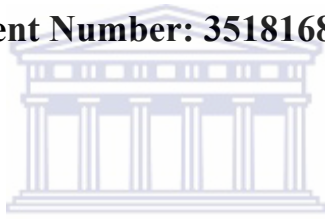


**ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF AN ENGLISH FOR
ACADEMIC PURPOSES COURSE ON THE ACADEMIC
WRITING SKILLS OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE
LEARNERS ATTENDING ECONOMICALLY
DISADVANTAGED HIGH SCHOOLS: AN
INTERVENTIONIST CASE STUDY**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Education,
University of the Western Cape**

Supervisor: Professor Zubeida Desai

ABSTRACT

Academic writing skills are vitally important for South African learners in both high school and tertiary contexts. The importance of such writing skills is even more pronounced for English Second Language (ESL) speakers, as such learners often attend low-performing schools (that inculcate poor levels of academic literacy), and also face the challenge of writing in a non-native language. This study is an attempt to understand how a specially designed English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course can improve the academic writing of bilingual, economically disadvantaged high-school South African learners.

The study analysed the effects of the EAP course on Grade 11 learners from two ‘no-fees’ high schools located in Khayeltisha and Delft. Over a seven-week period Grade 11 learners from these schools attended the EAP course twice a week (after school hours on their school premises) and submitted a total of fourteen written assignments (seven rough drafts, and seven final drafts). These assignments required the learners to formulate essay-like responses to literary and philosophical texts. The learners shaped their responses by making reference to structured classroom discussions (led by the EAP course instructor), as well as standardised notes and assignment instructions.

The conceptual frameworks that guided this study were mapped using a variety of sources and materials. Whilst Hyland’s (2005, 2006) influential writings on EAP helped the researcher situate the study’s academic writing skill’s course within an EAP paradigm, recent theoretical and empirical advancements in cognitive science (in particular by Tooby & Cosmides 1992; Gallistel 2000; Wagner & Wagner 2003) helped to justify the specifically ‘modular’ approach to academic writing skills that the course favoured. Finally, testimonies about the function of creative fiction (see Pessoa 2010; Kafka 2013; Barnes 2012; Pinker 2011) played an important part in shaping the EAP course's approach to text-orientated academic writing skills.

Importantly, this study also aimed to describe and analyse various factors that threatened the implementation of the academic writing skills course. In relation to attrition – a phenomenon which clearly presented the single greatest threat to the intervention – Bandura’s theoretical writings on the structure of agency (2006, 2005, 2004, 2001, 1998, 1997, 1994) provided a rich source of justification for many of the conclusions that the study derived about the underlying factors that drove the high drop-out rate.

Another key aim of this study was to transmit writing skills that would boost levels of learner preparedness for matric and first-year university. To establish a link between the course and the writing requirements of certain matric and university subjects, the researcher compared the contents of the writing skills course to the contents of these subjects. This comparative analysis relied heavily on matric and first-year university source material (i.e. exam papers, memorandums, marking rubrics, departmental handouts, etc.).

In terms of its findings, the study discovered many striking parallels between the Grade 11 learners at Khayelitsha *and* Delft. Firstly, in both experimental groups, a pre-intervention writing task revealed that – prior to the EAP course’s inception – the overwhelming majority of the learners were not in firm possession of virtually any of the writings skills the EAP course aimed to transmit.

Secondly, in both groups, it was found that the EAP course significantly improved the learners’ academic writing skills. Although this improvement was not especially visible in the learners’ grade-based results for the EAP course (due, mainly, to absenteeism and resulting missed assignments), a thorough qualitative analysis of the learners’ pre-intervention, early and late EAP assignments demonstrated that – by the end of the course – most of the learners had gained fairly high degrees of proficiency in a range of critically important academic writing skills.

Thirdly, qualitative data – derived from observations and interviews – established that the high rates of attrition and absenteeism that plagued *both* experimental groups was chiefly due to a single cause: weak levels of agency.

On the basis of this study’s findings, a number of recommendations can be put forward. Firstly, the many parallels between the two experimental groups suggest that the EAP course designed by this study could achieve comparable results in other South African township schools. Secondly, due to the difficulties that this study encountered in relation to high absenteeism and attrition rates, it is recommended that future implementations of the EAP course adopt a number of measures to improve learners’ perceptions of their self-efficacy. Finally, it is recommended that future versions of the EAP course could include a ‘matric study skills module’.



KEYWORDS / PHRASES

English for academic purposes

Academic writing skills

Agency

English second language speakers

Modularity

Attrition

Matric

Creative fiction

Economically disadvantaged

History

English first additional language

Frequency analyses

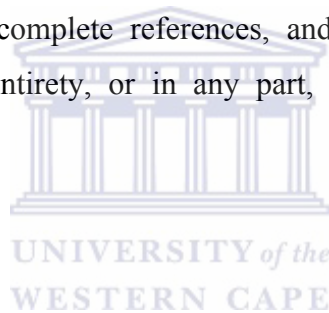


DECLARATION

I declare that

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF AN ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES COURSE ON THE ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS ATTENDING ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED HIGH SCHOOLS: AN INTERVENTIONIST CASE STUDY

is my own work, that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this work has not been submitted previously in its entirety, or in any part, at any other higher education institution for degree purposes.



.....
BEN MATHEW SCHERMBRUCKER

[March 2017]

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

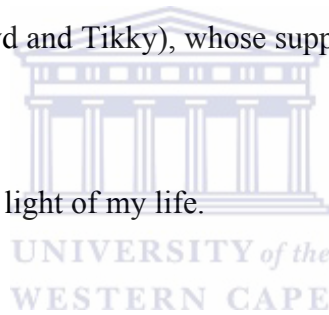
my parents, Peter and Reviva Schermbrucker, who provided me with a home – as well as moral and financial support – throughout the writing of this thesis,

my grandparents, Ivan and Leslie Schermbrucker, who went to prison for their beliefs and inspired me to help those less fortunate than myself

my grandparents, Yehudit and Gershon, who have always cared for me and believed in my abilities

my ‘uncle’ marc (as well as Syd and Tikky), whose support made the completion of this thesis possible,

and last, but not least, Elaine – light of my life.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a thesis is not a solitary enterprise, as it necessarily relies upon a range of people giving their input and assistance. I would therefore like to thank the following individuals for aiding me in the completion of this study.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Grade 11 Gonwa and Delta learners who voluntarily took part in the EAP course. Without their cooperation, it would have been impossible to implement this study. The principals, security guards, secretaries and teaching staff at both schools also helped and supported me immeasurably, and I am much indebted to them for this.

Secondly, I would like to extend a big thank you to my supervisor, Professor Zubeida Desai. Her helpful feedback was always delivered timeously, and her many contributions to our afternoon meetings ensured that this thesis came to full fruition.

Finally, I want to thank the UWC Education Faculty and the Sasakawa Foundation for the funding grants they provided me with.

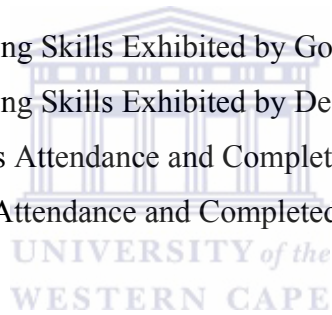
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS WITH EXPLANATIONS

General Terms:

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EAP	English for Academic Purpose
EGAP	English for General Academic Purposes
ESAP	English for Specific Academic Purposes
EFAL	English First Additional Language
ESL	English as Second Language
PEP	Positive Education Practices
PP	Productive Pedagogies
QUES	Quarterly Employments Statistics

Academic Writing Terms:

[AR]	Author Referral
[BRFMAP]	Boosted Referral to First Main Argumentative Point
[BRSMAP]	Boosted Referral to Second Main Argumentative Point
[CBHOTS]	Conclusion Based Higher Order Thinking Skills
[DFMT]	Development of First Main Theme
[DSMT]	Development of Second Main Theme
[FMAP]	First Main Argumentative Point
[FMT]	First Main Theme
FQT]	First Quoting Technique
[GOAM]	General Outline with Attitude Markers
[GTAR]	Genre, Title and Author Referral
[HOTS]	Higher Order Thinking Skills



[LW/P]	Linking Word or Phrase
[MAP]	Main Argumentative Point
[MAPD]	Main Argumentative Point Development
[MAPR]	Main Argumentative Point Referral
[MT]	Main Theme
[MTD]	Main Theme Development
[MTR]	Main Theme Referral
[RFMT]	Referral to First Main Theme
[RSMT]	Referral to Second Main Theme
[SMAP]	Second Main Argumentative Point
[SMT]	Second Main Theme
[SQT]	Second Quoting Technique



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In order to perform well in matric, South African learners need to be in possession of academic (essay-based) writing skills. Such a requirement exists because many demographically popular matric subjects (e.g. History, English First Additional Language, isiXhosa Home Language, Business Studies, etc.) require learners to write essays that are assessed in accordance with rubrics that prioritise coherence, structure and effective argumentation. Seen in this light, it is problematic that the majority of South African schools – whether public or private – do not offer modules that place an exclusive emphasis on academic writing skills. This lacuna is especially surprising since essays form the dominant mode of assessment in most tertiary disciplines. Arguably, the inability of schools to give learners in-depth training in academic writing has resulted in a situation - in both local and international contexts - in which high-school graduates are often unable to cope with university requirements (Winch & Wells 1995; Lillis 2001; Blythman & Orr 2002; Groenewald 2005). Within a South African context this claim can be further substantiated through noting that a frequently cited reason for students being ill prepared at university is ‘academic illiteracy’, that is, “students’ inability to read and write in a critical and analytical manner, to discern between fact and opinion, to recognize what is deemed evidence for an argument and to grasp the discourse of the discipline” (Van Schalkwyk, Bitzer & van der Walt 2010: 2) [see also Moore, Paxton, Scott & Thesen 1998; Van Dyk & Weidemann 2004; Woollacott & Henning 2004; Fraser & Killen 2005)].¹

Given the multiple positive effects that the introduction of school-level writing modules could therefore have at both school and university, the need for experimentally confirming their utility and then effectively implementing them ought to be self-evident. Of course, within a South African context, the need for this to happen is especially

¹ It is worth noting that (both in South Africa and abroad), special tertiary units have actually been created to help combat academic illiteracy through providing underprepared students with academic support (McKenna 2003; Alexander, Badenhorst & Gibbs 2005; Paczuska 2002).

² Of course, in a historic sense, the educational disadvantages that black South Africans have faced extend

great, since alarmingly high matric failure and underperformance rates (see Mouton, Louw & Strydom 2012; Akoojee & Nkomo 2007) indicate the need for greater curricular reform.

Importantly, there are compelling reasons why such school-level writing modules – at least initially – should be offered to black, economically disadvantaged learners. These reasons derive from the fact that the enduring legacy of apartheid has had a crippling effect on public schools in economically disadvantaged communities (Christie 2008).² Unfortunately, controversies in the present-day South African education system have further exacerbated the historically determined difficulties faced by these schools (for a sampling of some of the controversies that relate to curriculum reform, teacher competency and policy development, see Jansen 1998; Bansilal, Brijlall & Mkhwanazi 2014; de Clercq 1997). In addition, perhaps most distressingly, the majority of bilingual students who attend these schools do not receive foundational mother-tongue education (Phaala 2006; Desai 2012), something which creates considerable impediments to academic progress (Cummins 2000). Coupled with the fact that learners from impoverished backgrounds are extremely vulnerable to pedagogically disruptive conditions (Barbarin & Richter 2001) caused by their social environment, it becomes all too clear that the majority of South African learners are unfairly disadvantaged due to factors that they have little – if any – direct control over.

In contrast, both apartheid, and, (arguably) the neo-liberal economic policies adopted by post-apartheid governments, have entrenched a high quality of education in an elite minority of (traditionally) white schools (Christie 2008; Soudien 2007). Importantly, too, the middle and upper class learners who attend these schools already possess ‘cultural capital’ that predisposes them to achieve high results (Bourdieu 1976). In addition, these learners are far more likely to be taught in their mother tongue, and to

² Of course, in a historic sense, the educational disadvantages that black South Africans have faced extend well beyond apartheid. For a useful discussion of how missionary education was skewed so as to ultimately serve colonial white interests, see Msila (2007).

have remedial teachers and counsellors (employed by the schools) to provide additional levels of academic support (Teese & Polesel 2003). For these reasons (as well as economic ones) it is clear that gross inequalities plague the South African education system.

Given these obstacles and inequalities, it ought to be self-evident that some segments of the learner population require assistance more urgently than others. Moreover, if the complex and demanding needs of these learners are to be adequately addressed, the measures used to aid them need to be progressive.

Due to its focus on economically disadvantaged schools, and the novel ways in which it seeks to build up core academic skills that are not sufficiently prioritised by the standard curriculum, this study is compatible with both these concerns, and harmonises with what other South African educationalists concerned with social justice have claimed:

To change schooling in South Africa, more radical measures are needed to reduce social injustices and work towards greater equity. We need more resources and support directed towards poor schools. [...] The challenge is not to view what exists as inevitable and unchanging – and not to underestimate the task of changing what exists. The task is to keep envisaging alternatives, to keep challenging with new ideas, and to keep pressing against the boundaries of common sense towards something better.

(Christie 2008: 216)

1.1 Aims and objectives of the present study

For all the reasons listed in the previous section, this study sought to examine how a specially designed English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course impacted upon the academic writing skills of Grade 11 ESL learners attending economically disadvantaged schools in Cape Town. The study's main goal was to determine whether the EAP course could significantly improve the learners' essay writing skills. The study also aimed to provide a careful theoretical evaluation of whether the skills transmitted by the EAP course could be expected to better prepare participants for English essay and comprehension based matric subjects (like English FAL and History), as well as first-

year tertiary writing assignments. Finally, the study sought to document and analyse various elements that destabilised the EAP course, so as to generate data on the kinds of difficulties intervention projects at economically disadvantaged high schools may expect to face.

Through addressing these issues, the study hoped to explore novel ways in which EAP courses could facilitate learning processes in which academic writing skills, matric preparation and tertiary preparation could mutually reinforce one another and be coherently unified into a single module. Since the project focused on one of the most challenging and arduous double hurdles that South African learners confront – success at matric and subsequent integration into a tertiary environment – it possessed relevance. Indeed, since the study aimed to develop innovative means to *help* students with these twin challenges, and since failure and underachievement are endemically high in these domains, the study's interventionist approach made its relevance especially high in a South African context.

This chapter first provides the background to the study by discussing an earlier implementation of a school-level academic writing skills course (conducted by the researcher). The chapter then proceeds to offer a rationale for the study by exploring the importance of matric level intervention programmes (in a South African context). Thereafter, the study's significance is analysed through making reference to possible future implementations of the study, and the manner in which a Humanities- inspired approach to such modes of intervention may be especially appropriate. Next, the research methodology is summarized and a layout of the chapters in the thesis is provided.

1.2 Background to the study

Although I was unaware of it at the time, this study is rooted in a range of experiences I had as student volunteer and part-time teacher. In 2010, as a B.A Honours student at

Rhodes University, I volunteered to join a literacy enrichment programme that was jointly run by postgraduate students in the Rhodes English and Philosophy departments. The programme aimed to assist learners who were re-writing their matric at the GADRA Matric School.³ Once a week, about five other volunteers (including myself) would meet with the GADRA learners and read to them from assigned literary works. Both the GADRA headmistress and the volunteer group hoped that this exposure to literature would strengthen the learners' appreciation of books, and thereby impact positively on their language skills and overall scholastic performance.

A few months into the programme, I began to note a striking paradox. Along with the rest of the volunteers, I was encouraged to punctuate my reading sessions with questions that would test the learners' levels of understanding of the assigned text and heighten their levels of participation. Again and again, I was taken aback by the eloquence and insightfulness of the learners' answers, as well as their general levels of enthusiasm. Despite having performed rather dismally at matric, there seemed – to my great surprise – to be absolutely nothing wrong with their general cognitive skills. Encouraged by this, I pushed the learners further and asked them to write down some of their answers. As the first of these written assignments were returned to me, it became apparent that there was a *massive* discrepancy between the learners' ability to express their understanding orally and through writing.

In the weeks that followed, as I continued to reflect on these findings, I began to question the efficacy of the volunteer programme. Firstly, it was clearly the case that the learners' ability to write about texts – rather than to appreciate them or engage with them orally – was the most pressing problem that they faced. Secondly, it appeared

³ The GADRA Matric School is located in Grahamstown, and offers predominantly black, economically disadvantaged learners the opportunity to re-write their matric exam. GADRA provides a 1-year full-time programme of classes to prepare approximately 130 students to re-write selected National Senior Certificate subjects. This provides an opportunity for students to pass their NSC (if they failed first time round), or, to improve their NSC results to gain access to tertiary-level study and employment opportunities.

intuitively obvious to me that *by not* focusing on writing skills, the volunteer programme was not being adequately responsive to the learners' primary concerns. In a few months' time, the GADRA learners – along with the rest of South Africa's matric students – would write their final exams and need to formalise their understanding of subjects through *written* responses, not oral ones. Furthermore, should they pass the hurdle of matric and be accepted into universities, they would again be required to demonstrate their understanding in terms of written essays, irrespective of the tertiary discipline they chose to pursue. It thus struck me that while general language and cultural enrichment is of vital significance, the programme had an even greater obligation to be *as relevant as possible to the students' immediate sphere of interests*. Indeed, this line of thinking became truly compelling when I considered that there was no incompatibility between offering the GADRA students a course that would improve their essay-writing skills *and* deepen their appreciation of literature.

Motivated by these considerations, I approached the GADRA headmistress and sought permission to run an academic writing-skills course at the school the following year. The course was premised on the idea that good literature has a pedagogical utility, and that canonical stories, poems and arguments can not only be used to broaden our minds, but also to aid and vitalise projects which seek to improve matric results. Thus, within the design framework of the course, each new writing skill that the students would learn would help them to better analyse a piece of literature. Consequently, techniques that would help the students to be clearer, logical and more rigorous (in their writing) were linked and associated with the unlocking of new and exciting ideas – ideas that would enliven the learning process and place the technical exercises in a richer and more intriguing context.

However, in an attempt to maximize its relevance to the GADRA learners, the course would aim to not only improve the learners' matric results, but also ease their transition into a tertiary environment. The course would thus require learners (in their final writing assignments) to produce written work that would meet with basic first-year university

standards. Upon producing such work, the learners would be supplied with a report that would then be incorporated into their university application packages. This report would state that – to the best of my knowledge as a former first-year university tutor – the successful learners had produced written work that met some basic requirements for first-year tutorial assignments in the humanities. It was my hope that the report would enhance the learners' chances of getting accepted at a university or technikon.

In February 2011 – after my proposal was ratified by the school's headmistress and governing body – the course officially commenced, and I began meeting with a group of seventeen GADRA students twice a week. During the week's first session, the students were introduced to a literary work. After this introduction and a discussion around the text, the students received written information on the importance of a particular essay writing technique. They then received an assignment which provided detailed instructions about how to use this technique to analyse the set piece of literature. In addition to thirty minutes' class time, the learners were given four school days to complete a rough draft of their assignment. Upon the commencement of the second 'workshop' meeting of the week, the students had an opportunity to discuss their rough drafts with me and to also start writing up their final drafts (to be submitted four days later). In total, the course lasted for two school terms.

The course, in my view, was a success. The majority of the students managed to produce written work that met with basic first-year tertiary standards. In addition to this, the course appeared to impact positively upon some of the learners' matric performance. One student improved her English HL mark by 20%, while at least three other learners improved their English HL marks by over 10%, and received offers to study at South African universities (including Rhodes). Finally, the students themselves acknowledged the helpfulness of the course. Thus, after being given a questionnaire about the course's usefulness, many of the students testified that it had galvanised a positive and paradigmatic shift in their approach to academic writing.

However, in order to convey a more precise understanding of what the course helped the learners to achieve, I would like to make reference to the written work of a participating student – from here on called ‘Xolisa’. I have selected Xolisa’s work for two reasons. Firstly, like many of the GADRA learners who participated in the course, Xolisa had scored below 50% for matric English. Secondly, at the beginning of the course, Xolisa expressed little interest in classroom discussions and homework assignments. Keeping these two facts in mind, helps to accentuate what Xolisa went on to achieve by the end of the course.

Before providing this example, however, I would like to insert the text that Xolisa’s written assignment responded to – an excerpt from Blaise Pascal’s *Pensees*. I feel this inclusion is both illuminating and necessary, as it clearly demonstrates that Xolisa was not analysing a simplistic text. Rather, he was examining an excerpt from a seminal piece of Western philosophy written in highly stylised and historically idiomatic English:

Let man [...] contemplate the whole of nature in her full and exalted nature. Let him turn his eyes from the lowly objects which surround him. Let him gaze on that brilliant light set like an eternal lamp to illumine the Universe; let the earth seem to him a dot [...] But if our vision stops here, let the imagination pass on; it will exhaust its powers of thinking long before nature ceases to supply it with material for thought. All this visible world is no more than an imperceptible speck in nature’s ample bosom. No idea approaches it. We may extend our conception beyond all imaginable space, yet produce only atoms in comparison with the reality of things. It is an infinite space, the center of which is everywhere, the circumference nowhere. [...]

Returning to himself, let man consider what he is compared with all existence: let him think of himself as lost in this remote corner of nature; and from this little dungeon in which he finds himself lodged – I mean the universe – let him learn to set a true value on the earth, its kingdoms, and cities, and upon himself. What is a man in the infinite?

But to behold another miracle no less astonishing, let him examine the most delicate things he knows. Let him take a mite, with its tiny body and its incomparably more tiny limbs: legs with their joints, veins in those legs, blood in those veins, humours in the blood, drops in those humours, vapours in the drops. Subdividing yet again, let him exhaust his powers of thought, and let the ultimate point he can reach be now the subject of our discourse (i.e the atom). Perhaps he will think that here is nature’s extreme diminutive. But in it I mean to show him a new abyss. I will paint for him not only the visible universe but all the imaginable vastness of nature in the womb of this diminutive atom [...]. For who can fail to marvel that our body, which before, was imperceptible in a universe itself imperceptible in the vastness of the whole, should now be a colossus, a world [...].

(Pascal 1961: 51-52)

Here is Xolisa's critical analysis of the excerpt:

Initially, it seems the main point made on the extract is how man can use their imagination to measure the universe, yet that imagination produces only atoms in comparison with the universe. However, it soon becomes apparent that the extract is also telling us that, even nature's extreme diminutive such as an atom has its own visible universe.

Firstly, Pascal tells us how immeasurable the universe is: no matter how much we should use our imagination to measure it we could not be able to. Our imaginative thoughts would be the size of an atom in comparison with the universe. And even man is extremely diminutive if compared to the universe. Furthermore, Pascal tells us "It is an infinite space, the centre of which is everywhere, the circumference nowhere. This again shows how boundless the universe is.

However, as the extract progresses Pascal tells us that even the smallest of things in nature has its own universe, which would also exhaust one's imaginative thoughts. Moreover, Pascal says "I will paint for him not only the visible universe but all the imaginable vastness of nature in the womb of this diminutive atom. This again shows us that even the extreme diminutive things have its own universe which would also exhaust one's imagination.

Therefore, in conclusion, Pascal is telling us that the universe is immeasurable and we are diminutive when compared with the universe. It is also pointed out that an extreme diminutive thing (e.g. atom) has its own universe besides the visible universe.

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In the above essay, Xolisa has provided a well-structured and lucid analysis of the excerpt. Specifically, the essay's tone is neutral and its central claims have been substantiated through appropriate quotations and paraphrased sections of the excerpt. In addition, the essay has been conceptually parsed into paragraphs that reflect the argumentative phases that the excerpt passes through. It should also be noted that Xolisa's writing style is concise and clear, an impressive feat given the complexity of the ideas that he has analysed. Apart from a few minor lapses in his paraphrasing skills – in which phrases from the text are directly imported into the essay (e.g. "extreme diminutive") – Xolisa's conclusion is perhaps the weakest part of his essay. Unfortunately, Xolisa did not manage to comment on the precise nature of the relationship between the two central claims in the excerpt. He did not, for instance, comment on whether the second claim (e.g. human beings contains whole 'worlds')

within their bodies) is meant to contradict the excerpts' first central claim⁴ (e.g. in relation to the infinite cosmos, human beings are minuscule), or explore the possibility that these two claims – despite appearances – are in actual fact compatible with one another (e.g. human beings are, paradoxically, both minuscule *and* vast in their dimensions). Nevertheless, given Xolisa's academic background and his attitude at the beginning of the course – not to mention the difficulty of the text itself – there can be little doubt that his essay can justifiably be seen as a serious accomplishment.

Importantly, in comparison to the other learners, Xolisa's developmental trajectory was not atypical. Although not to the same dramatic extent as Xolisa, many of the other learners *also* became increasingly interested in the course as it unfolded. And like Xolisa, too, by the end of the course, many of the other learners were producing competent written responses to fairly complex literary texts.

Frustratingly, though, for a number of reasons, it is difficult to know whether there was indeed a direct causal relationship between the course and the considerable improvements in the GADRA students' writing and academic abilities. In this respect, the GADRA Matric School has a dedicated staff of experienced teachers who conscientiously strive to create a pedagogical atmosphere that is conducive to learning.⁵ It could be argued that the results of the course cannot be disambiguated from this highly supportive structure, and that as a consequence the contribution of the course to the learners' improved writing-skills and marks remains unverifiable. In addition to this, the GADRA learners were re-writing their matric exam. An additional year of matric

⁴ It should be noted that there is also a slight inconsistency in Xolisa's essay. In his conclusion he states that Pascal's first point is that we are 'diminutive when compared to the universe'. However, in the introduction and the body of his essay, Xolisa claims that Pascal's first point is that we cannot comprehend the infinite nature of the universe.

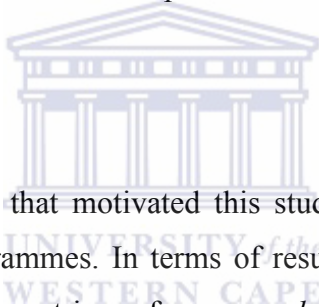
⁵ For example, according to the GADRA Matric School website:

"GADRA Matric School is very proud of its track record of excellent results. GMS 2010 and 2011 results place it in the top 5% of all state schools in the Eastern Cape. For a number of years it has had subject pass rates and overall NSC pass rates of over 90%. Many students leave GMS with Bachelor-level passes. For example, at the end of 2011, 47 of the 131 students left GMS able to apply for Bachelor studies at University in 2012 (on entry into GMS this figure stood at only 13 of the 131 students.)"

experience could again make it difficult to disentangle whether the improvements in the students' writing skills owed to the course itself or to external factors. Finally, the students chosen by GADRA's headmistress to participate in the course were all judged to be good students (in a relative sense) who possessed academic potential. Arguably, such students would have shown improvements in their academic output *irrespective* of the particular intervention programme they participated in. Seen in this light, it could plausibly be the case that *any* programme that had given the students extra time to practise their writing would have achieved comparable results.

Seen in this light, one of this study's main objectives was to resolve these outstanding questions and provide more reliable data on whether the GADRA writing-skills course was indeed as efficacious as it appeared to be. The particular methodology that was used to do this shall be discussed in more depth later.

1.3 Rationale



Another set of large concerns that motivated this study relates to the importance of matric level intervention programmes. In terms of results, matric is self-evidently the most important school year, as matric performance *alone* determines whether learners can access higher education. Access to higher education, in turn, determines the likelihood of upward social mobility and hence the trajectory of learners' entire future. And yet, despite this, in a South African context, compared to research on Early Childhood Education [ECE], there is a comparative dearth of research on late modes of school-based intervention. For example, a general search for articles with the keywords 'Early Childhood Education Intervention (conducted via four large education databases) produced many studies that analysed ECE intervention projects (for a sampling of these see Diamond, Justice, Siegler & Snyder 2013; Groark 2011; Ellenbogen, Klein & Wekerle 2014; Diken, Bayhan, Turan, Sipal, Sucuoglu, Ceber-Bakkaloglu, Gunel & Kara 2012; Muscott, Pomerleau, & Szczesiul 2009; Cordus & Oudenhoven 1997; Littlewood, Strozier & Whittington 2014; Perez-Johnson & Maynard 2007). When this

search was refined to include *South African* ECE Intervention, a considerable number of studies once again appeared (for a sampling of some of these, see Atmore 1996; Feza 2014; Liddell & McConville 1994; Ebrahim, Killian & Rule 2011; Eloff, Maree & Ebersöhn 2006; Woodward 2007). Interestingly, while a general search for ‘High School Intervention’ (via the same databases listed above) identified a large number of academic studies (for a sampling of these, see Swain-Bradway, Pinkney & Flannery 2015; Nelson, McMahan & Torres 2012; Cook & Bennett 2014; Bemboom & McMaster 2013; Williams 2010; Castleman & Page 2013; Shieh & Chang 2013; Bangser 2008; Rodriguez, Rhodes & Aguirre 2015; Novosel 2012), when this search was modified to include ‘South African High School Intervention Projects’, very few results appeared. Interestingly, too, the few studies that did appear mainly focused on intervention projects that dealt with gender, sexual health, drugs and alcohol (see Dlamini, Taylor, Mkhize, Huver, Sathiparsad, de Vries, Naidoo & Jinabhai 2009; James, Reddy, Ruiter, McCauley & van den Borne 2006; Mukoma et al., Flisher, Ahmed, Jansen, Mathews, Klepp & Schaalma 2009).

Importantly, while abundant research indicates that ECE generates a rich array of cognitive benefits, and that it is critically important in helping children achieve ‘school readiness’ (for a useful overview of this evidence, see Currie 2001), this evidence alone does not justify a disproportionate focus on ECE in a South African context. The main reason for this is that ECE cannot be construed as some kind of substitute – or alternative – for later modes of intervention that focus on advanced (rather than primary) aspects of the school curriculum. This viewpoint can be substantiated through the following two thought experiments.

Imagine a child who receives ECE due to an NGO that runs an intervention programme in their economically disadvantaged community. However, in the child’s early and middle schooling years, the positive impact of this intervention starts falling away because certain factors make it difficult for the child to participate or concentrate (e.g. some of the teachers are negligent in their teaching duties, the classroom environment is

often noisy and unruly, there are a lack of textbooks and teaching materials, etc). Unless ECE is a buffer against severe and obviously disruptive factors in an educational context, it seems incontrovertible that such a child would *also* benefit from late intervention programmes. Moreover, since South African schools located in economically disadvantaged areas are frequently subject to these disruptive conditions, we can safely assume that such negative factors *do indeed* affect learners.

Now consider a different example. Let us imagine an instance in which the advantages a child accrues through ECE are not eroded by their school environment. Even in this context, it is still highly plausible that such a learner could significantly benefit from late intervention programmes. For example, it could be the case that there are specialised skills – not currently prioritised by the standard curriculum – which could improve such a learner’s ability to cope with matric to an even greater extent. Seen in this light, if educationalists aim to *optimise* learners’ ability to deal with particular educational tasks (like matric), it is clearly the case that there is always a need for the development and implementation of more specialised modules that are designed to maximize learners’ performance in specific contexts.

For the reasons supplied above – in addition to the fact that matric is a critical determinant in learners’ future – there are ample reasons why researchers need to understand more about what late intervention programmes can accomplish.

Furthermore, intervention programmes that are specifically orientated towards *matric* are also of critical importance because they provide an ideal platform to test whether more can be done to ensure that school prepares students for tertiary education. While content knowledge and general cognitive skills inculcated throughout school obviously prepare students for university, it is also plausibly the case that high-school education could do a *lot* more to provide learners with skills that directly and explicitly prepare them for university. Out of all the high-school years, matric is by far the most attractive candidate for such intervention due to its proximity to university. For example, if high-

schools were to offer such a ‘university preparation course’ in Grade 9 or Grade 10, we can easily imagine how the intervening years between these grades and university would result in the students either forgetting about this knowledge or deeming it to be too irrelevant to their present studies. In comparison, if such a programme were offered in matric, it is plausible to suppose that the learners would be more sensitized to its relevance, and that they would be better able to recall and transfer the skills imparted by it once they enter university (a few months later).

This last claim may raise some eyebrows. After all, how can it be appropriate to focus on university-orientated skills when learners ought to be focusing all their attention on the looming matric exam? This concern can be rebuffed if we dismiss the notion that there is any necessary incompatibility between matric preparation and university preparation. For example, in the GADRA project, learners gained writing skills that would better prepare them for matric English and History by learning how to write essays that would meet with basic first-year university standards. Indeed, it shall be this study’s guiding claim that learners can prepare for matric in an *optimal* manner if they acquire skills that will simultaneously prepare them for some of the specific requirements of university.

I would now like to mention a final reason for why late high-school intervention programmes are of such critical importance. Put simply, educationalists need to know more about when (precisely) it becomes too late to significantly improve a learner’s academic output. For instance, many researchers may have the strong intuition that South African matric learners who have received a poor standard of education are too lacking in skills and too advanced in their schooling career to undergo a pedagogical metamorphosis that will transform their academic output. However, what if this intuition is mistaken? What if it is the case that – even at matric – it is *not* too late to radically improve students’ performance in certain subjects? However improbable such an outcome may seem, the consequences that spring from it are so striking that they surely demand a thorough investigation. To see this, consider schooling in a South

African context. In the coming years, hundreds of thousands of economically disadvantaged students will be at an advanced point in their schooling *without* the necessary training or skills to excel – never mind even pass – matric. This prediction can be made with confidence, since there is considerable evidence that the South African public schooling system is performing dismally. To begin to see this, consider the following excerpt from Gilmour & Soudien (2009: 282-283), which gives a broad and well substantiated overview of how the South African education system has fared (in both primary and high school) from 1994-2002:

From 1994 to 1999 the results showed a marked decline from a 58% to a 49% pass rate, with only 12% of the candidates qualifying for university entrance in 1999. There has been a largely unexplained increase since then to a pass rate of 73% in 2003 and a 19% university entrance pass [...]. This increase is unexplained in the sense that there is little systemic evidence to show why this has been the case.

There are, however, signs that the improvements could be a consequence of a range of factors. Firstly, weaker candidates could drop out before the exams. For example, Fiske and Ladd [...] estimate that the net enrolment rate between primary and secondary schooling drops from 'over 90% at the primary level to about 62% at the secondary level' while the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) (2002, 38) indicates that in the Western Cape province 'only 48% of children ... who begin Grade 1 reach Grade 12'. The overall effect is that by 2003 there was a decline in candidates presenting themselves for the Grade 12 examination from 495,408 in 1994 to 440,267 in 2003, a decline of 55,141 or 11% [...].

Secondly, there is evidence that under pressure to improve pass rates, schools are entering candidates at the Standard Grade (SG) for subjects rather than at the Higher Grade (HG), the level required for University entrance certificates. [...] Thirdly, a detailed review of examination papers and marking standards by the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, UMALUSI, notes that in addition to the above points, there is a 'declining level of conceptual demand in examination question papers [...]. Given this scenario, it is unsurprising that scrutiny has turned to the primary school system to try to understand why the end products appear to be poorer today than they were 10 years ago. [...] The 2001 national Grade 3 systemic assessment (the final report appeared in 2003) showed that the average score for numeracy was 30% and for literacy 54% [...]. TIMMS-R placed Grade 8 South African learners 44% below the mean scores of all participating countries, while the MLA study of Grade 4 students showed South Africa with an average numeracy score of 30%, which was last amongst the 12 participating African countries [...].

This deeply worrying trend has continued up until the present. In a recent report that aims to give an empirical overview of the quality of education in South Africa, Spaul (2013:3) reaches the conclusion that "[...] South Africa has the worst education system of all middle-income countries that participate in cross-national assessments of

educational achievement.” This claim, again, is borne out by strong statistical evidence. As with the period examined by Gilmour & Soudien, school drop-out rates have remained extremely high, such that “of 100 pupils that start school, only 50 will make it to Grade 12, 40 will pass, and only 12 will qualify for university” (Spaull 2013: 3) . Numeracy and literacy achievements among South African students have also remained alarmingly low. A 2007 report from the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality [SACMEQ] found that (roughly) a quarter of South African Grade 6 pupils were illiterate and could not “read a short and simple text and extract meaning” (Spaull 2013: 4). The ‘Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study’ [TIMSS] – an international test for mathematical educational achievement – found that “in 2011 a third of [South African] pupils (32 per cent) performed worse than guessing on the multiple choice items (i.e. no better than random). Furthermore, three quarters (76 per cent) of Grade Nine pupils in 2011 still had not acquired a basic understanding about whole numbers, decimals, operations or basic graphs [...]” (Spaull 2013:4).

Given the extent of what has justly been referred to as an educational “crisis” (Spaull, 2013), the claim that was made earlier – that in the coming years, a great many economically disadvantaged students will be at an advanced point in their schooling *without* the necessary training or skills to excel at matric – does indeed seem justified. Barring a miracle, the South African education system gives no sign that it is about to change anytime soon.

However, this disastrous situation may be ameliorated if we consider the possibility that such students are *not* too far gone, and that late intervention programmes could feasibly be put in place to improve their academic performance. Assessing the efficacy of late intervention programmes is therefore intimately bound up with the question of whether we can be optimistic about the millions of current and future learners who will reach matric before the South African public schooling sector undergoes major reforms. Indeed, if this study’s central prediction is confirmed – that there is reason to believe

that a year-long intervention programme can significantly improve economically disadvantaged learners' performance in key matric subjects – the implications could be even more dramatic. This is because if only a year's intervention at matric is required to improve learners' National Senior Certificate [NSC] results, late high-school intervention projects needn't be sprawling, complex and resource heavy initiatives. And if this is indeed the case, it clearly becomes much easier to see how such programmes could be rolled out on a mass basis.

At this point, it is important to mention that such optimism is not unfounded. One case study in particular - that of New Dorp High School – clearly supports the idea that an academic writing skills course *can* indeed be efficacious in helping underachieving, economically disadvantaged high-school students. In her illuminating analysis of the intervention project that transformed New Dorp, Tyre (2012: 96) initially describes New Dorp as “a notorious public school on Staten Island [...] a 70's style brick behemoth near a grimy beach.” Indeed, pre-intervention, the school's academic record provided a strong testament that neither its reputation nor grim Dickensian appearance were undeserved or unreflective of what was happening inside its walls:

In 2006, 82 percent of freshmen entered the school reading below grade level. Students routinely scored poorly on the English and history Regents exams, a New York State graduation requirement: the essay questions were just too difficult. Many would simply write a sentence or two and shut the test booklet. In the spring of 2007, when administrators calculated graduation rates, they found that four out of 10 students who had started New Dorp as freshmen had dropped out, making it one of the 2,000 or so lowest-performing high schools in the nation.

(Tyre 2012: 97)

After a lengthy investigation, in 2008 New Dorp's principal and teaching faculty reached the conclusion that a lack of writing skills was to blame for the students' poor performance, such that “students' inability to translate thoughts into coherent, well-argued sentences, paragraphs, and essays was severely impeding intellectual growth in many subjects” (Tyre 2012: 97). Consequently, the following year, the school began implementing a programme that placed an intensive focus on analytic writing skills. Tyre (2012: 98) describes the results of this intervention:

the students who had begun receiving the writing instruction as freshmen were already scoring higher on exams than any previous New Dorp class. Pass rates for the English Regents, for example, bounced from 67 percent in June 2009 to 89 percent in 2011; for the global-history exam, pass rates rose from 64 to 75 percent. The school reduced its Regents-repeater classes—cram courses designed to help struggling students collect a graduation requirement—from five classes of 35 students to two classes of 20 students.

The number of kids enrolling in a program that allows them to take college-level classes shot up from 148 students in 2006 to 412 students last year. Most important, although the makeup of the school has remained about the same—roughly 40 percent of students are poor, a third are Hispanic, and 12 percent are black—a greater proportion of students who enter as freshmen leave wearing a cap and gown. This spring, the graduation rate is expected to hit 80 percent, a staggering improvement over the 63 percent figure that prevailed before the Writing Revolution began.

The case of New Dorp clearly demonstrates that (high-school) intervention programmes focusing on academic writing skills have a tremendous amount of potential. Through illustrating this, New Dorp's transformation provides a strong vindication for the approach that was taken by this study.

1.4 Significance of the study

Apart from increasing our understanding of what high-school intervention programmes can accomplish, this study was further motivated by a need to better understand how the Humanities can contribute to basic education in a South African context. In the GADRA project, for instance, the learners' acquisition of analytic writing techniques was heavily mediated through their engagement with literary and philosophical texts. If – as this study hopes to prove – it is indeed the case that a humanities-inspired approach to academic writing can increase the likelihood that matric students will acquire analytic writing skills, such findings may not only precipitate a revision of the pedagogical utility of the *content* taught in the Humanities, but indeed also a revision of the ways in which Humanities *students* can contribute to basic education. This is because if the writings skills course analysed in this study were to be implemented on a broader scale, humanities graduates⁶ – due to their specialised understanding of literary and

⁶ Of course, many humanities graduates do currently end up becoming teachers. However, since these graduates become trained teachers who must adhere to the curriculum set by the Department of Basic Education, they do not enter the educational system with the means or flexibility to generate a direct

philosophical texts, as well as their intensive training in essay writing – would be ideal candidates to teach it. Since there are few specialised programmes that allow students in the humanities to directly apply their analytic training in literature and philosophy to pressing societal problems, the proposed project could thus be amongst the first to question whether such graduates could have a significant impact on problems which are usually deemed to be far removed from their area of specialisation.

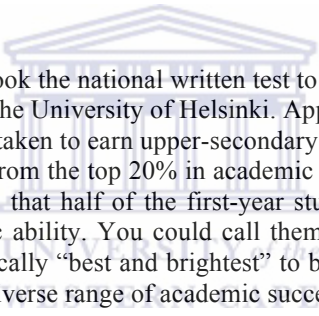
The involvement of humanities graduates in South African basic education can be further vindicated through appealing to a number of bodies of literature. To begin with, there is a rapidly growing consensus that quality teaching is the single greatest determinant of students' academic success. A study by Wenglinsky (2002), for example, reports that “the effects of classroom practices, when added to those of other teacher characteristics, are comparable in size to those of student background, suggesting that teachers can contribute as much to student learning as the students themselves.” Sanders et al. (1997) report similar findings from a different study, claiming “teacher effects are dominant factors affecting student academic gain [...] classroom context variables of heterogeneity among students and class sizes have relatively little influence on academic gain.” Studies by Rockoff (2004) and Rivkin, Steven, Hanushek & Kain (2005) that focus especially on mathematics and reading reach similar conclusions about the powerful and significant effect that teachers have on learners' academic achievements.

These findings about teacher effectiveness connect to humanities students for the following reasons. *If* this study were to be implemented on a broader scale, it could feasibly attract top performing humanities students. This is because a programme that offered humanities graduates the opportunity to maintain a direct intimacy with their discipline-specific subject matter would be unique. Indeed, outside of academia, there are few (if any) opportunities for humanities graduates to maintain a direct continuum

continuum between the specialist skills they have attained in their academic disciplines and their classroom teaching. In contrast, the ‘humanities graduates’ spoken about in the above sense, are individuals who are given the chance to directly import their specialist academic skills and interests into their classroom teaching approaches.

between their studies and the jobs they end up doing. Since, in addition, there is a notorious dearth of tenured academic posts for humanities graduates, future implementations of this study could also appear attractive to such graduates for purely practical reasons. For self-evident reasons, having such top performing graduates involved in basic education would ensure high levels of teacher quality and hence quality teaching.

However, it is important to emphasise that academic achievement and ‘braininess’ are not the most important ingredients for quality teaching. Although many are of the view that Finland has the best education system in the world⁷ because (among other things⁸) it only allows academically excellent students to become teachers, this view is actually mistaken. Sahlberg (2015: no page number) provides a clear and compelling account of why this is the case:



Last spring, 1,650 students took the national written test to compete for [...] 120 [primary school teacher education] places at the University of Helsinki. Applicants received between one and 100 points for the subject exams taken to earn upper-secondary school leaving diplomas. A quarter of the accepted students came from the top 20% in academic ability and another quarter came from the bottom half. This means that half of the first-year students came from the 51- to 80-point range of measured academic ability. You could call them academically average. The idea that Finland recruits the academically “best and brightest” to become teachers is a myth. In fact, the student cohort represents a diverse range of academic success, and deliberately so.

If Finnish teacher educators thought that teacher quality correlates with academic ability, they would have admitted my niece and many of her peers with superior school performance. Indeed, the University of Helsinki could easily pick the best and the brightest of the huge pool of applicants each year, and have all of their new trainee teachers with admirable grades.

But they don’t do this because they know that teaching potential is hidden more evenly across the range of different people. Young athletes, musicians and youth leaders, for example, often have the emerging characteristics of great teachers without having the best academic record. What Finland shows is that rather than get “best and the brightest” into teaching, it is better to design initial teacher education in a way that will get the best from young people who have natural passion to teach for life.

⁷ See Sahlberg (2007)

⁸ Again, see Sahlberg (2007) for an informative summary of the critical factors that have determined the Finnish education success story

Although the high achievements of the Finnish education system naturally validate such an approach to teacher selection, other perspectives on pedagogy provide support for it as well. For instance, an array of studies (Louden, Rohl, Barrat-Pugh, Brown, Cairney, Elderfield, J 2005; Hattie 2005; Brady 2005) have discovered that the degree to which a teacher is able to develop meaningful personal relationships with their students (often via expressions of trust, care and respect) correlates with students' academic performance. Such findings support the Finnish approach to teacher selection insofar as it appears intuitive that teachers with a vocational passion for teaching will have the requisite sensitivity and interest in their students to develop nuanced intrapersonal relations with them.

Although it may be far from immediately apparent, this 'twist' in the story of quality teaching again justifies the appropriacy of selecting humanities students for future implementations of this study. Since humanities students usually have liberal political views, they have an ideal orientation towards understanding the moral, historical, political and cultural significance of programmes that aid marginalised learners. Indeed, it is to be expected that these liberal views will be especially pronounced in a South African context, due to the fact that centuries of colonialism and over four decades of apartheid have created especially tragic, conspicuous and enduring disadvantages and challenges for the majority of South Africa's citizens. Thus, it is plausible to suppose that such an orientation would ensure that humanities graduates would experience a strong vocational pull towards teaching roles that enabled them to engage with such students in a meaningful manner.

Finally, through answering the research questions stated at the outset of this chapter this study hopes to explore novel ways in which EAP courses can facilitate learning processes in which writing skills, matric study skills and tertiary preparation can mutually reinforce one another and be coherently unified into a single module. To again summarise, these research questions are:

1. Can the study's EAP course improve the academic writing of bilingual, economically disadvantaged high-school South African learners?
2. What kinds of factors threaten the implementation of EAP programmes in South African township schools?
3. Can the study's EAP course heighten Grade 11 learners' levels of preparedness for matric and first-year university?

Through accomplishing this, this study can potentially make novel contributions to a number of scholarly domains. To take one example, it can reconceptualise the standard focus and function of EAP courses and acclimatise them to a specifically South African context, thus accentuating an important lacuna in the EAP literature. However, perhaps most significantly, the thesis will lay the groundwork for modes of intervention that have the potential to bring about tangible and significant improvements for those worst affected by the structural inequalities built into the South African education system. Although this latter goal may appear incommensurate with research, there is a lively and ongoing debate in South African academe about whether community engagement and knowledge production are indeed at cross purposes. Indeed, ever since the White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education and its injunction for higher education institutions to take community engagement seriously, academics have explored the issue of whether reputable research can be made commensurate with intervention or engagement orientated projects (Bender 2008; Hall 2010; Muller 2010; Favish 2010). Since it is my belief that practical dimensions of this study will generate theoretically captivating insights, I shall side with theorists like Ernest Boyer (1996) who have argued for 'a scholarship of application' in which

knowledge is not produced in a linear fashion. The arrow of causality can, and frequently does, point in both directions; that is, theory leads to practice and practice leads to theory. Community engagement, viewed and practised as a scholarly activity, provides the context for a dialogue between theory and practice through reflection.

(Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna & Slamet 1996: 63)

Interestingly, Boyer's observations map rather neatly onto what experienced educationalists have also found. For example, (the educationalist) Jim Cummins (2000: 1) notes that "the relationship between theory and practice as two-way and ongoing: practice generates theory, which, in turn, acts as a catalyst for new directions in practice, which then inform theory, and so on." Thus considered, both within education and academia at large, public intellectuals have found that practically- orientated projects can generate research-worthy knowledge. Seen in this light, the findings of this study may entitle it to contribute to a 'meta-academic' debate about the nature of scholarship.

1.5 Research Methodology

The interventionist component of this study was implemented over a seven-week period with randomly selected learners from two non-fee paying schools located in townships on the outskirts of Cape Town. The study worked with these learners for the duration of the third term of Grade 11. A single researcher ran the intervention programme at both schools, meeting the learners on a weekly basis. These meetings with the learners were extracurricular and took place in assigned classrooms on the school premises. The written work produced in these lessons was used to provide answers to the study's primary research questions (i.e. Can the intervention significantly improve the academic writing skills of the learners). All these aspects of the research design – in addition to many more – are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.6 Chapter summary

The structure and content of this thesis can be summed up in the following manner.

In Chapter 2, issues that are particular to the nature and design of the EAP course will be connected to relevant bodies of literature. This will involve an analysis of how the study has positioned itself in regards to a number of important debates. Firstly, the question of whether EAP courses should transmit interdisciplinary or subject specific

writing techniques will be examined and related to the generalist approach adopted by the course. To provide a decisive answer to this question, it will be argued (by making reference to the rubrics used to assess matric essays, and the marking criteria used to assess first-year university essays) that there are indeed ‘domain-general’ writing techniques which are required in a wide array of matric and tertiary subjects. After this, the theory of cognitive modularity and its relevance to the EAP course’s approach to academic writing will be examined. This discussion will be followed by a focus on the texts used in the course. Specifically, an emphasis will be placed on why the course is so heavily reliant on literary and philosophical texts, and why such texts can play an arguably indispensable role in EAP courses (especially in economically disadvantaged learning contexts). Finally, issues relating to linguistic imperialism, South African English policy and learning incentives will be analysed.

Chapter 3 will discuss the research methodology used in this study. Thus, a plethora of issues – relating to the basic design of the study (e.g. participant selection, site selection, duration, etc.), instrumentation and measures, as well as the qualitative and quantitative methodologies employed by the researcher – will receive in-depth treatment. The chapter will conclude by considering a number of ethical considerations that determined the researcher’s conduct while he was conducting the field-work components of this study

Chapter 4 aims to answer the question of whether the skills learned in the EAP course can *also* (in theory) boost the participants’ readiness for writing requirements in certain matric subjects. To establish this, a detailed analysis of relevant matric exam papers will be conducted. Adopting an approach that relies heavily on ‘frequency analyses’ of previous matric papers (i.e. analyses of the frequency with which certain kinds of matric questions appear), it will be argued that certain questions which reliably emerge in matric exams (from one year to the next) do indeed require writing skills that the EAP course helped to inculcate into the participants.

Chapter 5 will present the primary empirical results of this study. Through doing this, it will provide answers to two of the research questions listed at the beginning of this chapter. Thus, the question of whether the participants became proficient in essay-writing skills will be answered by presenting their grade for the EAP course, as well as a detailed comparison between their pre-intervention and post-intervention writing samples. Secondly, ethnographic techniques – like observations and interviews – will be used to identify the primary phenomenon that threatened the EAP course. This ethnographic data will be related to a number of external studies and findings to bolster its reliability and provide evidence that it may pick out a generalisable phenomenon.

