote:

'It specifies content, content has many examples, content is systematically organised, has room for memorisation of work done, can address a variety of outcomes in one lesson, lot of activities at end of every lesson'.

Additionally, see another text below used for comprehension:

Name : Grade 6() 2008

English assessment task 1 **Activity 1 Comprehension exercise**

Theme : Personal development

LO's covered 3. Integrated LO's 1,3,4& 5

Read the following passage and answer the following questions

Time

Why do we need watches and clocks? Let's imagine a world without any clocks or watches. Nobody would know what time it was. Nobody would know when to go to school or to work or to church. Nobody would know when a bus, a train or aeroplane should leave. In fact, the trains would be running into one another, because they would all be starting at the wrong times.

This world of ours was once just like that, but it did not make much difference then. There were no schools or churches and no trains. When man went away from his cave, neither he nor anybody else knew when he would be back. He would just come home when he liked and his family could expect him when they saw him.

After a while he wanted them to know when he would be back. Day after day he had seen that the shadow of a certain rock beside his cave reached almost the same place at the same time every afternoon. So when he went away he sat a stone down at a certain place on the ground. He would try to get back when the shadow reached that point. He had made the first sundial.

We still tell the time by the movement of the sun, and all our clocks and watches are just to show the time by the position of the sun.

How well did you understand the story?

1. Without clocks or watches we would not be able to tell the correctly
2. what would happen to trains, buses and aeroplanes if they started at the wrong time?
.....
3. The caveman used the (machine; sun; clock; rock) to tell the time.
4. Why did the caveman want to find a way of telling time?.....
.....
5. Do you think the weather could have stopped the caveman from telling the time?
.....
How?.....

The above text from this textbook was used for a previous lesson, where Adam used the same strategy of reading but learners had to complete a comprehension. The text moves between the present and the past and it appears as if the purpose of the text is to give the reader or learners' information or facts about how people learnt to tell time. However, the title is very broad and it jumps to 'watches and clocks' in the first paragraph, making no explicit reference to 'time'. It appears to be a recount of past events, but it has a confusing orientation, the sequence of events jumps from the 'world' to the 'man', and does not appear to be well linked. In genre theory it would thus not be a good example of a recount. Furthermore, punctuation in the questions is incorrect, for example, one does not have a full stop, one does not start with a capital letter, and there is incorrect use of the article 'the' and of vocabulary (see questions 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7).

I now go on to describe assessment practices in this class in order to assess the degree of coherence in the approach.

Example of an Assessment task in Class A

NAME.....GRADE.....DATE.....

ENGLISH ASSESSMENT
TASK 1
ACTIVITY 3

THEME: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
LO 4

ATHLETICS MEETING

FILL-IN THE FOLLOWING WORDS IN THE CORRECT SPACE

(corner-judges, energetic, hired, races, time, assemble, excited, week, January, athletics, school, Blue Dawns, arrived, athletes, officials, middle, left, spectators, team-managers, stadium)

Last the 29th of 2008, our participated in the inter-schools competition which was held

The bus was to take us to the The bus at the school gate at half past eight and at nine o'clock. We arrived at the stadium on

Most of our Educators were at the stadium. Our were ready to take part. The were cheering and singing. At all the corners the Were on duty. All the were called to at the of the field.

Our athletes were so They won most of the we returned home very

20 MARKS

1	2	3	4
0-6	7-9	10-13	14-20

This is an example of the type of assessment tasks that learners were exposed to: all the skills assessed focused on formal knowledge. The task counted twenty marks although there are only nineteen 'gaps' to be filled. This was one of the assessment marks that counted towards a progress report at the end of the term. This task contained no extended writing, minimal reading and viewing, and thinking and reasoning skills focused on gap-filling and therefore required a fair degree of grammatical knowledge.

Key Issues emerging from observation of Class A

Code-switching

Adam shared the same mother tongue as all the learners in his English class and code-switched frequently, especially when he felt that the learners would not understand the tasks, instructions, questions or explanations. Furthermore, learners were allowed to answer or respond in their mother tongue and were seldom prompted to rephrase their responses in English. Interestingly, although Adam code-switched frequently, this only elicited responses from the same four to six learners in his class. In general, learners in this class appeared disinterested, irrespective of whether the teacher phrased the questions, explanations or instructions in English or in their mother tongue.

Focus on grammar

The textbook, type of texts, the assessment task, lesson plan and types of class activities illustrated above along with the findings from lesson observations indicate that this teacher valued a traditional, formal approach to teaching English. One example is the lesson plan is where learners had to underline the nouns, verbs, change the story from past to present tense and write sentences using isolated words taken from the text

Views about text

Based on his choice of textbook and how he implemented texts in class, it seems as if Adam viewed texts as a teacher aid to teach grammar, punctuation, parts of speech and to develop reading skills. Therefore, he viewed texts as paragraphs containing a range of inter-related sentences. As a result, texts for him were neutral and value-free, reflecting the correct, Standard English that should be taught in the English additional language class.

Knowledge about texts

Based on his use and choice of texts as well as his teaching strategies when working with texts, it appears as if Adam had limited knowledge about how texts work, the generic stages in texts, or of the social context, communicative purpose, intended audience and how these impact on the use of language in texts. As a result, he focused on technical, grammatical knowledge, and punctuation, and in turn learners were exposed to word-level tasks such as spelling and vocabulary and sentence-level tasks such as parts of speech, word order and gap

filling. Consequently, learners were not exposed to a range of genres or to meaning-based genre-specific activities (see content page of textbook).

Assessment

Assessment focused on knowledge of word and sentence level tasks, testing learners' knowledge about grammar, parts of speech and sentence construction. During lesson observations there was minimal evidence of continuous assessment, questioning, checking understanding -- learners would just do as the teacher instructed, for example reading, completing sentences. Assessment was basically individual, teacher-centred assessment. The types of questions in most assessment tasks reflected literal retrieval of information from the text.

Pedagogy

In this landscape there was limited sequencing of tasks, little use of examples, a few explanations, and questions or instructions were mostly in Xhosa. The focus of learning and teaching was on knowledge of grammar and formal aspects of English. The teacher followed the tasks in a specific textbook and this resulted in transmission pedagogy, with minimal use of learners' background knowledge or of scaffolding as the focus was on a set of language rules to be taught.

4.1.2 Constructing landscapes from Class B

Eve is a woman of between forty and forty nine years old. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree combined with a Higher Diploma in Education, which she obtained during 1980 and 1990's. Her major subjects included Xhosa as a language and African Thought and Literature. At the time of this study she was receiving in-service training at UWC through an Advanced Certificate in Language Education and had since been assigned the additional responsibility of language coordinator for the school. She felt that this training had been most useful in developing her professional skills through practical workshops, opportunities to try out new ideas in the classroom, practical experience with feedback from an expert, and guided research (Questionnaire 1).

Eve taught grade 3 in 2004 and since then she had been teaching across the intermediate phase. In 2008 she was teaching a multi-grade class. As discussed earlier, this class

combining Grades 5 and 6 was established due to the School Governing Body's not having the additional finances to employ an additional teacher for the seventeen grade five learners when parents insisted that their children be taught through the medium of English. The result was a class of 38 Xhosa- and Afrikaans-speaking who were being instructed in the medium of English. Eve teaches 5 learning areas, Economic Management Science, Social Science, English, Arts and Culture, Xhosa and Technology.

Eve shared a mother tongue with only fifteen of the learners in her English class and code switching in this class was rare. The learners were allowed to respond in their mother tongue but they were also encouraged to make attempts to rephrase their responses in English. For example, *'Yes, that is correct but how can you say that in English'*. Learners in this class appeared to be more interactive, had to raise their hands if they wanted to respond but the teacher also encouraged those who appeared more introverted and hesitant to answer.

Description of a lesson in Class B

This was a social science lesson but it was integrated with English in many ways. Firstly, the teacher explained the relevance for learning by telling learners that they would learn about natural resources, such as forests, and the reasons for soil erosion. Thereafter, she asked whether they could remember what a natural resource is and, when learners did not raise their hands, she asked them to name some examples. Learners named some and the teacher used these examples to explain what a natural resource is. Then she used brainstorming strategies and the learners had to write anything that they knew about natural resources in their environment. Then she told a story of the area, Leiden, from which the learners come and told them that it had been forest at one time and how it became the area it is currently. She used the familiar as a basis to explain the impact of development such as housing on forests and soil erosion. Thereafter, she read a factual text about natural resources, forests in danger, and the reasons for soil erosion.

Learners were then given jumbled sentences from the text and had to rearrange the sentences in chronological sequence. Then they had to analyse a pie chart and find the causes of soil erosion. The pie chart assessed learners' understanding and knowledge about the content of the Social Science learning area. They also had to do research about the demands for wood between rich and poor countries, as well as the dangers and safety hazards.

A final activity expected learners to write a poem about trees, focusing on learning outcomes for language and a separate one for Social Science.

Below is an excerpt of the teacher's lesson plan for the Social Science Lesson

Learning Area: Social Science: - Geography

Geography-6.2.3: Describes some ways human in which society has changed the environment

Geography-6.2.2: Identifies how access to different kinds of resources influences development in different places

History-6.3.2: Analyses some of the factors that lead towards social and environmental inequality at different places

History-6.3.3: Evaluates actions that lead to the sharing of resources and reducing poverty.

Genre type: Information report

Purpose: Give information about how and societies contribute to environmental problems

Number of learners 21

Activity 1 (Group work 7)

Make a mind map and write anything you know about (natural resource) environment (Newsprint)

Activity 2

Categorise the between the uses of a tree and that of the soil

(Background: the area where Leiden exists was a forest at one time .Around the year 2000 a need arouse for housing development the government decided to use this area to develop it as a housing community .The forest that was here was cleared to give way for everything that is in existence here and now, the schools .houses. police station)

Activity 3–teacher reads the text out loud(LO 3 Reading)

Our natural environment is all plants and animals around us that occur naturally on Earth. They are also natural resources. Humans rely on these resources to survive. As the world's population continues to grow, we are using up our natural resources at a faster and faster rate. As people become richer and have higher standard of living, they use more resources.

Forests in danger

All over the world there is greater need for wood. In poor countries people need wood for fuel while in richer countries they need it as a raw material for furniture, paper and plastic. The biggest reason for cutting down trees and clearing forests is to grow crops. Often the land is not fertile enough to support crops for long. When the trees were growing they made compost and fertilize the soil. The world's largest forests are tropical forests. Thousands of hectares of forest in the Amazon River Basin has been cleared for cattle grazing.

