

**University of the Western Cape**

**Faculty of Arts**

**Linguistics Department**



**Biliteracy and Academic Success: the experiences of selected Libyan students.**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of  
Magister Artium in the Department of Linguistics, University of the Western  
Cape**

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**+**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is an investigation into the biliteracy skills (in Arabic and English) employed by Libyan students at the University of the Western Cape to gain their academic success. Nowadays, international students form a significant number in every academic institution. The study attempts to show that there are literacy factors beyond basic editing of written tasks by biliterate students studying outside their country of origin that need to be acknowledged as contributing to their success in completing such tasks. Qualitative research methods - a questionnaire and interviews – were used in order to understand what strategies the participants rely on to first understand, then write their assignments, how they apply their biliteracy skills, and what biliterate resources they draw on in their writing in order to produce a successful assignment. Hornberger's (1989) Biliteracy Model was adopted as a framework to map students' responses.

This study may serve as a response to the question posed by Hornberger and Link (2012:243): "How should educators engage with students' linguistic and literacy diversity in order to facilitate successful school experiences and greater academic achievement for students from often minoritized backgrounds?" This study might also be one of a series of research studies exploring, as Creese and Blackledge (2010:113) recommend, "what 'teachable' pedagogic resources are available in flexible, concurrent approaches to learning and teaching languages bilingually".

The findings of the research show that the Libyan students in this study used particular strategies whenever they faced academic barriers, and to compensate for their limited competence in English and the academic discourse in the foreign context of UWC. The most significant of these strategies were the use of the first language as a bridge to the second, oral discussions preceding written assignments, drawing on prior knowledge, and moving from reading to writing. Moreover, the findings revealed some of the factors behind the students' growing confidence in their writing and consequently, succeeding in writing their assignments. These were lecturers' feedback, oral discussions with a writing coach or friends, and drawing on contextualized content.

By applying Hornberger's Biliteracy Model, the participants' resources highlighted significant indications for educators to contest the power relationships posed by

traditional autonomous literacy programmes that advocate only the most powerful ends. Moreover, the implications of the findings of this research support the call of the New London Group of literacy scholars (1996) for a pedagogy that develops literacy according to students' lived world experiences, linguistic and cultural resources.



## DEDICATION

*To*

*The spirit of my father for being my first teacher*

*The spirit of mother, the great woman who has always inspired me...who taught me to trust in Allah, believe in myself and that so much could be done with little.*

*I dedicate this humble work.*



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMNT

I owe my deepest gratitude and respect to my supervisor, Prof Charlyn Dyers, for her patience with me and for her ever-present support and encouragement.

I would also thank Ms. Nathalie Hattingh for her assistance regarding my thesis.

I sincerely thank my sisters who were always encouraging and supporting me in the hardest times. I would also thank my little family, my husband and my children who supported me for better or worse. I greatly appreciate their patience, faith, and love.



## DECLARATION

I declare that *Biliteracy and Academic Success: the experiences of selected Libyan students*, is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name: **Fathia El Shibani**



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 30 April 2019 \_\_\_\_\_



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# Chapter One

## Introduction and Background

### 1.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate the biliteracy skills employed by Libyan postgraduate students at the University of the Western Cape as they navigate the demands of their respective disciplines and, in particular, the demand for effective written assignments. This study is an attempt to test the validity of Hornberger's (1989) model of biliteracy for speakers of Arabic studying in English in a foreign country.

Language is an empowering device important for students' confidence and success in their academic discipline. As there is a need to develop students' literacy skills in order for them to meet the academic standards of universities, there is also a need to look at their academic language as a factor that contributes to their academic success.

International students form a large part of the diverse student community that exists at any academic institution. From a linguistic view, these bilingual (or multilingual) students have to develop their academic literacy and second language skills – what Hornberger (1989) terms 'biliteracy'. Most academic institutions have formulated in their policies which language or languages are official media of instruction (MOI). However, one of the major challenges for academics is to recognize the biliterate skills with which most students come to higher education institutions (HEIs). It is important not to make assumptions about these students who, in one way or another, may lack some academic literacy skills or learning strategies because of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. On the contrary, international students are some of the highest achieving students at many universities. The fact of the matter is that they have certain challenges that distinguish them from the other domestic students. These include the following challenges, as mentioned by Arkoudis (2006:5):

- learning and living in a different culture;
- learning in a foreign university context;

- learning while developing English language proficiency; and
- learning the academic disciplinary discourse.

Cummins (2000:1) argues that, despite the fact that international students tend to be strongly overrepresented in school failure categories, few studies have succeeded to address specifically the causes of educational failure among such students. Even “fewer contemplate bilingualism and biliteracy as part of the solution rather than as part of the problem” (Cummins, 2000:1). He also argues that biliteracy must become an essential component of educational programmes to promote and empower culturally and linguistically diverse students.

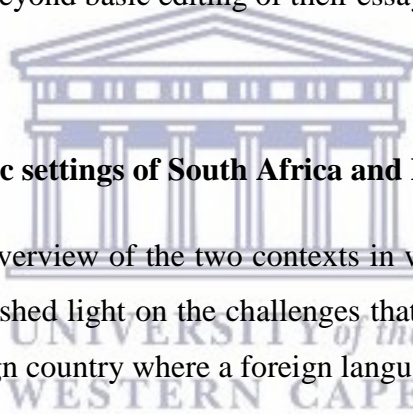
In 2015, I conducted a small-scale research study for my Honour’s research essay on Libyan students studying at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). I investigated some of the strategies they used to cope with their academic work in a foreign country. The study described some of the linguistic challenges they encountered in their academic journey and what strategies they used to cope with these challenges. The results showed that, while most of them have good communicative skills in English, it is in the area of academic literacy, particularly writing, that they encountered difficulties. While most of them are currently doing their postgraduate study by full thesis, they feel that they lack the necessary skills for this task. The results from my Honours study revealed the following linguistic problems:

- Simplified English language use;
- Lack of confidence in their ability to communicate properly in the language;
- Low attention was given to pronunciation;
- Lack in academic vocabulary needed for academic discourse;
- Difficulties in writing, which is the most important skill needed for their academic success;
- Ignorance of the appropriate academic writing conventions in terms of spelling, punctuation and grammar; and

- Committing some plagiarism.

These problems affected the students' academic achievement and social engagement in the academic environment.

Despite this lack of the necessary previous knowledge of the academic literacy skills, specifically in writing – the major form of assessment – most of these students were succeeding in their studies and developing their academic literacy. By the beginning of the year (2016) fortunately, three of the five participants in my 2015 research study graduated successfully. I was motivated to do this research to investigate what resources these Libyan students draw on in writing their assignments successfully and how they approach academic writing. The study aims to question the application of these linguistic resources beyond basic editing of their essays.



## **1.1 The different linguistic settings of South Africa and Libya**

This section provides an overview of the two contexts in which the participants have studied. The purpose is to shed light on the challenges that Libyan students may face when they study in a foreign country where a foreign language dominates.

### **1.1.1 Libya**

Like South Africa, Libya is a multilingual nation. According to the online site *Ethnologue*, the official language of Libya is Modern Standard Arabic, which is mainly used in writing and for official and religious purposes. Libyan Spoken Arabic, together with a range of local dialects, is the main language spoken by the population. However, Egyptian Arabic is also used in Eastern Libya, while Tunisian Arabic can be heard in Western Libya. Minority languages include Berber, Domari and Tedaga. The main European languages dating from the colonial period are Italian and English (WorldAtlas.com).

Just after Libya's independence in 1951, Libyans were guaranteed the right to be educated, as about 90% of the population were illiterate. The country invested heavily in the improvement of the education system, realizing the importance of education as a tool for the development and empowerment of its population. A modern educational system was established and education became a guaranteed right for all. In the 1970s, this significantly developed education system changed considerably as English and French were introduced besides Arabic (Najeeb, 2013; Orafi, 2008).

After the 1986 American air raid on Libya, the Libyan government decided to stop teaching foreign languages in all the educational sectors in the country. However, in 1996, English was again introduced as a subject in schools from grade seven, and subsequently, in higher education and in primary schools. In 2000, the English language curriculum was developed as a step to reconnect Libya with the rest of the world, following other nations who initiated programmes of English as a second language in the twenty first century (Najeeb, 2013; Orafi, 2008; Youssef, 2012).

The government's decision to eliminate English as a subject in the mid-eighties meant that a whole generation grew up with no exposure to the English language. Even though English was reinstated as a subject later, students suffered owing to the lack of qualified teachers and limited curriculum. However, another obstacle in learning the language was the absence of opportunity to get exposure to the English language anywhere in the country. Rajendran (2010) states that the absence of opportunity to use English acts as a de-motivating factor among students and English teachers. The students have no reading habit, because of the absence of newspapers or any journals in English. Arabic is the only language used everywhere, even in the names of shops or hospitals. These difficulties and lack of exposure made teaching English in Libyan universities a very difficult task for both teachers and students.

Orafi (2008) explains that many sociocultural factors may affect the educational process in any society (Coleman, 1996; Holliday, 1994; Shamim, 1996; Tudor, 2001, cited in Orafi, 2008). In his study, he explained that teachers and students bring to classroom their expectations and beliefs about what education is, derived from their cultural backgrounds. He went on that Libyan students often assume that their role in the classroom is to memorize the information imparted by the teacher to succeed in their exams. In English as a subject, for example, grammar memorization and

vocabulary knowledge are tested and other language skills, such as the oral skills, are ignored (Al-Buseifi, 2003). Students compete to succeed in the exams, and families and the society tend to regard those students who pass with high grades highly. Usually scholarships to study abroad are offered to those with the highest grades.

According to Najeeb (2013), learning a second language with the aim of passing exams only, restricts students from acquiring skills that are needed for academic literacy later on, like oral discussions, seminar presentations and writing papers, which are needed when they study abroad where high levels of competence in academic English are required.

### **1.1.2 South Africa**

Under the apartheid regime (1948-1994), people in South Africa were kept separated according to their ethnic origins. They were recognized according to their skin colour as either white, coloured, black or Indians in every sector, particularly education (Stroud and Kerfoot, 2017). The population of the country can be described as very multilingual and multicultural due to the diversity of ethnicities and languages in the South African society. South Africa has 11 official languages (English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga and isiNdebele), but English predominates in Higher Education.

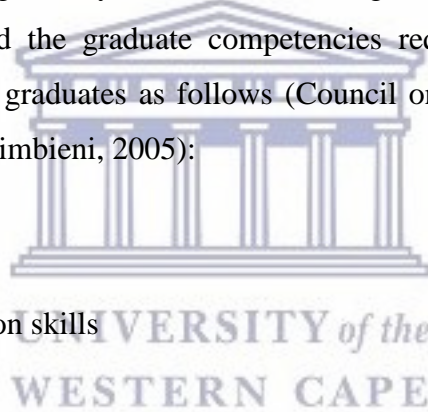
As a consequence of these apartheid laws of discrimination in universities, a number of non-white educational institutions were established. The University of the Western Cape (UWC) - where this study was conducted - was established in 1960 as a bilingual Afrikaans/English coloured university. Later, as an act against racism in South Africa, the UWC staff and students protested against all discriminatory policies of the institution, seeking the right of education to all ethnicities. Eventually, the institution reopened its doors in 1982 as a home for all races as an “engaged university” with a vision statement “from hope to action through knowledge” (Stroud and Kerfoot, 2017: 4).

Since 1994, educational reforms in South Africa have attempted to build a system of education that ensures equality, democracy, and social justice to broaden the

participation of all races of the country in higher education. The aim of the South African language in education policy was to promote multilingualism and save language rights for all races, therefore students have the right to have their mother languages as a media of instruction in addition to English and Afrikaans.

The government has demanded that the sector of higher education's approach to education meet international demands that will allow students to be well prepared to participate in the emerging knowledge society. Therefore, there have been steering mechanisms to structure curricula that reflect student competence in disciplinary content and enhance critical thinking. In its 2004 report, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) insisted that South African Institutions of Higher Learning should play a key role in national reconstruction and transformation, and ensure that graduate skills gained from these institutions contribute to the goals of "equity, democracy and development" in a learning society (the Council on Higher Education, 2004, 34–35). The CHE has enumerated the graduate competencies required in the twenty-first century by South African graduates as follows (Council on Higher Education 2001, cited in De Jager and Nassimbieni, 2005):

- computer literacy
- knowledge reconfiguration skills
- information skills
- problem-solving
- teamwork
- networking
- mediation skills
- social sensitivity.



### 1.1.3 The University of the Western Cape (UWC)

The University of the Western Cape is not only home to South African students but has become an attractive destination for international students, from different regions of Africa as well as Asia, Europe and the Americas who make up an estimated 10% of the student population at the university. In 2015, there were 172 Libyan postgraduate students at UWC (UWC Office for Quality Assurance and Management Information Systems, 2015).

The University of the Western Cape is a multilingual university. According to its language policy of 2003, it “is committed to nurture the cultural diversity of South Africa and build an equitable and dynamic society”. The main aim of the language policy of the university is that language must not be an obstacle to students’ educational goals.

According to the language policy of the university, English is the main language of teaching in addition to Afrikaans and isiXhosa. However, all languages are welcomed if they are used to encourage and facilitate academic communication and discussions.

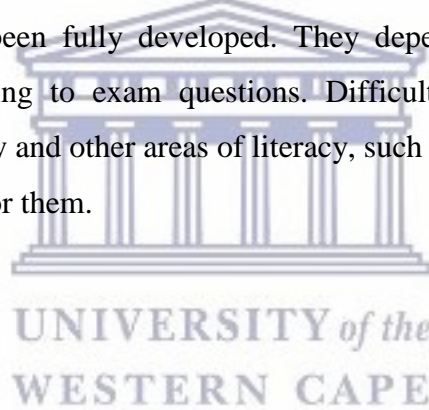
In order to achieve their academic targets - on the level of language - the university offers students a variety of services. All students have access to entry-level language courses to strengthen their academic literacy. In addition, the writing centre in the university assists the students and helps them in writing their academic tasks. In general, as the students of the University of Western Cape are a diversity of cultures and languages, the Libyans feel that they are a natural component in this mix. This advantage frees them to some extent from the complexity of language insufficiency and pushes them forward towards their educational targets.

From the above-mentioned, it seems that there are some similarities between the Libyan and South African contexts of the participants in this study. Firstly, the people in Libya were deprived of their rights to be educated, similar to South African coloured and black people, therefore as they have regained their rights, they are looking at education as a means of mobility and gaining a position in the international society. Secondly, within the context of UWC, English is a second language for



Libyan students as well as most of the population of the university. The South African students who speak languages other than English have already studied either English or Afrikaans as a school subject and medium of instruction. However, Libyans have only studied English as subject from grade seven, unless they were lucky enough not to have experienced those years when foreign languages were banned. Arabic is the only language (standard and vernacular, with a variety of regional dialects) for 95% of the population in Libya. It can be said that there is really no chance of exposure to English inside the country. Most Libyan students who have come to South Africa have a limited competence in English, so they start their journey with a year of intensive language study in any language school. Only then do they proceed to pursue their postgraduate study at university.

Another difference is in the literacy skills required for graduate studies; it seems that students from Libya may lack the ability to write assignments as their academic literacy skills have not been fully developed. They depend more on memorizing information and responding to exam questions. Difficulties in academic English language computer literacy and other areas of literacy, such as reading academic texts, may also pose problems for them.



## **1.2 Research Aims**

This study aimed to investigate the following key issues:

1. What are the strategies adopted by selected Libyan students, biliterate in Arabic and English, in understanding and then writing their academic assignments successfully?
2. How do these students develop confidence in their writing ability and their skill in understanding how to do their academic assignments?
3. Drawing on Hornberger's biliteracy framework (Hornberger, 1989), how do these students draw on the *full* range of their communicative and literacy skills in order to succeed in academic writing tasks that have to be completed in

English, and what is the significance of this for the teaching of academic literacy?

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What are the strategies adopted by selected Libyan students, biliterate in Arabic and English, in understanding and then writing their academic assignments successfully?
2. How do these students develop confidence in their writing ability and their skill in understanding how to do their academic assignments?
3. Drawing on Hornberger's biliteracy framework (Hornberger, 1989), how do these students draw on the *full* range of their communicative and literacy skills in order to succeed in academic writing tasks that have to be completed in English? What is the significance of this for the teaching of academic literacy?
4. Having mapped the frameworks employed by each research participant in this study, what response can be offered to this question posed by Hornberger and Link (2012:243): "...how should educators engage with students' linguistic and literacy diversity in order to facilitate successful school experiences and greater academic achievement for students from culturally and linguistically different and often minoritized backgrounds?"

### **1.4 Rationale and Hypothesis for the study**

This study is needed in order to show that there are communicative and literacy factors that should be acknowledged as playing key roles in the success or failure of biliterate students studying outside their country of origin, particularly in the completion of written assignments in English. This study might be one of a series of research studies exploring, as Creese and Blackledge (2010:113) recommend,

“...what ‘teachable’ pedagogic resources are available in flexible, concurrent approaches to learning and teaching languages bilingually”.

Bearing in mind the stated research aims, questions and rationale, my **research hypothesis** regarding this study is as follows:

Libyan students, biliterate in both Arabic and English, make use of the *full* range of their communicative and literacy skills in order to succeed in academic writing tasks that have to be completed in English. In other words, they apply all their linguistic and semiotic knowledge instead of just relying on their existing knowledge of English literacy – a multiliteracies approach. Promoting a stronger awareness of how biliterate students negotiate the world of academia in English can lead to the development of better approaches to the teaching of academic literacy.

### **1.5 The methodology selected for this study**

The research questions of this study are explored through data which consist of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews administered to three Libyan postgraduate students at UWC in order to understand what strategies the participants rely on to understand and then write their assignments. Samples of their written assignments have also been accessed to investigate how they apply their biliteracy skills and what biliterate resources they draw on in their writing in order to perform a successful assignment. The study follows a qualitative research design and adopts Hornberger’s framework of biliteracy (Hornberger, 1989) to map these students’ responses.

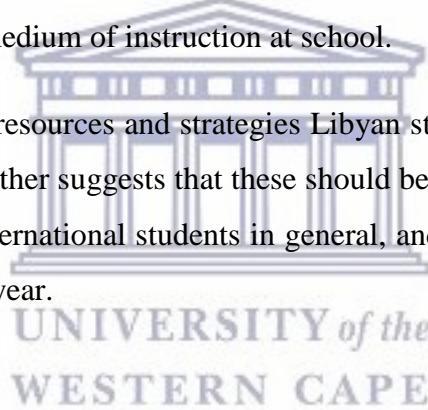
### **1.5 Background of the researcher**

This study is closely connected with my background as a postgraduate student at UWC. My experience with bilingualism and studying in a foreign context through a foreign language was behind these questions I wanted to explore in this study. During my study at UWC, I have experienced silence, misinterpretation, miscommunication and inadequacy that kept me away from being able to give exactly what I had in my

mind. I felt that I belonged to the minority so I usually felt powerless and different in relation to the majority. I often felt that my English was more important than any other resource that I came with from my previous academic experience and I was in problematic situations where my language and literacy skills made me much weaker than the local students. But in Hornberger's (1989, 2003) model of biliteracy development, I found an explanation for my situation as a biliterate individual in a foreign context where forces sometimes were against me. Through this, I learned to acknowledge my distinctive cultural and linguistic background as a resource.

When I successfully completed my BA (Honours) degree at UWC, I found that what Hornberger's model stated was a reality, as I was depending on strategies other than those of my fellow South African students. However, it must be acknowledged that there are also some similarities between my experiences and theirs, given that for many, English is a second or third language. The main difference is their longer exposure to English as a medium of instruction at school.

This research maps those resources and strategies Libyan students bring with them to the context of UWC. It further suggests that these should be acknowledged and drawn on in the university, as international students in general, and Libyan in particular, are growing in number every year.



## **1.6 Thesis Outline**

Chapter 1: An introductory chapter which serves as an overview of the study. It briefly outlines the background, research problem, research aims and research questions.

Chapter 2: Discusses in detail the theoretical and conceptual framework used for this study, exploring the key concepts relevant to the study such as biliteracy as part of academic literacy, translanguaging, multimodal literacies and Hornberger's continua of biliteracy model.

Chapter 3: Presents the research methodology which is qualitative in nature, introduces the study sample and the methods for analysis.

Chapter 4: Presents the data analysis and the findings elicited.

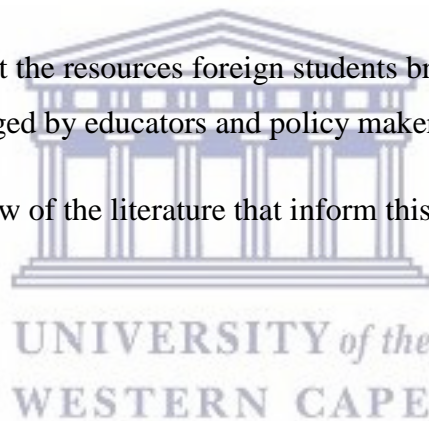
Chapter 5: Discusses the final findings, summarizes the study and makes suggestions for further research.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

This study aims to investigate the biliteracy skills in Arabic and English employed by Libyan postgraduate students at the University of the Western Cape as they navigate the demands of their respective disciplines, and in particular, the demand for effective written assignments. Hornberger's model of biliteracy (Hornberger, 1989) is used to test the biliteracy skills these students draw on while studying in English in a foreign country.

The study is needed so that the resources foreign students bring with them to a foreign context can be acknowledged by educators and policy makers.

The next chapter is a review of the literature that inform this research.



## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical discussion of the literature I consulted in order to inform and support my study. For my theoretical framework, my thesis is situated within the social approaches to literacy of the New Literacy Scholars (Heath, Street, Scollon and Scollon, Prinsloo, etc.), as well as biliteracy, in particular Hornberger's theories on biliteracy in education. In terms of the conceptual framework, I draw on concepts like linguistic interdependence, academic literacy, biliteracy, multiliteracies, bi/multilingualism and hybridity within academia, language learning, discourse, and translanguaging. These concepts all contribute towards my interpretation of my research data and the overall orientation of my study.

Finally, I also have an analytical framework, drawing on the continua of biliteracy model (Hornberger, 1989; Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester, 2003). The model consists of four continua – contexts, development, content, and media – that are influenced by how they are privileged in society, with monolingual practices often receiving higher status and bilingual practices receiving lower status. The continua model of biliteracy is valuable in understanding multilingual students' identities and the social contexts in which they develop as writers.