Through discussing the larger relevance of the study, Chapter Six will touch upon many of the issues that were mentioned earlier in this chapter. In addition, it will explore ways in which the study's results can feed into both policy and practice. In this respect, the question of whether the study can be enlarged into a sustainable, ongoing initiative will receive a thoroughgoing analysis. Among other things, this analysis will explore a number of techniques that could – in the future – be used to neutralise the elements that destabilised this particular implementation of the EAP course. Finally, anomalies, deviations and surprise findings will be identified and – if possible – explained.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 a number of broad motivations for conducting this study were examined. In this next chapter, the rationale, theoretical framing and design of the EAP course (implemented by this study) will receive a thoroughgoing analysis. To accomplish this, the EAP course will be connected to bodies of research that provide insights into English in a multilingual context, the identity and function of EAP as an academic discipline, cognitive science and English Literature. All these broad macro-theoretical issues will provide key insights into *why* the course adopted the particular approach to academic writing that it did. The topics that will be dealt with in this chapter are the following:

- English in a global multilingual context
- English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) Vs. English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP)
- Cognitive Modularity and Academic Writing Skills
- EGAP and Modularity
- EAP and Literature
- EAP and Linguistic Imperialism

2.2 English in a global multilingual context

In today's world, English has attained a level of linguistic dominance that is unparalleled. Although, quantitatively, there are far more native Chinese and Spanish speakers than English speakers⁹, English's ascendancy in international business, politics

⁹ According to recent survey data, 1,197,0000 people speak Chinese and 414 000 000 people speak Spanish. In comparison, only 335 000 0 0 people speak English (Parkvall 2007).

and academia has conferred unrivalled prestige upon the language. In addition, English is also the most widely spoken language in the world, and so has the power to facilitate communication between individuals from countries that are as geographically and culturally remote as Zimbabwe and Cambodia (to select one example at random).

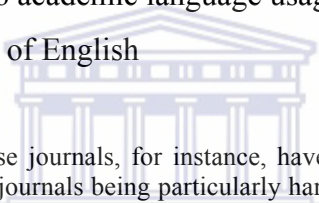
In most continents, the rise of English has been tied to globalisation and the need for countries to adapt to fast-paced technological change (Coleman 2006). Nevertheless, construed in a more fine-grained sense, the function and identity of English is influenced by a diverse range of historic, linguistic and socioeconomic factors that vary from one geographic context to the next (Nunan 2003). Kachru's (2006) 'concentric circle' model of global English usage is particularly helpful in teasing out these context-dependent variations. In Kachru's model the global identity of English is schematised using the metaphors of an 'inner circle', an 'outer circle' and an 'expanding circle'. Countries which mostly consist of native English speakers (e.g. the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) make up the inner circle. In contrast, the 'outer circle' is comprised of non-native English speaking countries, in which English is important for colonial or historical reasons (e.g. India, Nigeria, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Tanzania, Kenya, etc.). For such countries, English is often used as an official language or in governance, and it is often perceived as a tool to create economic and cultural ties with the rest of the English-speaking world (Huggins & Randell 2007). Finally, the 'expanding circle' picks out countries in which the spread of English is not due to history or governance (China, Russia, Japan, most of Europe, Korea, Egypt, Indonesia, etc.). In general, expanding circle countries use English as a lingua franca and teach it widely as a foreign language at school due to the belief that it is the most useful way to foster international communication.

While Kachru's model provides some helpful insights into the global composition of English speakers, and the functional variability of English, there are a number of other

theoretical frameworks that can be used to analyse the contemporary spread of the English language. These other frameworks draw greater attention to the ethical dimensions of the global English phenomenon, as well as the causal mechanisms driving it. In the next section, these theories shall be analysed and commented upon.

2.2.1 Linguistic imperialism

While some commentators view English as a neutral lingua franca (Hyland 2006) other critics cast its dominance in a more predatory light, and argue that the spread of English has been inseparable from the destruction of many indigenous languages. Swales (1997: 374), for example, has argued that English can be compared to “a powerful carnivore gobbling up the other denizens of the academic linguistic grazing grounds.” To choose an example of this that relates to academic language usage, Hyland (2006: 25-26) notes that since the global dominance of English



Many European and Japanese journals, for instance, have switched to English, with Swedish, Dutch and German-medium journals being particularly hard hit. English has superseded Russian as the academic language of the old Eastern bloc since the Cold War, Swedish has virtually disappeared in academic publications (Swales, 1997) and there is evidence that many doctoral students internationally are completing their Ph.D. theses in English where they have a choice [...]. With libraries increasingly encouraged to subscribe to online versions of journals, the impact of English-language journals becomes self-perpetuating as it is in these periodicals that authors will be most visible on the world stage and receive the most credit for recognition and promotion.

While this process is more pronounced in some fields than others, academics all over the world are increasingly less likely to publish in their own language. They are also likely to find their English-language publications are cited more often. References to English-language publications, for example, have reached 85 per cent in French science journals [...] and, more generally, English makes up over 95 per cent of all publications in the *Science Citation Index*.

As many have pointed out, the process that has resulted in this dominance – in both academic and broader cultural contexts – has by no means been innocent. British and American colonialism (Hyland 2006) and multi-billion dollar industries with profit-driven interests in the spread of English (Philipson 1992; Gray 2002) have all contributed to the global ubiquity of English. This historically contextualised view of

the global spread of English causes Benesch (2001: 34) to be critical of EAP's "discourse of neutrality" in which the dominance of English is perceived as a "consensual and inevitable chronology of pedagogical events [...]."

Whilst noting the importance of linguistic imperialism, Pennycook (2000, 2001) provides a number of other ways to analyse and ethically evaluate the global spread of English. The *colonial celebratory* framework celebrates the rapid global propagation of English and sees English as an essentially useful tool for all people. One example of a national language policy influenced by this framework is provided by Singapore. In her (2001) article, Rubdy describes how the Singaporean Government initiated the 'Speak Good English' movement to combat (what was perceived by the government) to be a poor standard of spoken English amongst the Singaporean population. According to Lee and Norton (2009) the government's decision to implement this policy was fuelled by their belief that Singlish (i.e. Singaporean English) was damaging the possibility of inter-ethnic communication, as well as "degrading national identity, economic prosperity and international competitiveness" (279). Seen in this light, this policy reflected a colonial celebratory framework due to the way in which it perceived English to be highly useful and invaluable in many different spheres. Thus, from the Singaporean government's perspective the adoption of English was "the only way to simultaneously consolidate [...] economic objectives [...] and meet the inter-ethnic communication needs of the community while ensuring that individuals had equal access to the invaluable knowledge capital English could provide" (Lee and Norton, 2009: 279).

Another framework identified by Pennycook is *hybridity*. This theory stresses the importance of local contexts of English in multilingual communities, and makes the charge that Phillipson's understanding of linguistic imperialism does not provide a nuanced enough understanding of the agentially rich manner in which communities simultaneously adopt and resist English. Canagarajah (2000) thus argues that to generate a more sophisticated perspective on global English usage forms of "micro-

social analysis” are needed to determine “the everyday strategies of linguistic negotiation of [...] local people”. As Lee & Norton (2009: 283) eloquently explain, through doing this

Canagarajah emphasizes that dichotomizing perspectives that frame debates for and against English, or for and against the vernacular, oversimplify local and global contexts. He makes the case that people can engage favorably with both English and the vernacular and that people in marginalized communities have the human agency to critically examine their options and devise ideological alternatives that promote their own empowerment.

Canagarajah’s (1999) research underscores the veracity of these claims through providing ethnographic data on how Sri Lankan students acknowledge the practical benefits of an English education, yet also refuse to passively assimilate aspects of this education which they find to be problematic. Thus though “e-mail correspondence, verbal asides, and drawings scribbled into their textbooks” (Lee & Norton 2009: 283) these students demonstrate a robust capacity to resist, subvert and critically filtrate unsatisfactory aspects of their English centric education. Canagarajah (1999) thus reaches the conclusion that

The question confronting the students is not whether English should be learned, but how. They will neither refuse to learn English nor acquire it unconditionally in the terms dictated by the centre. They will appropriate the language in their own terms, according to their needs, values, and aspirations.

(175-6)

Norton & Kamal’s (2002) field work in multilingual Pakistan provides further ethnographic data to support Canagarajah’s findings. Examining Karachi middle-school children receiving an English medium education, Norton and Kamal found that when asked the question “In what language do you prefer expressing your thoughts and opinions?” the clear majority of the children answered that they used both Urdu (their native language) and English. The children in the study justified their use of codeswitching by explaining that “the use of both Urdu and English enabled them to meet institutional expectations, improve communication between themselves and other bilingual students, and negotiate social relationships and personal identity” (Norton & Lee 285). Such codeswitching harmonises with Canagarajah’s theorising ‘as

codeswitching practices of students and teachers in classrooms [...] can give us insights into ways in which students and teachers negotiate dominant ideologies, while at the same time affirming their own desired identities and values' (2001: 195).

2.2.2 Implications

This study seeks to situate itself in these broad debates about global English through maintaining that it is rationally permissible for a person to be *highly* critical of the causal factors that have resulted in the supremacy of English, and yet *also* hold the view that projects which seek to valorise academic English should be supported and promulgated. Although such a stance appears contradictory, it becomes inexorable if the *contemporary function* of English is separated from its *historical identity*. In this respect, even though it is clear that morally unjust processes (e.g. colonialism) have (historically) spread and entrenched English in much of the world, this does not diminish the fact that – for the same reasons given by the Singaporean government – English is an undeniable asset in today's globalised world.

To take just one hypothetical example that relates to South Africa, it is well-nigh impossible to imagine an African township youth achieving social upward mobility (through going to university and entering into some qualified profession) without possessing a fair degree of fluency in the English language. While it goes without saying that this is not a *fair* situation and that it has been determined by processes which any rational and ethically-minded person should wholeheartedly condemn, it is nevertheless a reality which cannot be circumnavigated or done away with. Indeed, it should be emphasised that in a South African context, the integration of English into university syllabuses and the market economy is so entrenched that a lack of English is not just an *impediment* to progress. Rather, it is an actual *disadvantage*, metaphorically akin to a disability that hampers a person's ability to perform a task at every stage.

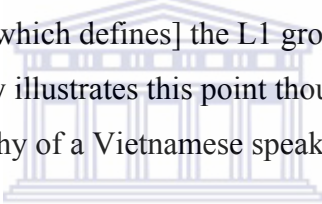
On a slightly more positive note, it is worth pointing out that – although it is not morally justifiable for English to be the world's lingua franca – the existence of a global lingua

franca (in itself) is arguably a good thing. In this respect, Graddol (2001) observes that English has generated a common scientific language that enables geographically dispersed researchers to enter into fruitful dialogues with one another. Glaze (2000) makes the even more fundamental point that a lingua franca (like English) facilitates a global exchange of ideas and thus contributes to the overall growth of knowledge.

A further consideration – based on my own experience as a native English speaker who studied at a European English medium university in Eastern Europe (Hungary) – is that a lingua franca can entrench (rather than steamroll) a respect for cultural diversity. In this respect, at the university I attended (Central European University) students from countries as diverse as Puerto Rico, Yugoslavia, Senegal, Peru and Tibet were all united through their ability to speak English. Access to a shared language facilitated *socially intimate*, cross-cultural understanding and hugely boosted my own (and I have no doubt other students’) understanding and respect for other cultures. Without the existence of a global lingua franca, this would not have been possible.

Ironically, then, even though – historically – the spread of English did incalculable harm to many indigenous languages and cultures, English can now play a massively important role in promoting values of multi-culturalism. In an analogous manner, those worst affected by linguistic imperialism, can arguably be helped to the greatest extent by English. For example, black students in former British colonies – like South Africa – can now use English as a tool to not only become integrated into the socio-economic fabric of South Africa, but indeed the entire world. This leads to the captivating idea that the promotion of English needn’t be equated with the unthinking perpetuation of a subjugating language. Rather, it can be seen as a redemptive process, in which a language which was once inexorably bound up in processes of colonial enslavement is metamorphosed into a tool that entrenches intercultural exchange and opens the doors of opportunity for those who were previously oppressed by Anglo colonialism.

This perspective is further validated through Canagarajah's fundamental point that English Second Language speakers often play an active and critical role in determining the way in which English mediates their subjectivity. Not only does this theoretical lens accentuate the idea that English is consciously incorporated and patterned into native languages and cultural identities (and that it does not therefore simply erase them), it also emphasises that there is no necessary reason why English is oppressive rather than emancipatory. Indeed, the idea that English does not necessarily erode indigenous and cultural identity is further emphasised through Houses' (2003) compelling thesis that English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) for second language English speakers "can be regarded as a language of communication, that is, a useful instrument for making oneself understood in international encounters" (559). House (2003) goes on to mention that "EFL speakers are unlikely to conceive of it as a 'language for identification': it is local languages, and particularly an individual's L1(s), which are likely to be the main determinants of identity [which defines] the L1 group and its members" (560). Kramsch (2002: 98-99) vividly illustrates this point though supplying the following quotation from the autobiography of a Vietnamese speaker:



As for English I do speak the language but I don't think I'll ever talk it. English flows from the mind to the tongue and then to the pages of books. [...] I only talk Vietnamese. I talk it with all my senses. Vietnamese does not stop on my tongue, but flows with the warm, soothing lotus tea down my throat like a river giving life to the landscape in her path.

In many ways, Houses' approach to second language English language acquisition and subjectivity echoes Canagarajah's. In this respect for both House and Canagarajah, ESL subjects negotiate their linguistic identity in a complex, often critical manner, and either consciously or reflexively position their ESL identity in relation to the entrenched, indigenous culture they possess.

As a final note, it is worth mentioning that House's thesis provides another reason why the EAP course implemented by this study did not significantly encroach upon the learners' cultural identity. Academic writing – unlike expressive writing – is a highly formal genre of writing that, ultimately, allows students to communicate their (mostly)

impersonal ideas about certain concepts and texts. Seen in this light, the EAP course clearly did not colonise or muddy the learners' core identities through requiring them to mediate their personal experiences through English (an arguable consequence of writing programmes which requires ESL learners to autobiographically explore their identity via English).

2.2.3 English medium education in a South African context

English language policy in South African education, has, in particular, been controversial. Many academics and educationalists (Desai 2012; Benson 2005; Alexander 1995; Luckett 1995; Heugh 1995; Pluddeman 1996) have opposed a system which has resulted in African children only having mother tongue education for their first three years of schooling (after which they have to switch to English).¹⁰ Broadly stated, among all these critics, this policy has been opposed due to the existence of overwhelming evidence that (when learners are second language English speakers) “The present situation in which English is the preferred medium of instruction is thought to impede learning [leading] to poor mastery of both English and the mother tongues” (Banda 2000: 51). In addition to being empirically robust, these conclusions harmonise with Cummins' seminal work on bilingualism, and so it can be safely assumed that there is an *extremely* strong case to be made that the English policy pursued in South African bilingual schools has had a crippling academic effect on learners.

This (ongoing) controversy in language policy creates additional reasons why English programmes that operate in bilingual South African schools need to be highly sensitised to the fact that they may be (potentially) implicated in a problematic practice. Fortunately, due to the fact that the EAP course implemented in this study focused on

¹⁰However, as Kamwangamalu (2002) points out, this policy is not just particular to South Africa. In many other African countries, as well, there is an early and abrupt switch from the mother tongue to a European language as a medium of instruction.

matric and university preparation, it can be confidently stated that it in no way contributed to the displacement of foundational mother tongue education. Indeed, since even traditionally African universities – like Fort Hare, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and The University of Zululand – opt for English as the medium of instruction,¹¹ it can be argued that a greater emphasis upon English immersion programmes in English Second Language high schools is needed. Combined with the fact that (in the present system) ESL learners write matric in English,¹² the importance of giving access to extracurricular EAP programmes should be clear.

2.3 What is EAP?

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) connects to research and teaching practices that aim to assist learners who are studying or conducting research in English (Hyland 2006; Flowerdew and Peacock 2001; Jordan 1997). EAP thus refers to “language research and instruction that focuses on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular groups in academic contexts (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons 2002: 2). Due to the tertiary-level academic environment in which it mostly operates, EAP courses are usually specialised to some degree and aim to provide “teaching grounded in the social, cognitive and linguistic demands of academic target situations, providing focused instruction informed by the understanding of texts and the constraints of academic contexts” (Hyland 2006: 2). Originally EAP courses were designed for native speakers of English who required further training in academic writing to function properly in an academic community (Fortanet-Gómez & Räisänen 2008). However, in later years, with the influx of

¹¹ Of course, the mere fact that these universities have adopted English as the language of instruction does not mean that this decision is necessarily justified or uncontroversial. For example, a recent survey conducted among isiXhosa speakers at the University of Fort Hare, found that “while English is recognised as the dominant language in South Africa and, more specifically, in the domain of education, some categories of respondents acknowledge the usefulness of isiXhosa as an additional medium of instruction” (Dalvit 2004; abstract).

¹² Again, it is far from clear that an English-orientated approach to matric is a good policy. For one thing, in a South African context, it gives native English speakers a considerable (and self-evident) advantage over ESL learners. Nevertheless, most would agree that English medium education at a (late) high school level is less damaging than foundational English medium education. Seen in this light, an English medium EAP course’s complicity in English medium matric education is less controversial than such a course would be in a foundational phase context.

international students in Anglophone universities, it became more standard for EAP courses to aid and equip second-language English speakers with academic writing skills (Hyland, 2006). Seen in this light, EAP is a broad field of enquiry and practice which, according to Hyland (2006: 1) is typically concerned with:

Pre-tertiary, undergraduate and postgraduate teaching (from the design of materials to lectures and classroom tasks) [...] Classroom interactions (from teacher feedback to tutorials and seminar discussions) [...] Research genres (from journal articles to conference papers and grant proposals) [...] Student writing (from essays to exam papers and graduate theses) [...] Administrative practice (from course documents to doctoral oral defences).

How, though, does EAP make contributions to these broad educational domains?

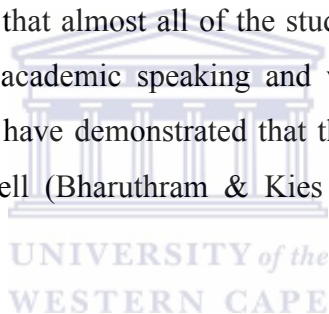
Hyland (2006: 2) is once again illuminating:

[...] current EAP aims at capturing ‘thicker’ descriptions of language use in the academy at all age and proficiency levels, incorporating and often going beyond immediate communicative contexts to understand the nature of disciplinary knowledge itself. It employs a range of interdisciplinary influences for its research methods, theories and practices to provide insights into the structures and meanings of spoken, written, visual and electronic academic texts, into the demands placed by academic contexts on communicative behaviours, and into the pedagogic practices by which these behaviours can be developed. It is, in short, specialized English-language teaching grounded in the social, cognitive and linguistic demands of academic target situations, providing focused instruction informed by an understanding of texts and the constraints of academic contexts.

Importantly, the EAP course implemented by this study can be fitted into this theoretical paradigm. Specifically, the EAP course designed for this study aimed to generate “disciplinary knowledge” of writing skills and teaching methodologies that would enable Grade 11 learners to gain a greater degree of proficiency in the kinds of writing tasks that feature in matric (and even first-year university). By focusing on bilingual, economically disadvantaged learners, the course also sought to be responsive to the “social, cognitive and linguistic demands” of an “academic target situation”. Seen in this light, it should be clear that this study’s academic writing course, can, with justification, be labelled as an EAP programme.

2.3.1 The role of EAP in higher education

Despite its broad level of theoretical applicability (as identified by Hyland), in reality EAP programmes are primarily designed for tertiary institutions. In recent years their function in these institutions has become increasingly important due to the manner in which ESL students often struggle with English being the medium of instruction. Examples of this phenomenon abound in many different regional learning contexts. For example, Kirkgoz's (2009) study of three English medium departments at the Turkish university Cukurova highlight that the students' attending these departments are often unable to adequately comprehend the language embedded in their assignments. Evans & Green's (2007) study of English as the medium of instruction at the University of Hong Kong reveals a similar situation. Specifically, out of the 5000 students involved in their survey, Evans & Green found that almost all of the students admitted that – at various points – they struggled with academic speaking and writing in an English medium context. A plethora of studies have demonstrated that this situation obtains in a South African tertiary context as well (Bharuthram & Kies 2013; Mammino 2010, 2013; Pretorius 2002).



Of course, the manner in which ESL learners struggle with English as a medium of instruction is not confined to tertiary contexts. In particular, the situation in many South African schools – in which ESL learners receive an English medium education – has created an equally pressing problem. The scale of this problem is reflected in South Africa's catastrophically low ranking in global education surveys (see Chapter 1), and the fact that – for many educationalists – this lamentable state of affairs is due (significantly) to a situation in which South African ESL learners do not have the necessary language skills to cope with an enforced English medium curriculum.¹³

¹³ Details about South Africa's educational language policy and its relation to poor academic performance will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Seen in this light, it is clear that EAP programmes can possess a similar degree of relevance in both schools and universities. That is, in both educational spheres, they can serve the core function of providing much needed support for ESL students who require more specialised and in-depth training in academic English. This study's decision to implement an EAP programme at South African ESL schools (which subscribe to an English medium curriculum) is therefore in synergy with the broader EAP agenda that has been pursued at a tertiary level.

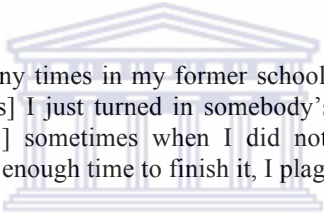
2.3.2 EAP and plagiarism

Through improving ESL students' ability to engage with academic English, EAP courses can also combat another serious problem that can potentially have negative effects on the academic writing of second-language English speakers – plagiarism. Justifiably referred to as an 'epidemic' (Lessing 2004), studies have found that 18% of American college students plagiarise at some point, and that as many as 49% of students at upper tier universities like Cambridge admit to cheating (Dee & Jacob 2010; Sugden 2008). Indeed, studies by Coleman & Curry (2010) and Selwyn (2008) have uncovered even higher rates of plagiarism amongst students in British and American universities. Thus while universities like Ohio State have received as many as 174 complaints of plagiarism in a single academic year (Coleman & Curry 2010), some 60% of students attending online courses in the UK regularly plagiarised in a 12-month period (Selwyn 2008).

Importantly, plagiarism is not just a problem that afflicts Anglophone universities. Comparing the paraphrasing and summarising skills of L1 and L2 writers, Keck (2006) discovered that L2 writers copied at a significantly higher rate than L1 writers. Keck's findings are far from idiosyncratic (see Deckert 1993; Wong 2009). In fact, L2 plagiarism is so common that many authors have put forward a range of reasons to explain it. Decker (1993) argues that L2 plagiarism results from a lack of understanding of intellectual property, while Fox (1994), Scollon (1995), Bloch (2001, 2008) and

Pennycook (1996) ascribe its existence to cultural difference and particular cultural and historical developments.

While there are elements of truth to all these explanations, this study shall adopt the view that plagiarism is endemic among both L1 and L2 students for a simple and intuitive reason: learners of all linguistic stripes – whether English is their first or second language – often struggle to comprehend, condense and reword academic texts. In such a situation, plagiarism presents an obvious – if not misguided – solution. Howards et al. (2010) reach such a conclusion in their ‘Citation Project’ when they present data showing that plagiarism arises in contexts in which students encounter difficulties in “understanding and summarizing the source texts they are using in their writing” (Bloch 2012: 11). The following student testimony (provided in Bloch [2012: 11]) provides a nice illustration of this:



Yes, frankly I plagiarized so many times in my former school [...] Sometimes I plagiarized by cut and pasted the paper [sometimes] I just turned in somebody’s paper to the professor by changing original name to my name [...] sometimes when I did not have any idea about the paper or assignment and I did not have an enough time to finish it, I plagiarized.

Although plagiarism is less spoken about in a school context than a university one, rates of ‘copy-paste’ internet plagiarism are rising alarmingly among high school students (Sisti 2007; Scanlon 2003). Perhaps as pertinently, many examinable aspects of school curricula confront high school learners with situations in which they need to paraphrase (rather than merely copy) in order to effectively answer comprehension style questions. For example, in a South African matric context, English FAL Paper 1 contains comprehension questions which directly specify that learners must re-write (rather than copy) relevant sections of a set text. Thus, as with a tertiary environment – through developing learners’ ability to write academically and comprehend texts – EAP can play an important role in high-school plagiarism avoidance.

Significantly, the EAP course implemented by this study placed a great emphasis upon paraphrasing skills. In light of the previous analysis, such skills are not only integral for

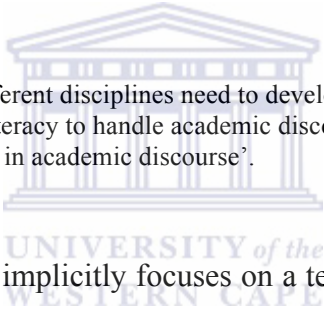
text-orientated academic writing, they also clearly provide learners with writing skills that can act as a bulwark against plagiarism.

2.4 English for general academic purposes (EGAP) VS English for specific academic purposes (ESAP)

The issue of whether EAP courses should transmit interdisciplinary writing skills (i.e. EGAP writing skills) or subject-specific writing skills (i.e. ESAP writing skills) has generated much debate among applied linguists. Before summarising this debate, however, it is necessary to give a definition of EGAP and ESAP. According to Dudley-Evans & St John (1998: 41) EGAP aids learners with such activities as “listening to lectures, participating in supervisions [...] reading textbooks, articles and other material, and writing essays, examination answers, dissertations and reports”. Other academic skills which are sufficiently general to be labelled GAP skills could also include “reading abstracts, paragraph and essay writing, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, interpretation of graphic information, critical thinking and language awareness” (Hyland 2005: 173). As Hyland (2006) thus notes, the main function of EGAP is to impart basic literacy-based skills that appear to be common to all academic disciplines. Nevertheless, in the same breath, Hyland (2006) also argues that the advantages of EGAP may be diminished due to the way in which many academic disciplines may have specific writing conventions which are not shared by other disciplines. Students in a tertiary context may therefore require a variety of specific literacies (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons 2002) in order to realistically cope with tertiary requirements. In contrast to EGAP, ESAP thus aims to equip learners with writing and thinking skills that are attuned to the specialised discursive conventions of specific academic disciplines.

When making the case for an EGAP approach to EAP, critics point out that A) language teachers lack the expertise to teach subject-specific skills [Spack 1998], B) students with a weak grasp of English struggle to grasp advanced discipline-specific language

[Hyland 1996], C) teaching subject-specific skills relegates EAP to a minor ‘supporting’ discipline [Raimes 1991], D) all academic texts (irrespective of the particular discipline they fall within) have uniform grammatical and structural features [Hutchison and Waters (1987)] and E) certain fundamental skills are required for all academic disciplines (e.g. paraphrasing and summarising arguments) [Jordan 1997]). Conversely, proponents of an English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) approach support their stance by claiming that A) academic subject specialists rarely explicate the writing conventions of their discipline (since they see them as being self-evident) [Street 1999] B) it is not necessarily true that weak students can only acquire subject-specific language if their core language skills are sufficiently developed [Hyland 1996], and C) there is considerably more linguistic variation between different academic discourses than proponents of ESAP acknowledge. Bhatia (2002: 27) captures this last concern eloquently when he observes:



students interacting with different disciplines need to develop communication skills that may not be an extension of general literacy to handle academic discourse, but a range of literacies to handle disciplinary variation in academic discourse’.

Interestingly, the above debate implicitly focuses on a tertiary context, and the question of how to impart skills that will allow students to write essays that meet all the criteria for excellence within sophisticated research communities. However, the EAP course implemented by this study aimed to a) help learners with matric preparation and b) lay the groundwork for analytical writing skills that are required in a first-year university context. Importantly – within the parameters of *this* context – it is clear that there are certain general-purpose writing skills that are robustly interdisciplinary and that are a prerequisite for success in *any* essay-based matric or university subject.

This claim can be substantiated by making reference to two sources: the rubrics used to assess matric essays, and the marking criteria used to assess first-year university essays. While the rubrics used to assess matric essays are available in *memoranda* (provided by the Department of Basic Education), the marking criteria used to assess first-year

university essays are available in *handbooks* or departmental notes that are distributed to first-year university students.

2.4.1 A comparative analysis of assessment rubrics for matric subjects

In Appendix 1A I provide information on the criteria used to assess essays in three matric subjects that are popular in non-fee paying South African schools (History, English FAL and Business Studies). For English and History, I have opted to give the specific criteria that an essay must meet to be judged ‘exceptional’ and earn top marks (as this provides the clearest normative account of the most desirable skills learners *ought* to have when writing their essays). Unfortunately, however, this information is not provided in the Business Studies essay rubric. Nevertheless, on the basis of the information that is provided in the rubric, it is possible to infer the features that an exceptional Business Studies essay should possess

After consulting the rubrics in Appendix 1A it should be evident that there are clear overlaps in all three marking criteria. Firstly, the importance of *structure* (in terms of essays possessing cleanly parsed introductions, bodies and conclusions) is emphasised. Secondly, all three criteria sets underscore the importance of learners making some kind of original contribution to the essay topic (although the English FAL marking criteria does not mention the word ‘original’, it does refer to a ‘striking’ response [presumably a striking response necessarily contains an element of originality]). Finally, the importance of information synthesis is highlighted (once again, although the English FAL marking criteria does not mention the word ‘synthesis’, it does mention the importance of paragraphs being ‘connected’ [and hence, presumably, synthesised]).

Of course, there are also differences between the writing skills needed for the three types of essays. While the History marking criteria draws attention to the importance of carefully structured argumentation, the English marking criteria state that learners

should excel in terms of their use of the formal components of the English language (e.g. vocabulary, style, tone, grammar, spelling, etc.). With regard to the Business Studies essay, the importance of learners referring to *contemporary* information is highlighted.

However, despite appearances, these differences do not really erect any barriers between the essays. In this respect, it almost goes without saying that argumentation is a necessary component of the “Intelligent thought provoking ideas” that an exceptional English FAL essay ought to possess. Conversely, it is clear, too, that any “original” and well-argued history essay will contain fairly advanced vocabulary and an appropriately balanced and objective academic tone. Finally, incorporating contemporary information into a History essay (via an analogy) or an English FAL argumentative essay (via a recent topical event) can clearly enhance the argumentative virtues of an essay.

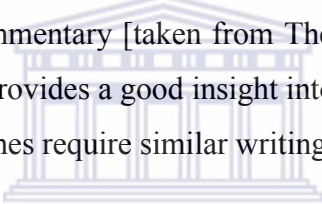
This analysis should make it clear that – at a matric level – an EGAP approach to academic writing is entirely justifiable. However, does an EGAP approach also make sense when it comes to first-year tertiary education? This is a crucial question, since the EAP course in this study was premised on the idea that a single set of writing skills could simultaneously prepare learners for matric and university. If, however, there is a case to be made that first-year tertiary preparation requires an ESAP approach, it becomes harder to see how such a goal can be achievable.

2.4.2 A comparative analysis of assessment rubrics for first-year university subjects

To resolve these issues, in Appendix 1B I provide the essay marking criteria for four first-year subjects (English, Anthropology, Business Management and Law) at the University of Cape Town. These four subjects are very different from one another (in terms of their content), and so it was reasoned that a comparison between them would give a good indication of whether – in general – first-year university subjects have shared or distinct essay marking criteria.

Before consulting Appendix 1B it is important to mention that the Business Management marking criteria refer to a long (300-word) tutorial assignment. The decision to include the marking criteria for tutorial assignments was deliberate, as tutorial-length written assignments are thoroughly incorporated into the curricula of first-year tertiary subjects. In addition, 300-word (plus) tutorial assignments can be thought of as miniaturised essays that have a similar structural template to standard length first-year university essays. Such tutorial length assignments can therefore be conceptualised as essays (of a sort) rather than comprehension style answers.

Before commenting on the congruencies between these criteria, I would like to include the following note that accompanies the Law essay marking criteria. Out of all the UCT departments that supplied essay marking-criteria, the Law Faculty was the most detailed, and the following commentary [taken from The Research, Writing, Style and Reference Guide 2016: pg.2] provides a good insight into why – as I shall subsequently argue – various tertiary disciplines require similar writing skills:



There are different types or ‘genres’ of legal writing. On the one hand, writing about law may take the form of general descriptions and/or evaluations of aspects or areas of law. This type of legal writing differs little from academic writing in other disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences (eg History, Philosophy, Politics, Psychology). Although it is important to remember that each discipline may have its own conventional sources of evidence and style of ‘correct’ writing and referencing, legal writing of this type follows the normal academic practice of stating and defending a thesis.

Due to the shared “academic practice of stating and defending a thesis”, the above note takes it for granted that disciplines in the Social Sciences and the Humanities require similar writing techniques. This understanding of academic writing harmonises with a more detailed comparative approach, as Appendix 1B clearly show that similar skills are required due to the inherently *argumentative* nature of academic prose. Thus, in each of the rubrics, the importance of thorough and logical *argumentation* is conspicuously emphasised. Next, all the rubrics stress that essays should be rigorously *structured* through the use of introductions and conclusions. Here, it should be added that any well-structured essay will necessarily also contain

elementary (or more advanced) instances of *information-synthesis* (i.e. the establishment of firm links between the introduction, body and conclusion of an essay).

Language or *diction* is also prioritised in the rubrics, with a specific emphasis placed upon clarity and conciseness. Importantly, although the Business Management tutorial marking criteria do not mention the importance of language or diction, other tutorial marking criteria which were kindly made available to me by the department *do* prioritise the importance of formal language skills.¹⁴ Finally, all the rubrics and criteria identify the importance of brands of *creativity* in which originality or some *appropriate* contribution from the students' own subjective experience is structured into their essays.

However, despite these congruencies, there is a specific area in which Law seems to require discipline-specific writing skills that are *not* a requirement in other disciplines. This difference is elucidated in the following note provided by the Law Department's *Research, Writing, Style and Reference Guide 2016*:

On the other hand, legal writing may take a form that is specific to the work of lawyers: the provision of written advice about the legal solution to a particular problem. This type of legal writing is characterised by its specific and disciplined focus on the precise problem and the legal principles and sources that are relevant to its solution. The principle is that a lawyer is not free to digress and to pursue knowledge for its own sake, but must confine herself only to what is relevant— anything more would waste the client's money and/or the lawyer's time (and income). Legal writing of this kind takes the form of an attempt to identify the legal issues raised by the problem and to resolve these by finding and then applying relevant legal rules. The style of this type of legal writing therefore takes the form of a search for a solution rather than the defence of a proposed thesis, but it should be obvious that both forms of legal writing require the formulation and defence of a point of view, and require logical arguments based on credible evidence (in other words, *not* mere emotional reactions or political ideologies or slogans) drawn from critical reading of the researched material. Finally, legal writing may sometimes amount to a combination of these two types, as where one is required to assess or evaluate the manner in which the law resolves a particular type of problem.

¹⁴ In particular, these tutorial assignments state that tutorial assignments should have an “academic tone”, and that the writing style used in them should be “smooth” and “easy to read”.

(2)

The note is perfectly correct to identify this as a distinctive component of law writing. Although academic writing (in the Humanities and Social Sciences) *does* often confine itself to what is “relevant” and “is not free to digress and pursue knowledge for its own sake”, these virtues of relevance and parsimony are usually employed to defend a thesis. Law, on the other hand, often requires students to use these writing techniques to seek a *practical solution* to a *problem* by invoking legal *rules*. This mode of writing is clearly too pragmatic and constrained by practical exigencies (i.e. not wanting to waste the client’s money, pre-determined rules, etc.) to harmonise with academic writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

One possible way to circumnavigate this problem – and maintain that all the disciplines analysed require virtually identical writing skills – is to claim that this aspect of law writing is not really “academic”. On this view, it can be argued that a mode of writing cannot really be counted as academic when it is not determined by a disinterested, quasi-scientific attempt to get at a deep and truthful account of a particular phenomenon. Since the mode of law writing hitherto considered is determined by concerns relating to the time and money of clients – and since it is more concerned with relevant ‘rules’ than a philosophically robust notion of the truth – it perhaps fails to display these defining characteristics.

There are, however, problems with this kind of argument. To begin with, in a certain sense, *all* writing which is required for the conferment of a degree and which students are required to do in a tertiary context is academic. A mode of writing cannot be disqualified as ‘academic’ simply because it fails to display some of the most conceptually demanding features of academic prose. Secondly, as the note indeed mentions, ‘problem-solving Law writing’ (for want of a better term) requires aspects of academic writing which are of foundational importance (e.g. the construction of arguments, the use of secondary readings, etc.). Finally, the note specifies that “legal writing may sometimes amount to a combination of these two types, as where one is

required to assess or evaluate the manner in which the law resolves a particular type of problem”. This makes it possible for the more ‘trade-orientated’ parts of Law discourse to be synthesised with the conceptually rich parts of Law, something which again accentuates the academic nature of both kinds of writing.

2.4.3 Comments on the similarities between matric and first-year essay marking criteria

The preceding analyses of matric and first-year tertiary essay marking criteria prove that there are indeed general-purpose writing skills that are required in a diverse array of matric and university subjects. Interestingly, too, the writing skills required for matric subjects like English, History and Business Studies closely resemble those that are needed in first-year tertiary subjects like English, Anthropology, Business Management and Law. Thus, it was observed that *structure, argumentation, diction* and *information synthesis* reliably emerged in the assessment criteria for both matric and first-year tertiary subjects.

Of course, the nature of this overlap should be not exaggerated. We have seen, for instance, that Law writing has distinctive, subject-specific requirements. Perhaps even more importantly, criteria like *structure, argumentation, diction* and *information synthesis* are incredibly broad. While it is plausible that certain academic writing techniques can generate a *basic* level of competency in relation to all these criteria (in the context of just about any academic discipline), it is equally true that achieving a good level of, say, ‘diction’ in a first-year tertiary English essay may *also* require discipline-specific writing techniques.

However, even this caveat doesn’t change the fact that the EAP course’s adoption of an EGAP approach is justifiable. In this respect, the EAP course sought to improve students’ ability to cope with the writing requirements of matric and first-year university. This, clearly, can be accomplished through the learners being equipped

with *basic* interdisciplinary skills to improve *structure, argumentation, diction* and *information synthesis* in an essay-writing context.

2.5 Cognitive modularity and academic writing skills

In line with the injunction that doctorates ought to make *original* contributions to academic discourse, this study tried to develop a *novel* approach to school-level academic writing. This approach is rooted in an incredibly rich body of literature about the *modular* nature of cognition. It is this thesis' key claim that an awareness of cognitive modularity can help to provide a useful set of heuristics that can positively influence the way in which academic essays ought to be conceptualised and taught.

In what follows, the theory of cognitive modularity will be described. Since the value of any theory depends on its truthfulness, this description will refer to a multitude of empirical findings that establish that cognition (whether animal or human) is indeed almost certainly modular. After a conceptual difficulty that the modularity thesis appears to give rise to has been discussed and dealt with, this literature will be related to academic writing skills, the nature of essays and EAP.

2.5.1 Why the mind is modular

In contemporary usage – within the domain of the mind – modules are usually taken to be functionally specialized computational mechanisms. Most would agree that they are almost certainly adaptations that were naturally selected to solve evolutionary recurrent problems (Tooby & Cosmides 1995)¹⁵, that they process domain-specific classes of information (Sperber 2001), that they can function independently of one another (Marr 1982), and that they can be reduced to discrete, neurologically localizable areas in our

¹⁵ The conclusion that modules are evolutionary adaptations is inexorable. This is because evolution by natural selection is the *only* known process that can account for the existence of functionally specialised biological mechanisms (Dawkins 1986; Cosmides and Tooby 1991; Symons 1987; Tooby and Cosmides 1990).

brains (Carruthers 2005). Since this view on cognition emphasises the functional independence and specialisation of the various mechanisms that constitute the brain, it gives rise to the striking metaphor of the mind as “a sort of a Swiss Army knife” (Pinker 1997).¹⁶

The strength of cognitive modularity (as a theory) derives from the fact that multiple independent scientific disciplines support it. As the philosopher of biology Daniel Dennett wittily points out, it is for this reason, too, that the theory of evolution by natural selection is virtually impregnable:

Like Gulliver tied down in Lilliput, it [Evolution] is unbudgable, not because of some one or two huge chains of argument that might - hope against hope - have weak links in them, but because it is securely tied by thousands of threads of evidence anchoring it to virtually every other area of human knowledge. [...]. The evidence of evolution pours in, not only from geology, paleontology, biogeography, and anatomy (Darwin's chief sources), but from molecular biology and every other branch of the life sciences.

(Dennett 1996: 128)

The first scientific discipline that supports a modular view of cognition is neuroscience. Due to the increasing accuracy of functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) scans¹⁷, it is a virtual consensus among neuroscientists that our cognitive competencies reduce to a *great many* neurologically isolable mechanisms that perform task-specific functions. To give just a few examples, brain regions responsible for emotion (Panskepp & Panskepp 2000) sexuality (Fisher, Aron, Mashek, Li & Brown 2002), language

¹⁶ Since this metaphor is strictly figurative, it gives the slightly misleading impression that modules are sharply individuated and bounded entities (like miniaturised neural versions of cogs and wheels). To use another one of Pinker's metaphors, modules are much more likely to resemble “roadkill, sprawling messily over the bulges and crevasses of the brain” (1997). Importantly, adopting this more realistic view does not rule out that modules can be conceived of as neurologically bounded entities (since even roadkill has a boundary, albeit a smeared and irregular one).

¹⁷ According to Devlin (2015):

“Functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI, is a technique for measuring brain activity. It works by detecting the changes in blood oxygenation and flow that occur in response to neural activity – when a brain area is more active it consumes more oxygen and to meet this increased demand blood flow increases to the active area. FMRI can be used to produce activation maps showing which parts of the brain are involved in a particular mental process.”

(Bookheimer 2002), face-processing (Haxby James, Hoffman & Gobbini 2000), memory (Baddeley 2007), belief and goal attribution (Saxe, Carey & Kanwisher 2004) and reading (Dehaene & Cohen 2007) decompose into a battery of functionally specialized neurological units.¹⁸

Further neuroscientific evidence for the modular architecture of the mind is provided by selective impairment or neural dissociation. Thus brain damaged individuals can be congenitally blind in terms of object recognition and yet still see faces (McMullen, Fisk, Phillips & Maloney 2000); they can lose the ability to categorize artefacts but not biological kinds (Atran, 2001); they can reason (conditionally) about social contracts (“If you take the benefit, then you must satisfy the requirement”) and yet lose the ability to reason about precaution rules (“If you engage in hazardous activity X, then you must take precaution Y”) [Stone, Cosmides, Tooby, Kroll & Knight, 2002].

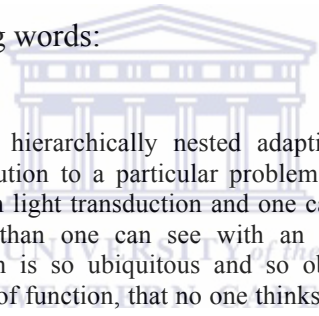
Building on Chomsky’s famous poverty of stimulus arguments for an ‘innate’ language acquisition device, in recent years *developmental psychologists* have shown that numerous cognitive capacities (to represent numbers, objects, agents, space and social partners) emerge very early in development and cannot be fully accounted for in terms of (domain-general) trial and learning strategies or the influence of culture (Spelke & Kinzler 2007; Scholl & Leslie 1999; Bateson & Martin 1999; Bjorklund & Hernandez 2005). The majority of developmental psychologists have thus reached the conclusion that learning is facilitated by ‘innate’ special purpose mechanisms (or modules).¹⁹

¹⁸ Here is a more detailed example of how neuroscience reveals the modular nature of modular cognition. According to fMRI scans, face processing is facilitated by two groupings of anatomically localizable and functionally-specialized mechanisms. While the first ‘central’ network processes static and dynamic features of faces, the second ‘extended’ network uses visually perceived cues to extract salient information about the person (e.g. their mood, intentions, etc.) [Haxby et al. 2000]. Amazingly, this psychological information can then loop back into the face perception system to enhance our perceptual classification of a face. Studies have thus found that the emotional ‘tone’ of an expression appears to contribute to the accurate *perception* of that expression (Calder 1996; Adolphs, Tranel, Damasio, H. & Damasio, A 1994).

¹⁹ A striking example of a specialised competency that developmental psychologists have discovered in infants is facial imitation. Specifically, not only can new-born babies – some as young as 42 minutes old – imitate facial expressions (Meltzoff & Moore 1983, 1989, 1997), and not only is this capacity

Indeed, even theorists who stress the importance of domain-general Bayesian inference for early development acknowledge that such inferences are deeply reliant on modules (Tenenbaum, Joshua, Thomas, Griffiths & Kemp 2006).

Many researchers in *Artificial Intelligence* (AI) also agree that human cognition must be modular. This is because AI experiments show (repeatedly) that attempts to artificially duplicate the complexity of human intelligence require modular computational systems (Minsky 1985; Kortenkamp, Bonasso & Murphy 1998; Thorrison 1999; Sengers 1999; Hexmoor, Horswill & Kortenkamp 1997; Bryson 2000, 2003; Bacchus & Kabanaza 2000). Finally, animal psychologists have also invoked the modularity concept to provide the most satisfactory explanation for a spectrum of behavioural patterns among animals. One of the leading researchers in this field, Randy Gallistel (2000:1179), powerfully summarises his views on the necessary connection between modularity and animal learning in the following words:



Biological mechanisms are hierarchically nested adaptive specializations, each mechanism constituting a particular solution to a particular problem [...]. One cannot use a hemoglobin molecule as the first stage in light transduction and one cannot use a rhodopsin molecule as an oxygen carrier, any more than one can see with an ear or hear with an eye. Adaptive specialization of mechanism is so ubiquitous and so obvious in biology, at every level of analysis, and for every kind of function, that no one thinks it necessary to call attention to it as a general principle about biological mechanisms. In this light, it is odd but true that most past and contemporary theorizing about learning does not assume that learning mechanisms are adaptively specialized for the solution of particular kinds of problems. Most theorizing assumes that there is a general-purpose learning process in the brain, a process adapted only to solving the problem of learning. There is no attempt to formalize what the problem of learning is and thereby determine whether it can in fact be conceived as a single or uniform problem. From a biological perspective, this assumption is equivalent to assuming that there is a general-purpose sensory organ, which solves the problem of sensing.

2.5.2 Modularity and cognitive flexibility

One of the reasons why cognitive modularity is so controversial is that specialised mechanisms are usually assumed to be ‘rigid’ and ‘narrow’. In contrast, it is plausibly

(predictably) cross-culturally invariant (Reissland 1988), there is now even evidence that foetuses practise facial expressions of pain/distress before they have an affective experience of pain/distress (Reissland, Francis & Mason 2013).

assumed that general purpose mechanisms – due to their lack of internal constraints – are ‘flexible’. Since it is quite clear that humans display great degrees of behavioural and cognitive flexibility, and since (both in our evolutionary history and everyday life) we frequently encounter novel environmental conditions that necessitate flexible responses, many philosophers and cognitive scientists have argued that it is far more likely that our minds contain domain-general mechanisms (Woodward & Cowie 2004; Carrol 2006; Chiappe & McDonald 2005; Quartz 2003; Flinn, Geary & Ward 2005; Sterelny 2006; Potts 1998).

However, proponents of modularity (Tooby & Cosmides, 1995; Barrett 2014) hold the view that the *proliferation* of functionally-specialised mechanisms can also bring such flexibility about. This thesis has its roots in the claim that domain-general cognitive systems cannot be made neatly equivalent with behavioural flexibility. Tooby & Cosmides (1995:100 &104) vividly capture this concern in the following passage:

From a traditional point of view [...] it seemed sensible to regard generality as an enhancement of the capacity of a system: The system is not prevented from assuming certain states or kept from doing what is adaptive (or desirable) by a "rigid" or "biased" architecture. Generality of application seems like such an obvious virtue and content-independence seems like such an obvious road to flexible behavior, what could possibly be wrong with them? In this view, content-specificity in evolved psychological design is imbued with all the legendary attributes of "biology"-rigidity, inflexibility, and constraint. It is viewed as preventing the system from achieving advantageous states that would otherwise naturally come about.... [however] by widening the problem domain that a mechanism must address, strategies that worked correctly on only a subset of problems must be abandoned or subtracted from the repertoire because they give incorrect answers on the newly included problems in the enlarged domain. As problem domains get larger and more broadly defined, a smaller and smaller set of residual strategies is left that remains applicable to the increasingly diverse set of problems. At the limit of perfect generality, a problem solving system can know nothing except that which is always true of every situation in any conceivable universe and, therefore, can apply no techniques except those that are applicable to all imaginable situations. In short, it has abandoned virtually anything that could lead it to a solution.

Contrary to received wisdom, then, it is perhaps mistaken to believe that domain-generality is a hotline to cognitive flexibility. However, this doesn't automatically imply that domain-specific mechanisms are the answer to the problem, and that they have therefore been mistakenly aligned with rigidity. Importantly, domain-specific mechanisms acquire their processing power through having very stringent input criteria. As such, it appears they

obtain this efficiency at the cost of being completely blind to the many other adaptive problems that fall outside the purview of the specialized sub-classes of information that they are designed to process. This gives rise to the horns of a computational dilemma, in which either narrow success or broad failure seem possible. Tooby & Cosmides (1995: 113), however, claim that a middle road is possible:

The solution to the paradox of how to create an architecture that is at the same time both powerful and more general is to bundle larger numbers of specialized mechanisms together so that in aggregate, rather than individually, they address a larger range of problems. Breadth is achieved not by abandoning domain-specific techniques but by adding more of them to the system. By adding together a face recognition module, a spatial relations module, a rigid object mechanics module, a tool-use module, a fear module, a social-exchange module, an emotion-perception module [...], and so on, an architecture gains a breadth of competences that allows it to solve a wider and wider array of problems, coming to resemble, more and more, a human mind. The more a system initially "knows" about the world and its persistent characteristics, and the more evolutionarily proven "skills" it starts out with, the more it can learn, the more problems it can solve, the more it can accomplish. In sharp contrast to the Standard Model, which views an absence of content-specific structure as a precondition for richly flexible behavior, the analysis of what computational systems actually need to succeed suggests the opposite: that the human capacity for adaptive flexibility and powerful problem-solving is so great precisely because of the number and the domain-specificity of the mechanisms we have. Again, this converges on William James's argument that humans have more "instincts" than other animals, not fewer [...].

Tooby and Cosmides' thesis is not only conceptually plausible, it is also supported by extensive empirical evidence (discussed in the previous section) which shows that the brain is indeed constituted by myriad special-purpose mechanisms. Although many critics have been (justifiably) sceptical about how special-purpose mechanisms can interact with one another²⁰, cognitive scientists *have* nonetheless managed to put forward biologically plausible accounts of how modules can flexibly communicate with one another and augment each other's processing procedures (see Barrett 2012).

²⁰These criticisms primarily derive from Jerry Fodor's original (1983) analysis of the architecture of modularity. In this analysis, Fodor reasoned that modules would struggle to preserve the true properties of their informational output unless that output was immediately posted into a vertical transmission chamber that fed into the input of another module. Crucially, in this architecture, information processing is bottom up, that is, once information gets sucked up a tube it cannot be re-integrated into the system at large (see diagram in appendix). Clearly, this rigidly encapsulated 'pipe' like system doesn't cohere with the phenomenology of central cognition, in which distal thoughts bleed into one another and are combined on the fly in endless associative patterns. To cash this idea out more technically – as Fodor himself puts it – central cognitive beliefs are determined through global processes. Thus, when we form or confirm any belief we draw upon our entire epistemic landscape, a process that requires the mixing and matching of ideas in a manner that is far too unconstrained for Fodor's rendering of our cognitive architecture to facilitate.

2.5.3 Modularity and the nature of academic prose

The preceding section sought to establish that modularity successfully explains the structure and nature of the mind. The almost certain truth of modularity (in a cognitive domain) hopefully lends credence to the following claim – that modularity, too, can successfully explain the nature of academic essay writing. In a manner that is analogous to the way in which the mind *appears* to be constituted by a general-purpose learning instinct, in the following section I shall try to establish that academic essays are not generated through a domain-general language competency (as they indeed appear to be) but rather by an integrated complex of domain-specific (i.e. functionally specialised) writing skills.

At a school level, from the perspective of both teacher and students, there is a commonly held assumption that academic essays are produced by the free flow of general language and thinking aptitudes. This assumption is evinced through the way in which – apart from the injunction to include an introduction, body and conclusion in an essay – learners are given no sense that academic writing, like mathematics, is grounded in transferable, formulaic procedures. Although teachers do frequently tell students to be “thorough”, “objective”, “factual” and “structured” when writing academically, these are content-free heuristics that contain no specific information about *what* (in particular) it means to be factual and *how* (in particular) such factuality can be realised within the constraints of an essay format. To use an analogy, such advice is about as helpful and descriptive as a mathematics teacher who seeks to help his/her students with trigonometry by telling them to be more “meticulous”, “rational” and “analytic”.