The teacher attempted to scaffold learners' understanding through questioning, reminders, explanations, and the use of many examples. The above lesson focused mostly on group work and she regularly stopped to check for learner understanding. The teacher used every day examples in the activity from which learners could draw associations, and learners were asked to explain and elaborate some responses to her questions. She thus attempted to draw on learners' background knowledge and link it to the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom. Learners were exposed to a range of skills, categorising, brainstorming ideas, rearranging sentences, reading and working with a pie chart, and searching and locating for information in their neighbourhood. The teacher identified the text to be used for the lesson as an information report genre and she attempted to apply her knowledge of genre in the

social science lesson. She had also adapted the text from a Grade Six textbook to make it conform more to the features of this genre.

Example of an assessment task in Class B before the ‘Language across the curriculum’ module on the ACE

NameGrade 6 May 2008

English Assessment TaskActivity [15]

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow:

At Parys in the Orange Free State the Vaal River is wide and deep, and there are many islands in the river. The river-water is used in the homes and gardens in many other ways, such as for washing clothes and watering animals. There are boats on the river, and many people spend their summer holidays in this town.

Diamonds are found in the bed of Vaal. Many people dig for these diamonds at Bloemhof, Christiana, and other places along the river. The diamonds are not easy to find. Some people spend most of their lives looking for these stones without finding any.

Answer the questions in full sentences:

- 1) How do we know that diamonds are not easy to find? (1)
- 2) Why do many people go to Parys in summer? (1)
- 3) Name two places where people dig for diamonds along the river (2)
4. Give two example of how the river is used. (2)
- 5) State whether this is **true** or **false**
 - A) The Orange Free State is a province in Africa (1)
 - B) Christine is another big city in Orange Free State 1)
 - C) Diamond is rare stone (1)
6. What is found in the bed of the Vaal River? (1)
- 7.The adjectivesandare used to describe how the river looks like. (2)
8. The use oftense indicates that this narratives. (1)
9. Where is the Vaal River deep? (1)
10. What will the diamonds use for? (1)

This comprehension was an assessment task that would count towards a progress report for a term and the mark allocation was fifteen. The text is factual and gives information about a topic. Questions focus on literal retrieval of facts and do attempt to integrate language knowledge. It appears as if the teacher had some awareness of text, context and language. However, she categorised this as a narrative genre (see question 7).

A lesson plan from Class B after the teacher's exposure to a 'language across the curriculum' module on the ACE

LESSON PLANS

Grade : Date 16-01-08
 Learning area English Duration 1 week
 LO 4 Ass 5.4.1.2 / 6.4.1.2
 Context Personal development: 5.4.5.7
 Content My Self
 Intergration
 Resources Human resource- experience; classwork books.

Knowledge	Skills	Attitude & value
Recount events.	listening skill	Admire and
Use linking words		appreciate what
listen to instructions		you have experienced

Activities / Assessment

List places/people he/she met during December holiday.....
 Circle the most exciting place/person.....
 Write 4 describing words to use to describe a place/person.....
 Recount the events " that " happened during the.....
 holiday and write a short story about the.....
 chosen person/place.....
 Use linking words to join the sentences together.....

Strategies:

Write a personal recount of events (a short story).....

Tools: Classwork.....

Barriers to learning:

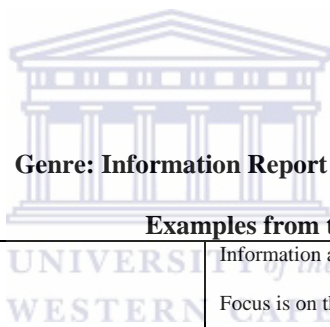
Opening late for school- late registration by learners.....

This lesson demonstrates a greater familiarity with genre theory. For example, the knowledge component indicates 'recount of events' and 'using linking words'. The lesson plan also shows evidence of scaffolding and sequencing activities, for example, it starts with listing, circling, writing, describing words and then recounting the events and then writing a short story that is, a recount of events. The purpose of a recount genre is to retell past events and the focus is on a specific event(s), place or person(s). The textual phases in this genre consist of an orientation, a series of events in chronological order or according to cause and effect see (Derewianka, 1990) for more detailed understanding of this genre. It appears as if learners

were exposed to a range of different tasks including extended writing and that the teacher had an awareness of text and its social function. Eve attempted to concentrate on aspects of a genre-based approach to teaching writing. For example, writing a personal recount of events, linking sentences and integrating these tasks with descriptive language use. She also exposed learners to editing, logical development of text and some focus on producing a coherent text although the focus was on correcting mistakes of punctuation in the text. She thus demonstrated some understanding of language, context and genre after being exposed to the ACE, for example, she was aware of context, textual stages and language features because she asks the learners, ‘state where the story is taking place’, ‘rewrite following the recount genre structure, linking words to join sentences’.

See below a sample of a text analysed by Eve after exposure to the language across the curriculum module and translated into Xhosa

Eve’s analysed Text:



Genre: Information Report

Genre characteristics	Examples from the text
Purpose: To organize and store information on a topic Focus: on a subject of a whole group	Information about Amphibians. Focus is on the Frog
<p style="text-align: center;">Key stages</p> Opening or general statement Facts about various aspects of the subject Facts are grouped into topic sentences Sub headings Paragraphs organize information effectively	Classifies the term amphibian and provides an example thereof. Provides facts about size, physical appearance, habitat Each topic sentence indicate the particular aspect of the frog Texts has sub headings, Feeding, habitat, physical appearance Paragraphs are sequenced logically beginning with the classification, description and various aspects of the frog
<p style="text-align: center;">Language features</p> Generalized participants Action verbs describing behaviour Simple present tense Linking verbs Descriptive language, scientific and precise	Amphibians Jumping, swimming, feed, see, sitting Catch, feed, grow, see, live, creep Is, are, have, can Bulbous eyes, long sticky tongue, 1,5 cm in length, 20 cm or more

This text (see Appendix 1, text on frogs) was longer and more scientific than the previous text, yet Eve showed the ability to do a deeper analysis of this text. She firstly highlighted the purpose and key stages of an information genre and gave clear examples from the text to substantiate her analysis. She then identified the language features and also provided examples of these taken from the text.

Key Issues emerging from observation of Class B

Code-switching

As mentioned above, Eve shared a mother tongue with only fifteen learners in her English class and code switching in this class was rare. Where possible, she encouraged learners to use their mother tongues if necessary but to try and then rephrase their answers in English. This strategy appeared to be one factor in creating a more interactive class.

Focus on grammar

Eve focused on grammar but made attempts to integrate it with the whole lesson, that is, she attempted to teach language in context. Unlike Class A, the learners in this class were exposed to a range of skills besides a focus on grammar. For example, they were exposed not only to word- and sentence-level tasks but also to text-level tasks. At word-level learners were asked to list, brainstorm, and write descriptive words; at sentence-level learners were asked to rearrange sentences and use describing words; at text-level they had to recount an event and write a poem.

Views about text

Based on the lessons and the use of texts it appears as if this teacher viewed texts as a resource to plan lessons. She was aware of the social function in texts and thus she viewed texts as valuable resources to give learners information about their social world. She saw texts as more than just words and sentences on a topic.

Knowledge about texts

This teacher demonstrated some knowledge about how texts work. She could deconstruct a text by analysing purpose, key stages and language features in texts. She was thus aware of the text/context relation and how this affects language use in social contexts.

Assessment

Eve assessed a range of skills and exposed her learners to a range of assessment tasks including extended writing, comprehension and language-focused tasks.

Pedagogy

This teacher attempted to provide scaffolding through questioning, reminders, explanations and the use of many examples. She used interactive teaching strategies and made clear attempts to use language across the curriculum, for example, in Social Sciences learners had to sequence the text and write a poem relating to the topic; however, these activities were complemented with discipline specific knowledge when the learners had to do research and work with the pie chart.

4.2 Summary of classroom observations

Classroom observations provided information on how teachers selected, structured, sequenced, and presented the content to be taught and how the teaching of writing was practiced. Thus the observations provided insights into how the official curriculum was enacted and implemented and how the classroom as a social domain impacted on the implementation of teaching writing. Factors influencing the effective teaching and learning of writing in these classes included code-switching, background knowledge, scaffolding, types of writing activities, teaching strategies, use of resources, and teachers' understanding of extended writing.

4.2.1 Code switching

The data reveals that the amount of code switching in the English class in the intermediate phase at this school appears to be largely determined by the learner-teacher ratio in terms of mother tongue speakers.

4.2.2 Approaches to Background knowledge

Teachers' understanding of background knowledge differs with the one understanding background knowledge as either reading or telling a story about the content to be covered and the other seeing it as reminding learners of previous lessons that they have covered but also providing a series of activities to elicit learners' knowledge or topic and genre. This resulted in fragmented ways of scaffolding in the English classes as a whole at this level.

4.2.3 Scaffolding

Different practices in scaffolding lessons were also observed. These were evident both in practice as well as in lesson preparation on official documents. Both teachers' understandings of scaffolding appeared to be rooted in the notion that using the background knowledge implies that the lesson was scaffolded successfully, rather than seeing scaffolding as an approach to supporting learning throughout the lesson. Although one teacher demonstrated a greater range of supportive strategies, in neither class were activities sequenced in a systematic way that might deepen and consolidate writing for a range of texts and associated language features.

4.2.4 Views and knowledge about texts

Teacher A seemed to view texts as neutral and value-free, as a collection of sentences and paragraphs that can be used to teach language and grammar. Teacher B, on the other hand, viewed texts as resources for planning lessons and was aware of social function in texts. Additionally, it appears as if the teacher A viewed textbooks as developed by experts and thus to be implemented without any critical analysis of the material or the text. He did not have knowledge of genre theory and could not identify textual and linguistic features in the texts that he used. In contrast, the teacher B demonstrated some knowledge about how texts work, could deconstruct a text by analysing for purpose, key features and language features and had begun to adapt texts which did not have the genre-specific stages and linguistic features that they should.

4.2.5 Lesson Plans

Teachers' lesson plans were analysed to gain an understanding of the types of texts and writing activities to which teachers in grade 6 exposed their learners. Of particular interest was the extent of teachers' skill and knowledge to implement a functional approach to language. Interestingly, the data reveals that teachers used similar learning outcomes; however these learning outcomes were understood and implemented differently and revealed a contrast in the depth of their individual understanding of the National Curriculum Statement especially as relates to writing. The lesson plans and preparation done by Eve after being exposed to genre theory seemed to have developed both in relation to content and to a greater awareness of language across the curriculum as she attempted to integrate language into all her other learning areas.

4.2.6 Types of genres or related writing activities

Teacher A exposed learners only to genres of stories and recounts with no explicit focus on these as text types. Teacher B attempted to integrate genres from the other learning areas such as Social Science, Technology and Economic Management Science. However, these genres were in most cases not explicitly taught by means of the curriculum cycle. Where explicit teaching was attempted, it ran the risk of being a prescriptive, for example, telling learners what the stages in the text were rather than assisting them to identify them. This could however be viewed by the teacher as providing a writing frame. In this class, the purposes for writing in most cases were not made clear to learners and language features were highlighted but at times taken out of the context of the text, for example, the descriptive language of an information report is different from descriptive language in a narrative. These language features, although understood and correctly analysed by the teacher, could still be scaffolded and taught more appropriately.

