

**Contrasting Constructions of  
Students' Literacy-Related Experiences  
at a  
Historically Black South African University**

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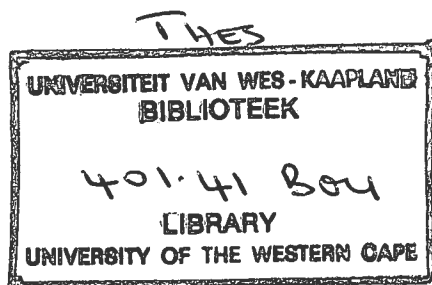
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**Supervised by Professor David Gough**

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UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE



## Abstract

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In recent years, many long held assumptions about language and literacy have come to be questioned by so-called “critical” discourses. The result of this questioning at a theoretical level has resulted in a concomitant interrogation of the practices and methodologies intended to develop both phenomena. Situated against the background of this critical questioning, this thesis examines the appropriacy of interventions designed to develop students’ academic literacy at the University of Zululand, a historically black South African University. It does this by asking two questions about students’ literacy-related experiences. The first question, “How does the University of Zululand construct students’ literacy-related experiences?”, is answered using an analysis of Senate and Faculty documents, extant study and course guides and archived examination papers. In answering the question, the focus is on the identification and exploration of the ideologies which underpin dominant understandings of students’ literacy-related experiences. The answer to the second question, “Is there a way to construct students’ literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?”, uses ethnographic research to support an analysis of students’ written texts produced in a first year Systematic Philosophy class to “talk back” to the dominant understanding of students’ literacy-related experiences identified as a response to the first research question.

The analysis of students' writing is conducted using a systemic functional linguistic framework (Halliday, 1973, 1978, 1994). A systemic framework relates three different kinds of meanings evident in texts (experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings) to the contexts in which those texts are produced. The framework was used because of its potential to account for the form of students' texts by referring to a mismatch between the expectations of the dominant contexts of culture and situation (the university and the Systematic Philosophy class in which the research was conducted respectively) and the contexts which students themselves use as a reference point.

The "conversation" between the dominant and alternative constructions of students' literacy-related experiences, which comes about as a result of responses to the first and second research questions, provides an answer to a third question: "At the University of Zululand, what is the educational significance of an alternative understanding of students' literacy-related experiences?". The answer to this question suggests that a pedagogy which focuses on empowering students by providing epistemological access to meanings which are "appropriate" to the context of the university rather than a pedagogy which focuses on linguistic form and the development of a set of acultural, asocial, apolitical skills is necessary if students are to develop the literacy which will denote their membership of academic discourses. At the same time, however, it also acknowledges students' own agency in the construction of positive identities through resistance to this pedagogy. In doing so, the thesis raises a number of questions which are significant at this time in the history of South African tertiary education.

## Acknowledgments

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**This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Audrey Williams, who wanted to see me graduate so very much but who died before I could do so.**

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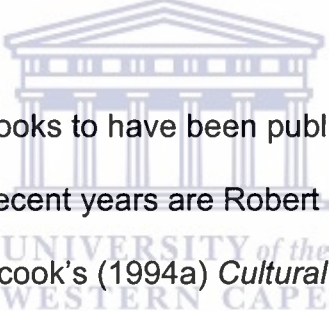
## Chapter One

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### Introduction

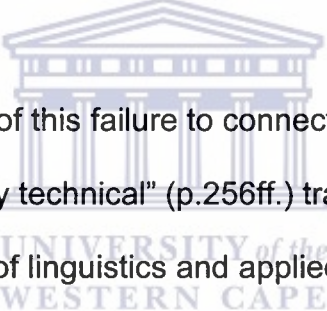
The dominance of the Western academy in defining concepts and practices of language teaching is leading to the ever greater incursion of such views into language teaching theory and practice around the world. The export of applied linguistic theory and of Western-trained language teachers constantly promotes inappropriate teaching approaches to diverse settings. It is of fundamental importance to acknowledge that different ways of teaching and learning are embedded in social, political, philosophical and cultural differences (Pennycook, 1994a:159).

#### 1. Background to the Study



Two of the most contentious books to have been published in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) in recent years are Robert Phillipson's (1992) *Linguistic Imperialism* and Alistair Pennycook's (1994a) *Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. Both books indict the conscious development of English as a global commodity, the brokering of which has been achieved by the parallel development of an English language teaching "industry". Following Galtung's (1980:128) *imperialism theory*, which posits a division of the world into a dominant *Centre* of powerful Western nations and dominated *Periphery* of underdeveloped countries, Pennycook and Phillipson go on to argue that the result of the development of English as a global commodity is that the interests of the Centre are served at the expense of those of the Periphery.

Both Pennycook and Phillipson are particularly critical of the role of English language development offered in the name of international “aid” in this process. For Phillipson, the fundamental problem with ELT in aid contexts is the “political disconnection” (p.250ff.) stemming from the artificial distinction made between language development and general education. Many aid projects use Centre-trained experts to design and deliver curricula intended to develop language. These projects do not always take into account practices and beliefs operating elsewhere in the school system or in the wider socio-cultural environment. The belief that language can be developed in isolation from what is happening elsewhere has thus meant that ELT has been disconnected from the wider social, cultural and economic environments in which it takes place.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with columns and a pediment, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' below it.

According to Phillipson, much of this failure to connect ELT to wider educational contexts is due to the “narrowly technical” (p.256ff.) training of its practitioners. By rooting itself in the disciplines of linguistics and applied linguistics, ELT training has largely failed to acknowledge understandings derived from education, sociology and cultural theory, focusing instead on the generation of scientifically derived “methods” and teaching paradigms which largely ignore the nature of the socio-cultural environment in which teaching takes place. This technical training is then compounded by the fact that teachers “exported” to the Periphery can generally only draw on their experience of teaching English in the Centre. This experience is not always useful preparation since, for example, exposure to English outside the classroom would be only one factor distinguishing the situation of teaching adult

learners in a British language school from that of, say, teaching a class of children learning English in mainland China.

For Phillipson, the results of such “political disconnection” are far more serious than the failure of many English language teaching projects to deliver the sort of language development envisaged in project planning documents, since there are also social, cultural and economic consequences for aid recipients. In many contexts, for example, the idea is promoted that English should be the only language used in the classroom. This practice is often justified on the grounds that increased exposure to the language (and especially increased exposure to language modelled by a native speaker) leads to improved acquisition. However, many teachers working on what might be termed the “international circuit” have little or no knowledge of the languages spoken by their students and are thus unable to work in multilingual classrooms. When this observation is added to the fact that the most profitable text books are those written wholly in English for an international market, the question arises of whether an “English Only”<sup>1</sup> classroom policy has been devised to benefit the ELT “industry” rather than the learners it serves. The benefit which accrues to donor countries who advocate monolingual classroom practices is usually ignored however, and, as a result, the skills of local teachers are devalued in favour of those of teachers exported from the Centre. A second consequence of aid projects intended to further language development is that the emphasis placed on

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<sup>1</sup> Auerbach (1993) makes the link between monolingualism in the ELT classroom and the English Only lobby in the US which aims to outlaw the use of other languages claiming, both have roots in attempts to preserve the political and economic power of dominant groups.

the need to learn English means that local languages tend to become neglected, with knock-on effects for the psycho-social-cultural well-being of their speakers. In spite of the fact that aid projects do not always advantage local contexts, however, enormous benefits inevitably accrue to donors as a result of the use of ELT to propagate Centre-generated ideologies.

Pennycook takes up and, in many respects, goes beyond Phillipson's point about the ideological benefits gained from the spread of ELT with his claim that "teaching practices . . . represent particular visions of the world and thus make the English language classroom a site of *cultural politics*, a place where *different versions of how the world is and should be are struggled over*" (my italics, 1994a:146).