In terms of matric pedagogy, a good example of this generalist stance is provided by the Department of Basic Education’s (DBE) approach to essay writing in the EFAL curriculum. Thus, in one of the main study guides the DBE provides to students and teachers [*Mind the Gap*], students are given the following note on the structure of the

five kinds of essays (Narrative, Descriptive, Reflective, Discursive, Argumentative) that appear in EFAL Paper 3:

Introduction

The introduction is the first paragraph of the essay. It should catch the reader's attention and suggest what the essay is about (the topic).

Body

The longest part of an essay is the body of the essay. It is divided into paragraphs. Each paragraph usually contains one main idea about the essay topic.

Conclusion

The last paragraph in an essay is the conclusion. It brings the essay to an end. No new information is given in the conclusion, but it often brings together some key points or ideas.



(*Mind the Gap: EFAL Paper 3: pg. 2*)

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While it is no doubt helpful for matric EFAL learners to have such a blueprint for essay writing, it should also be noted that the advice which is given is framed in very general terms. For example, how, *exactly*, should the author catch the reader's attention (introduction), express the main idea (body) and synthesise key points (conclusion)? These are all fairly complex writing and thinking procedures, and it appears that the instructions – through not giving any particularised, formulaic guidelines – carry the implicit assumption that they can be best expressed via general-purpose thinking and writing aptitudes.

Importantly, though, the study-guide *does* offer a more technical approach to essay writing when it discusses how students ought to write *particular* essay genres. For example, in relation to the *Argumentative Essay*, the study guide provides the following pointers:

- Use the present tense.
- Begin by stating your opinion of the topic. Do not state that you agree or disagree with the topic, but rather present your point of view in your introduction.
- Give reasons to support your view, and link them together in a logical way. For example, use linking words like “because...”, “this shows”, “however...”, “therefore...”.
- End the essay with a strong conclusion that clearly, and convincingly, states your opinion. It may repeat the idea written in your introduction, but written in a different way.

(29)

While these instructions do offer a more fine-grained approach to argumentative essay writing, they are not sufficiently particular to dispel the implicit message that students will need to rely upon even more fundamental (unspecified) writing and thinking abilities to write successful essays. To take one example, students are not provided with specific methodologies for writing ‘clearly’ and ‘convincingly’: it is just assumed that students will be able to execute these skills without further assistance. While the study guide’s ‘process’²¹ approach to academic writing ameliorates this lack of specification, it does not exactly overcome it either.

As the following section on EAP will make clear, it is possible to ‘modularise’ academic writing to a far greater extent, such that skills (which are of instrumental importance for academic writing) are reducible to words, phrases and sentences with precisely delineated functions. The next chapter will continue to build upon this approach by demonstrating how whole essays can be entirely composed of such specialised skills.

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²¹ The ‘process’ approach (see also Hedge 1988, White and Arndt, 1991) to writing favoured by the *Mind the Gap* study guide emphasises the importance of mind-map based planning, proof-reading and multiple drafting. While these skills work more ‘technicality’ into the guide’s approach to writing, they clearly do not provide students with fine-grained writing methodologies to *directly* execute the skills that the exam requires of them (e.g. synthesising information in conclusions, expressing main ideas, etc.).

When it comes to establishing that essay-orientated academic writing skills are more modular than this conventional approach to academic prose allows, Cummins et al's (1979) approach to language proficiency provides a good starting point. Specifically, Cummins argues for a distinction between *basic interpersonal communication skills* (BICS) and *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP). Cummins (2000: 59) explains the nature of this distinction and its rationale in the following way:

[A] way of expressing [the] difference [between BICS and CALP] is to note that native-speakers of any language come to school at age five or so virtually fully competent users of their language. They have acquired the core grammar of their language and many of the sociolinguistic rules for using their language appropriately in familiar social contexts. Yet, schools spend another 12 years (and considerable public funds) attempting to extend this basic linguistic repertoire into more specialized domains and functions of language. CALP or academic language proficiency is what schools focus on in this endeavour. It reflects the registers of language that children acquire in school and which they need to use effectively if they are to progress successfully through the grades. For example, knowing the conventions of different genres of writing (e.g. science reports, persuasive writing, etc.) and developing the ability to use these forms of expression effectively are essential for academic success.

Cummins' motivation for making this distinction is rather intuitive: while some BICS clearly plateau at an early age (e.g. a six-year-old and twelve-year-old will be equally competent in BICS [Cummins 2000]), CALP continues to develop for many years and requires at least twelve years of formal schooling to effectively cultivate (Cummins, 2000). For Cummins, this undercuts Oller's (1979) influential claim that "all individual differences in language proficiency [can] be accounted for by just one underlying factor [...] *global language proficiency*."²²

Importantly, Cummins' thesis has been supported by a range of studies and theoretical considerations (see Biber 1986; Snow & Hoefnagel-Hohle 1979; Vygotsky 1962; Bruner 1975; Canale 1983; Donaldson 1978; Bereiter & Scardamalia 1981; Snow et al. 1991; Mohan 1986). In particular, Corson (1993, 1995, 1997) has provided an

²² Although Cummins' distinction has influenced policy and practice in North America and the United Kingdom (Cline & Frederickson 1996), and although other studies and observations have essentially concurred with it (see Snow et al. 1991; Bereiter & Scardamalia 1981; Mohan 1986; Gibbons 1991), it has also been subjected to much criticism (see Edelsky et al. 1983; Martin-Jones & Romaine 1986; Romaine 1989; Wiley 1996). However, in Cummins (2000), these criticisms are acknowledged and addressed.

interesting substantiation of Cummins' theory by noting how – even at a fine grained semantic level – academic language is deeply contingent on contexts and mediums that do not occur in an everyday context. Specifically, according to Corson, academic texts are replete with Graeco-Latin words whereas everyday conversations contain far higher concentrations of words and terms that are Anglo-Saxon in origin. This is significant as Graeco Latin words tend to be three or four syllables long²³ and are mainly literary in their use. Fascinatingly, even books written for children have 50% more Graeco Latin words than mainstream television or the conversations of college graduates (1997).²⁴ Given the context specificity of this vocabulary, Cummins' finding that BICS develops easily – whereas CALP develops at a slower rate and requires years of formal schooling – is unsurprising.

The BICS / CALP distinction ushers in a certain *degree* of modularity in language proficiency, as it demonstrates that an academic lexicon is functionally, developmentally and semantically separable from an everyday lexicon. However, despite this distinction, such an academic lexicon is far too broad and general to be described as 'modular'. In order for academic language – and academic writing in particular – to be modularised, evidence must be supplied that such a lexicon decomposes into even more specialized competencies and skills.

2.5.4 Hedges

Applied linguists (working within an EAP paradigm) have been particularly successful in uncovering a rich taxonomy of specialised academic writing skills. To begin with, corpus analysis studies have confirmed that bilingual students use “epistemic verbs” (e.g. words like *may* and *think*) and “epistemic modifiers” (e.g. words like *appear*, *apparently*, *perhaps*, *possible*) far less frequently than first language speakers do

²³ In comparison, Anglo-Saxon words tend to be one or two syllables long.

²⁴ According to Corson, frequent Anglo Saxon words include: time, people, years, work, something, world, children, and life. Frequent Graeco-Latin words include: chapter, component, context, criterion, data, design, focus and hypothesis.

(Hyland & Milton 1997; Silva 1993). Both epistemic verbs and epistemic modifiers can be more broadly classified as “hedges”. According to Hyland (2005: 179) ‘hedges’ fulfil the following function:

[...] Writers must calculate what weight to give to an assertion, attesting to the degree of precision or reliability that they want it to carry and perhaps claiming protection in the event of its eventual overthrow. Hedges, therefore, imply that a statement is based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge, indicating the degree of confidence it is prudent to attribute to it.

The fact that such words are deployed more frequently by native English speakers is unsurprising, as such words have a complex and specialised function. In the words of Hyland and Milton (1997: 183):

The ability to express doubt and certainty appropriately in English is a complex task for language learners [...] To be effective, writers need to make claims and assertions which academic readers judge to be warranted and which reflect appropriate social interactions. Statements must not only indicate the extent of the writer’s conviction in their truth, which may range from uncertain possibility to confident prediction, but also convey a suitable degree of deference and modesty to the audience.

Significantly, hedges fulfil many of the criteria for being modular. Firstly, they appear to reduce to particular words (e.g. perhaps, appears, etc.) and are therefore ‘fixed’ semantically discrete entities rather than sprawling, indivisible composites of words and phrases that shift and change from one argumentative context to the next. Secondly, they have a highly specialised epistemic function (i.e. they enable writers to express appropriate degrees of confidence in relation to key claims). In the preceding section it was observed that cognitive modules share these two characteristics as well (i.e. they are spatially discrete – and therefore isolable – and also have a specialised function). In light of this congruence, it is clear that certain essay writing skills (in a figurative sense) appear to be modular. In what follows, the applicability of the modularity concept to academic writing will be consolidated by assessing a number of other modular writing skills that have been identified by EAP researchers.

2.5.5 *Self-mention*

Self-mention refers to the manner in which person pronouns and possessive adjectives are strategically deployed to generate propositional, affective and interpersonal information (Hyland 2005). According to Hyland (2005: 181) “in the humanities and social sciences [...] the use of the first person is closely related to the desire to both strongly identify oneself with a particular argument and to gain credit for an individual perspective.” To cash out the function of these words in a more concrete manner, consider the following citations from ‘self-mention’ interviews (provided in Hyland [2005]) with Sociology and Philosophy academics:

Using ‘I’ emphasizes what you have done. What is yours in any piece of research. I notice it in papers and use it a lot myself.

(Soc interview)

The personal pronoun ‘I’ is very important in philosophy. It not only tells people that it is your own unique point of view, but that you believe what you are saying. It shows your colleagues where you stand in relation to the issues and in relation to where they stand on them. It marks out the differences.

(Phil interview)

Due to their semantically discrete nature and their special-purpose function (within particular academic contexts) ‘self-mention’ words possess all the hallmarks of modularity previously ascribed to hedges.

2.5.6 *Boosters and Attitude Markers*

In contrast to *Hedges*, *Boosters* are used by authors to indicate their confidence in certain claims (Hyland 2005). Boosters therefore include words like *clearly*, *obviously*, *undoubtedly*, *evidently*, *undeniably* and *plainly*. According to Hyland (2005: 179), boosters are particularly useful due to the way in which they “help writers to present their work with assurance while [also] setting the caution and self-effacement suggested by hedges against assertion and involvement.”

Attitude markers are used by authors to reveal their affective (emotional) rather than epistemic (belief based) attitudes towards their claims (Hyland 2005). Attitude markers can therefore convey, surprise, agreement, appreciation, frustration and so on. Attitude verbs (e.g. agree, prefer), sentence adverbs (e.g. unfortunately, hopefully), and adjectives (e.g. appropriate, logical, remarkable, clever, incomplete, faulty) are commonly used as attitude markers. Through expressing these judgements and attitudes, attitude markers add a certain richness to academic writing and help to emphasise an author's subjective stance towards the texts he/she is discussing.

For all the reasons mentioned in relation to the writing skills previously discussed, boosters and attitude markers are clearly also modular in nature.

2.5.7 Directives

Academic writers use directives to explicitly inform their readers about how they intend to structure their essays. A set of directives can thus be thought of as a blueprint which provides a miniaturized representation of an essay's overall structure and chronology. For example, at the end of her introduction to her essay *Moral Saints*, the moral philosopher, Susan Wolf (1982: 419) provides the following set of directives:

In this paper, I wish to examine the notion of a moral saint, first, to understand what a moral saint would be like and why such a being would be unattractive, and, second, to raise some questions about the significance of this paradoxical figure for moral philosophy. I shall look first at the model(s) of moral sainthood that might be extrapolated from the morality or moralities of common sense. Then I shall consider what relations these have to conclusions that can be drawn from utilitarian and Kantian moral theories. Finally, I shall speculate on the implications of these considerations for moral philosophy.²⁵

Importantly, there are other *kinds* of directives. Hyland (2005:185), for example, identifies another set of directives that reduce to particular words and phrases (rather than sentences):

²⁵ Although such directives are frequently made synonymous with an 'abstract', it is often the case (as with Wolf's essay) that they are embedded into the actual body of the essay (usually after an introductory paragraph)

Directives instruct the reader to perform an action or to see things in a way determined by the writer. They are signalled mainly by the presence of an imperative (like *consider, note, and imagine*); by a modal of obligation addressed to the reader (such as *must, should, and ought*); and by a predicative adjective expressing the writer's judgement of necessity/importance (*It is important to understand ...*).

In light of the analysis of the previously listed writing skills, it is clear that the directives that Hyland speaks about can be understood in terms of modularity. However, the first set of directives (discussed above) are less semantically specific. They do not reduce to particular words, but rather to sentences that fulfil a specific function. In my view, this needn't imply that they are not modular. Firstly, directive sentences are functionally specialised (and, according to some, functional specialisation is *the* key component of a modular entity [Barrett 2014]). Secondly, a sentence is still a sharply delineated and isolable 'sub-component' of an essay. Thirdly, something can still be modular if it is composed of a great many parts or elements: for example, a corkscrew is a (functionally specialised) modular component of a Swiss army knife even though a corkscrew is composed of many different metallic curlicues of different shapes and sizes. Indeed, if the logic of this previous point is accepted, it is possible to conceptualise a modular academic writing skill that requires two, three or even more sentences to be expressed.

The point that sentence-long writing skills can be modularised gives rise to an important qualification. Technically, it is incorrect to say that any of the previously listed writing skills can be completely reduced to single words. This is merely shorthand (used by Hyland) to accentuate the functional and conceptual significance of certain words, and the way in which they reliably index the overall function of the sentences they are embedded within. Considered more accurately, a 'hedge', 'booster' or 'attitude marker' will only function correctly if the sentences they are embedded within behave in a certain manner. To see this clearly, consider the following excerpt of an academic text that uses 'boosters' (taken from Hyland 2005: 179):

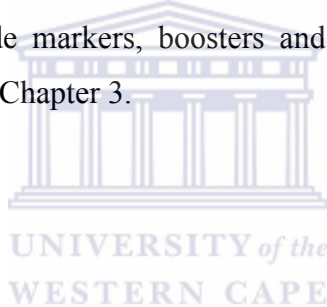
This brings us into conflict with Currie's account, for static images surely cannot trigger our capacity to recognize movement. If that were so, we would see the image as itself moving. With a few interesting exceptions we obviously do not see a static image as moving. Suppose,

then, that we say that static images only depict instants. This too creates problems, for it suggests that we have a recognitional capacity for instants, and this seems highly dubious.

In the above excerpt, none of the boosters would function optimally (or even function at all) if they weren't embedded in whole sentences that harness the boosters to relevant conceptual points. Thus, the *correct* or *desirable* use of boosters, attitude markers, directives, and attitude markers necessarily entails the construction of whole sentences. Seen in this light, sentences – rather than specific words – are the proper units of modular academic writing skills.

This study sought to build on these insights by designing exercises that would enable learners to write essays *entirely* composed of sentence-level modules. Due to the way in which these exercises required learners to write specifically *text-orientated* essays, the researcher developed *new* modular writing skills whilst also incorporating some of those already discussed (like attitude markers, boosters and hedges). These exercises will receive an in-depth analysis in Chapter 3.

2.5.8 Concluding thoughts



Hyland's important work in EAP scholarship shows that aspects of academic writing decompose into subsets of functionally specialised skills that are tethered to particular words and phrases. Of course, the skills identified by Hyland are by no means exhaustive, and represent a tiny fraction of the possible writing techniques that will no doubt be identified as EAP matures as an academic discipline. Importantly, as well, it has also been argued that Hyland's findings harmonise with recent empirical advancements in cognitive science. These advancements show that human cognition is modular. It has been my claim that the modularity concept can be fruitfully applied to academic writing, as it helps to theoretically clarify and delineate the underlying *nature* of academic prose.

On a deep theoretical note, I believe that it is highly significant that two separate disciplines – cognitive science and EAP – have reached similar conclusions about the underlying nature of complexity (whether it is the complexity of a biological system [like the brain] or the complexity of a semantic system [like an academic essay]). This linkage is important since in the words of the famous philosopher of science, Otto Neurath (1973:5) “The [scientific] endeavour is to link and harmonise the achievements of individual investigators in their various fields of science.”²⁶ Thus, by the lights of Neurath’s reasoning, through being conceptually linked to cognitive science, the scientific pedigree of EAP is increased, and the notion of developing a carefully systematised science of academic writing becomes more probable. The possibility of developing a more scientific approach to academic writing is all the more likely since modularity not only links EAP to cognitive science, it also increases the likelihood that academic writing *can* be analysed with all the precision with which the natural sciences analyse biological phenomena. In the words of the evolutionary developmental biologists Wolfgang and Gunther Wagner (2003:5):

In general, the idea of modularity is the hypothesis that reality can be packaged into more or less discrete units with characteristic properties. If this is possible there is the hope that a class of natural processes may be understood as interactions and reactions among those natural units. Within the sciences the paradigm for such an approach is certainly chemistry, which has a small hierarchy of such units that define the universe of classical chemistry.

Since the modularity concept also “packages” essays into “discrete units” with “characteristic properties” it holds out the promise that essays can be reduced to the

²⁶ Crucially, the process of ‘conceptual unification’ is not just a teleological norm that guides science. Rather, it provides an accurate characterization of the history of modern science and the unified worldview that it has generated Tooby & Cosmides (1995) vividly capture this idea:

“Disciplines such as astronomy, chemistry, physics, geology, and biology have developed a robust combination of logical coherence, causal description, explanatory power, and testability, and have become examples of how reliable and deeply satisfying human knowledge can become. Their extraordinary florescence throughout this century has resulted in far more than just individual progress within each field. These disciplines are becoming integrated into an increasingly seamless system of interconnected knowledge [...] In fact, this development is only an acceleration of the process of conceptual unification that has been building in science since the Renaissance.”

interplay between these units. As with chemistry or cognition, this evidently makes the structure and nature of academic prose more transparent and analysable.

2.6 EGAP and modularity

At this point a potential clash between the two central claims made in this chapter must be addressed. After a careful analysis of matric and first-year tertiary essay grading criteria, it was concluded that an English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) approach to the EAP course was appropriate. This conclusion was reached on the basis that similar writing skills are required in a variety of academic contexts. However, in the second part of this chapter it was argued that academic writing is deeply modular. This gives rise to an apparent contradiction, as it seems inconsistent to say that academic writing is modular, *and* that there is a set of ‘domain-general’ writing skills that are required in a wide variety of school and (first year) university subjects. Surely, if academic writing skills are highly-specialised – as the section on modularity indeed claimed – it would make more sense for an English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) approach to be adopted. Specifically, an ESAP approach appears to harmonise more with a modular conceptualisation of academic writing, as ESAP emphasises that academic writing skills are dictated by discipline-specific convention. In high contrast, the more applicable a set of writing skills is to a wide range of contexts, the less functionally specialised and modular it appears.

To resolve this tension, it must be claimed – somewhat paradoxically – that a writing skill can still be functionally specialised (and hence modular) even if it can be applied in a range of semantic contexts. This is actually less difficult to demonstrate than one may think. Consider, for example, quotation sentences. In particular, consider quotation sentences which quote from a text in order to accentuate (or prove) that a particular claim made in an essay is directly rooted in a relevant reading. Such a sentence is functionally specialised and forms a discrete semantic unit. On these grounds, it can, with justification, be termed modular. Most importantly, however, it is perfectly

legitimate to claim that such a modular writing skill will be useful in just about any academic context in which students have to either structure their essay around a primary text, or augment their essay with secondary literature.

Seen in this light, it ought to be clear that an EGAP approach is not incompatible with a modular conceptualisation of academic writing. This is especially true in the context of this study, since it has never been my claim that an EGAP approach will give students a set of skills that will enable them to cope with *all* the writing-based demands of matric and first-year university subjects. In this respect, in the first part of this chapter I was careful to state that the writing skills needed to produce *structure*, *diction*, *argumentation* and *information synthesis* will not be wholly determined by a single set of subject-transferable writing skills. Rather, I claimed that – in many matric and university subjects – foundational aspects of *structure*, *diction*, *argumentation* and *information synthesis* can be generated through a single set of subject-transferable writing skills. This position is inevitable since criteria like *structure*, *argumentation* and *information synthesis* are incredibly broad and general, and can therefore be realised through a plethora of different writing techniques. Thus, within the domain of a specific academic discipline (especially at a university level), it is entirely likely that additional subject-specific writing skills will be required for students to successfully generate *structure*, *diction*, *argumentation* and *information synthesis*. For example, in a theory-laden social sciences subject like Anthropology, (even at a first year level) ideal argumentation may require a subject-specific writing skill in which – within the concise span of a sentence or two – the veracity of theories is interrogated through appealing to *other* opposing theories.²⁷ This should make it clear that there is no binary opposition

²⁷ It goes without saying that such a writing skill would also be required in other Humanities subjects (like Sociology, psychology, politics, philosophy, etc.). Especially at a first-year level, it is actually difficult to comprehend any writing skill will be truly subject specific. Rather, it can be expected that certain writing skills will be required in a cluster of closely related subjects. Nevertheless, a kind of quasi-subject specificity can still be referred to as it appears probable that a cluster of more distantly related subjects (like architecture and engineering, for example), will entail specific writing skills that are not required in a Humanities subject cluster. To consider just one possible example, students writing an essay about an architecture or engineering project may be required to incorporate numeracy-based descriptions of spatial and structural data into their writing. This, clearly, will never occur in a Humanities academic essay (unless very unusual circumstances dictate it).

between an ESAP and EGAP approach to academic writing, since it is possible that both approaches can be coherently synthesised. Indeed, this study aims to provide a good example of such a stance.

2.7 Literature and EAP

Within the context of higher education there are problems with some of the standard ways in which EAP skills are transmitted to students. For instance, the frequent use of instructional texts “contradicts experiential learning theories which emphasize that effective learning takes place when learners experience a problem and take action, reflect on the action, form concepts on the basis of their reflection and apply these concepts in new situations” (Wingate, 1; 2006). Importantly, these forms of deep engagement are not necessarily brought about by interactive EAP course environments either. Analytic writing skills, like grammar, present the average student with a domain of enquiry that does not appear particularly interesting or invigorating. Indeed, as anyone with classroom experience will testify, generating student engagement with subject matter that is even designed to be ‘fun’ or ‘contemporary’ is not easy. Consequently, if students – especially at a school level – are to truly engage with EAP material, teachers need to think of innovative ways in which to quicken their students’ interest in the subject matter.

The EAP course run at the GADRA Matric School attempted to do this by facilitating the following process: each new writing skill that the students learned helped them to better analyse a piece of literature. Thus, techniques that helped the students to write structured essays were linked and associated with the unlocking of new and exciting ideas – ideas that aimed to enliven the learning process and place the technical exercises in a richer and more intriguing context.

The literature used in the course was also carefully chosen. Thus, the selected literary works were lucidly worded, and yet also had sufficient layers of semantic complexity;

they (mostly) aimed to communicate philosophical ideas that the students probably hadn't come into contact with before, and yet it was intended that these new ideas would have an archetypal ring of truth to them; the pieces came from a variety of cultural and historical milieus in order to be diverse, and yet they lacked many of the alienating idioms and 'insider' references that usually alienate learners from such works. In short, everything was done to ensure that the students found the syllabus maximally interesting.

The rationale of the syllabus can be further justified by making reference to bodies of scientific and pedagogical literature. Thus, in respect to the philosophical nature of the course's syllabus, findings in developmental psychology show that even young children ask philosophical questions that resemble adult ones (Harris 2000) – a fact which strongly suggests that we have an inborn cognitive orientation towards philosophy.²⁸ With regard to the course's multicultural orientation, educationalists concerned with inclusive education have urged for syllabi that include exposure to non-dominant cultures (see Hayes, Mills, Christie & Lingard 2006).

Creative fiction can play an indispensable (possibly unique) role in socialising students into the idea that CALP ought to be valued for more than just instrumental reasons connected with scholarly progress. In this respect, creative fiction offers a particularly persuasive example of what complex, precisely phrased language can achieve. Specifically, it shows that a formal register can amplify our understanding of ourselves and the world in a way that resonates with our emotions, and hence the deep core of our subjectivity. In doing this, it can mitigate the alienation that students often feel when encountering a register that is divorced from the reflexive ways in which they understand themselves and navigate their immediate social environment. Literature arguably achieves these things through the way in which it makes 'language come to

²⁸ Indeed, since the majority of the world is religious, and since religion clearly provides answers to basic ontological and metaphysical questions (i.e. What am I and why do I exist? Where does the universe come from? etc.), it is clear that most people's concern with fundamental questions extends into adulthood.

life'. In the following passage, the Portuguese poet, Fernando Pessoa [2010:77] (writing about his own work) charismatically communicates just such an idea:

There are metaphors more real than the people who walk in the street. There are images tucked away in books that live more vividly than many men and women. There are phrases from literary works that have a positively human personality. There are passages from my own writing that chill me with fright, so distinctly do I feel them as people, so sharply outlined do they appear against the walls of my room, at night, in shadows... I've written sentences whose sound, read out loud or silently (impossible to hide their sound), can only be of something that acquired absolute exteriority and a full-fledged soul.

Finally, literature has a number of unique therapeutic functions. Arguably these functions become even more important within the context of an economically disadvantaged schooling environment (especially in a South African township context). Learners in such an environment frequently inhabit a fractured and disorderly world that severely impinges on the stability of their emotional psychology and sense of self-worth. While literature – of course – is no panacea for this, it can catalyse a number of realisations that can help to fortify students against the more harmful aspects of their environment. For example, in the words of F. Scott Fitzgerald “that is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong” (qtd. in Graham & Frank, 1958: 261)

Literature not only ‘universalises’ some of the most emotionally consequential parts of our psychology (and so diminishes our feeling of existential isolation), it can also *unlock* and *intensify* emotional faculties which are constitutive of our humanity, and yet are all too often tragically dormant. Franz Kafka (1977:116) captures this idea vividly:

We need the books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us.

Even in ordinary social conditions, our lives are encumbered with a multitude of commitments, time constraints and practical considerations that make it difficult to fully analyse and appreciate our experiences. This is *especially* true for people in economically disadvantaged conditions, in which the pressing exigencies of daily life

leave even less time for the luxuries of introspection. However, literature – like all art forms – can mitigate this alienation. Due to the way in which literature can crystallise and distil the essence of phenomena within the span of pages, it offers an accelerated and time effective way to authentically grasp reality in a ‘deep’ manner and to enter – as Nadine Gordimer puts it – “the nerve centre of being”. In this vein, dismissing the idea that literature – even when it transports readers into historically and culturally remote environments – is about escapism, the Booker winning British author, Julian Barnes (2012: 8), eloquently notes:

When you read a great book, you don't escape from life, you plunge deeper into it. There may be a superficial escape – into different countries, mores, speech patterns– but what you are essentially doing is furthering your understanding of life's subtleties, paradoxes, joys, pains and truths. Reading and life are not separate but symbiotic.

Lastly, literature plays an indispensable role in increasing empathy. Although the cultivation of empathy is important in *any* social context, impoverished environments increase the vulnerability of people and hence make kindness and charity virtues which can – literally – have life-saving consequences. One of the earliest proponents of the idea that literature increases empathy was the English novelist, George Eliot. In Eliot's words “the greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies.... Art [amplifies] experience and extend[s] our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot”. In recent times the cognitive scientist, Steven Pinker (2011: 145), has given perhaps the most interesting, fleshed out account of this relationship:

Reading is a technology for perspective-taking. When someone else's thoughts are in your head, you are observing the world from that person's vantage point. Not only are you taking in sights and sounds that you could not experience firsthand, but you have stepped inside that person's mind and are temporarily sharing his or her attitudes and reactions [...] Stepping into someone else's vantage point reminds you that the other fellow has a first- person, present-tense, ongoing stream of consciousness that is very much like your own but not the same as your own. It's not a big leap to suppose that the habit of reading other people's words could put one in the habit of entering other people's minds, including their pleasures and pains.

It is important to stress that there is much evidence that the psychological and ethical dimensions of literary texts are also *academically* significant. In this respect, there is

now considerable neuroscientific evidence that emotion and rational cognition are strongly interlinked (Damasio 2003; Immordino-Yang et al. 2007; Isaacowitz et al. 2000; Phelps 2006; Pessoa 2008; Gay et al. 2002). Within the domain of education, this interconnection has been borne out by multiple findings which suggest that learning is *significantly* mediated by students' emotional psychology, as well as broader intrapersonal dynamics that relate to their peers and teachers. Many educationalists thus strongly dismiss "the taxonomic notion that cognitive learning outcomes can somehow be separated from affective or social ones [...]" (Lovat & Toomey, 2010: 18). In this respect, numerous studies have confirmed that the motivation of students to learn is greatly increased when emotional meaning can be discovered in subject matter (Immordino-Yang & Faeth 2010; Tytler, Barraza & Paige 2010; Bishop, Seah & Chin 2003), and that the explicit dissemination of pro-social values positively impacts upon academic diligence (Lovat & Toomey 2010). As the preceding analysis has hopefully established, literary texts are charged with emotional meaning and can help promote pro-social values. Therefore – in light of the evidence just supplied – they clearly have the potential to contribute to high academic achievement.

2.8 Literature and text-orientated writing

Within the overall context of the EAP course, the literary texts that were used had an even more basic function. This function refers to their basic identity as *texts*, and connects to the researcher's decision that the EAP course should focus on *text-orientated* essays (i.e. essays which refer to and analyse texts). The decision to focus on such essays was determined by a number of factors. Firstly, many of the matric English and History essays and (obviously) comprehension questions require learners to write short or long pieces in which (primarily) they respond to a text. Secondly, this tendency becomes even more pronounced at a university level, as in all disciplines essays must be carefully structured around secondary readings and primary texts. Finally, certain important essay genres – like argumentative essays – which (at least at in a matric context) are *not* text-orientated, nonetheless have a basic structure which closely

resembles the structure of text orientated essays. To see this, consider the following two *basic* structural blueprints for argumentative and text-orientated essays:

Basic Structure for an Argumentative Essay:

State point(s) that will be argued for (intro)
Provide reasons for why points are correct (via examples, arguments, etc.) (body)
Comment on broader implications of debate (conclusion)

Basic Structure for a Text-Orientated Essay:

Identify main theme (s) or argument(s) in text (intro)
Provide textual evidence to prove that they are sufficiently present in the text (body)
Comment on broader significance of the themes /arguments (conclusion)

Apart from the broad structural similarities between the two essay types, the more fine grained writing techniques required for both kinds of essays also bear a strong resemblance to one another. This claim will be substantiated in detail in the following chapter, through an analysis of how exercises which can enable learners to write argumentative essays can take full advantage of many of the writing skills transmitted by the EAP course.

Finally, it should also be noted that literary texts promote reading skills which other genres of writing often neglect. Specifically, literary texts require readers to tease out implicit claims and arguments (via imagery, symbolism, tone, rhetoric, metaphors, etc.) that other more factual genres of writing (e.g. newspaper articles, text books, etc.), do not require readers to do to the same extent. Through promoting ‘deep reading skills’ the appropriacy of this EAP course using literary texts is once again emphasised.

2.9 Poverty and learning incentives:

The original GADRA project (described in Chapter One) departed from many literacy orientated community engagement projects by providing students with a report that

enhanced the attractiveness of their university application packages. The report stated that – to the best of my knowledge as a former first-year university tutor – the successful learners had produced written work that met some basic requirements for first-year tutorial assignments in the humanities. It was my hope that the report would increase the learners' chances of getting accepted at a university, college or technikon. Moreover, since it has been documented that economically disadvantaged adolescents often experience a sense of hopelessness (Bolland 2003) and that poor children have negative assessments of their future career opportunities (Weinger 1998), the report was designed to counteract these feelings by giving students a concrete asset (e.g. a legitimate report). The proposed EAP course will once again offer students such a report and will thus endeavour to increase its relevance to the students' immediate sphere of interests.

2.10 Summary:

In this chapter I sought to give an in-depth theoretical justification of the design and nature of the EAP course implemented by this study. I undertook this by first giving an account of why the course has many defining characteristics of a typical EAP project. As with many other sections in this chapter, Hyland's theoretical writings on EAP were particularly helpful in this respect. Then, I justified why an English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) approach to academic writing harmonised with the EAP's courses aim to better prepare learners for the writing requirements of matric and first-year university. To do this, I conducted an analysis of essay grading rubrics from a variety of matric and first-year tertiary courses. The chapter then proceeded to explain why the modularity concept can be fruitfully applied to academic writing. This discussion involved a theoretical account of what cognitive modules are, why they are empirically robust entities, and, finally, why academic writing – like human cognition – is also modular in nature. After clearing up a potential clash between claims made in the first part of the chapter (with regard to EGAP) and the claim that academic writing is modular in nature, I gave an account of why literary texts were incorporated into the

EAP course. Apart from providing some intuitive reasons for why literary texts can enrich a technical subject like academic writing, this section argued that there is neuroscientific evidence that some of the therapeutic functions of literature can improve the academic performance of learners in a variety of ways. The chapter then proceeded to address some broad political concerns with English medium education in a multilingual South African context. This section sought to provide reasons why the EAP course implemented by this study is not aligned with linguistic imperialism and the South African policies which have provided South African learners insufficient access to mother tongue education. Finally, a short account was given of how the EAP course sought to ameliorate some of the negative psychological effects that poverty can have upon the psychology of economically deprived learners.

The next chapter examines the research methodology utilised by this study.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the study's design and the procedures that were followed during its implementation. The chapter is divided into nine sections, which are listed below:

- Basic design of study
- Weakness in the case study design
- Contexts and participants in the research
- Broad outline of research process
- Instrumentation and measures
- Pre-intervention instruments
- Procedures of analysis
- Qualitative methodology
- Ethical considerations



3.2 Basic design of study

This study adopted a case study design. The question of how to define a case study has generated a variety of answers. Nisbet & Watt (1984: 2), for example, state that case studies involve “the study of a specific instance [of a class of social phenomena] that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle”. Gerring (2004: 341) offers a similar account, stating that “a case study is best defined as an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena.” Abercrombie et al. (1984: 34), however, disagree with the idea that case studies can generate generalizable data. In their view

The detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena, a case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases

Importantly, like Abercrombie et al, a number of other theorists view the case study method with – what can best be termed – “extreme circumspection” [Gerring 2004] (see also Achen and Snidal 1989; King, Keohane & Verba 1994; Lieberman 1991, 1992, 1994; Njolstad 1990)]. Campbell & Stanley (1966: 6-7) provide perhaps the most scathing expression of the scepticism that is expressed towards case-study methodology by this body of literature:

Such studies have such a total absence of control as to be of almost no scientific value [...] Any appearance of absolute knowledge, or intrinsic knowledge about singular isolated objects, is found to be illusory upon analysis [...]. It seems well-nigh unethical at the present time to allow, as theses or dissertations in education, case studies of this nature (i.e., involving a single group observed at one time only).

Nevertheless, despite the disagreement about the relationship between case studies and generalisable data (this issue will be explored in more detail in relation to this study at a later point in this chapter), there *is* a broad consensus that, typically, case studies are naturalistic enquiries which seek to generate in-depth data about “real people, in real situations” (Cohen et al. 2007: 253). Case studies are therefore “strong in reality” as they offer a “down to earth” account of socially relevant institutions, activities and decisions. The ‘grounded’ nature of case studies makes them especially relevant and applicable. In the words of Adelman et al. (1980: 60) case studies feed into policy and action because

they begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use; for staff or individual self-development, for within-institutional feedback; for formative evaluation; and in educational policy making... at its best, they allow readers to judge the implications of a study for themselves

Yin (2003) suggests that a case study design should be considered when (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (b) the behaviour of the study’s participants cannot be influenced by the researcher; (c) contextual conditions are deeply relevant to the study and d) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not

clear. To illustrate the appropriacy of case study designs in instances in which there is a potential entanglement of phenomenon and context, Baxter & Jack (2006: 545) mention the example of a study of the decision making of nursing students:

[for this study] a case study was chosen because the case was the decision making of nursing students, but the case could not be considered without the context, the School of Nursing, and more specifically the clinical and classroom settings. It was in these settings that the decision making skills were developed and utilized. It would have been impossible for this author to have a true picture of nursing student decision making without considering the context within which it occurred.

Finally, case studies are – of course – variable in their basic scope and structure. Yin (2003) and Stake (2005) have provided a useful typology of case studies that are commonly undertaken. According to Yin (2003) and Stake (2005), case studies are frequently either *exploratory*, *descriptive*, *multiple*, *intrinsic* or *instrumental*. In *exploratory* case studies interventions are unencumbered by predetermined objectives, while in *descriptive* case studies situations or interventions are accurately recorded (Yin 2003). *Multiple* case studies aim to replicate findings across cases and also aspire to formulate predictions on the basis of theories that result from cross-case verisimilitudes (Yin 2003). *Intrinsic* case studies are atheoretical endeavours which attempt to understand particular (usually idiosyncratic) social phenomena (Stake 2005). Finally, according to Stake (2005), in contrast, *instrumental* case studies are “used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. [They] provide insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else” (Baxter & Jack 2006: 549).

3.3 Contextualising the study in a case-study paradigm

In what follows, I shall analyse how this study has positioned itself in relation to the central issues mentioned in the previous section.

To begin with, as a case study, this project – like all case studies – sought to give an in-depth and realistic description of the phenomenon under analysis. Additionally, a

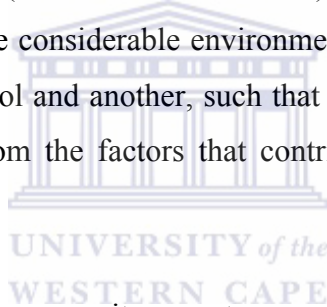
reliance on qualitative data was deemed appropriate due to the fact that relevant aspects of school environments and the cultures of learning that prevail at them simply cannot be captured through quantitative data. Since these aspects of the environments naturally mediate how learners deal with academic work, such qualitative data provide an indispensable tool for understanding why learners may engage with academic work in one way rather than another.

However, due to this study's main research goal – to measure the impact of an EAP course on the academic writing skills of economically disadvantaged matric learners – a controlled form of data collection was also used. According to Henning et al (2004), in such an approach data is typically collected and processed statistically via quantitative methods. In relation to this particular study, marking criteria and grades were used to generate clear-cut numerical data about the degree to which the students' written assignments met with commonly accepted standards in academic writing. In addition to this quantitative data, a comparison between the learners' early assignments and later assignments was used to provide an illuminating qualitative measure of the degree to which the course improved the learners' writing skills.

Due to its reliance on qualitative and quantitative data, this study adopted a 'mixed methods' approach (see Creswell 2013). According to Clarke & Yaros (1988) a mixed methods approach is helpful due to the manner in which it generates multiple perspectives on complex social phenomena. Similarly, other researchers (Steckler McLeroy, Goodman, Bird & McCormick 1992) have noted that because certain case scenarios – relating to health and education – are invariably complex, “a broad spectrum of qualitative and quantitative methods” (Sale, Joanna, Holfield & Brazil 2002: 4) are required. In terms of the precise way in which the quantitative and qualitative data are mixed, this study will adopt what Creswell (2013: 208) refers to as an “embedded” strategy. When ‘embedding’ takes place a researcher has “a primary aim to collect one form of data (say quantitative) and have the other form of data (say qualitative) provide supportive information” (Creswell (2013: 208). Adopting a slight variation of the

embedding methodology mentioned by Creswell, this study used both quantitative (grade-based) data *and* qualitative (observation and interview based) data to support theoretical conclusions about a primary qualitative data source (the learners' written EAP assignments).

As the previous section explored, due to the way in which case studies confine themselves to a *particular* social environment (or area of interest), it is arguably the case that their findings can be idiosyncratic and unrepresentative of the class of social phenomena that is being examined. For example, if a researcher conducts an ethnographic case study to understand the culture of drug abuse at a single no-fees school in the Western Cape, it could be argued that their findings provide no basis for understanding how the culture of drug abuse operates in *most* other non-fee paying schools in the Western Cape (let alone South Africa). This is because it is entirely conceivable that there could be considerable environmental variance between one non-fee paying Western Cape school and another, such that the factors contributing to drug abuse in one school differ from the factors that contribute to drug abuse in another school.



Although this is a legitimate concern, it presents no serious threat to the relevance of this study's findings. In this respect, this study implemented the same intervention programme (i.e. an EAP course) at two research sites (i.e. two economically disadvantaged [township] South African schools) to diminish the chances that it would generate unrepresentative data. In addition, the researcher's findings at both sites were strikingly similar. The considerable strength of this overlap suggests such results may obtain at other (similar) sites, as it seems plausible to suppose that a strong overlap is more demonstrative of a general pattern than a weak one.

Finally, it is important to point out that there are empirical reasons for believing that there is not a huge amount of environmental variance in South African townships schools. In this respect, there is much evidence that – in general – these schools face an

array of recurrent problems (e.g. poor teaching, low academic performance, lack of materials, poor maintenance, etc. [Christie 2008; Wilkinson 2015]). The uniform plight of poor (traditionally black) South African schools is further accentuated by comparative analyses of how primary school African learners compare – academically – to white and coloured student cohorts. In this respect, Spaul (2013: 14) for example notes

prePIRLS (2011) showed that Grade Four pupils from rural areas and townships are two to two and a half years behind urban children in reading. The National School Effectiveness Study (2007/08/09) showed that Grade Three pupils from former-white schools scored higher on the same test than Grade Five pupils from former-black schools, showing that already by the age of eight there are large inequalities in the educational outcomes of pupils.

Lam et. al (2011: 11 & 16) provide data on how these levels of academic inequality persist into high school, and manifest themselves in drop-out rates and matric results:

While 93% of whites who were in grade 8 in 2002 advanced to grade 11 or 12 by 2005, the experience of African youths [...] is very different. Among Africans who were in grade 8 in 2002, only 36% had reached grade 11 [...]. About 78% of Africans passed the [matric] exam on their first attempt, compared to 90% of coloureds and 99.6% of whites. [in addition] only 18% of Africans passed [the matric exam] with exemption, compared to 23% of coloureds and 59% of whites.

All this evidence demonstrates that – in general – black South African schools are characterised by low academic achievement (due to the factors mentioned earlier), and that this underachievement is so pronounced that it creates stark discrepancies between the academic performance of African, white and coloured students. Indeed, in 2013, in a parliamentary media briefing the basic education minister (Angie Motshekga) stated that “[t]he diagnostic test of the [National Development Plan] found] 80% of [South Africa] schools [to be] dysfunctional” (Wilkinson 2015). As the head of the civil rights group Afriforum – Ernst Roets – correctly notes, it is no secret that the overwhelming majority of these dysfunctional schools are located in South African townships (see Wilkinson 2015). Given this situation, it is not unreasonable to believe that townships schools – in many relevant areas – are quite similar to one another.

Due to the way in which this study implemented an intervention at two Western Cape township schools, it can, according to Yin's (2003) typology be classified as a *multiple* case study. In line with Yin's classification of multiple case studies, this study therefore sought to comparatively analyse qualitative and quantitative data from the learners at both schools. This was done in order to discover cross-case verisimilitudes and generate predictive theories on the basis of these similarities. Specifically, this study compared the learners' pre-intervention writing samples, EAP coursework, attendance rates, course-evaluation questionnaire answers and interview responses to generate broad, predicative theories about the academic impact of the EAP course and the learners' motivational psychology.

Finally, a case study design was deemed appropriate for this project due to potential entanglements between phenomenon and context [see Yin (2003)]. In this respect, the researcher decided that critical aspects of the learners' educational psychology would either be altered or made invisible if the EAP course was conducted in a learning context that removed the learners from their typical schooling environment. In addition to the logistical difficulties of hosting the EAP course outside the learners' school premises, it was also reasoned that if the researcher engaged with the learners in a novel learning environment, there would be less of a chance that the broader culture of learning at the schools would permeate the EAP classroom environment. Firmly situating the EAP course within the warp and weave of the learners' ordinary school environment was important, as the researcher – for a host of practical reasons – anticipated that future versions of the EAP course could be most feasibly implemented at the same schools in which enrolled learners attended.

3.4 Contexts and participants of the research study

This study implemented an EAP course at two schools located on the outskirts of Cape Town (Gonwa High School and Delta High School).²⁹ Since this study desired to focus

²⁹ To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms for both schools have been provided.

on schools located in poor South African communities, in what follows, I shall justify the selection of the aforementioned schools by providing a socio-economic profile of the broader communities in which they are embedded. After this information has been provided, a description of the schools and the participants will be offered.

3.4.1 A socioeconomic profile of Khayelitsha and Delft

Gonwa High School is located in Khayelitsha (Site B). Khayelitsha is situated about 30 kilometres away from the City of Cape Town, and, according to a 2011 census by Statistics South Africa, has a population of 391 749 people. According to the same survey, 74% of households have a monthly income of R3200 or less, 38% of the population (between the ages of 15 and 64) are unemployed and only 45% of households live in formal dwellings.

Delta High School is located in Delft. Like Khayelitsha, Delft is a township located near Cape Town International Airport, and it, too, is relatively far from the city centre of Cape Town. Survey data from 2011 reveals similar trends to those already observed in relation to Khayelitsha. While the population of Delft is only half that of Khayelitsha (159 000), 69% percent of the population have a monthly income of R3200 or less, and there is a 41% unemployment rate. Notably, 83% of people who live in Delft have access to formal dwellings – an amount that is strikingly higher than the number observed earlier in relation to the housing access rates in Khayeltisha (45%). Although such a discrepancy may appear to token that Delft is a wealthier area than Khayeltisha, the fact that both townships have similar unemployment and monthly income rates negates this possibility. Interestingly, then, within the context of at least these two townships, access to formal housing does not reliably index that one community is any better off (financially) than another.

Both Khayelitsha and Delft can be classified as economically disadvantaged communities. According to Statistics SA's March 2015 Quarterly Employments

Statistics (QUES) survey, the South African average monthly (in the non-agricultural sector) is R16 461 a month, a number that is vastly higher than the average monthly income in both Khayelitsha and Delft. In addition to low wage standards, Khayelitsha has living conditions in which most of its residents live “cheek by jowl in overcrowded shack settlements, accessing electricity illegally, sharing communal water taps, and relying on grossly inadequate sanitation arrangements (such as outside portable toilets)” (Super 2015). Significantly, Khayelitsha also has the highest level of murders in the Western Cape (DCS 2009; Lancaster 2013), and according to some, it is estimated that over half of the townships residents live below the poverty line (Super 2015). A similar story emerges when a more detailed picture of Delft is given. Delft also has a high poverty rate and a very similar murder rate to Khayelitsha (a murder rate of 94 per 100k, compared to a murder rate of 95 per 100k in Khayelitsha [Achmat 2014]). As with Khayelitsha, living conditions in Delft are marked by poor service delivery, overcrowded living spaces, gangsterism, drugs, sexual abuse and violence. (Bentel 2013; Kinnear 2014)

3.4.2 Delta High and Gonwa High: a profile

Due to their location within such impoverished environments, both Delta High and Gonwa High are ‘no fee-paying schools’. Chennells (2015: 581) offers a succinct account of the selection criteria that are used to determine whether a school qualifies for a ‘non fee’ status or not:

[In South Africa] schools are divided up into 5 categories or quintiles, with the poorest schools being in quintile 1, and the less poor being in quintile 5.

The amount contributed by the state in a Quintile 1 school (the poorest school according the quintile status) will be higher than the amount contributed in a quintile 2 school (less poor) or a quintile 5 school (least poor). In other words all these schools receive subsidies but the amount varies depending on which quintile the school is determined to be. The amount that the state contributes per learner decreases as you move up the quintiles.

Theoretically, schools falling into quintiles 1 and 2 ought to be no-fee schools, and some schools falling into quintile 3 may be no-fee schools too, although this is voluntary in each province. Parents sending their children to these schools should not have to pay any fees, including registration or activity fees. In some instances, the Minister of Education may stipulate that a

school will be a no-fee school for learners in Grade R to Grade 9, but will charge fees after this.

It should be noted that since both Delta High and Gonwa High only charge school fees after Grade 9, they fall within a category reserved for some of the very poorest schools in the country. In tandem with the socio-economic status of the broader communities that they are located within, both schools' status as 'no fee' schools again reflects that this study has been conducted in a set of schooling environments which can, with justification, be termed 'economically disadvantaged'.

Delta High School runs from Grade 8 until Grade 12, and at the commencement of this study (2015) had a learner population of 1 114 learners (738 females and 376 males). The school has a mixture of black and coloured students, and as a consequence the school offers two home languages: Xhosa and Afrikaans. However, it should be noted that the Xhosa students significantly outnumber the coloured students. For example (in 2015) in Grade 10, only 44 learners took Afrikaans Home Language as a subject, compared to the 176 learners who took isiXhosa Home Language as a subject (a pattern which is also repeated in Grade 11 and Grade 12). As with many other South African high schools located in poor areas, Delta High School does not offer subjects like Art, Drama or the Natural Sciences [e.g. chemistry and physics]. The subjects that are available to learners from Grade 10 until Grade 12 are: Afrikaans Home Language, Business Studies, Consumer Studies, English First Additional Language, Geography, History, IsiXhosa Home Language, Life Orientation, Life Sciences, Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Tourism. Importantly it should be noted that the more demanding and scientifically orientated subjects that are on offer (like Mathematics) are not especially popular among Delta learners. For example, in 2015 only 43 learners wrote Mathematics for matric (compared to the 125 learners who opted for Mathematical Literacy as a matric subject).

Gonwa High School also runs from Grade 8 until Grade 12, and at the commencement of this study (2015) had a similar learner population to Delta High School (1175 learners [619 females and 556 males]). Unlike Delta High School, nearly all of the learners at Gonwa High School are native Xhosa speakers, and the medium of instruction is officially English. Although Gonwa High School (like Delta) does not offer Art as a subject from Grade 10 until Grade 12, it does offer Natural Sciences as a subject. Again, though, as with Delta High School, it should be noted that demanding scientific subjects (like Mathematics and Physical Sciences) are not especially popular among Gonwa learners at a matric level. For example, in 2015, out of a population of 158 learners, only 58 opted to write Mathematics and even fewer (55) wrote Physical Sciences. The subjects that are officially on offer at Gonwa High School from Grade 10 until Grade 12 are: Accounting, Agricultural Science, Business Studies, Consumer Studies, Economics, English First Additional Language, Geography, History, IsiXhosa Home Language, Life Orientation, Life Sciences, Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Physical Sciences.

3.4.3 Delta High and Gonwa High matric results

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, South African township schools often underperform academically, and in this respect, too, both Delta High and Gonwa High are highly representative of the class of economically disadvantaged schools to which they belong. For instance, in 2014 (the year prior to the intervention), the matric results in both schools were alarmingly poor. Although a detailed overview of both schools' matric results are available in Appendix 2, in what follows I shall provide a summary of the most salient statistics that reflect the scale of this underachievement.

In Gonwa High and Delta High, an analysis of students who achieved 50% (and above) for matric subjects powerfully accentuates the overall low standard of academic achievement in the 2014 matric year. This information is summarised below:

Percentage of Gonwa Students who achieved above 50% in the 2014 final matric exams

1. Accounting: 10.3%
2. Agricultural Sciences: 25%
3. Business Studies: 16.7%
4. Consumer Studies: 15.8%
5. Economics: 18.8%
6. English First Additional Language: 42.6%
7. Geography: 23.9%
8. History: 79.2%
9. IsiXhosa Home Language: 100%
10. Life Orientation: 89.8%
11. Life Sciences: 21.1%
12. Mathematical Literacy: 18.8%
13. Mathematics: 20.5%
14. Physical Sciences: 10.9%



Percentage of Delta Students who achieved above 50% in the 2014 final matric exams

1. Accounting: 34.3%
2. Afrikaans Home Language: 52.4%
3. Business Studies: 47.2%
5. English First Additional Language: 36.4%
6. Geography: 11.6%
7. History: 23.6%
9. IsiXhosa Home Language: 93.7%
10. Life Orientation: 34.9%
11. Life Sciences: 9.5%
12. Mathematical Literacy: 16.3%
13. Mathematics: 3.4%
14. Tourism: 54.9%

In both schools, there are only 3 subjects (out of 14) in which more than 50% of the learners achieved above 50%. In both schools, too, for the majority of subjects, *significantly* less than 30% of the learners achieved above 50% percent. The poor matric results of both schools can be further highlighted by considering the number of subject distinctions that were earned by the learners. Thus, at Delta High, out of a cohort of 195 learners who wrote the final matric exams, there were only 13 subject distinctions (i.e. a subject distinction is earned when a learner gets between 80 -100% for a subject). With regard to Gonwa High, out of 155 learners who wrote the final matric exams, only 6 subject distinctions were earned. These results are in line with Roets' earlier observation about township schools, and clearly establish that both schools typify academic trends that prevail in the majority of economically disadvantaged South African schools.