A further difference revealed by observations was that teacher A had a preference for word-level activities such as labelling, spelling, vocabulary knowledge and word lists. At sentence level he focused on grammar knowledge, knowledge about word classes and knowledge about punctuation. Both teachers used comprehensions as the preferred assessment tool. However, the skills and knowledge that were assessed differed as teacher A focused on word and sentence level, while Teacher B attempted to assess factual retrieval of content from the text combined with some activities that went beyond the text to knowledge of the wider world. Furthermore, this teacher followed an eclectic approach, integrating word and sentence level activities at whole text level. It appears as if her induction into genre-based approaches was influencing her choice of tasks, content and teaching strategies.

Knowledge of genre-based pedagogies also impacted on assessment of writing, especially extended pieces of writing. Below is an example of the each teacher assessing a narrative genre.

4.2.7 Assessment of writing in a narrative genre

Class A

Add your Criteria:

CRITERIA	V.A	LB	LA ₂	LB	LA ₃	LB	LA ₄	LB
5 MK ₁ TOPIC SENTENCE			2					5
5 MK ₂ PARAGRAPHING	1					3		
5 MK ₃ PUNCTUATION					3	3		
5 MK ₄ SEQUENCE OF EVENTS							4	4

$\text{LEARNER A} = \frac{10}{20} = \text{code 2}$
 $\text{LEARNER B} = \frac{18}{20} = \text{code 3}$

Class B

Add your Criteria:

	Level - 1	Level - 2	Level - 3	Level - 4
1. <u>Structure of a narrative</u> • Orientation:-	Learner did not set the scene: Place; time and characters are not introduced.	Learner made implications about the scene: Place, time and characters are not introduced adequately.	Scene is set at an acceptable manner: Place, time and characters are introduced.	Scene is set properly and according to narrative structure.
• Complication:-	Problem is not stated at all.	Some indication of the problem. Some events leading to the problem are stated.	Problem is not clear. Events leading to the problem are jumbled up.	Problem is clearly stated. Events are clear and sequential.
• Resolution:-	Not clear how the problem was solved.	Some inference is made on how a problem was solved.	Few indications are shown on how the problem was solved.	Steps to solving the problem are clearly shown.
2. <u>Language Use</u> • Vocabulary and sentence structure	Number of errors relating to vocabulary and sentence structure.	Adequate vocab. with some repetition. Still noticeable mistakes in sentence structure.	Wide use of vocabulary. Sentence structure is fairly acceptable.	Vocabulary is fairly good. Sentence structure is designed well.
• Describing words and tense.	Describing words are not used at all, incorrect use of tense.	Makes some use of describing words, use of tense is fairly acceptable.	Few describing words are used and use of tense is at an acceptable level.	Makes use of describing words, and use of tense is good.
• Linking words to do with time	Linking words are not used at all.	Some linking words are used.	Few linking words are used.	Linking words that are time related are used.
3. <u>Planning</u>	No evidence of planning, poor introduction, No clear ending.	Some evidence of planning, weak introduction and conclusion.	There is evidence of planning, introduction and conclusion are adequate.	Thorough planning, effective introduction and indication of conclusion.

Teachers were given two mock samples of learners work (Appendix 2, mock samples), asked to develop assessment criteria and to assess them. Based on the text, the teacher in Class A developed the following criteria: Punctuation, Topic Sentence, Paragraphing and Sequence of events. However, in Class B the teacher demonstrated knowledge of the textual stages and

language features of narrative texts. She was interested to assess whether the learner had understood the stages in a narrative text, for example, under structure she included: Orientation, Complication and Resolution. She also provided examples of different levels of competence for the text structure. These kinds of assessment criteria could assist learners in gaining knowledge of and learning about how texts work. Knowledge of genre could make assessment developmental as would integrate knowledge and develop skills. Furthermore, evidence of integrating a process approach within this text-based approach was also visible, for example, in ‘planning’, although the criteria could be more specific to proofreading, editing, errors, etc.

Assessment for progression by Teacher A

NAME..... GR 6.....DATE.....

TASK 2 ENGLISH ASSESSMENT 1 HOUR

QUESTION 1

Give the collective nouns of the following.

- 1..Mr Brown owns a of cats.
- 2 .I see a of people in front of me.
- 3.He has a fine of cattle.
- 4.My mother bought aof flowers.
- 5.There is aof birds flying in the sky. (5)

QUESTION 2

Complete the following sentences by filling in the correct prepositions (choose from those below)

(under, through, from, on, behind)

1. The apples that fallthe tree are green.
2. The cat is lying..... the chair.
3. She put oranges the table.
4. My father is watching..... the window.
5. The banana tree is growing the house. (5)

QUESTION 3

Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct verb. Please underline the correct one.

- a. The boys (are\ were) working in the garden now
- b. Siphso (was\ is) pruning the trees now.
- c. Yesterday we (are \ were) playing soccer.
- d. The choir (is \ was) singing last week. (4)

Before the end of a term, all the grades in the intermediate phase write the same examination and each teacher gets an opportunity to set the question paper for the exam. This question paper prepared by Teacher A highlights the danger that teachers who have limited or outdated subject knowledge might rely more severely on the learners’ ability to memorise or retrieve

facts. This may also expose learners to writing activities which require them to merely display knowledge of rules of grammar, parts of speech and sentence level writing, rather than focusing on purpose, meaning and appropriate textual forms. The emerging patterns indicate that knowledge about pedagogy and adequate subject knowledge of literacy teaching could strengthen teaching and learning in the English class.

4.2.8 Teaching strategies

Different levels of teaching strategies in the English class at this school were also found during observations and these occurred at the level of task content, teaching skills, and assessment. For example, although both teachers would do similar kinds of tasks, these varied in terms of level of complexity, knowledge and skills assessed, and pedagogy. The content and the types of questions were often different. One focused on formal language teaching in most content tasks while the other focused more on aspects of genres. Different approaches were also found in the structuring of the lesson content, presentation of lessons, ways of questioning, explaining, giving instructions, giving feedback to learner responses, and attempts to improve incorrect responses.

These different strategies imply that the teaching of writing was implemented differently depending on the degree to which the teacher had an explicit theory from which to draw. Whereas one class got more explicit instructions and explanations for the purpose of writing, the other class generally received limited and implied or vague, often decontextualised reasons for writing.

4.2.9 Use of resources

The use of resources in these two grade 6 classes was also divergent as one teacher used a range of resources and the other relied heavily on a traditional textbook. It appears as if the prescriptive nature of the textbook in relation to content and its focus on grammar, parts of speech, and vocabulary were a valuable resource in the absence of knowledge or understanding of how to implement the NCS. This influenced the types of genres and writing tasks to which this class was exposed to, as learners were mostly required to write sentences and carry out grammar-based activities.

Based on the observations in these two classes, it appears that sufficient knowledge of pedagogy is crucial at all levels in the teaching process. For example, during classroom observations, the impact of theory on pedagogy and classroom practice was evident in the

choice of content, quality of task, the presentation of these tasks to learners, classroom organisation and management, classroom interaction, scaffolding and modelling learning. On the other hand, limited or outdated knowledge of theory made one teacher heavily reliant on structured content with preset exercises and tasks. The danger of textbooks that are rigidly structured according to a specific theory, like the one that this teacher uses, is that teachers may view learning as a structured course to be completed, and adopt transmission pedagogies.

The following section looks at these issues from the teachers' perspectives.

4.3 Presentation of data from interviews

As described in chapter 3, I initially focused on unstructured interviews to get a deeper understanding of general classroom practices and issues. These were complemented by semi-structured interviews that focused on broad questions in relation to planning and sequencing English lessons, types of writing activities, and ways of assessing writing.

4.3.1 Findings: Unstructured interviews

The unstructured interviews mostly occurred at the beginning of the data collection process and were aimed at understanding practices that were unclear during the observation sessions in the classroom. Therefore, these sessions took the form of informal conversations that were recorded and used with the permission of the teachers.

During these conversations teachers expressed much concern for the learners' communicative abilities in both their mother tongues and English. Both were quite eloquent about the learner's inability to express themselves in English and in their mother tongues. They felt that this had an effect on the learners writing abilities in the English class. Eve, for example, said that, *'Now if you send them to the principal or to the parent they speak Afrikaans. They can argue their point in Afrikaans but when it comes to writing, they can't even write that Afrikaans'*.

Both teachers felt that the lack of exposure to English at home created language barriers, which impacted on the learners' competence and performance in the English class. As a result, one teacher argued that their learners would not be able to cope with the learning outcomes as stipulated in the curriculum as plan:

'Given the question of lowering the standards. Because you can just think that these learners they are out there they are low low and then you just go down because you think..they don't understand..' (Teacher A)

Both teachers referred to background knowledge and how they liked to start from where the learner was coming from and what the learner knows. When I asked Adam what the learners' background meant to him, he replied that he focused on friendship and personal development, for example, a lesson about time dealt with personal development. When I asked him to explain, he answered that the learners would know the relevance of time and being punctual. When we discussed the skill of telling time and understanding the 24-hour clock, he was not sure what that was because he wanted them to develop for 'real purposes' like being punctual.

4.3.2 Analysis

The unstructured interviews revealed that teachers experienced language barriers in the additional language class. Teachers felt that learners' communicative and verbal skills hindered the development of effective writing skills. The mother tongue of learners in these two classes was not English and yet they were taught through the medium of English at the insistence of their parents. Yet, whether they were exposed to literacy events in English at home is questionable. Many learners appeared to be inept at expressing and explaining even the simplest statement, phrase or instruction as illustrated in the following incident recorded outside the principal's office

TEACHER: What did you do?

LEARNER1: Nothing. He did hit me first with this.

TEACHER: Why did you hit him?

LEARNER2: Because like we did play there then he's hit me with this en toe slat hy vir my.

TEACHER: Hoekom. Hoekom is hy slat jou?

Neither of these learners had adequate syntactic or vocabulary skills to express how and why the fight occurred. The first boy could not refer to his jacket and used gestures and the word 'this' to indicate what the other boy hit him with the jacket, the second boy could also not express himself and indicated towards the jacket to explain what happened and, when he

could not find any words to express himself in English, he switched to Afrikaans. Therefore, both seemed to have limited grammatical and lexical skills that could negatively impact on writing in the English class.

These barriers in the English class could explain some teachers' prime interest in teaching rules of grammar, word level and sentence level activities as they might believe that this could give learners the resources to have meaningful conversations and to be better writers. On the other hand, it could also lead to teachers not exposing their learners to higher order skills in the English class in the intermediate phase due to the perception that they would be unable to cope cognitively and verbally.

4.3.3 Findings: Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews were more focused on teachers' perceptions, values and beliefs about their English class, and in particular teaching and assessing writing in the intermediate phase.