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

As noted in the introduction, my theoretical framework is situated within the social approaches to literacy of the new literacy scholars, as well as the theory of biliteracy. This is because the study seeks to investigate bilingual students studying in a foreign country in a foreign language. In this study, literacy is viewed as a social ideological construct, which is never completely free from the norms and values attached to reading and writing in society. As Auerbach (1991:12) states:

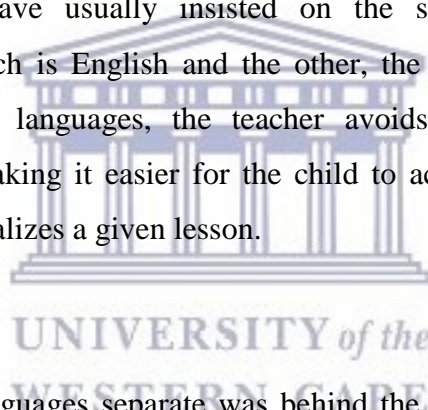
*There can be no disinterested, objective and value-free definition of literacy:  
The way literacy is viewed and taught is always and inevitably ideological.*

This study also uses the concept of bilingualism as a continuum of ever-changing competencies due to the multilingual context of the University of the Western Cape where this study takes place.

### **2.1.1 Shifting the boundaries of traditional language practices in education – the New Literacy Theorists**

Traditionally, bilingual educators have argued that languages should be kept separate in the learning and teaching of languages, as noted by Jacobson and Faltis (1990: 4):

Bilingual educators have usually insisted on the separation of the two languages, one of which is English and the other, the child's vernacular. By strictly separating the languages, the teacher avoids, it is argued, cross-contamination, thus making it easier for the child to acquire a new linguistic system as he/she internalizes a given lesson.



However, keeping the languages separate was behind the monolingual instructional approaches of education such as the two-way immersion programmes, which are described as “periods of instruction during which only one language is used (that is, there is no translation or language mixing)” (Lindholm-Leary, 2006: 89). Cummins (2005: 588) explains this separation as “the continuing prevalence of monolingual instructional approaches in our schools”. According to these approaches, the target language in the only language in the classroom, there is no place for translation between L1 and L2 and the two languages should be kept rigidly separate as “they constitute two solitudes” (Creese and Blackledge, 2010: 105).

Heller (1999: 271) contests the approach of “parallel monolingualism” in which “each variety must conform to certain prescriptive norms”. In this way, she argues that students learn to become bilingual only in particular ways, while particular groups of (minority) students are disadvantaged. Creese and Blackledge (2008) refer

to “separate bilingualisms” when they describe the context in complementary schools where teachers insist on the use of the target language only. According to Creese and Blackledge (2010: 105), all these types of monolingual education “assign boundaries around languages” and represent a view of the multilingual/bilingual student or teacher as “two monolinguals in one body” (Gravelle, 1996:11).

Language education has gradually shifted from teacher-centred to a more student-centred approach, where the learner’s contribution in the learning process has become a central principal (Nunan, 1988). In language teaching, this shift was influenced by the cognitive view of learning that regards language learning as a creative, dynamic process regarding the learner as an active strategy user and knowledge constructor (Corder, 1981). In student-centred teaching, planning, teaching and assessment are centred on the resources, needs and abilities of students. The content of the courses is more relevant to the students’ “lives, needs and interests and when the students themselves are actively engaged in creating, understanding, and connecting to knowledge” (Al-Buainain, 2010: 93).

The New London Group (NLG) of literacy scholars, which includes Gee and Street, explored the growing significance of cultural and linguistic diversity in our societies as a result of immigration, globalization and multiculturalism. The new working life and global industry often means that “with a new work life comes a new language” (NLG 1996: 66) as result of new technologies. The NLG emphasizes the importance of new pedagogy that takes into consideration the demands of the new working life and provides learners with access to employment “through learning the new language of work” (NLG 1996: 66). They advocate for a kind of education that fosters a multiplicity of interests, ways of knowing, intentions, and goals that the diverse students bring into the classroom, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the increasing needs for a variety of text forms associated with technology and multimedia diversifying communication channels to accommodate linguistic and cultural diversity.

The new pedagogy does not ignore students’ different backgrounds and their pre-existing realities. It describes these differences as assets used as “a productive resource” (NLG, 1996:69), and does not superimpose on them the standard language and the meanings of the dominant culture:



“instead of core culture and national standards, the realm of the civic space for the negotiation of a different sort of social order: where differences are actively recognized, where these differences are negotiated in such a way that they complement each other, and where people has a chance to expand their cultural and linguistic repertoires so they can access a broader range of cultural and institution resources” (NLG, 1996: 69).

The New Literacy theorists, like the NLG, argue that the new pedagogy consists of four factors:

“Situated practice” that is “based on the world of the learners’ Designed and Designing experiences” (NLG, 1996: 83). It encourages a pedagogy that takes into consideration students’ backgrounds, cultures, and future needs as a resource for learning.

“Overt instruction” pushes students to become conscious of their learning, plan for it, and interpret it. “The goal is the conscious awareness and control over what is being learned over the intra-systematic relations of the domain being practiced” (NLG, 1996: 86).

“Critical framing” (NLG,1996:83) formalizes what students have learned and relates the meanings to their social contexts and purposes, and also distances them from what they are learning: “through critical framing, learners can gain the necessary personal and theoretical distance from what they have learned, constructively critique it, account for its cultural location, creatively extend and apply it and eventually innovate on their own within old communities or in the new ones’ (NLG, 1996: 87).

Finally, there is “transformed practice” (NLG, 1996:87) in which students reflect on their learning and their practices and situate them in their own objectives “in which students transfer and re-create Designs of meanings from one context to another” (ibid).

Ultimately, these scholars advocate for a pedagogy which they have termed “multiliteracies”. Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, and Gee (1996), in their discussion of

multiliteracies, describe the fundamental shift in literacy skills from one which “assumes a page-bound, monolingual, monocultural environment to one which includes multicultural, multilingual, and multiple channels of communication” (cited in Gilliver-Brown and Johnson, 2009: 333). In conducting their studies, students use all the available technological resources such as computers, mobile phones, internet networks, online books and journals, etc. Moreover, “in order to become effective participants in emerging multiliteracies, students need to understand how the resources of language, image and digital rhetoric can be deployed independently and interactively to construct different kinds of meanings” (Unsworth, 2001: 8).

According to Unsworth (2001:10), multiliteracies “can be differentiated not only on the basis of the channel and medium of communication (print, image, page, screen), but also according to field or subject area (history, geography, science, math, etc.)”. Every study area has its own characteristics, linguistic demands and literate practices (Wyatt-Smith and Cumming, 1999, cited in Unsworth, 2001). They show that academic literacy demands are dynamic, varying significantly across subject areas. They conclude in their research that “it is no longer appropriate to talk about ‘literacy across the curriculum’. Instead, there is a need to delineate ‘curriculum literacies’, specifying the interface between a specific curriculum and its literacies rather than imagining there is a singular literacy that could be spread homogeneously across the curriculum” (Unsworth, 2001:10-11).

The different descriptions of literacy skills specific to different subject areas, is a result of the research in Systemic Functional Linguistics – SFL (Halliday and Martin 1993; Coffin 1997; Rothery 1996; Veel and Coffin 1996; Martin and Veel 1998; Unsworth 1999; Veel 1999). SFL has identified different genres (types of texts such as narratives, reports, explanation) which are prominent in the reading and writing demands of different subject areas. Each genre has its specific organizational structures. “Understanding the grammatical forms of written English and how these are characteristically deployed in the genres of school subject areas is a crucial resource for enhancing students’ comprehension and composition of the distinctive discourse forms of different school subject areas” (Unsworth, 2001: 11).

### **2.1.2 Biliteracy**

The theoretical framework for this study also draws on the concept of biliteracy as a dynamic competence that develops along intersecting continua within linguistic environments. Using the framework of sociocultural theory to uncover relations of power, identity and agency, Hornberger (1989, 2000, 2003, 2006) provides a model of biliteracy that is constructed around the same themes. This model views literacy as developing through the continua of context, development, content, and media. Each continuum is positioned between a powerful end and a powerless end. Hornberger (2000) suggests that educators use this literacy model to uncover their position in each continuum as well as the position of their students in the process of learning. In a biliteracy context, it is usually the bilingual minority population that is placed by the education community and leadership at the less powerful end of the continua. Once uncovered and identified, those positions (the less powerful) need to be moved toward more favourable places in the continua.

The model is a tool that individuals can use to expose power and to transform it by becoming agents of social change. It is a tool to uncover the tensions in the third space, to reveal the possibility to build bridges between school and home discourse, between local and global contexts, and between mono- and multi-linguistic and multicultural contexts. Most importantly, it is a tool that teachers and students can use together to change unbalanced relations of power as they stand in today's educational contexts.

This concept, of course, lies at the heart of my study, as I was interested in discovering the biliteracy skills of Libyan postgraduate students and how they draw on these to successfully complete academic assignments in English.

## **2.2 Conceptual Framework**

The following concepts are drawn on in this study – bi/multilingualism and hybridity within academia, language learning, discourse, biliterate learning, and translanguaging. These concepts provide the basis from which I interpret my research data and provide the overall orientation of my study.

### **2.2.1 Hybridity in Academia – the advantages of bi/multilingualism**

Nowadays, classrooms are hybrid multilingual and multicultural spaces where learners' home culture, language and knowledge meet with the official discourse. Such highly diverse spaces pose challenges for educators to accommodate this diversity (Froipesi, 2011; Antia and Dyers, 2017).

Froipesi (2011: 15) states that the source of the challenges lies in considering the learning process as pre-established and directed “in these environments, the practice of teaching and learning is believed to be decontextualized as if decontextualization could provide a sense of purity and truth that is applicable to any school context”. In contrast to this viewpoint, recent scholarship views education as a process of socialization in which teachers and learners participate actively in the learning process. Schieffelin and Ochs (1992), and Heath (1983) demonstrate how children are socialized to use language and also how they are socialized through language.

Language is a tool of communication used to ensure that people are fully accepted as members of a culture or society (Froipesi, 2011). Hornberger (1996:461) identifies the relationship of language to education when stating that “education is the site where, on the one hand, larger social and political forces are reflected in the kinds of educational opportunities offered to speakers of different language varieties and, on the other, language use mediates their participation in those opportunities and, ultimately, their potential contributions to the larger society”. Language diversity then can be either viewed as ‘problems’ or ‘resources’ (Ruiz, 1984).

No one can argue that learners come to schools with their own social and cultural backgrounds and that they have already developed ways of interacting, understanding and socializing from their social experiences and practices at home. In academia, language is an empowering device which is important for students' confidence and

success in their academic disciplines. Fishman (1972) states that language is a means and a carrier of knowledge and its mastery is an indicator of either success or failure. As there is a need for developing students' literacy skills in order for them to meet academic standards, there is also a need to look at how their academic language skills have been developed by their experiences prior to joining the university.

Academic language is defined as the language needed by students to understand and communicate in the academic disciplines. Academic language includes some elements such as specialized vocabulary, conventional text structures and written genres within a field (e.g., essays, lab reports), and other language-related activities typical of classrooms (e.g. expressing disagreement, discussing an issue, asking for clarification). Academic language constitutes skills and demands beyond those of conversational fluency. It is a key factor for academic success and for engagement in the academic society. Academic literacy refers to the critical thinking and the effective use of the language. "Mastery of academic discourse lets students participate in the community primarily responsible in our society for generating knowledge" (Academic Discourse 150, cited in Neeley, 2005:14). "Academic literacy can be developed by long-term practice and refinement of knowledge and strategies across variety of academic tasks. However, the different academic subjects differ of their specific discipline requirements of academic literacy skills and strategies, so the scientific students' demands are different from those in other humanities".

What role then does bilingualism play in an academic environment?

Scholars see bilingualism as an asset to children's intellectual development (Leopold, 1949; Peal and Lambert, 1962; Diaz, 1983; Romaine, 1995). In his study, Diaz (1983) advocated that bilingualism has a positive effect on cognitive abilities "When compared to monolinguals, balanced bilingual children show definite advantages on measures of metalinguistic abilities, concept formation, field independence, and divergent thinking skills" (Diaz, 1983:48). Cummins (2001) adds that bilingual children, when they develop their abilities in two or more languages, gain a deeper understanding of how to use these languages effectively, especially when they develop literacy skills in both.

García-Vázquez *et al.* (1997), in responding to research on the positive effects of bilingualism, have examined the effect of proficiency in both the native language and English language of learners in their academic achievement. The conducted study included Spanish native language students in America, and examined the relations between language proficiency (including oral language and literacy) in English and Spanish and academic achievement. The results of their study revealed a strong relationship between English proficiency and academic achievement. More significant was the relation between Spanish language skills (the mother tongue), specifically reading and written language proficiency, and the academic achievement in English especially in the literacy areas. García-Vázquez and her colleagues recommended that first language (Spanish) maintenance is as important as the English language in determining academic success. Similarly, Cummins (2001:18) asserts that “both languages [first and second] nurture each other when the educational environment permits children access to both languages”.

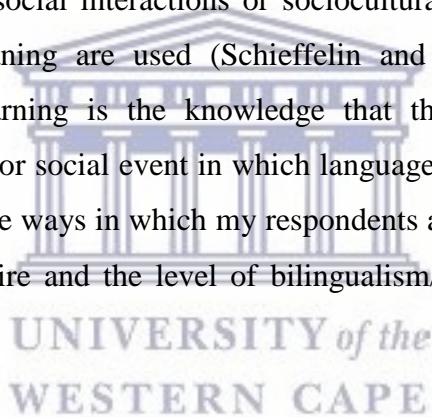
The findings of García-Vázquez *et al.*'s study correlate with arguments that point to the relationship between academic success and the interdependence of languages (Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa, 1979, and Cummins, 1979, 1981, 1992), which hypothesize that “the cognitive academic aspects of a first language and the second language are interdependent, and as a result, the development in the proficiency of the second language is partially a function of the level of proficiency of the first language” (García-Vázquez *et al.*, 1997: 338).

Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1979) state that there is a correlation between the development of skills in one language and the same skills in the second language. This interdependence of development in language is used to advocate for bilingual educational programmes which use both first and second languages for instruction. Similarly, Cummins (1992) suggests that a child's conceptual abilities in the second language will likely be developed based on a well-developed first language. In his research, Cummins (1981) suggests that second language learners (SLL) acquire Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) in about two years. BICS is described as “the surface fluency in language which is not cognitively demanding and can be acquired by everyone”. In contrast, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

(CALP) is related to academic ability, and literacy skills are acquired in a period of four to nine years.

### **2.2.2 Language Learning**

Language learning is not only dependent on the mastery of grammatical rules, it also includes knowledge of discourse rules and constraints that generate sentences in a given language (Gee, 2000). According to Young (1999:17), language learning is an interactive process where learners' pre-existing knowledge (primary discourses emanating from the home language or mother tongue) join the knowledge of the second language (secondary discourses) and everything which the study of the second language encompasses. Consequently, acquiring a language is the result of the learner's participation in social interactions or sociocultural environments in which the rules generating meaning are used (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1992). Language learning as discourse learning is the knowledge that the speaker builds on by assigning a social activity or social event in which language is used. It was important in this study to consider the ways in which my respondents acquired or learned all the languages in their repertoire and the level of bilingualism/biliteracy that they were able to achieve.



### **2.2.3 Discourse**

Ochs (1992), cited in Froipesi (2011:11), explains that discourse is “a set of norms and choices that relate forms of linguistic structures to a context”. Discourses state what is possible and acceptable to say or do with respect to a particular context. Gee (1996) identifies two types of discourses: primary discourses, which are acquired by people in early life (e.g. at home), and secondary discourses, acquired from social institutions outside the home like academic institutions. What students attending academic institutions need to master for success in these environments is the secondary discourse known as academic literacy.

Leibowitz (2001:2) stated that academic literacy “can be summarized as a culturally specific set of linguistic and discourse conventions, influenced by written forms utilized primarily in academic institutions”. It is a key factor for academic success and for engagement in the academic society. If such conventions have been mastered in a first language, it should, in theory, not be too problematic for students to master them in a second language like English.

#### **2.2.4 Biliterate learning in today’s hybrid classrooms**

The linguistically diverse classroom is also the place for biliteracy development (Froipesi, 2011). Cummins (2008: xii) defines bilingual education as the “use of two (or more) languages of instruction at the same point in a student school career”. García, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torres-Guzman (2006:14) argue that multilingual schools “exert educational effort that take into account and build further on the diversity of languages and literacy practices that children and youth bring to school”. This means that educators should cultivate the diversity of languages in schools through teaching and learning. Cummins (2000:1) argues that, despite the fact that international students tend to be strongly overrepresented in school failure categories, few studies have succeeded to specifically address the causes of educational failure among such students. Even “fewer contemplate bilingualism and biliteracy as part of the solution rather than as part of the problem”. He also argues that biliteracy must become an essential component of educational programmes to promote and empower the culturally and linguistically diverse students.

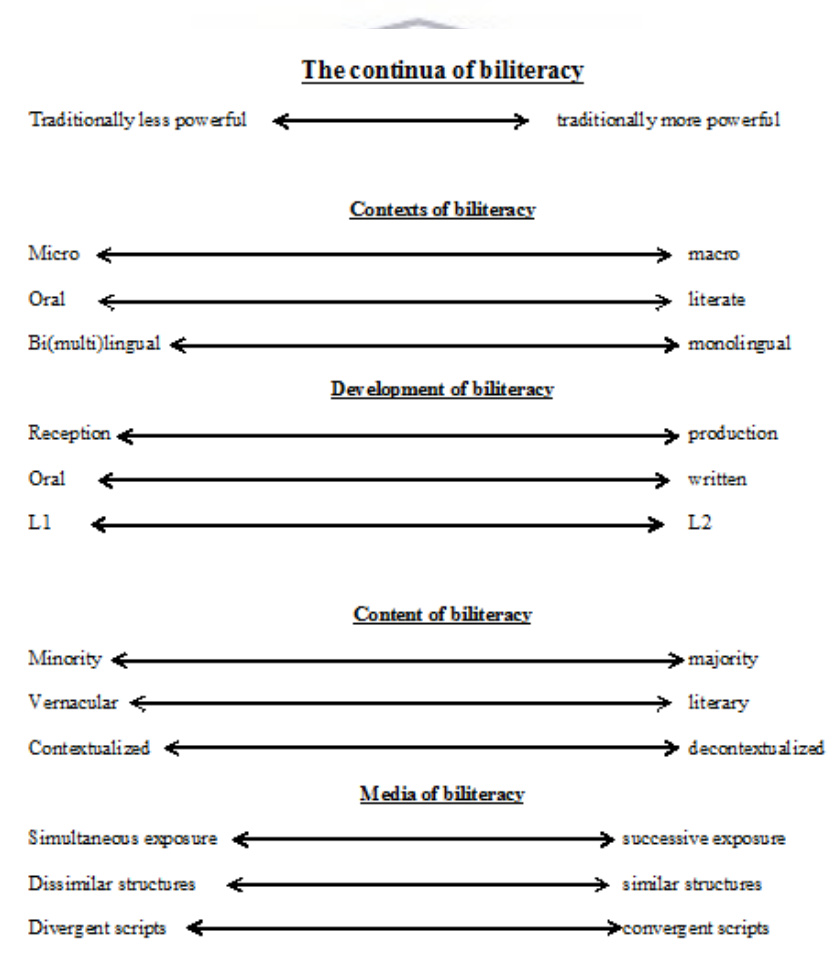
A more recent addition to bilingual pedagogy is the concept of translanguaging. Canagarajah (2011: 401) defines translanguaging as “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system”. According to Hornberger (2012), translanguaging is not only a “language practice of multilinguals”, but it can be seen as a successful way to develop and foster students’ language and literacy. She advocates for an ecological perspective in bilingual education which is “essentially about opening up ideological and implementational space in the environment for as many languages as possible” (Hornberger, 2002: 30).



Studies like those by Creese and Blackledge (2010), Canagarajah (1995), Garcia (2009), and Hornberger (2004), theorize how students may shuttle between languages and modalities in their learning. Creese and Blackledge (2010: 113) recommended “further research to explore what ‘teachable’ pedagogic resources are available in flexible, concurrent approaches to learning and teaching languages bilingually”.

### 2.3 Analytical framework – the Continua of Bilingual Model

My study was an investigation into how Libyan students, bilingual in Arabic and English, develop and exploit their biliteracy in the academic context. To analyze their biliteracy within this context I used the Continua of Bilingual Model proposed by Hornberger (1989) as a framework.



**The Continua of Bilingual Model (Hornberger, 1989)**

The continua model of biliteracy works as a framework for research, teaching, and language planning in linguistically diverse settings and for explaining how biliterates develop their literacy. Hornberger (1989) used the notions of ‘intersecting’ and ‘nested’ practices to describe the continua in order to demonstrate the multiple and complex interrelationships between bilingualism and literacy, and the importance of the contexts, media, and content through which biliteracy develops. Specifically, the model depicts the development of biliteracy along:

- the intersecting first language-second language, receptive-productive, and oral-written language skills continua;
- through the medium of two (or more) languages and literacies whose linguistic structures vary from similar to dissimilar, whose scripts range from convergent to divergent, and to which the developing biliterate individual’s exposure varies from simultaneous to successive;
- in contexts that encompass micro- to macro-levels, and are characterized by varying mixes along the monolingual-bilingual and oral-literate continua; and
- (as revised here) with content that ranges from majority to minority perspectives and experiences, literary to vernacular styles and genres, and parts to whole language texts (Hornberger, 1989,2003; Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester, 2003).



Biliteracy, in this model, means “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” (Hornberger 1990:213). With this definition, Hornberger attempts to clarify that, in order to understand any particular instance of biliteracy, we need to take into account all dimensions represented by the continua. At the same time, the advantage of the model is that it allows us to focus, for analytical purposes, on one or selected continua and their dimensions without ignoring the importance of the others.

Hornberger argues that “in educational policy and practice regarding biliteracy, there tends to be an implicit privileging of one end of the continua over the other”, and that there is a “need to contest that power-weighting by paying attention to / granting agency and voice to the powerless end of the continua”. She emphasized a balanced

attention to both ends of the continua and all points in between. The notion of continuum was “intended to convey that although one can identify (and name) points on the continuum, those points are not finite, static, or discrete. There are infinitely many points on the continuum; any single point is inevitably and inextricably related to all other points; and all the points have more in common than not with each other” (Hornberger 1989: 274-275). She further suggests that “the more their learning contexts allow learners to draw on all points of the continua, the greater are the chances for their full biliterate development” (Hornberger 1989: 289).

#### **2.4 A brief overview of related studies within South Africa and other contexts**

As I am situating my study within a South African context, it is important to acknowledge related studies in this field of enquiry that I have found useful in addressing my research problem, such as those by Paxton (2007); Kapp and Bangeni, (2011); Banda (2003) and Antia and Dyers (2017). This section also includes studies relevant to my research from other countries.