3.4.4 Participant selection

The participants for this study were thirty Grade 11 learners from Delta High School and thirty Grade 11 learners from Gonwa High School. All of the students were randomly selected to ensure that they were representative of the student populations. However, since the researcher anticipated that the EAP course would have the greatest academic impact on learners who would be studying English FAL and History for matric, the randomised selection took place within the parameters of a Grade 11 cohort who were studying both these subjects. Although this did limit the degree to which the study's participants were representative of the learner populations, it is worth noting that (at both schools) *all* Grade 11 and Grade 12 learners opt for English FAL as their second 'language' subject. Additionally, History is a fairly popular subject that has only a moderate degree of difficulty, and so it seems reasonable to infer that a History student will have average academic abilities (compared to, say, a student who studies a more demanding and less frequently chosen subject like Mathematics or Physical Sciences and who may therefore be expected to have higher than average academic abilities). Seen in this light, despite the way in which the students' subject choices constrained the process of randomisation, there is still good reason to suppose that the

participants for this study were representative of the broader learner populations at both schools.

The researcher decided upon having 30 learners in each experimental group for two reasons. Firstly, since the researcher was implementing the EAP course on his own, the required amount of attention and one-on-one contact time required with each student would not have been met if more students participated. Secondly, due to the long duration of the EAP course, the researcher anticipated a high attrition rate. Although a number of 30 students does not provide an especially strong buffer against a high level of attrition (in which, say, two thirds of the participants drop out), it does offer some insurance that the study will not become completely imperilled if there are many dropouts.

3.4.5 Permission procedures

In order to gain permission to implement the intervention, the researcher pursued the following process. First, he met with the principals at both schools and explained the potential academic benefits that the learners could gain from participating in the intervention. When providing this explanation, he also stressed that the course not only aimed to improve the learners' grades in English essay and comprehension based subjects, but that it also aimed to increase the learners' preparedness for tertiary level academic literacy. Next, he met with the teachers who taught History and English FAL (the two subjects that the course aimed to assist the learners with), and explained the purpose, structure and duration of the intervention to them. Both the teachers and principals appeared to be enthusiastic about the project and gave the researcher formal written consent to conduct research at the two schools.

The researcher then arranged to meet the Grade 11 students who had been randomly selected to participate in the study. During the researcher's meeting with the learners, he explained that he was a doctoral student in Education from UWC, and then proceeded to

give the learners a fairly detailed overview of what their involvement in the study would entail. This involved an overview of the course's function and duration, as well as a description of the written assignments that the students would have to complete (should they choose to participate). Throughout this presentation, the researcher made constant reference to the course's relevance to matric and university, and also stressed that the learners could expect to gain significant benefits (in relation to their academic writing skills) from taking part in the intervention. Once the presentation had been conducted, the researcher gave the learners a five-minute period to read through an overview of the EAP course, and to decide whether they did indeed want to participate in the study. The learners were then given participant consent forms and were informed that their participation in the study was strictly voluntary, such that their signature on the consent form was not binding and that they could therefore choose to withdraw from the study at any point without suffering any negative consequences. Surprisingly, out of a total of sixty randomly selected students (at both Delta High School and Gonwa High School), only a single learner decided not to participate.

Once the researcher had the written consent of the learners and gained ethical clearance from UWC, he sent an email to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) seeking permission to conduct research at Gonwa High School and Delta High School. A few weeks later permission was granted by the Research Directorate in the WCED.

3.5 Broad outline of research process:

Before moving on to an analysis of the instrumentation and measures that were used in the study, it is necessary to provide a broad overview of the EAP course and the manner in which it was implemented at both schools. Such an overview will include a description of the timing and duration of the intervention, the number of experimental groups and research sites that were used, and an outline of the EAP course's content.

3.5.1 Original parameters of the intervention

The proposed study consisted of two experimental groups. The first experimental group were Grade 11 learners from Gonwa High School. The second experimental group were Grade 11 learners from Delta High School. At both schools, each experimental group consisted of thirty randomly selected students who studied English FAL and History. The study was implemented concurrently at two separate research sites. The first research site was a classroom in Gonwa High School, located in Khayelitsha Site B. The second research site was a classroom in Delta High School, located in Delft.

Originally, before its implementation, the proposed EAP course was divided into three distinct stages. The first stage was planned to begin in the third term of Grade 11 (July) in the 2015 academic year. For a seven-week period, this stage of the intervention was to focus on the application of analytic writing skills to pieces of literature

The second part of the EAP course aimed to commence in the first term of Grade 12 (January) in the 2016 academic year. This part of the course was to focus on matric study skills and the question of how to apply the writing techniques learned in the first part of the course to English FAL and History, and was to cease at the beginning of the matric preliminary exams.

The EAP course's final stage was planned to run from the end of the preliminary exams to the commencement of the final matric exams. At this point in the course, it was hoped that the participants would organise themselves into autonomous study groups. Although the course instructor planned to observe and occasionally guide the students' interactions, it was intended that – at this stage in the course – the students themselves would be primarily responsible for practising and refining their matric study skills.

3.5.2 Changes to the scope of the intervention

Although high rates of attrition diminished the sizes of both the Delta and Gonwa groups in the first (2015) stage of the intervention³⁰, by the end of this stage there were still enough remaining learners (in both groups) for the course instructor to judge that the EAP could be continued in the 2016 academic year. However, at the commencement of the EAP course's second stage (in February 2016), the strongest members in the Delta group chose to discontinue their participation in the programme. In the coming weeks, the few remaining Delta students dropped out at a steady rate. Although the Gonwa learners continued with the course in (slightly) greater numbers, towards the end of the first (2016) school term (18 March) their numbers had seriously dwindled. As the situation at both Delta and Gonwa worsened, the course instructor decided to discontinue the programme after the few remaining learners (in both groups) made no effort to confirm (via sms) whether they would be attending the remaining EAP lessons in the term. Importantly, the course instructor made two efforts to telephonically contact the learners (to confirm whether they would be attending), and on both occasions received no responses. The learners had communicated with the instructor via text messages on many occasions before, making it highly implausible that they had not responded due a communication error.

Importantly, in both groups, the majority of the learners who dropped out in 2016 had written highly accomplished essays in the first part of the course. Indeed, they were students who had the potential to study at university – and who had been told as much by the course instructor. Their decision to drop out was not, in any way, connected to the fact that they struggled with the course. Instead, as I shall later argue in Chapter 4, it was related to far deeper psychological issues that connected with their sense of agency and their willingness to actively seize control of their lives and their education. It is my claim that these same issues also affected the weaker students (most of whom had

³⁰ This attrition rate will receive a thorough analysis in Chapter 4.

dropped out in the first part of the EAP course) and therefore played the most causally significant role in their attrition as well.

Due to the disintegration of the EAP course in the 2016 academic year, the researcher decided to only analyse the *first* stage of the course. Although this change led to a drastic reduction in the original scope of the study, the first part of the EAP course nonetheless yielded a rich flow of data. Ultimately, this data allowed the researcher to draw strong conclusions about the impact of the EAP course on the learners' academic writing skills, and the causal factors which were most significant in determining the alarmingly high attrition rate that afflicted the study. In what follows, for the sake of brevity, I shall simply refer to the 'first stage of the EAP course' as 'the EAP course'.

3.5.3 Mechanics of the EAP course's implementation

The EAP course was an extra-curricular activity hosted on the school premises, and ran after school hours. It took place on two week-day afternoons per week. Both weekly sessions lasted for one and a half hours (from 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm). In the first session, students were introduced to a literary work. After this introduction, they received written information on the importance of a particular essay writing technique. They then received a written exercise which requested them to apply this technique in order to analyse the piece of literature. The students then completed a rough draft of the exercise in class hours. Upon the commencement of the second 'workshop' meeting of the week, the graded rough-drafts were returned to the students. The students were then given a chance to individually discuss their assignment with the EAP course instructor and to write up their final drafts.

Completed assignments were kept by the instructor. The overall grade that the students received for the course was determined by the cumulative mark that they received for all their graded final drafts.

3.6 Instrumentation

This study used a rich array of instruments to help improve the learners' academic writing skills. In essence, seven assignments or 'tasks' were designed to aid and assess the learners. These assignments had four main characteristics. Firstly, they provided the learners with a series of clearly delineated, atomised instructions, in order to a) make the process of writing more manageable and b) accentuate how an academic essay can be decomposed into a patterned series of mechanical steps. Secondly, although the early writing assignments in the course only required students to perform a few procedures (and thus did not result in the students writing fully formed essays), each successive assignment retained most of the old procedures and added new requirements. The assignments were thus cumulative: they grew in complexity as the course progressed. Thirdly, each writing assignment requested the learners to analyse a short piece of literature. Fourthly, the exercises required the learners to explicitly indicate when they used a specific writing technique (via a highlighted acronym placed in square brackets). Finally, although the questions were highly compartmentalised, the assignments required learners to produce smooth, unbroken paragraphs of text that resemble the paragraphs that appear in normal matric or university essays. Below I provide a summary of the specific writing skills and texts that each of the seven assignments focused on. From the second table onwards, the bold text represents new writing skills that are not present in any of the previous assignments:

Week One: First Assignment

Text: 'XXVI' by Fernando Pessoa

Writing Skills required to complete assignment:

- 1) Using 'Linking Words' (e.g. words like firstly, then, finally, etc.).

Week Two: Second Assignment:

Text: 'Eleven' by Sandra Cisneros

Required Writing Skills:

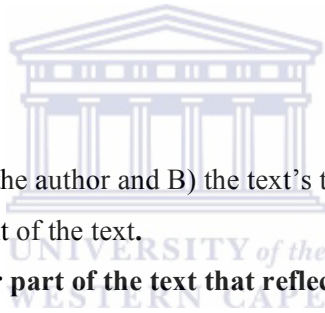
- 1) Using 'Linking Words'.
- 2) Referring to a) the name of the author and b) the text's title c) the genre.**
- 3) Identifying the main theme of the text.**
- 4) Rewriting the main events that express the theme.**
- 5) Explicitly relating these events to main theme/ argument.**

Week Three: Third Assignment

Text: An excerpt from 'Natural Theology' by William Paley

Required Writing Skills:

- 1) Using 'Linking Words'.
- 2) Referring to A) the name of the author and B) the text's title C) the genre.
- 3) Identifying the main argument of the text.
- 4) Paraphrasing the particular part of the text that reflects the main argument (as economically and accurately as possible).**
- 5) Explicitly relating these points to the main argument.



Week Four: Fourth Assignment:

Text: 'Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity' by Steve Biko

Required Writing Skills:

- 1) Using 'Linking Words.
- 2) Referring to A) the name of the author and B) the text's title C) the genre.
- 3) Identifying the two main arguments made in the text.**
- 4) Paraphrasing the particular part of the text that reflect the first main argument.**
- 5) Explicitly relating this information to the first main argument.**
- 6) Paraphrasing the particular part of the text that reflects the second main argument.**
- 7) Explicitly relating this information to the second main argument**

Week Five: Fifth Assignment:

Text: 'Hawk Roosting' by Ted Hughes

Required writing skills:

- 1) Using 'Linking Words'.
- 2) Referring to A) the name of the author and B) the text's title C) the genre.
- 3) Referring to the author's name in each sentence.**
- 4) Identifying the two main themes in the text.
- 5) Paraphrasing the particular part of the text that reflects first main theme.
- 6) Using two quoting techniques to provide further evidence that the first theme has been directly identified.**
- 7) Explicitly relating this information to the first main theme.
- 8) Paraphrasing the second main theme as economically and accurately as possible;
- 9) Using two quoting techniques to provide further evidence that the second theme has been directly identified.**
- 10) Explicitly relating these points to the second main theme.

Week Six: Sixth Assignment:

Text: 'The City' by Cavafy

Required Writing Skills:

- 1) Using 'Linking Words'.
- 2) Referring to A) the name of the author and B) the text's title and C) the genre.
- 3) Referring to the author's name in each sentence.
- 4) Identifying the text's two main themes.
- 5) **Using the word 'however' to A) signal a tension between the two themes and B) structure the paragraph divisions in the essay.**
- 6) Paraphrasing the particular part of the text that reflects first main theme.
- 7) Using two quoting techniques in relation to the first theme.
- 8) Explicitly relating this information to the first main theme.
- 9) Paraphrasing the particular part of the text that reflects the second main theme.
- 10) Using two quoting techniques in relation to the second main theme.
- 11) Explicitly relating these points to the second main theme.
- 12) **Writing a conclusion which evaluates the nature of the tension between the two themes.**

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Week Seven: Seventh Assignment

Text: 'Man's Place in Nature; The Two Infinities' (an excerpt) by Blaise Pascal

Required Writing Skills:

- 1) Using 'Linking Words'
- 2) Referring to A) the name of the author and B) the text's title C) the genre.
- 3) Referring to the author's name in each sentence.
- 4) **A sentence with (an attitude marker) that provides a general outline of what the text is about (without mentioning anything about the two main arguments.**
- 5) Identifying the two main argument made in the text.
- 6) Using the word 'However' to A) signal a tension between the two themes and B) structure the paragraph divisions in the essay.

Week Seven: Seventh Assignment (cont.)

- 7) Paraphrasing the particular part of the text that reflects first main argument.
- 8) Using two quoting techniques in relation to the first main argument.
- 9) Explicitly relating this information to the first main theme using a booster.**
- 10) Paraphrasing the particular part of the text that reflects second main argument.
- 11) Using two quoting techniques in relation to the second main argument.
- 12) Explicitly relating these points to the second main argument using a booster**
- 13) Writing a conclusion which evaluates the nature of the tension between the two themes**

In what follows, I provide the first three assignments that were given to the learners (assignments 4 -7 are available in appendices 3A-D). Although these assignments and texts could have *also* been placed in the appendices, I would like to include them in the main body of the thesis to emphasise their central importance to this study. In addition – without embedding them here – it would be extremely difficult to provide a conceptual ‘outline’ that does full justice to the nature of the assignments. Thus, while the above tables give a schematic impression of the assignments and texts that comprised the EAP course, it is only a blueprint and fails to give a three-dimensional representation of the assignments.

I have also opted for this approach since it seems to be the best way to represent the precise ways in which each assignment became incrementally more complex and required learners to ‘bolt’ on new writing techniques to pre-existing techniques that they learned in earlier assignments. In what follows, each assignment has three main components: a text (with a vocabulary list)³¹, notes explaining the importance of certain

³¹ For layout reasons, I have sometime changed the formatting of the original exercises that were given to the learners (in terms of font, spacing, etc.). To save space, I have also not included the vocabulary sheets that accompanied each assignment. In the below exercises the words in bold (with numbers) feature in the vocabulary list.

writing skills and a set of instructions. Every assignment in this part of the course had this kind of format.

Assignment 1: Text ('XXVI' by Fernando Pessoa)

Sometimes, on days of **perfect (1)** and **exact light (2)**,
When things are as **real (3)** as they can possibly be,
I slowly ask myself
Why I even **bother (4)** to **attribute (5)**
Beauty to **things (6)**.

Does a flower **really (7)** have beauty?
Does a fruit really have beauty?
No: they have only color and **form (8)**
And **existence (9)**.
Beauty is the name of something that doesn't exist.
But that I give to things in **exchange (10)** for the pleasure they
give me.
It means **nothing (11)**.
So why do I say about things: they're beautiful?

Yes, even I, who live only off living,
Am **unwittingly (12)** visited by the lies of men
Concerning things,
Concerning things that simply exist.

How hard to be just what we are and see nothing but the
Visible (13).

Assignment 1: Notes

In order to critically analyse a text, we need to know how to **summarise**. To summarise properly we must put our ideas in the **right order**. This requires '**linking words**'. Here are some examples of linking words:

In the **first** stanza Pessoa states...
In the **second** stanza he states...
In the **third** stanza he states...

The words **first**, **second** and **third** are **linking words**. If you use them you are showing your reader that you are trying to summarise the poem in the right order. Look what happens if you don't use linking words:

What Pessoa saying is that...
In another stanza he also says...
I also think he is trying to say...

The summary that uses linking words is **much better** than the summary that doesn't use them. The summary that uses linking words gives the reader the impression that the **whole** poem is being discussed in a **systematic way**. The summary that doesn't use linking-words gives the reader the impression that information could be **left out** and that statements are **not being put in the right order**. Linking words are also important because they link your claims to **particular** parts of the text. This gives your reader the impression that you are analysing the text **carefully**. Here are three more examples of summaries that use linking-words or phrases:

1.

Pessoa **begins** his poem by saying....
After this he says.....
His **final** point is that...

2.

At the start of the poem Pessoa says.....
The **next thing** he talks about is.....
Lastly he claims...

3.

Pessoa **introduces** his theme by saying that...
He **then** states that...
He **concludes** by saying....

Assignment 1: Notes (cont.)


Here is a small list of linking-words and phrases that you begin your summary with:

LIST A:

**first / firstly,
at the beginning / to begin with,
at the start / starts**

Here is a small list of linking-words and phrases that can be used after your first linking-words:

LIST B:



**second /secondly,
after /afterwards,
next,
then,
subsequently,**

Here is a list of linking-words and phrases that you can finish your summary with:

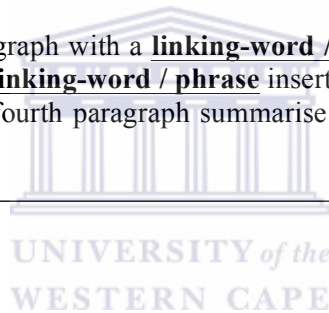
LIST C:

**final / finally,
last / lastly,
concludes / in conclusion,
at the end/ ends**

Assignment 1: Instructions

For your written exercise, I want you to summarise Pessoa's poem in four paragraphs. Before beginning the assignment carefully read all the instructions. Your summary should not exceed one page.

- 1) Begin your first paragraph with a **linking word /phrase** from list A. Immediately after writing your first **linking-word / phrase** insert and highlight a **[LW/P]** sign. [LW/P] stands for **linking word / phrase**. In the remainder of your first paragraph summarise the contents of the poem's first stanza.
- 2) Begin your second paragraph with a **linking-word /phrase** from list B. Immediately after writing your first **linking-word / phrase** insert and highlight a **[LW/P]** sign. In the remainder of your second paragraph summarise the contents of the poem's second stanza.
- 3) Begin your third paragraph with a **linking-word /phrase** from list B. Immediately after writing your first **linking-word / phrase** insert and highlight a **[LW/P]** sign. In the remainder of your third paragraph summarise the contents of the poem's third stanza.
- 4) Begin your fourth paragraph with a **linking-word /phrase** from list C. Immediately after writing your first **linking-word / phrase** insert and highlight a **[LW/P]** sign. In the remainder of your fourth paragraph summarise the contents of the poem's third stanza.



Assignment 2: Text ("Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros)

What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don't. You open your eyes and everything's just like yesterday, only it's today. And you don't feel eleven at all. You feel like you're still ten. And you are -- underneath the year that makes you eleven.

Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten. Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five. And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need to cry like if you're three, and that's okay. That's what I tell Mama when she's sad and needs to cry. Maybe she's feeling three.

Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one. That's how being eleven years old is.

Assignment 2: Text (cont.)

You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you. And you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the way it is.

Only today I wish I didn't have only eleven years rattling inside me like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box. Today I wish I was one hundred and two instead of eleven because if I was one hundred and two I'd have known what to say when Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk. I would've known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting there with that look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth.

"Whose is this?" Mrs. Price says, and she holds the red sweater up in the air for all the class to see. "Whose? It's been sitting in the coatroom for a month."

"Not mine," says everybody. "Not me."

"It has to belong to somebody," Mrs. Price keeps saying, but nobody can remember. It's an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope. It's maybe a thousand years old and even if it belonged to me I wouldn't say so.

Maybe because I'm skinny, maybe because she doesn't like me, that stupid Sylvia Saldivar says, "I think it belongs to Rachel." An ugly sweater like that, all raggedy and old, but Mrs. Price believes her. Mrs. Price takes the sweater and puts it right on my desk, but when I open my mouth nothing comes out.

"That's not, I don't, you're not...Not mine," I finally say in a little voice that was maybe me when I was four.

Maybe because I'm skinny, maybe because she doesn't like me, that stupid Sylvia Saldivar says, "I think it belongs to Rachel." An ugly sweater like that, all raggedy and old, but Mrs. Price believes her. Mrs. Price takes the sweater and puts it right on my desk, but when I open my mouth nothing comes out.

"That's not, I don't, you're not...Not mine," I finally say in a little voice that was maybe me when I was four.

"Of course it's yours," Mrs. Price says. "I remember you wearing it once." Because she's older and the teacher, she's right and I'm not.

Not mine, not mine, not mine, but Mrs. Price is already turning to page thirty-two, and math problem number four. I don't know why but all of a sudden I'm feeling sick inside, like the part of me that's three wants to come out of my eyes, only I squeeze them shut tight and bite down on my teeth real hard and try to remember today I am eleven, eleven. Mama is making a cake for me tonight, and when Papa comes home everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you.

But when the sick feeling goes away and I open my eyes, the red sweater's still sitting there like a big red mountain. I move the red sweater to the corner of my desk with my ruler. I move my pencil and books and eraser as far from it as possible. I even move my chair a little to the right. Not mine, not mine, not mine.

Assignment 2: Text (cont.)

In my head I'm thinking how long till lunchtime, how long till I can take the red sweater and throw it over the school yard fence, or even leave it hanging on a parking meter, or bunch it up into a little ball and toss it in the alley. Except when math period ends Mrs. Price says loud and in front of everybody, "Now Rachel, that's enough," because she sees I've shoved the red sweater to the tippy-tip corner of my desk and it's hanging all over the edge like a waterfall, but I don't care.

"Rachel," Mrs. Price says. She says it like she's getting mad. "You put that sweater on right now and no more nonsense."

"But it's not--"

"Now!" Mrs. Price says.

This is when I wish I wasn't eleven, because all the years inside of me ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two and one the back of my eyes when I put one arm through one sleeve of the sweater that smells like cottage cheese, and then the other arm through the other and stand there with my arms apart like if the sweater hurts me and it does, all itchy and full of germs that aren't even mine.

That's when everything I've been holding in since this morning, since when Mrs. Price put the sweater on my desk, finally lets go, and all of a sudden I'm crying in front of everybody. I wish I was invisible but I'm not. I'm eleven and it's my birthday today and I'm crying like of everybody. I put my head down on the desk and bury my face in my stupid clown-sweater arms. My face all hot and spit coming out of my mouth because I can't stop the little animal noises from coming out of me, until there aren't any more tears left in shaking like when you have the hiccups, and my whole head hurts like when you drink milk too fast.

But the worst part is right before the bell rings for lunch. That stupid Phyllis Lopez, who is even dumber than Sylvia remembers the red sweater is hers! I take it off right away and give it to her, only Mrs. Price pretends like everything's okay.

Today I'm eleven. There's cake Mama's making for tonight, and when Papa comes home from work we'll eat and everybody will sing only it's too late.

I'm eleven today. I'm eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one, but I wish I was one hundred and two. I wish I was anything but eleven, because I want today to be far away already, far away like a runaway balloon, like a tiny *o* in the sky, so tiny-tiny you have to close your eyes to see it.

Assignment 2: Instructions

For your written exercise, I want you to summarise Cisneros' short story in **two** paragraphs. Before beginning the assignment carefully read **all** the instructions. Your exercise should not exceed one page.

FIRST PARAGRAPH

Begin your first paragraph by mentioning A) the name of the author and B) the name of the piece of writing and C) the genre of the piece of writing. Immediately after providing this information insert and highlight a **[ATGR]** sign. [ATGR] stands for 'Author, Title and Genre Reference'. In the remainder of the sentence (and any subsequent sentences should you need them) **use your own words** to establish the main theme of the story. Once you have established the main theme of the story, insert and highlight a **[MT]** sign. [MT] stands for 'Main Theme'.

SECOND PARAGRAPH

Before writing your second paragraph, identify on what page(s) Cisneros provides a central event that explores or reflects this theme. Then, in the first sentence of your second paragraph, write down this page number. After writing down the page number insert and highlight the **[LW/P]** sign. Next, **using your own words**, describe the particular events or ideas that express this theme (this should take a number of sentences). Once you have done this insert and highlight a **[MTD]** sign. [MTD] stands for 'Main Theme Development'. In the very next sentence of your summary (still in the second paragraph), explain exactly why these incidents in the story reflect the main theme identified in your first paragraph. Once you have done this insert and highlight an **[MTR]** sign. MTR stands for 'Main Theme

Assignment 3: Text (An Excerpt from "Natural Theology" by William Paley)

In crossing a **heath (1)**, suppose I **pitched (2)** my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there: I might possibly answer, that, for any thing I knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever [...]. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be **inquired (3)** how the watch happened to be in that place; I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given - that, for any thing I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? Why is it not as **admissible (4)** in the second case, as in the first? For this reason, and for no other, **viz (5)** that, when we come to **inspect (6)** the watch, we **perceive (7)** (what we could not discover in the stone) that its **several (8)** parts are [...] put together for a purpose, that they are so **formed (9)** and **adjusted (10)** as to produce **motion (11)**, and that motion so **regulated (12)** as to point out the hour of the day; that, if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, of a different size from what they are, or placed after any other manner, or in any other order, than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it.[...]

Assignment 3: Text (cont.)

This mechanism being observed [...] the **inference (13)** [to draw] we think is **inevitable (14)**, that the watch must have had a **maker (15)**: that there must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer: who **comprehended (16)** its construction, and designed its use.

[...] Every observation which was made in our first chapter concerning the watch may be repeated with strict **propriety (17)** concerning the eye, concerning animals, concerning plants, concerning, indeed, all the organised parts of the works of nature.

Assignment 3 Notes:

In the written exercise for this week, I want to focus on your **paraphrasing** skills. Although the previous two exercises have already require you to re-write sections of texts using your own words, for this week's exercise I want you to concentrate especially hard on improving your paraphrasing skills.

If you paraphrase a sentence or paragraph you make the same point that the author does, but using **fewer** and more **basic/simple** words. For example, in the second paragraph of page 622, Rachels makes the following point:

There is a general theoretical point here, namely, that there are some moral rules that all societies will have in common, because those rules are necessary for society to exist. The rules against lying and murder are two examples. And in fact, we do find these rules in force in all viable cultures. Cultures may differ in what they regard as legitimate exceptions to the rules, but this disagreement exists against a background of agreement on the larger issues. Therefore, it is a mistake to overestimate the amount of difference between cultures. Not every moral rule can vary from society to society (93 words).

I can paraphrase this paragraph in the following manner:

Rachel claims that a society cannot exist without some moral laws being in place and that consequently all societies will share certain moral laws. (e.g. rules against lying and stealing) [29 words]

Now, there may not be a huge difference between saying something in 93 words and saying something in 29 words. However, if we had to paraphrase another twenty paragraphs, we could end up saying the same thing as the author in a much, much shorter space and time. We would also be able to say the same thing more simply and clearly. Furthermore, by using our own words we would show our reader that we understand the article, and that we are not just copying it. So, to be able to paraphrase something is very, very important.

Assignment 3: Instructions

For your exercise, I want you to analyse Paley's argument in three paragraphs. Before starting your exercise, carefully read **all** the instructions.

FIRST PARAGRAPH

Begin your first paragraph by mentioning A) the name of the author and B) the name of the piece of writing and C) the genre of the piece of writing. Immediately after providing this information insert and highlight a **[ATGR]** sign. [ATGR] stands for 'Author, Title and Genre Reference'. In the remainder of the sentence (and any subsequent sentences should you need them) **use your own words** to establish the text's main argumentative point. Once you have done this, insert and highlight a **[MAP]** sign. [MAP] stands for 'Main Argumentative Point'.

SECOND PARAGRAPH

Start your second paragraph with a linking word/phrase. After writing this down insert and highlight the **[LW/P]** sign. Next, **using your own words**, describe Paley's argument in the **first** paragraph of the text (this argument is fairly complex, so it should take you **at least** five or six sentences to do this).

THIRD PARAGRAPH

Start your second paragraph with a linking word/phrase. After writing this down insert and highlight the **[LW/P]** sign. Next, **using your own words**, describe Paley's argument in the **second** paragraph of the text. Once you have done this insert and highlight a **[MAPD]** sign. [MAPD] stands for 'Main Argumentative Point Development'. In the very next sentence of your summary (still in the third paragraph), explain exactly why the argument you have just described relates back to the Main Argumentative Point you identified in your first paragraph. Once you have done this insert and highlight an **[MAPR]** sign. [MAPR] stands for 'Main Argumentative Point Referral'.

3.6.1 Pre-intervention instruments

This study also relied upon qualitative data to evaluate the degree to which the course impacted upon the learners' academic writing skills. This qualitative approach hinged on a pre-intervention essay-writing sample that the researcher received from all learners before they officially enrolled in the EAP course.

The writing sample was obtained in the following manner. First, the researcher handed out copies of a simply worded poem and read through it twice (aloud). Next, learners were given a vocabulary sheet that explained the meanings of potentially difficult words (the researcher read through this vocabulary sheet twice and vetted any further questions that the learners had about the meanings of the words). Finally, the learners were given the deliberately general instruction to “write an essay” about the poem. This instruction was kept general so that the researcher could gain an insight into whether the learners were primed to associate text-orientated essay-writing with an informal or academic writing style. This is the text (with vocabulary) that the learners were given forty minutes to write an essay about

CANDLES

The days of the future stand before us
like a line of burning candles –
golden candles, warm with life.

Behind them stand the days of our past,
a pitiful row of candles extinguished,
the nearest still sending up their smoke:
cold and melted, withered sticks.

I don't want to look; their image makes me sad,
it saddens me to recall their kindling.
I look ahead at the ones still burning.

I don't want to turn and see, with horror,
how quickly the line of shadow lengthens,
how quickly the number of snuffed candles grows.

C.P Cavafy (1863-1933)

VOCABULARY:

- 1) Pitiful – sad, deserving of pity
- 2) Extinguished – no longer burning
- 3) Withered – limp, shrunken, thin
- 4) Kindling – burning
- 5) Horror – terror, extreme fright
- 6) Snuffed – extinguished

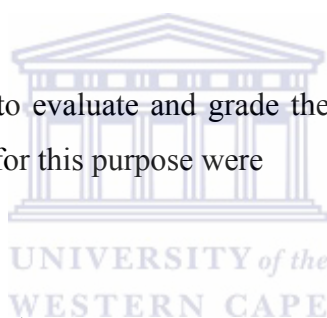
At both Delta High and Gonwa High, the writing samples produced by the participants displayed striking similarities. Specifically, many of the participants struggled to A) adopt an impersonal register, B) generate an appropriate thematic perspective on the text and C) write in a structured manner. Through further analysis of these broadly defined problem areas, it was possible for the researcher to create a fairly fine-grained taxonomy of the kinds of errors that the students were (on average) making most frequently. Furthermore, by examining whether the participant's post-intervention essays also displayed these errors, it was possible for the researcher to give a rich qualitative assessment of the degree to which the course *improved* the participants' academic writing skills. A detailed account of all these findings will be provided in Chapter 4.

3.7 Procedure of analysis

This study developed criteria to evaluate and grade the students' written work for the EAP course. The criteria used for this purpose were

- Instructions (4 marks)
- Comprehension (3 marks)
- Coherence or grammar (3 marks)
- Feedback sensitivity (2 marks)

The *Instructions* criterion referred to the learners' ability to accurately follow the instructions in the writing assignment. The *Comprehension* criterion referred to the learners' ability to demonstrate a clear and complete understanding of the text they were writing about. The *coherency* criterion referred to the learners' ability to write grammatically correct sentences. Finally, the *Feedback sensitivity* criterion referred to the learners' ability to incorporate the course instructor's grammatical and conceptual feedback into their final drafts.



Since the EAP course aimed to boost the learners' level of preparedness for matric subjects like English FAL, the appropriacy of these criteria can be substantiated by referring to the marking rubrics that are used to assess the essays of Grade 12 learners in the matric English FAL Paper 3 exam (see appendix 4A). These rubrics have three main categories: *Content & Planning*, *Language, Style & Editing* and *Structure*. All three of these categories harmonise with the grading system used in this study.

Firstly, the *Content & Planning* criterion used in the Grade 12 rubric aligns with the *Comprehension* criterion (used in this study), as both criteria measure the degree to which a learner understands a topic or text. For example, in the Grade 12 rubric, a learner is awarded an "Outstanding" grade (80%-100%) if the content of their essay shows "impressive insight into a topic".

Secondly, both the *Coherency* criterion (used in this study) and the *Language, Style & Editing* criterion used in the Grade 12 rubric overlap, insofar as both emphasise the importance of writing grammatically correct sentences. Thus, according to the Grade 12 essay marking rubric, a learner is awarded an "Outstanding grade (80-100%) if their "punctuation is effectively used" and their "choice of words [is] highly appropriate".

Thirdly, this study's *Feedback Sensitivity* criterion connects to important aspects of both the *Content & Planning* and *Language, Style & Editing* criteria used in the Grade 12 assessment rubric. Specifically, insofar as the *Feedback Sensitivity* criterion (used in this study) measured the students' ability to edit their work (in accordance with feedback) and produce a final draft that was significantly better than their rough draft, it prioritised the importance of A) planning and drafting, and B) editing. The ability to use these techniques when writing an essay is identified in the both the *Content & Planning* and *Language, Style & Editing* criteria used in the Grade 12 assessment rubric. Thus, if a learner is to score an "Outstanding" grade in the *Content & Planning* criterion their "planning and/or drafting [must produce] a virtually flawless essay". With regard to the

Language, Style & Editing criterion, an ‘Outstanding’ grade is earned if an essay is “virtually error-free following proof-reading and editing”.

Finally, since the *Instructions* criterion (used in this study) measured the learners’ ability to adhere to instructions that would help them to write highly structured essays, it clearly links up with the *Structure* criterion in the Grade 12 rubric. Thus, some of the instructions used in this study required learners to parse their written work into paragraphs that reflected the thematic structure of texts. In addition, these instructions also ensured that general introductory claims made about a text were subsequently substantiated by making reference to particular details that bore out these claims. These skills clearly link up with those identified by the *Structure* criterion in the Grade 12 rubric. Specifically, an outstanding grade is awarded in the *Structure* criterion if there is a “coherent development of topic” and paragraphs are “coherently structured”.

3.8 Qualitative methodology

As mentioned in Chapter 1, one of this study’s main objectives was to provide data on the kinds of difficulties that intervention programmes at non-fee paying schools encounter. A qualitative methodology was adopted to answer this question since – from the commencement of the EAP course – it quickly became apparent that qualitative data would provide the most direct way to chronicle many of the behavioural tendencies that destabilised the intervention. In addition, qualitative data is deeply sensitised to the subjective point of view of individuals. In the words of Denzin and Lincoln

Both qualitative and quantitative researchers are concerned with the individual’s point of view. However, qualitative investigators think they can get closer to the actors perspective through detailed interviewing and observation. They argue that quantitative researchers are seldom able to capture their subjects’ perspective because they have to rely on more remote, inferential empirical methods and materials.

(2000: 10)

In line with this observation, the researcher reasoned that qualitative data would cut closer to the bone of the participants’ experience of the EAP course, and so vividly

render many of the subjective attitudes, experiences and beliefs that mediated their outward social and academic behaviour.

The primary qualitative data-gathering methods used in this study derive from Glaser and Strauss's (1967) claim that theory should be 'grounded' in data rather than assumed at the start of research. This gives rise to an approach to field-work in which "research is essentially a matter of immersing oneself in a naturally occurring set of events in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the situation" (Singleton, Straits & McAllister 1988: 11). Although such an approach appears to be atheoretical, Gubriem and Holstien (1997) correctly note that it is deeply reliant on "naturalism", a theory predicated on the notion that presuppositions must be minimized "in order to witness subject's worlds on their own terms" (34).

While it is unrealistic to suppose that any researcher can enter a field without expectations and beliefs that will subjectively colour the social phenomena under analysis – and while it is equally true that the researchers' very presence will exert a foreign influence on subjects' behaviour (Strong 1979) – within the particular context of this study, a naturalistic approach is entirely defensible. Firstly, due to the interventionist nature of this study, it was never the researcher's intention to be a neutral presence or to observe the learners in a naturally occurring school environment. Rather, the whole point of the study was to see how the students would act in a novel academic environment mediated by a course instructor who had very different expectations and teaching materials to those the learners were typically accustomed to. Secondly, the researcher's primary qualitative findings contradicted many of his starting expectations. For example, at the start of the EAP course, the instructor anticipated that the primary obstacles that would stop the learners from engaging with the course would be cognitive. However, it soon became apparent that social and behavioural issues – in combination with the whole culture of learning at both schools – were the primary impediment for the learners successfully engaging with the course. This central finding was so novel and in opposition to the 'cognitivist' stance that the researcher implicitly

adopted at the start of the course, that it is deeply improbable that it was a mere offshoot of a pre-existing belief.

In terms of the actual data gathering methods that were used, the researcher relied heavily upon 'triangulation'. According to Denzin (1978: 291) triangulation allows for "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon". The triangulation metaphor was originally derived from military procedures which used a range of reference points to determine the position of a single object (Smith 1975), and relies on the epistemic assumption that "researchers can improve the accuracy of their judgments by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon" (Jick 1979: 602). The most popular type of triangulation is referred to as the "between (or across) methods type" (Denzin 1978: 302). This approach is a means of cross-validation in which *distinct* methods are used to study the same dimension of research. For example, in an organisational context, distinct methods (such as interviews, observations and the evaluation of performance records) may be deployed to understand a single phenomenon (i.e. the effectiveness of a leader).

This study opted for an orthodox "between (or across) methods type" of triangulation. Specifically, the researcher relied upon observation, interviews and theoretical writings on agency when analysing the cause of attrition. These three (distinct) methodologies converged on the same finding, and as a result of this agreement, allowed the researcher to "provide a more certain portrayal of the [...] phenomenon" (Jick 1979: 602) under analysis. In addition, these qualitative methodologies allowed the researcher to interpret the study's main grade-based quantitative findings in a non-obvious manner that accentuated how – despite appearances – many of the students' grades were less low than they outwardly appeared to be. In line with its qualitative aspirations, by accentuating the points of intersection between these different streams of data, the researcher hoped to provide a unified, descriptively "thick" account of the difficulties faced by the intervention project.

Finally, it is important to mention that throughout the intervention, the course instructor maintained a detailed fieldwork journal in which he regularly noted a range of salient behavioural tendencies that he observed in the learners.

3.9 Ethical considerations:

This study followed the three main ethical guidelines set by the Belmont Report (1979).

Firstly, the researcher treated all participants as autonomous individuals. Consequently, the researcher obtained informed consent from all the individuals who agreed to participate in the study. Since the participants in the study were teenagers, consent was also obtained from parents or guardians via a letter informing them of the nature of the research and requesting their permission for their children to participate. Importantly, before this selection process even began, the researcher gained explicit consent to enter the research site from the principal/school governing body.

Secondly, the researcher ensured that no harm came to the participants. This involved a risk assessment process which – in accordance with the Belmont Report – required the researcher to reflect upon (1) the validity of the assumptions on which the research was based, (2) the nature of the risk and (3) the likelihood of potential harms outweighing potential benefits.

Thirdly, the principle of justice was upheld. As a consequence, there was no unwarranted discrimination when it comes to selecting participants.

Importantly, student participants were also informed that all of the information they provided would remain strictly confidential. Thus, when information concerning their academic performance or views is referred to in this thesis, pseudonyms will be used to protect their identity.

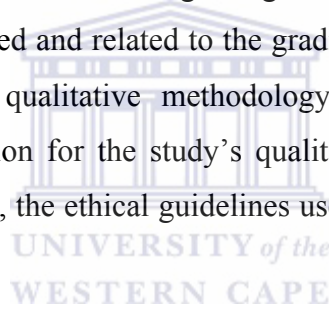
Finally, the researcher also developed a consent form. The form contained the following information (taken from Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger 2005):

1. An explanation of the purpose of the study, the number of participants that will be recruited, the reason that they were selected, the amount of time that they will be involved, their responsibilities, and all experimental procedures.
2. A description of any potential risks to the participant.
3. A description of any potential benefits to the participant or to others that may reasonably be expected from the research.
4. A description of alternative procedures or interventions, if any, that are available and that may be advantageous to the participant.
5. A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the participant will be maintained.
6. A clear statement explaining that participation is completely voluntary and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled.
7. A statement that any new findings discovered during the course of the research that may relate to the participant's willingness to continue participation will be provided to the participant.

3.10 Summary

In this chapter an account of the study's research design was given. To accomplish this, a justification for the study's mix-methods and case study approach was put forward.

The two schools (Delta High and Gonwa High) which participated in the study were then profiled. These profiles included socio-economic information about the schools' location, size, (in terms of the learner populations), official medium of instruction and matric syllabus. In this section, information about Delta High and Gonwa High being classified as non-fee paying schools was also discussed. This was done to further emphasise how both schools could, with justification, be labelled as economically disadvantaged. Next, the timing and duration of the intervention, the size of the selection groups, the research sites that were used and the mechanics of the EAP course's implementation were reviewed. An overview of the instrumentation used in the study followed. Apart from a broad conceptual summary of the instruments used to aid the learners in the development of their academic writing skills, this section of the chapter included a presentation of some of the actual tasks that the learners completed while participating in the EAP course. The grading criteria used to assess the learners writing tasks were then analysed and related to the grading criteria used to mark matric essays. Finally, the study's qualitative methodology and ethical guidelines were explored. While the justification for the study's qualitative methodology appealed to theoretical work on naturalism, the ethical guidelines used by this study appealed to the Belmont report.



In the next chapter, the EAP course's relevance to matric and first-year university will be established through a comparative analysis of matric exam papers, first-year university assignments and the writing skills that were developed through the EAP course material.

CHAPTER FOUR

EAP AND ITS RELEVANCE TO MATRIC

4.1 Introduction

The EAP course (implemented in this particular study) aimed to transmit writing skills that could boost matric readiness for subjects like English FAL and History. In order to demonstrate how the skills learnt in the EAP course can be functionally extended to help prepare learners with these subjects, the researcher conceptualised the requirements for matric in a very specific manner. The researcher thus adopted an approach that relied heavily on ‘frequency analyses’ of previous matric papers (i.e. analyses of the frequency with which certain kinds of matric questions appear). This choice was made for two interrelated reasons. Firstly, a frequency analysis provides a clear and effective method for detecting certain patterns and structural regularities that occur in matric exams. Secondly, this understanding can be used to generate certain predictions about exams. These predictions can radically reduce the volume of content that learners need to know in order to pass exams. Crucially, in turn, this can enable the learners to focus all their attention on *specific* parts of the curriculum and develop *specialised* skills to cope with them.

A further advantage of such an approach is its conceptual simplicity. Due to this simplicity, the function and importance of a frequency analysis can be explained to learners using a short, simply worded note. In this respect, consider the following example:

We can predict many things about your final matric exams by performing a ‘frequency analysis’. When a frequency analysis is performed, we look at previous exam papers and try to work out whether certain kinds of questions appear every year. Doing this allows us to predict the kinds of questions that will appear in future exams. For example:

In every single Life Sciences exam from 2010-2014, there has been a question about the function of red blood cells. Since this question appears so frequently, we can confidently predict that it will also appear in the 2015 Life Sciences exam.

In the EAP course, the participants acquired a rich compendium of essay-writing skills. By the end of the course, the successful deployment of these skills enabled the learners to write fully-fledged essays about complex literary texts. This next section will give a detailed analysis of how these skills overlap with many of the writing skills required in the matric English FAL and History exams. Throughout this section, frequency analyses of (actual) matric English and History exams will be used to identify the best possible ways in which the exams can potentially intersect with the EAP course.

4.2.1 English FAL Paper 3 (Section A)

A 2010-2014 frequency analysis of the English FAL matric exam papers shows that (in Section A) learners always have the option to answer a question on the following essay categories – Argumentative, Discursive, Narrative, Reflective and Picture- based. Out of all the essay categories, the EAP course intersects most directly with the Argumentative essay. This is because, when writing an argumentative essay, learners need to (1) identify their central claim in the opening paragraph of their essays, (2) paraphrase and refer back to earlier claims, (3) use appropriate paragraph divisions and (4) write conclusions that emphasise a clear-cut verdict on a given topic. These writing skills all featured prominently in the assignments that the learners completed in the EAP course. It should also be mentioned that the essay section of English FAL Paper 1 requires learners to produce a rough draft and final draft of an essay (irrespective of the type of essay that is chosen [e.g. Discursive, Argumentative, Narrative, etc.]). Producing a rough draft and final draft of an exercise was integral to the EAP course, and so here again, there was a noticeable overlap. Finally, the rubric used to mark essays highlights the importance of “insight”, “thought-provoking ideas” and a “critical awareness of [the] impact of language”. Throughout the EAP course the importance of these features of essay writing were continually impressed upon the learners through the oral interactions that the researcher had with the participants.

To emphasise the extent of the overlap between the EAP course and the matric argumentative essay, I have designed an exercise which could be used by a matric learner to write about an argumentative essay on *any* topic. Importantly, this exercise requires a learner to utilise the EAP writing skills mentioned earlier. Thus, to successfully complete the exercise a learner must (1) identify their central claim at the start of the essays, (2) paraphrase and refer back to earlier claims, (3) use appropriate paragraph divisions and (4) write conclusions that emphasise a clear-cut verdict on a given topic. Furthermore, in order to successfully accomplish all these steps, the learners must follow atomised instructions that closely resemble the instructions that feature in the EAP course

Instructions for writing an argumentative essay:

1. No matter what essay topic you get, you can write the following introduction:

*In this essay I shall offer a balanced and impartial account of whether **[INSERT ESSAY TOPIC HERE]**. After exploring a number of reasons why we might think **[INSERT VIEW YOU WILL DISAGREE WITH]**, I shall respond to all of these points and ultimately argue that **[INSERT VIEW YOU WILL AGREE WITH]**. I shall conclude by briefly touching upon the broader implications of this debate.*

2. In your second paragraph, let **X** stand for the view that you will ultimately disagree with. Begin your second paragraph with the following sentence:

*Here are three reasons why someone may plausibly think that **X**.*

3. Then, begin your next sentence with the linking-word “Firstly” and list the first reason why someone may believe **X**. Changing only the linking word that you begin your sentences with, repeat this pattern when providing the second and third reason why someone may believe **X**.
4. In your third paragraph, let **Y** stand for the view that you will ultimately agree with. Begin your second paragraph with the following sentence: However, in my view all of these reasons can be rejected.
5. Then, begin your next sentence with the linking phrase “To begin with” and provide an argument for **Y**. To provide an argument for **Y**, simply provide a reason why the first point you used to establish **X** is wrong (when you refer back to **X**, describe it using different words). Changing only the linking word that you begin your sentences with, repeat this pattern when providing the second and third reason why **Y** is correct.

Instructions for writing an argumentative essay (cont.):

3. Begin your fourth paragraph with the following sentence:

In conclusion, it is worth noting that there is perhaps an even more fundamental reason why we should not believe X

4. After writing this sentence, state what this reason is (this should take at least two sentences). Then write the following sentence:

Considered in conjunction with all the earlier objection I raised, it is clearly and emphatically the case that X is faulty and ill conceived. As a consequence, the view that Y appears to be a far more reasonable and defensible position to hold

4.2.2 English FAL Paper 3 (Section B & C)

A 2010-2014 frequency analysis of Section B of English FAL Paper 1 (the section entitled ‘Longer Transactional Texts’) revealed that – out of a possible 13 question categories – two question types reliably emerge in most final matric exams. The first question type requires learners to write formal letters, while the second question type requires learners to write either informal or formal dialogues (between characters). Unlike the argumentative essay, however, these writing formats have fewer obvious overlaps with the EAP course. Thus, while both the dialogue question and the formal letter require the production of rough drafts and clearly delineated paragraphs, they do not *explicitly* draw upon any other skills that were transmitted in the course. Nevertheless, despite this, it is worth pointing out that the marking rubric used to assess these questions prioritises “[focused] disciplined writing” and “coherent content and ideas”. *These* virtues of academic writing were part and parcel of the EAP course, since both the assignments and oral interactions with the course instructor gave the learners ample opportunity to become increasingly conscientised to them.

A very similar pattern to the one described above emerges when Section C of English FAL Paper 1 is examined. Once again, a frequency analysis revealed that two question types (out of a possible eight) emerge in the majority of final matric exams. These two recurrent questions are quite similar, as both questions require learners to adopt a bullet-point format in which either *directions* (Category 1) or *instructions* (Category 2) must be written out. As with the formal letter and dialogue questions in Section B of the paper, the only explicit overlap between the EAP course and the skills required for these questions lies in the production of rough drafts and the parsing of information into cleanly differentiated segments. Again, though, this lack of congruence is slightly misleading, as the marking rubric for Section C makes it apparent that both questions are loaded with implicit requirements that draw heavily on academic writing skills. Since these skills are identical to the ones already cited in relation to the marking rubric for Section B, there is no need to quote them directly again.

4.2.3 English FAL Paper 2 (Section B)

English FAL Paper 2 deals exclusively with literature set works. In the first part (s) of the paper (Section A & B) learners have the option to answer questions about *either* a novel *or* a play. The assigned network at both Delta High and Gonwa High was John Kani's play *Nothing But the Truth* (a network that is assigned at most South African schools in which English FAL is studied). In years gone by, in Section B (as with Section A) learners had the option to either answer contextual questions or an essay-based question on the play. However, in 2015, the essay question was removed and the contextual question became compulsory. The decision by The Department of Basic Education to annex the essay question is not especially surprising given the obvious discrepancy in difficulty levels between the contextual and essay-based questions. This difficulty arises because there is a huge amount of variability in the essay questions from one year to the next. To take just two examples, consider the 2012 and 2013 essay questions on *Nothing But The Truth*:

2013:

The issues of truth and reconciliation are at the centre of the play, *NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH*. Write an essay in which you discuss this statement. In your essay, refer to specific incidents in the play.

2012:

In the play *NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH*, Siphon could have dealt with some of the issues that troubled him in a different way. Discuss this statement in an essay.

These essay questions focus on strikingly different aspects of the play, and (according to the memorandum) require the learners to undertake a *sustained, structured and detailed* enquiry into the specific events, themes and relationships that constitute the focus area of the question. In contrast, the contextual questions are highly predictable, and (mostly) only require learners to have a rudimentary grasp of the play's characters, structure and themes. Specifically, the contextual questions come in four main category types: (1) questions that require learners to have knowledge of events that come before or after a text extract; (2) questions that require an understanding of a character or a theme within the context of the play as a whole; (3) questions in which the body-language or emotional state of a character must be inferred [on the basis of a text extract]; (4) questions that require the formulation of an opinion or point of view on a particular event or relationship in the play. Of these four category-types, the second is the only one that requires in-depth knowledge of the inner workings of the play. However, the significance of these more difficult questions is neutralised by the fact that, out of the possible 35 marks allocated to the contextual questions, it is highly unlikely that more than 6 marks will be allocated to category type-two questions.

Although it is not immediately apparent how the contextual questions link up with the academic writing skills taught in the EAP course, the fog begins to lift when one considers that writing a paraphrased summary of the play fully equips learners to answer most contextual questions. This is because paraphrasing and summarising helps with the internalisation and memorisation of central events, interactions and character-based dialogues in a text. Thus, through possessing their *own* paraphrased summary of a text, there is a far greater chance that a learner will be able to comprehend and memorise all the contextual information needed to grasp the emotional psychology of

characters, as well as the causal relationships between events. Being in confident possession of this information greatly increases the chances that learners will be able to cope with the question categories that feature in the contextual section of English FAL Paper 2. Furthermore, it is worth emphasising that the successful acquisition of all this information hinges on two crucial academic writing skills: the ability to successfully paraphrase and summarise texts. Since *every* exercise in the EAP course required learners to execute these skills, there is a clear and significant overlap between the writing skills needed to answer the contextual questions and the writing skills transmitted in the EAP course.