In exploring the concept of cultural politics, Pennycook, like Phillipson, is critical of the theoretical foundations on which ELT is laid, claiming that the dominance of positivism and structuralism in linguistics and applied linguistics has made it possible to concentrate on the idea of an abstract system of language whilst ignoring the cultural, social and economic environments in which language is embedded (p.109ff.). The supposedly scientific nature of the methods which have been derived from this theoretical basis, have then, in turn, allowed English language teachers to understand the spread of ELT, and their own roles within in it, as socially, politically and culturally neutral and, in modernist terms, beneficial. Where the neutrality and beneficial nature of ELT is questioned, a second discourse, the "discourse of the market place" (p.154.ff), understands the spread of ELT as determined by global market forces and as something fairly traded. The result of both discourses is an



ideology centring on the idea that the “West is better”. For learners, however, the West is not always better since social, political, philosophical and cultural differences require different ways of teaching and learning.

The problem with Western assumptions about language teaching, according to Pennycook, is that they hinge on the notions that monolingualism is normal and that communication is the primary function of language (p.168). Like Phillipson (p.185ff.), Pennycook criticises the effects of ideas about monolingualism on the use of other languages and on the status of non-native speaking teachers of English. The focus on communication is criticised not only because the communicative functions taught in the ELT classroom are predominantly Western, and therefore often largely inappropriate in other contexts, but also because communicative methodology has implications for the general educational development of the learners because of the way in which its emphasis on games tends to trivialise learning. Citing Walkerdine (1984), Pennycook is also critical of the supposedly student-centred nature of dominant ELT methodologies claiming that it is effectively a “version of masked authority” (p.174) inculcating Western ways of being in a very particular form of cultural politics.

Given its contentious nature, it is not surprising that the work of both Pennycook and Phillipson has elicited a great deal of response. Much of the criticism of Phillipson’s work centres on the determinism of his neo-Marxist account. Davies (1996:495), for example, argues that Phillipson’s work is “naive about the way in which political systems impose themselves” and that in the highly multilingual societies which are

often the recipients of aid projects, restricting access to English would reinforce the privileges of the élite who have access to English through private education.

Arguably more useful than Davies' entirely dismissive critique of Phillipson, however, are the responses of Canagarajah (1995) and Bisong (1995) who both take up the issue of agency in the Periphery. Canagarajah makes the point that, in Phillipson's work:

What is sorely missed is the individual, the local, the particular. It is important to find out how linguistic hegemony is carried out, lived, and experienced in the day-to-day life of the people and communities in the periphery. How does English compete for dominance with other language in the streets, markets, homes, schools, and villages of underdeveloped communities? The book fails to capture the voices and acts of people in the periphery, to dramatize how linguistic imperialism is manifested or realised there (p.592).

For Canagarajah this omission is significant since his own research (Canagarajah, 1993) shows that the reproduction identified so unproblematically by Phillipson is resisted by language learners in the Periphery.

In considering Phillipson's work from a Nigerian perspective, Bisong (1995) joins Canagarajah in taking up the issue of agency. He also echoes Davies (1996:489) in pointing out that the issue of language dominance is more complex than Phillipson would have his readers believe. Many Nigerians, he argues, acquire English in addition to other languages which are not devalued in the process of doing so:

Why settle for monolingualism in a society that is constantly in a state of flux, when you can be multilingual and more at ease with a richer linguistic repertoire and an expanding consciousness? To interpret such actions as emanating from people who are victims of Centre linguistic imperialism is to bend sociolinguistic evidence to suit a preconceived thesis (p.125).

Criticism of Pennycook's work tend to centre on its roots in postmodernism. For McDonagh (1999), for example, the main problem with Pennycook's work is his reliance on a "strong" (Brumfit, 1996:7) or "ludic" (see, for example, Carspecken, 1996:15) form of postmodernism which denies the existence of any absolute "truth", positing instead a world constructed by the "vortex of Foucauldian discourses" (McDonagh, 1999:583). According to this argument, if there is no absolute "truth" then Pennycook's claims must also be seen as nothing more than a product of discourse. In the light of this critique, Pennycook's work may be most useful if read from a position of "weak" (Brumfit, 1996:7) or "resistance" (see, for example, Carspecken, 1996:15) postmodernism which admits the notion of "truth" and which therefore makes possible the critique Pennycook aims at.<sup>2</sup> From such a position, the Foucauldian notion of discourse, as McDonagh (in press) points out in a review of Holborow's work, is useful "provided that it is not allowed to go 'all the way down'".

I have discussed Phillipson's and Pennycook's work in some detail because of its significance to this thesis. As a teacher of English trained within the dominant British paradigm of ELT, reading both books made me feel extremely uneasy. This was not because I felt that the teaching of English should be abandoned because of

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<sup>2</sup> The distinction between "weak" or "resistance" postmodernism and "strong" or "ludic" postmodernism is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two of this thesis.

its linguistic imperialism, but because the claims of both authors concerning the inappropriacy of many classroom practices and the assumptions which underpin them struck a chord with my own experience in the context of international “aid”.

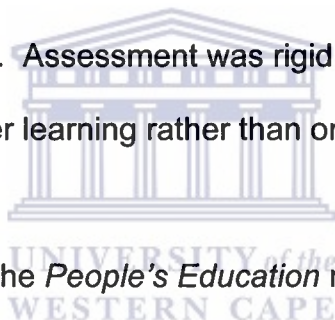
For much of my career I had worked in the Middle East: from 1976 to 1979 in one of the first girls' schools to be established in the State of Qatar in the Arabian Gulf, from 1979 to 1983 in a British Council Direct Teaching of English Operation in Abu Dhabi, one of the United Arab Emirates, and from 1984 to 1988 in the Language Centre at the University of Sana'a in the Yemen Arab Republic. In all of these places, my teaching, using the methods my training had led me to believe were the most modern, and therefore the most effective, had contributed to many of the issues identified by both authors. Cause for even greater discomfort was the realisation that my attempts to find solutions to what I identified as students' “problems”, by undertaking research at master's level<sup>3</sup>, had been grounded in the theoretical abstractions identified by Phillipson and Pennycook as isolated from the social, cultural, philosophical and economic realities of the contexts in which my students lived and learned. By the time I read the books, however, I was working in South Africa in a field which had become known as *Academic Development* and which was heavily informed by a movement known as *People's Education* and it was against this background that both Phillipson's and Pennycook's ideas resonated most powerfully.

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<sup>3</sup> An example of such research (Boughey, 1988) was my attempt to use schema theoretical understandings of the reading process to explain my students' lack of success with a communicative reading task.

## 1.2 *People's Education and People's English*

*People's Education* developed in the mid 1980s in response to the system of *Bantu Education* devised by the apartheid government. Centred on the idea of "separate development", *Bantu Education* sought to control the black population and limit the career opportunities open to young black people by enforcing a rigid, content-heavy curriculum based on traditional disciplinary boundaries (Christie, 1985; Kraak, 1998). The role of the teacher in this system was to ensure that learners rote-learned content and the curricula of teacher training colleges were focused on developing only the capacity to do this. Deviation from state-driven curricula was not permitted and the heavy content load meant that it was difficult for learners to engage meaningfully with that content. Assessment was rigid and tended to focus on excluding students from further learning rather than on facilitating their access to it .



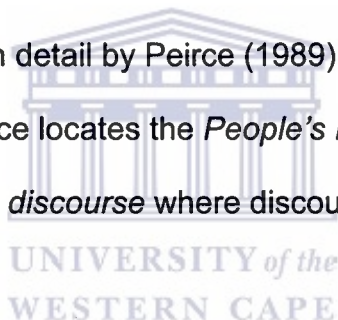
According to Kraak (1998:2), the *People's Education* movement was a "fledgling radical pedagogic alternative" to the *Bantu Education* system which sought to make the school classroom a central site in the struggle against apartheid. Political struggle had long had a place in the educational arena. The 1976 Soweto riots, for example, occurred as a result of an attempt by the apartheid government to enforce the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools. The *People's Education* movement differed from previous acts of struggle, however, in that it constituted an attempt to set up a comprehensively structured alternative to *Bantu Education*. It aimed to do this by replacing the existing curriculum with a vision of a curriculum integrated across subject areas and focused on the development of

critical, independent thinking through the use of a learner-centred pedagogy.