A study conducted at the University of Cape Town (UCT) by Paxton (2007) used data from first year students in the university, more than half of them were African language speakers for whom English is a second language. The study used an intertextual analysis of the students’ writing to investigate how they draw on their different discourses in their writing in the university. The study also aimed to develop the term of ‘interim literacy’ which was first introduced by Paxton (2004). By ‘interim literacy’, Paxton means the writing practices of first year students who are in a process of acquiring the new discourses of academia, “the transition process from school and home to academic literacy” (Paxton, 2006: 86). The notion is used in this study to move from looking at the second language writers’ practices as a ‘deficit’. On the contrary, Paxton argues that understanding students’ ‘interim literacy’ may “contribute to teaching and transformation” (Paxton, 2007:45). In her study, Paxton has offered some of the features of students’ interim literacies which may include the following:

- the way in which students use their prior discourses which she refers to as “hybridity, the traces of prior discourses and discourse strategies as very distinctive features of interim literacies”;
- the way by which students borrow from the new discourses “the ways in which students mimic the new discourses by reproducing chunks of them in their essays”;
- new terminology avoidance strategy used by the students - “this seems to stem from a resistance to the new terms”; and
- the lack of coherence in their writings (Paxton, 2007: 48-52).

Paxton (2007) points to some ways of assisting students, favouring Lillis’ (2001) ‘talk back model’ - a collaborative discussion between students and tutors in order to reach the maximum understanding of how to make meaning in their writing.

"I believe this kind of collaborative talk could be used between writers and tutors to facilitate greater control over meaning-making. In the process, students not only learn from the tutor but the tutor might also discover more about the associations students are making, which can provide him/her with new ideas about how to get the message across. This model also has the potential to push the boundaries of what counts as acceptable meaning in the academy and to move us away from traditional conventions and ways of knowing that serve to gate-keep rather than to facilitate access" (Paxton, 2007:54).

Similar results were found by Kapp and Bangeni (2011), whose study captured students’ ‘ambivalence’ when moving between the academic discourse and home discourses - in other words, how they achieve academic success while still maintaining their identity. Kapp and Bangeni investigated the students’ shifts in language and literacy skills alongside how they position and reposition themselves between academic and home discourses. The study revealed that over the years of study, the students gradually change their practices and attitudes and eventually

achieve academic success. However, the study noted that these students achieved lower to medium marks, preventing them from pursuing postgraduate studies at the same institution.

Both studies describe the complexity of the ESL African students' experiences and their struggle with academic discourse and advocate for more support other than the "quick-fix skills package" (Kapp and Bangeni, 2011: 205).

The findings of these studies go hand in hand with some Western studies concerned with the struggle of ESL students in academic literacy. Stegemoller (2013), drawing on Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester's (2003) continua model of biliteracy, explored how biliterate Mexican immigrant students at a US university draw on their bilingual and bicultural resources to approach academic writing and build confidence in their writing in English.

The study aimed to develop one-on-one writing instruction with immigrant students to improve tutors' understanding of how to help bilingual students to draw on their bilingual and bicultural resources and maintain their identity in their writing. "When tutors use the concepts of the continua of biliteracy as a guide to understanding writing contexts, coupled with a stance of learning from what students are saying, there is potential to open up possibilities for students to build confidence in drawing on their bilingual and bicultural resources in their university writing" (Stegemoller 2013: 74). Stegemoller advises university writing centres to tap into the linguistic background of both tutors and students, as this may help to "recognize students' linguistic diversity and create inviting contexts for them to discuss and learn about language and writing" (Stegemoller 2013: 75).

In the same field, the study by Lea and Street (1998) investigates the "own Literacy practices" of ESL students at two universities in England. Their study examined the contrast between the expectations and the interpretations of the academic staff and the students regarding the written assignments. They described in their work situations in which both the academic staff and students were virtually incommunicado in their relations with each other. They suggested not looking at the problems of students' writing only with respect to the students themselves, but instead to focus more broadly on students, student-academic staff interactions, and the institution.

Muñoz-Sandoval *et al.* (1998) indicate that bilingual students' academic linguistic repertoire is a result of all languages at their disposal regardless of their level of proficiency in each, influenced by their knowledge across languages and cultures.

Therefore, from a multilingual perspective, students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds are resources for learning. Scholarship on biliteracy has demonstrated the importance of biliteracy in developing the academic language of the students and subsequently their academic success (Collier and Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1981, 1992, 1996, 1979; Thomas and Collier, 1997; Wong, Fillmore and Valadez, 1986). The understanding of the interaction between the full range of students' linguistic skills (including literacy) to make meaning (Reyes and Costanzo, 1999) can help academics to understand how to engage with their students, in investing all their resources in order to develop their biliteracy and achieve academic success. Furthermore, academics should provide equal opportunities between students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

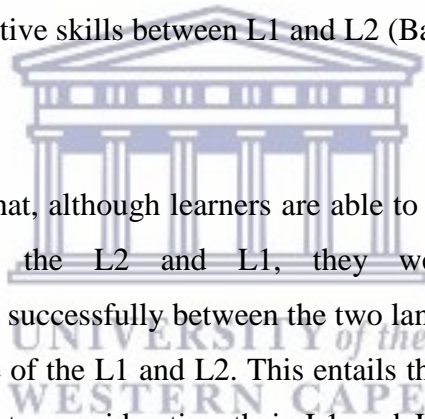
The University of the Western Cape (UWC) - the same university where my study is situated – has a rich profile of multicultural and multilingual population; therefore, has been a rich site for studies that are interested in investigating the relations of multilingualism and literacy.

Banda (2003) investigated translation as an academic literacy mediation in South Africa's multilingual/multicultural context. The study, which took place at the University of the Western Cape, focused on the translation strategies employed by learners between their L1 and L2 to cope with the academic assignments. The study aimed to identify some pedagogical implications.

Banda's 2003 study summarized some of the conflicts that learners face in learning in a multilingual context where their mother tongue is the media of instruction.

- The mismatch in learners' perceived language proficiency, and the demonstrated academic language proficiency;
- The mismatch between the language and culture of the education system and that of the learners' homes (particularly in the case of higher education);
- The mismatch between the languages of discussion of assignments, and that used in actual writing;

- The mismatch between the learners' L1 production and the mediated versions in the L2;
- The mismatch between what the learners think they know given the L1 and what they produce in the L2;
- The mismatch between learners' values, attitudes and ideologies, and what is required for their development of academic language proficiency;
- The choice between L1-based literacy practices and ESL-based literacy practices;
- The mismatch between the learners' demonstrated language ability and the demands of the curriculum process of the ESL classroom at higher education;
- The mismatch between the learners' translations of academic tasks and the academic language proficiency required for these tasks; and
- The mismatch between 'translation' as swapping of linguistic labels and translation of cognitive skills between L1 and L2 (Banda, 2003: 81-82)



Banda (2003) concluded that, although learners are able to come up with translations of vocabulary between the L2 and L1, they were unable to transfer knowledge/cognitive skills successfully between the two languages. He recommended the need for functional use of the L1 and L2. This entails that students are taught in a creative manner, taking into consideration their L1 and L2 and their sociocultural background, and for teachers to be trained as bilingual mediators.

Banda (2003) strongly insists on a collaborative classroom practice that promotes positive differences and develops learners' ability to mediate between the different perspectives and meanings of the two languages and cultures. This would help learners to develop successful strategies to "achieve transform/recontextualise knowledge/cognitive skills between the L2 and L1, and vice-versa, in multilingual/multicultural contexts" (Banda, 2003: 68).

Antia and Dyers (2016; 2017) have attempted to respond to the challenges posed by the hegemony of English in Higher Education to the linguistic diversity and literacy heterogeneity of their students at UWC. In their module, they offer multilingual and multimodal learning resources to their students as additional online support to the

lecture and reading materials in English. These researchers teach a third year undergraduate linguistics module on multilingualism in English. Their support materials are provided in standard and non-standard Afrikaans, and standard and non-standard isiXhosa. They used Hornberger's continua of biliteracy model as a framework to track their students' responses to the use of their home languages as additional resources to teach their module.

The study revealed that students responded very positively to the use of such materials. The participants of the study expressed how valuable the use of additional languages besides English was in overcoming their struggle with the English language, and that the additional multilingual resources contributed to a better understanding of key concepts of the module. The authors see this multilingual experience as successful, stating that "the multilingual/-dialectal lecture resources are becoming an effective means of challenging the hegemony of English, in order to reach diverse segments of the class largely on their own terms, and to have more motivated students claiming to be able to work more efficiently, and expending fewer cognitive processing resources on subsidiary tasks" (Antia and Dyers, 2017: 24). Their work underscores Hornberger's view on translanguaging as not only a language practice of multilinguals, but as a successful way to develop and foster students' language and literacy.



## **2.5 Conclusion**

Gilliver-Brown and Johnson (2009: 333) call for a blended learning environment that is developed in light of research on three main academic areas: multiliteracies, academic literacy, and student engagement, which "provide powerful insights both into what is possible, but also what is key in the design and development of students' academic competence".

As an international student at UWC, I have found that much of the current scholarship on multilingualism in education specifically maps the conflicts that ESL faces in educational institutions that are concerned with problems and solutions that may serve as pedagogical strategies to help to eliminate students' struggles. The South African studies have identified many of these factors, but nevertheless, it seems that they are



mainly concerned with the internal complex linguistic and cultural struggles of their own diverse society. I found that there is a gap in the South African literature regarding international students' experiences in the country, especially the experience of Arabic students. As a Libyan student, I was motivated to situate myself in this very different context and apply the findings of these studies mentioned earlier in my study. I decided to use Hornberger's continua of biliteracy model on my participants in order to gain a better understanding of how biliterate Libyan students use their languages to make meaning in their writings, which is a main source of struggle for them. This study is an attempt to bring attention to our needs as a growing community at UWC mainly and in South African universities in general.



## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### 3.0 Restatement of the Purpose and Overview

This study investigates the biliteracy skills (in Arabic and English) employed by selected Libyan students at the University of the Western Cape to achieve academic success. The study attempts to show that there are literacy factors, beyond the basic editing of written tasks by biliterate students studying outside their country of origin, that should be acknowledged as contributing to their success in completing such tasks. The participants of this study were three Libyan postgraduate students at the University of the Western Cape. The research questions were explored through the collection of the data which consisted of a questionnaire and interviews in order to understand what strategies the participants relied on in understanding and then writing their assignments. Samples of their written assignments were also accessed to investigate how they apply their biliteracy skills and what biliterate resources they drew on in their writing in order to produce a successful assignment. The study followed a qualitative research design and adopted Hornberger's framework of biliteracy (Hornberger, 1989) to map these students' responses.

#### 3.1 Research Questions

In writing this chapter, it was important to remember the four research questions of this study.

5. What are the strategies adopted by selected Libyan students, biliterate in Arabic and English, in understanding and then writing their academic assignments successfully?
6. How do these students develop confidence in their writing ability and their skill in understanding how to do their academic assignments?

7. Drawing on Hornberger's biliteracy framework (Hornberger, 1989), how do these students draw on the *full* range of their communicative and literacy skills in order to succeed in academic writing tasks that have to be completed in English? What is the significance of this for the teaching of academic literacy?
8. Having mapped the frameworks employed by each research participant in this study, what response can be offered to this question posed by Hornberger and Link (2012:243): "...how should educators engage with students' linguistic and literacy diversity in order to facilitate successful school experiences and greater academic achievement for students from culturally and linguistically different and often minoritized backgrounds?"

### 3.2 Research Paradigm

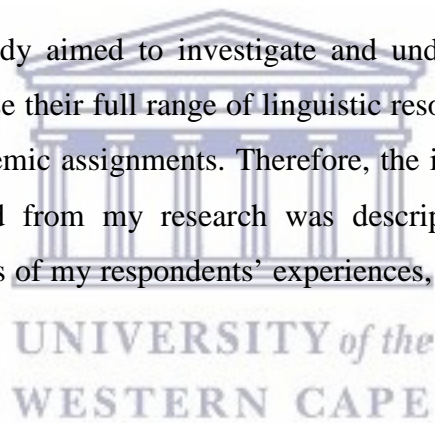
According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), the choice of research method depends on the research questions the researcher seeks to answer. For this study, I determined that a qualitative ethnographic case study research design was best suited to provide data that would answer my research questions as listed above.

According to MacDonald and Headlam (2008: 8), *Qualitative Research Methods* "attempt to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for actions and establish how people interpret their experiences and the world around them. Qualitative methods provide insights into the setting of a problem, generating ideas and/or hypotheses". Qualitative methods provide the researcher with rich and detailed data to enable him/her to come to particular findings and conclusions about the subject in question. It is "an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (Merriam, 1998: 5).

This study utilized ethnographic techniques in conducting interviews with the participants. According to Agar (1980), *ethnography* aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of some human groups in order to understand their ways of doing

certain things and viewing their realities. Ethnographic analysis also provides rich descriptions of data (Merriam, 1998). Spradley (1979:3) explains that ethnography aims at “learning from people”, therefore, an ethnographer sets out to discover the insider’s view in order to understand people’s lifestyles, values, and their worldviews from their points of view. Ethnographers therefore build up detailed case studies of their respondents. According to Stake (1995:8), the purpose of a *case study* is “particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does”. Therefore, a qualitative case study is very much a personal study. Moreover, Stake (1995:135) emphasizes that “the way the case and the researcher interact is presumed unique and not necessary reproducible for other cases and researchers”. Merriam (1998:193) adds that a case study provides “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit”.

As stated earlier, this study aimed to investigate and understand Libyan students’ strategies and how they use their full range of linguistic resources in order to respond successfully to their academic assignments. Therefore, the intent of the ethnographic case studies that resulted from my research was descriptive. My focus was on providing rich descriptions of my respondents’ experiences, not judging or evaluating them.



### **3.3 Research Participants**

The study sample consisted of three postgraduate Libyan students studying at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) who were writing their theses over the period of 2016 to 2017. While this may seem like a relatively small number, I did an in-depth mapping of their biliteracy skills using Hornberger’s continua of biliteracy framework.

These participants were chosen as they were international students who were not English first language speakers, but were bilingual in English and Arabic. I chose them to be at postgraduate level and therefore academic achievers. This was necessary, as I indicated earlier, to show that they did not lack academic literacy skills but struggled with their written assignments in English. I chose Libyan students

because I always aim for my studies to be applicable to my country and contribute to its development.

As this is an in-depth study of three participants, their individual profiles considered the following:

A. Personal details: gender, age, languages spoken and stated proficiency in each one, field of study.

B. Literacy development: family literacy background, pre-school, school and academic literacy development. gender/age/field of study/family literacy backgrounds/school and academic backgrounds.

### **3.4 Research Methods**

Adopting an ethnographic case study approach, I started with asking the participants to respond to a questionnaire which formed part of the initial interviews to be sure that they understood every question. A sample of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix II. The questionnaire was written in English and focused on determining the axes of Hornberger's model in order to explain how the participants approached the writing of their assignments. Furthermore, in light of their responses to the questionnaire, interviews were conducted in order to understand the students' experiences with English and academic writing in the academic institution. Each participant was interviewed individually to understand their backgrounds and the contexts of their studies. I also shared information about my research purpose and aims. The interviews I conducted were semi-structured with open-ended questions. These questions aimed to develop a full understanding of the participants' experiences and the meanings their experiences had for them. Therefore, the interviews were semi-structured to give my participants space to tell their personal stories and any other experiences they wished to share.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed, as well as translated where needed, because most of the interviews were conducted in Arabic. Transcribed interviews are

attached in Appendix III. However, some English was also occasionally used during the interview and when I obtained their responses to the questionnaire; therefore, translanguaging took place here too, and this was certainly captured in the recorded interviews.

Additionally, I obtained their permission to access samples of their academic writing – essays, assignments, and draft chapters of their choice (see examples in Appendix IV). I explained to them that I needed them to speak about the gradual development in their academic writing. They were satisfied to bring these assignments along with them during the interviews. These included the ones they felt were the most disappointing and those that were the most successful.

Sara\* provided two assignments in two different modules she studied as part of her coursework towards obtaining a BA (Honours) degree in Linguistics. These were entitled:

- Hypermodality and a Hypermodal analysis of Standard Bank in business and organizational communication; and
- Face and politeness in Islam in Inter- and Cross-cultural Communication.
- 

Heba\* provided four assignments:

- Mercury Toxicity Debate.
- Mercury Toxicity Debate (a revised version).
- Dental Ceramic;
- Tooth Wear.

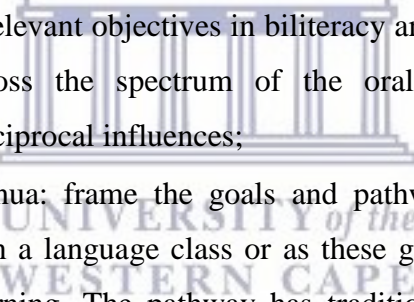
Abdulla\* provided two pages of handwritten drafts of his proposal written mostly in Arabic, a revised and edited draft of his PhD proposal on Banking, and two pages of his notes about the research structure.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire were grouped into two tables to show the respondents' self-reported proficiency in their receptive and productive skills in Arabic and English respectively. This enabled me to see the strengths and weaknesses in their biliteracy skills, as reported by them, and the areas where these skills complemented one another.

The interview responses of the three participants were kept in three different profiles for each one to be used for analysis later. Hornberger's framework was used to map each research participant's responses to the questionnaire and the individual interviews in order to determine the biliteracy skills they typically drew on to complete assignments in English.

I then mapped their responses onto Hornberger's framework. These responses were explained under each of the four axes, which I explain here:

- 
- Context continua: relevant objectives in biliteracy are achieved by drawing on several points across the spectrum of the orality/literacy continua and recognizing their reciprocal influences;
  - Development continua: frame the goals and pathways of language/literacy instruction, either in a language class or as these goals are embedded within subject content learning. The pathway has traditionally been from the less powerful to the more powerful endpoints but here too the reciprocal influences must be recognized;
  - Content continua: the curricular substance. Whose meanings or experiences are conveyed in what form (genre, style) and to what ends?
  - Media continua: the actual languages through which curricular content is delivered, but also the differences between speech and writing as well as images and other symbols need to be considered in an understanding of 'language' (Hornberger, 2004: 158).

Once this had been completed for all three participants, I was able to do a thematic analysis of the complete data set in order to pinpoint the key findings that were needed to inform my conclusions and recommendations.

### **3.6 Ethics**

In this research study, ethics was of major importance and I adhered strictly to the guidelines laid down by my university's ethics committee. I obtained informed consent through asking permission of the participants who participated entirely voluntarily, and were fully informed of the aims and objectives of the research. Participants' privacy was respected as their real names were never used. Before the interviews, they were informed that the interview would be recorded and that their identities would not be revealed. The research data collected is being kept in a secure place under the supervision of my supervisor and will be disposed of after five years. I have attached the relevant ethics forms in Appendix I of this thesis.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This study investigated how Libyan students use their full range of linguistic resources to respond successfully to their academic assignments. Therefore, the intent of the ethnographic case studies that resulted from my research is to provide rich descriptions of my respondents' experiences. The research population consisted of three postgraduate Libyan students at different departments at UWC. They responded to a questionnaire and individual interviews. Hornberger's framework was used to map each research participant's responses to the questionnaire and the individual interviews in order to determine the biliteracy skills they typically drew on to complete assignments in English.

The next chapter presents the data and data analysis, which was mapped according to Hornberger's model.



## Chapter 4

### Findings and Analysis

#### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the data collected from my three respondents are presented and analyzed. The chapter is organized according to the data collected in three sections, as follows:

- The first section provides a comprehensive background profile on each of the three participants, in terms of their personal details and literacy development.
- In the second section, I compare and contrast the three participants' responses to the questionnaire.
- The third section looks at the data obtained from the interviews, and to what extent these interviews confirm the findings of the questionnaire responses.
- The data from these sources are then analyzed according to Hornberger's (2004) continua of biliteracy model.
- Finally, I present the main themes emerging from the complete data set.

#### 4.1 The data obtained

The data for this qualitative research study were collected by means of a questionnaire (Appendix II) and recorded interviews with the participants (Appendix III).

The three participants were postgraduate Libyan students at the University of the Western Cape. Two of them were female Master's degree students: (Sara\*)<sup>1</sup> is a full-time student in the Linguistics department, and (Heba\*) is a full-time student in the Dentistry Faculty. The third participant (Abdulla\*)<sup>1</sup> is a male doctoral student in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences.

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<sup>1</sup> \*real names withheld

As this is an in-depth study of three participants, their individual profiles will consider the following:

A. Personal details: gender, age, languages spoken and stated proficiency in each one, field of study.

B. Literacy development: family literacy background, pre-school, school and academic literacy development. gender/age/field of study/family literacy backgrounds/school and academic backgrounds.

#### **4.1.1 The personal profiles of the participants**

##### **A. SARA**

###### ***Personal Background***

Sara is a 32-year-old female from Libya. Sara comes third among her siblings. She came from a small city in Libya, 150km west of the capital, Tripoli. Arabic is the standard and almost the only language spoken in Libya.

Sara speaks Standard Arabic alongside her Libyan vernacular, the *al khomsi* dialect. This is a dialect spoken in the north-western cities in the country. Standard Libyan Arabic is the language used in the schools, i.e. for writing academic tasks, while vernaculars are used orally by teachers and students for discussions inside and outside the classroom. At home, only the vernacular language is spoken. Her family speaks the same languages and nobody speaks any other languages. Sara also speaks English.

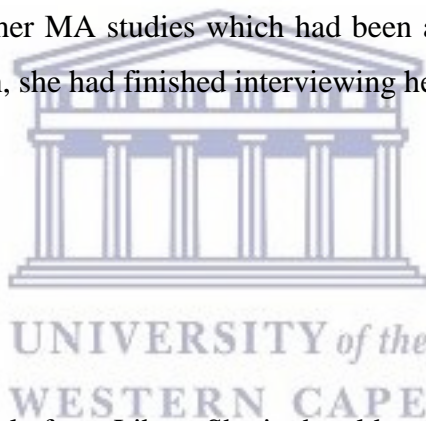
###### ***Literacy Development***

Sara's parents only did a few years of the Libyan equivalent of primary school education, which undoubtedly impacted her own literacy development. Her father studied until grade three and her mother to grade six. The whole family speaks the *al khomsi* vernacular, and no one else in the family speaks any other language.

Sara started school at the age of six in grade one and had no pre-school education. She started learning English in grade seven when English was reintroduced in the Libyan curriculum. She obtained her qualification as an English teacher with a Bachelor's degree from (x) university in Libya in 2006, and she was awarded a scholarship to study abroad for a Masters' degree.

Sara has been in South Africa for three years now and spent one year studying English in an English school in Cape Town. In 2015, she studied for an Honours degree in Linguistics at the University of the Western Cape. In that year, she completed three modules and submitted a research essay. Having successfully obtained the BA (Honours) degree in Linguistics, she applied to do her Master's degree by full thesis in the year of 2016 at the same university.

On the day I had my first interview with her, Sara had successfully completed writing her research proposal for her MA studies which had been approved and accepted by the department. In addition, she had finished interviewing her research participants.



## **B. HEBA**

### ***Personal Background***

Heba is a 36-year-old female from Libya. She is the eldest in her family. She lives in Tripoli (the capital city). Heba and her family speak Standard Arabic in addition to a Tripoli dialect - a vernacular spoken in and around Tripoli. Similar to Sara, Standard Arabic is used for academic purposes, while the vernacular variety is used for oral discussions. She learnt English at school as a subject from grade eight.