4.2.4 English FAL Paper 2 (Section C)

In the third and fourth part(s) of the paper (Sections C & D) learners have the option to answer questions about *either* short stories *or* poems. Importantly, in Section C & D there has never been the option to write essays, as questions in these sections have always been contextual (i.e. based on a short excerpt of a text). At Delta High and Gonwa High the English teachers always choose to focus on the short stories (Section C). Importantly, most schools in which English FAL is studied choose to focus on the short stories as well.

In a manner closely resembling the other English papers, a frequency analysis revealed that there are many recurring question types in Section C. In addition, once more, there is a high degree of contiguity between the skills required to answer these question types and the skills transmitted by the EAP course. Interestingly, too, these question types closely resemble the ones already examined in relation to *Nothing But The Truth*, and primarily consist of (1) questions that require knowledge of events that precede or follow a text extract; (2) questions that require learners to comment on the way in which particular events reflect overarching themes, and (3) questions that require the formulation of an opinion or point of view on a particular event or relationship in the story.

Due to this overlap – for all of the reasons already listed in relation to *Nothing But The Truth* – paraphrasing skills can be highly useful (see preceding section). In addition, in the EAP course, learners were often required to identify the main themes of literary works and to relate these themes to particular events. This skill set clearly intersects with the reading and writing skills needed to answer question type two.

4.2.5 English FAL Paper 1 (Sections B & C)

In English FAL Paper 1 comprehensions feature prominently, as well as an array of questions that test learners' knowledge of grammar, figures of speech and other linguistic conventions. Although it has a far broader scope than the other two English papers, a frequency analysis of Paper 1 reveals that there are certain types of questions that reliably emerge in each final matric exam. After giving a brief description of these question-categories, I shall explain how each one of them requires writing and reading skills that learners' acquired in the EAP course.

From 2010-2014, the comprehension question for Paper 1 came from magazines and newspapers. These articles are always about real events, places and people. In all the comprehensions there are 'fact retrieval' questions. Such questions merely require learners to look for a factual answer to a question in a certain part of a text. However, this answer cannot just be imported wholesale. Above each set of comprehension questions there is a note which states that learners must "Answer ALL the questions in [their] OWN WORDS". Seen in this light, paraphrasing is an essential component for answering fact retrieval questions.

In the EAP course learners gained extensive practice in responding to questions that *also* required them to retrieve and paraphrase information from a text. Specifically, when constructing the body of their essays, learners were expected to identify and paraphrase information that reflected the main theme (or argument) identified in their introduction.

In the comprehension section of the exam there are also frequently ‘inference’ based questions. These are more difficult questions, as learners cannot simply locate their answers in the text. Instead, they require learners to possess some general knowledge and to ‘derive’ what the answer is.

The first part of the EAP gave learners ample opportunities to develop such inference based skills. This is because – in relation to many of the texts – learners had to infer themes or arguments that were not explicitly stated in the texts. Rather, these themes and arguments had to be logically deduced on the basis of the textual evidence.

Within the comprehension section of the exam, there are also questions that require learners to formulate their own opinion and judgement on an excerpt. Once again, the EAP course gave learners considerable practice with this as many of the exercises from the first phase of the course required the learners (in their concluding paragraphs) to generate their *own* evaluation on thematic and logical tensions within the assigned texts.

Outside the comprehension section of Paper 1, there is always a summary section that requires learners to summarise the contents of a short article in bullet point form. The importance of summarising in the EAP course has already been discussed in relation to *Nothing But The Truth*, so there is no need to give another account of the nature of this convergence.

Finally, in the second part of Paper 1, there are a multitude of frequently occurring question types that focus on grammar. These include (1) ‘Error correction questions’ (in which learners must detect domain-general grammatical errors in sentences, (2) ‘Tense correction questions’ (in which learners must re-write a sentence in the past, present or future tense, (3) Sentence joining questions (in which learners must combine two separate sentences using a missing word or phrase and (4) ‘Missing word questions’ (in which learners must fill in an omitted word in a given sentence. Through editing their

rough drafts and receiving live oral feedback from the course instructor during class-time, the learners were continually alerted to these kinds of grammatical errors in the EAP course.

4.3 History papers 1 & 2 (Essay question)

In contrast to English FAL, a frequency analysis reveals that the two final exam papers that comprise matric History are virtually identical in terms of their structure and question-types.³² Specifically, both History papers contain two broad types of questions (contextual questions and essay questions), and both papers give learners the option of either writing two essays and one contextual question, or one essay and two contextual questions.

With regard to the History essay, it is possible to develop an essay writing methodology that can be applied to *any* essay topic and that would take full advantage of some of the more complex writing skills that the learners acquired in the first part of the EAP course. Amongst other things such a methodology would involve

1. 'Higher Order Thinking' [HOT] words and phrases (e.g. words and phrases like 'however' and 'despite appearances') to emphasise (1) the complexity of the students' argumentative strategy and (2) the fact that they would be arguing for a non-obvious interpretation of events.
2. Conclusions, in which two different interpretations of events are compared to one another, and reasons are provided for why one of these interpretations is superior to the other.

³² This frequency analysis was only applied from 2014-2015, as, with the commencement of the 2014 History exams, significant changes were introduced to the structure and content of the exam papers. Importantly, these changes were not random. Instead, they ushered in a set of new regularities with regard to both question types and content.

All of these skills featured prominently in the EAP course. Specifically, in the course's latter stages, learners had to use HOT words (like 'however') to acknowledge when texts had two themes or arguments that were in tension with one another. In addition, learners were required to resolve these thematic and argumentative tensions through providing their *own* reasons for the ultimate validity of *one* of the opposing themes or arguments.

Importantly, this approach to the History essay has not been formulated in order to contrive a connection between the EAP course and the matric History syllabus. Rather, it has been formulated due to the self-evident ways in which it potentially allows learners to be fully responsive to the criteria for a successful essay that features in the rubric used to assess the matric History essays. These criteria are the following:

Very well planned and structured essay. Good synthesis of information. Developed an original, well balanced and independent line of argument with the use of evidence and sustained and defended the argument throughout. Independent conclusion is drawn from evidence to support the line of argument.

Seen in this light, the convergence between the EAP course and this approach to the matric History essay has not been manipulated. Rather it developed organically, due to the manner in which there was an unpremeditated overlap between the marking criteria for the matric History essay and the writing skills developed in the EAP course.

Below I provide an example of an essay writing template that could be used to answer a matric history essay on *any* topic (and which requires learners to execute the writing skills mentioned above). In the template, an actual matric essay question on the Cuban Missile crisis is often referred to in order to clarify some of the instructions:

Matric History Essay Template:

1. The first sentence of your introduction should establish that you are going to directly answer the essay question. So, for example, if the essay question is “How did the Cuban missile crisis intensify tensions between the USA and USSR”, your opening sentence should be **“In this essay I shall explore how the Cuban missile crisis intensified cold war tensions between the USA and the USSR.”**
2. The second sentence of your introduction should contain a HOT word or phrase, and it should establish that – despite appearances – you are going to offer an argument or interpretation of events that questions a popular view of the essay topic. So, for example, my HOT second sentence was: **“Although it is easy to depict the Soviet Union as the aggressive, primary instigator of the missile crisis, I shall defend the view that the soviet premier Khrushchev (rather than Kennedy) played a more conciliatory and peace-friendly role in the crisis.”**
3. Your second paragraph should begin with a background contextualising sentence. This sentence informs your reader that you are providing necessary background information. In the example essay, my background contextualising sentence was **“A number of events need to be taken into account to understand the political identity of Cuba and the origins of the missile crisis.”** After inserting this sentence describe these background events. These description sentences should be as concise as possible, and should always contain dates.
3. The first sentence of your third paragraph should inform your reader that you have finished providing background info and that you are now examining the main topic of your essay. In the example essay, I used the following sentence to accomplish this, **“The missile crisis itself can be succinctly described through making reference to a number of key events.”** After inserting this sentence describe the events that ‘constitute’ or make up your essay’s main topic. This description sentences should be as concise as possible, and should always contain dates. Sometimes you will need more than one paragraph do to this (for example, in the example essay, I needed two paragraphs in order to explain how the missile crisis intensified tensions between the USA and USSR).
4. The opening sentence of your concluding paragraph should provide a clear and emphatic answer to the essay question. For example, if the essay topic is “Did the Cuban Missile Crisis increase tensions between the USA and USSR”, such a sentence could be **“In conclusion, it should be quite obvious that the missile crisis almost resulted in nuclear war and sharply escalated tensions between the US and USSR.”** The remainder of your conclusion is perhaps the most important part of your essay. In this part of your essay you need to explicitly justify why you disagree with the orthodox view. Here is the argumentative section of my conclusion (it argues against the orthodox view that the Russians were the primary aggressors in the missile crisis):

Matric History Essay Template (cont.):

Since US missiles in Turkey did present a potential threat to USSR security, Khrushchev's decision to put missiles in Cuba can feasibly be seen as retaliatory rather than aggressive. Furthermore, Kennedy's decision not to withdraw missiles from Turkey arguably shows that the US was perhaps the more aggressive party in the conflict. This is because US missiles in Turkey presented as much of a threat to the USSR as USSR missiles in Cuba presented a threat to the US. Khrushchev's insistence that the US remove their missiles from Turkey can therefore be seen as entirely reasonable. In contrast, Kennedy's refusal to dismantle US missiles in Turkey can be seen as unreasonable. Thus, although such an interpretation is no doubt questionable, it could be argued that Khrushchev was the real hero during the crisis. By backing down despite the fact that the US retained a military advantage over the USSR, he was arguably prepared to set aside the immediate political interests of the USSR in order to avoid full-blown nuclear war.

4.3.1 History Papers 1 & 2 (Source-based questions)

In both matric History papers, it is impossible to predict the precise content that source-based³³ questions will ask learners to focus on. This is because source-based questions often require learners to analyse particular elements of photographs, articles, biographies and cartoons that they have never seen before. However, despite this, it is still possible to make certain broad predictions about source-based questions. This can be done because there are certain *kinds* of source-based questions that always appear in matric history exams. Thus, even though we cannot predict very much about the material that source-based questions will ask learners to focus on, there is a lot that we can predict about the source-based questions themselves. In what follows, I shall (1) briefly describe frequently occurring question categories in the source based section, and (2) explain how the writing skills needed to answer these questions draw upon writing skills that were transmitted in the EAP course.

³³ Source-based questions require learners to answer questions which are based on textual extracts (provided in the exam papers). They therefore bear a close resemblance to the kinds of comprehension questions that feature in English exams.

Comprehension style source – based questions are very common and easy to answer. They are easy to answer because the answer they require is contained in the source – based material. Thus, to answer such a question, learners just have to understand the question, read through the source and write out their answer(s). Furthermore, unlike the comprehension style questions in English FAL Paper 1, learners do not need to paraphrase the part of the text that answers the question (it can, instead just be copied). In the EAP course learners were required to quote sections of texts to support their main claims, a skill that (self-evidently) requires almost identical reading and information extractions skills to the ones required by the comprehension style source- based questions.

‘Information bias’ questions also occur frequently in the source-based sections of the exam. As the name suggests, these questions require learners to assess whether source material (usually textual, but sometimes picture -based) is biased or – alternatively – reliable and objective. Although bias can be detected through a learner isolating and analysing a particular word or phrase (for example, in the memo of the 2013 exam, a USA source was judged to be biased because it referred to the Kremlin’s “duplicity”), the memorandum states that *any* relevant response can be used to show that a text is biased. This means that if a learner provides an argument which justifies their interpretation of a text, they will be able to successfully answer such questions. Despite the fact that the EAP course required the learners to use their own arguments to justify a thematic or argumentative interpretation of a text (rather than interpretations which sought to determine the historic reliability of a text), the adoption of an interpretive stance and the use of personalised argumentation to support such a stance clearly contain many underlying congruencies with the writing and thinking skills needs to answer bias -detection questions.

Finally, source-based questions often require learners to explain a concept in their own words. Importantly, these concepts are usually embedded in texts that provide enough framing information about the concept for a learner to answer the question by

paraphrasing this information (and, if necessary, drawing upon their own knowledge as well). The centrality of paraphrasing to the EAP course has already been spoken about in length in relation to English FAL.³⁴

4.4. Summary and conclusion

Although the preceding analysis has been fairly lengthy and detailed, it provides a clear and necessary illustration of the precise ways in which essay writing skills have a far reaching applicability in relation to matric English and History. Seen in this light, it ought to be clear that the EAP course can help with matric preparation. In essence, while text-orientated academic essays provide a format in which a variety of writing skills are holistically integrated, non-essay exam questions (in English and History) create a format in which specific modular writing skills (which partly comprise an essay) are required.

Suggestions for possible ways in which the EAP course could be enlarged into a programme that *directly* prepares learners for matric (using some of the exercises that have featured in this chapter) will be explored in detail in Chapter 5. In addition, data from the study will be presented and analysed.

³⁴ It must be mentioned that the source-based section of the matric History exams also contains two frequently occurring question types that do not intersect with the first part of the EAP course: ‘Role Playing Questions’ and ‘Background Information Questions’. While ‘Role Playing Questions’ require learners to imagine how an individual within a particular society would respond to an important event, ‘Background Questions’ require learners to incorporate memorised general information into their answers about a source.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present and discuss data which seek to answer two of the primary research questions guiding this study. The chapter starts with an analysis of the learners' pre-intervention essays, and then draws upon the study's primary qualitative findings to identify and analyse the most significant difficulties the intervention project encountered. The chapter then examines the issue of whether the EAP course enabled the learners to become proficient in academic essay writing skills. In the chapter's last section, qualitative data derived from a questionnaire will be used to demonstrate how the learners' own evaluation of the EAP course supports the conclusion that it had a positive impact on their academic writing skills.

5.2 Pre-intervention writing samples

The pre-intervention writing task was administered to all of the study participants in September 2015. At this stage in the study, the participants were completing the second term of Grade 11. The task was given to the learners after they had signed consent forms to take part in the study (for a description of the precise way in which the task was administered, as well as a description of the task, see Chapter 3]. In total, 59 participants completed the task (30 learners from Delta High, and 29 learners from Gonwa High).

These tasks were not graded. Instead, the researcher compiled the nine most important writing techniques taught in the first part of the EAP course, and checked to see whether any of these techniques were present in the participants' written work. This approach was chosen for two principal reasons. Firstly, it enabled the researcher to determine whether any of the learners were already in possession of the writing skills the EAP course aimed to transmit. Secondly, the nine writing techniques that the researcher

compiled are so fundamental to text-orientated academic writing that their presence or absence provides a very good indication of the learners' starting levels of academic literacy. I list these nine criteria below:

1. Discussing the text in an accurate logical and sequential manner through the use of 'linking words' (i.e. words like 'firstly', 'secondly', 'finally', etc.).
2. The identification of the text's main theme /argument (at the start or introduction of the essay).
3. An attempt to show how this main theme or argument is reflected in a particular part of the text (in the body of the essay).
4. The use of appropriate paragraph divisions.
5. The use of quotations.
6. An attempt to paraphrase sections of the primary text.
7. The ability to maintain a neutral (rather than subjective and personalised) writing tone.
8. The presence of a conclusion which uses argumentative or evaluative language to consolidate the essay's main argument.
9. The use of words which reflect any tensions or contradictory claims in a text (i.e. words like 'however', 'appear', etc.).

Importantly, when the researcher evaluated whether these techniques were present in the learners' writing samples, there were no added expectations about the degree of competency displayed in the techniques. Thus, a technique was judged to be present even if it was executed in a poor fashion. This approach was favoured since the researcher anticipated that it would be extremely unlikely for *any* of the Grade 11 learners to be fully competent in the above- listed writing techniques. The results of the writing samples from both experimental groups fully confirmed this prediction, and are presented in the tables on the following pages.

Table 5.1 Academic Writing Skills Exhibited by Gonwa Learners

Pupil	Skill 1	Skill 2	Skill 3	Skill 4	Skill 5	Skill 6	Skill 7	Skill 8	Skill 9
A		x			x	x			
B		x				x			
C		x							
D		x	x			x			
E			x			x			
F	x			x	x				
G		x			x	x			
H									
I		x				x		x	
J									
K				x					
L		x							
M	x								
N	x				x	x	x		
O									
P									
Q									
R									
S									
T									
U									
V									
W					x	x			
X									
Y						x			
Z		x			x	x			
AA		x	x		x	x			
AB		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
AC		x	x	x	x	x	x		
AD		x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Total With Skill	3	8	4	5	9	10	4	2	1

Figure 5.1.1 Academic Writing Skills Exhibited by Gonwa Learners

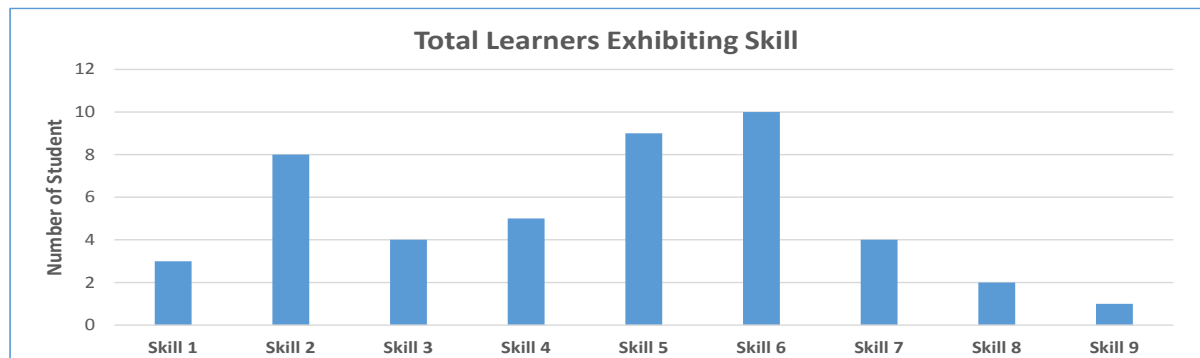
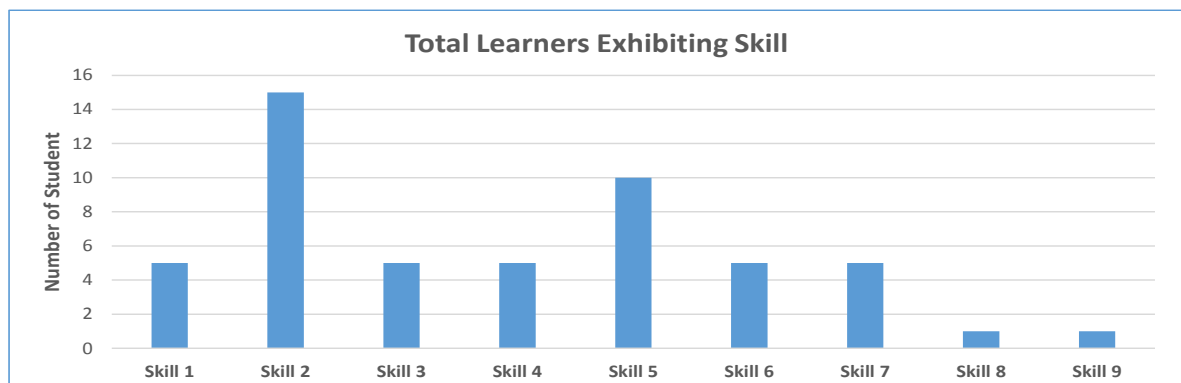


Table 5.2: Academic Writing Skills Exhibited by Delta Learners

Pupil	Skill 1	Skill 2	Skill 3	Skill 4	Skill 5	Skill 6	Skill 7	Skill 8	Skill 9
A1									
B1					x	x			
C1					x	x			
D1					x	x			
E1					x				
F1	x				x				
G1									
H1									
I1									
J1		x		x	x	x	x		x
K1		x	x				x		
L1	x	x	x	x	x			x	
M1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
N1		x	x	x	x	x	x		
O1		x							
P1		x							
Q1		x							
R1		x							
S1					x				
T1		x			x	x			
U1									
V1					x				
W1	x	x			x				
X1		x			x				
Y1		x							
Z1									
AA1		x							
AB1	x	x	x	x		x	x		
AC1									
Total With Skill	5	15	5	5	10	5	5	1	1

Figure 5.2.1 Academic Writing Skills Exhibited by Delta Learners



5.2.1 Analysis of Gonwa pre-intervention writing samples

The data from Table 1 show that out of the 29 learners, 11 failed to display any of the writing techniques identified by the previously listed criteria. Interestingly, as one might perhaps expect, this failure did not stem from a poor grasp of written English (or even, necessarily, an inability to understand the set text). In fact, many of the learners in this category produced sentences that were as grammatically coherent as learners who displayed considerably more of the identified writing techniques. Rather, learners in this category made no real effort to discuss the text *itself* (despite receiving instructions to write an essay about the text). Specifically, every single learner in this category entered into an account of candles that was coloured by their subjective experiences (as a young South African). At base, this seems to be symptomatic of academic illiteracy, rather than any cognitive or linguistic deficits on the part of the learners. In essence, the learners simply had no idea that the instruction to write an essay about a text carried the implicit expectation that the text itself – rather than their own subjective viewpoints – should be the central focus of their essays.

Among those learners who did display the listed writing techniques, paraphrasing and quoting (skillsets 5 & 6) appeared most frequently. However, in general, the learners' quoting and paraphrasing skills were of an extremely low standard. Indeed, apart from a single learner who placed his quotations in inverted commas, the majority of the learners wrote 'hybrid' sentences in which paraphrased and quoted sections of the text (without inverted commas) were confusingly amalgamated.³⁵ This suggests that although paraphrasing and quoting skills were rudimentarily present in the majority of the writing samples, learners had not yet learned how to conceptually distinguish the two skills from one another.

A fair number of the writing samples (8/30) made an effort to identify the text's theme at the outset of the essay. With the exception of a single learner, however, none of the

³⁵ Many examples of this tendency will be provided in later sections of this chapter.

learners managed to comment on how the text possibly expressed more than one theme or idea. Significantly, this lacuna links up with the absence of two other writing techniques in virtually all the writing samples: the absence of ‘Higher Order Thinking’ (HOT) words which signal an awareness of tensions and (possible) contradictions in the text, and the absence of argumentative conclusions. While HOT words like ‘however’ and ‘although’ are essential corollaries to thinking processes in which a text – or indeed any phenomenon – is examined from multiple perspectives, the ability to write a conclusion which argumentatively emphasises the correctness of a certain interpretation *also* signals that a writer is adopting a ‘strong’ interpretative stance towards a text. Given the absence of these two writing techniques, it was therefore unsurprising that the learners had an extremely weak thematic grasp on the text, and appeared unable to work any real nuances or complexity into their essays.

5.2.2 Analysis of Gonwa pre-intervention writing samples

Table 2 shows that (7/30) of the Delta learners failed to produce essays that displayed the previously listed writing skills. However, this figure is misleading, as an additional 6 learners produced essays that *only* succeeded in making a brief, rather superficial reference to the theme of the poem. Thus, apart from these sketchy references to the poem’s thematic content (usually no more than two or three words long), these essays displayed *none* of the identified writing skills.³⁶ Seen in this light, it is perhaps truer to say that (virtually) 13 of the essays failed to display the listed writing skills. Again, this failure was not due to any language or cognitive issues. As with the Gonwa learners, the Delta learners in this category saw the essay as a subjective launching-pad for their own views on candles, South African history and the difficulties faced by South African youths.

In relation to the writing skills that were displayed most frequently, quoting and paraphrasing featured prominently. These skills were of a poor standard since, as with

³⁶ Examples of this tendency will be illustrated in later sections of the chapter.

the Gonwa group, the majority of the Delta learners lumped together paraphrased and quoted information in a confusing manner. Furthermore, as with the Gonwa group, only a single Delta learner placed his quotations in inverted commas. Interestingly, this use of inverted commas was not merely ornamental: unlike all of the other Delta learners, this learner used his quotes in an explicitly argumentative fashion, to support his interpretation of the poem. With regard to the single Gonwa learner who also quoted using inverted commas, the quotes were used in a similarly argumentative fashion.

However, unlike the Gonwa group, considerably more of the Delta learners who produced strong essays (i.e. essays that displayed more than three of the listed writing techniques) also identified more than one important theme in the text. Interestingly, the two essays that extrapolated and discussed these themes in the clearest manner used the HOT word 'but' in an appropriate manner. This, again, suggests that the presence or absence of HOT words is a good predictor of the degree to which a learner can successfully adopt multiple perspectives about a text.

5.2.3 Comparison of pre-intervention writing samples

From the preceding analysis it ought to be clear that there were many striking parallels between the writing samples of both experimental groups. Firstly, a similar number of the Gonwa and Delta learners were completely lacking in the listed writing skills. In addition, this lack did not derive from multiple causes. Instead, the absence of foundational academic literacy provided a clear and obvious reason for why *all* the learners in this category failed to produce competent essays. Next, in both groups, the writing skills that were present (i.e. quoting, paraphrasing, introductory thematic discussions) were poorly executed for similar reasons (i.e. blurred distinction between quoting and paraphrasing, lack of HOT words, etc.). Furthermore, additional convergences – not mentioned in the preceding discussion – strengthen the similarity between the Delta and Gonwa learners an even greater extent. In this respect, in both

groups the majority of learners did not use ‘linking-words’, and in both groups only a small number of learners lacked the ability to write coherent sentences in English.

The data make it apparent that – prior to the intervention – the two experimental groups were very similar in terms of the level of their academic writing skills. This similarity extended from the number of students displaying certain tendencies, to the reasons why certain writing skills were either poorly executed or not present at all. Perhaps most significantly, the data from both groups demonstrated that many of the learners were not in possession of the skills prioritised by the EAP course. Importantly, the data also showed that, although a good portion of the learners were in possession of certain basic writing skills, in the majority of the samples these skills were either extremely limited, or, in most cases, barely competent. Since most of these skills are of foundational importance to academic writing, the primary conclusion to be drawn from the data is that – prior to the intervention – the majority of the learners in both groups had no real conception about how to write academically.

5.2.4 Pre-intervention writing task sample analysis

Samples of the learners’ pre-intervention essays will now be provided to give concrete illustrations of many of the tendencies identified and discussed in the preceding sections. These writing samples have been divided into three different categories. While ‘Competent’ essays display a healthy cluster of the listed writing skills, ‘Poor’ essays display virtually none of these writing skills (due to the fact that they make no effort to discuss the text itself). The third – and rarest – category is ‘Incoherent’. While ‘incoherent’ essays make a few sketchy attempts to paraphrase the text and quote from it, for a variety of reasons the basic meaning of the sentences in these essays cannot be deciphered. In order to give a summarised yet accurate overview of the written work of both groups, one sample from each of these categories shall now be discussed. For ease of readership, I again embed the text – “Candles” – that the learners were instructed to write an essay about:

CANDLES

The days of the future stand before us
like a line of burning candles –
golden candles, warm with life.

Behind them stand the days of our past,
a pitiful row of candles extinguished,
the nearest still sending up their smoke:
cold and melted, withered sticks.

I don't want to look; their image makes me sad,
it saddens me to recall their kindling.
I look ahead at the ones still burning.

I don't want to turn and see, with horror,
how quickly the line of shadow lengthens,
how quickly the number of snuffed candles grows.



C.P Cavafy (1863-1933)

5.2.5 Gonwa pre-intervention samples

Competent sample:

I'm going to write about the poem which talks about a candle briefly i will explain what it is about and what these candles are compared to.

I could say that this poem is compared or is relevant to a person's past, and it seems like this writer is not happy about the past and he has never make peace with the past, maybe his life was good as it is said on the poem that it is horror.

There were things that he cannot manage to look at because he believes that they are snuffed candles that grows, he is looking forward to those that are still burning, which means he is focusing on his bright future.

All I'm saying is let's make peace with our past because it determines our destiny and future let us not be afraid of our history because past is always with us. let us be brave and face our past.

Interestingly, out of the sixty learners who wrote the pre-intervention essay, this learner was the only person who started her essay by using ‘directives’ (i.e. she tells her reader what she is going to do in the body of the essay (for a discussion of directives see Hyland 2005)). It is interesting to consider the possibility that the use of directives presages the academic competence (relative to the group) of the rest of this learner’s essay, as directives are usually indicative of agency (Hyland 2005), as well as foresight and planning.

In the second paragraph of the essay, the learner identifies (albeit clumsily) one of the poem’s main themes (“it seems like the writer is not happy about the past he has never make peace with the past”) and then provides a quotation (“it is said on the poem that it is horror”) to establish the particular part of the poem that supports her thematic interpretation of the text. This section of the learner’s essay is important for a number of other reasons. Firstly, the learner’s use of the word “writer” shows a conscious effort to align her essay with the views of the writer. Although such a stance seems to be a self-evident requirement for text-orientated academic writing, virtually none of the learners (in both groups) made an effort to refer their claims back to the writer’s point of view. Secondly, the learner’s use of the HOT word ‘seems’ displays an underlying sensitivity to the interpretative or provisional nature of her essay. Considered in conjunction with the directives used at the start of the essay, this semantic evidence seems to suggest that fairly basic and domain-specific writing skills (that can often be reduced to single words like ‘seems’ and ‘writer’) index base-line levels of academic literacy.

The essay’s third paragraph contains a good example of the quoting tendency identified and discussed at length in the preceding section (i.e. the tendency to not cleanly differentiate between paraphrased and quoted information). Thus, when the learner states “There were things that he cannot manage to look at because he believes that they are snuffed candles that grows [...]” there are signs of paraphrasing (i.e. ‘he cannot manage to look’ for the text’s original phrase of ‘I don’t want to turn and see’) as well as instances of unacknowledged quotations (“snuffed candles” and “grows”).

Importantly, in this sentence, the quotes have not been placed in inverted commas, and so appear to be continuous with the paraphrased parts of the sentence. On the basis of this sentence, it appears that for this learner – as indeed with all the learners in both groups – there is no realisation that quotes can be used to supply direct evidence for a particular claim. Instead, quotations are conceptualised as primarily descriptive mechanisms that serve the same function as paraphrasing.

In the essay's closing paragraph, the learner displays some rudimentary conclusion writing skills (something which none of the other learners achieved). Specifically, certain injunctive phrases that the learner deploys (e.g. "let's make peace with our past because it determines our destiny and future" and "let us not be afraid of our history because past is always with us") provide evidence that she is adopting a normative, argumentative perspective. Put more simply, she is making an effort to *convince* her reader that her interpretation of the poem is *correct*.

Poor sample:

In the past our grandmother and gran farther did not have the opportunity to get education. Because of the unequal right and because of their skin colour. They lived a painful life.

The opportunity came in 1994 were we all treated equal. In our generation we are living in a better future which light like a burning candle. But our education is in our hand the future depends on us. In other country they deeply want this opportunity but because of sending up their smoke and they are in the dark they could not have opportunity.

Now we have people that care about us and want us to get success and kindling future. This education could do many things in our lives *like reduce the number of uneducated children and unemployment in our country. But they are people who are send by god who want quickly number of snuffed candles grows in this country.

The candles that will make us to have future is Education. You don't have to have money so that you can be Educated but if you work hard everything is possible for your future.

This learner's essay makes no effort to discuss the text *itself* and so typifies one of the most common tendencies discussed in the previous section. Although the learner does mention 'candles' and the 'future' (two things of central importance in the poem), these

images are harnessed to highly subjective interpretations of the poem (connected to apartheid, unemployment, education, etc.) that clearly have their origins in the learner's own experiences and concerns (rather than the text). As with nearly all the essays in this category, there appear to be no glaring deficits in the learner's ability to write in English – in fact, in many ways, the learner's vocabulary and grammar is as good as the learner who wrote the previous essay.

Incoherent sample:

The poems is telling us about that. we have a future life that be stand in our life. The day that we gone stay alive in long period and it is a row of candles that a burning. Behind of us stand the day of our life like a sad candle row.

The candle show that how long time we stay alive and the is no time to waste and we have no right to stand like. I didn't want to see the horror things like people fright about the money and it is not allowed when you see the thing like pitiful.

This essay has been categorised as incoherent because – although it does contain some sentences that manage to awkwardly convey coherent information (e.g. “Behind of us stand the day of our life like a sad candle row”) – it is also littered with sentences that do not make any sense at all (e.g. “The candle show that how long time we stay alive and the is no time to waste and we have no right to stand like”; “I didn't want to see the horror things like people fright about the money and it is not allowed when you see the thing like pitiful”)

Interestingly, in terms of the number of learners who produced such essays, this essay category is far smaller than the two categories previously considered. This suggests that – in both experimental groups – only a very small portion of the learners' inability to write academically can be attributed to fundamental issues with the writing and comprehension of English.

5.2.6 Delta pre-intervention samples

Competent sample

The poet in the story uses comparison to show how the future awaits us with more warmth and golden / enjoyable moments to show, like a row of candles he adds. But behind our future lies, our past that is now erased and can never come to life again, but those memories in our past that happened not long ago, still appear once again in our mind.

Most of those past memories are too sad to even think about, rather to pay attention to the happy one's I've had in the past.

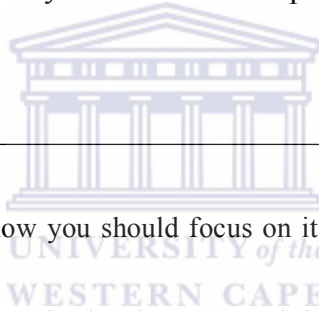
I'm scared to reflect on the past. As the past can come back again to hurt and bring you sorrow, and old wounds could be opened, not to make you smile but to destroy you, like when you leave a candle burning in a shack/informal settlement. for sure it will destroy your house and belongings.

This essay displays many of the tendencies already observed in the Gonwa sample of a competent essay. Like the Gonwa sample this essay alludes to both themes in the poem at an early point in the essay (“[...] the future awaits us with more warmth”; “[...] our past that is now erased and can never come to life again”), and uses quotes (“like a row of candles he adds”) and paraphrased information (“Most of those memories are too sad to even think about”) to show the specific ways in which the themes are instantiated in the poem. In addition, this essay also filters the essay through the poet’s intentions (“The poet in the essay uses comparison [...]”), and also uses HOT words (“But”).

However, unlike the Gonwa sample, in this essay the learner has not managed to write a conclusion that deploys argumentative language to consolidate the arguments made throughout the essay. In fact, in the essay’s final paragraph, the learner starts slipping into a more subjective register (“I’m scared to reflect on the past; “[...] when you leave a candle burning in a shack/informal settlement. for sure it will destroy your house and belongings”). Interestingly, in both groups, the tendency for even competent academic essays to contain subjective slippages was fairly pronounced. To take just one example, after a fairly balanced and objective discussion of the text, one Gonwa learner who produced a competent essay wrote “[...] I think the writer is trying to emphasise that

he/she had time to study and failed”. Seen in this light, it can perhaps be concluded that a fairly strong temptation to adopt a subjective register exists for all the learners, even for those learners who – for the most part – manage to adopt an appropriate academic writing style.

One possible way to interpret this finding is to claim that the learners’ tendency to adopt a subjective register frequently equates with a desire for empathy. In this respect, many of the learners’ ‘subjective’ paragraphs and sentences *do* draw attention to historic and socio-economic difficulties that are encountered in daily township life. This interpretation reminds us that the learners’ inability to maintain a neutral register may not be a straightforward cognitive or (academic-based) linguistic deficit. Rather, it can also be understood as a cry for help: an attempt to articulate concerns that are marginalised and even silenced by the chaotic and pressurised environments that the learners occupy.



Poor sample:

The poem is about the future, how you should focus on it and what things you should do and not do to brighten your future.

this poem tells us that We as young leaders have a very bright future ahead of us, that our future is already planned but waiting for us to act no matter what we should have done in the past we need to bear in mind that the past does not hold the future.

We don't have to look back, we need to look forwardly through what we want in life because if you do look back you lacking the confidence that tells you, that you have a bright future ahead of you.

Lastly you don't have to stress about the Paths that you'll cross but focus on the reason that made you want to cross that Path, because if you don't believe in your capabilities surely you don't believe in yourself.

My advice is stay focused and aim higher than where you are then you will reach that far, seek better things, then your life will go easy your future is then brighter than the stars.

Apart from the fact that this essay starts with an elliptical claim about what the poem is about, in terms of its strongly subjective nature it is virtually identical with the Gonwa sample from this category. Once again, it should be noted that the learner's grasp of written English is on par with the Delta learner who produced a more competent academic essay. Clearly, then, as with the Gonwa essay sample in this category, the deficits of this essay are due to a lack of academic literacy (rather than a basic lack of English writing and comprehension skills).

Incoherent sample:

This poem is about burning candles its like choice that we make at this time can stand in our way in life like bad choices that we take and it also says that the future is still burning. the other thing is when you want the opportunity of the olden day its you that you put your own future in mad but when you look the Other's their's still burning their future is still on the is a Word that say's the future us in your hands its that choice the right way you wanna take your life and future. the Other thing is that people who achieved their future they will be like enemy's.

When you make your future Upsite down one day you will think and realised that if you Where child you would not take any chances about life because you have an experience about it.

Your future can things be better for you if you choose good friends people ho have dreams that can make your candle to burn and bright like a star.

From this essay's opening sentence ("This poem is about burning candles its like choice that we make at this time can stand in our way in life like bad choices that we take and it also says that the future is still burning"), it is clear that this learner lacks the necessary language skills to coherently articulate his/her opinions through English. Thus, as with the Gonwa learner in this category, it ought to be clear that a small number of learners in both groups could not write competent academic essays due to foundational limitations in their English writing skills. Note, however, that both samples from this category are also highly subjective in terms of their content (in this essay, for instance, the learner talks about things that do not feature in the poem, such as "enemies" and "good friends") Seen in this light, it is perhaps more accurate to say that essays in this category are not competent because of language issues, as well as issues connected with academic literacy.

5.2.7 Discussion and conclusion

One problem with the text used to elicit these writing samples is that it could be argued that – due to the poem’s symbolic nature – learners who wrote about how the candles reflected aspects of contemporary South Africa were not necessarily doing anything academically incorrect or even ‘subjective’. Instead, they were being responsive to the poem’s symbolism by formulating plausible explanations for what the ‘burning candles’ and ‘extinguished candles’ might *represent*.

Although this is a valid concern, it has some obvious limitations. First and foremost, the poet explicitly states what the burning candles and extinguished candles symbolise. Thus, at the start of the first stanza he states “*The days of the future* stand before us / like a line of burning candles” [my italics], while in the opening of the second stanza he claims “Behind them stand *the days of our past*, / a pitiful row of candles extinguished” [my italics]. Seen in this light, although the poem is symbolic in nature, the symbolic meaning of the candles is supplied within the parameters of the text.

However, it may still be maintained that this does not neutralise the above concern. The concepts of a ‘positive /glowing future’ and ‘a depressing / pitiful past’ are extremely broad, and so it may be argued that the learners who wrote ‘subjective essays’ were only trying to give a more nuanced and particularised account of what the poem really means when it refers to the future and the past.

Although this is an interesting view, it can be rejected for the following reason: the learners who wrote subjective essays conflated their views with the views of the poem, that is, they wrote as if the poem really was about Apartheid and contemporary South Africa. *If* these learners had been seeking to flesh out and enrich the poem’s two central concepts, they should have written a sentence like ‘When the poet speaks about the past and the future it can be related to South Africa for a number of reasons’. The presence of this kind of sentence would provide evidence that the learners were attempting to

enlarge upon the poem's thematic content, and that they were distinguishing between the poem's themes and what they were adding (or relating) to these themes. None of the subjective essays, however, contained such a sentence. In fact, a significant portion of the 'subjective' essays didn't even refer back to the poem *at all*. In my view, this provides enough evidence to rule out the possibility that the poem's symbolic nature was responsible for the subjective nature of many of the learners' essays.

5.3 Attrition

One of this study's major findings relates to the alarmingly high attrition rate of the Gonwa and Delta learners. A careful description and analysis of this phenomenon will be provided before data on the EAP course is given. This approach has been favoured due to the way in which the attrition rate had a profound effect on the size of the experimental groups, the number of assignments that were completed and therefore the grades that learners obtained for both the EAP course and matric. Seen in this light, it should be clear that – without this contextualising information – a discussion of the data produced by the EAP course would be very difficult to interpret and place in an appropriate perspective.

This section of the chapter will be structured in the following manner. First, an account will be given of the ways in which – prior to the EAP course's implementation – the researcher anticipated the possibility of a high attrition rate and developed a number of strategies and incentives to reduce it. Next, data on attendance and drop-out rates for the entire duration of the EAP course will be supplied and analysed. This will be followed by an ethnographic description of the visible behaviour (displayed by the learners) that appeared to cause and accompany the attrition. Key findings from unstructured interviews with the learners will then be provided to give a more a psychologically interiorised account of factors that determined attrition. Finally, the findings from all these enquiries will be placed within a broad theoretical framework, and related to

bodies of literature that corroborate the conclusions the researcher derived from the data.

5.3.1 Precautions against attrition

In total, the EAP course was implemented for seven weeks. Due to its protracted length, the researcher foresaw the possibility that attrition could be a major destabilising factor. Thus, in an effort to combat potentially high drop-out rates, the researcher did his utmost to design the course in such a way that it would appeal to the learners' self-interest and, in doing so, strongly motivate attendance. This appeal was made in three principle ways. Firstly, the learners were informed that – if they successfully completed the first part of the EAP course – they would receive a report that could be incorporated into their college or university application packages. Since this report would comment favourably on the degree of proficiency in their academic writing, the learners were informed that (to some extent) it would increase their chances of being accepted at an institute of higher learning. The learners were also informed that the writing skills learned in the first part of the EAP course would improve their performance in subjects like matric English and History, and that these skills would also significantly raise their ability to cope with higher education

It is important to stipulate that these incentives were not just printed on a piece of paper and handed out to the learners at the start of the EAP course. Instead, at the commencement of each lesson, the course instructor made an effort to briefly remind the learners of the benefits that they would receive if they attended.

In addition to these benefits, attendance was encouraged through a number of other practical features of the course design. As stated earlier, the entire EAP course was conducted on the school premises of Gonwa High and Delta High, and so the learners did not need to travel or encounter any other kinds of logistical difficulties to attend the lessons. The learners were also supplied with free meals and drinks. Through the

provision of these supplies, the instructor hoped to raise the concentration levels of the learners, and also compensate them for any meals or snacks that they would potentially miss due to their attendance. Finally, the learners were informed by the school principals that they could request transport money (for the late afternoon return journey home) if they needed it.

The researcher also endeavoured to reduce potential attrition by adopting classroom teaching practices that would create a learning environment in which all of the learners would feel included, stimulated and psychologically cared for. With regard to the issue of inclusivity, the “Productive Pedagogies” (PP) approach favoured by Hayes, Milles, Christie and Lingard (2006) was adopted by the researcher. PP is deliberately primed for a multicultural environment, and thus provided the researcher with an excellent framework for classroom practice. In essence, PP calls for lessons that (1) possess intellectual quality (2) promote a supportive class environment (3) include mention of non-dominant cultures and (4) connect with the outside world. While the use of carefully constructed writing exercises and a multi-cultural assortment of literary texts (that connected with real world issues) ensured that the EAP course incorporated three pillars of the PP approach, the second pillar of PP - the creation of a supportive class environment – was judged by the researcher to be especially important and was thus enriched and guided through making reference to an additional theory – Positive Education Practices (PEP).

Of particular interest to the proposed course’s attitude to classroom practice is the finding that students’ “perception of ‘pedagogical caring’ in their teachers [...] [is] strongly and significantly related to the students’ level of motivation and engagement in learning” (Noble & McGrath, 2010, [also see Wentzel, 1997]). Keeping this latter finding in mind, both in the provision of written feedback and more general ‘live’ interactions, the course instructor endeavoured to give the students the impression that their needs were being nurtured and cared for. The use of Positive Education Practices (PEPs) (See Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) can help to engender just such an

ethos, as PEPs place a greater emphasis on students' strengths than their shortcomings. The use of PEPs is additionally justifiable, as studies have found that a frequent experience of positive emotions increases students' levels of academic engagement (Reschly Huebner, Appleton & Antaramian 2008).

In terms of the specific PEPs that were used in the EAP course, the following concrete examples can be provided. First, throughout the programme, the course instructor lavished praise on high-performing students (using words like 'excellent', 'outstanding', 'brilliant' and phrases like 'You have an incredible amount of potential' or 'If you keep this up you'll do outstandingly in this course and perhaps matric as well' [this information comes from a field-work journal the researcher kept for the duration of the course]). This positive language was also carefully deployed in the written comments that the learners received when their written exercises were returned to them. Here, for example, are two comments that learners who scored well in their assignments received:

[...] you're a hard worker and you've written a strong essay. Keep pushing yourself and believing in your abilities.

[...] I can tell how much effort you've put into this essay. You demonstrated real insight with your understanding of Biko's second main argument: well done.

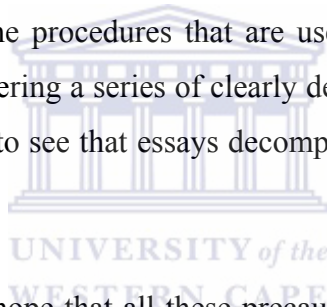
It is important to mention that learners who struggled with the coursework were not ignored, chastised or side-lined. Instead, they were gently encouraged to persist with whatever difficulties they were facing, and were deliberately given more one-on-one interaction time with the course instructor. Whenever the course instructor did point out shortcomings in these students' written work, he was careful to frame it in a broader context that also drew attention to some of the students' strengths (e.g. "You haven't followed this question of the assignment accurately enough, but I can see that – compared to last week – there's a definite improvement in your use of quotations" [taken from fieldwork journal]).

Finally, in terms of classroom practices that were used to reduce the likelihood of attrition, the course instructor adopted an approach called "explicit teaching". The

educationalist, David Hopkins (2001:73), neatly encapsulates the guiding principle of explicit teaching in the following words:

Teaching is more than just presenting material, it is about infusing curriculum content with appropriate instructional strategies that are selected in order to achieve the learning goals the teacher has for her students.

In my view, explicit teaching is especially appropriate for a course which seeks to give learners the necessary skills to write critical essays. This is because – from the perspective of students – there is often a misconception that essays are produced by the free flow of general language and thinking aptitudes. This makes essay writing seem particularly intimidating and opaque, as, unlike with mathematics or the sciences, it appears to not be grounded in any formulaic procedures. By adopting an explicit teaching approach, the proposed course hoped to dispel the notion that academic writing is any less mechanical than the procedures that are used to solve basic mathematical equations. Thus, through answering a series of clearly delineated, atomised instructions, the students (hopefully) came to see that essays decompose into a series of manageable steps.



It was the course instructor's hope that all these precautions and methodologies would work – in tandem – to create a learning environment in which the learners would experience a variety of incentives, skills and supportive structures that would motivate regular attendance.

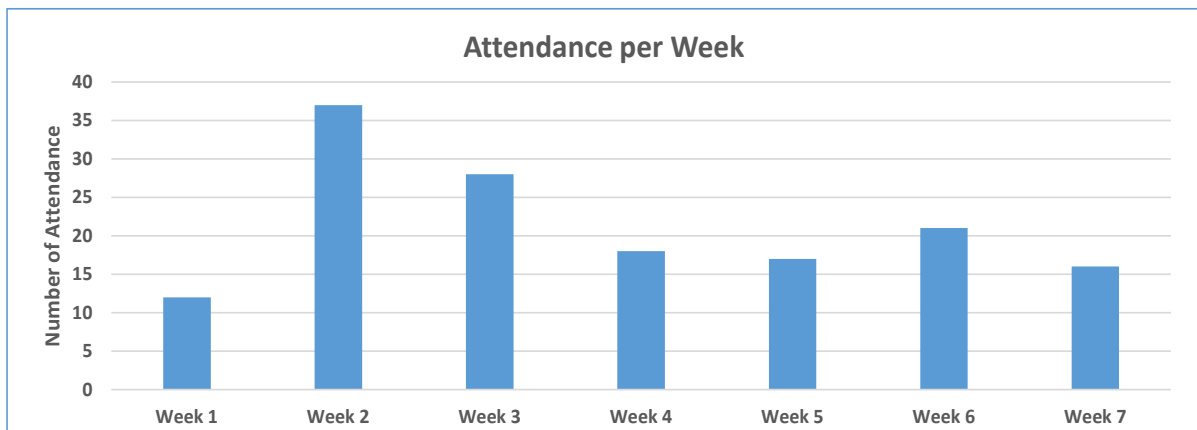
5.3.2 Attendance and completed assignments

The tables below provide data on A) weekly attendance, B) assignments handed in and C) attrition. Since the learners were required to produce and hand in a rough draft in the first weekly lesson, and were required to produce and hand in a final draft of the assignment in the second weekly lesson, the rate of attendance is exactly paired with the rate of assignments handed in.

5.2.1 Gonwa Attendance and Completed Assignments:

Pupil	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Total	Percentage
									Attendance
A	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14	100%
B	0	2	0	2	1	2	0	7	50%
C	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	5	36%
D	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	10	71%
E	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14	100%
F	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	10	71%
G	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	12	86%
H	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	5	36%
I	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	6	43%
J	0	1	2	2	1	1	0	7	50%
K	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	5	36%
L	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	11	79%
M	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	10	71%
N	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	14%
O	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	14%
P	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	7%
Q	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	21%
R	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	21%
S	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	7%
T	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	7%
U	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	7%
V	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	14%
W	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	14%
X	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	21%
Y	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	14%
Z	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	14%
AA	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	14%
AB	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	14%
AC	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	14%
AD	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	14%
Total With Skill	12	37	28	18	17	21	16	149	35%

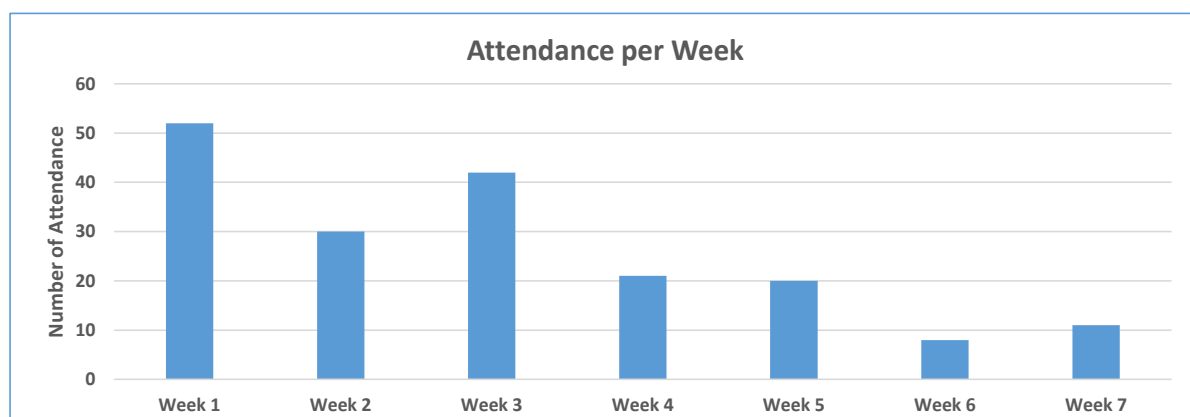
Figure 5.2 Gonwa Attendance and Completed Assignments.



5.2.2 Delta Attendance and Completed Assignments

Pupil								Percentage	
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Total	Attendance
A1	2	2	2	0	2	1	1	10	71%
B1	2	2	1	2	0	1	1	9	64%
C1	2	0	2	0	2	0	1	7	50%
D1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14	100%
E1	0	2	2	1	2	1	0	8	57%
F1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	11	79%
G1	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	6	43%
H1	2	2	2	0	0	0	1	7	50%
I1	2	2	1	2	1	0	0	8	57%
J1	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	7	50%
K1	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	10	71%
L1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	29%
M1	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	5	36%
N1	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	5	36%
O1	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	10	71%
P1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7%
Q1	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	6	43%
R1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	29%
S1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7%
T1	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	5	36%
U1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	29%
V1	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	7	50%
W1	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	7	50%
X1	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	5	36%
Y1	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	7	50%
Z1	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	4	29%
AA1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	21%
AB1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	21%
AC1	2	0	2	0	1	0	1	6	43%
Total With Skill	52	30	42	21	20	8	11	184	45%

Table 5.2.2 Delta Attendance and Completed Assignments



Out of the 30 Gonwa students who signed consent forms and officially enrolled in the course, only 13 completed the first part of the EAP course. Importantly, only three of these 13 learners attended all 14 lessons. In contrast, apart from two learners who missed 4 lessons and 3 lessons respectively, absenteeism was a major issue for the remaining learners in this group. Four learners were absent from 8 lessons, one learner was absent from 7 lessons and the remaining learners were absent from 6 and 5 lessons respectively.