*People's Education* also incorporated a vision of teachers as fully empowered and developed professionals able to make decisions about their own classroom practice.

The perceived threat of the movement to the status quo at the time is seen in government action to quash it. In 1986, the third national conference of the movement's co-ordinating body, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), was banned and the State invoked the Public Safety Act of 1953, thus prohibiting all non-approved curricula, text books and other teaching materials.

Out of the *People's Education* movement grew a second phenomenon, known as *People's English*, discussed in detail by Peirce (1989). Writing of what she terms a "pedagogy of possibility", Peirce locates the *People's English* movement in an understanding of language as *discourse* where discourses are defined as:

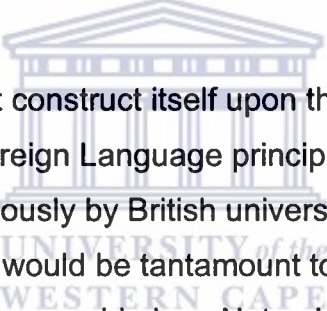


. . . complexes of signs and practices that organise social existence and social reproduction. In this view, a discourse delimits the range of possible practices under its authority and organizes how these practices are realized in time and space: A discourse is thus a particular way of organizing meaning-making practices (p. 405).

By the time the *People's English* movement began to emerge in South Africa, the idea that language teaching should be directed at developing *communicative competence* through teaching the "rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" (Hymes, 1972:278) was already well established in Britain and the United States. For those involved in the movement, however, this practice was

problematic since it assumed that these rules of use were essentially neutral. While the *People's English* movement did not deny that "rules of use" needed to be taught, it also demanded that students should explore questions such as why the rules existed and whose use they served. Such exploration, it was argued, would equip students with the critical capacity to challenge the use of language to support the interests of dominant groups and thus provide them with the means of developing more equal roles for themselves.

The need to develop learners' critical capacity led to the validity of language teaching practices imported from the Centre being questioned. Peirce quotes Gardiner (1987:60) on this point thus:



People's English cannot construct itself upon the implementation of the English as a Second/Foreign Language principles generated so industriously and marketed so assiduously by British universities, publishers and agents of its Foreign Office. That would be tantamount to changing the names of the actors but retaining the same old play. Not only should future syllabi be reconceptualised; they must proceed from different principles.

In many respects, therefore, the *People's English* movement in South Africa was a discourse which attempted to counter dominant language and language teaching related discourses which were perceived to be implicated in the maintenance of social inequalities based on race. Although the *People's English* movement also suffered as a result of the government action described above, the ideas it had engendered continued to circulate in the work of people such as Janks (1990, 1993a, 1993b).

In relation to this thesis, my experience of *People's English* as a challenge to what authors such as Johns (1997) and Cope and Kalantzis (1993) term “traditional pedagogy” was not the only the factor which gave significance to Phillipson's and Pennycook's views, however, since the field of *Academic Development* was also particularly important.

### 1.3 Academic Development in South Africa

The field which has become known as *Academic Development* grew out of an earlier endeavour, known as *Academic Support*, instantiated in the early to mid 1980s to meet the needs of the, then, small number of black students who had gained admittance to historically white institutions such as the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand. Academic Support initiatives tended to centre on the provision of additional tutorials and classes in areas such as language development and so-called “study skills” (see, for example, Lazarus, 1987). The shift from Academic Support to Academic Development occurred largely because of events at another South African institution, the University of the Western Cape (UWC), which, in spite of having been founded by the apartheid regime as a “bush college” for the so-called “coloured” population living in the Western Cape peninsula, had unilaterally opened its doors to the large numbers of black students who had come to live in the Cape Town urban area following the repeal of the pass laws<sup>4</sup> in

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<sup>4</sup> The Pass Laws were instituted by the apartheid government in order to control the movement of the black population into the urban areas. They were named “Pass” Laws as black people were required to carry a single “reference book” providing details of their employment. The aim was to keep black people out of urban areas and, unless employed there, they were not allowed to remain in an



1986 (Walker & Badsha, 1993:3). Previously denied access to any form of tertiary education in the Western Cape,<sup>5</sup> a large number of black students entered the institution bringing with them the problems that had accumulated because of the inferior quality of the educational experiences offered to them under the apartheid regime. These problems of so-called “disadvantage” or “underpreparedness” were compounded by the fact that the education of the traditional “coloured” student population of UWC had been affected by the unrest and boycotts which had plagued the educational system following the Soweto riots<sup>6</sup> of 1976. Faced with this situation, academics at UWC began to argue that so-called “disadvantage” was a majority, rather than a minority, phenomenon requiring a response at an institutional level rather than the *ad hoc*, adjunct response of the historically white institutions (see, for example, Mehl, 1988). This call for an institutional response heralded the shift from Academic Support to Academic Development. The movement towards the concept of Academic Development did not only come about because of the pragmatic reason of student numbers, however, since the very concept of “disadvantage” had long been criticised by left-wing intellectuals at UWC who argued that black students were disadvantaged by the Centre-generated curricula, conceptions of knowledge and ways of learning of the institutions themselves rather

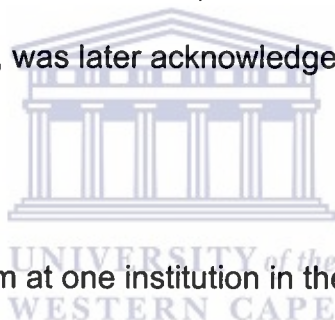
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urban area for more than 72 hours.

<sup>5</sup> The nearest tertiary institution established for black students was at Fort Hare in the Ciskei, a rural “homeland” more than 800 kilometres away from Cape Town.

<sup>6</sup> In 1976, school children in Soweto, a large township south of Johannesburg, rioted at the requirement that they should use Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at secondary level. The need to learn through the medium of Afrikaans, long dubbed the “language of the oppressor” would further impede their ability to learn in a system specifically designed to offer them an education of an inferior quality.

than by inherent deficiencies (see, for example, Ndebele, 1993). What was needed in order to undo this “disadvantage”, it was claimed, was development of curricula and teaching methodologies relevant to Africa. The shift from Academic Support to Academic Development thus involved the development of the institution to meet the needs of the changed demography of the student population rather than the development of the individual to meet the unchanged order of the institution. This meant that activities which had previously been central to Academic Support such as the provision of adjunct remedial tuition, were eschewed in favour of curriculum development and staff development. The link between the call for an institutional response at UWC involving wide-scale curriculum development and a change in teaching methodology and the tenets of *People’s Education* movement, discussed in the last section of this chapter, was later acknowledged by UWC declaring itself the *People’s University*.



What began as a call for reform at one institution in the Western Cape, soon spread to other institutions and was embraced by Academic Support practitioners who were beginning to realise that their attempts to “fix up” students so that they could fit into an unchanged institution were not always enhancing those students’ chances of succeeding there. This realisation from tutors was then augmented by the resentment of many of the students enrolled in Academic Support programmes. These students felt stigmatised<sup>7</sup> by the label of deficiency which enrolment in extra

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<sup>7</sup> Evidence that students felt pathologised by the courses they were required to attend is seen in the perception, reported in Angéllil-Carter and Thesen (1993) that the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course run at the University of Cape Town was actually a course of *English for African People*. Similarly, colleagues at the University of Natal’s Pietermaritzburg campus described students’ reluctance to

classes entailed (Angéilil-Carter & Thesen, 1993) and further “disadvantaged” by the need to complete extra tasks when they were already struggling to keep up with the demands of their mainstream curricula.