I now present short extracts from each teacher's description of his or her lesson followed by a discussion of key issues arising from these descriptions and other topics covered in the interviews.

Teacher A

During his interview Adam revealed that he started an English lesson with what learners know and referred to background knowledge.

'Actually in this year when I started, I start with what they know. For instance if I am going to teach about let's say about the violence and then I must ask them what they know about the violence and what type of violence they know'. '..what does it mean so there are different [kinds of] violence and they must understand that and then I move from there. When they understand the word 'violence' the concern when they start to explain that there are different violence's around them..and then I start doing the new information. The new information is something like the things that they don't know for instance the abuse is part of the violence..'

He said that after this he would ask learners to write a short paragraph analysing the topic, ‘*distinguishing between two families, one that is violent and one that is non violent*’, and then he might use pictures. He said that he does not start his English lessons in a specific way and explained,

‘For instance let’s say if I’m going to focus on the elements of the story, let’s say looking at the text, looking at the content of the text I must also bring about the key words and then the key words that they plot and the difficult words, those are the things I need to give to them. And they must tell me what they understand about this things and then for instance they will read the whole text, then from there when they will be able to[..] before they can be able to answer the comprehension and understand the comprehension they should know what all these things are, because the comprehension will be based on that.’

He continued,

‘And I like sentences and also the paragraph writing. Not very big, just small paragraph writing. Just about five lines and not much, I like to do where they must fit in the sentences, you know. But they must write the full sentence, they mustn’t just write if it’s “is” they mustn’t just write “is” they must write the full sentence. I want them to get practice of writing. And they must also maybe make meaning of what they’re writing... Summary they must be able to make meaning of what they are’ reading’.

Sentence construction and identifying parts of speech were thus highly valued by Adam,

‘...from their sentences they must also they just also they must identify the verbs’. Learners in this class must demonstrate that they understand what they are writing about, *‘They should understand what they are writing about. You must not write about let’s say about the plants and then they come again writing about the let’s say about the people swimming in the beach. So there must be that understanding of what am I writing about.’* He also tried to prepare learners for reading and writing by discussing the topic or teaching keywords.

Teacher B

Eve describes her approach to background as follows:

‘It depends on what lessons it is. Now I was working with cartoons, so I asked them what is their general knowledge What I’ve done, I made copies of two cartoons that tell us about the life during the apartheid times, how life was, and then I ask them what do they know,

their knowledge, what do parents tell them about the apartheid, and whether or not those things are still applicable in our lifetime. I asked them why, what is special about the cartoons so they gave me the descriptions of the cartoons, everything is exaggerated, even a cheese can speak and all of that, so it's kicked off like that and then we cut pictures of the cartoons in the newspapers. Now when we start I ask them what's the purpose of having a... why do you watch a cartoon? They give different answers, it's entertaining, they learn from the cartoons but in a very nice way and then we cut the pictures in the newspaper and then I told them that in each and every thing there is a message like they must learn to look closely into the picture or the cartoon, see what message it is'.

[...] we started the cartoons because the idea for me was to teach them about the democracy, to analyse, teach them to analyse [...]they must know how to compare and find the similarities yes. We are busy with that activity [...]

She went on to describe the next step of the lesson:

'..they must do a mind map or they must cut pictures for me and then I give them a straightforward instruction on what exactly they must do with that particular picture. Because now, after now, they have written an essay for me on life during apartheid system, now what we are busy with, we are busy with adjectives and adverbs. Now I gave them a frame on what I want. They must cut for me pictures and then they must describe, how they must make a description. They must either [...] what the verb is doing, which would be the adverb, and then what the noun is doing, yes, and I gave them an explanation between the two so that they can get the difference.

Eve has a better sense of building the background knowledge but she sometimes get confused but this could be because she finds herself caught between traditional approaches and her newer knowledge of a genre-based approach to teaching writing.

4.3.4 Analysis

Building Background knowledge

While one teacher's understanding was fairly limited, the other one appeared to have a better idea of how to build background. She set the context of content of the lesson by asking them what their parents had told them about apartheid, linked that with cartoons where learners had

to think why a cartoon is special, and drew their attention to textual features and the purpose of cartoons. As a result, from a genre perspective she was setting the context and activating schemata about the topic as well as building genre knowledge through eliciting, probing and questioning techniques.

Scaffolding English lessons

Scaffolding lessons in the English class appeared to be fragmented. Adam, for example, used learners' understanding of violence as a scaffold but uses it as word level knowledge and understanding. He mentioned that, after he had highlighted the meaning and identified key words, he might ask them to write a paragraph. In this case, the sequencing of teaching activities and the quality of the cognitive support or guidance by the teacher was not able to challenge and extend what learners were able to achieve. Thus these learners were exposed to a learning context with high challenge but inadequate or low levels of support. Such learning contexts are more likely to result in failure; learners are likely to be demotivated with the result that little learning occurs. Learners appeared to be bored and disinterested in the activity in question, but this may have disguised problems such as lack of clarity on purpose and requirements of the task.

Eve, on the other hand, asked questions and reminded learners about previous content that might link with the new lesson. Then she attempted to scaffold understanding by doing a range of tasks such as mind maps, cutting pictures and '*straightforward instruction on what exactly they must do with the picture*'. Although Eve used a range of activities before learners were required to write an essay, the sequencing of these tasks was not done systematically to firstly deepen and then consolidate learning. For example, learners had to write an essay, then language was taught, learners had to use descriptive language and then were provided with a writing frame. So in this class there is evidence of scaffolding. However, the level of challenge is high and the sequencing of activities results in medium teacher support. Nonetheless, most learners in this class mostly appeared to be interested and motivated to learn. Although their results remained average those learners who had language barriers displayed low or minimal interest, there was a high level of motivation.

Despite this, generally teachers need to be aware of different learning domains and how to sequence tasks along these domains. For example, teachers appeared to have the skill of using the everyday domain but did not necessarily use this as a bridge towards the applied domain,

the theoretical and the critical domain. In each of these domains, learners need to be exposed and inducted into specific skills so that they begin to master or control the theoretical and critical domains.

Teaching Strategies in Writing

From the interviews, it appears that learners were not explicitly made aware of issues such as lay out, purpose, sequential organisation, participants, processes and circumstances in texts, which contribute to their ability to engage with and produce different genres.

Eve did attempt to include aspects of the above in her lessons but she appeared to be caught between her previous approaches to teaching writing and her newer exposure to genre-based approaches, and this led to some confusion about implementation of the genre-based pedagogy. She often used traditional instructional techniques to teach features of genres and as a result her approach could in part be seen as transmission pedagogy. However, her learners were reaping some rewards as she did ask questions, elaborate, explain textual and language features, and provide learners with writing frames to guide writing. She exposed her learners to high writing challenges at word, sentence and text level.

By contrast, Adam had not been inducted into genre-based pedagogy or, it appears, process approaches and, as such, his teaching strategy for writing was rooted in a formalist approach. He mostly preferred sentence construction and summaries, although he said that he exposed his learners to paragraphs but '*small paragraphs*'.

These semi-structured interviews reveal that teachers had divergent understandings of scaffolding and sequencing tasks in the English class. Furthermore, it highlights some of the strategies that teachers used to teach writing in the English class. The emerging patterns indicate that knowledge about pedagogy and knowledge of writing teaching theory could strengthen the teaching and learning of writing in these English additional classrooms.

Overall, Adam exposed his learners to limited opportunities for the writing tasks as set out in the NCS (2003) and also the NCS: Assessment Guidelines (2006). He said that he exposed learners to summaries mostly, and some paragraph writing, yet the policy (2006:14-16) states that learners should write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts and that they must be exposed to writing for a wide range of purposes. Also, the decontextualised way writing

was taught in this class reflected my own earlier writing experiences as a learner at primary school, for example, topics that were not always related to my interest and my everyday world, the teacher giving us the key words and having to write ten sentences or a paragraph which I was told should have a topic sentence without the teacher ever explaining how to develop the topic sentence in a paragraph. Therefore, it appears as if teachers in primary schools, in the absence of limited or outdated theories about teaching writing, could continue to teach writing in a decontextualised manner. For assessment, Adam said that he mostly used memorandums and, to some extent, rubrics; however, during observations evidence of these were not found.

The following section analyses the two questionnaires I asked teachers to complete to complement the information obtained through observations and interviews.

4.4 Presentation of Questionnaires

The first questionnaire was on the personal background information of the participants and the second one focused on assessment and writing. It was anticipated that the second questionnaire could either refute or validate findings from observations and interviews as to teachers' knowledge about theories of teaching writing and how this impacted on their approaches to teaching writing and the types of writing that they valued. Therefore, questionnaires were analysed to ascertain the educational background of the two teachers, their major subjects, attendance at workshop and in-service training, and the relationship between these and their strategies for teaching and assessing writing. I also examined the types of activities that teachers preferred for writing and the assessment of writing.

Major subjects

As mentioned earlier, Adam's major subjects were English and Biology; whereas Eve's major subjects were Xhosa and African Thought and Literature.

Writing activities preferred by teachers for assessment

Both teachers mostly preferred to set their own topics and both sometimes used observation schedules and learner self-assessment to assess writing. Adam used writing activities developed by other colleagues quite often, whereas Eve only sometimes made use of these. Eve made use of rubrics to 'a great extent' while Adam only sometimes used rubrics.

Assessing writing

Both teachers were asked to assess two mock samples of extended pieces of writing. The writing sample was a narrative genre and I chose this one because it appeared to be the text type with which teachers are quite familiar. They were asked to develop a set of criteria to mark the samples. Adam's criteria focused on topic sentence, paragraphing, punctuation and sequence of events. On the other hand, Eve focused on the narrative structure, language use and planning. For instance, she included criteria such as orientation, complication and resolution, linking words of time, tense and describing words. (See genre and assessment of writing section 4.2.7 in this chapter or appendix 2)

4.5 Discussion of Questionnaires

It appears as if the explicit knowledge of genre gained in the ACE had constructive rewards for the assessment of writing. Knowledge of texts and how texts work enabled Eve to look for aspects of textual, language and topic development. The learners would also be able to get genre-specific feedback that could assist the development of their writing skills. This is borne out by observations that showed greater focus and motivation amongst learners in Class B. This aspect of writing development is explained more fully in section 4.9, which describes a genre-based unit of work taught by both teachers.

I now briefly discuss the curriculum as plan as represented in policy documents in order to compare this with teachers' observed and self-described practices.

4.6 Presenting Data from Document Analysis

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (2003) and the NCS (2006): Assessment Guidelines were analysed to understand the underlying view of language that supports the writing curriculum.

National Curriculum Statement (2003)

The NCS (2003) advocates a communicative approach together with a text-based approach and states that both should be dependent on continuous use and production of texts. Thus the view of language that underlies the NCS is that language is functional, that it is through language that society gets things done. The functionalist theory is rooted in the belief that language occurs in particular cultural and social contexts, that it is understood in relation to these contexts and that these contexts influence the language and word choices that occur in

texts. It is therefore consistent with an explicit focus on genres and their associated textual and linguistic features.