Eighteen Gonwa learners dropped out of the EAP course. The majority of the learners who dropped out (11), did so in the third week of the course, while all the remaining learners exited the course in its second week. The data clearly establish that most of the attrition occurred at an early stage in the course. Explanations for this phenomenon will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

Out of the 29 Delta learners who signed consent forms, only 11 completed the EAP course. Significantly, only a single learner in this group attended all the lessons that were offered. With regard to the rest of the group, 1 learner missed 3 lessons, 4 learners missed 4 lessons and the remaining 5 learners missed between 6 and 8 lessons. Clearly, as with the Gonwa group, even amongst those learners who persisted with the course and who did not drop out, absenteeism was a huge issue.

In total, eighteen Delta learners dropped out the EAP course. Although most of these learners dropped out at a fairly late stage in the programme (between week 5 and week 7), it should not be forgotten that their attendance up until this point had been erratic – something which (arguably) provides evidence that their commitment to the course flagged well before the point at which they stopped attending altogether.

All things considered, there are some striking parallels between both groups. Firstly, a similar number of learners completed the first part of the course. Secondly, among the learners who did complete the first part of the course, there were similar rates of

absenteeism. Thirdly, although the early rate of attrition was far more pronounced in the Gonwa group, ultimately – in both groups – an identical number of students dropped out.

In the following section I shall put forward a number of possible explanations for the high rate of attrition and absenteeism in both groups. This analysis will draw on qualitative data – in the form of observation and interviews – to address certain issues. Central findings will also be re-inforced by drawing on relevant theory.

5.3.3 First explanation for attrition

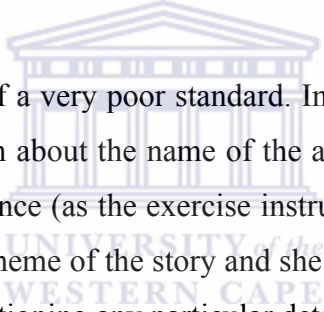
The first – and most intuitive – explanation for the high attrition rate is that many of the learners appeared to lack the skills and knowledge to engage with the EAP course. This claim is borne out by the fact that – *in general* – the students who dropped out appeared unable to follow the assignment instructions and to construct coherent essays. Conversely – *in general* – those students who persisted with the course displayed the ability to follow the assignment questions and write well-constructed essays. On the basis of this evidence, it can perhaps be inferred that levels of *academic competency* determined who dropped out of the programme and who remained.

Gonwa Sample 1:

the name of author is Sandra Cisneros. The name of the writing short story. The litter of the story is about the is Eleven [ATGR] They many theme of the story is about the Special eleven Birthday to Understand about birthdays and what they want tell you is that when you're eleven. Its about everything that have turning to expect to feel eleven. And you don't feel eleven at all. Its like Some days you might say something and might need sit mama lap because you're scared its about nothing to say when you're all grown and not nothing to change. [MT]

Second paragraph [LW/P] the event of the story insert like Some days you Something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten. the part of you're five. And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need. She doesn't like the stupid she says Sylvia Saldiva Rachel And ugly sweater like that. Its an ugly sweater with red plastic [MTD].

Evidence relating to the academic competency of the learners can be readily supplied by appealing to the early coursework that was handed in. The following two samples – both of which formed Task 2 – have been selected (1 from Gonwa, and 1 from Delta) because they typify writing and thinking patterns that the students who dropped out displayed. The first writing sample comes from a learner who appears to have understood virtually nothing about the assignment text and the writing instructions that accompanied it. The second writing sample comes from a learner who appears to have understood the text, but who still has an extremely tenuous grasp of how to execute the writing instructions properly. Nearly all the learners who dropped out displayed a combination of these tendencies, that is, to varying degrees, their written work failed to demonstrate a clear understanding of the text and the assignment instructions. Before reading these samples it is advisable for the reader to review Task 2 in its totality. Task 2 has been embedded into Chapter 3.



The writing in this sample is of a very poor standard. In the first paragraph, the learner fails to encapsulate information about the name of the author, the genre of the text and the story's title in a short sentence (as the exercise instructed). Additionally, the learner does not clearly articulate the theme of the story and she does not make any real attempt to state this theme *without* mentioning any particular details from the narrative.

In the second paragraph, the learner attempts to paraphrase the particular events in the story that reflect the story's main theme. This description becomes incoherent in places (“She doesn't like the stupid she says Sylvia Saldiva Rachel And ugly sweater like that. It's an ugly sweater with red plastic”), and fails to clearly describe the sequence of events which it brokenly alludes to. The fact that the learner begins the description by writing “Some days you [say] something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten” alerts us to the fact that –from the very outset of the description – the learner has not made an attempt to zero in on the *particular events* that demonstrate the story's theme.

Finally, the exercise is incomplete. After paraphrasing the particular events in the story that reflect the story's main theme, the learner was meant to explicitly describe *why* these events reflect the main theme. Viewed in conjunction with the fact that the sentences throughout the essay are grammatically muddled, all these errors and omissions demonstrate that this exercise has attained only the barest level of competence.

Delta Sample 2

In this short story of "Eleven" is written by Sandra Cisneros [GTAR] The main theme of this story is Rachel and is Eleven years old and this theme is about the girl that not understand about growing of the person, the little girl was saying that you open your eyes and everything just like yesterday. When mrs price spoke about her red Jersey, she cry like is not Eleven, she cry like is two or three years old. [MT]

The main theme of this story is one page one, two, three and four [LW/P]. Mrs Price give Rachel a red Jersey doesn't belonged to Rachel and Rachel cry like is not eleven years, she was feel embarrassed in the classroom / in her friend of her class. [MTD] Rachel wish that was one hundred and two instead of eleven because of she was one hundred and two she have what to say when mrs price put the red sweater on her desk. [MTR]

The writing in this sample is of a better standard. To begin with, although it does not quite succeed, the first sentence does make an *effort* to pack in information about the story's title, genre and author into a single coherent sentence. Secondly, the learner does identify the story's main theme with a fair degree of clarity. However, the theme is alluded to by cluttering the introduction with particular events and characters from the story. For this reason, the learner fails to state the theme in general terms (an important exercise instruction).

In the second paragraph, the learner clearly makes an effort to paraphrase the particular events in the story that reflect the theme. However, this description is incomplete. In order for the description to reflect the theme, the learner needed to mention that Rachel felt like a younger child when she cried (the learner comes close to saying this when she states 'Rachel cry like is not eleven years'). Finally, the learner does not manage to

write a sentence which forges an explicit connection between the story's theme and the particular events that reflect this theme (this is the [MTR] sentence in the sample). In fact, in the [MTR] sentence, the learner chooses to focus on how Rachel wishes she were *older* ("Rachel wish that was one hundred and two instead of eleven because of she was one hundred and two she has what to say when mrs price put the red sweater on her desk"). Therefore, in addition to not adhering to the exercise instructions, this sentence appears to go against the grain of the theme identified in the introduction by emphasising Rachel's feeling of wanting to be older (rather than her feeling of experiencing herself as a young child)

5.3.4 Discussion

Given the limited grasp of the coursework displayed in the above (representative) samples, it could be plausibly inferred that many of the learners dropped out because the EAP course was too challenging for them. This inference seems entirely warranted as many studies have discovered a connection between substandard academic achievement and attrition (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock 1986; Goldschmidt & Wang 1999; Rumberger 1995; Rumberger & Larson 1998; Swanson & Schneider 1999; Wehlage & Rutter 1986).

However, despite the persuasiveness of such a thesis, it has clear limitations. To begin with, in both groups, there were a small number of weak students who persisted with the course and considerably improved their academic writing skills. Seen in this light, it simply cannot be the case that the difficulty of the course provided an insurmountable obstacle for weaker students and caused them to drop out in some kind of deterministic sense. Instead, on the basis of the evidence, it appears more likely that many of the students dropped out because *they* were not prepared to grapple with a series of challenging – but by no means inappropriately difficult – tasks. By the lights of this view, the attrition rate had more to do with the learners' sense of agency than with the difficulty of the coursework. The issue of agency – and the role it played in the learners'

engagement with the course and indeed their entire educational psychology – shall be discussed and theoretically elaborated at length later in this chapter.

The notion that there was a causal connection between the difficulty of the course and the high attrition rates can be further called into question if the erratic attendance of the academically strong students is considered. As stated earlier, many of these students missed whole weeks of the course despite the fact that they produced strong written assignments and received high grades. Although absenteeism is not the same as attrition, the number of classes that a student attends *does* serve as a useful proxy for their levels of commitment and interest. The absenteeism rates of the high-performing students therefore show that – despite their command of the course material – they veered dangerously close to dropping out. Indeed, on a number of occasions, a good portion of these students almost certainly *would* have dropped out if the course instructor had not actively sought them out on the school premises and motivated them to continue attending the course.³⁷

5.3.5 Observations of behaviour accompanying attrition

For the duration of the EAP course, all of the learners who dropped out did so in an almost identical *manner*. In conjunction with data derived from interviews and other observations, the uniformity of this behaviour – along with its defining characteristics – can be used to entertain certain hypotheses about the underlying causes of the attrition.

With regard to this behaviour, the first important thing to mention is that *none* of the learners who dropped out explained their reasons for leaving or formally excused themselves. These learners, without any prior announcement, simply stopped attending. In theory, a plethora of other behavioural responses could have foreshadowed or

³⁷ This interpretation of the students' behaviour is supported by a number of studies which have found that absenteeism "the most common indicator of student engagement" (Rumberger 2001: 8), as well as discipline problems, are frequently associated with dropping out (see Bachman, O'Malley & Johnston 1971; Carbonaro 1998; Ekstrom et al. 1986; Goldschmidt & Wang 1999; Rumberger 1995; Rumberger & Larson 1998; Swanson & Schneider 1999; Wehlage & Rutter 1986).

accompanied the decision to leave the programme. For example, learners who were struggling with the course could have easily informed the course instructor that they were considering leaving the programme because they were finding it to be too difficult. Additionally, learners in such a situation could have explored a whole range of further possibilities. They could, for example, have enquired whether it was possible to work at a slower pace, or whether they could receive simplified exercises. Perhaps even more tellingly, learners who dropped out could have expressed regret or frustration. They could – for example – have informed the course instructor that they were upset at having to leave a free course that promised so many benefits, but that they had no other choice due to their inability to understand the assignments.

In my view, this suggests that the learners who dropped out of the course had weak levels of motivation. *If* the majority of the Gonwa and Delta students had genuinely desired to attend the course, they would – surely – have made at least some effort to negotiate the challenging situation they encountered in some of the ways mentioned above. Intuitively, it is simply not plausible that a person can have a particularly strong desire to overcome a challenge if they walk away from the challenge without making a firm attempt to devise solutions to the challenge – or mitigate it – by engaging with the person responsible for it (in this case the course instructor). Evidence for this lack of motivation can be further bolstered if it is considered that most of the learners dropped out of the programme within the first three weeks of its implementation. Once again, it is deeply counter-intuitive to suppose that anybody can be especially motivated to do something if their efforts to engage with it are disproportionately brief.

Before proceeding further, it is essential to rule out the possibility that the learners did not communicate their concerns or their decision to leave because the course instructor had made himself unapproachable in any kind of way. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the course instructor maintained a very positive and caring attitude towards all the learners. Thus, during lessons, the learners were repeatedly reminded about the course instructor's belief in their abilities and his firm commitment to go to great

lengths to help and support them with the coursework. Indeed, if anything, the learners were placed in a classroom environment in which they had every reason to believe that any difficulties they were encountering would be acknowledged and sensitively dealt with.

Nevertheless, there *are* still limitations with the claim that the learners dropped out in the manner they did solely because of weak motivation. This is because the ability to negotiate a situation and vocalise concerns arguably requires learners to have a fairly robust sense of themselves as agents who can actively shape and influence their education. While motivation is a component of such agency, it is certainly not exhaustive of it. As a consequence, it is faulty to claim that the drop- out behaviour in this study is reducible to low motivation levels. In what follows, this viewpoint will be consolidated and elaborated upon by appealing to further observations and theory.

5.3.6 Further behavioural observations

On numerous occasions, before the commencement of an EAP lesson, learners would attempt to run away or hide from the course instructor. This behaviour would occur in the following environmental context: the course instructor would be waiting outside the learners' home-room classroom at the end of the school day, and would thus be physically located in such a way that the learners would be aware of his presence as they filed outside. The course instructor waited for the learners in this manner for two reasons. Firstly, it was a convenient place to wait, as the EAP lessons took place in the learners' homeroom classroom each week. Secondly, by being clearly visible to the learners as the school day came to an end, the course instructor wanted to signal that the EAP lesson was indeed taking place as arranged.

In this environmental context, on one occasion, a female learner (while attempting to hide away) hid behind a tiny bush (which was clearly too small to cover her body) and pretended not to hear the course instructor's request to come out and discuss her

behaviour. On another occasion, a male learner acted as if he was going to attend the afternoon lesson, and then sprinted away across the school quadrangle as soon as the course instructor turned away to discuss an issue with another learner. In addition to hiding and running away, learners would frequently tell lies in order to avoid honestly discussing their decision not to attend with the course instructor. Thus, on many occasions, learners would tell the course instructor that they “needed the toilet” or “needed to fetch something from a friend” before they could participate in the lesson. After assuring the course instructor that they would return timeously, they would exit the classroom and simply disappear.

These modes of behaviour are very important and telling, as they can be used to further support the earlier claim that – at an *intuitive* level – the learners were ‘weak agents’. Intuitively, most people would agree that a strong agent will express a basic preparedness to confront and negotiate a difficult situation. Such a strong agent will thus – at the very least – have a desire to justify and communicate their decision to discontinue a project. In contrast, most people would intuitively characterise someone as a weak agent if they run away from a situation without making any attempt to explain why they are absconding or to suggest possible ways in which the difficulties they are encountering can be ameliorated. On the basis of these criteria, it should be clear that – by repeatedly running away and dissimulating – the learners in both groups were acting in a weak agential manner.

In the following section, a more theoretically informed notion of agency will be provided and behavioural observations of the learners will once again be provided to substantiate why their behaviour was indicative of a weak – rather than strong – sense of agency.

5.3.7 Bandura's account of agency

In an influential paper, Bandura (2006) identifies three “core properties” of human agency – *forethought*, *self-reactiveness* and *self-reflectiveness*.³⁸ He unpacks the meaning of these terms in the following manner:

Forethought includes more than future-directed plans. People set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts. A future cannot be a cause of current behavior because it has no material existence. But through cognitive representation, visualized futures are brought into the present as current guides and motivators of behavior. In this form of anticipatory self-guidance, behavior is governed by visualized goals and anticipated outcomes, rather than pulled by an unrealized future state.

(Bandura 2006:164)

[another] agentic property is self-reactiveness. Agents are not only planners and forethinkers. They are also self-regulators. Having adopted an intention and an action plan, one cannot simply sit back and wait for the appropriate performances to appear [...]. Agency thus involves not only the deliberative ability to make choices and action plans, but also the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution.

(Bandura 2006: 165)

The [last] agentic property is self-reflectiveness. People are not only agents of action. They are also self-examiners of their own functioning. Through functional self-awareness, they reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, and the meaning of their pursuits, and they make corrective adjustments if necessary. The metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one's thoughts and actions is the most distinctly human core property of agency.

(Bandura 2006:165)

³⁸ Interestingly, although it appears quite intuitive, when Bandura first put forward his theory of agency, it very much ran against the grain of orthodox psychology. According to Bandura, psychologists at the time commonly depicted behaviour as “shaped and shepherded by environmental forces” (Bandura 2005:20). Thus, in the behaviourist conception of agency, motivation is “regulated by a crude functionalism grounded in rewarding and punishing consequences (16). Bandura, influentially disagreed with the behaviourist approach to human psychology arguing that it “presented a truncated image of human nature given the self-regulatory capabilities of people to affect their thought processes, motivation, affective states, and actions through self-directed influence” (16). This study, too, shall take it for granted that people have the capacity to consciously regulate their own actions, and that they are not just deterministic products of unconscious urges and environmental factors.

Throughout the EAP course, the learners displayed behaviour that showed low-levels of all three properties. With regard to *forethought*, it should be mentioned that after signing their consent forms the learners were reminded (by the course instructor) that the EAP course would require much hard-work and concentration. The course instructor thus stipulated that the learners should only choose to participate if they were determined to push themselves and work as hard as they possibly could. In both groups, the learners unanimously responded to this warning by assuring the course instructor that they were indeed prepared to meet these expectations. Clearly, however, on the basis of the behaviour discussed in the previous section, the learners *did not* correctly anticipate what their future-orientated levels of commitment would be. This shows a fundamental lack of *forethought*, as nearly all the learners failed to correctly ‘visualise’ or ‘represent’ (using Bandura’s terminology) a likely outcome of their participation (i.e. weak levels of motivation, attrition, absenteeism, etc.). While it would (of course) have been unrealistic to expect any of the learners to publically express *doubts* about their own individual ability to commit to the course, it would not have been unrealistic (I hope) from them to have expressed *concern* about the demanding nature of the course. As has already been noted, however, such concern was not expressed. When presented with the opportunity to vocalise any concerns about their ability to engage with the course, both the Gonwa and Delta learners gave the course instructor the impression that they were fully committed to the EAP course.

The learners also displayed extremely low levels of *self-reactiveness* – Bandura’s next core property of human agency. In this respect, whenever the learners received a task that required them to regulate their behaviour outside the classroom environment, they failed to “construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution” (Bandura 2006). For example, on occasion, the course instructor gave learners the opportunity to finish off an assignment at home. Even when the very best students (who actually completed the course) were given this opportunity, they either did not hand in the homework or returned it at a time that significantly exceeded the deadline the course instructor provided them with. Just about all the learners also failed

to arrive at the weekly lessons with a file (provided by the course instructor) containing their notes. In the researcher's view, the ability to perform appropriate actions outside the classroom environment is an excellent measure of *self-reactiveness*. This is because learners must rely on their *own* ability to regulate their actions when a task is undertaken outside of the classroom. In contrast, when a task is completed in the classroom, the presence and authority of a teacher imposes a set of external expectations that usually obligate or pressurise learners into completing their work.

Self-reflectiveness is perhaps the most important core property of agency that Bandura identifies. Unfortunately, as with the other properties of agency thus far considered, the learners did not display much of it, that is, they did not significantly “reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, and the meaning of their pursuits [...]”. For example, virtually none of the learners asked pointed questions about what they needed to do to improve their academic writing. Typically, when seeking feedback, the learners would hand over their written work to the course instructor and expect him to comment on what they needed to do. Furthermore, the learners never sought to assess their own efficacy through entering into a discussion (with the course instructor) about how their work compared to the work of other participants. Lastly, it should be noted that the learners did not seem especially attuned to the meaning of their pursuits. To elaborate by way of an example, despite being informed that the EAP course would help them with matric and university, none of the learners ever asked questions about the specific ways in which the course would interlock with the matric syllabus and the writing skills that are required at a tertiary level.

5.3.8 Interviews with students

In order to provide a final confirmation that the absenteeism and attrition stemmed from the learners' motivational psychology, the researcher conducted a number of unstructured interviews with the Delta and Gonwa learners. Since the behaviour of the learners described in previous sections draws attention to their reluctance to talk about

their decision-making procedures, the researcher judged that a formal interview would make the learners feel ill at ease and pressurised. In contrast

Unstructured interactive interviews are shared experiences in which researchers and interviewees come together to create a context of conversational intimacy in which participants feel comfortable formatting telling their story (Ramos, 1989). The nature of unstructured interviews makes them contrary to what quantitative research is normally considered to be—a process in which distance and control are highly valued.[...] Larossa et al. (1981) stated that in the comfortable atmosphere of the home and when there is trust, information that a participant might not have otherwise chosen to reveal might be so. The authors implied that the stance of “interviewer as a friend” rather than an impersonal professional crosses conversational trust boundaries and may entice the participant into providing information that they might later regret.

(Corbin & Morse 2003: 338)

Within the context of this study, these unstructured interviews mainly took place before the start of the EAP lesson (usually in the school corridor outside the learners’ homeroom classroom). When conducting these interviews, the researcher always ensured that the students he approached were isolated (such that their responses would not be conditioned by their fears that others would overhear them). The researcher also did his best to maintain a casual, friendly air, and even adopted a faintly humorous tone in relation to the attrition and absenteeism situation (so as to signal acceptance rather than anger). The interviews that were conducted in this manner fell into two main categories. In category 1 interviews, the researchers asked a learner why *other* learners were either absent or had dropped out of the programme. In category 2 interviews, the researcher asked a learner who had either dropped out of the programme (or been frequently absent) to explain the reasons for his/her behaviour.

5.3.9 Category 1 interviews

In total, the researcher conducted eight unstructured interviews. Four of the interviews were conducted with Delta learners, and the other four were conducted with Gonwa learners. Each learner was approached separately at various points between week four and week seven of the course. After initiating a casual conversation with the learners –

concerning their hobbies, their family situation, their school-work and their plans for the future – the following three questions were naturalistically encoded into the conversation

1. Do you think so many people are absent or have left the course because it's too difficult?
2. Is the course too time-consuming? Is that the reason why they've all left?
3. Is it because they've got too much homework?
4. Do you think it's because they don't want to come? Is it because they're not motivated enough to attend?

All of the learners (in both groups) answered 'no' to the first three questions, and 'yes' to the fourth question. When the researcher asked the interviewees whether they were sure about the correctness of their answer to question four, most of them got what can be best described as a 'knowing' expression and emphasised their certainty. When responding to question 4, the learners would often say things like 'They just don't want to come', 'They do what they like', 'All of these things they're telling you [for why they miss lessons], they're excuses'. Two Delta learners provided some variation to this pattern when they stated that – in addition to not wanting to attend – many of the learners were frequently absent or had dropped out because of peer pressure. When asked to elaborate on this, the one learner replied "If someone who has influence says it's a waste of time, then the others will follow him."

5.3.10 Category 2 interviews

It was far more challenging to interview students who had either dropped out of the course, or who were frequently absent. These students often deliberately avoided the course instructor, and were also extremely reluctant to 'open up' and speak about their behaviour. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, it was possible to interview 4 Delta learners and 4 Gonwa learners and to elicit some basic information from them. While 4

of these learners expressed remorse about their behaviour and were not able to give a concrete explanation for why they missed classes regularly or dropped out of the course, the other 4 justified their actions by saying things like ‘I have too much school work’ or ‘I have transport difficulties’.

For a number of reasons, the legitimacy of the justifications these 4 learners gave is questionable. Firstly, *none* of these learners made any effort to seek a solution to the problem or provide any suggestion that they *wanted* to continue the course. They never, for example, stated “*I want to carry on*, but there are problems that I’m having with schoolwork or transport. Is there any way that we can shorten the afternoon classes?” Perhaps, as tellingly, they never expressed *any* conflict or ambiguity in relation to their decision to leave. Thus they never said things like “It’s difficult to come in the afternoons, even though I can see that this course can help me. I think that’s why I stopped coming.” Finally, on many occasions (at both Gonwa High and Delta High) the researcher arrived in the last period of school to find the entire learner population milling around and talking in the school quadrangle. If the learners who had complained about having too much homework had really wanted to do the EAP course, they would have surely used this free period more productively.

5.3.11 Discussion

Both interview categories provide psychologically interiorised evidence that the absenteeism and attrition affecting the study derived from the learners’ lack of willingness to continue with the EAP course. Considered in conjunction with the behavioural observations provided in the previous section, the interviews support the idea that the learners were weak agents, and that this psychological predisposition best explains their often negligent behaviour.

This interpretation of the data gains even more credence if it is considered that – in general – discipline is a huge issue in South African schools. In this respect, many

specialists (Oosthuizen, Roux & Van der Walt 2003; Joubert, De Waal & Rossouw 2004; Van Wyk 2001; Mabeda & Prinsloo 2000) have argued that a lack of discipline among learner is “one of the major concerns expressed by all stakeholders in the education process in South Africa” (Mhistry & Khumalo 2012: 97). This view is echoed by Rossouw (2013) and Thomson (2002) who have conducted studies in primary, secondary and rural South African schools, and who have also found that bad discipline and disruptive behaviour seriously jeopardises the possibility of effective teaching.

While the EAP course in this study was not affected by any overtly disruptive behaviour, there is a clear and obvious link between low-agency levels and poor discipline. To take just one example, a lack of self-control and regulation is deeply implicated in both disruptive behaviour *and* a lack of agential control. Seen in this light, since the learners’ behaviour in relation to the course is coextensive with a well-acknowledged behavioural problem that is endemic to many South African schools (especially those located in poor areas), the study’s findings cohere with a substantial body of literature that focuses on the behavioural psychology of learners.

5.4 Quantitative results

The quantitative data from this study will now be presented and commented upon. The data were derived from the grades that the learners received for the seven assignments that the EAP course was structured around (a description and rationale of this grading system has already featured in the preceding chapter). The graded assignments of the learners who dropped out will not feature in this analysis.

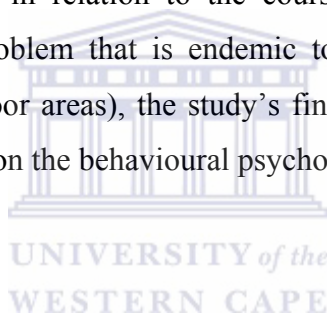


Table 5.3.1 Gonwa Course Results

Pupil	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Total Score	Percentage
A	7	6	10	9	5	5	7	49	58%
B	0	5	0	9	5	10	0	29	35%
C	0	7	5	0	0	10	9	31	37%
D	0	9	0	10	10	9	10	48	57%
E	9	11	11	11	9	10	9	70	83%
F	10	10	7	10	10	0	0	47	56%
G	11	11	11	0	9	12	9	63	75%
H	0	6	8	0	7	0	0	21	25%
I	0	4	0	0	0	10	8	22	26%
J	0	0	10	9	0	0	0	19	23%
K	0	10	0	0	0	10	8	28	33%
L	0	0	9	10	9	11	0	39	46%
M	10	0	0	11	10	10	8	49	58%

Table 5.3.2 Delta Course Results

Pupil	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Total Score	Percentage
A1	6	8	6	0	10	0	10	40	48%
B1	11	11	0	10	0	0	0	32	38%
C1	9	0	7	0	11	0	8	35	42%
D1	8	8	10	11	11	10	11	69	82%
E1	0	7	10	6	9	0	0	32	38%
F1	8	5	7	0	11	10	0	41	49%
G1	10	0	11	0	10	0	0	31	37%
H1	11	9	6	0	0	0	0	26	31%
I1	11	10	9	0	0	0	0	30	36%
J1	8	11	6	0	0	7	0	32	38%
K1	7	7	6	4	0	0	0	24	29%

Assessed quantitatively, both the Gonwa and Delta learners performed very poorly. In the Delta group, 10 out of the 11 learners scored a cumulative grade of less than 50 %. Out of the Delta learners who scored 50% or less, 6 learners earned cumulative grades that dipped *significantly* below the 50% mark. Amongst the Gonwa learners, 7 out of the 13 learners scored a cumulative grade of less than 50%. In a manner that again resembled the Delta group, of those Gonwa learners who did earn less than 50% (cumulatively), 4 learners received grades that fell significantly below the 50% mark.

Interestingly, it should be noted that the two groups also paralleled each other in relation to the students who performed well. Specifically, in both the Delta and Gonwa groups, only two learners gained a cumulative grade above 80%.

This bleak assessment of the learners' performance can, however, be mitigated, if a different perspective is adopted. In this respect, it must be mentioned that the majority of the learners did not necessarily perform badly because they produced incompetent assignments. Rather, they only managed to score sub-par grades because – due to absenteeism – they failed to hand in many assignments (for a discussion of the rate of absenteeism see Sections 5.3.2 – 5.3.11). Thus, if the Gonwa and Delta data are examined closely, it becomes apparent that many of the learners – whether they performed strongly or weakly – missed the opportunity to score a hypothetical 24 additional points (due to their inability to hand in all the assignments). In fact, in the Delta group 4 learners failed to hand in 4 assignments (a potential 48 points), while another 2 learners failed to hand in 3 (a potential 36 points) assignments. In the Gonwa group, 2 learners failed to hand in 4 assignments, whereas as many as 5 learners did not hand in 3 assignments. In addition to this, in both groups, many of the students who scored a cumulatively low grade nonetheless managed to score surprisingly high grades for a number of individual assignments. This is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it reaffirms the earlier claim that absenteeism was *not* triggered by the students' inability to do the coursework. Secondly, it suggests that the students who scored a low cumulative grade had high degrees of intellectual resourcefulness, since they could perform well in spite of the fact that they missed many lessons.

To provide a concrete sense of how the learners' cumulative grades do not capture the degree to which the course helped many of the learners improve their academic writing skills, I shall now analyse two essays that were produced by Delta and Gonwa learners who attended the EAP course erratically (and therefore received low cumulative grades). The first sample essay comes from a Delta learner who had missed two weeks of attendance (and a total of four assignments [two rough drafts and two final drafts])

prior to handing in the below assignment. The second sample essay comes from a Gonwa learner who had missed four weeks of attendance (and a total of eight assignments) prior to handing in the featured assignment. It is advisable for the reader to review Task 5 and Task 6 in Appendices 3B & 3C before reading the samples below.

Delta sample 1 (Task 5):

In Ted Hughes' poem "Hawk Roosting" there are two themes that are explored in the poem. [GTAR]. Hughes' first theme is that in the natural world there is a struggle for existence [FMT]. Hughes' second theme is about how animals want to dominate other animals in the wild [SMT].

In the second stanza [LW/P] Hughes writes about [AR] how the only thing that the hawk is thinking in its mind is how to kill and then feed itself [DFMT]. Hughes thus tells us that "Or in sleep practice perfect kills and eat". [FQT] In addition "I kill where I please because it is all mine. [SQT]. With all of these descriptions Hughes is showing us there's no peace in the wild and it's either you kill or be killed. [RFMT]

Lastly [LW/P] Hughes tells us about [AR] that no animal wants to be seen as weak, they're all trying to overpower other individuals [DSMT]. Hughes thus tells us that "My manners are tearing off heads." [FQT]. In addition "No arguments assert my right". With all of these descriptions Hughes is trying to show us that each and every animal in the wild is trying to over-control other animals. [RSMT]

This essay received a high grade (10/12) because it executed many of the assignment instructions correctly. In the introductory paragraph 1) information regarding the genre, author and title of the text is neatly condensed into a grammatically correct sentence, and 2) the two main themes of the poem are correctly identified without particular details about the poem being prematurely mentioned. In the second paragraph the learner 1) paraphrases a particular section of the poem that reflects the first theme identified in his introduction, 2) provides an appropriate quotation to establish the accuracy of his paraphrasing, 3) provides an additional (appropriate) quotation to provide further proof that the theme he has identified is rooted in the text and 4) constructs a sentence in which he explicitly refers all this information back to the first theme mentioned in his introduction. Importantly, in relation to this last step, when the learner does refer back to the first theme mentioned in his introduction, he uses different

words to describe this theme. Through doing this he avoids clumsy repetition and demonstrates that he has a firm and flexible understanding of the poem's first theme.

In the third paragraph the learner successfully analyses the poem's second theme by again following all of these steps. However, it should be mentioned that in both the second and third paragraphs, the learner does make a mistake: when providing his second quotation, he does not follow an assignment instruction to insert the author's name and the specific part of the text that the quote comes from *before* the quotation (e.g. he does not say 'In addition, *in the seventh line of the poem Hughes states [...]*'). Although this is a small and relatively insignificant omission, the missing information does ensure that the quote is properly contextualized and grammatically correct.

In addition to following most of the assignment instructions, the learner managed to write in a grammatically coherent manner and incorporated feedback from his rough draft into his final draft. For these reasons as well he scored a high grade.

Gonwa sample 2 (Task 6):

Cavafy 'the city' [GTAR]. Cavafy explores two themes that are important. Firstly cavafy states that in his first theme How the people blame the environment they are in for the fact that their lives are messed up. [FMT]. 'However' [HOTS] secondly cavafy states his second theme that environment can not be blamed for our Issues we are responsible for our lives to become successful or not. [SMT]

In the first stanza [LW/P] Cavafy talk about a person who blames a place that spoil everything when it have not even started [DFMT]. Cavafy thus states [AR] "Here everything I do is condemned in advance and my heart like a dead man's lies buried" [FQT]. In addition, in the first stanza [AR]. Cavafy states that "Wherever I turn, wherever I look, I gaze on the ruins of my life here, where I've spent and botched and wasted so many years." [SQT] With all these descriptions Cavafy is showing us [AR]. Most people blame their environments that they live in for their lives that have not worked out. [RFMT]

However in the second stanza [LW/P]. Cavafy writes that if you have spoiled your life here in this environment, then will also destroy it in all other environment. [DSMT] Cavafy thus states [AR] "for just as you've ruined your life here in this backwater, You've destroyed it everywhere on earth". [FQT] In addition, in the second stanza [AR]. Cavafy describes that "You will always arrive in this city". [SQT] With all these descriptions Cavafy is showing us [AR] even if we leave the environment we live in, we also find another environment like the one we left [SMT].

Gonwa sample 2 (Task 6) [cont.]:

In conclusion, Cavafy's second theme is clearly meant to contradict his first theme. It is very wrong to blame our environment for our lives that are not working out, because we do things without thinking about the consequences, eg when you smoke drugs, drink alcohol or get involve in gangsterism. when consequences came that's were we start to blame the environment and creticize it for our own mistakes [CBHOTS].

This essay was written in response to the penultimate assignment (assignment 6), and as a consequence the learner had to follow certain (new) instructions that were more complex than the instructions that the learner responsible for the previous essay had to adhere to. Before analysing the manner in which the learner handled these new instructions, it should be noted that in the first, second and third paragraphs of this essay the learner successfully followed virtually all the instructions that the learner responsible for the first essay followed. Thus – apart from 1) a failure to condense the [GTAR] information into a full sentence and 2) the inclusion of the author's name and a linking-phrase into the [SQT] sentence – the two essays (in terms of their structure) mirror each other very closely.

For the concluding paragraph of the essay, the learner was instructed to establish the precise relationship between the poem's two themes (using argumentation). When doing this, the learner was told to use words like 'disprove', 'although', 'appears' 'contradicts' or phrases like 'casts doubt', 'despite appearances' and 'does not really contradict'. These words and phrases were selected due to the fact that – in the text – there is a tension between the theme expressed in the first stanza (e.g. our lives are determined by the environment we inhabit) and the theme expressed in the second stanza (e.g. our lives are determined by our own choices and beliefs, not our surroundings). For this reason, earlier in the essay – at strategically appropriate points – the learner was instructed to use the word 'however' to acknowledge this tension.

A close examination of this essay reveals that the learner successfully followed all these instructions. In the introduction and third paragraph of the essay the word ‘however’ has been inserted in argumentatively appropriate places, and in the concluding paragraph the word ‘contradict’ has been used to generate a clear and compelling account of the precise way in which the two themes relate to one another. It should also be noted that the learner justifies his/her interpretation of the poem by appealing to an argument which *she* has formulated, but which is nonetheless not inappropriately subjective (i.e. it as an argument which rests on philosophical and psychological claims about human nature rather than anecdotal subjectively derived experience).

Since the essay followed nearly all of the assignment instructions it received a high grade (10/12). The learner would have no doubt received a perfect score if she had read through her final draft more carefully and corrected the many grammatical errors that detracted from the essay’s overall merits.

5.5 Qualitative results

In the following section I shall continue to build on the idea that the quantitative data generated by this study offers a limited – or partial – account of the degree to which the EAP course *improved* the learners’ academic writing skills. To do this, I will adopt a qualitative methodology and compare the learners’ first assignment (Task 1) to their final assignments (Task 8). To ensure that this analysis is comprehensive yet concise, in each experimental group I will examine the work of one ‘strong’ student and one ‘average’ student. This approach has been adopted since – among both the Gonwa and Delta learners –there were very few genuinely ‘weak’ students who completed the course (although, of course, there were many students who performed badly overall due to absenteeism). As a consequence, the written work of the strong and average students in the following analysis *typifies* the work of nearly all the learners in the group, and so offers a broad insight into the levels of improvement that took place in the work of most of the learners.

Before reading these samples, it is advisable for the reader to review Task 1 (see Chapter 3 p.97-100) and Task 7 in section 3D of the appendix.

5.5.1 A qualitative assessment of a 'good' Delta student

Task 1:

At the beginning [LW/P] of the stanza 1 the pessoa claims that sometimes we compare things with beauty whereas beauty doesn't exist. its just a word.

Pessoa then [LW/P] tell us that Does the flower really have beauty? no it is not beauty it just have colour, shape, form and existence.

In the third [LW/P] stanza pessoa claims that other men lies when they say they saw beauty to something because they concerning things that simply exist.

Finally [LW/P] the sad thing is that you can see a flower, you can touch it but you can't say its beautiful because beautiful is just a word you can't see it.

In this exercise, while the learner completes the first assignment instruction successfully (i.e. she inserts linking words in the correct places), she encounters a fair amount of difficulty with the second assignment instruction (i.e. paraphrasing the poem). To begin with, in the second stanza of the poem she does not re-write a central idea that is expressed in the poem (“[beauty is something that] I give to things in exchange for the pleasure they give me”). Secondly, in the third paragraph, although the learner does demonstrate an understanding of the central idea expressed in the poem’s third stanza (i.e. beauty is a ‘lie’ that comes from other men), her paraphrasing contains awkward phrases (“[...] when they say they *saw beauty to something*”) and chunks of the poem that have simply been copied (“concerning things that simply exist”). Finally, in the fourth paragraph, the learner offers her own subjective viewpoint on the poem, instead of paraphrasing the poem’s fourth (short) stanza (“How hard to be just what we are and see nothing but the visible”).

Thus, at this early stage in the course, although the learner has managed to communicate the gist of the poem in her own words, her paraphrasing skills are fairly limited.

Task 7:

In this essay Mans Place In nature: the two infinities Blaise Pascals [GTAR] Pascals [AR] offers us an exciting and interesting account/picture the largeness of the universe and our place in it [GOAM] “specifically in the first paragraph [LW/P] of his essay Pascal states [AR] that the universe is so big that you cannot measure it and the comparison in it [FMAP]. However [HOTS], in the second paragraph [LW/P] Pascal [AR] state that Even us we are very big because we’ve been made up with small parts (atom) in the universe [SMAP].

In the first paragraph of his essay [LW/P] Pascal states [AR] that how the largeness of the universe and we cannot even imagine how big it is [DFMAP]. Pascal thus states [AR] let the imagination pass on: “it will exhaust its powers of thinking before nature ceases to supply it with material for thought” [FQT] In addition in the first paragraph [LW/P] in in the eleventh line Pascal [AR] “It is an infinite space, the centre of which is everywhere, the circumference nowhere...Returning to himself let man consider what he is compared with all existence [SQT]. With all these descriptions Pascal is obviously showing us [AR] how important is the universe and also how we are not important as universe [BRFMAP].

However in the second paragraph of his essay [LW/P] Pasal states [LW/P] Even human beings they are so big because they’ve been made up with many parts as the universe [DSMAP]. Pascal thus states [AR] “I will paint for him not only the visible universe but all the imaginable vastness of nature in this dimunitive atom” [FQT]. In addition in the last line of paragraph two Pascal states that [AR] “for who can fail to marvel that our body, which before, was imperceptible in the vastness of the whole, should now be a colossus, a world ” [SQT] With all these description Pascal is obviously showing us [AR] even human beings they are so big as the universe because they’ve been made up with many parts [BRSMAP].

In conclusion Pascal is showing us that [AR] the first paragraph cast doubt on the second one because it appears that we are very small in the universe and the universe is too big than us because it cannot be imaginable and it is made up with many small parts. The first paragraph disprove the second paragraph because human beings are large and important because we need to compare ourselves with people around us if we are not doing that we are going to have small understanding about the largeness of the universe [CBHOTS]

By her last assignment, the learner has gained a battery of further academic writing skills, as well as greater proficiency in her paraphrasing. Before analysing the sample further, it is necessary to summarise the 10 academic writing skills that the learner had to execute in order to do the assignment:

1. The ability to use words or phrases that signal that A) the text is being examined in a sequential and comprehensive manner and that B) particular parts of the texts are being examined (this is what the [LW/P] sign refers to). [LW/P] stands for 'Linking Word / Phrase.'
2. The ability to refer to the genre, title and author of the text in a grammatically coherent fashion (this is what the [GTAR] sign refers to). [GTAR] stands for 'Genre Title Author Referral'
3. The ability to refer back to the author in each sentence (this is what the [AR] sign refers to). [AR] stands for 'Author Referral'.
4. The ability to state what the text is about in extremely general and basic terms, whilst also using attitude markers to convey an evaluative/attitudinal stance towards the text (this is what the [GOAM] sign refers to). [GOAM] stands for 'General Outline with Attitude Markers'.
5. The ability to paraphrase particular sections of the text which reflect the main theme(s)/idea(s) (this is what the [FMAP] and [SMAP] sentence refers to). [FMAP] stands for 'First Main Argumentative Point' while [SMAP] stands for 'Second Main Argumentative Point.'
6. The ability to use words (appropriately) which emphasise a tension between two or more ideas/themes in a text (this is what the [HOTS] sign refers to). [HOTS] stands for 'Higher Order Thinking Skills'
7. The ability to quote the exact part of the text that is paraphrased to establish a main idea/theme (this is what the [FQT] sign refers to). [FQT] stands for 'First Quoting Technique'.
8. The ability to quote an additional part of the text that provides more evidence for why the themes/ideas identified in the introduction are rooted in the text (this is what the [SQT] sign refers to). [SQT] stands for 'Second Quoting Technique'.
9. The ability to *explicitly* refer back the paraphrased and quoted information to the themes/ideas identified in the introduction. When this is done, the themes must be re-written so that they are not copied from the introduction. A 'booster' word must also be used to emphasize the learners' confidence in their claims (this is what the [BRFMAP] and [BRSMAP] signs refer to). [BRFMAP] stands for 'Boosted Referral to First Main Argumentative Point, while [BRSMAP] stands for 'Boosted Referral to Second Main Argumentative Point'.
10. The ability to reach a clear-cut conclusion about the precise relationship between the text's two opposing claims (using argumentative language) [this is what the [CBHOTS] sign refers to). [CBHOTS] stands for 'Conclusion Based Higher Order Thinking Skills.'

By reading through the sample again, it should be clear that the learner has managed to execute all of these skills (with varying degrees of success though). In what follows, I will comment on the three skills the learner has executed most admirably and the three skills that have only been poorly executed.

With regard to the more successful parts of the essay, it should be noted that (in the essay's opening sentence) the learner has done an excellent job of stating what the text is about in general terms that only touch obliquely upon the two main arguments mentioned later in the introduction (in addition the learner uses appropriate attitude markers ["exciting" and "interesting"]). Next, in the second and third paragraphs of the essay, the learner uses highly appropriate quotations. Specifically, both her [FQT] sentences directly reflect her paraphrased sentences, while both her [SQT] sentences clearly provide *distinct, additional* evidence for the claims that are conveyed in her introduction. Finally, the learner is able to explicitly relate all of this information back to the central claims made in her introduction (whilst, in addition, re-writing these central claims in order to avoid repetition).

The essay, does, however, contain a number of flaws. The learner has not managed to insert her [GTAR] information in a coherent manner and the meaning of some of her most important claims is far from clear (e.g. what, exactly, does the learner mean when she claims that – according to Pascal – you cannot “measure” the “comparison” in the universe?). Most importantly, though, the learner's conclusion is defective. Apart from attributing contradictory claims to the first paragraphs of the text (initially she claims that the first paragraph establishes our smallness, then, later, she claims that it establishes our largeness), the learner seems (in a rather muddled manner) to be re-stating the two dominant themes rather than clearly evaluating which one is correct, and why.

5.5.2 A qualitative assessment of an 'average' Delta student

Task 1:

Firstly [LW/P] this quotation is about seeing things clearly it is what the poet says about in the first paragraph. but beauty something that you can see.

Secondly [LW/P] Pessoa tells us clearly that Beauty is just a word is doesn't really exist something like dinosaurs, but flowers exist with its own colour and the fruit got its shape but the flower is just beauty by its own colour and the thing that you can see in that flower its just colour not beauty.

After [LW/P] This is a men's lie when they lay a beautiful flower but a flower just have its own colour.

Finally [LW/P] you can just say that beauty is visible because you never see something beautiful.

Although this learner correctly inserts his linking-words into the exercise, it is quite obvious that he has failed to understand most of the poem. To take just one example, the learner claims that – in the first stanza of the poem – Pessoa claims that you can see beauty (when in actual fact, Pessoa makes the very opposite claim). Indeed, even when the learner appears to be accurately capturing the poem's meaning (like in his second paragraph) he makes many errors that misrepresent the claims made in the poem's second stanza (i.e. according to the learner people attribute beauty to a flower because of its colour, whereas Pessoa's actual point is that people attribute beauty to certain objects (like flowers) because of the *pleasure* that they derive from perceiving the colour, shape and presence [or existence] of the object). Thus, due to his inability to understand the text, the learner's paraphrasing skills are of a very low standard.

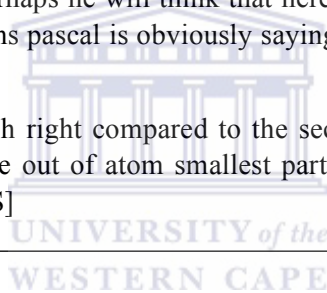
Task 7:

In Pascal Essay called the ‘man’s place in the Nature” [GTAR] pascal gives us an amazing account about the man’s place in the universe [GOAM]. Specifically, in the first paragraph [LW/P] pascal state [AR] the Universe is big we as human We like atom on it [FMAP]. However [HOTS] in the second paragraph pascal states that even the smallest things contain the Universe on themself [SMAP].

In the first paragraph [LW/P] Pascal states [AR] we can think and about the universe but our thoughts can’t allow us to the universe. [DFMAP] Pascal thus states [AR] “We may extend our conception beyond all imaginable space yet produce only atoms in comparison with the reality of things.” [FQT] in addition Pascal states [AR] Returning to himself, let man consider what he is compared with all existence let him think of himself as lost in this remote corner of nature and from this little dungeon in which he finds himself lodged [SQT] With all these descriptions Pascal is clearly showing us how small we are compared to the universe [BRFMAP]

In the second paragraph [LW/P] pascal say the Universe is big even the smallest insert contain the universe [DSMAP]. Pascal thus state [AR] “I will paint for him not only the visible universe but all the imaginable vastness of nature in this diminutive atom.” [FQT] In addition Pascal states [AR] “Perhaps he will think that here is nature’s extreme diminutive” [SQT] With all these descriptions pascal is obviously saying that the human also contain the Universe. [BRFMAP].

In conclusion the first paragraph right compared to the second because the first paragraph because We are small We made out of atom smallest part in our bodies and that make us small to the universe. [CBHOTS]



This essay clearly demonstrates a massive improvement in the learners’ academic writing skills. Not only has the learner demonstrated a sound understanding of a text that is far more semantically complex than the poem previously discussed, he has also executed some of the more complex assignment instructions with a surprising degree of insight and sensitivity (see his [GOAM] sentence as well as his [FMAP] and [SMAP] sentences). This is especially evident in his conclusion. In the concluding paragraph of his essay, the learner manages to establish the precise relationship between Pascal’s two main ideas through formulating his own (plausible) argumentative claim (“We made out of atom smallest part in our bodies and that make us small to the universe”).

Of course, this does not mean that the essay is error free. The learner's paraphrasing occasionally fails to articulate the idea he is trying to communicate (“[...] we can think and about the universe but our thoughts can't allow us to the universe”) and his second quotation (in the third paragraph) is fragmentary and could easily be replaced by a far more appropriate quote from the text. Nevertheless, for the *most* part, the learners' quotation and paraphrasing skills (as well as his ability to relate this information to his introduction) are on par with the previous learner.

5.5.3 A qualitative assessment of a 'good' Gonwa student

Task 1:

At the beginning [LW/P]. Pessoa states that someday when things are so pure, perfect and accurate when they seem excellent, correct. He slowly ask himself why he take time to describe beauty.

Subsequently [LW/P] pessoa ask a questions of whether flowers and fruit are beautiful. He also answer and states that they don't have beauty. There are only 3 properties colour, form and existence.

Afterwards [LW/P] he argues that he was once visited by the lies of men. We all know that most of men are full of lies in this poem lies refer to saying thing are beautiful of which they are not.

In conclusion [LW/P] he express out about how hard can it be for us just to see what is really there and be true to ourselves and see nothing but the properties we could see with our naked eye.

In this exercise, the learner inserts her linking words correctly and does the best job – out of all the learners in this analysis – of accurately paraphrasing the text. In particular, the learner manages to clearly articulate the contents of the poem's fourth stanza – a feat which none of the other learners managed. The exercise does, nevertheless, contain errors. In the first paragraph the learner does not so much paraphrase as substitutes words in the poem for synonyms provided in the vocabulary sheet (this negatively affects the clarity and meaning of the paragraph's second sentence). Finally, like all the

other learners, in her second paragraph, the learner fails to paraphrase Pessoa's central claim about the relationship between pleasure and beauty.

Task 7:

In Blaise pascal's Philosophical essay Mans place in NATure: THE TWO INFINITIES [GTAR] Pascal [AR] states two interesting points. Pascal's first point [AR] is about how humans are important [GOAM] In the first paragraph [LW/P] Pascal [AR] argues about how big the universe is and also that humans are nothing compared to the universe, they are like tiny parts compared to the universe [FMAP]. However [HOTS] In the second paragraph [LW/P] pascal's [AR] second important theme is that even if we are small we are also complex but scientifically we are not that small [SMAP].

In the first paragraph [LW/P] pascal states humans are small compared to the universe [DFMAP] "Universe; let the earth seem to him a dot" but if our vision stops here, let the imagination pass on; it will exhaust its powers of thinking long before nature ceases to supply it with material for thought" [FQT] In addition thus All the visible world is no more than an imperceptible speck in nature's ample bosom. [SQT] With all these descriptions pascal [AR] is clearly telling us about how small we are in the universe.

In the second paragraph [LW/P] Pascal [AR] Explores that when you look at us scientifically we are not really small [DSMAP] Pascal [AR] thus states "But to behold another miracle no less astonishing let him the most delicate things he knows. let him take a mite with its tiny body and its tiny limbs legs with their joints, veins in those legs, blood in those veins". [FQT] In addition Pascal [AR] states "Subdividing yet again let the ultimate point he can reach be now the subject of discourse (i.e. the atom) [SQT] with all these descriptions Pascal is evidently showing us [AR] that when you look at us scientifically we are really not that small [BRSMAP]

The improvement between this learner's first and last assignment is not as dramatic as the improvement between the first and last assignment of the previous learner. Interestingly this shows that a learner who started the programme with *significantly* stronger writing abilities did not *necessarily*³⁹ benefit more from the course than an academically weaker student.

³⁹ This statement, does, however, need to be put in perspective. In this respect, this learner's assignments were far stronger (on average) than the previous learners' assignments. This learner's comparatively poor performance in the last EAP assignment could, therefore, be connected to difficulties she had with the particular text she had to write about in the last assignment.

With regard to the particular elements of the assignment, although this learner *has* managed to execute all the assignment instructions with a fair degree of accuracy, the learner's ability to quote and provide a broad outline of what the text is about leaves much to be desired. Specifically, the learner's [GOAM] sentence has been conflated with the text's first main argumentative point, and many of the quotes in the second and third paragraphs do not reflect the paraphrased sentence that precedes them (to take one example, in the essay's third paragraph the learner's first quote does not establish that things are not really small if we examine them scientifically). Most seriously, the learner omits the conclusion from her essay – something which clearly tokens that the learner has not yet learned how to argumentatively evaluate the relationship between the two central ideas expressed in the text.