### 1.3.1 Language in Academic Development

One of the areas in which the shift from Academic Support to Academic Development was most obvious was in the work done in the area of language development. The shift here was particularly significant since, as Bradbury (1993:2) points out, the need for language development work was a politically expedient way of naming students’ “problems” when other alternatives might involve admitting differences in the sensitive area of cognition:



. . . academic support was established to assist (in the main) African black students in coming to grips with the demands of university study. Outside the racist labels of innate “cultural” and “cognitive” differences of Apartheid, the obvious characteristic of these students was that they were “second language” students, learning at the tertiary level in English, which was not their mother-tongue. In a sense, the move to a second-language frame was adopted in rejection of the view that the problems which Black students experienced in white institutions were due to innate racial differences in cognition or thought. The political validity of this re-labeling (or the coining of new language) for the problems of disadvantaged students was clearly an essential development for academic support programmes.

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pick up the course hand-outs printed on yellow paper because the “Yellow Pages” they then carried around with them marked them as “deficient” (Margi Inglis and Fiona Jackson, private conversation).

While Academic Support programmes might have succeeded in avoiding the racist connotations of “cognitive” and “cultural” difference by using the term “second language problems” to name the difficulties students faced at tertiary level, the language framework still located the problem within the individual and not the structure in which the individual sought to learn. The move from Academic Support to Academic Development therefore had important implications for what was done in the name of language development.

The early Academic Support language development initiatives were generally offered as adjunct additional classes and had tended to cluster within two main approaches: an approach which relied heavily on work done in psycholinguistics on the language-related skills of reading and listening and another which relied heavily on the tradition of teaching composition in the United States. The former approach was supplemented by work which attempted to develop language either by using the concept of the notional syllabus developed by Wilkins (1976) to identify the most important uses or *functions* of language in academic discourse, such as defining, exemplifying and classifying, and then teaching the *exponents* (or ways of expressing those functions in English) or by relying on what Christie (1993) terms the “Received Tradition of English Teaching” which focuses on teaching parts of speech and sentence analysis and is familiar to native speakers from the English classes of their schooldays. Course books organised around the concept of a notional syllabus were available from the international publishers with the result that texts such as *Reading and Thinking in English* (Widdowson, 1979) found their way into many Academic Support classes. Teaching material produced locally often

tended to rely on the *Received Tradition*, in whole or in parts, both when published commercially (see, for example, Orr & Schutte, 1992) or when produced as in-house teaching material and course guides.

The second approach to working with perceived problems with the use of language was derived from research undertaken in the United States and was supported by the activities of influential organisations such as the US-based National Council of Teachers of English and journals such as *College Composition and Communication* and *College English*. The research which underpinned this work stemmed from Janet Emig's (1971) seminal investigation into the *Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* and which focused, not on what "good" writing looked like, but on what "good" writers actually *did* in order to produce "good" writing. The move from teaching about the *product* of writing to teaching about the *process* of writing gave rise to a number of different theories of how the process should be facilitated. An example of one such theory is Peter Elbow's (1973) *Writing without Teachers*, an approach which has become part of what is now known as the "Expressivist Tradition".

Process approaches to the teaching of writing were extremely influential and are evident in courses such as Murray and Johanson's (1990) *Write to Learn* while the *Expressivist Tradition* motivated, in part, the work of, for example, the Special English course at UWC and the production of *The Basic English Language Skills Book* (Justus *et al*, 1992) written by staff working on the course.

The shift from Academic Support to Academic Development had profound implications for language development work since, in Academic Support programmes, language had traditionally been developed in the adjunct way criticised by the Academic Development movement. Instead of working in the extra classes resented by students, the concept of Academic Development required that mainstream curricula and teaching approaches should be developed to address the needs of students studying through the medium of an additional language. This resulted in a focus on the “Language Across the Curriculum” movement, instantiated by the work of people such as Douglas Barnes (see, for example, Barnes, 1970; 1976) in the United Kingdom, the “Writing Across the Curriculum” movement which began in the United States<sup>8</sup> and an interest in the relationship of writing to learning revealed by researchers such as Applebee (1984) and Emig (1977).

I arrived in South Africa in 1989, a time when the debate about the inadequacies of Academic Support models was just beginning to become animated. By the time I had been appointed to the post of Language Across the Curriculum Researcher at the Academic Development Centre at the University of the Western Cape early in 1992, many institutions were beginning to follow UWC’s lead in introducing a model of Academic Development. My brief as Language Across the Curriculum Researcher was to investigate ways in which language could be developed in mainstream curricula and I began my work with little real understanding of the political dimensions of the task ahead. My early work (see, for example, Boughey &

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<sup>8</sup> According to Walvoord (1996), the first WAC workshops took place at Central College in Pella, Iowa in 1970.

Goodman, 1994; Boughey & Van Rensburg, 1994; Coetzee & Boughey, 1994) concentrated on interventions in mainstream classes designed to introduce students to the process of writing and to support them in the reading of academic texts. In 1993, for example, I worked in a Biochemistry class (see Boughey & Goodman, 1994) supporting students as they worked on an essay set by their mainstream lecturer on the Human Genome Project. Students were required to read a number of journal articles in order to be able to write the essay, and the class moved from reading and discussion into using a process approach to draft and redraft their writing.

The work of colleagues at the Academic Development Centre was driven by theories of institutional transformation underpinned by critical theories of education (see, for example, Walker & Badsha, 1993; Walker, 1994). It was in this environment that Phillipson and Pennycook's work, discussed earlier, took on personal significance most powerfully, and my interests turned to building a more socio-cultural understanding of language use and of students' difficulties in using language within the academy.

In 1994, I took up a post at the University of Zululand, an institution whose genesis lay in the ideology of separate "homelands" for the black population. In a remote rural position on the north coast of Kwa Zulu-Natal, the University had been isolated both geographically and intellectually from the challenges to established curricula occurring in other institutions. Charged with the task of developing students' language, I worked in a unit which was still termed "Academic Support" and was

expected to achieve my brief in isolation from the mainstream curriculum. My resistance to this task in favour of an approach which took language development into mainstream curricula and made it the responsibility of every academic staff member led me to undertake the research project on which this thesis is based.

#### 1.4 Aims of the Thesis

In the thesis, I follow Canagarajah (1999:175) in believing that, in the light of Phillipson's and Pennycook's work, what is needed is neither an outright rejection of ELT on the grounds of its "linguistic imperialism" or "cultural politics" nor an uncritical acceptance of its benefits but a "third way" which explores "not *whether* English should be learned but *how*". The thesis therefore takes up Phillipson's and Pennycook's criticisms of the understandings of language and language learning generated by a long tradition of English language teaching in order to examine their appropriacy *to one particular context*, in this case a first year Systematic Philosophy class at the University of Zululand. It does this by:

1. exploring the way in which the institution constructs students' literacy-related experiences in order to identify the way this construction is influenced by Centre-generated ideologies;
2. using a critical ethnography of students' literacy-related experiences in a first year systematic philosophy class to "talk back" to the institutional construction of these experiences and the ideologies which underpin them;
3. exploring the significance of this "conversation" for the teaching and learning of English at the University. Key in this exploration of the significance of this



conversation is the idea that “inappropriate” teaching will not provide students with the epistemological access to the University they need in order to succeed in obtaining a degree.

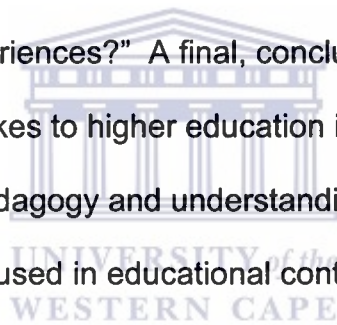
More specifically, the thesis answers three questions:

1. How does the University of Zululand construct students’ literacy-related experiences?
2. Is there a way to understand students’ literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?
3. At the University of Zululand, what is the educational significance of an alternative way of understanding students’ literacy-related experiences?