Furthermore, the NCS (2003:23) also states that '*schools must promote a high level of critical literacy amongst learners...*' It assumes that teachers are able to teach critical literacy and that they have knowledge of the theory of texts and how texts work.

Assessment Guidelines (2006)

The NCS assessment guidelines for the English first additional language (2006:14-16) states that learners should write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts and that they must be exposed to writing for a wide range of purposes. According to this document learners should write for the following purposes:

- **To communicate information**

Types of activities could include drawing labels, plans, maps, writing descriptions of a person, object or simple process, using a writing frame or structure to write a report (for example, of a science experiment), to express opinions and substantiating such opinions with relevant, suitable reasons or writing book reviews.

- **To write for social purposes**

Examples of these types of activities include writing a simple personal letter using a 'frame', identifying some differences between formal and informal style (e.g. word choice); differences between speech and writing; and writing for personal reflection (e.g. a diary).

- **To write for creative purposes**

This shows development in the ability to write stories, play scripts and dialogues (e.g. by using poetic devices to create interesting titles, by including dialogue in a story).

- **To design media texts**

Types of activities could include designing a poster, a simple advertisement and a simple questionnaire; and writing a simple news report.

- **To understand the writing process and use developing knowledge of language structure**

This includes writing rough drafts, reading drafts critically, getting feedback from the teacher and classmates, and rewriting; understanding the difference between revising

(changing content and structure) and editing (correcting mistakes); editing writing, using knowledge of structure (e.g. grammar, spelling, punctuation, grammatical differences between home and additional languages) and tools (e.g. a dictionary).

The policy integrates a mix of communicative, process and text-based approaches and offers the potential to create engagement with genres of schooling and to develop sound writing skills but it is not specific enough on teaching strategies to guide teachers with no exposure of genre-based approaches.

4.7 Summary of Document Analysis

Analysis of the official documents reveals that the Department of Education provides teachers with numerous support strategies to implement the official curriculum but this support is mainly rooted in policy guidelines and some examples of strategies to implement the writing curriculum. However, as shown throughout this study, elements of teachers' understanding and confusion in implementing the official curriculum clearly emerge at document planning level such as lesson plans, learning programmes and assessment.

The assessment guidelines do provide examples of activities that teachers could expose learners to in the intermediate phase to achieve the stipulated learning outcomes. To achieve these, teachers would have to include activities that engage with social and cultural contexts, those that focus on the content of texts, and tasks that consider the purpose of texts, the intended audience, genre features of the texts, etc. It is questionable whether teachers in the intermediate phase have been trained to use these approaches and the consequences are evident at this school where the knowledge about how to implement the learning outcomes for writing was limited. Teachers were expected to teach and implement a language theory which they did not have thorough knowledge and understanding. This often resulted in teachers drawing on teaching practices based on their own experiences as learners: *'I teach the way one of my teachers taught me'* is what one of the teachers said in a conversation.

Consequently, teachers' confusion and lack of theoretical understanding of how to implement the writing curriculum could result in severely fragmented attempts to teach writing without the necessary subject knowledge to support planning and to make explicit the language and structure of different types text types as well as the writing conventions to which learners should be exposed, as stipulated in the official writing curriculum.

Lesson Plans and the NCS

Another look at teachers' the four lesson plans of each teacher enabled me to gain an understanding of the types of texts and writing activities to which teachers in grade 6 exposed their learners. Of particular interest was the extent of teachers' skill and knowledge to implement a functional approach to language teaching. Interestingly, the data reveals that teachers use similar learning outcomes; however these learning outcomes were understood and implemented differently and revealed a contrast in the level or depth of their individual understanding of the National Curriculum Statement and especially of the writing section. Interestingly, the lesson plans and preparation done by Eve after being exposed to genre theory seems to have developed both in relation to content and to a greater extent an awareness of language across the curriculum: She attempted to integrate language activities in all her other learning areas (see appendix 3 of Eve's technology lesson plan).

Teaching strategies

The different teaching strategies and approaches to teaching writing were indicative of the teachers' ability to plan lessons and content, to plan for assessment, to question effectively, to elaborate and explain, and to give effective feedback. Learners being exposed to teachers who display a vast difference pedagogical knowledge could result in learners in grade six at the same school displaying vast differences in comprehension, language competence and motivation to learn in the intermediate phase. For example, Eve reflecting on her practices after being exposed to a genre-based approach, mentioned that used to plan lessons and would follow it religiously but after the ACE, she allowed learners to dictate some aspects of the lesson and that she was more responsive to the needs of her learners.

Assessment of writing

Teachers assessed similar learning outcomes and assessment standards for writing. However, the type of activity was different and the assessment criteria also reflected elements of what the specific teacher valued about writing.

Adam mostly had no evidence of assessment tools but claims to mostly use memorandums for comprehension and summaries and to some extent he said that he used rubrics. The rubric that he designed to assess the mock sample of writing contained criteria such as punctuation, topic sentence, paragraphing and sequence of events.

Eve preferred using rubrics and checklists for writing purposes, these contained criteria such as language features, text stages and planning.

4.8 Discussion: General themes across findings

During the analysis of the data certain patterns persistently emerge. These include the use of background knowledge, scaffolding of writing, and the writing tasks valued by teachers. These patterns were categorised in five broad themes, i.e. pedagogical knowledge, subject knowledge of writing, extended writing, assessment of writing and barriers to writing.

4.8.1 Pedagogical knowledge

In both classes observation focused on how writing would be introduced, whether and in what ways the learners' prior learning and everyday knowledge and experiences were built on, whether and in what ways connections between various texts and literacy activities were made, and how new learning about text and language was accumulated.

Knowledge of language and theories of teaching and learning seemed to influence the teaching of writing in the intermediate phase at this school. For example, data reveals that Adam's understanding of language was that language transmits meaning and knowledge between participants. Furthermore, this translated into transmission pedagogy where language is seen as separate facts to be taught, learnt and acquired. Therefore, the teaching of writing in Adam's class was rooted in word and sentence level construction such as grammar, knowing word clauses, grammatical functions in sentences and punctuation knowledge.

After being inducted into genre theory Eve had some grounding in linguistic and socio-cognitive elements of genre theory. She appeared to be familiar with aspects of the organisational and linguistic properties of texts and genres. However, without adequate follow-up and systematic support, using genre theory appears to be challenging as the data shows evidence of Eve being sandwiched between transmission pedagogy, process approaches and implementing aspects of a genre-based approach without always a clear logic for her choice.

Nonetheless, overall the data showed vast degrees of differences between Eve and Adam's practices in the intermediate phase. Although Eve was caught between transmission

pedagogy and a genre-based approach, the benefits of a genre-based approach could be seen to permeate different spheres of teaching and learning in her English class. For example, she demonstrated a better understanding of scaffolding, she used a range of questions, and explanations and frequently asked learners to explain and elaborate on their responses. Furthermore, she used of a range of resources, exposed learners to a range of texts and she demonstrated the ability to analyse texts, also adapting and transferring this skill through the translation of texts into Xhosa. Thus she might in the long run be able to infuse aspects of critical literacy into her teaching as genre theory focuses on power relations in texts. In addition, learners in this class were also frequently exposed to tasks that focused on word, sentence and text level and the evidence of this can be found in paragraphs, essays, use of writing frames and ways in which she explicitly assessed the writing of learners.

Consequently, the data highlighted that teachers' ability to scaffold learning and their knowledge and understanding of language and literacy and of how texts work impact on learning and teaching in the intermediate phase.

4.8.2 Extended Writing

Working with a functional model of language as advocated in the NCS (2003) implies that teachers need to make informed decisions about elements such as text type, register and language and therefore decisions need to be theoretically informed.

The findings reveal that some understanding and knowledge about different school-valued texts resulted in Eve's exposing her learners to a range of extended writing tasks such as narratives, procedures and recounts. Vast differences were highlighted between the types of extended writing tasks that Adam and Eve exposed their learners to; for example, Adam preferred writing sentences, whilst Eve exposed her learners to a range of functional and creative writing tasks.

4.8.3 Assessing Writing

The findings suggest that teachers assessed writing differently because they valued different aspects of writing. In Adam's case, he assessed at sentence and to some extent at paragraph level, he focused mostly on punctuation, grammar, and how on sentences are sequenced. On the other hand, after being exposed to genre theory, Eve included textual features and language features in her assessment criteria. Her understanding and knowledge about the

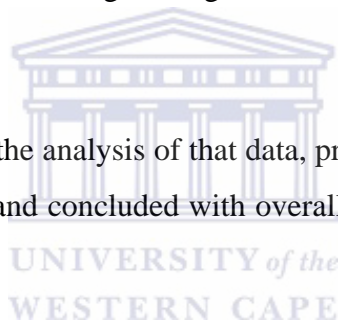
patterns in the genres enabled her to include it explicitly in the assessment criteria. In this way the assessment of learner writing became another learning activity, as learners were made aware of the elements that need to be included in their writing.

4.8.4 Barriers to writing

Learners in Class A and Class B were learning English as an additional language but they were also learning through a language that they were still attempting to acquire. Teachers in these two classes commented on the learners' lack of ability to speak and explain in their mother tongues and the impact this had on writing. These learners were mostly entering the school with no or limited English ability and thus the support of specialist English teachers became an absolute necessity. Such teachers need to be able to use the learners' first language and other teaching strategies as a scaffold to support learners' language development in an additional language. Knowledge of genre-based pedagogy appeared to assist this teacher to identify areas for close attention that might integrate listening, speaking, reading, language and writing effectively.

The chapter so far has presented the analysis of that data, provided a summary of the findings in each phase of data collection and concluded with overall broad themes that have emerged when analysing that data.

The next section will focus on the experimental unit of work and the analysis of the learner samples in each class.



4.9 Intervention

The unit of work was designed to establish in what ways genre theory could strengthen the learning and teaching of writing in the intermediate phase. I developed a unit of work to induct learners into the Information Report genre and created resources for teachers to implement this on the topic of Elephants. The purpose of the information report is to document, organise and store factual information on a topic. It classifies and describes the phenomena of our world. The textual phases of this genre are a classification or definition that introduces the topic and followed by subheadings in order of importance. The associated language features is simple present tense, for more detailed discussion see Derewianka (1990). The unit of work followed the curriculum cycle suggested by proponents of genre-based approaches such as Martin and Rose (2005) and Gibbons (2004) (Appendix 4: Unit of work).

I present the analysis of each class separately, followed by a summary of the findings in each class.

I first present two writing samples of learners from Class A who were not exposed to genre-based approaches and analyse the patterns that emerge. I include more samples in the appendix section of the study (Writing samples of Class A, appendix 5). Thereafter, I present one learner's sample of work in Class A and then present the same learner's sample after he had been moved to Class B and been through the intervention with a teacher familiar with genre-based pedagogy.