### ***Literacy Development***

In contrast to Sara, Heba comes from a well-educated family, and this would definitely have strengthened her literacy development as a child. Her father qualified as an oil engineer, and works at an oil company in Libya. He speaks some English as he has contact with some foreigners there. Her mother completed secondary school.

Heba attended pre-school from the age of five, where she learned the Arabic alphabets, numerals and some songs. She started learning English in grade eight, and she also liked reading short stories in English. Moreover, she used English often during her graduate study at university as it was a medium of instruction in the Medical Sciences departments.

She obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Dentistry from one of the top universities in Libya in 2002. She was awarded a scholarship to study abroad for a Master's Degree. Heba has now been in South Africa for four years which is the first foreign destination in which she has studied. She spent one year studying English in an English school and three years studying at the University of the Western Cape in the faculty of Dentistry. By the end of 2015, she completed the requirements for her Master's degree in Restorative Dentistry.

### **C. ABDULLA**

Abdulla is a 43-year-old male from Libya. His order in the family is the sixth among ten siblings. He lived in a small city east of Libya for 20 years where he had his schooling and then moved to Benghazi (the second biggest city in Libya), where he studied at a well-recognized university in the country in both the graduate and postgraduate economic programmes.

Abdulla speaks Standard Arabic as well as different vernaculars, namely the *Misurati* and *Bengazi* dialects - the first is spoken in the middle of the country, and the second in the far east. The whole family speaks the same languages and varieties. Again, Standard Arabic is used for academic tasks while the vernacular, which does not have a written form, is used only orally.

### ***Literacy Development***

Of the three participants, Abdulla probably comes from the weakest background in terms of the literacy levels in his home. Abdulla's father attended primary school without completing it, and his mother never received any kind of formal education.

Abdulla started grade one when he was six years old. He received no pre-school education. Unlike the two other participants, he did not have a chance to study English in Libya, because at the time he was at school, foreign languages were forbidden in the country.

Despite all the barriers to his literacy development, Abdulla graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Accountancy in 1998. Later, in 2004, he obtained his Master's degree in Banking from the same university by course and thesis programme. Abdulla has spent five years in South Africa, two of them studying English at an English school. He is currently still writing his thesis in Finance, specifically in Banking.

### ***Summary***

The above data shows a great deal of similarity between the backgrounds of the three participants. However, they speak different Libyan dialects and Abdulla has had less exposure to English than Sara and Heba. Standard Arabic, an important aspect of their schooling from their earliest years to the present, also plays a significant role, particularly for academic purposes. However, the strength of the local dialects, particularly as a regional marker and as a main form of communication within the family, cannot be underestimated in how it shaped the literacy backgrounds of these three respondents. It can be said to be the key component of their oral literacy.

#### **4.1.2 The data obtained from the questionnaire**

This section provides a thematic analysis of the three participants' responses to the questionnaire. The data is discussed here in the order in which the questions were asked.

##### ***i. How did the respondents rate their own language proficiency?***

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show how respondents rated their proficiency in the receptive and productive skills of Arabic and English respectively.

Respondents' self-rated language proficiency in ARABIC				
Name	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Sara			Speaking and listening	Reading and writing
Heba			Speaking, listening, reading and writing	
Abdulla				Speaking, listening, reading and writing

**Table 4.1: Self-rated proficiency in Arabic**

The three participants came from mostly a monolingual context where the mother tongue, Arabic, is the language spoken and used by students inside and outside the academia, therefore, from the table, we can see that they have developed a very good competence in the language, especially in the writing and reading skills. This should have its effect on acquiring the second language, English, according to the interdependence of languages hypothesis by Cummins (1979). However, with the exception of Abdulla, they rate their ability to speak and listen to the language lower than their reading and writing skills. This may indicate that their listening and oral fluency in the language is perhaps less developed than the local dialects they use every day.

Standard Arabic (*Fusha*) is used only for written and reading purposes and the vernacular for oral use only, as the vernacular have no written form. The standard is used in formal schooling as the language of content for poetry, literature, history, religious sermons, formal political speeches, newspaper and editorials, and news broadcasts. Local vernaculars are used in informal conversations at home, the marketplace, mostly everywhere. It is also used in folk literature, in radio and TV, plays, and advertisements. *Fusha* is not a mother tongue and almost never used for conversations. It is only learned through schooling and used for official communications, especially written forms. The vernacular variety is acquired as a mother tongue and continues to be used almost exclusively in oral communication (Maamouri, 1998).

<b>Respondents' self-rated language proficiency in ENGLISH</b>				
Name	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Sara	Listening	Speaking and writing	Reading	
Heba	Writing and listening	Speaking and reading		
Abdulla		Speaking, listening and writing	Reading	

**Table 4.2: Self-rated proficiency in English**

The respondents generally rated their proficiency in the second language, English, lower than for the first language, Arabic. The table shows how the participants gave themselves similar ratings from 'fair' to 'good' in writing and oral skills, and 'very good' in reading by Abdulla and Sara, while Heba simply rated herself as 'good'. Listening was problematic for Sara and Heba. Sara noted: "the first problem is in listening as I am doing interviews with South Africans, I find difficulty in understanding many words I can't understand them until I go back to my interviewee as I'm transcribing my interviews now". Heba was also concerned about her listening skills: "Sometimes the accent of the lecturer when they explain quickly...I think my listening skills are less developed than the others I sometimes find myself unable to understand the whole thing may be because of ...er the accent I understand more when I read from slides or leaflets." However, Abdulla said that his professor spoke English "with a very understandable accent"/**accent?!** so he could understand him completely, but naturally he struggled with the different accents in South African English.

These low rates can be explained as a lack of proper exposure to English, as the period spent in studying the second language was only one year for both Sara and Heba, and two for Abdulla. According to Cummins (1981) and Cullier (1989, 1987), learners of a second language can acquire the conversational skills of a language (BICS) in about two years, while the academic language skills (CALP) need between

four and nine years. In developing their primary literacy, the three participants used their first languages.

***ii. The language/s used when preparing their written assignments***

Asked what language they used when they prepared their assignments, the three respondents reported using a mix of English and Arabic, but with a strong preference for Arabic. Heba indicated that Arabic helps her to express her ideas much better. Similarly, Abdulla emphasised that he used Arabic to structure his thesis.

***iii. Do lecturers make their assignments clear to students?***

According to these three respondents, UWC lecturers could do far more to make their assignments clearer to their foreign students. Sara felt that this never happened in her department, while Heba struggled to understand exactly what was required of her in these assignments. Abdulla felt that this only happened sometimes, despite the fact that he did not have assignments in his programme. For Abdulla and Heba, their backgrounds as Arabic speakers were sometimes acknowledged by their lecturers, but Sara felt that this never happened in her case - although acknowledging later in the interview that her lecturers offered more assistance with her second assignment.

***iv. The methods used to teach the content of their individual study programmes***

According to Sara, she received her lectures in English and her assessments were in the form of oral presentations, written assignments and take-home examinations. Heba's study programme consisted of practical work in a hospital, and her assessments consisted of written assignments and presentations. She did not receive any formal lectures. Abdulla only worked with his supervisor on his thesis, and did not do any coursework.



***v. The relevance of their study programmes to their backgrounds and cultures***

As Abdulla was completing his thesis in Finance, and Heba was doing her postgraduate studies in Dentistry, both felt that these fields are international and the content of their current study was relevant and could be effectively applied back in Libya. In contrast, Sara felt that the content of the discipline of Linguistics at UWC had little relevance to her background. She explained later that she was more interested in subjects related to English language teaching which are relevant to the needs of her country.

***vi. What could assist them in their studies at UWC?***

With regards to assessment, Sara suggested that assignments should be more flexible to suit international students' backgrounds. Moreover, she thinks that if there are Libyan students taking the same course, they might work together on the same assignment when applicable. Abdulla suggested that he would have liked to do more academic English courses, specifically in his field. Unlike the other two respondents, Heba did not respond to this question, which may indicate that many of her needs were being met.

Although the lecturers working with Sara and Heba only spoke English, they always supported their lecture materials with audio-visual aids such as PowerPoint presentations. All three respondents spoke favourably about the use of the additional media, which helped them to understand the lectures better, especially when they struggled to follow the different accents of the lecturers. Sara added that she also found discussions with her fellow students and self-study useful.

***vii. Contact with lecturers***

The respondents were asked how they preferred to contact their lecturers. Both Sara and Heba agreed that they prefer to speak to them face to face because they were worried about making too many mistakes when writing to their lecturers. Heba added that she can make use of different modes of communication in order to make herself understood. In contrast, Abdulla preferred writing e-mails as this gave him time to choose the appropriate words.

***viii. How did the respondents acquire the ability to write their academic assignments?***

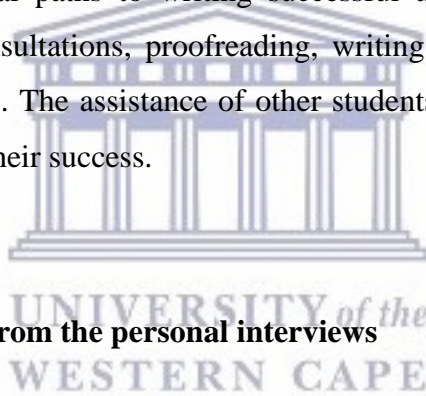
Both Sara and Heba had to do several writing tasks, unlike Abdulla who is only working on his thesis. Abdulla's past experience as a postgraduate student stood him in good stead in terms of developing his skills in academic writing. Heba worked with a writing coach, and relied on guidance from her lecturers. Sara said that her lecturers offered her some assistance, and she also found group-work helpful.

***ix. Why did they think that they were succeeding in writing their academic assignments?***

This was a very important question to determine what strategies these respondents used to write successful academic assignments and later became confident in their writing ability to carry on in their studies. Sara said that she relied on four strategies: translation, consulting colleagues, proofreading, and using lecturers' feedback. Heba's strategies were: making use of her writing coach, learning from reading articles, and diligent proofreading of her work before submission. Abdulla mentioned several strategies: reading articles in order to understand which structures would work most effectively in his writing, proofreading, and relying on the advice of a friend who studied in the same field.

***Summary***

As could be expected, the respondents rated their proficiency in their second language, English, lower than their first language, Arabic. Nevertheless, they appeared to be less confident in their ability to speak Standard Arabic than in their ability to read and write in the language, which has been their main medium of instruction since primary school. In writing their academic assignments, they drew on both Arabic and English to prepare the final version in English. In other words, in terms of Hornberger's (2004) contexts of biliteracy, they moved from the bilingual to the monolingual context. They all felt that there was a lack of awareness about their specific needs as international students among the lecturers, especially in terms of setting assignments. When these lecturers supported their teaching with other media, they felt that they learned much more. The two female students preferred face to face consultations with their lecturers, but Abdulla was more comfortable with composing e-mails for his consultations, so that he could have the time to select the right words. Each had found individual paths to writing successful assignments – translation, group-work, effective consultations, proofreading, writing coaches and drawing on past academic experiences. The assistance of other students through oral discussions was also seen as a key to their success.



#### **4.1.3 The data obtained from the personal interviews**

I used the personal interviews to either confirm or dispute the findings of the questionnaire. However, new information also emerged during these interviews.

The interviews basically started with the questions from the questionnaire and then extended as the participants were actively guiding my interview. I felt that they had their concerns and ideas that they wanted to share. Therefore, I tried most of the time to let them speak freely about their academic writing journey. Before the interviews, I had explained the focus of my research to each of them, and asked them to bring along with them any assignment that they would like to talk about. I suggested that they might want to bring the most difficult one and the one in which they were most successful. The main aim of the interviews was how they gained the ability to write successful academic assignments. They spoke of their beginnings and failure

sometimes, about the problems encountered, and the strategies adopted to overcome these difficulties.

Sara started by talking about the first assignment she brought. She told me how this assignment was difficult to deal with and how she was disappointed in her poor mark. She went through the difficulties of collecting the information needed for the assignment and could not understand the reasons behind that low mark she obtained. Then she proceeded to the second assignment that she thought as the best. Again she explained how her writing had improved and how she felt that she succeeded in writing the assignment and gained a good mark. The rest of the interview determined the strategies she adopted to overcome those obstacles and develop her writing.

With Heba's interview, the first part was about the questionnaire. In the second part, she spoke about the first assignment that she failed to write successfully and about the reasons behind her failure. Then, gradually, she went through the second assignment and how she improved her writing and corrected her previous faults. After that, she explained the most successful assignment, the third one. She gave a thorough explanation of both problems encountered, the strategies she had adopted and the resources she depended on to write successful assignments and a Master's thesis.

Abdulla's interview started with questions about his current study programme and his previous experience in his country. Then we proceeded to how he wrote his proposal step by step - where he started, which languages he used, and who assisted him until the end product was submitted to his supervisor. This was to look for the strategies, resources, and languages he used to develop his writing in English.

The questionnaire was submitted to the participants before the interviews. Heba was the only respondent who completed both the questionnaire and the interview at the same time owing to time constraints.

### *Comparing the results of the questionnaires and interviews*

In this section, I will compare the findings of the questionnaire with information from the interview to see how their responses were similar or different. I will explain every participant's responses separately.

**A. Sara:**

In answering the question, 'How relevant is the content of your course to your cultural and socio-background?', she indicated in the questionnaire that there are rarely any similarities that she can draw on. In the interview, she explained from the beginning that the content in her studies are far removed from her expectation as a foreign student: 'I told you before... I always think why I am studying this what is the benefit?... They use it and apply it but we do not'.

In contrast, later in the interview, when she explained about her second assignment on 'Islamic Politeness', she acknowledged that the professor gave her and her Libyan colleague an assignment that related to their culture and she did very well in it. Again in her Master's thesis, her professor had suggested a topic for her that is very near to her Islamic culture. Therefore, it is more realistic to say that there were some opportunities where the content was relevant and there were some similarities that she could draw on.

**B. Heba:**

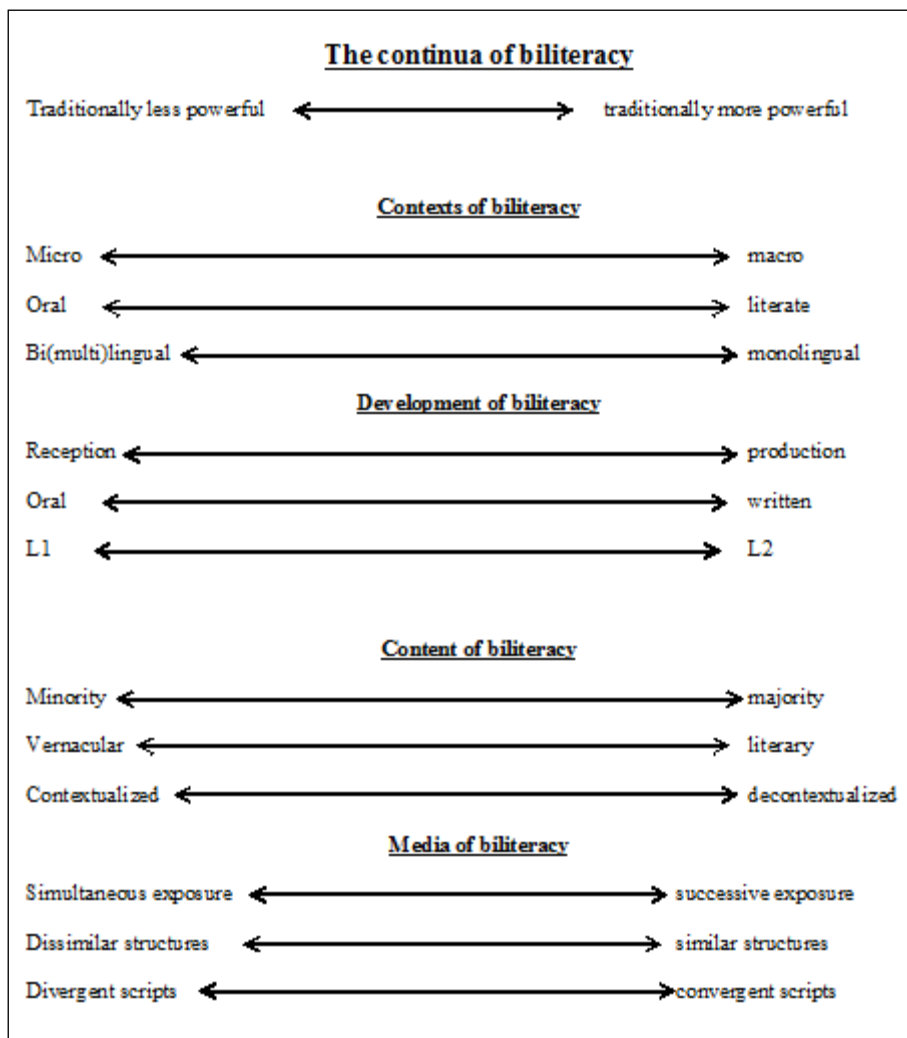
There was no difference between Heba's responses during the interview and to the questionnaire because answering the questionnaire was part of the interview. Therefore, she simply extended what she had answered for the questionnaire with more details.

**C. Abdulla:**

Similar to Heba, Abdulla gave the same answers and did not offer very different views between the questionnaire and the interview.

**4.2 Data Analysis**

It is useful, in analysing the data, to look once again at Hornberger's continua of biliteracy model.



**Figure 1: Hornberger's continua of biliteracy model (Hornberger, 2004:158).**

The data from each research participant is analysed separately below as they reflect the above continua. Thereafter, I shall summarize the findings from the three participants.

#### 4.2.1 Individual Findings

##### A. Sara:

In terms of the **contexts of biliteracy**, Sara can be positioned as follows:

*i- Moving from micro to macro-contexts of biliteracy:*

If commencing from known (micro) contexts, Sara performs much stronger. As evidence of this, Sara contrasted her performance in two assignments she was required to do in two different courses. One was on 'Face and Politeness in Arabic' in the Inter- and Cross-Cultural Communication module, while the other was on 'Hypermodality and Hypermodal Analysis of Standard Bank' in a module named Business and Organisational Communication. When she was asked to write about politeness in Islam, she performed much better than in her other coursework assignments. As she said: "It belongs to us, I was able to write my own ideas", "when I had chosen the subject of the assignment I felt relieved to it I felt that I am interested in it as a Muslim and have a good background about it... when I looked for information, I didn't find any difficulty as that I encountered in the other assignments... I had the information easily". When expected to start from a much more unknown framework (the Standard Bank assignment), she really struggled, as she had no known context to draw from - "I had never heard about it". She added that the subject of the assignment was not relevant to her context 'micro', as it was purely South African 'macro': "of course this will not be a useful subject there (in Libya) but for them (South Africa) they use it here and apply it but we not".

*ii- Oral to literate:*

Sara prefers to work from the oral to the literate parts of the continuum, by having plenty of discussion with classmates, fellow Arabic speakers, etc. before attempting to write: “I did well in the written far better than the earlier assignments because I have already learnt -as I told you- from my friend who taught me we had a lot of discussions about every bit in the assignment... I learnt how to organize my ideas and edit my writing...”

*iii- Bi/multilingual to Monolingual:*

She draws on her Arabic in these discussions, as well as a blend of Arabic and English before producing the final product in English. Thus, she moves from a bi/multilingual discussion and drafting to the monolingual end product. Her work goes through various drafts and she uses Arabic when her English fails her (but replaces these words with the English translation when working on the final draft): “I use the dictionary it’s Arabic–English of course and English–English”, “when I don’t understand I translate into Arabic then I use English one to change ...”

In terms of Sara’s **development of biliteracy**, she can be positioned as follows:

*i- Reception to production:*

In this sub-category of Hornberger’s continua, Sara rates her English reception skills, especially reading, as very good: “the first problem is in listening as I am doing interviews with South Africans, I find difficulty in understanding many words I can’t understand them until I go back to my interviewee as I’m transcribing my interviews now”. She has difficulty in terms of one of the production skills, viz. writing, as she did not learn the needed skills for effective academic writing in her earlier experience as a student. She struggled to select appropriate literature for her assignments: “Every time I had collected information and showed them to the group... they said to me this is literature not suitable for the discussion”. In addition, the grammar required for these assignments also proved a difficult hurdle for her: “I didn’t even know how to change the sentences on my own... I didn’t have any idea”. Nevertheless, making use



of an Arabic-speaking friend as editor, Sara succeeded in writing a fairly successful assignment. “I did well in the writing far better than the earlier assignment because I have already learnt as I told you from my friend who taught me”. Also, she relied on reading not only to look for information, but also for expressions and she imitated writing structures in her own writing: “When I read an article I always look at the writing style and the expressions like ‘I noted that’ or ‘according to’. I collect these expressions and then I use them”.

*ii- Oral to written production:*

Sara stated that her educational background in Libya had not prepared her for submitting written assignments in English. “I didn’t have any idea or background about academic writing ...even I had never ever wrote using computer”. Therefore, she depended a lot on oral discussions with her colleagues and fellow Arabic speakers as she asked for guidance every time to succeed in writing her assignments.

She preferred oral presentations over written assignments, as she felt that she was in a safe space in oral presentations, where nobody would consider her to be deficient while speaking English: “Normally the oral is better why because in the oral presentations they will not account for your speaking mistakes even they when you listen to them... they make a lot of grammatical mistakes...” She also preferred having face to face meetings with her lecturers rather than consulting with them via e-mail.

*iii- Moving from the L1 to the L2:*

Although English is the medium of instruction at UWC, Sara shuffles between Arabic and English to succeed in her studies. She uses Arabic in her discussions with her Arabic colleagues and friends as it gives her more understanding of her various modules. Moreover, she uses translation into Arabic to compensate for any deficiency in her English language skills. She feels that she belongs to the Arabic language. On the other hand, she writes all her assignments in English and uses the language in her

communication with her lecturers and classmates. Even though she prefers writing only in English, she still uses Arabic translation when her English fails her.

Here is how Sara is positioned in terms of the **content of biliteracy**:

*i- Working from the minority language (Arabic) to the majority language (English):*

All Sara's modules are taught in English (the majority language at UWC), and it dominates inside and outside class at this institution. Arabic is used in oral communication with her Libyan fellows. Only once in the 'Face and Politeness in Islam' assignment was a chance to use some Arabic scripts.

*ii- Working from the vernacular to the literary language:*

Sara rated her Standard Arabic skills as 'excellent'. In Libya, she used Standard Arabic in formal writing, but when speaking with friends she prefers to speak her western Libyan vernacular. When she was asked at the beginning of the interview which language she preferred to use during the interview, she showed preference for her Libyan dialect: "Let's speak Libyan...I feel more relaxed."

On the other hand, she used Standard English in her current context, but she found it difficult to keep up with her South African colleagues when they started speaking their vernaculars.

*iii- Moving from contextualized material to decontextualized assignments:*

Sara described the content of the courses as mostly decontextualized and much of it was irrelevant to her expectations as a foreign student, for example, "the standard Bank" essay. She thinks that there is no benefit in studying them as these topics are not useful for her when she goes back home: "Why I am studying this, what is the benefit?" On the other side, she was very satisfied when she was offered a chance to

write about a topic that was related to her background as a Muslim woman - the 'Face and Politeness in Islam' essay.