In the research questions, I have chosen to use the word *literacy*, rather than the word *language*, to describe students’ experiences because of its more inclusive nature. This is because the term literacy not only describes ways of knowing individual languages but also the way social context defines “appropriate” ways of using those languages (see, for example, Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 1993, 1995). In doing so, it encompasses the strategies language users use to engage with texts and takes into account the ways previous experiences with text influence these strategies. This issue is taken up in some detail in Section 2.3.3 of this thesis.

This thesis comprises seven chapters. In this introductory chapter, I have provided a context for the research and the research questions and attempted to locate myself in that context. Chapter Two frames the research questions and my answers to them in more detail. It does this by using a more thorough survey of the

academic literature to add to the brief discussion of Phillipson's and Pennycook's challenges to dominant language-related discourses already provided in this introductory chapter. Chapter Three then explicates the approach to research used in order to answer the questions and details the research process. The answers to the questions "How does the University of Zululand construct students' literacy-related experiences?" and "Is there a way to understand students' literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?" are then detailed in Chapters Four and Five respectively. Key to the responses to these questions is the use of a *Systemic Functional Linguistic* framework (Halliday, 1973, 1978). Chapter Six explores the final research question "What is the educational significance of an alternative way of understanding students' literacy-related experiences?" A final, concluding, chapter then assesses the contribution the thesis makes to higher education in South Africa, understandings of "critical" pedagogy and understandings of the way *Systemic Functional Linguistics* can be used in educational contexts.



### Critical Challenges to Dominant ELT Discourses

. . . it is misleading to claim that ESL is merely a non-ideological tool for development. Instead, it is closely connected to the 'modernization' processes that reproduce unequal relationships between 'developed' and 'developing' societies, and between 'Western' and 'traditional' sectors within 'developing' societies. Similarly, modern ESL teaching practices must be examined for their impact upon the relationship between students and teachers, and for their ideological assumptions about the roles of teachers and students in society. The faith that educational institutions can resolve economic and social inequality rooted in the organization of society, places teachers and students in an impossible role, and ultimately serves to sustain inequality (Tollefson, 1991:101-102).

#### 2.1 Introduction



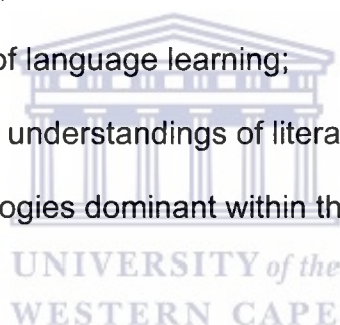
As I have already indicated, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a more explicit context for the research questions addressed in this thesis. It does this by surveying the academic literature in order to identify what I have chosen to term "critical challenges" to dominant ELT discourses. Such challenges are grounded in the understanding that:

. . . we cannot treat human activities as though they were determined by causes in the same way as natural events are. We have to grasp what I would call the double involvement of individuals and institutions: we create society at the same time as we are created by it (Giddens, 1982:13).

The challenges therefore set out to explore the ideological underpinnings of ELT-related discourses in the belief that awareness of those ideologies will allow individuals to free themselves from them. More specifically, critical challenges seek to make language educators attentive to the fact that language and language teaching practices are not “natural”, “right” or “true” in any absolute sense but are rather socially constructed responses to the environments in which we find ourselves.

The challenges to dominant ELT discourses fall into a number of main areas:

- challenges to the disciplines of linguistics and applied linguistics as the theoretical base of ELT;
- challenges to theories of language learning;
- challenges to dominant understandings of literacy;
- challenges to methodologies dominant within the field.



Pennycook (1994b:691) identifies the following three characteristics of what he terms the “critical pedagogical approaches to research” which produce these challenges:

- a focus on questions of social and cultural inequality in education;
- an aim to change the conditions which produce this inequality;
- a focus on the broad question of knowledge production mostly involving a critique of what has been termed the “positivist paradigm”.

Since this last characteristic effectively underpins all other considerations, I propose to begin this chapter with a discussion of positivism followed by a survey of post-positivist understandings of knowledge. I will then proceed to examine each of the challenges identified above in more detail. In doing this, the chapter will therefore provide a background against which my answer to the first research question, “How does the University of Zululand construct students’ literacy-related experiences?” and my construction of a response to the second question, “Is there a way to understand students’ literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?”, can be read.

## **2.2 Challenges to Dominant Epistemology**

### **2.2.1 The Positivist Paradigm**



As both Lather (1991:6) and Usher (1997a:2) point out, the epistemology, or “way of knowing” known as “positivism” is rooted in the struggle against the tyranny of the medieval church and particularly against its “monopoly over learning and its construction of truth in terms of the authority of divine texts” (Usher, 1997a:2). Sited in the work of the philosophers Descartes (1596-1650) and Bacon (1561-1626) and the scientific method of Galileo (1564-1642), a positivist epistemology assumes that:

- A lawful and orderly “reality” exists independently of those who come to know it. “Knowing” therefore requires the use of systematic observation and rational scientific methods in order to reveal the laws of this reality.

- An understanding that the whole of “reality” can be achieved by examining its parts. The whole is therefore understood to be no more than the sum of its parts.
- There is a distinction between the subjective researcher and the objective reality she seeks to reveal. In order to uncover this reality, subjectivity must be repressed as the truth can only be revealed through objective observation and the application of reason.
- Language is a vehicle which is used to transmit this reality, as revealed by the researcher, to others. Reality thus exists independently of language, which only describes it.
- Knowing involves using the laws revealed by this objective observation to predict and control.



Many writers (see, for example, Lather, 1991; Cohen & Manion, 1994; McKenzie, 1997) mention that it was Auguste Comte (1798-1857) who first sought to apply the methods characteristic of the natural sciences to the understanding of human behaviour although others (see for example, Hamilton, 1976, cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985) trace the application of positivism to the social sciences to John Stuart Mill's *A System of Logic*, published in 1843. According to Hamilton, Mill assumes that the natural and social sciences both set out to identify general laws in ways which are methodologically identical and that the social sciences are merely more “complex” than the natural sciences.

Although the positivist paradigm has held sway in the social sciences for many years, it is now challenged on many accounts even though the effects of this challenge are themselves disputed. Lincoln & Guba (1985:24), working from what they term a “naturalistic” perspective, are able to claim that positivism has been brought to its “metaphoric knees”. While they might be sufficiently confident of their own challenge to positivism on ontological and epistemological grounds to make such a statement, the reality of the situation is very different. As Lather (1991:9) points out, the difficulties of getting work which is not grounded in a positivist paradigm published<sup>1</sup>, suggests that positivism is far from vanquished in spite of the challenges it faces.

### 2.2.2 Post-positivist Paradigms

Many writers (see, for example, McKenzie, 1997; Usher, 1997b) point to the fact that the diversity of post-positivist paradigms makes description and classification extremely difficult. This diversity is important, however, for as Lather (1991) points out:

The desire is not to substitute an alternative and more secure foundation, what Harding (1986) calls a ‘successor regime’ [to positivism], but to produce

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<sup>1</sup> There has been considerable research into the extent to which science itself is socially constructed. Bazerman (1988), for example, argues that the process of writing scientific articles, their textual form, the dissemination process and the audience’s response all point to the socially constructed nature of scientific “fact”. If this is the case, it is an irony that it is difficult to get work published which is not rooted in a positivist paradigm if “positivist” science is itself a social construction.

an awareness of the complexity, historical contingency and fragility of the practices that we invent to discover the truth about ourselves (p.7).

Lather (1991:8) classifies research into four categories: approaches which seek to *predict*, approaches which seek to *understand*, approaches which seek to *emancipate* and approaches which seek to *deconstruct*. The first three categories are derived from Habermas' (1972:301ff.) thesis of three categories of human *interest*.