Secondly, I present one learner sample from Class B before the intervention and then the same learner's sample after the intervention. In Appendix 6, I include three more learners' samples of work from this class after the intervention, briefly discuss these and present a summary of the findings in Class B.

4.9.1 Analysis of Class A writing samples before and after the intervention

The essay that learners had to write was an argument genre. This genre's key stages should include title, an opening statement, presenting the first viewpoint, then the second viewpoint and ending with a concluding statement. Learners were assessed using criteria of schematic structure, topical development, reference and language features.

CLASS A Before the intervention

40% = $\frac{40}{100} = \frac{2}{5}$

Apartheid

- 1 Black people had no right to vote.
- 2 People had no grants.
- 3 Politicians were arrested.
- 4 Blacks were living in poor townships.
- 5 Blacks and whites had their own restaurants and toilets and schools.
- 6 People were not equal.
- 7 Children were taught in Afrikaans.
- 8 People were separated according to race.
- 9 Black people had no right to vote.

Democracy

- 1 People had right to vote.
- 2 People were not separated.
- 3 Blacks can marry with whites.
- 4 People can have the right to have lawyers.
- 5 People got grants.
- 6 Freedom of speech.
- 7 Freedom of movement.
- 8 People were equal.
- 9 You can stay where you want.

73% = $\frac{73}{100} = \frac{73}{100}$

Old times

In old times the black people ^{were not} always go to town and white people they go to town on time. They went to go to town and black people and white people had their own restaurants and toilet school.

New times

In new times the people always go to town and white people they go to town on time they visit town black people and white people were not separated according to race and black people have the right to vote and people were equal black people and white people they changed the toilet and school.

Only two of the ten learners managed to demonstrate some knowledge of paragraph writing. None of these ten learners introduced their essay with a title or had opening statements about the topic that they were addressing and as such the development of both textual and topical elements were limited. The learners also did not make use of words that signalled similarities and differences and therefore their samples display a lack of cohesion and structure. Two samples that displayed evidence of paragraphs contained topic sentences but these ideas were not clarified and expanded on in developing sentences or in supporting sentences by the using examples that could support the topic sentence. As a result, limited evidence of language, topic and schematic development were displayed and learner's paragraphs appeared fragmented. Not surprisingly, these learners were more skilled in word and sentence level construction.

Class A after the intervention

Two samples of learners not exposed to a genre-based approach

A

Cheetahs are mammals. Cheetahs have a thick, deep
cheetahs have head, body, legs and tail. Body is
Marked with irregular patches or streaks of different colours
Males tend to be slightly larger than females and have
bigger heads. Cheetah is a carnivore, eat meat. The
adult cheetah weighs between 40 kilograms and 65 kilograms
The skin is covered with hair called fur and it is rough
when you touch it. The tail usually white at the end
Eats mammals under 40 kilograms. It for food early
in the morning or later in the evening the cheetah hunts
by vision. They could go for several days without water
Eat cheetahs are found in Africa, Namibia and Iran.
~~Five~~
Five subspecies of cheetahs for 4 in Africa and in Iran
people kill cheetahs for their fur
farmers hunt them because the farmers are afraid that
cheetahs will eat their cows, sheep and chickens

The total body length is approximately 118 centimetres
The tail can measure up to 84 centimetres

B

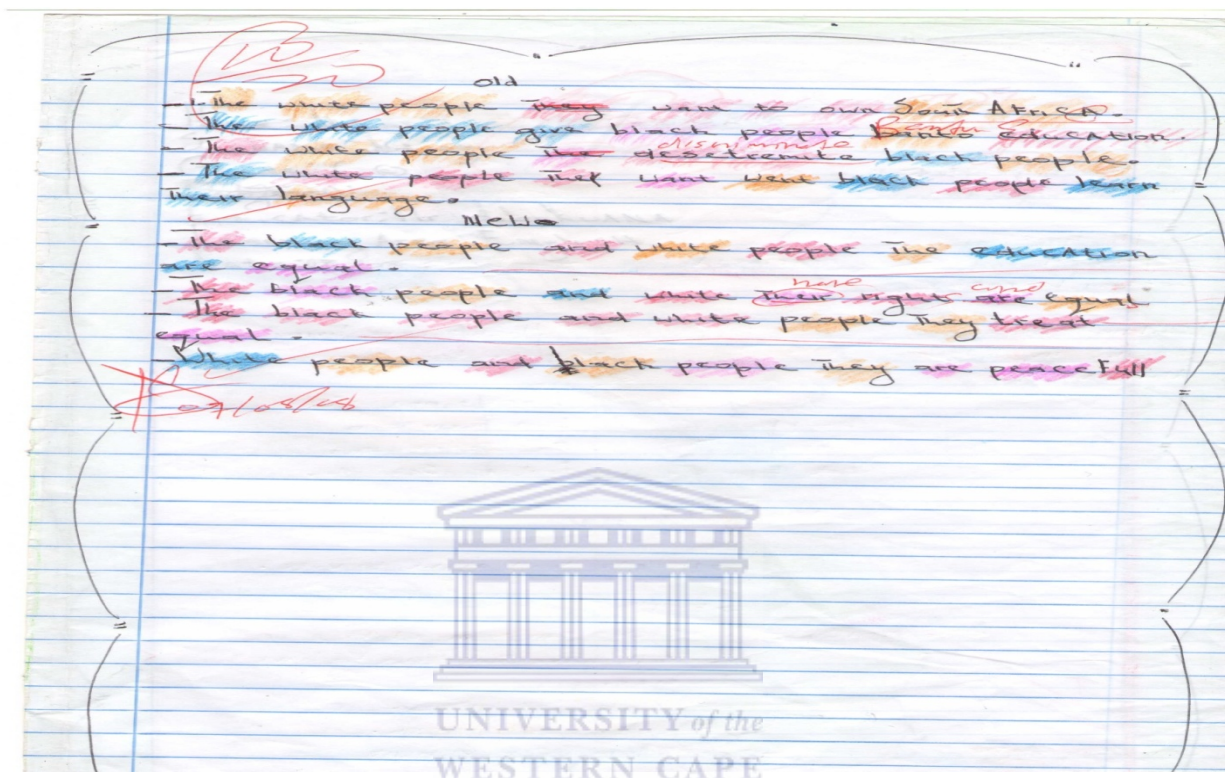
Body Parts
~~It~~ information about the cheetah
Body parts
Head, body, legs and tail. Body is marked with
irregular patches or streaks of different
colours often confused with a leopard.
Chest is deep
Waist is narrow
Different from the leopard
for example, it has long lines that run from
the corner of its eyes to its mouth and the
cheetah's tail is thinner and longer than the leopard
What the ^{eat} ~~it eat~~?
cheetah is a carnivore, eats meat
Eats mammals under 40 kilograms. It hunts
for food early in the morning or later in the
evening. Body height
The total body length is approximately
118 centimetres to 135 heads.

The normal writing practice in this class would be that the learners would write about 'The Elephant', which was the focus of the lesson. Therefore, the teacher and the learners were somewhat confused about the activity mainly because they are not accustomed to writing without keywords or on a topic that was not first discussed by the teacher. Therefore, these learners received some elements of modelling the text by the researcher.

The findings show that, Sample A has neither title nor subheadings, Sample B consists of a title and subheadings however both samples lack cohesion and it could be ascribed to learners mostly being inducted into word-level and sentence level writing. Furthermore, explicit instruction of the textual and language elements did not occur.

4.9.2 Analysis of Learner A (moved from Class A to Class B) before and after the intervention

Sample before exposure to a genre-based approach



I was told that this was an over-age learner and that he was already behind and struggling academically. Like the other samples before the intervention, learner A did not provide a title, opening statement or closing statement. Furthermore, he did limited referencing as he referred to mostly 'The Whites and The Blacks' throughout his essay. It appeared that he was aware that a paragraph should consist of one idea and in the second paragraph 'equality' was his topic. There is some evidence of arguing for a point of view, for example, in the first paragraph he argues that the old government was bad by comparing White advantages against Black oppression and the new one was good by focusing on the equality between Black and White. In the first paragraph he positions white people as ill-treating blacks and in the second paragraph the theme of equality brought about peace. Thus there is topical although not schematic development and simple present tense in the second paragraph although not simple past in the first one.


After exposure to the genre-based approach

FASTEST OF CHEETAHS/MAMMALS

It has long lines that run from the corner of its eyes to its mouth and the cheetah's tail is thinner and longer than the leopard's. The skin is covered with hair called fur and it is rough when you touch it.

The weight of cheetahs are difference.

The total body length is approximately 115 centimetres to 135 centimetres. The tail can measure up to 28 centimetres. The adult cheetah weight between 40 kilograms.



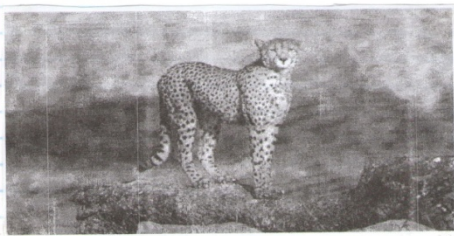
Male tend to be slightly larger in the evening.

What they eating

Cheetah is a carnivore, eat meat, Eat mammals under 40 kilograms. They could go for several days without water. It hunts for food early in the morning. The cheetah hunts by vision.

Why people kill cheetahs.

Farmers hunt them because the farmers are afraid that cheetahs will eat their cows, like, sheep and cows. People kill cheetahs because they want fur.



Where are found in Africa.

Iran and Namibia five subspecies of cheetahs. 4 in Africa and 1 in Iran.

They are different colours streaked.

Cheetah is deep
Waist is narrow

With explicit instruction of the purpose, key stages and linguistic features Learner A managed to control the Information genre quite competently. His information report demonstrated evidence of understanding the key stages, linguistic features and social purpose. Firstly, his report consisted of a title, Fastest of Cheetahs-Mammals, he included an opening paragraph, subheadings, 'The weight of cheetahs are different, What they eating, Why people kill cheetahs, Where are found in Africa'. The introduction whilst not a classification at least provided a description of the cheetah. He included visuals that complemented the texts. Having knowledge about the key stages purpose and language features appeared to have also given this learner the confidence to be creative, for example, in the second subheading, the text is written around the picture, indicating that if a learner has knowledge of the language and language conventions of texts, thus controlling the genre, it may lead to creativity. Also, the learners knew the purpose of this task and who they were writing for, that is, giving information to the grade four learners. Therefore, explicit teaching using a genre-based approach, writing for authentic purposes, and being aware of the language features, allowed this learner access to the conventions of the information report genre.