Finally, here is how Sara was positioned in terms of the **media of biliteracy** continua:

*i- Acquiring simultaneous or successive multilingualism:*

Sara acquired English after she had acquired her Libyan vernacular and Standard Arabic. At UWC, English is the only language used for teaching, but she felt that English became more comprehensible when lecturers supported their materials with media presentations. She could however draw on Arabic when interacting with her Arabic fellow speakers, and this led to a fuller understanding of her English modules and tasks.

*ii- Moving from dissimilar structures to similar structures:*

Most of Sara's mistakes in her assignments were grammatical. Additionally, she did not learn to write in the same styles and genres in her previous experiences in Arabic, so she had many structural deficits. Her lecturers' notes on her assignments – as can be seen on the assignments offered by her – were mostly on punctuation, structure and referencing: "I say honestly in Libya I didn't study them, nobody showed me how to do referencing". It seems that the discourses in both her previous and present experience are different. She did not seem able to draw on her knowledge of Arabic grammar and sentence structure to help her cope with the grammar of English.

*iii- Moving from divergent scripts to convergent scripts:*

Sara managed to master the divergent scripts of both Arabic and English, to the point where she could successfully study in a foreign country through the medium of English, despite many difficulties.

## ***B. Heba***

In terms of the **contexts of biliteracy**, Heba could be positioned as follows:

### *i- Moving from micro to macro:*

Heba does not find any difference here, as she studies Dentistry so the context of her previous study in her country is similar to the current one in South Africa: “it is medicine so it is international”. Even in terms of language, she indicated that all materials she studied at her university were in English. Also, her lecturers were using English in the classroom, and exams were written in English as well. Arabic had been used for oral discussions during lectures: “basically during my study in the university in Libya we used to study medical sciences in English ... so to say that the notes the lecturers gave us were in English and then they explain the lecture in Arabic or mix of Arabic and English... but the exams were in English.”

### *ii- Moving from Oral to literate:*

Heba has succeeded writing her assignments when she proceeded them with plenty of discussions with her writing coach, lecturers or her colleagues. Of great importance to her was the writing coach who explained every bit in writing and discussed her draft assignments before the assignments were finally written: “we had a lot of discussions about my writing...I write a draft and then we discuss about it and then we do another one and so on until I did it myself”, “she sat with me and gave me from her time so she revised with me my assignments line by line hinting every spelling grammatical mistake she helped me in formulating the sentences”. She therefore acknowledged the coach’s presence in her experience as a key factor of her success in writing: “the most helpful thing was the assistance of the writing coach”. In addition, a Sudanese friend helped her to acquire the ability to write references: “my colleague she was a Sudanese she taught me exactly how to do them she told me that I have to use copy past then to adjust it into Harvard and adjust the font”.

### *iii- Moving from Bi/Multilingual to Monolingual:*

Heba was mostly monolingual in her writing as she had always started her writing in English. Even when her English failed her, she used an English-English dictionary. She rarely used an Arabic dictionary unless she encountered unknown words, “I don’t use translation usually only when I can’t understand the meaning of the word a new word for me”. She explained that, as in her previous context, they also used English.

In terms of the **development of biliteracy**, Heba can be positioned as follows:

*i- Moving from Reception to production:*

Heba rated her English reading skills (reception) as good to very good in Arabic and described herself as ‘a good reader’. On the other hand, her previous experience had not prepared her to acquire the required writing skills (production) or writing different genres: “it was only once during my whole university study (in Libya) I was assigned with an assignment and it was in English... I don’t remember another one”.

She acquired better writing skills during her postgraduate studies at UWC. She thinks that reading (reception) is a strength that she relied on in succeeding writing her assignment. Therefore, she always preceded her writing tasks with reading many articles to imitate the structures, understand how academic writing works and learn new vocabulary: “when I read an article or a research I try to learn from them and pick as much as I can... I tried to imitate the academic writing style and also how to think like them”.

*ii- Moving from oral to written:*

Heba came to South Africa with insufficient writing experience. When she was asked to submit written assignments, she depended on writing drafts, followed by oral discussions with her writing coach or with her professor until she could submit the end product in a written form. She stated that oral discussions in English or in Arabic with her Sudanese colleague helped her a lot to understand how to write an assignment.

Heba is still not sure about her ability in writing. She prefers oral communication when contacting her lecturers as she thinks she can use different ways to make them understand her when her language fails her: “the more you write the more you make mistakes and you lose the main idea... I prefer to speak with the Prof because what if I would have written something he couldn’t understand...when I’m with him I can explain the meaning using different modes of communication”.

*iii- Moving from the L1 to the L2:*

Most of her use of Arabic (L1) is restricted to discussions with her Arabic colleagues and fellows in the department, when they talk about general problems they encounter during their studies. In one case, she discussed writing an assignment in Arabic with her Sudanese friend, which she found very helpful.

On the other hand, English is the main language that she prefers to write in. She uses the English-English dictionary when looking for synonyms instead of a direct translation into Arabic. She explained: “I prefer to speak my Libyan language but I write best in English... I think that I write better in English than in Arabic ...it’s from 2000 when I was in secondary school I didn’t write in Arabic”. She did not even use any Arabic materials or resources, nor in her previous studies in Libya.

In her communications, she used English with her colleagues, writing coach and lecturers.

In terms of the **content of biliteracy**, Heba can be positioned as follows:

*i- Working from the minority language (Arabic) to the majority language (English):*

All the materials were taught to her in English, as all lecturers and students in the university use English as a medium of instruction. Heba only used Arabic when she has discussions with her Arabic-speaking friends.

ii- *Working from the vernacular to the standard languages:*

Heba speaks both Arabic and English vernacular. She uses Arabic vernacular with her Libyan colleagues, as she said it helps her to express her ideas. It takes away the stress when she speaks and she can express her ideas without losing the main idea when she is discussing something: “the Libyan accent exactly what I prefer it is the language that relates to us...and I can express myself in.” She even prefers Libyan Arabic to Standard Arabic when interacting with her Arabic colleagues. She thinks Standard Arabic is like a second language to her: “Sometimes I find myself in need to explain some vocabulary to my Arab friends. I feel that may affect the fluency of my speech as the speech change in its content ... using Standard Arabic is like using translation”.

On the other hand, different English vernaculars are spoken around her by lecturers and students in the university halls, which sometimes hinders her from understanding the content. She uses Standard English in writing assignments.

iii- *Moving from contextualized materials to decontextualized assignments:*

Heba described the content of her study as completely contextualized. She explained that because she studies medicine, it is an international science. As was shown earlier, she draws on her reading texts and lectures fairly effectively in order to write her assignments.

Finally, in terms of the **media of biliteracy**, Heba can be positioned as follows:

i- *Acquiring simultaneous or successive multilingualism:*

While Heba might see herself as bilingual, her profile actually shows that she is multilingual, speaking Libyan Arabic and her vernacular from birth (simultaneous multilingualism) and then acquiring Standard Arabic and English at school (successive multilingualism).

English is the language used in Heba’s current context at UWC. She described the language as comprehensible, especially when lecturers supported their materials with

media, pictures or leaflets that gave her more understanding: “Before any presentation they send all of us the seminar so we can read them and prepare it...” She only had a few chances to use her Arabic with her Arabic colleagues when they discussed things together around their studies. Nevertheless, she found those discussions very helpful and that it gave her a full understanding of the demands of the English modules.

*ii- Moving from dissimilar structures to similar structures:*

Like Sara, most of Heba’s mistakes in her assignments were grammatical. Additionally, she did not learn to write the same styles and genres in her previous experience in Arabic so she had many structural deficits. Looking at the assignments she had provided, I could see that her lecturers’ notes on her assignments were mostly on the font, punctuation, structure and referencing: “he told me that my essay was as if I am writing to a magazine not scientific in nature even the resources it was all from Google not certified information...he also commented on the font the bold writing ah... all the text was written in capital letters in addition to the grammatical and spelling mistakes... yes the assignment was not divided into different sections”. It seemed that the discourses in both her previous and present experience were different. In Libya, she had not had any writing experience: “I did not have any idea about academic writing”; “it was only once during my whole university study I was assigned with an assignment and it was in English... I don’t remember another one”, while in her current experience at UWC, the study programme generally depended on submitting written assignments as a means of assessment. She did not have a reliable writing experience in Arabic that she could draw on to cope with the demands of writing in English.

*iii- Moving from divergent scripts to convergent scripts:*

Heba also managed to master the divergent scripts of both Arabic and English, to the point where she could successfully study in a foreign country through the medium of English, despite many difficulties.

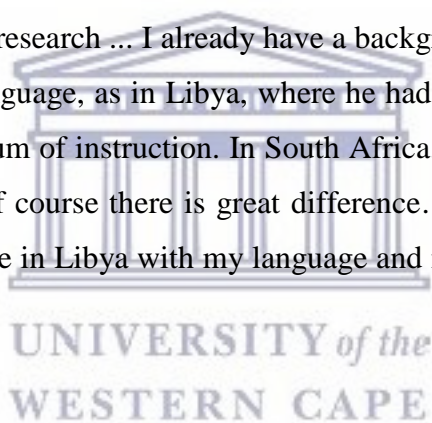


### C. Abdulla

In terms of the **contexts of biliteracy**, Abdulla can be positioned as follows:

*i- Drawing on micro or macro contexts of biliteracy:*

Abdulla does not find much difference between his current study at UWC in South Africa and his prior experience in Libya. He illustrated that his field of study is an international science that is applied everywhere: “Sure... by virtue of that the field of economics is general or international .... it is like medicine you can say... my country as a third world country of course it needs such studies”. Abdulla has already studied the same content in his previous experience doing his Master’s degree. Therefore, it can be said that there are no culture specific issues in his study. “I did work on the same area in my Master’s research ... I already have a background about it”. The main issue for him is that of language, as in Libya, where he had completed his education, Arabic was the only medium of instruction. In South Africa, however, he has to learn everything in English: “Of course there is great difference... ah...it’s the language I studied my Master’s degree in Libya with my language and now I studying in English only...”



*ii- Moving from oral to literate:*

Unlike the other two respondents, Abdulla did not have much opportunity to engage in oral discussions about his writing. It can be said that he usually works on the literate parts of the continuum: “Due to the nature of my study... from the time I did my proposal presentation my professor told me that I can even go back to my country and continue my study there as all my data are online and I can communicate with my supervisor by email ...so even I’m still in Cape Town I study at home and rarely go to the university... because of that I have very rare communication with my colleagues or lecturers in the department... all my work is reading articles from the Internet...ah ...when I need to talk to my professor I’d prefer to write him an email and sometimes we meet in the university...” Abdulla therefore mainly writes by himself at home.

Even when he contacts his editor or professor, he does this by writing emails. However, although Abdulla has little chance to discuss his research with either his friend from Libya who already has the same specialization or with other Arab friends from other specializations, he thinks that these discussions are very beneficial: “So to say... that most of my communications are with Arab students we speak about scientific and technical issues related to our studies... even though we are not from the same specialization we do benefit from our discussions together”.

*iii- From multilingual to monolingual:*

Although Abdulla’s written end product of his thesis was in English, it went through bilingual – Arabic and English – drafting stages until the monolingual end product in English was completed. He described these stages thoroughly: he first wrote his proposal in Arabic only and then used Google translator to prepare his proposal for proofreading. His proofreader revised his work many times until both were satisfied about it: “I wrote my proposal in Arabic ... at that time I didn’t have the ability to write in English... then I used translation... Google... then I try to arrange the translated text that was very difficult and very tiring”. Now is he still writing in both languages but mostly in English. He uses Arabic when his English fails him or to write notes.

In terms of the **development of biliteracy**, Abdulla can be positioned as follows:

*i- Moving from reception to production:*

Abdulla rated his English reception skills (reading) as very good, and production (writing) skills as good. “I mainly have communication with my Prof who speaks English with a very understandable accent... I can understand every word he says... I think that my listening skills are not developed well enough to understand every accent”. On the other hand, he rated his Arabic reception and production skills as excellent due to his previous experience in postgraduate studies which had prepared him to acquire the needed skills for effective academic writing. He described his reading ability as a main factor behind his success in developing his writing. He had some experience in academic writing in Arabic and admits to having difficulty in

writing in English. Therefore, he relies on reading to compensate these deficits: “...when you write a paragraph I depend on the writing skills I had already learnt during my previous study in Master’s so it was easy for me...the difficulties were in the language itself...I mean the terminology, so I rely on reading...I read a lot of articles I read to look for vocabulary and new expressions I can insert in my paragraph”. He learnt about English academic writing mostly from reading articles: “I concentrate on one point...for example when I write my introduction... I take introductions from a number of articles in the same field... I read them all deeply to borrow some English expressions and phrases that I can use in my own introduction... I read maybe ten articles at the same time... I read looking at their structures and phrases like those I have problems with...such as... linking phrases”.

*ii- Moving from oral to written production:*

Abdulla is still not comfortable with oral communication in English: “I don’t prefer things related with speaking...I think it’s a weakness point for me”. He finds oral discussions in Arabic helpful when he is with his Arab-speaking friends. Generally, he prefers written communication with his professor and proofreader; he says that when he writes he would have the time to choose the appropriate words: “when I write him an email I take my time to in writing and revising... I can select the appropriate words I sometimes use translation”.

*iii- Moving from the L1 to the L2:*

Abdulla rated his Arabic language skills as excellent. On the other hand, he rated his speaking and writing in English as good but very good in reading.

Although Abdulla is required to submit the end product of his thesis in English, he shuffles between the two languages. He relies heavily on translation from Arabic to English and vice versa wherever his English fails him and to write some notes that help him to organise the structure of his thesis before drafting and finally ending with an English end product.

In terms of the **content of biliteracy**, Abdulla can be positioned as follows:

*i- Working from the minority language (Arabic) to the majority (English):*

In Abdulla's current study programme (PhD by thesis), English (the medium of instruction at UWC) dominates all the communications on or around the university. He uses English to contact his professor or his proofreader. However, he does not have any contact with South African or foreign colleagues in the department as he mostly studies at home.

On the other hand, Abdulla uses Arabic (minority) with his Arab and Libyan friends for discussions around their study issues. He uses Arabic in translating texts and for writing parts and notes for himself, which he found very helpful.

*ii- Working from the vernacular to the standard language:*

He does not find any problem in understanding his professor, whom he described as having "a very understandable accent... I can understand every word he says". He added that his professor specifically, and South Africans in general, are very helpful for not criticizing his speaking mistakes, as he saw his speaking skills in English as a weakness: "He helped me a lot to get confidence in my speech". However, he only struggled to understand the South African vernaculars spoken by ordinary people around him in the street: "I think that my listening skills are not developed well enough to understand every accent ... the language spoken in the university is fine but I have a problem in understanding the street accent... specially by young people in the street".

On the other hand, when he was asked about the Arabic accents and which language he used for scientific issues, he gave a clear response: "I never speak Standard Arabic... and never write in vernacular. Every accent has its role... when I speak with friends...we speak Libyan dialect and we mix it with English vocabulary related to our study... this is the simplest way".

*iii- Moving from contextualised material to decontextualized assignments:*

As he studies Finance, Abdulla found many similarities that he could draw on in the content of his study. He described the content as “international...it is like medicine”. He had already done his Master’s research in the same field, therefore he has a good background in it. He finds it worthy to study in order to apply the knowledge in his country: “My country as a third world of course it does need such studies”. These similarities helped him to use his readings to develop his thesis, with the aid of his proofreader and through regular email contact with his supervisor.

Finally, in terms of the **media of biliteracy**, Abdulla can be positioned as follows:

*i- Acquiring simultaneous or successive multilingualism:*

Abdulla may have gained simultaneous multilingualism in Libya (Libyan Arabic and local vernaculars), but his successive multilingualism added Standard Arabic (taught at school) and English to his repertoire. In South Africa, his skills in English have improved substantially. English is the main medium of instruction at UWC, and he uses English in all his communications inside the university or with his professor.

*ii- Moving from dissimilar structures to similar structures:*

Abdulla’s previous knowledge of Arabic writing gave him more insight into the similarities between the two languages which he could draw on. He thinks that English and Arabic academic writing systems are sometimes similar: “I think the system of writing in the two languages is similar...I mean that how to write a paragraph with one idea...also punctuation is the same”. On the other hand, he stated that the grammars of the two languages have substantial differences. He therefore relied on the assistance of a proofreader who revised his mistakes thoroughly. The main source of his mistakes was his reliance on direct translation from Arabic to English.

*iii- Moving from divergent scripts to convergent scripts:*

Abdulla succeeded in mastering the divergent scripts of both Arabic and English, to the point that he managed to study in a foreign country through the medium of a foreign language despite many difficulties.

#### **4.2.2 Comparing the individual findings – a summary of the key themes which emerged from the data**

In analysing the data of the three respondents, the following key themes emerged:

##### ***4.2.2 The contexts of biliteracy***

What was clear from the three respondents was that similarity, in terms of context, played a major role in how well they were able to adjust to a different academic setting and be able to perform successfully. Thus, Heba and Abdulla found themselves dealing with contexts very similar to the ones they had studied in Libya. However, Sara's new context was far removed from her previous one, which made her struggle initially. When she was offered a chance to draw on her micro-context with the 'Politeness' assignment, she was much more relaxed and encouraged to submit a successful assignment after an oral presentation. Being able to draw on her own culture made this experience a positive one. Canagarajah (2006) pointed out that difficulties can arise from institutional barriers to tapping into bilingual and bicultural identities as resources to express in their writing. He adds that "successful literacy programmes not only affords its students opportunities to use the literacy skills they are acquiring, but also embeds the whole of their... literacy learning in a cultural, institutional, and interactional context which recognizes and validates their identity" (Canagarajah, 2006: 9).

Both Sara and Heba started from the oral endpoint, proceeding to the literate one. They depended a lot on oral discussions to fully understand their tasks. Abdulla also

showed a preference for oral discussions, although he had few opportunities to do this owing to the nature of his study. All of them indicated the benefit of mother tongue use in these discussions, although they also used English in discussions with non-Arabic speakers. In their study of science classrooms in Swaziland, Rollnick and Rutherford (1996) found the use of learners' main languages in discussions to be a powerful means for learners to explore their ideas. They go on to argue that, without the use of the students' own languages, some students' alternative conceptions would remain unexposed. A key finding was that learners' written work may conceal misconceptions and that these are more likely to be revealed in peer discussion in the learners' language.

Thus, the respondents' reliance on their bilingual skills, and their use of translation in the initial drafts of their assignments, is consistent with research (Dijkstra, 2009) that advocates that all languages are active during cognitive processes and bilingual students are active agents who use all multilingual resource repertoires to fulfil their monolingual academic tasks. A possible exception here is Heba, who only used English from the early stages of her writing until editing with her writing coach. Some research, for example that of Kells (2002) showed that some bilingual students avoid using their main languages because of their internalisation that their languages are useless in the foreign context.



#### ***4.2.3 The development of biliteracy***

Being able to develop their reading skills (reception) proved to be central to all three respondents' success in writing academic assignments, a skill for which they had been poorly prepared. They used their reading texts as a starting point to learn new structures, vocabulary and mimicking writing styles to adopt for their own use. As noted under the contexts of biliteracy above, they also relied on oral discussions and initial work in Arabic. This confirms Hornberger's assumption that what is often assumed to be at a lower position in the continua might be of considerable importance for some minority students who rely on those points as strategies to compensate for any deficiency in the majority language. Hornberger and Hardman (1994) argue

against the inadequacy of literacy programmes that emphasise the single standard majority language, stating that learners' own voices and agency can be obtained by giving them space to use their L1 oral receptive skills in addition to L2 written productive ones.

#### ***4.2.4 The content of biliteracy***

The three respondents relied on their Libyan vernaculars instead of Standard Arabic when communicating with their fellow Libyan students regarding their academic work. In contrast, they tried to speak Standard English with their lecturers and non-Arabic colleagues. Their Libyan vernaculars were more preferable than the Standard Arabic as they agreed that using these gave them a deeper understanding of study-related concepts. This is consistent with Antia and Dyers' (2017) study where they found that Xhosa and coloured students had a better understanding of terminology when they offered them lectures in the informal varieties of their home languages. This enabled their students to re-create knowledge and gain better understanding instead of mimicking structures and terminology: "the informal variety has enabled students to appropriate the material to the extent that the student is confident of being able to come up with original examples" (Antia and Dyers, 2017: 21).

This resonates with the point made by Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2003: 40) that the critical reflection around language and power, which the biliteracy model promotes "can allow new speakers, readers, and writers of a language to see that the values placed on particular languages and varieties are not fixed, but socially and culturally constructed". In the same vein, Kerfoot and Stroud (2013: 11) state that all languages brought to the academia by learners' 'multilingual repertoires' should be acknowledged as sources of significant "meaning potential" (Halliday: 1978).

#### ***4.2.5 The media of biliteracy***

All three respondents acquired English as a second language after they acquired their vernacular and Standard Arabic. Now in their foreign context of study at UWC in



South Africa, English dominates communication inside the academia. Even here though, the use of their Arabic language, either by using their vernaculars in oral discussions or in translating texts, gave them fuller understanding of their academic tasks. Of course, there is quite a lot of difference between the two languages in terms of grammar and discourse, which created problems especially for Sara and Heba. As Arkoudis (2006) explains, the difference in academic discourse between the previous academic experience of the students in their country and the current foreign one is a main challenge that distinguishes international students from domestic ones.

However, whenever there were points of similarities between Arabic and English, the three respondents drew on these points to succeed in writing their assignments. Abdulla was the luckiest as he had already obtained his Master's degree in Libya by doing a research project, which was similar to his experience at UWC. Even though he initially acquired his literacy in Arabic only, he found many similarities between the academic writing systems of the two languages which he could draw on.

### 4.3 Conclusions

This chapter provided an analysis of the main findings of this study. I commenced with a comprehensive background profile on each of the three participants, in terms of their personal details and literacy development. This was followed by the three participants' responses to the questionnaire, and finally by the findings of the detailed interviews I conducted with each participant. The data was analyzed using Hornberger's continua of biliteracy model. Finally, using thematic content analysis, I identified the five main themes to emerge from the complete data set, which were as follows:

- Similarity in terms of context regarding the types of academic assignments they were required to do, played a major role in how well these respondents were able to adjust to a different academic setting and be able to perform successfully;
- Being able to develop their reading skills (reception) proved to be central to all three respondents' success in writing academic assignments (production);

- The three respondents relied on their Libyan vernaculars instead of Standard Arabic when communicating with their fellow Libyan students regarding their academic work, and in this way were able to gain a deeper understanding of their assignments;
- The use of their Arabic language, either by using their vernaculars in oral discussions or in translating texts, gave them fuller understanding of their academic tasks; and finally
- Whenever there were points of similarities between Arabic and English, the three respondents drew on these points to succeed in writing their assignments.