For Habermas, the concept of *interest* is derived from his claim that the human species is fundamentally concerned with, or *interested* in, the means of reproducing itself. Knowledge is needed in order to create the conditions which will make this reproduction possible. Human interest therefore underpins what can count as knowledge. Habermas identifies three *knowledge constitutive interests*: the *technical interest*, the *practical interest* and the *emancipatory interest*.

The *technical interest* is concerned with the generation of laws which will facilitate survival through reproduction by allowing the environment to be controlled. The *technical interest* is therefore identified with the *positivist* practices of the empirical-analytical sciences. The foregrounding of control and the equating of claims to knowledge with claims to power is an important aspect of Habermas' theory of *technical interest* since it provides an account of how man relates to his environment, which contrasts with that of the *practical interest* and the *emancipatory interest*.



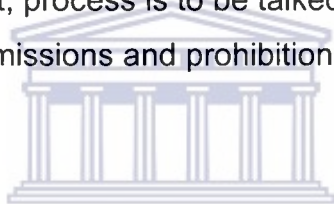
The *practical interest* is oriented towards understanding the environment in order to survive. The aim of understanding is not to control the environment but to exist in mutual harmony with it. The concept of existing in harmony rather than in control thus brings a moral dimension to the idea of knowledge. The interest is termed *practical* since it “is an interest in taking the right action (‘practical’ action) within a particular environment” (Grundy, 1987:13).

The *emancipatory interest* is grounded in the work of the group of philosophers who became known as the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and, more latterly, Habermas) and who advocated the use of psychoanalytic theory and practice to achieve a state of independence (or emancipation) from influences and forces outside the individual. Central to the *emancipatory interest* is a process of self reflection which generates critical theories about the way in which ideology, coercion and distortion inhibit freedom in ways which are often subtle yet powerful. This process of self reflection is seen ultimately to lead to emancipatory action.

The final category of approaches to research, those which seek to *deconstruct*, focuses on the role of language in organising thought and experience (Lather, 1991:13). Whereas other approaches perceive language to be either a transparent vehicle for transmitting knowledge (positivism) or a site of ideological study (emancipatory approaches), approaches which seek to *deconstruct* examine the way language constructs both the researcher and the researched. For this reason, Lather describes such approaches as *Discourse on Discourse*.

Lather's use of the term *discourse* here does not refer to a piece of text or conversation but to a phenomenon where, in Foucault's (1980:100) terms, "power and knowledge are joined together". Possibly the most accessible definition of discourse in this sense is that provided by Kress (1989:7) who describes *discourses* as:

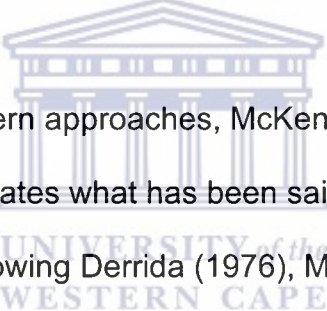
. . . systematically-organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what it is possible to say (and by extension - what it is possible to do or not to do) with respect to the area of concern of that institution whether marginally or centrally. A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organises and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about. In that it provides descriptions, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions.



Key to the concept of *discourse* is the idea that, just as a discourse constructs its members by determining how they can behave and what they can say, the members, by acting and saying in those ways, reconstruct the discourse. This does not mean that discourses are stable, however, since they are acknowledged to be the sites of protracted struggle over what can be included and what should be excluded (see, for example, Gee, 1990). Discourses emerge out of complex historical conditions and are re-forged and remade in the equally complex present.

Lather's final category of *discourse on discourse* bears many similarities to what other writers (see for example, Carspecken, 1996; McKenzie, 1997; Usher, 1997b) term "postmodern approaches" to research in the social sciences. Common to what

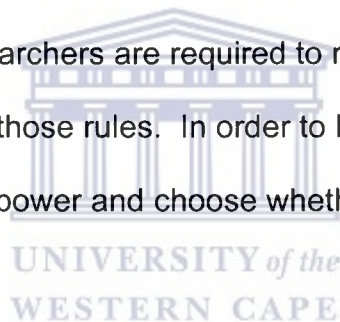
Carspecken (1996: 11) calls “mainstream research epistemologies” is their dependence on empiricism, or sense perception, to apprehend “truth”, “reality” or “fact”. According to Carspecken, one of the first major challenges to empiricism was Husserl’s (1962; 1970) claim that what we perceive through the senses is really just a perspective of the object and that therefore the object “comes into being” through a process of unconscious synthesis. Derrida (1962; 1973) then deconstructed Husserl’s work to show that, because of the impossibility of being conscious of something at the same time as we are aware that we are conscious of it, signs are never constant. The result of this is that meanings themselves are not constant. It is the apprehension and acknowledgement of the inconstancy of meaning which, according to Carspecken, lies at the core of postmodern approaches to research.



In his examination of postmodern approaches, McKenzie (1997:18ff.) identifies three themes, the first of which reiterates what has been said above about the status of the products of research. Following Derrida (1976), McKenzie suggests that common to postmodern approaches is the idea that the products of research are no more than texts based on our own interpretation of the world around us. These texts then interact with other texts to produce an unending succession of more texts. In acknowledging that knowledge is a text constructed out of other texts, postmodern approaches, according to McKenzie, recognise the impossibility of eradicating bias and prejudice from the process of investigation and, as a result, focus on making that bias explicit.

The second theme identified by McKenzie is the identification of binary oppositions in postmodern research. In these binary oppositions, one of each pair is always marginalised, with the privileged element achieving its status through what it suppresses. One such pair is that of researcher and researched, with postmodern approaches to research seeking to break down this opposition by involving the researched in the research process.

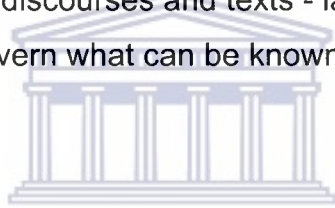
Finally, McKenzie argues that, following Foucault (1972), postmodern perspectives acknowledge the role of academic disciplines in constructing the marginalised half of each pair by establishing systems of controls and rules which fix the limits of enquiry. These limits then ensure the dominance of one side of each pair. The construction of disciplines is such that researchers are required to reinforce the rules which bind them by working solely within those rules. In order to break out of this cycle, researchers need to exercise power and choose whether or not to submit themselves to the rules.



Usher (1997b:30), like Carspecken and McKenzie, identifies the *displacement of epistemology* as the first of what he terms “features” of a postmodern approach. Epistemology is displaced because, in the postmodern world, the questioning of the existence of a reality “out there”, which can be revealed through a process of systematic observation and scientific experiment, means that the first step in any research process requires that a new “reality” has to be constructed to investigate. The result of this is that “ontology precedes epistemology” (p.31). Once the socially constructed nature of reality is acknowledged, the examination of the historically

located practices of natural and social science which have created that reality becomes crucial. Science is thus seen not as transcendental but as located in time and place and the validity of its claims can only be ascertained with reference to this location. Like Lather, Usher identifies the investigation of the way language works to construct these worlds as central to postmodern approaches:

. . . language is not conceived as a mirror held up to the world, as simply a transparent vehicle for conveying the meaning of an independent external reality. Since there is always an already existing structure of significations which gives rather than reflects meaning, referents are an effect of language. No form of knowledge can be separated from language, discourses and texts at work within culture. The structures, conceptuality and conventions of language, embodied in discourses and texts - language as a meaning-constituting system- govern what can be known and what can be communicated (p.31).




The second feature of postmodern approaches to research identified by Usher (1997b:31) is the “decentring of the knowing subject”. The idea that the researcher can transcend her socio-cultural and historical location in order to examine the “research problem” from an objective position is no longer tenable. Instead, subject and object are perceived to be engaged in constructing “realities” which are “real” only to themselves and which are transitory since they are constructed out of specific times and places.