4.9.2 Overall findings in Class A

The samples of writing before the intervention had no criteria for assessment and the purpose for writing was to compare the old government and the new democratic government. As a result, the learners had to compare and contrast two topics. In genre theory this would be viewed as an argumentative genre. The purpose of the genre was to examine and compare and to develop an argument, see Derewianka (1990) for a more detailed discussion. However, the genre used for the unit of work was an information genre. Although these two genres, used during pre- and post intervention was different my interest was less in the control of a specific genre than in the difference a conscious focus on genre can make to learners' writing.

In the first sample, the learner was penalised for errors of punctuation such as full stops and capital letters. The second sample, although it had a paragraph structure scored lower marks. In terms of purpose, the learners were supposed to examine and compare two issue in this case, the South African government, old and new. Therefore they should have included a title, an opinion about the topic in the thesis statement and the focus had to be on comparing and contrasting Apartheid and Democracy. With regard to schematic structure, learners the essays had to consist of a thesis/opinion statement and arguments comparing different aspects of the old and the new government. Language features could contain words to signal similarities and differences, present tense to compare issues of the new and present tense to refer to the past system. None of the samples analysed consisted of an opinion statement, there was no or limited evidence of the use of vocabulary to signal differences and similarities, and the use of appropriate tense was erratic. However, the samples do display appropriate focus and learners managed to compare the old and the new system.

The sample of Learner A, after the intervention demonstrates that explicit instruction using a genre-based approach had clear advantages for developing learner's writing skills. For example, this sample shows that the learner had managed to include most elements for schematic structure, as well as language features which facilitated topic development.

By contrast, for the other 28 learners who remained in Class A findings were as follows: Firstly, none of these learners had a classification; only three learners had a title, subheadings and paragraphs; ten learners had a title and two paragraph; eight learners had a title and one paragraph and seven learners only had a title and sentences.

4.9.3 Overall findings for the ten Class A learners that were included in Class B

- Five of these learners had a title, classification, paragraphs, subheadings, and pictures and demonstrated evidence of understanding the language features.
- Two of these learners had a title, paragraphs, subheadings, visuals and understanding the language features
- Three learners only had sentences and a title

The majority of learners thus showed a significant improvement in control of this specific genre.



4.9.4 Analysis of Class B writing samples before and after the intervention

Learner B Sample before the unit of work

07 August 2002 ¹⁶ ₂₀ English

Comparing Apartheid government with the democratic government in South Africa

Although democratic government and apartheid government are [^] different in many ways.

The apartheid government passed laws that affected black, coloureds as well as Indian people. These laws were discriminating the South African people.

The blacks, coloureds and Indians were ^{very poor} living in ^(the) different areas, as apartheid laws were very painful for these race groups. As time goes by democratic law came by to make living standards better for these certain race groups, why because they have collected race groups and put them in one area so that they can be free.

Only whites had wealthy than blacks, coloureds and Indians. They were the only race that had a lot of wealthy than these certain race were not allowed to. And coloureds they also had ~~money~~ but not like whites people, because coloureds had small amount of money than whites.

Job was not easy to find, it was difficult for the blacks to find jobs so that they can earn an amount of money. They were asked to clean ^{domestic work} houses and Whites so they can earn money not to stay ^{hungry} for weeks, months and even years staying without food. They had no choice of ^{not accepting} the offer so they had to do it so that they can earn money to buy food.

^{could not} They ~~were forced to~~ ^{were} choose the leader that they think would let them stay where they want to stay, some ~~was~~ ^{is} it could not choose the leader that could rule the country that is there's, they're own land so that they can be free from Apartheid government. Democratic government is what they needed ^{it} to be ^{believed} by whites and tell them what to do, when they can do it and how they can do it. They had a vision how it will be like to have a democratic government, how they can be treated and how much respect they will gain with democratic government.

Finally they had a president that had set them free, to go where they want to go and to be more free, not to be discriminated ^{and not segregated} and be not put in living arrangements for certain race groups to put them together to make one country in many cultures, religions and beliefs. They had the leader that could rule the country politely not to harm them because apartheid government was wrong ^{in setting} ~~putting~~ them certain kinds of race in certain areas.

^{democratic} Leadership set them free from what they were going to become with apartheid government now the democratic government ^{is known} for what he has done for those who needed help, needs and wants. (Now they know to be grateful for that in past times.)?

~~16~~ ¹⁷ ~~20~~ ²¹

This essay displays evidence of some explicit teaching. The teacher has been inducted into genre-based approaches and attempted to implement elements of genre-based approaches to teach writing. The learner included a title, 'Comparing Apartheid government with the Democratic government in South Africa' and a clear difference is noticeable in comparison to writing in Adam's class and this essay shows visible evidence of Eve being inducted into genre-based approaches. Although, upon closer analysis there is also some evidence of confusion relating to elements of key stages, use of language features and sequential logical development of the topic.

Learner Sample after intervention

The members of the cat family

Cheetahs are mammals, they are the members of the cat family - they are called felidae. They are the fastest land animals.

Their weights

The adult cheetah weighs between 40 kilograms and 65 kilograms. The total body length is approximately 115 centimetres to 135 centimetres. The tail can measure up to ~~84~~ 84 centimetres. Males tend to be slightly larger than females and have bigger heads. The cheetah is the fastest land animal cat.

What else cheetahs eat

The cheetah eats mammals under 40 kilograms. Cheetah is a carnivore it eats meat.

How cheetahs hunt for food

It hunts for food early in the morning or later in the evening. The cheetah hunts by vision. Cheetahs hunt the animals under 40 kilograms. They could go for several days without water.

Body parts of the cheetah

The chest is deep, waist is narrow. Every cheetah has its own head, body, legs and tail. The body of a cheetah is marked with irregular patches or streaks of different colours. It is confused with a leopard but it is different from a leopard. A cheetah has long lines that run from the corner of its eyes to its mouth and the cheetah's tail is thinner and longer than the leopard.

The cheetah's skin

The cheetah's skin is covered with hair called fur and it is rough when you touch it. The tail is usually white in the end, the tail can measure up to 84 centimetres.

People hunt cheetahs

People kill cheetahs for their fur. Farmers hunt them because they are

Findings for Class B after the unit of work

This activity was done over two periods in class.

This class had exposure to elements of genre-based approaches and the result of this was evident in most samples. In general, these learners included all the elements necessary for the information report. This is evident firstly with the titles; learners in this class had a range of different titles, subheadings and the lay out of the pictures and visuals. They had more control over the genre and manipulated it to suit their purpose, which was to provide information to grade four learners. They were aware of audience and some learners arranged their text in such a way that it might be interesting for the intended audience, another one chose to phrase the subheadings as questions. Their pictures were mostly relevant and provided more information, for example, a picture of the cheetah under the subheading, 'body parts' was labelled accordingly, another learner included a map illustrating where cheetahs are found under the subheading, 'Where cheetahs are found'. These learners demonstrated an awareness of key stages, and manipulated the text to some extent, some experimented subheadings and lay out, making attempts at sequential organisation. They also demonstrated

awareness of the language features in their report and this led to topical development and clear detail of content.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the data collected during the implementation of a unit of work implementing a genre-based approach to teach writing. The findings suggest that knowledge of genre theory and associated pedagogies could provide teachers with a sound basis for scaffolding the development of writing skills but, most importantly, that explicit instruction into the genres of schooling could significantly improve the writing skills of learners in the intermediate phase, particularly those learning through English as an additional language.



CHAPTER V

A Droplet into the Ocean of Knowledge

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ocean of Knowledge

I am at the periphery of the ocean, seeing the vast body of knowledge that came before this study and it is humbling as I realise that my findings and conclusions are but a droplet barely causing a ripple in this vast knowledge ocean. As I reflect on the research journey, an awareness of the role that I have played in constructing this droplet of knowledge emerges. I begin to realise that, because of my own writing inadequacies and challenges with writing in different domains, I was drawn to this topic and fixated on understanding current writing practices at schools. I was interested in observing whether and how writing practices have been transformed or to what extent they have remained the same since I was a learner and a teacher at school. And now I understand why I felt trapped between finding answers from participants' viewpoint and my own values, writing experiences, interests and beliefs. This journey was indeed outward as well as inwards as I am now aware of the dangers when novice researchers like myself, are 'taught' theory about the research process but not explicitly taught about how our own social identities and experience could influence and shape the studies we carry out.

And so, my initial question, 'Knowledge for whom and what purpose', is becoming more profound as I realise that although my conclusions are but a mere droplet in the ocean of knowledge, at the same time it is also a water surge of knowledge about my own world views, the world views of others and how an awareness of these elements during the research process is crucial. I have learnt that the findings and results of any study in the social sciences could never truly claim to be neutral and objective because: this study was situated in my own personal writing experiences and thus I had the power to construct reality through the selection of data to be included or to be excluded based on the framing of my research question.

5.1 Conclusion of findings

Despite these reservations, in this concluding chapter, I attempt to depict the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study. The intention of the study was to investigate writing practices in grade six at Eden Primary and to explore an alternative genre-based approach. Writing matters in school and outside of school: it is an important means of learning all areas of the curriculum at school and it is also necessary in most sectors in broader society. Teaching writing at schools is guided by the writing curriculum for languages (NCS, 2003) and this document provides the theoretical framework or underpinning for the teaching of writing. Therefore, this is the official plan for all grade 6 teachers nationally and it is assumed that teachers understand and implement the official policy. However, this study has shed some light on factors that enable or constrain the implementation of the official writing curriculum.

5.1 1 The English Writing Curriculum as Plan versus Curriculum as Practiced

The curriculum as plan propagates a comprehensive view of language. It states firstly, that language learning in the intermediate phase should provide access to information, life-long learning and work opportunities. Secondly, it asserts that learning about language should lead to understanding and asserting one's human rights. Therefore, critical literacy should be promoted to address past inequalities and facilitate social justice (RNCS, 2003: 23). To achieve these goals, the curriculum makes provision for a text-based approach that explores how texts work, a process approach that encourages a composing process for writing, and also a communicative approach that views language and writing as purpose-driven communication in a social context.

In addition, the writing curriculum proposes that learners should be able to write different kinds of factual texts and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes (RNCS, 2003: 20). However, this document only provides an outline or framework of what teachers should be implementing. Although the RNCS: Assessment Guidelines Document (2006) attempts to address this gap, it only provides examples of the kinds of texts or writing activities that teachers can do in class rather than specifying the genres, their generic structures and key features so that teachers know what to focus on and what to assess. Furthermore, the policy is quite clear on the outcomes, assessment standards and results that learners should achieve but mentions few pedagogical strategies. As a result, it remains vague in terms of explicit guidance for implementation. It assumes that teachers have knowledge about the language

and learning theories underpinning the language curriculum. It also provides very little support for critical literacy.