5.5.4 A qualitative assessment of an 'average' Gonwa student

Task 1:

At the start [LW/P] Pessoa is asking himself about beauty why does he bother himself asking him what is beauty all about.

Afterwards [LW/P] Pessoa tells us that beauty it really doesn't exist it is something that only has a colour and shape. These are beautiful because you can see the colour of it and shape and thats make it beautiful and simple to see it.

Subsequently [LW/P] The beauty of men relate to beauty because other mens realy love other buety things. And other men really

Finally [LW/P] Pessoa is trying to show us that he really cant find the real thing that is beautiful and that makes it hard for him

Although this learner comes close – at points – to understanding the text, it is quite apparent that she has failed to accurately paraphrase just about every key claim made in the poem. Putting aside the third and fourth paragraphs of the exercise (which clearly do not make sense), it should be noted that the learner's first paragraph makes a false claim (in the poem's first stanza the poet asks himself why he attributes beauty to things – he does not, as the learner claims, ask himself 'what beauty is all about') and that the

second paragraph (again) omits Pessoa's point about the relationship between pleasure and beauty. As with the Delta learner in the 'average' category, it appears that this learner has failed to paraphrase the text due to her inability to understand it.

Task 7:

In his philosophical essay Man's place in Nature Blaise Pascal [GTAR] Pascal offers us an interesting and true view about human in the universe [GOAM]. Specifically in the first paragraph [LW/P] of his essay, Pascal states [AR] that human are extremely small compared to the universe [FMAP] However [HOTS] in Second paragraph Pascal us that even smallest in nature are large and significant whey you look at them scientifically [SMAP].

First [LW/P] Pascal state [AR] that when we think about us in the universe, we see insignificant and small [DFMAP] Pascal thus states [AR] "The universe let him learn to put a true value on earth, its kingdom and cities and upon himself" [FQT] In addition secondly he states "all his invisible world is no more than an imperceptible speck in nature ample bosom" [SQT] With all these description Pascal is to show about human beings are small, like they are small and the earth has big cities more than humans [BRFMAP].

Secondly [LW/P] Pascal states [AR] that even smallest things in nature they are big when we see them. [DSMAP] "Let him take a mite with its tiny body and its tiny limbs" [FQT] In addition Secondly [LW/P] "Subdividing yet again let the ultimate point he can reach now be the subject of our discourse, perhaps here he will think that here is natures extreme dimunative [SQT] With all these description Pascal is trying to show us about the small things in nature that are complex.

Despite the fact that the learner's final essay does not contain a conclusion, and that her third paragraph is riddled with a number of errors, in her first two paragraphs she executes enough of the assignment instructions to make it clear that her academic writing skills have undergone a noticeable improvement. In the introduction of the essay, her [GTAR] information has been smoothly incorporated into a correct [GOAM] sentence, and her identification of the text's two main argumentative points are correct and well-articulated. Although the learner's first quotation does not reflect her (well-written) [DFMAP] sentence, her second quotation provides an additional (appropriate) source of justification for the central idea she is arguing for in the paragraph. Problematically, though, when the learner tries to relate this information back to her

introduction she mentions information (“earth has big cities more than human”) that does not have any direct bearing on the text’s first main argumentative point.

5.5.5 Discussion

A number of conclusions can be derived from the above analysis. Firstly, it is clear that all the featured learners benefitted from the course. Compared to their first assignment, the learners’ last assignments display better paraphrasing and comprehension skills, in addition to an array of academic writing techniques that work more structure, complexity and rigour into their written work. This improvement is even more pronounced if the learners’ pre-intervention essays are compared to their final essays. In this respect, three of the four learners produced ‘poor’ pre-intervention essays, while the fourth learner wrote an incoherent essay. The gap between these pre-intervention essays and the final work produced by the learners is considerable, and arguably tokens a movement from academic illiteracy to a basic or even intermediate level of academic literacy.

When charting the progress made by the learners, it is also crucial to make the point that the mere *presence* of certain writing techniques improves the quality of a piece of text-orientated academic prose. By the lights of this argument, even if a writing technique (like, for example, quoting) is poorly executed, an essay that contains poor instances of quoting is still comparatively better than an essay that makes no effort to quote. It is especially important to keep this in mind when evaluating essay samples in which certain techniques were poorly executed. Thus – if we consider the particular example of the last Gonwa learner who failed to quote properly in many instances – it should be pointed out that her *effort* to substantiate her claims through quotations indexes progress in her academic writing.

It should also be kept in mind that the *complexity* of the texts learners write about determines the virtues of their academic writing. Thus, for self-evident reasons, it is

much easier to write about a newspaper article or an excerpt from a magazine than it is to write about a complex literary or philosophical text. This, again, mitigates some of the shortcomings in the learners' last writing assignments. Specifically, in their last assignment the learners were attempting to analyse a 19th century text replete with sweeping philosophical ideas and complex words. Arguably, in such a context, an academic writing skill which is *almost* well-executed represents an achievement which is *as* significant (if not *more* significant) than a well-executed writing technique that is only responding to a simplistic factual text.⁴⁰

All of these considerations reinforce the idea that the learners' academic writing improved significantly due to the intervention. This claim does, however, need to be carefully qualified. In this respect, the preceding analysis of the writing samples shows that – barring one learner – the students did not manage to successfully write conclusions. Indeed, in half the samples (two out of four) the learners entirely omitted their conclusions, and so, did not even attempt to follow the assignment instructions. Thus, despite the progress that the learners made in their academic writing, they fell well short of executing one of the most important skills that the EAP course tried to

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⁴⁰ In their final assignment, the learners (on average) made the most errors when (in their third paragraphs), they attempted to back up their claims about Pascal's second argument (i.e. we do not appear insignificant when we adopt a scientific perspective on ourselves) by quoting sections of the text. A close analysis of the learners' quotations reveals that they *almost* capture the idea that even the smallest things contain whole universes within themselves. To take one example, consider the Gonwa learner who used the following quote:

“But to behold another miracle no less astonishing let him the most delicate things he knows. let him take a mite with its tiny body and its tiny limbs legs with their joints, veins in those legs, blood in those veins.”

This learner is certainly on the right track. The quotation reflects the idea of how something small (like an insect) contains even smaller parts, but in order to fully and accurately reflect Pascal's theme the learner should have extended the quote in the following manner:

But to behold another miracle no less astonishing let him the most delicate things he knows. let him take a mite with its tiny body and its tiny limbs legs with their joints, veins in those legs, blood in those veins *Subdividing yet again [...] let the ultimate point he can reach be now the subject of our discourse (i.e the atom). Perhaps he will think that here is nature's extreme diminutive. But in it I mean to show him a new abyss”.*

Seen in this light, it is indeed justifiable to say that this learner (like others) came *close* to quoting the right section of the text, and that her quoting skills (in this particular case) were *almost* well-executed.

teach them. The learners' inability to write conclusions is especially concerning due to the fact that the conclusions (in the assignments) required the learners to argumentatively evaluate opposing claims. This is a critical writing skill of fundamental importance that is required in matric English and History, as well as *many* tertiary level disciplines. Seen in this light, although the EAP course did go a long way in improving the learners' academic writing skills, this does not necessarily imply that it fully equipped them to cope with matric, let alone (aspects of) first-year university.

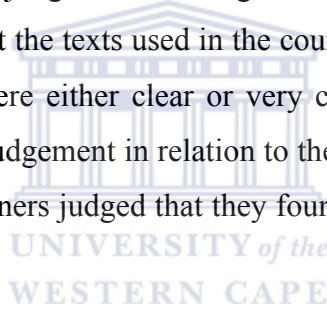
5.6 Questionnaire results

To assess whether the learners were consciously aware of their improved writing abilities by the end of the EAP course, a questionnaire was given to them (see Appendix 5). Apart from eliciting whether the learners' own viewpoints harmonised with the positive evaluation of the course provided in the previous section, this questionnaire tried to evaluate whether – in the learners' opinion – aspects of the course had been well designed. The questionnaire also tried to gain some basic insights into the learners' experience of essay writing in a normal school context.

Due to the regular problem of absenteeism, in both the Gonwa and Delta groups, not all of the learners were present when the questionnaire was administered. In the Delta group, nine out of the 11 learners who completed the course were present to answer the questionnaire, while in the Gonwa group 12 out of the 13 learners who completed the course were available. In addition to their absences being quite small, most of the learners (both within and between the groups) answered the questionnaire in a very similar manner. This makes it quite probable that *had* the 3 absent learners been present, they would have contributed to this pattern (rather than departed from it).

5.5.1 Gonwa questionnaire results

Overall, the questionnaire reveals that the Gonwa learners evaluated the course positively. All of the learners (12/12) answered that the course had improved their writings skills, with the clear majority of the learners (10/12) also claiming that they found the course to be interesting (10/12), relevant (8/12) and helpful in relation to subjects like English and History. A fair number of the learners also answered that the course required them to write more essays than they ordinarily did in a term (10/12) and school year (8/12), and that their teachers had never (previously) ‘directly’ taught them how to write essays (8/12). The mechanics of the course’s design and implementation received a positive evaluation as well: all of the learners found it helpful to write rough drafts (12/12) and found the course instructor’s feedback to be useful (12/12). In addition, the learners mostly judged that enough class time was given to them to complete the tasks (11/12), that the texts used in the course were mostly interesting, and the assignment instructions were either clear or very clear. The course, however, did receive a slightly ambivalent judgement in relation to the comprehensibility of the texts. In this respect, 5/12 of the learners judged that they found the texts to be too difficult to understand.



5.5.2 Delta questionnaire results

Although the Delta learners gave slightly more mixed responses when answering the questionnaire, there are (on the whole) clear indications that they viewed the course in a favourable light. Again, most of the learners (8/9) answered that the course had improved their writings skills, with the clear majority of the learners also claiming that they found the course to be interesting (8/9), relevant and helpful in relation to subjects like English and History (7/9). However, unlike the Gonwa learners, the Delta group expressed more ambivalence about whether the course gave them the opportunity to write more essays than they usually wrote in an academic school year or term. Thus, only 5/9 learners claimed that the course had given them an opportunity to write more

essays than they usually received in a school year or term. Moreover, as with the Gonwa learners, the mechanics of the course's design and implementation received a positive evaluation: nearly all the learners found it helpful to write rough drafts (8/9) and found the course instructor's feedback to be useful (8/9). In addition, the learners mostly judged that enough class time was given to them to complete the tasks (7/9), that the texts used in the course were mostly interesting, and the assignment instructions were either clear or very clear. The overwhelming majority of the learners (8/9) did however judge that the texts used in the course were too difficult to understand, and many of the learners (5/9) claimed that they struggled to see the course's relevance in relation to their schoolwork.

5.5.3 Comparison of questionnaire results

The questionnaire revealed that – in key areas – the EAP course was perceived by the learners to be helpful, well-designed and well-executed. Specifically, in both groups, the clear majority of the learners judged that A) the EAP course improved their writing skills, B) it helped in relation to school subjects like English and History, C) the texts that were incorporated into the course were interesting, D) the assignment instructions were clear, E) they were given enough time to complete the assignments and that F) the instructor's feedback was helpful. Interestingly, in the Delta group (and to a certain extent the Gonwa group) there was a fair amount of ambivalence about the volume of essays that the learners wrote in ordinary school circumstances. Furthermore, in both groups, there was ambivalence about whether school teachers (had previously) directly taught the learners how to write essays. Arguably, in both cases, this ambivalence may be taken to indicate that the students lacked a firm conceptual understanding of what counts as essay teaching and writing in a normal school context. This interpretation of the data is firmly backed up by the extremely poor quality of the learners' essay writing skills in their pre-intervention samples.

Interestingly, there was only one significant area in which – in both groups – there was a fairly strong indication that the EAP course had made a misjudgement. In this respect, most of the Delta learners (8/9) thought that the texts used in the course were too difficult to understand, while a significant number of the Gonwa learners (5/12) shared this viewpoint too. In the recommendations section of the next chapter, this problem will be addressed and some suggestions will be put forward.

5.7 Summary

This chapter examined three primary sources of data. First, the learners' pre-intervention essays were analysed. In both the Gonwa and Delta groups, these essays were of a generally poor standard and contained virtually none of the writing skills that the EAP course aimed to transmit. In addition – across both groups – many of the learners struggled to focus on the text and adopt an appropriately objective register. On the basis of these pre-intervention samples, it was possible to conclude that – prior to the intervention – the learners were not in possession of the writing skills that the EAP course aimed to transmit, and that their levels of academic literacy were extremely limited.

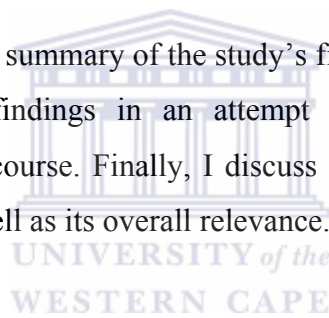
Next, qualitative data was supplied to explain the high absenteeism and attrition rates that afflicted the study. Principally, both behavioural observations and unstructured interviews (with the learners) ruled out the possibility that the attrition and absenteeism was due to the learners finding the course to be too challenging. Instead, by appealing to Bandura's theorising on agency, it was argued that the qualitative data strongly support the idea that the absenteeism and attrition was due to the fact that the learners were 'weak' agents.

The chapter then examined the question of whether the EAP course significantly improved the learners' academic writing skills. After arguing that a grade-based quantitative assessment of the learners' performance in the course was misleading, a

detailed qualitative analysis of the learners' pre-intervention, early and late EAP assignments was conducted. This analysis revealed that – in both groups – nearly all the learners accrued significant benefits from their participation in the course. However, it was also noted that most of the learners failed to acquire conclusion writing skills, and that this was a significant shortcoming that tempered the success of the course.

Finally, in the concluding section of the chapter, a questionnaire that was given to the students was analysed. This questionnaire sought to evaluate whether the learners' were also in agreement that the course had benefited them. Although the questionnaire revealed that (in both groups) a significant number of the learners found some of the texts used in the course to be too difficult, on the whole there was a strong indication that the students found the course to be helpful and well-designed.

In the next chapter, I provide a summary of the study's findings. I then base a number of recommendations on these findings in an attempt to optimise (potential) future implementations of the EAP course. Finally, I discuss some of the study's limitations and unexpected findings, as well as its overall relevance.

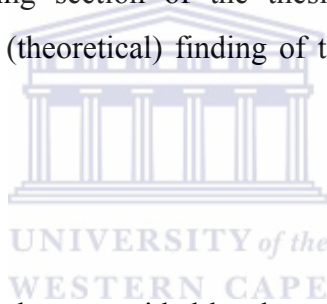


CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter a summary of the study's findings will be presented. A discussion of the recommendations arising from these findings will then follow. Importantly, in places, these recommendations will be appropriately supported and elaborated through appealing to relevant bodies of literature. The chapter will then consider some of the study's limitations and its relevance for future research that aims to understand the academic function of EAP projects in economically disadvantaged South African schools. Finally, in the closing section of the thesis, I shall comment upon the significance of an unexpected (theoretical) finding of this study that has not yet been discussed.



6.2 Overview

As stated in Chapter 1, this study was guided by three main research questions. While two of these questions depended on empirical results and observations derived from the interventionist fieldwork component of this study, the third question was reliant on a conceptual analysis between the contents of the EAP course and the writing-based requirements of matric and university subjects. In what follows, I shall provide an overview of this study's findings by summarising the empirical and conceptual data that these three research questions generated.

6.2.1 Summary of findings: Research Question 1

Can the study's EAP course improve the academic writing of bilingual, economically disadvantaged high-school South African learners?

The main purpose of this study was to determine whether a specially designed EAP course (which relied heavily upon literature and a modular approach to academic writing skills) could significantly improve the essay writing skills of second-language speaking English students attending schools in economically disadvantaged areas. In order to answer this question – over a seven-week period – two experimental groups (which each comprised of thirty randomly selected Grade 11 learners from two economically disadvantaged schools [Gonwa High and Delta High]) voluntarily took part in an extracurricular EAP course. The course required the learners to produce a total of seven writing tasks (each task, however, was comprised of a rough draft *and* a final draft). All of these assignments were graded systematically in accordance with marking rubrics. Despite a number of setbacks in relation to attrition, absenteeism and assignments that were not submitted, this quantitative data was robust enough to enable the researcher to reach a conclusion about whether the EAP course had a positive impact on the learners' essay writing skills. In addition to this quantitative data, a qualitative comparison between the learners' pre-intervention essays, early EAP assignments and later EAP assignments gave the researcher an additional source of data to evaluate the impact that the EAP course had upon the learners' essay writing skills. In what follows I shall first summarise the study's quantitative findings and comment upon how – despite appearances – they token a strong improvement in the learners' academic writing skills. After this I shall summarise the study's main qualitative findings (in relation to the students' written work) and state how these findings provide additional evidence for a strong improvement in the learners' academic writing skills.

6.2.2 Attrition, absenteeism and quantitative results of writing tasks

In both the Delta High and Gonwa High experimental groups, the students' quantitative results can only be properly interpreted in light of attrition and absenteeism rates. In this respect, due to high attrition rates, out of the of the 30 Gonwa High students who took part in the study, only 13 completed the EAP course. With regard to Delta High, out of a cohort of 29 students, just 11 finished the course. For these reasons – in both groups – it

was decided to only provide quantitative data for those students who completed the course. This decision was primarily adopted since (in both groups) most of the learners dropped out of the EAP course within three weeks of its inception: the qualitative data from these students is therefore so scant that it provides virtually no insights into whether the course actually helped them. Furthermore, although most of the learners who dropped out in this time-span did perform poorly in the EAP course's first three writing tasks (see previous Chapter), it is unfair to assess a seven-week course's efficacy on the basis of a three-week output. For these reasons, the researcher decided to only analyse the quantitative data of the students who completed the course.

On face value, both the Gonwa and Delta learners who completed the EAP course scored low results. In the Delta group, 9 out of the 11 learners scored a cumulative grade below 50 %. Furthermore, out of the Delta learners who scored 50% or less, 6 learners earned cumulative grades that fell far below the 50% mark. In relation to the Gonwa group, 8 out of the 13 learners scored a cumulative grade of less than 50% (with 4 learners receiving grades that fell significantly below the 50% mark). Nevertheless, as detailed in the previous Chapter, in both the Delta and Gonwa groups, many of the learners who persisted with the course were absent from many lessons (and therefore did not hand in many assignments). Seen in this light, the low cumulative grades are indicative of a failure to hand in many of the assignments, rather than a failure to produce sound academic writing. This interpretation is thoroughly supported by the fact that many of the students who scored low cumulative grades nonetheless managed to get high marks for individual assignments (see Tables 5.31 & 5.3.2 preceding chapter)

The misleading nature of the learners' low cumulative grades for the EAP course can be further accentuated through a qualitative analysis of their writing tasks. As the previous chapter demonstrated, such an analysis reveals that – for both poor, average and good students – a comparison between their pre-intervention writing tasks, early EAP writing tasks and later EAP writing tasks reveals that significant improvements and progress took place in their academic writing. However, the qualitative analysis also revealed

clear limitations to most of the learners' progress. Perhaps most saliently, most of the learners failed to learn how to write conclusions. This failure is especially telling as – within the context of the later EAP assignments – ‘conclusion-writing’ required certain thinking and writing skills that are of integral importance at a matric and university level.

6.2.3 Conclusion

Considered in tandem, both the quantitative and qualitative data strongly support the claim that the EAP course had a positive effect on the students' academic writing skills. The precise extent of this improvement cannot be given a reductive or numerical value. This is because the degree to which a learner will be able to successfully execute an academic writing skill is heavily mediated by the text (or concepts) they are writing about. As I explained earlier, in many of their assignments the students wrote essays about semantically and conceptually demanding texts that do not – even in South African private and model C schools – typically feature in a Grade 11 curriculum. To take just two examples, the participants wrote essays about excerpts from seminal texts by Steve Biko and Blaise Pascal. These excerpts were both semantically dense and contained complex abstract ideas that often feature in Social Science subjects and Philosophy. It ought to be clear that summarising a main argumentative point in such texts is going to be a lot more challenging than it would be in a context in which learners have to state the main point of a newspaper article titled “Woman Donates Clothes to Help Orphans”. The deeply *context-dependent* nature of academic writing therefore reminds us that it is very difficult to give a ‘fixed’ verdict on a student's academic writing ability. Nevertheless, the fact that the students *were* able to write (with a fair degree of competency) about such highbrow texts surely connotes that the course had a *significant* impact on their academic writing skills. If it is also remembered that – by the end of the EAP course – the majority of the learners' writing contained an array of modular writing skills that were totally absent in their pre-intervention writing samples, the significance of this impact becomes all the more pronounced. Although

these writing skills were often imperfectly executed, as I stated in the previous chapter, given the complexity of the texts the learners were writing about, an academic writing skill which is *almost* well-executed arguably represents an achievement which is *as* significant (if not *more* significant) than a well-executed writing technique that is only responding to a simplistic factual text.

On a final note, I wish to argue that it is *intuitively* clear that the EAP course significantly benefitted the learners. In the complex warp and weave of data, concepts and theory that academics use to validate their findings, they often lose sight of the fact that their results can be presented in the most striking and helpful light by adopting a more grounded and accessible approach to their findings. In this respect, it is my firm belief that if any educationalist or ordinary person (aware of the educational plight in township South African schools) were shown the written work of the learners who participate in the EAP course, they would – without any hesitation – be deeply impressed with what the learners accomplished in the span of just seven weeks. Such ordinary people would, no doubt, use words like “astonishing” and “amazing” to express their appreciation for the fact that second language English students from – literally – some of the worst schools in the *world* were tenacious and intelligent enough to write structured, lucid essays about demanding and culturally important English literary texts.

Although it is no doubt controversial for me to state this within the context of an academic thesis, I believe this last non-technical paragraph *best* captures and summarises what the EAP course helped the learners achieve in terms of their writing skills.

6.2.4 Summary of findings: Research Question 2

What kinds of factors threaten the implementation of EAP programmes in South African township schools?

This study's second main goal was to generate and analyse data on the kinds of difficulties EAP intervention projects at economically disadvantaged high-schools may expect to face. By far attrition and absenteeism presented the greatest threat to the implementation of this study, and so, as a consequence, a number of qualitative methodologies were employed to understand the cause of this phenomenon. Both behavioural observations and interviews clearly supported the idea that the students' lack of autonomy and agency were primary determinants driving attrition and irregular attendance. While interviews with the learners confirmed that low motivation levels and peer pressure – rather than the difficulty of the EAP course and the demands of homework – led to the high drop out and absenteeism rates, behavioural observations also established that the learners could clearly be classified as 'weak agents'. Considered in conjunction, all this qualitative data heavily suggests that the learners' motivational psychology – and the culture of learning that it in turn gave rise to – presented the single greatest threat to the intervention.

6.2.5 Summary of findings: Research Question 3

Can the study's EAP course heighten Grade 11 learners' levels of preparedness for matric and first-year university?

This study also tried to answer the question of whether the EAP course equipped the learners with skills that could improve their levels of preparedness for some of the writing tasks that feature at a matric and first-year tertiary level. A detailed analysis of the question types that regularly appear in certain matric exams (English FAL and History) demonstrated that the EAP course did indeed equip the learners with a variety of skills that could help with matric. With regard to the relationship between tertiary preparation and the EAP course, a comparison between the essay marking criteria of matric subjects and first-year tertiary subjects revealed that – broadly speaking – both matric and university subjects required similar academic writing skills. Importantly, an analysis of the modular writing skills that the course equipped the learners with (see

Chapter 2) provided concrete evidence that all of the competencies identified in this analysis were – to a certain extent – taught by the EAP course. Thus, a careful comparative analysis of matric and university writing requirements (in relation to the skills taught by the EAP course) revealed that the EAP course did indeed equip the learners with a plethora of skills that could be applied to matric and university.

6.3 Recommendations

In the following sections, I derive a number of recommendations from the study's three main findings. The first cluster of recommendations will be based on the finding that the EAP course significantly improved the learners' academic writing skills. The next set of recommendations will provide a number of suggestions for how intervention projects can combat absenteeism and attrition. I shall then put forward the suggestion that – due to the applicability of the EAP course to matric – if the EAP course is implemented on a broader scale in the future, it should be extended into Grade 12 and should contain a matric study skills module. Finally, the recommendation shall be made that universities should take an active interest in supporting, developing and contributing to EAP projects which seek to raise the standard of academic writing among learners attending schools in economically disadvantaged areas.

6.3.1 The importance of running similar EAP courses

The EAP course designed for this study helped a significant number of ESL learners (at township schools) improve their academic writing skills. Specifically, in both the Delta and Gonwa groups, such noticeable improvements were evident in *all* the learners who completed the course. This strongly suggests that if the remaining Gonwa and Delta learners had *not* dropped out of the programme, many of them, too, would have considerably improved their academic writing skills. Temporarily putting aside the question of whether these findings are applicable to other learners attending rural and township schools (I shall deal with this issue at a later point in this chapter), on the basis

of these findings it is clear that the EAP course developed by this study serves a vital academic function, and that it could therefore be potentially implemented on a broader scale in the future. This recommendation is strengthened by the additional fact that academic writing skills are not an isolated and specialised skill-set (like, say, a knowledge of human anatomy or geography). Rather, as I have argued throughout this thesis, they are profoundly applicable to many matric and university subjects, and can therefore help to inculcate skills that can aid learners in a wide array of disciplinary and institutional contexts.

The remaining recommendations that I put forward will all be more specific, and will elaborate on how future implementations of the EAP course could be improved and strengthened. Importantly, these recommendations will all be based on findings generated by the two other research questions that guided this study.

6.3.2 Strategies for improving agency

One of this study's main findings was that behavioural and psychological issues – rather than cognitive and linguistic barriers – impeded (and often altogether short-circuited) the learners' ability to master the EAP course material. As preceding sections have explored, these issues were chiefly manifested through alarmingly high levels of absenteeism and attrition. In light of this finding, it is clear that the competencies that enable learners to write academically – and indeed to master any number of other academic skills – cannot be neatly compartmentalised and separated from a range of psychological issues that have a damaging effect on the learners' sense of motivation and agency. On a broad, macro-theoretical level, this finding affirms a values approach to education which strongly dismisses “the taxonomic notion that cognitive learning outcomes can somehow be separated from affective or social ones [...]” (Lovat & Toomey, 2010: 18).

This makes it clear that if future implementations of the EAP course are to be successful, the EAP course must be expanded in such a way that it includes activities which address these psychological issues and help to shore up the learners' sense of agency. In the following section, I appeal to Bandura's work on agency development to provide some insights into the psychological faculties that must be strengthened in order to transform people into more effective agents.

6.3.3 Bandura and agency reinforcement

According to Bandura, a person's mere perception or belief that they are self-efficacious is an *actual causal factor* that can positively or negatively impact upon their agency levels.⁴¹ Thus according to Bandura (2001:10):

Efficacy beliefs are the foundation of human agency. Unless people believe they can produce desired results and forestall detrimental ones by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors may operate as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to produce effects by one's actions. People who regard themselves as highly efficacious act, think, and feel differently from those who perceive themselves as inefficacious. They produce their own future, rather than simply foretell it.

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Bandura identifies five sources that need to be focused on to develop improved levels of agency perception (see Bandura, 1994, n.p.; Bandura, 1997: 5517; Bandura, 1998:54-55; Bandura, 2004, 620-624). These sources are

- Mastery
- para-social learning
- social or verbal persuasion
- somatic or emotional states
- stress reactions

⁴¹ Interestingly, such an approach helps to explain why "people's performance and success are sometimes disjoined from their actual capabilities and why their behavior may differ widely even when they have similar knowledge and skills" (Pajares 2002: 5).

- locus of control.

For Bandura (2005:22-23) “through guided mastery we cultivate competences, coping skills, and self-beliefs that enable people to exercise control over their perceived threats.” This naturally involves processes in which *obstacles* are overcome. Commenting on the interplay between authentic success, obstacles and perseverance, Bandura (2004: 2002) states:

Successes build a robust belief in one’s efficacy. Failures undermine it. If people have only easy successes they are readily discouraged by failure. Development of a resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort. Resilience is also cultivated by learning how to manage failure so it is informative rather than demoralizing

Improved levels of self-efficacy can also be brought about through *social modelling*. For Bandura (1994:n.p) “Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers’ beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities to succeed”. Interestingly, it is worth noting that Bandura’s treatment of social modelling coheres with the widely held belief (especially in poor communities) that role models – who have overcome obstacles that confront the very people who they are talking to – fulfil a vital social function.

A stronger perception of self-efficacy can also be generated through *social or verbal persuasion*. This, again, is an intuitive point, and points out the obvious fact that if individuals are encouraged to believe in their own aptitudes and potentialities, they will be less prone to doubt themselves when they confront difficulties and obstacles. Importantly, though, Bandura points out that effective social persuaders do more than merely offer up salutary words: they also carefully orchestrate situations that will build up – rather than diminish – individuals’ perception of their self-efficacy (Bandura 2004: 622)

Somatic and emotional states also play an important role in determining self-efficacy levels. This is because such states affect how people evaluate their capabilities. Banduras (1994: n.p) thus states “positive mood enhances perceived self-efficacy,

despondent mood diminishes it.” The reduction of stress levels and the way in which people misinterpret their physical states (Bandura 1994) can therefore positively impact upon self-efficacy.

The perception of *self-control* is also critically important for improved levels of self-efficacy. Building on Bandura’s (2005) writings about the locus of self-control, Pajares (2007:7) gives a clear and helpful account of the relationship between *self-control* and self-efficacy in the following passage

As regards locus of control, the notion of perceived control is also related to self-efficacy. According to locus of control theory, people expect success to the degree that they feel in control of their behavior, often referred to as internal locus of control, and research supports this contention. People who believe they can control what they learn and perform are more apt to initiate and sustain behaviors directed toward those ends than are those with a low sense of control over their capabilities. In Bandura's social cognitive theory, a sense of control over the significant outcomes of one's life is a key motivator of behavior in addition to self-efficacy. In fact, it is demoralizing for people to believe that they have the capabilities to succeed, but that environmental barriers such as discrimination preclude them from doing so.

Pajares’ understanding of self-control once again stresses the causal efficacy of individuals having a positive attitude or disposition towards their agency. On Pajares’ (and Bandura’s) view whether individuals *actually* possess a deep reservoir of self-control is of secondary importance to the issue of whether they cultivate a disposition which leads them to *believe* that they are in control of their actions.

6.3.4 Incorporating Bandura’s theory into future EAP programmes

All in all, Bandura’s theoretically informed approach to agency development is straightforward and harmonises with common sense. For these reasons, it is fairly easy to imagine how Banduras’ theorising could be incorporated into a range of activities and events that could enable learners to improve their perceptions of self-efficacy. To take one example, university graduates from township schools could be invited to tell their stories to EAP learners, and so potentially generate a mode of emulation that closely

resembles Bandura's account of social modelling. With regard to Bandura's account of mastery, it is easy to imagine a range of stimulating physical and mental activities (e.g. obstacle courses, partially completed puzzles, etc.) that could expose EAP learners to a dynamic interplay between failure, perseverance and success in a *safe* and carefully orchestrated manner. Although many more examples of such activities can no doubt be enumerated, it is not my purpose to put forward any concrete recommendations about the exact nature of such agency reinforcement activities. This is a complex enterprise – perhaps deserving of a study of its own – that can only emerge out of a dialogue with educational psychologists, occupational therapists, physical educationalists and a range of other specialists. Rather, it is only my recommendation that such activities need to be developed and incorporated into future EAP programmes that are implemented at economically disadvantaged schools. It has been my finding in this study that – without developing means to address these psychological issues – intervention projects which focus purely on academic skills will encounter behavioural problems that are as destructive to academic progress as cognitive and language-based learning difficulties.

As a final note, it would be a mistake to think that the addition of such activities would turn the course into something too multi-disciplinary to be labelled EAP. If this study has shown me anything, it has revealed that academic competencies are inextricably linked with social, ethical, psychological and behavioural competencies. Academic writing is therefore not a purely cognitive skill. Rather it is a cognitive skill that can only properly exist if the psychological and emotional states upon which it ultimately depends are nurtured and guided too. To teach academic writing at a school-level, EAP programmes must therefore view learners as complex, *whole* individuals rather than as mere 'repositories' for certain cognitive skills that can be selectively activated. Such an approach necessarily entails a holistic approach to language education and eschews a dualistic separation between emotion and cognition.

6.3.5 Individual agency and organisational leadership

At this point, I would like to point out an interesting congruence between the recommendation of this study – in relation to the agency levels of *individual learners* – and the recommendations of other studies concerned with improving *schools* at a macro organisational level. It shall be my claim that this congruence can be used to generate further recommendations that can combat high attrition and absenteeism rates.

With regard to school-level improvement, the importance of leadership in high-income international contexts (Weber, 1971; Edmonds 1979; Purkey and Smith 1983; Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis, & Ecob 1988; Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995; Fink 2000) and low-income international contexts (see Lockheed and Levin 1993; Heneveld, 1994; Heneveld and Craig 1996) has been consistently pointed out. In a specifically South African context, similar conclusions about the importance of leadership (for improving the overall organisational structure and academic functioning of schools) have been reached (see Christie 2001; Calitz 2002; Coleman 2003; Lumby 2003; Prew 2007). Within the specific context of township and rural schools in South Africa, Ngcobo and Tikly (2010) have given a particularly helpful description and analysis of how such leadership qualities can have a positive impact. Since their analysis focuses on the same kinds of schools that this study has been concerned with, and since it accentuates the high levels of agency that are involved in various leadership roles at an organisational level, their study can be supplemented with this one to show how high-levels of agency – among both learners, teachers, principals and administrative staff – are essential for the healthy functioning of schools.

In their study, Ngcobo and Tikly (2010) identify four “key dimensions of effective leadership”. When examining the first of these dimensions, they make the point that – in all the schools in their study – “the role of the principal was pivotal to the change process” (12). They then proceed to give very useful examples of the lengths many principals went to in order to bring about positive changes in their schools

In one rural primary school, for example, the principal had been instrumental in persuading the local farmer to allow for a new school building on his land. In a township school the acting principal had been involved from the inception of the school, which was established by a religious trust. Significantly the principals in the township and rural schools were associated with having taken a lead in restoring a culture of teaching and learning amongst staff and pupils:

Since Mr. N [the Principal] came in our school we have really improved a lot because the learners were carrying weapons, daggas eh ... mandrax; you know anything that you can mention ... He just asks you to leave any bad behaviour outside the gates and come in the school as a student ... (Learners in a township secondary school)

Given the nature of the macro and micro contexts of the schools this was a monumental task. Examples of strategies that the principals used are given in the sections below. Sometimes they involved working in partnership with external agencies including local political and religious structures to restore order. In other instances, they involved working with communities and even the local farmer (in the case of one rural school) to secure the school from local criminals. In all cases the principals focused on the 'basics' including staff and student discipline and punctuality and the provision of necessary resources.

(Ngcobo and Tikly 12-13)

According to Ngcobo and Tikly, the adoption of a *democratic* approach to decision making (by principals) constitutes the second key dimension of leadership. When such an approach is adopted, “different stakeholders [are involved] in decision making” and “classroom teachers [are] invited to participate in school decision making largely through their involvement in school committees” (15). As the following excerpt from an interview (conducted by Ngcobo and Tikly) suggests, this results in a genuine feeling of inclusivity among teachers:

I think I must say that many decision because most of the time we do the decision making the principal does not tell us what to do, she makes us decide on what to do and how it should be done. (Educator, township primary school)

(Ngcobo and Tikly 18)

The third important leadership quality that Ngcobo and Tikly consider is not confined to the principal alone. Instead, it is distributed among all the school-staff. This distributed leadership quality can be understood as a shared vision or – explicated more

carefully – “a common set of meanings around what the purpose of the school [is] and how this ought to be realized” (17). According to Ngcobo and Tikly, this vision often places an emphasis upon the importance of high achievement and the role of the school in fostering (among learners) “a good sense of morality, the inculcation of citizenship skills, respect for elders and for authority, [an] understanding of gender equity, respect for Christian and other religious values [and a] respect for self and personal hygiene” (17).

Finally, Ngcobo and Tikly identify the importance of “personal integrity” for good leadership. Again focusing on school principals, they note:

[...] many of the respondents reported that the principals worked longer hours than the rest of the staff—reporting for work earlier and leaving the premises later. They were exemplary in carrying out their own teaching, administrative and management tasks. They were often upstanding individuals who held considerable respect within the wider community. They demonstrated an obvious commitment to assisting learners and showing concern for community welfare. Another quality related to the issue of integrity was financial trustworthiness and acumen, i.e. that leaders were trusted with the money raised from fees and other sources and it was perceived that this money was used wisely.

(Ngcobo and Tikly 23)

The reason I have given such an in-depth description of these leadership roles isn't just because they powerfully emphasise that high agency levels (which are obviously an implicit requirement for leadership) can be *as* critically important among teachers and principals as they can be among learners. Rather, the above description has been included because a number of useful recommendations can be derived from its *relationship to* this study. Firstly, because there is a profound verisimilitude between the psychological aptitudes that must be focused upon to help individual learners and schools as organisational wholes, EAP courses (which seek to promote agency) could be coherently integrated into larger projects which seek to reform entire schools. Importantly, on a practical level, EAP courses could gain forms of added structural, financial and logistical support through being part of larger, umbrella projects. Secondly, it is possible for the leadership roles discussed by Ngcobo and Tikly to be fruitfully transposed into a learner context. To give one possible example as to how this

could work, after learners' perception of their self-efficacy has been improved (through activities which incorporate Bandura's approach to agency development), their agency could be further strengthened through activities which require them to adopt leadership roles. In this respect, it is possible to conceive how all the key dimensions of decision making identified by Ngcobo and Tikly – from community involvement to democratic decision making, to the promotion of a shared vision and the cultivation of personal integrity - could be promoted through specially designed activities which learners participate in.

6.3.6 Other methods for combating attrition and absenteeism

An individualistic focus upon the learners themselves – and their own levels of self-efficacy – is not the only option for combating attrition and absenteeism. Over the past few decades, a number of American scholars have documented how parental involvement has a positive academic effect upon learners irrespective of their socioeconomic status (McGrath & Kuriloff 1999; Lareau & Horvat 1999; Lee, Croninger & Smith 1999; Lareau 1987). Focusing on a black historically disadvantaged schooling environment in a South African context, Msila (2004) discovered a similar phenomenon. Specifically, “for a period of twelve months spread over two years (2002/2003), 24 parents with learners in eight different historically disadvantaged secondary schools (HDSS) were investigated” (Msila; n.p). The study found that parental involvement (in relation to homework) was “crucial” and that “parents who played little or no role in their children's homework and study programmes contributed to the poor performance of their children in the classroom” (Msila: n.p).

These studies establish that in all stratas of society – both in South Africa and abroad – parents can play an extremely positive role in their children's education. Parental input can take any number of forms: motivation, sympathy, academic assistance, enforced discipline, time-management assistance, engaging with teachers and school

administrations, and so on. It is this study's strong recommendation that future EAP programmes harness this valuable resource, and make a concerted effort to involve parents in the programme as well. However, it is a well-known fact that parental involvement at low-income South African schools is poor. For example, this phenomenon is clearly articulated by teachers who were interviewed in Singh, Mbokodi & Msila's (2004) study:

The teachers in the study pointed out that the expected collaboration between parents the school on general educational issues was far from satisfactory. Seventy five percent of the teachers stated specifically that the parents' ignorance was to be blamed for the schools' lack of success. The teachers believed that the parents were not doing their share of the work as expected. Three teachers who were strongly vocal about the parents' ignorance stated that education in the historically African schools would never succeed because parents distance themselves when it comes to education. A deputy principal said that, as a school manager parents frustrated him:

They never come to PTA meetings, but they are quick in judging the teachers, our parents here are in no way involved.

(Singh, Mbokodi & Msila: 304)

Given this situation, EAP courses need to be realistic about the levels of parental involvement that are obtainable. This is especially true, since, in many cases, township learners come from broken homes, or have moved from a rural area (where their parents reside) to a city to attend what is perceived to be a better school.

For these reasons, it is my recommendation that an intensive, once-off meeting involving the students, their parents (or nearest residing relatives) and the course instructor take place at the commencement of the EAP course. Such a meeting would not impose unrealistic demands on the parents' expected levels of involvement in an extracurricular programme, and yet it could still precipitate enough involvement to have a critical effect on student participation. During such a meeting the course instructor could (primarily) inform parents about the numerous benefits the learners would receive from the course, as well as attendance expectations. The parents could then be given a chance to briefly articulate to the course instructor (as well as their children) the significance they attach to their child's participation in the course. Community and

church leaders could also be present at the meeting to give short speeches about their expectations with regard to the learners' participation. Apart from sensitising the learners to the expectations that others have of them, the meeting could be used by the course instructor to informally introduce himself/herself to the parents and exchange contact details with them. Establishing such a personalised relationship is an invaluable asset, as it can help to ensure that *meaningful* communication lines exist between the parents and the course instructor.

Needless to say, this is just one out of many possible ways in which parental involvement could be realistically mobilised. Once again – as with the recommendations made in relation to agency development – it should be emphasised that the question of how best to involve parents is a complex and multifaceted one, and that it would therefore be best determined by extensive reading and a sustained dialogue with a variety of experts. The scenario sketched above is a mere tentative beginning to this process.

6.3.7 A study skills approach to EAP

In Chapter 4 this study attempted to answer the question of whether there was proof that the EAP course equipped learners with writing skills that could help improve their performance at matric. A comparative analysis of the EAP course and the English FAL and History matric exams revealed that this was indeed the case. On the basis of this finding, it is my recommendation that this relationship be strengthened, and that the EAP course should be extended into matric via a study-skills module. Problematically, this may create an apparent discontinuity, as it is not intuitively obvious what study skills have to do with EAP. However, in actual fact, amongst EAP scholars, a study skills approach is driven by a need to be adequately responsive to the actual contexts in which students learn (Enwistle & Ramsden 1983), and constitutes one of the three main approaches to EAP (Hyland 2009). Indeed, by the late 1980's study skills was perhaps the dominant approach to EAP (Jordan 1989). Richards et al.'s (1992) definition of

study skills provides one means to understand how such skills link up with academic writing:

Abilities, techniques and strategies which are used when reading, writing, or listening for study purposes. For example, study skills needed by university students studying from English language textbooks include: adjusting reading speeds according to the type of material being read, using the dictionary, guessing word meanings from context, interpreting graphs, diagrams, and symbols, note taking and summarising.

(Richards et al 1992: 5)

On the basis of Richards et al's definition, there is no reason to suppose that a study skills approach to EAP couldn't be extended to include study skills that are *specifically* tailored to exam circumstances. In this respect, at both school and university, a significant number of the essays that students will write will be in examination contexts. At both levels, too, the essays (and short exercises) written under exam conditions will count for as much (and often very much more) than non-exam based written work. Moreover, exam conditions change the very nature of written work – memorisation and question anticipation becomes crucial rather than peripheral, secondary sources are inevitably relied on to a lesser extent, and so on. Given all these considerations, and the additional fact that only a sliver of the student population will ever progress to a (postgraduate) point at which their writing output will not be significantly defined by these conditions, it would be naive to suppose that EAP writing skills shouldn't be geared towards exams.

When considering future implementations of the EAP course that contain such a module, it ought to be mentioned that exam-orientated study skills need not be about fact cramming sessions. In a manner that is consistent with the writing-skills part of the course, they could be about developing precisely the kinds of critical faculties that are required at a university level. To take one possible example, students could be encouraged to ask deep questions about the nature of the exam-based subjects they are studying and to develop information gathering / prioritising techniques that are optimally based upon their conclusions. And so on.

When stressing the continuity between a study skills and academic writing skills approach to EAP, it is important to reiterate that –after a comparison between the EAP course and the matric exams – Chapter 4 reached the conclusion that, while text-orientated academic essays provide a format in which a variety of writing skills are holistically integrated, *non-essay* exam questions (in English and History) create a format in which specific modular writing skills (which partly comprise an essay) are required. In addition, the exercises embedded into Chapter 4 showed that students can be easily taught how to write matric English and History *essays* by drawing on an approach that fully utilises the academic writing skills transmitted by the EAP course. This again, emphasises that there is considerable potential for EAP courses which synthesise academic writing and matric study skills.

6.3.8 Further recommendations

In Chapter 5, a focus was placed on the questionnaire that was given to the learners (to assess their views on the EAP course's efficacy). This questionnaire revealed one fairly serious defect with the course design. To repeat this finding, most of the Delta learners (8/9) thought that the texts used in the course were too difficult to understand, while a significant number of the Gonwa learners (5/12) shared this viewpoint too.

Although the researcher was not adequately sensitised to this possibility when he originally designed the EAP course, complex and seminal literary texts can easily be re-written and *adapted* to an EAP context without compromising the complexity of the arguments and truths which comprise them. In addition, through re-writing texts, EAP course instructors can clarify and accentuate implicit assumptions and claims that are so subtly encoded into texts. To demonstrate this by way of an example, below I present one of the most complex texts that the learner had to write about, followed by an adaptation of the same text that I developed after the EAP course:

An Extract from *Natural Theology* by William Paley

In crossing a **heath (1)**, suppose I **pitched (2)** my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there: I might possibly answer, that, for any thing I knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever [...]. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be **inquired (3)** how the watch happened to be in that place; I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given,—that, for any thing I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? Why is it not as **admissible (4)** in the second case, as in the first? For this reason, and for no other, *viz* **(5)** that, when we come to **inspect (6)** the watch, we **perceive (7)** (what we could not discover in the stone) that its **several (8)** parts are [...] put together for a purpose, that they are so **formed (9)** and **adjusted (10)** as to produce **motion (11)**, and that motion so **regulated (12)** as to point out the hour of the day; that, if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, of a different size from what they are, or placed after any other manner, or in any other order, than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it.[...] This mechanism being observed [...] the **inference (13)** [to draw] we think is **inevitable (14)**, that the watch must have had a **maker (15)**: that there must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer: who **comprehended (16)** its construction, and designed its use.

[...] Every observation which was made in our first chapter concerning the watch may be repeated with strict **propriety (17)** concerning the eye, concerning animals, concerning plants, concerning, indeed, all the organised parts of the works of nature.

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My adaptation of the same text:

Imagine that you are walking in a completely **deserted** place. Nobody has ever lived in this place before, and it is as empty and **barren** as the planet Mars. If – while walking in this empty place – you happened to hit your foot against a stone, and you asked yourself how the stone came to be in this empty place, you would say “Well, it’s just always been here. Some sand got harder and harder and turned into a rock. There’s nothing mysterious about it.”

Now imagine something different. Imagine that – while walking in this place – you find a watch lying on the ground. When **enquiring** about how the watch came to be in the empty place, could you also say – like you said about the rock – “Well, it’s just always been here. There’s nothing mysterious about it”?

My adaptation of the same text (cont.):

The answer to this question is no. It would not be **admissible** to say this. It would not be admissible because the watch, unlike the rock, is incredibly **complex**. Thus, if you carefully **inspected** the watch, you would find that it has many different specially designed parts, and that if any of these parts were even slightly different, the watch would not **function** properly and tell the time. The **inference** can therefore be made that the watch was designed or created by someone. This inference can be made because – unlike with the rock – it is impossible to imagine how **purely natural processes** could result in the **formation** of a watch. Thus there is no possible situation in which we can imagine water, sand, wind, heat and chemicals **randomly combining** to form a watch.

Importantly, because living things – like plants, animals and human beings – are as **intricate** and complex as the watch, we can use the above argument to demonstrate that living things also must have been created by a designer.

It is important to emphasise that the adaptation of the text is not a mere ‘simplification’ or summary. In this respect, it is only 35 words shorter than the original, and contains roughly the same number of complex words (highlighted in bold in both texts). Furthermore, the adaptation follows the exact same argumentative steps as the original, and therefore does not simplify the rational process by which Paley reaches his conclusion.

However, the texts do still differ substantially. This difference is evident through the way in which the adaptation (mostly) expunges Paley’s historically antiquated vocabulary and his rather roundabout way of making his main argumentative points (which, in the excerpt, are made in a far less cluttered and circumlocutious manner). In addition, the excerpt tries to make some of Paley’s underlying assumptions clearer. For example, when Paley talks about a person walking through a barren ‘heath’ he is *assuming* that his reader will play along with the thought experiment and not raise the obvious question ‘But why couldn’t another traveller have dropped the watch on the heath while passing through it?’ The adaptation tries to make this assumption *clearer* through describing Paley’s heath as “a completely deserted place” that no one has ever

been to before and that “is barren and empty as the planet Mars”. Another important assumption Paley makes is that one *can* explain the presence of the rock by saying that ‘its just always been there’. Paley makes this assumption *because* it is shared common knowledge that rocks are ‘simple’ physical objects and that entirely natural processes can therefore lead to their formation. Once again, the adaptation tries to make this assumption clearer through giving a more detailed and direct account of why we can imagine natural process combining to create a rock, but not a watch.

For these reasons, it should be uncontroversial that a learner who reads the adaptation will have a sound understanding and appreciation of Paley’s argument: an understanding, moreover, that will not significantly deviate from one based entirely on the original text. Such adaptations therefore present a viable way for future versions of the course to make texts more accessible, and, in my view, can be successfully used to bring EAP learners into contact with literary and philosophical works that – in their original form – are even more complex than the Paley text.

6.4 Limitations of study

In the Research Methodology chapter of this thesis I acknowledged that – due to its case study design – this study was not in the best of positions to produce generalisable data. To counteract these limitations to some extent, two research sites were used. It was hoped that such an approach would make it possible to gain at least *some* indication of whether the study’s findings were *potentially* generalisable. In addition, it was argued that although studies which confine themselves to *particular* social environments (or areas of interest) risk producing data which is unrepresentative of the *class* of social phenomena that is being examined, there is evidence that there is not a huge amount of environmental variance in South African townships schools. Thus, it is well known that – in general – most township schools face an array of recurrent problems (e.g. poor teaching, low academic performance, lack of materials, poor maintenance, etc. [Christie

2008; Wilkinson 2015]). This, clearly, increases the likelihood that a case study's findings at one (or two) of these schools can be potentially generalised to more of them.

Due to the way in which the Delta and Gonwa students paralleled each other very closely – both behaviourally and academically –this study's findings strongly support the idea that the data presented in this thesis are indeed potentially generalisable. If, for example, there had been *less* of a similarity between the two experimental groups, such variation would have made it significantly more difficult for the study to lay claim to a phenomenon which may be expected to obtain in a large number of economically disadvantaged South African schools. This, however, was not the case. To reiterate this study's main findings: in both groups there were similar rates of attrition and absenteeism (accompanied by virtually identical behaviour), and in both groups similar numbers of students benefited significantly from the EAP course. Given that there is already (uncontroversial) data that many township schools resemble one another closely, this finding surely warrants a high degree of confidence that there is a high *likelihood* that if this *particular* EAP course were to be implemented at more (economically disadvantaged) schools similar results would obtain.

The issue of generalisability does not, however, exhaust the possible limitations of this study. Since research aims to provide true conclusions, it is necessary for researchers to be cognisant of various elements that can threaten the validity of their findings. Validity thus connects to methodological precautions that eliminate or control as many confounding variables as possible (see Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger 2005). Researchers themselves are often a source of bias (Kintz et al. 1965), and may consciously or unconsciously manipulate studies so that they produce outcomes that harmonise with their own expectations (see Barber & Silver 1968). Importantly, experimental bias is particularly prevalent in projects in which a single researcher is responsible for implementing an entire study (see Barber 1976). Since the proposed study was formulated and implemented by a single researcher, it needed to be especially vigilant in controlling for such bias. This was achieved in a number of ways. Firstly, all

aspects of the course were standardised to eliminate undesirable variance. Consequently, standardised lesson plans were constructed to ensure that the course was managed and implemented in identical ways at both research sites. Secondly, the researcher kept a record of any unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances that created discrepancies between the ways in which the two primary experimental groups were managed.