Like, McKenzie, Usher also identifies the challenge to what he terms “foundationalism”, the idea that knowledge is founded in disciplines, as characteristic of postmodern approaches to research. If the social world does not exist as an

independent entity to be broken into pieces and studied, disciplinary theorising is no more than the creation of texts. In order to maintain their positions of authority, however, it is in the vested interest of disciplines to claim the ability to produce a privileged account of reality by suppressing knowledge produced outside their boundaries.

The challenges to dominant ELT discourses identified at the beginning of this chapter can generally be located within the approaches to research categorised by Lather as *emancipatory* and *deconstructivist*. That is, their intent is to emancipate subjects from the control of dominant ELT discourses which are usually rooted in positivist understandings of epistemology and ontology and / or to deconstruct the discourses themselves. In this respect, they are what Brumfit (1996) terms the “weak” response to the postmodern project. Brumfit argues against a “strong” response by claiming:



. . . if all viewpoints reveal perspectives which are no more and no less valid than any other, then viewing, communicating about it, and understanding become impossible activities to conceive of, and the communication of postmodernist (or any other) ideas can be no more than a nervous twitch. Such extreme pessimism about human interaction is dysfunctional at best and quietist to the point of evil irresponsibility at worst. The total democratisation of epistemological perspective suffers from the same defect as its political equivalent, the total democratisation of power as in philosophical anarchism (p.9).

“Weak” responses, on the other hand, by accepting “that hierarchical models of science risk being self-serving “ enable us “to look for protection against the misuse

of hierarchy, to benefit from a critique which in its strong form denies the possibility of benefit at all” (p.10).

In making the distinction between “weak” and “strong” versions of the postmodernist project, Brumfit is picking up on the distinction between what other theorists (see, for example, Lather, 1991; Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994) term *resistance* and *ludic* postmodernism. Ludic postmodernism takes up Derrida's (1973; 1976) undermining of the concept of reality by arguing that the signs, which “stand for” objects in the moments we are aware of them, are not constant, in order to argue that there is, therefore, no reality and no truth. As Carspecken (1996) points out, however, ludic postmodernism undermines the value of research conducted with a *critical* or *emancipatory* orientation since its aim of revealing and eliminating social inequality cannot be achieved if the findings of the research are no more than interpretations. For researchers working within a critical orientation, therefore, resistance postmodernism, which retains some notion of “truth” is the only option. Critical challenges to ELT discourses therefore tend to be founded on such “weak” or “resistance” positions.

## **2.3 Critical Challenges to Dominant ELT Related Discourses**

### **2.3.1 Challenges to the Theoretical Foundations of ELT**

The role of linguistics and applied linguistics, as well as that of other disciplines such as psychology and sociology, in providing a theoretical foundation for English

language teaching is apparent in Stern's attempt (1983) to provide a conceptual framework for language pedagogy in his influential text *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Stern (see, also, Howatt, 1984) dates the period in which the disciplines of linguistics and psychology had the most profound influence on language teaching as the two decades between 1940 and 1960. Linguists and psychologists had played an important role in the US wartime language programmes which had had to provide ordinary servicemen with intensive oral tuition often in the relatively unknown languages of the Pacific basin. The need to confront language diversity, as regional and national boundaries were drawn and redrawn and new players such as the Soviet Union and China began to play increasingly powerful roles in international politics after the peace treaties of 1945 and 1946, also meant that the disciplines of linguistics and psychology became even more important in guiding the growing need for language teaching. The result of this demand for guidance was a rapid period of growth within the discipline of linguistics itself and the establishment of "subdisciplines" such as psycholinguistics and socio-linguistics.

According to Brumfit (1996), contemporary convention dates the term "applied linguistics" to the launch of the journal *Language Learning: A Quarterly Journal of Applied Linguistics* in 1948. The use of the term "applied" in relation to linguistics appears to have grown out of the need to reserve linguistics as a "pure" science producing knowledge for its own sake. Brumfit (1996:2) quotes Corder to make this point:

The application of linguistic knowledge to some object – or applied linguistics, as its name implies, is an activity. It is not a theoretical study. It makes use of



the findings of theoretical studies. The applied linguist is a consumer, or user, not a producer, of theories . . . Language teaching is also an activity, but teaching languages is not the same activity as applied linguistics (Corder, 1973:10).

This hierarchical ordering of “pure” to “applied” science where applied scientists use the knowledge produced by pure scientists in the evolution of technologies or, in the case of applied linguistics, pedagogies, which can then be delivered to practitioners, is one of the most important points of criticism in challenges to disciplinary power. If teachers are required to base their work on knowledge and theory generated in the academic disciplines, this means that they are denied the possibility of generating their own local knowledge and theory in relation to practice. The idea of “local” knowledge becomes critical when it is taken to include consideration of the social and political contexts in which teaching takes place. The result of failing to take these contexts into account is the “political disconnection” identified by Phillipson (1992) and discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. The hierarchical relationship of theory to practice is also significant in that it disempowers teachers and relegates them to the position of consumers rather than producers of knowledge.

Campbell’s (1980, cited in Stern, 1983:36) model (Fig.1.1) of the relationship between theory and practice probably best exemplifies such an understanding of the role of linguistics and applied linguistics in language teaching, although the double-headed arrows connecting the boxes do allow for a reciprocal flow of knowledge from the practitioner to the theoretician.



Fig.1.1 Campbell's model of the relationship between theory and practice I

Campbell (1980) goes on to suggest that linguistics and applied linguistics alone cannot provide the theory required by second or foreign language teaching. In a second version of his model (Fig.1.2) he therefore adds psychology, sociology and anthropology to the list of academic disciplines fulfilling these roles. The hierarchical relationship remains however.

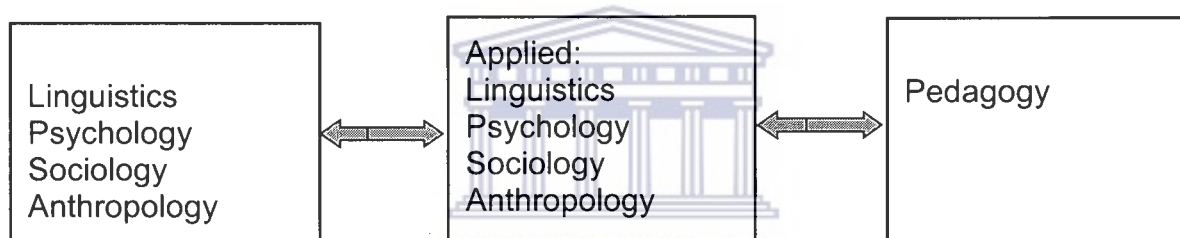


Fig.1.2. Campbell's model of the relationship between theory and practice II

Stern's (1983:45ff.) attempt to construct a "metatheory" or "general conceptual framework" of language teaching (Fig.1.3) incorporates what he terms "the principle of interaction" defined as "complementary co-operation among individuals fulfilling different roles in the total scheme."