In the final chapter, once I have summarized how my first three research questions have been answered, I provide what I consider as the implications of these key findings for the ways in which international universities can become much more accommodating to the specific needs of Arabic speakers. Of course, these implications also apply to all speakers of languages other than English. I also suggest practical ways in which the academy should be responding to such students, and make recommendations for further study. In this way, the fourth research question is answered:

*Having mapped the frameworks employed by each research participant in this study, what response can be offered to this question posed by Hornberger and Link (2012:243): "...how should educators engage with students' linguistic and literacy diversity in order to facilitate successful school experiences and greater academic achievement for students from culturally and linguistically different and often minoritized backgrounds?"*

## Chapter Five

### Conclusions and Implications of These Findings

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings of this research in terms of how the three core research questions were answered. As was noted at the end of Chapter Four, my response to the fourth research question is also part of this chapter, which provides a number of recommendations and ways of practically implementing these as derived from this study and related ones.

#### 5.1 How the main research questions were addressed

##### 5.1.1 Research Question 1

*What are the strategies adopted by selected Libyan students, biliterate in Arabic and English, in understanding and then writing their academic assignments successfully?*

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From the data discussed in the previous chapter, some themes emerged which can answer this question.

##### 5.1.1.1 The use of first language as a bridge to the second.

Even though English is the main medium of instruction at the university and the only language used in writing academic assignments, all three participants highlighted their use of the first language as a way of eliminating obstacles to their understanding and proficiency in English.

The first language (Arabic) was used for different purposes. Firstly, they used their first language – especially the vernaculars that they preferred in their discussions with

their Libyan colleagues – in oral discussion on or around their studies, indicating that the use of their mother tongues provided them with full understanding of the academic issues. The use of the mother tongue, which is a minority language in the context of their current studies, helped them a lot to attain full understanding of the majority language (English) and helped them to come up with their own understanding and look for similarities in their language. The vernaculars, although they have no written form, were the preferred media of communication for all three participants whenever applicable. Antia and Dyers (2017), in their study, had the same findings, illustrating that informal local varieties enabled their students to be more confident with the material and come up with original examples. All three participants spoke about this preference, noting that their own languages (vernaculars) were part of their identities and helped them celebrate their shared identity in the diaspora. This offers some support for Baker's point (2006: 334) when he writes that "where multilingual classes exist, then learning, motivation and self-esteem may be raised by celebrating multiliteracies".

Secondly, they used their first language in translating English texts. All of them shared the strategy of use of translation as a tool to overcome their inability to understand any unknown vocabulary in addition to looking for English synonyms to insert in their own writing. The use of translation is a successful literacy skill widely found among bilingual students, which has potential pedagogical applications (Malakoff and Hakuta 1991; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, and Meza 2003). Malakoff and Hakuta (1991:163) state that "[t]ranslation provides an easy avenue to enhance linguistic awareness and pride in bilingualism, particularly for minority bilingual children whose home language is not valued by the majority culture".

Thirdly, Abdulla used Arabic to write full paragraphs and notes in the margins, so that he had more time to spend thinking about scientific issues related to his study instead of language issues. Later, by using translation, editing and proofreading, he would replace the Arabic texts with English ones. Cummins *et al.* (2005) and Reyes (2001) encourage newcomer students to write in their L1 and then translate into English as a strategy that scaffolds students' output in English and enables them to use higher order and critical thinking skills. They see this as more effective than restricting students to only using English. Cummins (2001) and García (2008) add

that to affirm minority groups' identities, students' first languages should be legitimated as cognitive tools within the classroom.

#### **5.1.1.2 Oral discussion preceding written assignments**

The three participants showed the importance of oral discussions in order to gain full understanding of the requirements of every part of academic assignments. Sara and Heba explained that they were disadvantaged compared to their South African colleagues who were used to the academic discourse of UWC which includes writing assignments and oral presentations. Their previous academic experience had not prepared them to for the demands of academic writing. To overcome these difficulties, they discussed their assignments with their South African colleagues to understand exactly what was required. Beyond such discussions with the local students, Sara was also assisted by her Arabic friend who explicitly explained every bit of the academic requirements in Arabic, which gave her a complete understanding. Similarly, Heba used both the writing coach facility and both her English- or Arabic-speaking colleagues. These discussions for every part gave them the opportunity to understand the academic discourse in general and how to write every part of the assignment before they were able to apply what they had discussed in writing their assignments.

#### **5.1.1.3 Drawing on prior knowledge**

Cognitive psychologists and reading theorists like Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) explain that students' prior knowledge is the foundation upon which new learning is built. New ESL students' prior knowledge is encoded in their L1, and is important for building new skills that are relevant to the L2.

Prior knowledge was clear in Abdulla's case when he relied on his knowledge of academic writing in Arabic, which he acquired as a Master's student. He transferred similar structures in Arabic to English and later dealt with the differences between the languages themselves, like e.g. the vocabulary. "I think that who does not have the

ability to write in his language will not be able to write in another... ah...as I told you ... when you write paragraph I depend on the writing skills I had already learnt during my previous study in Masters so it was easy for me... the difficulties were in the language itself”.

It was also obvious in Heba’s case, when she showed that she did not have a problem with the terminology of her current studies and that she rarely used translation because she was used to the English terminology from her previous study context in Libya.

Research on contrastive rhetoric (Leki, 1991; Raimes, 1991) advocates the positive side of the foreign language learners’ writing backgrounds. They state students’ prior knowledge is an important resource in learning to write English. Connor (1996: 26) points out how students move from their prior knowledge to the new foreign one and how they “bring to the classroom ways of structuring discourse, interacting with audiences, and valuing knowledge that they have learned in their first language, employing some of these social practices as they write in English”. In the same vein, Cummins (1979) and Garcia (2002) emphasize students’ transfer of literacy knowledge learned in their L1 to learning to write in the L2. Cumming (1989) explains that writers who have developed writing expertise in their first language showed better problem-solving behaviours in the second language. Additionally, those writers were able to draw on their L1 writing expertise to the extent that they were not limited by their weak formal knowledge of the L2. He suggested that writing genres and strategies are mostly similar in both languages and therefore transferable.

On the other hand, the lack of prior knowledge was evident as a source of difficulty for both Sara and Heba who struggled to understand their assignments, as they did not have a good deal of writing experience in their earlier context.

#### **5.1.1.4 Moving from reading to writing**

The three participants highlighted the importance of reading in acquiring writing skills. The three rated their reading skills as very good which was far better – according to them – than their writing. To compensate for what they had missed in

learning academic writing skills, they shared that they read not only for information but also for finding vocabulary and structure which they could insert into their own writing. “When I read an article I always look at the writing style as the expressions like... “I noted that” or “according to”. I collect these expressions and then I use them” (Sara). Reading (reception) which, according to Hornberger (1989), is at the bottom of the continua, proved to be a skill which made them succeed in writing (production), the most desirable by academic policies. Studies like those by Eckoff (1983) and Taylor and Beach (1984) advocate the reading-to-writing model that claims that reading skills influence writing skills. These studies showed that learners’ writing reflected structures and styles that they used for reading materials, suggesting that reading and writing are interactive skills stemming from a single underlying proficiency influencing each other.

### **5.1.2 Research Question 2**

*How do these students develop confidence in their writing ability and their skill in understanding how to do their academic assignments?*



#### **5.1.2.1 Lecturers’ feedback**

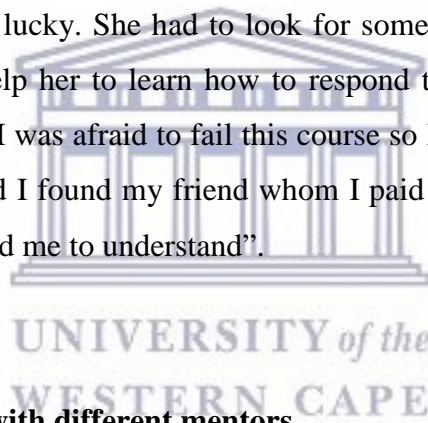
Lecturer’s knowledge of their foreign students’ needs plays a key role in directing students to acquire confidence in their writing. In all cases, the lecturers’ feedback could have been better, instead of merely focusing on language problems.

Feedback to students in writing, according to Goldstein (2005:24), is a “multiple factors process” in which these factors interact with, and mediate each other, through a “cyclical process” within which students’ texts and teacher commentary texts are created. One of these factors is the relationship between teacher and student which plays a critical role in how a teacher gives feedback to a student’s papers and in how the student responds to the feedback, and consequently develops his/her writing. Noddings (1984) is a theorist who has contributed to the understanding of the complexities involved in building relationships between teacher and student with her

construct of *caring*. The term *caring* describes the relationship between teacher and student which might be applied to explore how the relationship between teacher and students develop through the processes of providing feedback to students' drafts and how students respond to them in revision.

Heba's case was a good example of the gradual development of a student's writing through the assessment of the lecturer who understood the specific needs of the foreign learner: "she also asked me to send her a draft before submission... to see what exactly I was writing ... and when I did she told me I'm in the right road ... she said it's good ...complete the same way". Responding to Heba's own situation, her lecturer asked her to send drafts of the assignment to assist her step by step. The lecturer also assigned her to a writing coach who was of major assistance and the principle factor behind Heba's understanding and success with her assignments.

In contrast, Sara was less lucky. She had to look for someone on her own to clarify the assignments and to help her to learn how to respond to the lecturers' feedback, which was very general. "I was afraid to fail this course so I felt that I had to look for someone who help me and I found my friend whom I paid to teach me the academic writing methods and helped me to understand".



#### **5.1.2.2 Oral discussions with different mentors**

After the written feedback from the lecturers came the discussions with different mentors – the writing coach in Heba's case, or the Libyan friend in Sara's when they sought for a better understanding of the feedback and clarifications on how to apply these notes in practice. Together with their respective mentors, they went through the assignment line by line to revise and understand every bit so that they could eventually rely on themselves. The result was that they ended writing their assignments without continual assistance. As Sarah noted: "I did well in the written far better than the earlier assignments because I have already learnt – as I told you – from my friend who taught me we had a lot of discussions about every bit in the assignment... I learnt how to organize my ideas and edit my writing..."



They all agreed that the best form of feedback came not through the lecturers' written feedback, but through the oral discussions. The oral channel of communication is the medium which they preferred in their communication in general rather than writing in both English and Arabic. Both Heba and Sara explained that their written language was not perfect enough to express what they really needed to discuss and that they could make the listener understand the meaning by using multiple modes of communication. Moreover, they used all the languages at their disposal - the Libyan vernacular with their Libyan colleagues, then Standard Arabic with other Arabic-speaking students, and at last, English with the South Africans. The most important factor was that they discussed their assignments orally.

### **5.1.2.3 Drawing on contextualised content**

One of the major obstacles for Sara was the decontextualized content of her study course which made her unable to come up with satisfactory results, for example with the 'Hyper Modality' assignment. However, by the time more contextualized topics were offered like the 'Politeness' assignment, she managed to come up with information that was relevant to her own context and for her future needs in her own country: "when I had chosen the subject of the assignment I felt relieved to it. I felt that I am interested in it as a Muslim and have a good background about it that why I relieved to the topic and when I looked for information, I didn't find any difficulty as that I encountered in the other assignments... I had the information easily". It was a very important aspect which made her gain confidence in her writing: "I got an excellent mark and the Prof admired the presentation and I felt proud that I gave them information they didn't know. Before it was a different feeling than those other presentations". That was also her reason for choosing the topic for her MA thesis which was also of direct relevance to her.

In Abdulla and Heba's cases, they were also very satisfied with the materials they were currently studying, as it was not different from what they had studied before, and what they expect to take back to Libya. They described the content of their study as 'international'.

### 5.1.3 Research Question 3

*Drawing on Hornberger's biliteracy framework (Hornberger, 1989), how do these students draw on the full range of their communicative and literacy skills in order to succeed in academic writing tasks that have to be completed in English? What is the significance of this for the teaching of academic literacy?*

The participants in this research are examples of students who made a success out of challenges. They are newcomers to this foreign educational context with its foreign language in which they had not acquired the oral fluency or written communication skills needed to write a completed academic assignment in English. Despite this, they have been evaluated according to the same criteria as their native counterparts (Dong, 1998). They had to engage in the educational experience where literacy and language are central both as a means and an end for success, drawing on all the communicative and literacy resources available to them.

The continua of biliteracy model (Hornberger, 2003) can be used to interpret the participants of this research's academic literacy activities in the bilingual academic context, as it attempts to shift the power balance towards the less privileged ends of the continua. Hornberger affirms that there is always struggle and tension between the more and the less privileged ends in any biliteracy environment, such as the University of the Western Cape where these participants operated. She calls on educators to reflect on their teaching and language practices to unmask the unbalanced power relationships and transform them into assets for rebuilding new knowledge.

The data obtained revealed five themes which have served to answer all the research questions, and the third, in particular. Responding to the questionnaire, the participants of this research rated their academic English skills as good to fair. Within the context of UWC where English is the dominant language and the only language for the written end product, they had many struggles in developing their biliteracy in English and learning new knowledge in a new discourse. The participants resorted to adopting their own strategies and drew on the full range of their communicative and biliteracy skills in order to come up with successful written assignments and

consequently, succeed in their studies. They illustrate what Hornberger has argued for – that minority students may shift the power into the less privileged ends.

On the axis of context, the similarities between what they had learnt in their previous experiences and currently at UWC played a major role in their production of successful assignments. Additionally, whenever they were offered a chance to reflect on their backgrounds and cultures, it proved to be empowering for them, like in Sara's case in the 'Politeness' assignment. Here, she was able to use some Arabic resources and write about topics closer to her culture and what she assumed was relevant to her background and her future contexts back in Libya (the micro context).

The literacy activities of my respondents are also embedded in the content of biliteracy which, according to Hornberger, develops through the meanings that are owned by bicultural learners. Biculturalism develops in the content of biliteracy along the continuum of the minority-majority meanings (Forasiepi, 2011). They used their minority resources whenever they faced obstacles in the majority language. The Arabic language (the minority) was always present alongside the English language (majority) in their oral discussions, written drafts, or was used for translation into and from English. The use of their mother tongue helped them to come up with a better understanding of the unknown content and compensated for their limited competence in the language. They were creating spaces for themselves between the two ends of the continuum, shifting the power to a more balanced position as they found place for both languages and could find their identities and voices. Ruiz argues that "voice and agency are central to critical pedagogy" and that "without them, there is no such thing as 'empowerment' (Ruiz 1997:327). They acknowledged the benefits of the strategies involved using their L2, voting for the traditionally less powerful end of the bi(multi)lingual–monolingual continuum of the context axis which, according to Antia and Dyers (2017:16), "challenges the higher education correlate of submersion education that gates out languages used by (typically minority) students in their homes because the goal is for them to be mainstreamed into the majority language as quickly as possible". These clarifications challenge the current practices in respect of lecture materials and written assignments that may not be taking into account the diversity of learners inside the lecture halls of the university, their diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and their future employment. Forpiezi (2011) advocates

that educators in monolingual systems can support the language and culture of their diverse students by using cooperative learning strategies where other languages are promoted. Moreover, students can access their cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge freely and use it to learn new material and rebuild new knowledge.

Additionally, in the same context of the biliteracy axis, the participants were also paying attention to the contextualized-decontextualized continuum. They were able to contextualize the unknown discourses by using their previous knowledge and resources. Therefore, they tried to shift the weight in the balance by using their assets and strength points as they started from their social, cultural and linguistic knowledge to discover and learn the new discourse. In writing their assignments, they drew on all the languages in their repertoire, in oral form when they discussed their assignments with their writing coach, colleagues and friends. In these discussions, they used English and Arabic standard and vernacular; and similar resources were drawn on when doing the actual writing, e.g. translating texts between Arabic and English in the initial drafts of the assignments.

Although the three participants agreed that their vernaculars have no written form and, unlike the standard, is not used in an academic written form, the vernacular played a major role as a means of epistemic access. It allowed them to appropriate the material and gave them a deeper understanding of study-related concepts through the oral discussions with their Libyan and Arabic colleagues. This resonates with the point made by Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2003: 40) around language varieties in the biliteracy context which “can allow new speakers, readers, and writers of a language to see that the values placed on particular languages and varieties are not fixed, but socially and culturally constructed”. Hornberger’s biliteracy model emphasizes that non-school languages/literacy assets should be acknowledged in any bilingual educational programme.

Thus, the participants could use their vernaculars as a way of contextualizing their macro-monolingual majority standard literacy event giving evidence of the validity of the biliteracy model of Hornberger that calls for subverting the power of the powerful ends of the continua.

Moreover, they started their writing tasks by first reading intensively. They described their reading ability as a strength, so they used their reading as a strategy, not for collecting information, but to mimic academic writing structure and vocabulary. Every participant, in fact, had her/his own way of making use of previous knowledge in order to attain the target, which was the written product in English. These practices can be placed on the decontextualized-contextualized continuum which is connected to Street's (1984) ideological model, which views literacy as a result of one's knowledge and views about language. The participants were able to contextualize the decontextualized discourses by using their own practices, identities and languages, moving from being excluded to a more powerful position on the continuum. Starting from the micro contexts, oral discussions and multilingual ends are strategies to subvert the dominance of the macro, literate ends of the continua in the context dimension, as showed in Hornberger's (2003) work.

Being able to develop their reading skills (reception) proved to be central to all three respondents' success in writing academic assignments (production). Reading to mimick unknown writing structures and genre is a successful strategy that operates in the development axis of the continua. The autonomous model of literacy emphasizes the written form as an indication of being literate. According to Hornberger (1989-2003), oral reception is not given enough consideration in traditional learning environments. On the contrary, much importance is given to the production in the second language. Forasiepi (2011) states that the problem is that in the linguistically diverse classrooms, minority students, who are still learning English as their second language – as were the participants of this research – are mostly silenced by such pedagogies that privilege the written production ends over the oral and reception of language. Furthermore, the preponderance of written language as learning and assessing mode poses major challenges to these learners, hindering them from participating in the classroom literacy events actively and consequently succeeding in their study with lower marks compared to their domestic colleagues at the same level.

Cummins (1979) attributes minority children's failure in school systems to the lack of instruction in their L1, explaining that these students have not developed their CALP before being introduced to the foreign language system. Therefore, many minority children become unable to reach nativelike levels in both languages. Additionally,

Cummins showed that instruction through L1 is more effective in promoting the second language than restricting them in the second language only (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1979).

In this learning context where these three participants operated, the continua of biliteracy model (Hornberger, 2003) was used as a framework to understand relations of power in the policies of academic institutions. It may uncover how using multimodality in planning curriculum and assessment can shift the power balance to more empowerment of minority students.

The New London Group advocates a kind of pedagogy that values the full diversity of students' languages, cultures and experiences which are also central in the notion of "situated practice" (Kalantzis and Cope, 2003b: 243). By situated practice, they mean that pedagogy is built around the students' worlds and experiences. The New London Group explains that situated practice must take into consideration the "sociocultural needs and the identities of the learners" (ibid, 2003:33).

Hornberger (in her work spanning the years 1989-2003) has always called on educators to facilitate students' learning by supporting the less powerful ends of the continua, which are related to the minority linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In such a pedagogy, cultural and linguistic ties can be rebuilt between the minority and majority through acceptance and recognition. On the other hand, the students' cultural and linguistic resources can be used as the basis for designing new learning, but with the ultimate target of returning back home with newly acquired understandings (Forasiepi, 2011).

## **5.2 Summary**

This research study looked at how foreign students succeed in writing their academic assignments and looked for the strategies they adopted. It considered how they transformed their lack of academic language or knowledge into resources which led them to success and gaining confidence in their academic writing.

The participants of this research were three Libyan students at the University of the Western Cape. They came to South Africa with little competence in English. The journey of their study in the foreign country started with a year of English language learning. Later, they moved to study at the University of the Western Cape where English is the only language for communication in or around academia. As they progressed, they faced many challenges due to studying in a foreign discourse and within a different language, which they had not acquired properly, to fulfil the requirements of academic studies.

In this research, the continua of biliteracy model (Hornberger, 2003) was used to interpret these students' academic literacy activities in order to understand how these students used all their available linguistic resources to fulfil their academic requirements in the monolingual English context. Hornberger's model attempts to shift the power balance towards the less privileged ends of the continua, which affirms that in any biliteracy environment, such as the context of this research where the participants operated, there is always struggle and tension between the more and the less privileged actors in the scene. This study tried to shed light on some of the needs of foreign students in general, and specifically, Libyan students at UWC, so that their voices can be heard and that educators and policy makers should find a way to balance relationships and transform them into resources.

Writing is the most powerful end-point in terms of the continua of Hornberger (1989, 2003) and in academic assessment. However, before producing the final English written product, students go through many stages until they complete their assignments. The study clearly shows that the three respondents in this study have adopted their own strategies which moulded the linguistic barriers into resources to achieve their target. The first research question investigated what the strategies are that helped students in understanding, and then writing, their academic assignments successfully. Four strategies were detected from data, namely:

- The use of the first language as a bridge to the second.
- Oral discussions preceding written assignments.
- Drawing on prior knowledge.

- Moving from reading to writing.

The second question looked at how these students developed confidence in their writing ability and their skills in understanding how to do their academic assignments.

Three factors served as an answer to this question:

- Lecturers' feedback.
- Oral discussions with writing coach or friends.
- Drawing on contextualized content.

The third question investigated how these students drew on the full range of their communicative and literacy skills in order to succeed in academic writing tasks that had to be completed in English. The question was answered by relating the themes emerging from the data to Hornberger's biliteracy framework (Hornberger, 1989) and by looking at the significant implications these could hold for the future teaching of academic literacy.

From the discussion above, it is obvious that the participants, whenever faced with obstacles in their academic literacy requirements and when dealing with the unknown academic discourse in the foreign context, resorted to strategies of their own to compensate for their limited linguistic abilities. According to Hornberger's biliteracy model, the participants were moving from the less powerful ends of the continua into a more balanced position. This gives educators a significant indication to contest the power relationships posed by traditional autonomous literacy programmes that advocate only the most powerful ends. Moreover, the implications of the findings of this research supports the call of the New London Group for a pedagogy that develops literacy according to students' lived world experiences, linguistic and cultural resources.

### **5.3 Implications of these findings for classroom practices with foreign students**



In light of the findings of the three core research questions, this section offers a response to my fourth research question:

*Having mapped the frameworks employed by each research participant in this study, what response can be offered to this question posed by Hornberger and Link (2012:243): "...how should educators engage with students' linguistic and literacy diversity in order to facilitate successful school experiences and greater academic achievement for students from culturally and linguistically different and often minoritized backgrounds?"*

The findings of this study have revealed that meaningful language and literacy experiences can be fostered and supported, even in a monolingual English environment, by creating an open and collaborative learning environment.