This lack of direction contributes to a situation, as illustrated in this study, where individual teachers without solid theoretical grounding in the theories that underpin the teaching of writing might implement the curriculum differently in their classrooms. Therefore, many teachers could implement teaching approaches that do not reflect the writing policy as plan. This was indeed the case at this school where the writing curriculum was similarly understood however it was practiced in different ways. The first teacher valued a skills discourse because that is how he was taught English at school and during his teacher training. As a result, his beliefs about the positive elements of teaching writing is that learning to write involves learning sound-symbol relations and syntactic patterns. Learners were mostly exposed to rules of grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction because the teacher believed that knowledge about this would eventually enable learners to become proficient writers.

On the other hand, the second teacher, after being exposed to the ACE course, demonstrated a greater ability to interpret and understand the outcomes. Furthermore, she implemented a variety of texts both factual and narrative in her class and the quality of learner writing was also superior in comparison to the other grade 6 class. Writing was also integrated with language and grammar. However, classroom-based support after the ACE course would have been useful as this teacher is caught between aspects of process, text-based and communicative approaches as advocated by the official curriculum and not always certain which to prioritise when or how to integrate them. This teacher also valued the teaching of grammar and spelling but attempted to teach them in the context of the text.

As a result, the writing curriculum as practice includes elements of teacher's understanding and beliefs; this would be evident in pedagogy and classroom practice. Due to the lack of knowledge about the language theories underpinning writing, teachers displayed very little in common in their approach to teaching writing in the intermediate phase. However, in assessment they did have one element in common: an emphasis on grammar and traditional linguistic features that appeared to be the preferred element for assessment across the intermediate grades. For example, assessment for progression purposes would have minimal extended writing tasks and a heavy focus on completing sentences, gap filling, punctuation

and parts of speech. Furthermore, it depended on the teacher who was responsible for setting the assessment task to include the outcomes covered for a term and such tasks would inevitably reflect the specific teacher's beliefs about writing. For example, teacher A would design tasks focusing on formalist assessment of writing, did not include a text and thus the assessment would focus on regurgitation of language facts taught. On the other hand, teacher B would set comprehension, extended writing and grammar tasks. As a result, in practice learners in the intermediate phase were exposed to different kinds of writing tasks in terms of quality, content and purposes for writing.

5.1.2 Teachers Beliefs about Writing

Teacher A in this study believed that writing consists of applying knowledge of linguistic patterns and rules for sound-symbol relation and sentence construction. He valued teaching parts of speech, grammar and 'rules' about what constitute good writing. He focused heavily on word-level and sentence level activities. Examples of tasks in this class are spelling, building sentences from words taken from texts, identifying nouns, adverbs and adjectives, and punctuation. As a result, for writing, the teacher believes that knowing the rules will promote efficient speakers of English that will ultimately result in better writers of English. Overall, his approach could be said to reflect a formalist understanding of language and a predominantly a behaviourist understanding of learning.

At the time of the study, Teacher B beliefs' about writing appeared to be eclectic as the classroom instruction continuously varied according to the type of text, the learning area and content to be taught. For example, classroom practice included different modes and purposes for writing, from expressive to transactional to factual. As a result, learners had to talk and interact their way towards meaning before they wrote about a specific topic. Also, an awareness of the role that language plays across the curriculum appeared dominant, as learners were being made aware of language features and purposes in the different learning areas that the teacher taught. This could be ascribed largely to her induction into genre theory and the associated curriculum cycle in her in-service ACE training.

As a result, having knowledge about the language theories that underpin the official curriculum appears to have had benefits both for pedagogy and classroom practice. A wider understanding of a genre-based approach could provide teachers in the intermediate phase with knowledge about text and context, the social function of language as well as a meta-

language for language and scaffolding. Subsequently, having knowledge about a genre-based approach to writing could help bridge the divide between policy and practice because such an approach is rooted in social contexts. If teachers have more knowledge about genre theory, they would have a resource on which to draw when interpreting learning outcomes and planning lessons to achieve these outcomes.

5.1.3 Teachers understanding and knowledge of texts

For Teacher B, a text was a resource to plan integrated lessons and using text meant being aware of the purpose, textual and linguistic features. For example, whole texts were used as the basis to initiate talk and to teach reading and skills such as vocabulary, word recognition exercises and language features. This teacher is aware of language in social context and how language is reflected in texts. This awareness of the social purpose in texts indicated that this teacher made learners aware of language use in the different learning areas and thus language and writing occurred across the curriculum. However, at times the implementation and approaches to texts reflected aspects of ‘traditional’ teaching. For example, although the teacher had knowledge of genre theory, at times the teaching methodology leaned towards transmission approaches such as ‘telling’ learners the purpose, textual and linguistic features. Therefore, guided and systematic assistance of implementing genre theory appears to be a necessity.

For Teacher A, a text means an aid for the teacher to teach grammar and language related facts. Therefore, this teacher has limited knowledge of texts in social context and views texts as value-free and neutral. Therefore, using a text meant to teach reading, grammar, summaries and comprehensions and thus writing was taught in isolation from the texts used in this classroom. In this class texts are stories, mostly narratives and recounts and used to introduce reading, writing of sentences, gap filling and grammar. As a result, the focus was on text at word and sentence-level.

5.2 The extent to which a Text-based Approach could strengthen the Teaching of Writing

5.2.1 Subject Knowledge

Based on the findings of the study, a text-based approach to writing could have numerous advantages in implementing curriculum policy: increasing teachers’ knowledge about pedagogy, enhancing teachers’ knowledge and understanding of texts and of how texts work

to convey meaning. It could also potentially strengthen teachers' language resources and their skills in identifying linguistic features of texts, making teachers more aware of ideology in texts.

5.2.2 Pedagogy

The findings suggest that the level of subject-knowledge influences pedagogy and classroom practices. These teachers, for example displayed varied teaching strategies and skills in selecting content and texts for the writing tasks, as well as explanation and different questioning techniques and ways of scaffolding learning,

Knowledge of genre theory and associated pedagogies could provide teachers with sound basis for constructing a teaching and learning cycle. Such a cycle would be based on phases of setting the knowledge field, deconstructing text, modelling, then joint construction and finally individual construct of texts (see Feez, 2002; Gibbons, 2004; Derewianka, 1990). As a result, teachers would be more likely to include scaffolding building activities during the curriculum cycle, to discuss features such as lay out and phases in texts, to model texts and encourage and joint construction. This approach to pedagogy allows for systematic, focussed teaching strategies that could strengthen and consolidate learners' understanding and knowledge about writing.

Consequently, genre theory could bridge the divide between official policy for writing and classroom implementation in the intermediate phase and, more importantly, teachers would have greater knowledge of how to integrate communicative, genre and process approaches to teaching writing.

5.2.3 Learner Writing Development

The study demonstrated that learners writing improved substantially after explicit instruction and using the curriculum cycle for teaching and learning of genre theory. There was greater awareness of text and how texts work, more attention was given to the key stages of the text and overall learners were aware of the associated language features, which mostly led to sequential organisation, topical development and clarity of content.

5.3 Recommendations

Learning to write at schools seems like learning the forms or structures of the texts that school system or teachers' value. Therefore, teachers need knowledge about these texts, that is, the phases, language features and contexts. The data reveals that knowledge about literacy in the intermediate phase is crucial to teaching writing effectively. A genre-based theory makes explicit the structural organisation of texts and the associated language features: these could provide teachers with subject specific language resources to draw from. It might also enable teachers in the intermediate phase to focus more on social purposes for language. As a result, teachers could focus on communicative events as well as language features, and textual patterns, which could enhance reading, writing and speaking as learners learn these skills in context of the social conventions in broader society.

The findings suggest that teachers should have a firm grounding in linguistic and socio-cognitive theories about language and literacy development. Moreover, they need to be familiar with the organisational and linguistic properties of texts and genres. Without adequate training and systematic support, implementing the official curriculum appears almost impossible. Therefore, in-service programmes to equip current intermediate phase language teachers with such knowledge should be explored. Secondly, the inclusion of more than one language for pre-service language teachers in the intermediate phase should become a priority. The intention should be to train specialists in the development of advanced biliteracy skills for the intermediate phase.

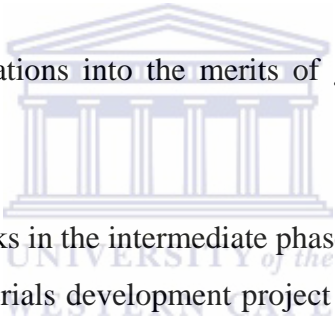
The literacy training and experience of current intermediate phase curriculum advisors should be investigated, as this level of support should enhance classroom literacy pedagogy based on genre theory. Providing genre-based training to those advisors who are currently offering generalist support for curriculum and assessment could have major benefits for schools, especially those schools classified as weak Literacy and Numeracy schools. Action research programmes could focus on the impact of genre theory in relation to improving the reading and writing proficiency of learners and more importantly how this influences pedagogy and classroom practices.

Furthermore, the possibility of including genre theory in other major learning areas of pre-service teacher training such as science, social science and economic management should be explored. This could provide these pre-service students with literacy skills to recognise the

text types and linguistic features that are predominantly part of their curriculum and ensure that language, writing and reading do not only occur in the language class. This could lead to the possibility of planning interdisciplinary theme-based units of work. As a result, it could facilitate integration across learning areas and assessment.

Teachers exposed to genre theory could form part of a project analysing current textbooks and developing samples of genres in the three official languages of the Western Cape. This could generate a range of genres, texts and sample activities. Projects such as these could provide direction to publishers of textbooks; they could also open opportunities for the professional development of teachers involved in such projects and possibly increase their skills as critical analysts of texts and materials developers. Implementation of any materials developed for genre-based approaches should be investigated through fieldwork and observations of teachers along with interviews that reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the materials.

To sum up, then, future investigations into the merits of genre theory in a South African context should include:

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- Evaluating current textbooks in the intermediate phase from a genre-based perspective
 - Exploring a teachers' materials development project to develop a variety of genres in the three official languages
 - Investigating the current level of curriculum advisors literacy skills and theoretical grounding to assess the kinds of school-based support that they could provide to teachers implementing genre-based approaches
 - Investigating the advantages of specialist literacy training programmes in pre-service courses of language teachers
 - Reconceptualising pre-service training courses for language across the curriculum in discipline-specific subjects
 - Developing a comprehensive framework to implement genre-based approaches in the General Education Band.

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APPENDICES

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a stylized classical building with columns and a pediment, positioned behind the word 'APPENDICES'. Below the building, the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' is written in a smaller, blue font.

APPENDIX 1



UNIVERSITY of the
PACIFIC

Text Analysed by EVE

APPENDIX 2



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WEST OF ENGLAND

Assessment of Mock Sample

ADAM

APPENDIX 2

Assessment of Mock Sample



APPENDIX 3

Additional Lesson Plan



APPENDIX 4

UNIT OF WORK



APPENDIX 5

WRITING SAMPLES



UNIVERSITY of the

CLASS A

APPENDIX 6

WRITING SAMPLES



UNIVERSITY *of the*

WEST OF ENGLAND
CLASS B