Researchers also need to take a number of precautions to eliminate any number of alternative hypotheses and explanations that could plausibly destabilise the researcher's findings (see Campbell 1957; Kazdin 2003). External events or incidents that take place within the period of study can generate such uncontrolled elements (see Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger 2005). This is especially relevant for the proposed study, as economically disadvantaged students are often exposed to events that can negatively impact upon their academic performance (i.e. friend and family related mortalities, divorce, money related difficulties, domestic violence, criminality, etc). As a consequence, throughout the intervention the researcher encouraged the learners to provide information about any difficulties they were encountering. Importantly, the researcher stressed that this information could be communicated in a 'very general' way (such that the students would not need to disclose any *particular* information that they felt embarrassed or compromised by).

Although the students in both groups sometimes expressed some slight concerns about transport and domestic chores (which the researcher promptly addressed)⁴², there was only one instance in which a learner (from Delta) *appeared* to drop out of the course because of an external event. Specifically, this learner informed the researcher that his involvement in initiation rituals made it difficult for him to attend the afternoon EAP classes. Since this learner expressed a willingness to continue participating in the course, when the researcher expressed a desire to call the people responsible for the

⁴² On the few occasions when the learners expressed these kinds of concerns, the researcher provided assistance in a number of ways. This assistance involved the provision of transport money, lifts, and – when domestic chores were an issue – telephone calls to concerned parents.

rituals and attempt to negotiate the situation with them, the learner appeared compliant and promised to provide the researcher with their contact details. This never happened. In the following weeks, the learner repeatedly ran away from the researcher (running into empty classrooms, crouching behind walls, etc.), and appeared totally unwilling to even enter into a minimal dialogue about his behaviour. As with the behaviour of the other learners who dropped out of the course (discussed in Chapter 5) it is clear that *had* this learner genuinely wanted to participate he would have behaved in a completely different manner. To consider one possibility, if the learner had wanted to attend the EAP course (whilst also being apprehensive about the ramifications of the researcher getting in touch with the people responsible for his initiation), he would – at the very least – have made *some* effort to talk to the researcher and express some regret about the situation. Thus, on the basis of his behaviour, it can only be assumed that while his initiation may have complicated his attendance, it was not – as he professed – the reason for him dropping out. This interpretation is further buttressed by the fact that a Gonwa student attended the EAP course without any difficulties, despite also going through his initiation. Seen in this light, it can be confidently stated that external events did not affect the study, and that they were firmly controlled for.



Finally, I wish to address perhaps the most problematic potential limitation of this study. As the course material displayed in Chapter 2 and the appendices show, when learners wrote their essays they followed detailed instructions that emphasised the modular nature of academic writing. For example, in their final exercise, in order to write a short introduction, learners were provided with a set of instructions that were almost two-hundred words long:

Your first sentence should mention A) the name of the author, B) the name of the text and C) the genre of the text. Immediately after providing this information insert and highlight a **[GTAR]** sign. Then (**still in your first sentence**) A) give your reader a general impression of what the essay is basically about and B) use attitude markers (remember to also give reasons for your attitude markers [see example sentence]). After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a **[GOAM]** sign. [GOAM] stands for 'General Outline with Attitude Markers'. Begin your second sentence by saying "Specifically, in the first paragraph [LW/P] of his essay Pascal states [AR]" Then (still in the second sentence) describe Pascal's first main argumentative point. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a **[FMAP]** sign. Your third sentence should begin with the word 'However', have a linking word / phrase and describe Pascal's second important theme.

After writing the word 'however' insert and highlight the [HOTS] sign, and at the end of the whole sentence, insert and highlight a [SMAP] sign.

Critics of such an approach may argue that these instructions did most of the work *for* the learners and that the EAP course therefore measured the learners' ability to follow instructions rather than to write fully-fledged essays. This is a pertinent objection. It is indeed true that the assignment instructions were extremely detailed and that they provided the learners with a lot of 'prefabricated' analytic scaffolding that they merely needed to insert into their essay. However, on a conceptual level, the modular approach to academic writing adopted by this EAP course was premised on the idea that there is no incompatibility between writing a holistic essay and following rather rigid, detailed and mechanical instructions. Seen in this light, if academic essays are conceptualised in a certain (i.e. modular) kind of way, essay writing *is* instruction following. Furthermore, if learners memorise these instructions, there is even less of an issue that the instruction-heavy assignments used by this EAP course over-determine students' written work. While the learners in this study did *not* memorise these instructions, there is no reason why future implementations of this EAP course could not have such a requirement, and so emphatically rule out the idea that the learners' progress in academic writing can be attributed entirely to external prompting

6.5 Relevance of study

In the first chapter of this thesis, it was noted that this study could help educationalists to better understand when (exactly) it becomes too late to significantly improve learners' academic output. This question was judged to be vitally relevant since there is much evidence to suggest that in the near future, a great many economically disadvantaged students will be at an advanced point in their schooling *without* the necessary training or skills to perform adequately at matric. Given this situation, the piloting and evaluation of late intervention programmes is highly significant. Indeed, since there is no real sign that millions of current and future learners who will reach matric before the South African public schooling sector undergoes major reforms, such

externally run intervention programmes may be the only *realistic* way to help future and current South Africa learners.

The main finding of this study is highly relevant to these issues, as it strongly suggests that – even in underperforming township schools – a seven-week intervention programme can induce striking improvements in the academic output of a significant number of Grade 11 learners. The practical ramifications of this are quite dramatic. This is because if only a relatively short period of time is required to bring about such changes, late high-school intervention projects can be fairly compact, resource-light initiatives. Furthermore, since matric – more than any other schooling year – determines upward social mobility, the relevance and importance of such programmes becomes all the more pronounced.

This study is also relevant due to the way in which it gives an example of how matric preparation and university preparation can dovetail and reinforce one another. This was demonstrated in a two-step process. First, Chapter 2 showed how matric and first-year university essays were graded in accordance with similar essay marking criteria. Secondly, in Chapter 4, it was established that the EAP course material taught the learners many writing skills that matric essay and comprehension questions require. It can thus be logically deduced that the EAP course also equipped learners with writing skills that would aid them with the writing requirements of first-year tertiary subjects. As Chapter 1 detailed, the importance of boosting learners' levels of preparation for a tertiary environment is of critical importance, since (in both South Africa and abroad) there is a severe and widespread problem with learners not possessing strong enough levels of academic literacy to cope with university writing requirements.

The EAP course's intersection with tertiary preparation is also deeply relevant for another reason. As explained in Chapter 1, there are few – if any opportunities – for Humanities graduates to emphasise essay writing skills and the content of their academic disciplines within the context of school-level teaching. Combined with the

current scarcity of academic employment (at a tertiary level) and the fact that many humanities students have a liberal political outlook, it appears likely that future implementations of this EAP course could *feasibly* expect to attract humanities graduates. The importance of getting highly trained graduates into economically disadvantaged schools cannot be emphasised enough, as research has consistently shown that quality teaching is one of the primary determinants of academic success. Combined with the fact that humanities graduates would experience a vocational pull towards such a teaching role (due to its harmonisation with their political ideology and their academic training) – and that such a vocational element is key to teacher success – the likelihood of such a partnership resulting in a strong and fertile learning environment becomes even more probable. Through establishing that a version of the EAP course – which can still be considerably improved – can have such a striking effect on the writing skills of matric learners, this study provides a programme and teaching ideology that can fruitfully structure and frame the engagement of humanities graduates with economically disadvantaged schools. Given the current crisis of the South African education system, there is a considerable amount of social, political, economic and pedagogical relevance to a programme that can help to *effectively* bridge the divide between advanced teaching communities and chronically deprived learning communities

6.6 Further research

This study creates fertile grounds for further research. Most obviously, in order to test the claims made in this chapter about A) attrition and absenteeism B) generalisability C) matric study skills and D) the importance of using humanity graduates as course instructors, it will be necessary to design, implement and analyse a substantively modified version of this study on a larger scale.

However, a number of other research questions – which are more conceptual in nature – also arise from discussions and findings presented in previous chapters. Firstly, this

study has done little more than sketch a theory of modular academic writing. It is no doubt possible – through bringing further theory to bear on the matter – for my account to be enriched, strengthened and technically elaborated to a far greater degree. Secondly, this study only developed a relatively short list of interdisciplinary modular writing skills (to help generate *basic* aspects of structure, argumentation, information-synthesis and style). There is little doubt in my mind that this list can be greatly lengthened through a closer and more systematic analysis of school and university essay-writing requirements. Thirdly, there is a great deal of work that could be done to understand how modular academic writing skills function at an academically advanced, postgraduate level. For example, do numbers of modular academic writings skills become more varied and populous in advanced pieces of academic writing? Perhaps, alternately, do a single-set of (numerically stable) modular academic writing skills become increasingly *refined* the higher up the academic pecking order we go? Or, could it even be the case that, while advanced pieces of academic writing may contain modular elements, such pieces of writing are significantly determined by writing skills that are too fluid and complex to be understood in terms of modularity. These, and other possible research questions, present a fascinating opportunity to explore the nature of the modularity concept's applicability to academic writing, and further develop the findings of this thesis.

6.7 Unexpected findings

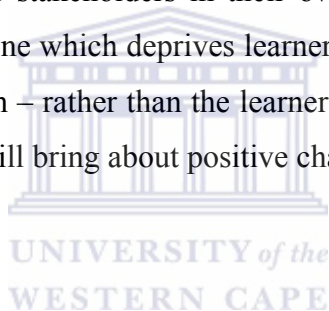
At the start of this study, it appeared obvious to me that my primary focus would be on academic writing skills, and that most of my findings would relate to the way in which the EAP course impacted upon the learners' levels of cognitive and linguistic competency. Although I was not altogether mistaken about this assumption – since a good portion of this thesis does indeed concern itself with this kind of data – I did not anticipate the *extent* to which a focus on academic writing skills would *necessarily* entail an exploration of problematic aspects of the learners' educational psychology. Having now completed the study, I see that, ironically, by focusing on a putatively

‘localised phenomenon’ (i.e. students’ ability to write academic essays) I gained an insight into a far broader behavioural phenomenon that would have otherwise been hidden from me. Indeed, while observations and interviews alone could have given me some insight into the learners’ work ethic, the running and management of a seven-week course generated *sustained interactions* and *experiences* which powerfully accentuated how low agency levels can be a *massive* impediment to academic progress.

This unexpected finding gave rise, in turn, to another one. The structural problems faced by township schools – in addition to the social ills faced by the communities who send their children to them – are so entrenched and severe, that there is often an (understandable) assumption that the present crisis in South African schooling will only be fixed with improved policy, teacher training and school-level management. Concomitant with this assumption is the mildly deterministic thesis that learners at these schools cannot be expected to thrive academically unless these broad structural reforms are implemented. Much of this viewpoint is undoubtedly correct. However, this study has also shown that one of the main obstacles to academic progress for these learners is their own internal agency. While there are a plethora of external causes which diminish the agency levels of township learners (causes, moreover, which are directly due to the deplorable states of the schools in which the learners are located), none of these causes are so over-deterministic as to render learners incapable of bettering their motivation levels. The idea that the learners *themselves* play an instrumental role in their own academic shortcomings is further accentuated by the fact that many of the Grade 11 learners that I worked with were in *firm* possession of the writing and thinking skills to excel at matric and beyond. And yet, despite possessing these academic resources, excelling at the EAP course and receiving continual encouragement, a good portion of these learners *chose* to discontinue their participation or severely compromise it through absenteeism. It is my strong intuition that the “choice” that many of these talented learners made to drop out of the course (or be repeatedly absent from it) is played out again and again in many contexts in their education. In other words, throughout their education, these learners shy away from the choice to actively seize control of their own

education and rise above ordinary standards of expectation. The EAP course highlighted this tendency, insofar as it showed that *even when* these learners were being actively supported and alerted (by the course instructor) to their considerable academic potential, they made the choice to leave the course and to again fully inhabit an ordinary schooling environment in which they could be more passive and meet with fewer expectations.

This perspective draws attention to how learners, too, play a significant role in some of the problems that afflict South African schools. However, it would be mistaken to conclude that this is a ‘negative’ verdict. If it is indeed true that many learners must shoulder a fair portion of responsibility for the poor academic performance of these schools, it is equally true that they *ought* to do so because they clearly *do* have the ability to become much larger stakeholders in their own education. This, surely, is a more optimistic account than one which deprives learners of this power, and argues that the external educational system – rather than the learners’ own internal psychology – is the primary determinant that will bring about positive change.



6.8 Conclusion

This study was pursued to establish whether a specially designed EAP course could improve the academic writing skills of Grade 11 learners attending economically disadvantaged schools. The data presented in Chapter 5 strongly suggests that the EAP course did indeed bring such an improvement about. In addition, through in-depth comparative analyses, it was also shown that the EAP courses equipped the learners with writing skills that matric and first-year university would require of them.

It is acknowledged that this case study has limitations which makes it difficult to generalise on the basis of its findings. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, it has been argued that because of A) the strong similarities between the two experimental groups and B) the relative uniformity of economically disadvantaged schools, it is highly

probable that similar findings would be generated if the EAP course were run at other economically disadvantaged schools.

Due to the difficulties that this study encountered in relation to high absenteeism and attrition rates, this chapter makes a number of recommendations that can improve the efficacy of future implementations of the EAP course. These recommendations primarily focus on measures that can be adopted to improve the learners' perceptions of their self-efficacy. In addition, it is recommended that – in the future – the EAP course could be feasibly enlarged to include a 'matric study skills module'. This recommendation is based on the fact that the writing skills acquired in the EAP course be directly applied to the matric curriculum via specially designed exercises (examples of which were given in Chapter 4).

For a middle-income country, South Africa has one of the worst standards of education in the world. The EAP course designed and implemented by this study presents one possible way in which to ameliorate this situation and improve learners' academic performance at both matric and university. Perhaps even more importantly, if future implementations of this study were to follow some of the recommendations outlined in this chapter, this course could not only have an even more direct and dramatic impact on learners' academic output; in addition, it could also – through focusing on agency development – help to catalyse a process in which learners come to view themselves as the primary movers of positive educational change.

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APPENDIX 1A

Essay marking criteria for matric English FAL, History and Business Studies

Criteria for an exceptional essay in History:

Very well planned and structured essay. Good synthesis of information. Developed an original, well balanced and independent line of argument with the use of evidence and sustained and defended the argument throughout. Independent conclusion is drawn from evidence to support the line of argument.

Criteria for an exceptional essay in English FAL:

CONTENT AND PLANNING

- Outstanding/Striking response beyond normal expectations
- Intelligent, thought-provoking and mature ideas
- Exceptionally well organised and coherent (connected), including introduction, body and conclusion/ending

LANGUAGE, STYLE AND EDITING

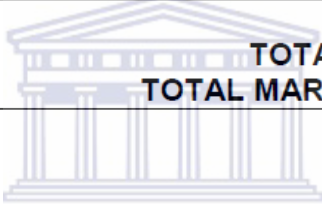
- Tone, register, style and vocabulary highly appropriate to purpose, audience and context
- Language confident, exceptionally impressive
- Compelling and rhetorically effective in tone
- Virtually error-free in grammar and spelling
- Very skilfully crafted

STRUCTURE

- Excellent development of topic
- Exceptional detail
- Sentences, paragraphs exceptionally well-constructed

APPENDIX 1A (continued)

Marking criteria for a Business Studies essay:

Layout/Structure:	(Is there an introduction, body, proper paragraphs and a conclusion?)	2
Analysis and interpretation:	(Learners' ability to break down the question/interpret it correctly to show understanding of what is being asked.)	2
Synthesis:	(What relevant parts of the question would you have included in the answer? Are there decisions made from a combination of relevant points) Marks to be allocated using this guide: Mostly irrelevant facts/No relevant facts: 0 Some irrelevant facts/Some relevant facts: 1 No irrelevant facts/Only relevant facts: 2	2
Originality:	(Examples, recency of information, current trends and developments.)	2
	 TOTAL FOR INSIGHT: 8 TOTAL MARKS FOR FACTS: 32 TOTAL MARKS FOR ESSAY (8 + 32) 40	

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APPENDIX 1B

Essay marking criteria for first-year English, Anthropology, Law and Business Management

Marking criteria for first-year English essays:

Distinction:

Content: Excellent critical and conceptual analysis. Insightful use of relevant reading.

Form: Excellent organization. Well thought-out, polished and systematically developed argument

Language: Exceptional use of language. Rare mistakes in grammar, spelling & punctuation.

Style: Excellent command of English. Mastery of idiom.

Marking criteria for first-year Anthropology Essays:

Content:

1.1 Relevance to question: directly to the point of the question/topic

1.2 Main issues all addressed

1.3 Basic/core terms & concepts – correct grasp; well deployed

Referencing:

2.1 Referencing, bibliography: both properly and fully done

2.2 Language: clear, concise

2.3 Presentation – Neat typed; cover page; title

Planning:

3.1 Coherent: parts hung together around an ARGUMENT

3.2 Planning – *Introduction* spells out argument and outline of discussion to follow. *Conclusion* offers succinct analytical commentary on argument and its implications.

Comprehensiveness:

4.1 Comprehensive essay that is detailed, thought through and thorough.

Creativity & Initiative:

5.1 New ideas, insights, applications & connections; critique and/or use of personal examples.

5.2 Much wider reading than set for the topic.

Marking criteria for first-year English, Anthropology, Law and Business Management

Marking criteria for first-year law essays:

- (1) It must posit a point of view and provide the arguments and evidence necessary to support or defend that position.
- (2) It must have an introduction and a conclusion.
- (3) It should demonstrate accurate knowledge of the relevant area(s) of law and pertinent secondary literature.
- (4) It should have a well-organised and logical argument or discussion.
- (5) It should demonstrate the ability to organise an answer, ie it should be a coherent piece of writing, set out in full sentences.
- (6) It should demonstrate the ability to analyse the concepts concerned together with the facts presented.
- (7) It is essential that the writing communicates clearly, ie grammar and spelling must be correct and language must be concise.
- (8) It must have full references in footnotes — you must acknowledge your sources fully by means of footnotes. (Please note that other methods of referencing, eg the Harvard method, are not acceptable for legal writing.) *See section 2 for further details.*
- (9) It must have a bibliography.

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Marking criteria for first-year Business Management tutorials:

In order to become good at formulating sound moral arguments, you must be able to identify and critique flawed ones. For this assignment, you must: a) Present a *poor* moral argument (in other words, one that contains at least one of the logical errors discussed in module 9's lectures), and b) Explain why your argument is a poor moral argument.

The argument could be one that you have recently read or heard (from any source - the newspaper, in magazines, on television, or from parents, friends or authority figures). Or, if you cannot think of any examples you've recently heard, make one up.

Your example must meet the following criteria:

1. It must be a moral argument and not simply a moral judgement - in other words, it must have premises, which are intended to support a conclusion on a moral issue.

Marking criteria for first-year Business Management tutorials (cont.):

2. It must be a good or cogent (clear, logical, convincing) argument – in other words, you must present something you believe to be a *poor* argument – *not* because you disagree with it, but because it employs *faulty logic*. Tuts that present *good* moral arguments will fail the assignment.

3. You need to use your own examples – not ones from the lecture slides (meaning the morality Lecture 2 slides that speak of Type 1,2, and 3 errors). Tuts that copy examples from the lectures will fail the assignment.



APPENDIX 2

Matric 2014 results for Delta High:

Summary Report NSC Exam November 2014

Metropole North

SECONDARY SCHOOL (1342265)

	201411	201311	201211
Number Entered:	196	116	187
Number Wrote:	195	114	178
Number Passed:	143 73.3%	100 87.7%	132 74.2%
Number Achieved Bachelors:	32 16.4%	20 17.5%	16 9.0%
Number Achieved Diploma:	82 42.1%	61 53.5%	82 46.1%
Number Achieved Higher Certificate:	29 14.9%	19 16.7%	34 19.1%
Number Achieved LSEN NSC:			
Number Achieved NSC:			
Number did not Achieve:	52 26.7%	14 12.3%	46 25.8%
Number Incomplete:	1	2	9

Subject Results

SubjectName	Entered	Wrote	Pass % at 30%	Pass % at 40%	Pass % at 50%	0-29%	30-39%	40-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-79%	80-100%	Not Resulted	Final Average%	Exam Average %	Raw SBA Average %	Diff: SBA and Exam Average %
Accounting	35	35	85.7%	51.4%	34.3%	5	12	6	8	2	1	1	0	43.5	40.8	41.6	-0.8
Afrikaans Home Language	21	21	100.0%	81.0%	52.4%	0	4	6	11	0	0	0	0	47.8	46.5	48.7	-2.2
Business Studies	127	127	85.0%	67.7%	47.2%	19	22	26	28	19	8	5	0	48.7	45.7	40.2	5.5
Consumer Studies	10	10	70.0%	30.0%	0.0%	3	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	33.8	31.3	23.8	7.5
English First Additional Langu	196	195	92.3%	74.9%	36.4%	15	34	75	53	16	2	0	1	46.0	44.8	43.4	1.4
Geography	130	129	63.6%	33.3%	11.6%	47	39	28	10	4	1	0	1	33.9	30.7	38.8	-8.1
History	90	89	62.9%	38.2%	23.6%	33	22	13	10	9	2	0	1	37.9	34.6	43.1	-8.5
IsiXhosa Home Language	175	174	99.4%	89.4%	93.7%	1	0	10	59	64	38	2	-1	62.3	61.1	61.7	-0.6
Life Orientation	196	195	100.0%	69.7%	34.9%	0	59	68	50	15	3	0	1	45.5		43.7	
Life Sciences	42	42	42.9%	16.7%	9.5%	24	11	3	4	0	0	0	0	28.7	25.8	33.0	-7.2
Mathematical Literacy	167	166	66.3%	41.0%	16.3%	56	42	41	18	7	1	1	1	35.6	33.3	26.8	6.5
Mathematics	29	29	27.6%	13.8%	3.4%	21	4	3	0	1	0	0	0	26.3	23.1	31.7	-8.6
Tourism	154	153	92.8%	80.4%	54.9%	11	19	39	45	25	10	4	1	51.0	48.0	45.0	3.0

02 January 2015

APPENDIX 2 (cont.)

Matric 2014 Results for Gonwa High:

Summary Report NSC Exam November 2014

Metropolis East

(1334428)

	201411		201311		201211	
Number Entered:	157		161		153	
Number Wrote:	155		155		152	
Number Passed:	113	72.9%	131	84.5%	128	84.2%
Number Achieved Bachelors:	34	21.9%	52	33.5%	52	34.2%
Number Achieved Diploma:	46	29.7%	63	40.6%	51	33.6%
Number Achieved Higher Certificate:	33	21.3%	16	10.3%	25	16.4%
Number Achieved LSEN NSC:						
Number Achieved NSC:						
Number did not Achieve:	42	27.1%	24	15.5%	24	15.8%
Number Incomplete:	2		6		1	

Subject Results

SubjectName	Entered	Wrote	Pass % at 30%	Pass % at 40%	Pass % at 50%	0-29%	30-39%	40-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-79%	80-100%	Not Resulted	Final Average %	Exam Average %	Raw SBA Average %	Diff: SBA and Exam Average %
Accounting	29	29	75.9%	34.5%	10.3%	7	12	7	1	2	0	0	0	36.3	33.0	45.3	-12.3
Agricultural Sciences	20	20	85.0%	40.0%	25.0%	3	9	3	3	2	0	0	0	41.4	37.8	49.8	-12.0
Business Studies	48	48	87.5%	50.0%	16.7%	6	18	16	5	3	0	0	0	40.5	37.6	37.4	0.2
Consumer Studies	19	19	100.0%	84.2%	15.8%	0	3	13	3	0	0	0	0	44.0	41.1	36.9	4.2
Economics	48	48	75.0%	41.7%	18.8%	12	16	11	4	4	1	0	0	38.5	35.9	38.4	-2.5
English First/Additional Language	157	155	98.7%	81.9%	42.6%	2	26	61	49	16	1	0	2	47.9	46.2	53.0	-6.8
Geography	39	38	89.8%	47.7%	23.9%	9	37	21	15	5	1	0	1	41.3	38.3	43.9	-5.6
History	54	53	100.0%	98.2%	79.2%	0	2	9	23	11	6	2	1	57.2	53.7	50.7	3.0
isiXhosa Home Language	157	156	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0	0	0	34	82	40	0	1	64.7	63.5	58.4	5.1
Life Orientation	157	157	100.0%	100.0%	82.8%	0	0	16	76	56	3	0	0	58.1		55.7	
Life Sciences	109	109	76.1%	44.0%	21.1%	26	35	25	11	6	3	3	0	40.5	37.7	42.2	-4.5
Mathematical Literacy	113	112	69.6%	41.1%	18.8%	34	32	25	15	5	1	0	1	37.7	34.9	40.3	-5.4
Mathematics	44	44	54.5%	25.0%	20.5%	20	13	2	5	4	0	0	0	33.4	30.3	42.9	-12.6
Physical Sciences	55	55	32.7%	18.2%	10.9%	37	8	4	4	1	1	0	0	28.2	25.5	38.3	-13.8

02 January 2015

APPENDIX 3A

Assignment 4

Assignment 4: Text ('Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity by Steve Biko)

There is no doubt that racism was **originally(1)** introduced into South African politics for **economic (2)** reasons. The leaders of the white community had to create some kind of **barrier(3)** between blacks and whites so that the whites could enjoy **privileges(4)** at the **expense(5)** of blacks and still feel free to give a **moral justification (6)** for the **obvious exploitation (7)** that **pricked (8)** even the hardest of white **consciences (9)**.

Freedom is the ability to **define (10)** oneself with one's possibilities held back not by the power of other people [...]. At the heart of this kind of thinking is the **realisation (11)** by blacks that the most potent weapon in the hands of the **oppressor (12)** is the mind of the oppressed. If one is free at heart, no man-made chains can bind one to **servitude(13)** but if one's mind is so **manipulated (14)** and controlled by the oppressor as to make the oppressed believe that he is a **liability (15)** to the white man, then there will be nothing the oppressed can do to scare his powerful masters.



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Assignment 4: Notes

It would be nice if we could always boil down a piece of writing to a single theme or main point. However, in many cases, pieces of writing – especially longer ones – **make lots of important claims**. Thus considered, if we want to produce a comprehensive critical analysis of certain texts, **examining two or three or even four arguments or themes may sometimes be necessary**. It is important for our written assignments to reflect this. For instance, if we recall Pessoa's poem, we could argue that it makes at least two important claims. Pessoa's first claim is that beauty is not an actual quality that objects possess. His second claim is that language helps to reinforce the illusion that beauty *actually* exists in the world. **Both these claims are of equal importance**, and our analysis would be **incomplete** if we did not identify **the centrality of both themes**. The following exercise contains instructions that will allow us to acknowledge more than one theme in our written assignments.

APPENDIX 3A (cont.)

Assignment 4: Instructions

For your exercise, I want you to analyse Biko's arguments in three paragraphs. From the second sentence of your essay until the last sentence of your essay, each one of your sentences should include phrases like ('Biko/He states'; 'Biko/He argues'; Biko/He establishes; 'Biko/He writes; Biko/He claims). Each time you write one of these phrases in a sentence, insert and highlight an [AR] sign. [AR] stands for 'Author Referral'. Before starting your exercise, carefully read all the instructions.

PARAGRAPH 1:

Begin your first paragraph by mentioning A) the genre of the piece of writing B) the title of the piece of writing and C) the name of the author. Immediately after providing this information insert and highlight a [GTAR] sign. Then (still in your first same sentence) mention the number of important claims Biko makes. Your second sentence should describe Biko's **first** important claim. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a [FMAP] sign. FMAP stands for "First Main Argumentative Point". Your third sentence should describe Biko's **second** important claim. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a [SMAP] sign. SMAP stands for "Second Main Argumentative Point".

PARAGRAPH 2:

Begin your second paragraph with a linking word/ phrase and then insert and highlight the [LW/P] sign. Next, identify the part of the text in which Biko makes his first important claim, and re-write it using your own words. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [DFMAP] sign. [DFMAP] stands for 'Development of First Main Argumentative Point'. In the very next sentence of your summary state that the information you have just written establishes the **first** main argumentative point mentioned in your introduction. **When you describe the FMAP in your introduction, describe your FMAP using different words to the words you used in your introduction**. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [RFMAP] sign. [RFMAP] stands for 'Referral to First Main Argumentative Point'.

PARAGRAPH 3:

Begin your **third** paragraph with a linking word or phrase and then insert and highlight the [LW/P] sign. Next, identify the part of the text in which Biko makes his second important claim, and re-write it using your own words. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [DSMAP] sign. [DSMAP] stands for 'Development of Second Main Argumentative Point'. In the very next sentence of your summary, state that the information you have just written establishes the **second** main argumentative point mentioned in your introduction. **When you describe the SMAP in your introduction, describe your SMAP using different words to the words you used in your introduction** Once you have done this insert and highlight a [RSMAP] sign. [RSMAP] stands for 'Referral to Second Main Argumentative Point'

APPENDIX 3B

Assignment 5

Assignment 5: Text ('Hawk Roosting by Ted Hughes)

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.
Inaction(1), no **falsifying (2)** dream
Between my hooked head and hooked feet:
Or in sleep **rehearse (3)** perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees!
The air's buoyancy (4) and the sun's ray
Are of advantage to me;
And the earth's face upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
It took the whole of Creation
To produce my foot, my each feather:
Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and **revolve it all slowly (5)** -
I kill where I please because it is all mine.
There is no **sophistry (6)** in my body:
My manners are tearing off heads - CAPE

The allotment of death (7).
For the one path of my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.
No arguments assert my right:

The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.

APPENDIX 3B (cont.)

Assignment 5: Notes

When we write an essay about a text, using quotations becomes **extremely** important. So far – in our essays – we have only backed up our claims by paraphrasing sections of the text that reflect particular arguments or themes. Quotations, however, **provide direct evidence for a particular claim that your essay makes**. In this respect, consider the following example. Suppose I claim that the main theme of Cisneros’s short story, *Eleven*, is that as we get older we don’t lose - or move completely beyond - the younger ages we have been. After paraphrasing the central incident that expresses this theme, a quotation will enable me to strengthen this claim by providing evidence that the paraphrased element is rooted directly in the text. Here is an example of what I mean:

*Cisneros’s [AR] main theme is reflected in an incident that occurs midway [LW/P] through the short story. Rachel, the story’s main character, gets embarrassed in front of her classmates after her teacher insists that an ugly red jersey belongs to her. Her embarrassment causes her to cry. As she cries she feels as if she is not really eleven. Instead, she experiences herself as a much younger person [DMT]. **As Rachel puts on the jersey, the reader is thus told, “This is when I wish I wasn’t eleven, because all the years inside of me – ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one – are pushing at the back of my eyes when I put one arm through the sleeve of the sweater” (8).***

This last sentence has three important features. Firstly, it contains a quotation that is embedded in a sentence that I have written and that properly contextualizes the quotation. Secondly, the word ‘**thus**’ tells the reader that the quotation will logically connect with the paraphrased sentences that precedes it. Thirdly, it references the quotation. When you quote in this week’s exercise, your ‘quotation sentence’ must also have these features.

Importantly, quotations can also be used to substantiate (i.e. back) up your claims in another manner. To see this, consider the final two sentences that I have added to the paragraph we have already read:

*Cisneros’s [AR] main theme is reflected in an incident that occurs midway [LW/P] through the short story. Rachel, the story’s main character, gets embarrassed in front of her classmates after her teacher insists that an ugly red jersey belongs to her. Her embarrassment causes her to cry. As she cries she feels as if she is not really eleven. Instead, she experiences herself as a much younger person [DMT]. As Rachel puts on the jersey, the reader is thus told, “This is when I wish I wasn’t eleven, because all the years inside of me – ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one – are pushing at the back of my eyes when I put one arm through the sleeve of the sweater” (8). **In addition, Cisneros [AR] tells us at the beginning [LW/P] of the story that “the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree or like my wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one”(7).***

APPENDIX 3B (cont.)

Assignment 5: Notes (cont.)

By using phrases like '**in addition**' this sentence emphasises that the quotation is **providing even more evidence to support the claim made in your introduction**. When critically analysing a text, **it is always good to provide as much evidence as possible to support a claim**. Consequently, when you quote in this week's exercise, you should use the (first) 'thus' quoting technique and the (second) 'in addition' quoting technique.

QUOTING TECHNIQUE

In this course we will use a very simple quoting technique. The technique has two steps. First, put your quotation in inverted commas. Secondly place the page number or line number of the quotation in brackets outside the inverted commas. Your complete quotation should look like the example I have placed below

“Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind and a way of life, the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time” (1).

Assignment 5: Instructions

For your written exercise, I want you to critically analyse Hughes' poem in three paragraphs. From the second sentence of your essay until the last sentence of your essay, each one of your sentences should include phrases like 'Hughes / He states'; 'Hughes / He writes'; 'Hughes / He describes', etc. Each time you write one of these phrases in a sentence, insert and highlight an **[AR]** sign. [AR] stands for 'Author Referral'. Before starting your exercise, carefully read **all** the instructions.

PARAGRAPH 1:

Your first paragraph should be **at least** three sentences long. Your first sentence should mention A) the name of the author, B) the name of the short story and C) the number of important themes in the poem. Immediately after providing this information insert and highlight a **[GTAR]** sign. Then (still in your first sentence) mention the number of themes Hughes explores in the poem. Your second sentence should describe Hughes' first important theme. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a **[FMT]** sign. FMT stands for "First Main Theme". Your third sentence should describe Hughes' second important theme. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a **[SMT]** sign. SMT stands for 'Second Main Theme'.

APPENDIX 3B (cont.)

Assignment 5: Instructions (cont.)

PARAGRAPH 2:

Begin your second paragraph with a linking word/ phrase and then insert and highlight the [LW/P] sign. Next, (using your own words) re-write the part of the text in which Hughes explores his first important theme. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [DFMT] sign. [DFMT] stands for 'Development of First Main Theme'. After doing this, provide a quotation which is embedded in a sentence that A) you have written and that B) has the word **thus**. The quotation must be also properly referenced. After writing this sentence insert and highlight a [FQT] sign. 'FQT' stands for 'First Quoting Technique'. Then provide an additional quotation. This quotation must be embedded in a sentence that A) begins with the phrase 'In addition' and B) has a linking word / phrase (as well as a linking word / phrase sign). Make sure that the quotation is properly referenced. After writing this sentence insert and highlight a [SQT] sign. 'SQT' stands for 'Second Quoting Technique'. In the very next sentence of your paragraph state that **all** the information you have written establishes the **first** main theme mentioned in your introduction. **When you describe the FMT in your introduction, describe your FMT using different words to the words you used in your introduction.** Once you have done this insert and highlight a [RFMT] sign. [RFMT] stands for 'Referral to First Main Theme'.

PARAGRAPH 3:

Begin your third paragraph with a linking word/ phrase and then insert and highlight the [LW/P] sign. Next, (using your own words) re-write the part of the text in which Hughes explores his second important theme. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [DSMT] sign. [DSMT] stands for 'Development of Second Main Theme'. After doing this, provide a quotation which is embedded in a sentence that A) you have written, that B) has a linking word/ phrase (as well as a linking word /phrase sign) and that C) has the word **thus**. The quotation must be also properly referenced. After writing this sentence insert and highlight a [FQT] sign. Then provide an additional quotation. This quotation must be embedded in a sentence that A) begins with the phrase 'In addition' and B) has a linking word/ phrase (as well as a linking word /phrase sign). Make sure that the quotation is properly referenced. After writing this sentence insert and highlight a [SQT] sign. In the very next sentence of your paragraph state that the information you have just written establishes the **second** main theme mentioned in your introduction. **When you describe the SMT in your introduction, describe your SMT using different words to the words you used in your introduction .** Once you have done this insert and highlight a [RSMT] sign. [RSMT] stands for 'Referral to Second Main Theme'.

APPENDIX 3C

Assignment 6

Assignment 6: Text ('The City' by C.P Cavafy)

You said: 'I will go to another land; I will try another sea.
Another city will turn up, better than this one.
Here everything I do is **condemned in advance (1)**
and my heart- like a dead man's- lies buried.
How long can my mind remain in this **swamp (2)?**
Wherever I turn, wherever I look, I **gaze (3)**
on the ruins of my life here, where I've spent
and **botched (4)** and wasted so many years.'

You will find no new land; you will find no other seas.
This city will follow you. You will wander the same
streets and grow old in the same neighbourhoods;
your hair will turn white in the same houses.
And you will always arrive in this city. **Abandon (5)** any hope
of finding another place. No ship, no road can take you there.
For just as you've ruined your life here
in this **backwater (6)**, you've destroyed it everywhere on earth.

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Assignment 6: Notes

This week I want us to focus on '**Higher Order Thinking Skills**' (or **HOTS** for short). HOTS are rooted in the following word:

HOWEVER

This word become very important when a single piece of writing can be understood in a number of ways that **conflict with one another**. Such conflicts often arise when the first part of a text has a theme or argument that appears to contradict (or be in tension with) a theme or argument presented in a later part of the text. What do I mean by this? Consider the following example:

*At the start of the poem, the poet suggests that the world is a violent and dangerous place.
However, in the last stanza, the poet describes a number of scenes which show people helping one another and treating one another with respect.*

In the above example, the word 'however' is very important. Specifically, the word 'however' stresses that the second theme appears to be in conflict with the first theme.

Assignment 6: Notes (cont.)

When we write a conclusion about a text which has two themes (or arguments) which are in tension with one another, it is essential that we reach a conclusion about how, exactly, the two themes are related to one another. Here is a list of common ways in which potentially opposing statements can be related in a conclusion:

1. *The views expressed in the first part of the text are meant to **disprove** or **contradict** those expressed in later parts of the text. This is because....*
2. *The views expressed in the first part of the text **cast doubt** upon those expressed in later parts of the text. This is because...*
3. ***Despite appearances**, the views expressed in the first part of the text **do not really contradict** those expressed in the second. This is because....*

Assignment 6: Instructions

For your written exercise, I want you to critically analyse Cavafy's poem in four paragraphs. From the second sentence of your essay until the last sentence of your essay, each one of your sentences should include phrases like 'Cavafy / He states'; 'Cavafy / He writes'; 'Cavafy / He describes', etc. Each time you write one of these phrases in a sentence, insert and highlight an [AR] sign.

PARAGRAPH 1:

Your first sentence should mention A) the name of the author, B) the name of the text and C) the genre of the text. Immediately after providing this information insert and highlight a [GTAR] sign. Then (still in your first sentence) mention the number of themes Cavafy explores in the poem. Your second sentence should contain a linking word / phrase and describe Cavafy's first important theme. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a [FMT] sign. Your third sentence should begin with the word 'However', have a linking word / phrase and describe Cavafy's second important theme. After writing the word 'however' insert and highlight the [HOTS] sign, and at the end of the whole sentence, insert and highlight a [SMT] sign.

APPENDIX 3C (cont.):

Assignment 6: Instructions (cont.):

PARAGRAPH 2:

Begin your second paragraph with a linking word/ phrase and then insert and highlight the [LW/P] sign. Next, (using your own words) re-write the part of the text in which Cavafy explores his first important theme. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [DFMT] sign. After doing this, write ‘Cavafy thus states [AR]’ and then quote the part of the text that you have written in your own words. After writing this sentence insert and highlight a [FQT] sign. Begin your next sentence by writing ‘In addition’ and then insert a linking word /phrase, an [AR] phrase and another quote that reflects the [FMT]. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a [SQT] sign. Begin your next sentence by writing ‘With all these descriptions Cavafy is showing us [AR]’ and then re-write your [FMT] sentence using different words. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [RFMT] sign.

PARAGRAPH 3:

Begin your second paragraph with the word ‘However’ and then insert a linking word / phrase (with a [LW/P] sign). Next, (using your own words) re-write the part of the text in which Cavafy explores his second important theme. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [DSMT] sign. After doing this, write ‘Cavafy thus states [AR]’ and then quote the part of the text that you have written in your own words. After writing this sentence insert and highlight a [FQT] sign. Begin your next sentence by writing ‘In addition’ and then insert a linking word /phrase, an [AR] phrase and another quote that reflects the [SMT]. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a [SQT] sign. Begin your next sentence by writing ‘With all these descriptions Cavafy is showing us [AR]’ and then re-write your [SMT] sentence using different words. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [SFMT] sign.

PARAGRAPH 4:

The first sentence of your concluding paragraph should begin with the phrase ‘**In conclusion**’. Then, in the rest of this sentence and the following sentences you write, you should establish what the **precise (i.e. exact)** relationship between Cavafy’s two themes is. When you do this, try to use words like ‘disprove’, ‘although’, ‘appears’ ‘contradicts’ or phrases like ‘cast doubt’, ‘despite appearances’ and ‘do not really contradict’. Once you have done this, insert a [CBHOTS] sign. [CBHOTS] stands for ‘Conclusion Based Higher Order Thinking Skills’.

APPENDIX 3D

Assignment 7

Assignment 7: Text ('Man's Place in Nature: The Two Infinities)

Let man [...] **contemplate (1)** the whole of nature in her full and **exalted (2)** nature. Let him turn his eyes from the **lowly (3)** objects which surround him. Let him gaze on that brilliant light set like an eternal lamp to **illumine (4)** the Universe; let the earth seem to him a dot [...] But if our vision stops here, let the imagination **pass on (5); it will exhaust its powers of thinking long before nature ceases to supply it with material for thought (6)**. All this visible world is no more than an **imperceptible speck in nature's ample bosom (7)**. No idea approaches it. We may **extend our conception (8)** beyond all imaginable space, yet produce only atoms in comparison with the reality of things. It is an infinite space, the center of which is everywhere, the circumference nowhere. [...] Returning to himself, let man consider what he is compared with all existence: let him think of himself as lost in this **remote (9)** corner of nature; and from this little **dungeon(10)** in which he finds himself lodged – I mean the universe – let him learn to set a true value on the earth, its kingdoms, and cities, and upon himself. What is a man in the infinite?

But to **behold (11)** another miracle no less astonishing, let him examine the most delicate things he knows. Let him take a **mite (12)**, with its tiny body and its [...] tiny **limbs (13)**: legs with their **joints (14)**, veins in those legs, blood in those veins [...]. **Subdividing yet again [...] let the ultimate point he can reach be now the subject of our discourse (15)** (i.e the atom). Perhaps he will think that here is **nature's extreme diminutive (16)**. But in it I mean to show him a new **abyss (17)**. I will **paint for him (18)** not only the visible universe but all the imaginable **vastness of nature (19)** in [...] this diminutive atom [...] For who can fail to marvel that our body, which before, was **imperceptible (20)** in a universe itself imperceptible in the vastness of the whole, should now be a **colossus (21)**, a world[...]

Assignment 7: Notes

This week's exercise instructions will help you to use the following words and techniques in your essay.

1. Boosters

Boosters are words used by authors to indicate their confidence in certain claims. Boosters therefore include words like

certainly, clearly, obviously, undoubtedly, evidently, undeniably, plainly.

APPENDIX 3D (cont.)

Assignment 7: Notes (cont.)

2. Attitude Markers

Attitude markers are used by authors to reveal their affective (emotional) attitudes towards a text. Attitude markers can therefore convey, surprise, agreement, appreciation, frustration and so on. Sentence adverbs (e.g. unfortunately, hopefully) and adjectives (e.g. appropriate, logical, remarkable, clever, incomplete, faulty) are commonly used as attitude markers. Here is an example of a sentence with attitude markers:

*In her short story “Eleven” Cisneros [GTAR] offers us an **intriguing** and **original** view of aging.*

These attitude markers give the reader a clear indication of the author’s assessment of the story. Note, though, that attitude markers are even more effective when we provide reasons to back them up. Thus, consider the following sentence:

*In her short story, “Eleven”, Cisneros [GTAR] gives us an insight into the way a child intuitively reflects upon the nature of growing up, and in doing so offers us an **intriguing** and **original** view of aging.*

Assignment 7: Instructions

For your written exercise, I want you to critically analyse Pascal’s philosophical essay in four paragraphs. From the second sentence of your essay until the last sentence of your essay, each one of your sentences should include phrases like ‘Pascal / He states’; ‘Pascal / He writes’ ; ‘Pascal / He describes’, etc. Each time you write one of these phrases in a sentence, insert and highlight an [AR] sign.

PARAGRAPH 1:

Your first sentence should mention A) the name of the author, B) the name of the text and C) the genre of the text. Immediately after providing this information insert and highlight a [GTAR] sign. Then (**still in your first sentence**) A) give your reader a general impression of what the essay is basically about and B) use attitude markers (remember to also give reasons for your attitude markers [see example sentence]). After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a [GOAM] sign. [GOAM] stands for ‘General Outline with Attitude Markers’. Begin your second sentence by saying “Specifically, in the first paragraph [LW/P] of his essay Pascal states [AR]” Then (still in the second sentence) describe Pascal’s first main argumentative point. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a [FMAP] sign. Your third sentence should begin with the word ‘However’, have a linking word / phrase and describe Pascal’s second important theme. After writing the word ‘however’ insert and highlight the [HOTS] sign, and at the end of the whole sentence, insert and highlight a [SMAP] sign.

APPENDIX 3D (cont.)

Assignment 7: Instructions (cont.)

PARAGRAPH 2:

Begin your second paragraph with a linking word / phrase and then insert and highlight the [LW/P] sign. Next, (using your own words) re-write the **particular part of the text** in which Pascal explores his [FMAP]. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [DFMAP] sign. After doing this, write ‘Pascal thus states [AR]’ and then quote the part of the text that you have written in your own words. After writing this sentence insert and highlight a [FQT] sign. Begin your next sentence by writing ‘In addition’ and then insert a linking word /phrase, an [AR] phrase and another quote that reflects the [FMAP]. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a [SQT] sign. Begin your next sentence by writing ‘With all these descriptions Pascal is ***INSERT BOOSTER WORD HERE*** showing us [AR]’ and then re-write your [FMAP] sentence using different words. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [BRFMAP] sign. [BRFMAP] stands for ‘Boosted Referral to First Main Argumentative Point’.

PARAGRAPH 3:

Begin your third paragraph with a linking word / phrase and then insert and highlight the [LW/P] sign. Next, (using your own words) re-write the **particular part of the text** in which Pascal explores his [SMAP]. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [DSMAP] sign. After doing this, write ‘Pascal thus states [AR]’ and then quote the part of the text that you have written in your own words. After writing this sentence insert and highlight a [FQT] sign. Begin your next sentence by writing ‘In addition’ and then insert a linking word /phrase, an [AR] phrase and another quote that reflects the [SMAP]. After writing this sentence, insert and highlight a [SQT] sign. Begin your next sentence by writing ‘With all these descriptions Pascal is ***INSERT BOOSTER WORD HERE*** showing us [AR]’ and then re-write your [SMAP] sentence using different words. Once you have done this insert and highlight a [BRSMAP] sign. [BRSMAP] stands for ‘Boosted Referral to Second Main Argumentative Point’.

PARAGRAPH 4:

The first sentence of your concluding paragraph should begin with the phrase ‘**In conclusion**’. Then, in the rest of this sentence and the following sentences you write, you should establish what the **precise (i.e. exact)** relationship between Pascal’s [FMAP] and [SMAP] is. When you do this, try to use words like ‘disprove’, ‘although’, ‘appears’ ‘contradicts’ or phrases like ‘cast doubt’, ‘despite appearances’ and ‘do not really contradict’. Once you have done this, insert a [CBHOTS] sign.

APPENDIX 4

Matric English FAL Paper 3 essay marking rubric

SECTION A: RUBRIC FOR ASSESSING AN ESSAY – FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (50)

	Code 7: Outstanding 80 – 100%	Code 6: Meritorious 70–79%	Code 5: Substantial 60–69%	Code 4: Adequate 50–59%	Code 3: Moderate 40–49%	Code 2: Elementary 30–39%	Code 1: Not achieved 0–29%
CONTENT & PLANNING (32 MARKS)	<u>26–32</u> -Content shows impressive insight into topic. -Ideas thought-provoking, mature. -Planning &/or drafting has produced a virtually flawless, excellent essay.	<u>22½ – 25½</u> -Content shows good interpretation of topic. -Ideas imaginative, interesting. - Planning &/or drafting has produced a well-crafted & very good essay.	<u>19½–22</u> -Content shows a sound interpretation of the topic. -Ideas interesting, convincing. - Planning &/or drafting has produced a presentable essay.	<u>16–19</u> -Content an adequate interpretation of topic. -Ideas ordinary, lacking depth. - Planning &/or drafting has produced a satisfactorily presented essay.	<u>13–15½</u> -Content ordinary. Gaps in coherence. -Ideas mostly relevant. Repetitive. - Planning &/or drafting has produced a moderately presentable & coherent essay.	<u>10–12½</u> -Content not always clear, lacks coherence. -Few ideas, often repetitive. -Inadequate evidence of planning/drafting. Essay not well presented.	<u>0–9½</u> -Content irrelevant. No coherence. -Ideas repetitive. -Non-existent planning/drafting. Poorly presented essay.
LANGUAGE, STYLE & EDITING (12 MARKS)	<u>10–12</u> -Critical awareness of impact of language. -Language, punctuation effectively used. -Figurative language used. -Choice of words highly appropriate. -Style, tone, register highly suited to topic. -Virtually error-free following proof-reading & editing.	<u>8½–9½</u> -Critical awareness of impact of language. -Language, punctuation correct; able to include figurative language correctly. -Choice of words varied & correctly used. -Style, tone, register appropriately suited to topic. -Largely error-free following proof-reading, editing.	<u>7½–8</u> -Critical awareness of language evident. -Language & punctuation mostly correct. -Choice of words suited to text. -Style, tone, register suited to topic in most of the essay. -By and large error-free following proof-reading, editing.	<u>6–7</u> -Some awareness of impact of language. -Language simplistic, punctuation adequate. -Choice of words adequate. -Style, tone, register generally consistent with topic requirements. -Still contains errors following proof-reading, editing.	<u>5–5½</u> -Limited critical language awareness. -Language ordinary & punctuation often inaccurately used. -Choice of words basic. -Style, tone register lacking in coherence. -Contains several errors following proofreading, editing.	<u>4–4½</u> -Language & punctuation flawed. -Choice of words limited. -Style, tone, register inappropriate. -Error-ridden despite proofreading, editing.	<u>0–3½</u> -Language & punctuation seriously flawed. -Choice of words inappropriate. -Style, tone, register flawed in all aspects. -Error-ridden & confused following proofreading, editing.
STRUCTURE (6 MARKS)	<u>5–6</u> -Coherent development of topic. Vivid detail. -Sentences, paragraphs coherently constructed. -Length in accordance with requirements of topic.	<u>4½</u> -Logical development of details. Coherent. -Sentences, paragraphs logical, varied. -Length correct.	<u>4</u> -Several relevant details developed. -Sentences, paragraphs well constructed. -Length correct.	<u>3–3½</u> -Some points, necessary details developed. -Sentences, paragraphing might be faulty in places but essay still makes sense. -Length almost correct.	<u>2½</u> -Some necessary points evident. -Sentences, paragraphs faulty but ideas can be understood. -Length – too long/short.	<u>2</u> -Sometimes off topic. General line of thought difficult to follow. -Sentences, paragraphs constructed at an elementary level. -Length – too long/short.	<u>0–1½</u> -Off topic. -Sentences, paragraphs muddled, inconsistent. -Length – far too long/short.

[From: Examination Guidelines: Languages Paper 3/2 – January 2009]

APPENDIX 5 (questionnaire)

Yes / No Questions

1. Do you feel that this course improved your essay writing abilities? _____
2. Do you feel that the skills you learned in this course helped you with any other subjects at school? _____
3. If you answered 'yes' in the previous question, please list the subjects it helped you with.
4. Have you ever written this many essays in a school term? _____
5. Have you ever written this many essays in a school year? _____
6. Did you find that it was helpful to write a rough draft before handing in a final draft?

7. Did you find the written feedback of the course instructor to be helpful? _____
8. Did you find the course to be repetitive and boring? _____
9. Did you feel as if you had enough time in class to work on your rough drafts and final drafts?

10. Do you feel as if any of your school teachers have ever directly taught you how to write essays about texts? _____
11. Did you often struggle to see the course's relevance to your other school work? _____
12. Did you find many of the texts used in the course to be too difficult to understand? _____
13. Did you often struggle to see the course's relevance to your other school work? _____
14. Did you find many of the texts used in the course to be too difficult to understand? _____

Circle the correct option:

15. How interesting did you find the texts that you wrote essays about?
Boring / Somewhat interesting / Interesting / Very interesting
16. The instructions in the writing exercises were
Confusing / Unclear / Clear / Very Clear