Paxton (2007) refers to Lillis' (2001) 'talkback model', where the students can be informants to provide their tutors with an understanding of how they make meanings. The participants of this study highlighted their need to be listened to and to discuss orally their problems in face-to-face interactions. Therefore, I suggest that tutoring should be an important facility for foreign students, specifically in order to understand each foreign student's needs and backgrounds. They need to be listened to individually and assessed thoroughly. Paxton (2007) believes that such collaborative talk would be necessarily useful, not only for students, but more significantly, for tutors who will gain new ideas about how to assist these individuals. This facility has the potential to move the barriers facing minority students in meaning-making and, according to the NLG (1996), allow students to participate in designing the pedagogy in partnership with their teachers and situating themselves in current practices.

More importantly, where applicable, it would be very useful to appoint bilingual tutors – in the case of these Libyan students, tutors who are bilingual in Arabic and English. UWC has a Department of Arabic where such tutors could be recruited to maximize successful facilitation with such students. As revealed in the findings, the participants of this research repeatedly mentioned that it was the oral discussions specifically in their L1 that mediated the unknown content and led to a clearer understanding of how to write their academic assignments successfully. Banda (2003) calls for tutoring to be done by trained academic mediators or bilingual translators.

This is necessary to help students understand the academic discourse in English and to identify the issues of second language socialization as a way of mediating the differences in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

For classroom practices, I recommend that there is a need for diverse instructions and resources to fulfil the needs of both domestic and foreign students. There is a need for lecturers and lecturers to emphasise positive differences and to allow more choice in the range of topics for assignments. A wider choice of topics will help students to feel free to write and incorporate their own backgrounds, so that the assignments become more relevant to the needs of their own national contexts. Teaching strategies like collaborative group-work is also highly recommended here, as the participants mentioned the importance of oral discussions with their peers. It would be useful to be a part of a group where they can learn from their colleagues who are used to the cultural conventions in L2 writing and to discuss their assignments freely in order to gain confidence in their work. The combination of such groups is also important – there should always be local students blended with foreign students in order to ensure that fruitful discussions take place that can improve the understanding of the foreign students.

The findings of this research have brought to light the important role of clear, thorough feedback from lecturers. It is highly recommended that lecturers instruct their foreign students thoroughly in the stages of composing, drafting, revising and editing multilingual drafts until they are sure that they have attained the ability to write the new academic discourse and have understood the different perspectives of the languages (Banda, 2003). Lecturers should also inform the faculty about the situation of these students when they are in need of further assistance, like assigning writing coaches, or recommending certain courses or other facilities, like study groups, to such students.

Lastly, there might also be a need to have social support systems and networks in the university to help foreign learners with academic literacy mediation. For example, a centre for multilingualism should aid in mediating the multilingual and multicultural contexts in the university and building cross-cultural awareness in academic institutions. The centre may provide services to help such students with, among

others, translation from Arabic (in the case of Libyan students), as well as meeting other specific needs of each foreign student community.



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## **FACULTY OF ARTS**

### **INFORMATION SHEET**

**LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

**RESEARCH PROJECT: Biliteracy and Academic Success: the experiences of selected Libyan students.**

**YEAR: 2016**

**Dear Student,**

We would like to invite you to participate in my Masters research project in Linguistics which seeks to document your experience in studying in a second language.

Your part in this project is to respond to a questionnaire which will be supplied by the researcher and permit the researcher to use the data from your written assignments. Your identity will of course not be revealed, and you have the right to withdraw your data at any time.

Yours sincerely

Fathia El shibani (researcher)



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**Consent Form**

University of the Western Cape

**Student Name:**

**Title of the research project:**

**Biliteracy and Academic Success: the experiences of selected Libyan students.**

**Please initial box**

- 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
- 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. (If I wish to withdraw I may contact the lead researchers at any time)
- 3. I understand my responses and personal data will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the essay or assignment
- 4. I understand the essay and assignment are not for publication although anonymous extracts may be published from them as part of future publications.
- 5. I agree to take part in the above research project.



\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Participant Date Signature  
 (or legal representative)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of person taking consent Date Signature  
 (If different from lead researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Lead Researcher Date Signature  
 (To be signed and dated in presence of the participant)

*Copies: All participants will receive a copy of the signed and dated version of the consent form and information sheet for themselves. A copy of this will be filed and kept in a secure location for research purposes only.*

<p><b>Researcher:</b>  <b>Student Name and Signature</b></p>	<p><b>lecturers in charge :</b>          Profs C. Dyers and B.E. Antia</p> <p><b>Signatures:</b></p>	<p><b>HOD:</b>          Prof B E Antia          Dept. Linguistics</p> <p><b>Signature:</b></p>
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## APPENDIX II - Questionnaire

Questionnaire:

**Dear Participants**

**We appreciate your participation in our questionnaire intended for a student's research in Linguistics. The reporting data to be obtained will be anonymous.**

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Please Complete the Following:

Name of the university:.....

Name of the course:.....

The nature of your course:.....

- a. By courses    b. By courses and thesis    c. Thesis only.

Years of study in South Africa:.....

Have you ever studied abroad before, if yes please specify for how long.

- a. Yes    b. No

Context:

1- How good do you rate your spoken Arabic ?

- Excellent    very good    good    fair

2- How good do you rate your spoken English?

- Excellent    very good    good    fair

3- How good you rate your written Arabic?

- Excellent    very good    good    fair



4- How good you rate your written English?

- Excellent
- very good
- good
- fair

5- How good is your reading skill in Arabic?

- Excellent
- very good
- good
- fair

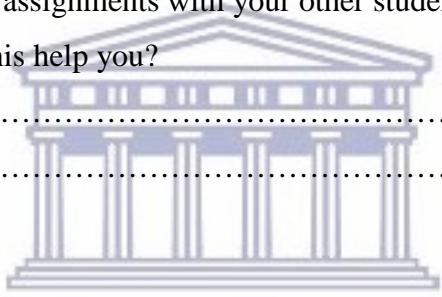
6- How good is your reading skill in English?

- Excellent
- very good
- good
- fair

7- Do you discuss your assignments with your other students/ yourself in English or Arabic? How does this help you?

.....

.....



Development:

1- How clear do your lecturers make their assignments?

- Conveniently clear
- Not very clear
- I struggle to understand them

2- Do they ever acknowledge your background as an Arabic speaker who may face specific challenges?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

Content:

1- How content is taught to you by your lecturer?

.....

.....

2- How do you think that the content of the course is relevant to your cultural and socio- background?

- I study science so it is international

There are some similarities that I can draw on

There is rarely any similarities, so I have to learn in a different content.

3- What you suggest to help you?

.....  
.....

Media:

1- What is the kind of English used inside the lecture hall by your lecturer and colleagues?

.....  
.....

2- Do your lecturer support the material by media presentations?

Always       Sometimes       Rarely

3- What do you think helps you or hinders you in understanding the content of your lectures?

.....  
.....  
.....

4- When you contact your lecturer, do you prefer to email him/her or speak with him face to face? Explain?

.....  
.....

5- How often during your study you be assigned with writing tasks?

Every class       Frequently       Never       Only thesis

6- How did you acquire the ability to write academic assignments?

I already used to write academic assignments during my past academic experience.

- My lecturers explain to me.       From group work with my colleagues.
- I consult the writing centre.

7- Why do you think you are managing to succeed in writing your assignments in English? What strategies you adopt?

.....

.....

.....

Thanks For Your Time



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## APPENDIX III – Transcribed Interviews

### Interview (1): SARA\*

F: would you like to do our interview in English or Arabic

S: no no.. Arabic of course .. let's speak our Libyan accent

F: OK that's fine...let's start... tell me Sara about this essay Hyper modality and hyper modal analysis of Standard Bank

S: Ok this was first assignment I wrote in the honors.. I don't have any idea or background about academic writing and even I had never ever wrote using the computer ...it was the first time I write on computer and my writing was very slow... even though I wrote by my own and it was my own effort... yes no body helped me... [ pointing at the paper] look here the writing, the points I had made were completely wrong... I had submitted it to the Prof she saw the font, the line space,...it was not the same ...ah

F: so the problem was firstly the computer convention or the things connected to with printing like the font type, spacing//

S: //I don't have any idea... because you know in Libya those days when I was studying we did not use the computer NEVER NEVER//

F:// when did you graduate

S: 2007... we did not use computers

F: [ looking through the assignment] if we come to the notes... firstly punctuation and grammatical then also the structure that is the[ reading from the papers] introduction, aims of the essay, the steps you will follow in your essay...

F: ok tell me when she gave you this assignment, did she give you instructions about how to write it//

S://Never on the basis that we already have an idea as the other student as I was one of a group... but I did not have any idea

F: ok tell me about the subject itself “ Hyper modality and hyper modal analysis of Standard Bank”

S: of course I had never heard about it... and when I started writing, I looked in Google for information about the Standard Bank but everything I gathered was as literature review... every time I had collected information and showed them to the group, as I was part of a group were completing each other in this assignment, they said to me this is literature not suitable for the discussion... even in the conversation...ah//

F: //oral presentation you mean//

S: oral presentation exactly.. I can't tell you how I got tired looking for the needed information

F: you mean that the difference between you and your colleagues was also in the way the analyze the information but your way is quoting and using directly//

S:// right and I didn't even knew how to change the sentences on my own I didn't have any idea//

F: they call it thrown in the deep side to either swim or sink//

S:// exactly I was not taught this and I did not ask until I came to look for information and show to my group the y told me that was not correct... I got very stressed... and looked for anyone to help but couldn't find someone who can explain to me

F: tell me about the content of this subject do you feel that it has to do with the science that you seek to learn here//

S:// I told you that before I had always thought why I am studying this what is the benefit//

F: because in Libya the subjects in linguistics always related to teaching English as second language//

S:// of course this will not be a useful subject there but for them they use it here and apply it but we not

F: thanks for the explanation it is a very useful assignment I'll take it

S: this is another one it is the same but a broader one and also you can see the Prof's feedback... you can see how she asked me to change the font and the writing... also this was my own work my own effort no body helped me

F: the notes also were between the punctuation, grammatical and the structure.. how do you feel about the feedback did you find it useful//

S:// of course it was useful//

F: how it was useful did you respond to them by yourself or did you ask for assistance

S: ok the first assignment was my own work but after I saw the mark it was a low mark I think it was 58... even though I was happy //

F:// it gave you hope//

S:// yes it gave hope that I had made something by my own and in the same time I was afraid to fail this course so I felt that I had to look for someone who help me and I found my friend whom I paid to teach me the academic writing methods and helped me to understand//

F:// and you found that they were small things just you didn't know them//

S://very simple but I haven't study them//

F: very simple and you lose marks for//

S:// exactly

F:// that's why you have hope when you think that you had got 50 with all of those mistakes but if had have known them earlier, you would have had 70 or something

S: this is another presentation [ politeness in Islamic culture] I did very well it was excellent

F: it is in cross cultural communications ok lets speak about it this assignment also has oral and written form.. first what was the advantages of the content of this assignment

S: when I had chosen the subject of the assignment I felt relieved to it I felt that I am interested in it as a Muslim and have a good background about it that why I relieved

to the topic and when I looked for information, I didn't find any difficulty as that I encountered in the other assignments... I had the information easily

F: what about the group you were working with in this assignment...was it different

S: of course the other student was also Libyan and she has the same feeling

F: did find that any positive side in being assigned with a Libyan colleague for example the similar interest in the subject, did you use Arabic language for your discussions... did you find the subject important for the future

S: of course we had the same interest in the subject we worked together at university and at home... also we wanted to show the others something from our culture... ah.... And the subject is important in the future for me and her//

F://because when you go back to teach Linguistics in Libya, usually Politeness in language might be one of the topics.. and you got a good mark

S:I got an excellent mark and the Prof admired the presentation and I felt proud that I gave them information they didn't know before it was a different feeling than those other presentations//

F:// you were confident//

S:// I had confidence and I was proud of what I had presented

F: can you tell me the difference in this assignment between the oral and written forms

S: of course the oral was much easier because writing style is different... yes I did well in the written far better than the earlier assignments because I have already learnt - as I told you- from my friend who taught me we had a lot of discussions about every bit in the assignment... I learnt how to organize my ideas and edit my writing... secondly it belonged to us...my own culture I was able to write my own ideas as I had a background and full understanding unlike the other assignments where I was even unable to change the text meaning

F: [looking through the paper ] and this note is about the references

S: yes this I had a problem with references

F: his feedback was clear and he gave you a very good mark for the assignment his notes were about the structure... he wrote you need a conclusion and the references... what's your problem with the references

S: what can I say honestly in Libya I had not study them no body showed us how to do referencing or we might did them briefly I can't remember it is a considerable time since 2006 I might have ...//

F:// forgot//

S://and while I was writing I had not thought of looking in the internet and see how they are done

F:I use the citing from Google scholar you may even copy paste them

S: I do not know that//

F:// until now//

S:// no no I learned referencing from my friend

F:it was very good mark .. he gave you 78

S: this is the best mark I had got in that year... as I told you when you have an understanding of the subject you can express your ideas unlike the other subjects where even when you look for information... I mean when you don't understand something it is difficult to write about it... it was really the best assignment and from it I liked the Prof because he gave me back my confidence

F: you have confidence right you feel that you are writing without tension//

S://yes exactly... another thing when we were presenting I didn't feel that fear like the other presentations where I were always hesitant as I was saying things I were not sure about them..but in this presentation I was sure 100% that the students learn the subject for the first time it was a very nice feeling

F: your explanation about the assignments was wonderful thanks very much... now I want to ask you some questions... can you explain the difference between the oral and written assignments which you prefer and which you feel that you are able to do better in



S: normally the oral is better why because in the oral presentations they will not account for your speaking mistakes even they when you listen to them... they make a lot of grammatical mistakes... on the other hand in writing the account for everything grammar, punctuation, every..//

F://also in the oral when you use power point it helps you and you get marks for the media presentation

S: so I think the oral is always better for me... the power point helped me a lot in reading from the slides

F: what about the lecturers' feedback... was it individual or general for all the students or there was no feedback at all as you had three lecturers in this year

S: I think the feedback was general... nothing was specific for me I think I was treated indifferently from my colleagues//

F:// even your thesis Prof now? She doesn't give you any individual feedback as she tells you what are your own writing problems you have this and this..

S: NEVER until now never

F: So you completely depend on yourself//

S: another thing I have to ask I mean if you don't ask she will never tell you I have always to ask

F: what are you doing at the moment.. writing your thesis

S: yes I'm writing now

F: how are you managing to write what are the strategies that you use and what do you think are the obstacles you face

S: first I use the dictionary it's Arabic-English of course and English- English Longman..I usually quote the sentence that's cut and paste and then change the words ..how I change..I concentrate on the verbs you need strong formal verbs and to change the sentence to be formal not just simple English and when I read an article I always look at the writing style as the expressions like... "I noted that" or " according to .." I collect these expressions and then I use them.. I've been advised to use the Google

translate but I found it useless it gave me completely wrong sentences it was literal translation I struggled with once twice then I decided not to use it anymore.. I now rely on the normal dictionaries ..when I don't understand I translate into Arabic then I use the English one to change.. after that I change the sentences with my own way...by now I only work by my own

F: what is your research about

S: discourse analysis of Bo-kaap heritage

F: Did you study discourse analysis before

S: NENER

F: so how did you choose this topic

S:honestly I did not choose this topic it was an advice of my Prof...at the beginning I had a topic about Libyan students and the problems they encounter here... she did not encourage the idea she said that I would need then interviews, questionnaire and class notes... she made it so complicated ...and...//

F:// she suggested this one //

S:// suggested this topic and told me as I already live in Bo-kaap so I would be able to get my data more easily

F: does as you topic relates to the Islamic culture//

S:// it is all about Islamic culture

F:so you already have an idea on it...I mean it goes with your honors research essay

S: it is the same topic but we made it wider

F: do you think that there's a difference between your cultural or linguistic background and this subject of your research for example the English- Afrikaans languages

S:no no it is the opposite I am really interested in it I mean that it relates to all cultures and to Islam and the more I read about it I learn new things... I'm really enjoying it

F: so you'll find a place for what you are studying now in Libya when you go back

S: The same topic not but when I start lecturing in my country, I'll touch on some concepts like identity, culture, discourse analysis... I mean that all these will be useful in teaching linguistics

F: yes all of these are important.. so now what are the obstacles that you face at the moment in your research

S: the first problem is in listening as I am doing interviews with South Africans, I find difficulty in understanding many words I can't understand them until I go back to my interviewee as I'm transcribing my interviews now... another thing is analyzing my data I'm really afraid of the analysis because I don't have any background about discourse analysis... these are the difficulties at the moment and I'll search for them soon In shaAllah

F: thanks Sara so much for your time and your great comments



## **Interview 2: HEBA\***

F: how long have you been in Cape Town now

H: four years

F: and how long have you studied Masters

H: three and I spent a year studying English

F: the first question is how you rate your two languages the Arabic and English your language skills writing reading speaking

H: in writing I usually give myself good I can't say more or less I'll choose fair

F: the next how do you discuss your assignments with your colleagues as I know you have Arab and Libyan in your department

H: yes there are a group of Libyans and Arab some of them in my department and also in the other departments

F: so when you discuss with them things related to your assignments do you use Arabic

H: of course we speak Arabic

F: which variety, standard Arabic or your Libyan vernacular and can you say what is the difference between these accents

H: the Libyan accent exactly what I prefer it is the language that relates to us and I can express myself in... sometimes I find myself in need to explain some vocabulary to my Arab friends I feel that may affect the fluency.. or meaning of my speech as the speech changes in its content using the standard Arabic is like translation

F: yes standard Arabic is a second language to us//

H: //exactly

F: ok tell me about your assignments and how your lecturers can make them clear for you do they give you only the title or they use some clarifications about the techniques needed in writing them

H: in the first assignment the Prof gave us the title and said- that's how I understood- he said it should be a debate and that I have to stick to one side either with or against... I was against and submitted my assignment he was unsatisfied about it and asked me to rewrite it for many reasons firstly he stated that I was not fair in the argument I was supposed to discuss the pros and cons of the subject but I only discussed the negative side... there was something lost in my translation as they say I didn't understand//

F: // your English failed you

H: exactly this was the first point ...the second thing I had lots of grammatical and spelling mistakes in addition to a big error it was writing the whole assignment in capital letters he said that he was tired reading the assignment in capital letters...also there were major mistakes in writing the references and the text citation because I didn't have any idea about academic writing

F: so when before he gave you the assignment he didn't give you instructions about the technical details like the font...spacing//

H: // never and I didn't have any idea about that only he gave us the title and that it should be a debate I used my previous knowledge in writing that I had learnt in the English school and he said that the assignment should be divided into logical parts as introduction, conclusion etc... that was after my submission of this article he started giving me like more information and he recommended the department to assign me a writing coach in addition to a writing work shop that I had attended...in fact it helped me a lot

F: did your lecturers acknowledge you as an international student or you were treated as a domestic one was the treatment general or specific

H: at the beginning I was treated like the other students specially in this first assignment and another one... after that they assigned a writing coach for me because they had understood that I have my own struggles in the language

F: tell me about how the content of the lectures was taught to you...did you have lectures or you prepare the assignments...In general

H: about the assignments from the first week the Prof sent us the titles for every student so we can prepare... in the first assignment of another module also my English failed me.. the Prof said that she wants power point presentation and word document assignment...in this time I also didn't understand and I had prepared only a power point presentation this was the first problem... secondly she told me that my presentation was very basic... all the information were basic not of a postgraduate level all the information I used were taken from text books... no articles or new researches were used... it was like I reached the point that I wanted to change myself... I wanted to know what they mean exactly... I told my Prof that I will write the essay she asked for but she told me that assignment is the first one just to see where I am and what are my weakness points so in the next two I wouldn't make the same mistakes...ok

F: going back to the my question how were you lectures given to you

H: we don't have lectures//

F: // in all modules//

H:// yes we didn't have any lectures during the course

F: so you have practical work on patients and you submit assignments//

H: // exactly

F: so you have to do the major course work not your lecturers//

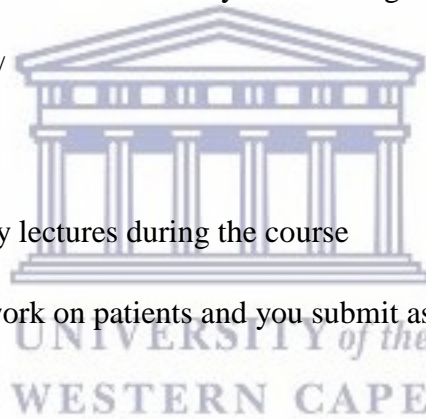
H:// yes ..they always told us that we are postgraduate students we don't need lectures it is a self study course

F: do you think that the content of the course is related to your background in Libya was it the same as that you studied there

H: the information and subjects I have studied here are more... I've learnt more but the basis are the same

F: so nothing South African specific

H:// no at all it is medicine so it is international



F: can you tell me about the kind of English was spoken inside you lecture halls or for you inside the practice rooms... I mean the varieties your lecturers speak with and your colleagues

H: they speak English only //

F:// what kind of English...I am asking about the accents mixes..

H: generally they all speak English but some Profs speak with a Malayan accent it was difficult for me sometimes... yes sometimes when they don't want us to understand something they speak Afrikaans but not in thing that related to our subject matters

F: what about your South African colleagues do they also use English in their discussions//

H: // yes of course

F: do your lecturers usually support their lectures with media material

H: yes they always do in the seminars specially when we had new equipments or devices for the departments or new materials they give us like a lecture about it and the use power point presentation and even hands in

F: so what do you think are the things that helped you more to understand the lectures or the presentations and vise versa

H: the subjects some subject are at the heart of my interest so you find me already have an idea about them and already read about them so I don't find a problem in understanding the lecture... sometimes I don't have interest in the subject matter of the lecture some technical subjects for example so I already don't understand the basics of them... we also have a positive thing that our lecturers usually do..before any presentation they send all of us the seminar in a written form like leaflets so we can read them and prepare so if I am interested I print it read it so on the day of the presentation I have an idea about it... so it's the reading and the foreknowledge what helps me understand the lectures

F: I meant in my question techniques the modes your lecturers use like media... pictures

H: // yes all of that and also they give us leaflets it helps me a lot besides what you mentioned the pictures also when I do presentation the media helps me to read from the slides and organize my talk

F: what about what hinders you from understanding

H: sometimes the accent of the lecturer when they explain quickly...I think my listening skills are less developed than the others I sometimes find myself unable to understand the whole thing may be because of ...er the accent I understand more when I read from slides or leaflets

F: when you want to discuss something with your Prof do you write him an email of you prefer to meet him face to face

H: of course I prefer to meet him face to face first I send him a brief email to have an appointment... we used to have a weekly meeting ..I'm speaking about my thesis supervisor... we were meeting every Friday from 9-10 discussing about what I had added to my research what are the difficulties and usually I discuss with him his feedback when I couldn't understand his hand writing and he on the other side ask me to explain him what I mean with certain things when he can't understand my language... when I explain to him and this happened to me several times he tells me that I am translating from Arabic to English just a transfer which is inapplicable so he rewrites the sentence for me

F: how meeting the Prof face to face helped you than just emailing him

H: the more you write the more you make mistakes and you lose the main idea... I prefer to speak with the Prof because what if I would have written something he couldn't understand...when I'm with him I can explain the meaning using different modes of communication

F: can you tell me how have you learnt writing assignments... summarize

H: I have learnt gradually first I have learnt from my mistakes in the first and second assignments after that when they assigned me with a writing coach in the first year she sat with me and gave me from her time so she revised with me my assignments line by line hinting every spelling grammatical mistake she helped me in formulating



the sentences she sent me emails contain like the words connecting the sentences or the words we use at the beginning of the paragraph //

F: // was she South African //

H: // she was Kenyan she was a PhD student I still remember how she taught me how to divide my essay into paragraphs... introduction... conclusion..ah...we had a lot of discussions about my writing...I write a draft and then we discuss about it and then we do another one and so on until I did it myself...additionally when I read an article or a research I tried to learn from them and pick as much as I can I tried to imitate the academic writing style and how to think like them

F: did you have writing experience before... I mean during your study in Libya had you submitted any assignments//

H:// never unfortunately no

F: so you did not have any experience so what are your strategies that you adopted to submit a successful assignment

H: the most helpful thing was the assistance of the writing coach//

F: // what about the strategy of translation do you use translation

H: no I don't use translation usually only when I can't understand the meaning of the word a new word for me//

F: // didn't you read any articles in Arabic or revise your texts books that you had studied in Libya you go back to them so you gain a better understanding

H: basically during my study in the university in Libya we used to study medical sciences in English... so to say that the notes the lecturers gave us were in English and then they explain the lecture in Arabic or mix of Arabic and English... but the exams were in English...so I can say that my strategies are the writing coach and the self learning from articles

F: didn't you turn to ask for a proof reading by someone before you submit the assignment

H: yes in my first year the writing coach was the one who do the proof reading for me but from the second year so became more busy so I used to do the editing myself ...yes only once before submitting my research proposal I remember that I gave it to my colleague a Kenyan student as English is an official language for them his English was very good so he read it and gave me some comments

F: what about the thesis//

H: //for the thesis the supervisor was doing the proofreading I didn't send it to any body

F: can you tell me how do you rate your writing ability in Arabic in the past

H: generally I was a good reader in the past I love reading books and my Arabic language is good I hate the linguistic mistakes grammatical or spelling in Arabic language

F: the different genres in writing in Arabic like writing emails ...letters, a report did you have any mastery on some of those genres

H: unfortunately no

F: do you mean that during your studies in the past in Libya you didn't use writing

H: it was only once during my whole university study I was assigned with an assignment and it was in English... I don't remember another one

F: so you have learnt the alphabets of the academic writing in South Africa

H:exactly

F: this is your first assignment... the Prof gave you the title//

H:// the title and told you that it should be a debate//

F:// right ...how was his feedback

H: he told me that my essay was as if I am writing to a magazine not scientific in nature even the resources it was all from Google not certified information...he also commented on the font the bold writing ah... all the text was written in capital letters

in addition to the grammatical and spelling mistakes... yes the assignment was not divided into different sections

F: and this is all because you didn't have any previous experience

H: never I didn't have any idea about the standards needed to succeeding the assignment also numbering the pages right I didn't know how to do it... yah this is the second draft... see I tried to correct the first one but still the references

F: yes was the feedback about the second draft better

H: no he wasn't still satisfied it wasn't in the required level//

F: // was he able to make you understand your errors

H: he told me what are they but didn't teach me how to correct them may be he sees that it's not his responsibility to teach how to write that's why they assigned me to the writing coach

F: can I ask this question here... what are the difficulties when you start writing

H: yah the first thing is how to start and what to say ...also how to link the ideas together... even how to divide the paragraphs I think that every paragraph should express one idea then sometimes you have a common idea you don't know where it must go with this paragraph or the other one

F: ok what about the second assignment

H: this is the second assignment this is for another Prof in another module and this was the second assignment for he as I didn't write one as I told you... here Alhamdulillah I have learnt many things she also asked me to send her a draft before submission... to see what exactly I was writing ... and when I did she told me I'm in the right road .. she said it's good complete the same way... see here I wrote introduction ah...yes the font is still bold but the font twelve as required and the spacing....also I was able to number my pages ... also I learnt the in text citation ... you can say I started to follow a logical way in the argument and she gave me guidelines .... yes I learnt how to write the references so the result was much better

F: how did you learnt the references

H: my colleague she was a Sudanese she taught me exactly how to do them she told me that I have to use copy past then to adjust it into Harvard and adjust the font

F: tell me about this friend ... to what extent do you think that your discussions with your Arab and Libyan colleagues help you//

H: // a lot it helps a lot specially in technical issues how to write the assignment sometimes we discuss our problems in the clinic or with our supervisors we feel much comfort when we speak together...we learn from each other's mistakes

F: have you ever worked with one of them in the same assignment or presentation

H: no never we write individually

F: so this is the assignment [looking at the third one provided] that you think is the best what's different about it

H: yes this was the best for me it was a big assignment you can say I covered all the sides of the subject and I got a good mark ...yes you can see how is the improvement first see the time of content.. the divisions... introduction... I discussed a kind of disease I did cover the whole subject and used pictures and tables ..by the time in this assignments I wrote and revised many times//

F: // drafting//

H: // exactly.. I revised it many time so I was able to correct my mistakes you can say that it was in the last year so I didn't want to send something full of basic mistakes showing that a final year student and still committing such basic stuff...so I learnt from my previous errors and the most useful thing was my colleagues... I looked at how they make things and tried to do the same like the table of contents here I noticed that they use it even in the power point presentations ... the Prof gave me in her evaluation 69 on everything and the course coordinator told me that once your Prof gave you this mark that means that she is very satisfied because she doesn't give such a mark easily//

F: // and this gave you a push//

H: //of course

F: tell me about the techniques you follow in writing like this paragraph.. how do you write it how do you use the articles

H: generally I prefer to print the article and read it.. in the first time I read generally then in the second time I start underlining the important information and I put it under sections where they go you can say that from I divide my writing into sections like introduction... diagnosis what exactly I'm going to write... then when I read the articles I may add more subtitles... prevalence for example I always find it in articles so... I adopted it as a principle section in my assignments... so I can learn from the articles not only the information but also how to arrange my writing under certain sections... I like to write by my hand I don't like to use the computer until later... first I read the information then I rewrite it by my own in a note book until I finish this article I move to the other article I use the linking words then I read what I had written and arrange my paragraph so it discusses only one idea ... so ... the writing coach taught me that I should know what are the more preferable academic synonyms

F: ok .. do you usually use the dictionary

H: yes of course//

F:// which dictionary//

H:// honestly I use Google I write synonyms then It gives a number of translation websites I use any one of them

F: is it English- Arabic or Arabic –English

H: I use the Arabic dictionary rarely only when I don't know the meaning of the word at all

F:// so you don't translate literally

H: I always aim to understand the meaning in general so I don't use a dictionary for every word

F: ok I'll ask some different questions... when first you started learning English

H: it was when I was in grade eight

F: so you were from the lucky generation in Libya who studied English in school//

H: // yes I had started English in grade eight

F: now you rated your languages Arabic, Libyan vernacular and English ... where do you find yourself more

H: I prefer to speak my Libyan language but I write best in English... I think that I write better in English than in Arabic ...it's from 2000 when I was in secondary school I didn't write in Arabic

F: so do you want to say that your previous writing skills in Arabic did not have any role in developing the new writing skills in English that you have learnt in South Africa

H: exactly... I feel that I've lost my ability to write in Arabic ...unfortunately

F: thanks a lot for your time



Interview 3: Abdulla\*

F: hello Mr... I'd our interview today will be about your writing experiences but generally about your study experiences with a context of a foreign language

A: yes

F: would you like to speak English or Arabic

A: yes yes Arabic I'd prefer

F: ok first tell me about your study program.. ah ..what its nature exactly

A: It's a PhD by research

F: so only thesis ok did you take any courses//

A:// scientific courses or in writing//

F:// any courses//

A: I didn't have any courses relevant to my study material it's only research

F: in writing//

A:// in writing I did take some... for example in the first year I had a course for three days about writing proposals step by step... ah..how to communicate with supervisor...and collect data etc after that in the second year I had another course about writing the thesis .. it was about how to write every chapter... um.. in the third year I had a one day course about the last steps in writing the thesis and how to finish it we learnt about submitting the thesis to turn it in program... these are the course I had

F: can you tell me the difference between your PhD experience and your previous one in Masters

A: of course there is great difference... ah...it's the language I studied my masters degree in Libya with my language and now I studying in English only...ah... another difference from an academic view the PhD experience is wider than the Masters ...during my Masters study my background about the academic research was less than now...ah... now I studied a lot for more details about data collection and doing analysis .. how to write literature review...the hypothesis of the research I think it's more detailed and deeper in the PhD

F:but you have already the keys from you previous experience ...as you have written a similar research//

A:// of course//

F:// besides taking courses//

A:// in Masters //

F:// now the language is different

A: the language and the study is wider .. now I have learnt more about write research papers ...how to write data presentation better than before...with more details and accuracy

F:ok tell me ...now when you write do you have anybody who can help you or discuss with about your study issues... writing

A: due to the nature of my study.. from the time I did my proposal presentation my professor told me that I can even go back to my country and continue my study there as all my data online and I can communicate with my supervisor by email ...so even I'm still in Cape Town I study at home and rarely go to the university... because of that I have very rare communication with my colleagues or lecturers in the department... all my work is reading articles from the internet...ah ...when I need to talk to my professor I'd prefer to write him an email and sometimes we meet in the university...so to say that most of my communication is with Arab students we speak about scientific and technical issues related to our studies .. for example how to collect data ...ah.. how to do the analysis.. even though we are from different specializations we do benefit from our discussion together

F: good ... do you have someone who helps you with your research

A: yes I have... he's my friend he has studied the same field but in England as he had the same experience... he has already got his degree...ah.. he is the best who can help..he always provide me with useful instructions ... I have benefited from him greatly specially in data collection and analysis

F: let's talk about writing...the steps do you write in English directly or you use some Arabic

A: ok at the beginning I wrote my proposal in Arabic .. at that time my language was very poor so I did not have the ability to write fully in English ... so I used translation.. Google... then I try to arrange the translated text that was very difficult and very tiring ...ah ... another thing the translation often gives you weak or inappropriate phrases which makes the speech loses its content

F:later how has it developed

A: later ...ok let's say now I do the following... I concentrate on one point.. for example when I write my introduction... I take introductions from a number of articles in the same field I read them all deeply in order to borrow some expressions and phrases that I can use in my own introduction ...then when I come to the literature review I do the same ...now I read may be ten articles at the same time and I



read them looking at their structures and phrases like those I have problems with... such as...linking phrases I need them to link the different ideas logically... on the other side I write with Arabic to write notes to remind myself with the structure ...it's much easier to write these notes in Arabic... as if I'm discussing with myself ...of course Arabic is easier and faster

F: so even that the end product of your writing is in English Arabic is still present ... ah ...like the use of translation or as you said linking the ideas... um.. what about reading do you read any articles or books in Arabic... how that helps

H: from the beginning even sometimes when I'm in need of certain scientific vocabulary ... I look for some Arabic articles ...ah..you can say that the Arabic language is not commonly used in writing research in this field ... I have some difficulty with statistic terminology I need to find their equivalent in my language ... but I couldn't find the exact translation... this is one point

F: yes I understand ... tell me about your language skills Arabic... as you answered in the questionnaire that your Arabic is Excellent...ah ...and you rated your English skills as good ... do you think that there's a relation between both//

A:// If I have understood your question...I think that who does not have the ability to write in his language will not be able to write in another... ah..as I told you ... when you write paragraph I depend of the writing skills I had already learnt during my previous study in Masters so it was easy for me... the difficulties were in the language itself.. I mean the terminology so I rely on reading ...I read a lot of articles I read looking for vocabulary and new expressions I can insert in my paragraph

F: that's great..ah.. you strongly depend on reading in developing your writing//

A: //that's right//

F:// how//

A: this is an important point... my reading is not only for information... in the first time I read for information I mean.. um...I take the scientific substance form the article then I read again... I read usually ten articles looking for the structure how they organized the paragraph I try to imitate how they link the ideas and paragraphs in a piece of paper I collect as much as I can some new vocabulary... linking words or full sentences that I find them useful ..um.. and that's it

F:did you have presentation or a seminar

A yes I had a seminar of my proposal I use data show ...it was for my proposal...ah.. I presented the research before the committee of higher studies//

F:// how do you think the data show or media helped you to make yourself understood

A: ok... it was helpful... sometimes I use reading from the slides and I add explanation with my humble..ur ..or simple language... they were positive the lecturers... in terms of language they didn't give the impression that they did not understand... it was my first time to speak in front of specialized audience ...before that I have prepared for some time for the presentation I had a private course with a teacher who sat with me to prepare for the presentation... ur...for pronunciation... for key words she helped me a lot with pronunciation... I always have a problem with pronunciation ... I don't prefer things related with speaking .. I think it's a weakness point for me

F:I see in the questionnaire you wrote that you prefer to email your supervisor instead of speaking face to face

A: yes of course.. when I write him an email I take my time to in writing and revising... I can select the appropriate words I sometimes use translation ... and so on

F: now tell me about the subject or title of your thesis ...how did you choose it was it your choice or it was from your Prof's..or department

A: first of all I did work on the same area in my Masters research...after further reading of research on finance I did have interest in this subject matter... as you may know it is a growing field nowadays world wide .. of course the thing helped me mainly that I already have a background about it //

F:// do you think that your research have any connection with the context you relate to... I mean is it useful for you when you go back to your country//

A: // sure... by virtue of that the field economics is general or international...ur... it is like medicine you can say... my country as a third world country of course it does need such studies

F:now tell me about the accents of south Africa ... those accents spoken around you in the university or by your Prof ... tell me about them

A: as I told you that due to the nature of my study I don't have courses ... so you can say that I mainly have communication with my Prof who speaks English with a very understandable accent... I can understand every word he says... I think that my listening skills are not developed well enough to understand every accent ...on the other hand he even when sometimes I do pronunciation mistakes he doesn't try to make me feel that I make something wrong ... he helped me a lot to get confidence in my speech ...in fact the whole people in the university ... that's something positive let's say it.... In south Africa they all people... give you confidence in your speech they usually ignore your pronunciation mistakes once they had understood the meaning...going back to our point... the language spoken in the university is fine for me but I have problem in understanding the street accent ...specially spoken by young people in the street

F: we have discussed together about the Arabic language specifically the standard accent and you said that it is always present in your study...what about the Arabic vernacular does it have any role

A: yes... in writing I use standard Arabic ...it's very important ...but the vernacular I use it whenever I discuss something with my friend//

F: // do you discuss about scientific issues with you friend using vernacular Arabic//

A; yes.. I never speak in standard Arabic ...and never write in vernacular every accent has its own role... when I speak with my friend ... I think this is useful for you... we speak with our Libyan dialect and we mix it with English vocabulary related to my study... this is the simplest way ... this is the language that we can express our ideas freely without posing barriers

F: as this is your first experience to use English in writing or in study in general... can you tell me the similarities and differences you encountered with the language

A; because of my good background of Arabic writing I think that the system of writing in the two languages is similar... I mean that how to write a paragraph with one idea ... how to start with a main idea in the first sentence then...then you explain or exemplify ...things like that...also punctuation is the same

F: in English they start from left to right ...it's the opposite for Arabic...ur... right to left... what do you think

A: no..no I don't think.. the different thing is grammar...for example in Arabic when we name a list of items ... we use and..and ..and but in English we use commas until the one before the last we use and... yes there are some differences...//

F:// do you do proof reading

A: yes

F: what are the steps from writing and proof reading

A: first I write ...do the translation then I organize my chapter ... after that I send it to the proof reader ..she is someone that I pay to do ...usually because of my poor language she does more than twice...in the first time most of her comment are that she cannot understand the sentences... so she asks for more clarification...that is a result of direct translation ...a s I told you I use Google translate... or sometimes I use simple grammar ...like I usually use past simple not the present perfect or passive...which changes the entire meaning usually she sends it back three times until she and me are satisfied...then I send it to my Prof

F: what about the Prof's feedback

A: most of his comments are about scientific issues related to the subject matter itself rather than writing mistakes... like organizing the structure or sometimes referencing

F: now where are you in your research

A: in the present time I have completed collecting my data ... ah...and now I'm analyzing them... in fact I'm encountering difficulties

F: what do you think may help ... or give you a push

A; I think I need to ask my Prof to assign me a writing coach ... because... I think my way of writing is very slow...it takes long time

F: is it the language//

A:// of course.. the scientific and statistic issues are clear for me specially with the thorough advice of my supervisor...but when I come to writing I need long time to read a lot of articles then translate ...linking the paragraphs...it's too much work for every small paragraph...but things are going in the right way..I'm sure I'm going to do it soon.. my plan to finish by the end of this year

F: I hope so...we wish you good luck Inshaallah.



APPENDIX IV – Samples of the three participants' written assignments

Prepared by Ali Teeka.

Research  
proposal

Influential factors in determining the form of  
financing structure in banks and their  
impact on the Cost of funds

Evidence from SA banks

مقدمة ..  
ازدادت أهمية رأس المال خلال العقود الاثنان الأخيرة

كما حصلت تطورات مهمة على الطق والاستراتيجيات لتناسب  
مع التحديات التي تواجه المؤسسات المالية . بالإضافة  
الى التطور التكنولوجي والمسؤوليات الاجتماعية المتزايدة  
حيث ان نجاح المؤسسة في البقاء والازدهار والاستمرار في عملها  
يعتمد على قدرتها في ادارة رأس المال والحفاظ على معدلات  
آداء ناجحة ، خاصة في الحصول على الاموال واستثمارها ومساله  
افضل السبل لادارة الحوكمة (governance) لتحقيق الكفاءة  
مع أقل مخاطرة . وهذا يمكن الحصول عليه من خلال  
خليط مناسب من funding resource ، الذي يقلل التكلفة of fund  
للجوالدني .

حيث ان التكلفة هي الوجه الآخر للعائد the cost of fund  
يختلفت تبعاً لطبيعة ونسبة كل مصدر في الهيكل المالي  
Financial Structure للمؤسسة . لذلك فإن مسأله تشكيل هيكل  
مالي يتوافق بين رأس المال الخاص ورأس مال الديون  
Return من جهة مع العائد funds of debt Private Fund

Research Proposal:

**Influential factors in determining the form of financing  
structure in banks and their impact on  
the cost of funds**

**Evidence from SA banks**

**Introduction**

The importance of funding has increased during the last two decades and remarkable developments have been made on its methods in order to meet the growing challenges facing the economic institutions. This is in addition to technological development and increasing social responsibility, where the survival of the institution and its continuation in the field of business depends on the ability of financial management for the efficient performance of its functions, especially in getting and investing of funds and the issue of how best to conduct governance in order to achieve the greatest return at the lowest possible risk. This can be achieved through an appropriate combination of funding sources, which reduce the cost of funds as far as possible.

Since the cost is the other face of the return, the cost of funds vary according to the nature and proportion of each source within the financial structure of the institution. So the issue of forming an appropriate financial structure, reconciling private funds and funds of debt on one hand with return and risk on the other hand, has become the most important problem facing administration.

## INTRODUCTION.

The religion of Islam has rules of etiquette and a moral code involving every aspect of life. These are applicable to the whole society such as the elderly, young, men and women.

Islam is a monotheistic religion whose followers believe and obey the divine injunctions in the Quran. This paper addresses this data drawn from the Holy Quran. The data were analyzed in two main parts: The first included the verses that are concerned with the God-man relationship and the second with the man-man (i.e., interpersonal) relationship. By analyzing the structural and functional features of the verses, one found a range of various politeness strategies employed for conveying a huge number of divine ethical messages. This variety of politeness strategies relates strongly to the type of information being conveyed to the addressees. One contributes to the discussions of God-man communication and man-man communication in relation to the negotiation of politeness meaning in the context of religion. (DOI: 10.1515/ip-2012-0027, November 2012) This paper attempts to render a detailed characterization of politeness in this particular type of material and to relate it to a set of theories of politeness that have, so far, been attested against data collected from interpersonal communication. (*Al-Khatib, 2012*).

Therefore, Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the word of Allah (God) and that His Messenger Muhammad was sent to mankind as a guide and reference for human behaviour. The Arabic word "Islam" is a verbal noun originating from the trilateral root sa-la-ma. It is derived from the Arabic verb "aslama" which means as "He submitted himself". With regard to the religion of Islam and in respect to God, it specifically means, "He became submissive to God". Thus, Islam emphasizes the nature of the relationship that man has with God, should be one of submission and worship. Thus, Islam is not limited to the recognition of the Oneness of God but it is the conscious decision made by the individual to submit to the one only God (Zarabozo, 2009). It also means "to give up, to surrender, to resign oneself (to God)" (Islam 2011). Thus, in Islam, the basic duty of each individual is to submit and surrender to Allah (The God) and to His will. Even though the word "Islam" is derived from the same word that "peace" is derived from, it does not however, mean peace. not mean peace. It is also very true that true peace –both internally and externally- can only be achieved through the correct implementation of Islam. At the same time, it is should be very clear in the minds of every Muslim that his religion being Islam represents his commitment and devotion to worshipping and submitting to Allah alone (Zarabozo,2009). Muslims

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## 1. Introduction

Tooth wear is a complex, multifactorial phenomenon with interplay of mechanical, chemical, biological and tribological factors. Tooth wear can be defined as the progressive loss of the material from the contacting surfaces of a body, caused by relative motion at the surface (Wair et al., 1996).

Wear testing becomes a common practice for predicting the service time of the restorative material, and wear has been of interest in material science and mechanical engineering (Lee et al., 2012). Additionally, wear has been an important topic of discussion in dentistry as there are many epidemiological studies indicating that tooth wear, particularly erosion type of wear, is increasing in general population (Bartlett, 2005).

Tooth wear could be localised to anterior or posterior tooth depending on the causative factor or generalised that involves the entire dentition, and the amount of tooth wear depends on many factors such as patient diet, habits, lubricants, muscular forces and the type of restorative materials used (Mahalik, Knap and Weiler, 1971 cited in Lee et al., 2012).

## 2. Prevalence

Tooth wear is recognised as a clinical problem which is becoming highly important in the aging population, and this could be attributed to the increasing dental awareness with increased interest of retaining natural dentition rather than having them extracted (Jagger and Harrison, 1994; Bartlett, 2005).

The results of prevalence studies have demonstrated that tooth wear is a clinical finding in all age groups, as Smith and Robb (1996) carried out a cross sectional study that demonstrated the prevalence of tooth wear among adults, the study's results showed that tooth wear is common in adults, as up to 97% of 1007 participants showed features of tooth wear, and 5-7% of them exhibited severe tooth wear. Similar studies were carried out in adolescents and children (Bartlett et al., 1998; Dugmore and Rock, 2004).

Bartlett (2003) carried out a retrospective study by examining study models over a median time of 26 months, the study results showed slow progression of tooth wear in the study samples, suggesting that the progression of tooth wear is not inevitable.