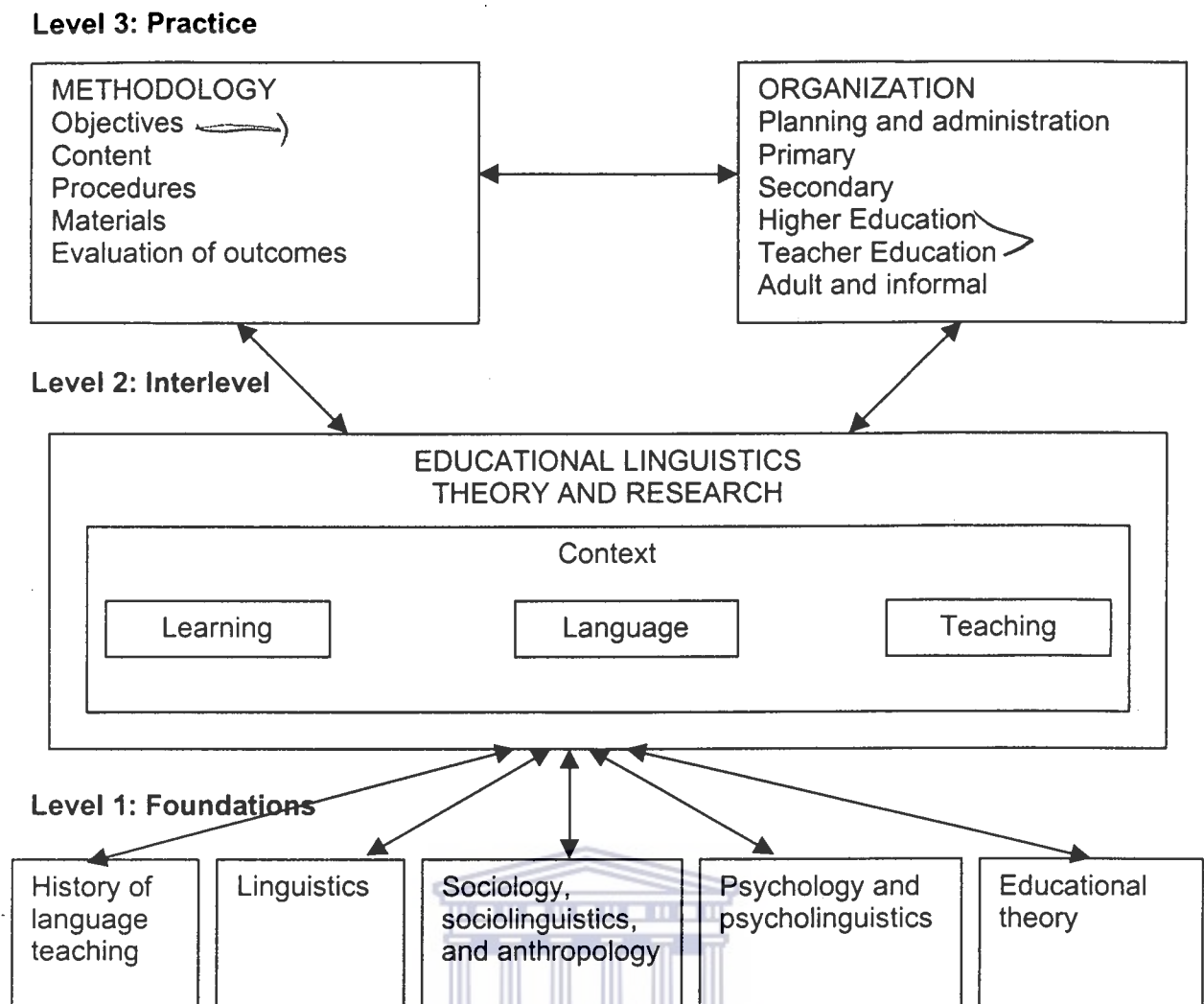


Fig. 1.3 Stern's general model for second language teaching

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The roles are described in terms of "levels". At level 1 in the model, are specialists in the relevant academic disciplines. At level 2, are the "language teaching theorist, research worker or applied linguist" and, at level 3, the "practitioners, teachers, testers, administrators and curriculum workers". Stern stresses that although he has distinguished differences in function, this need not necessarily result in a separation in terms of person since a language teacher at level 3 can research and build theory at level 2 as well as have expertise in one of the disciplines at level 1. Similarly, a scholar in one of the disciplines might apply his research at level 2 or even work as a language teacher at level 3.

The practice of language teaching tests Stern's claim that differences in function need not imply separation in terms of person, however. Phillipson (1992) examines at length the way in which ELT functions as an "industry" subject to global market forces. This background militates against teachers involving themselves in research and theory building since the very profit-making function of much ELT work requires as economical a budget as possible for staff salaries in relation to hours of work. In practical terms, this often means recruiting teachers with minimal qualifications<sup>2</sup> and requiring them to work long hours.<sup>3</sup> In the light of such conditions, the expectation that teachers will then be able to become involved in research and the generalisation of theory is somewhat unreasonable.

Although ELT has, to a large extent, become "professionalised" over the last fifteen years or so, with an enormous increase in the number of courses in applied language studies offered at master's level, the extent to which this has allowed course participants to produce their own theory is also questionable. For many participants, producing a master's dissertation after the coursework component of the degree has been completed is extremely difficult because of time constraints in a full-time job. Having completed the dissertation, even fewer continue to research their own practice in any structured way. As McDonough and McDonough (1990) point out:

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<sup>2</sup> The most common minimal qualification for ELT teachers is the Royal Society of Arts/University of Cambridge Examination Board Certificate in English Language Teaching. Preparation for the certificate often involves no more than one month's intensive tuition and practice. Many teachers do, however, go on to work towards the Diploma which requires more in-depth engagement with theory and practice.

<sup>3</sup> It has been my experience as a teacher that 28 contact hours (not periods) per week is not uncommon in private language schools.

There certainly seems to be a mismatch between the demands and opportunities of teachers and the demands and opportunities of researchers – a mismatch which currently acts to the detriment of an advance in our knowledge of the teaching/learning process (p.108).

The proliferation of master's courses offered by Centre universities in distance mode is also an issue. In many instances, the myth of the native speaking teacher being "best" has also been extended to construct the idea that a qualification gained at a university overseas is also "better" than a qualification obtained locally. This perception is fuelled by governments in both the Centre and the Periphery offering scholarships so that the promising teachers or graduates can go and study at a Centre-based university. The skills of the majority of non-native speakers of teachers who cannot afford to study overseas or who can only study at local institutions are thus further devalued<sup>4</sup>. The "professionalisation" of ELT through the upgrading of qualifications at master's level has thus tended to favour the career paths of Centre-based teachers exporting their skills to the Periphery and has strengthened the construction of the ELT "industry".

With regard to Stern's claim that theorists and researchers at level 1 might choose to engage in teaching at level 3, Phillipson (1992:161) points out how the rigid career structures of those working in applied linguistics (and presumably other disciplines) in

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<sup>4</sup> I believe this is true even of South Africa which has a number of "world class" universities. I recently sat on a selection committee for a post as a junior lecturer on an English for Academic Purposes course. Several members of the committee were impressed by qualifications and experience gained overseas to the detriment of candidates who had studied and worked only in South Africa.

the Centre prevent them from involving themselves in the direct teaching of English as a second or foreign language<sup>5</sup>. The result of this, according to Phillipson, is that:

. . . their first-hand experience of [teaching] inevitably recedes into the past year by year. This might not necessarily be a disqualification, but it certainly increases the likelihood of academics being remote from everyday classroom realities (p.161).

In the light of criticism of the hierarchical relationship of theory to practice, the action research paradigm, which aims to locate the power to research with those who will use the knowledge it produces, becomes particularly important. When local knowledge has been produced, it has usually been through the use of action research facilitated by interested academics. Even here, however, initiatives are not always entirely successful, as Walker's (1993) exploration of the conditions supporting action research shows. For Walker, action research is "rooted both in teachers' views of themselves as autonomous professionals and a well-established movement for curriculum as a process" (p.98). When neither condition is present, then the expectation that teachers will be able to become action researchers is unrealistic. They might, like the teachers in Walker's study, become involved in research conducted by the academic and, as a result of this, become more *reflective* about their own practice but they will not ultimately produce research. Given that the conditions of autonomous professionalism and understandings of curriculum as a

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<sup>5</sup> This is not the case for linguists/applied linguists working in South African universities since their teaching of the discipline takes place in predominantly ESL contexts. They are therefore exposed to the problems of using another language as medium of instruction and of the difficulties students experience in becoming academically literate. This would not be the case, however, for all linguists and applied linguists working in universities in Britain and the USA.

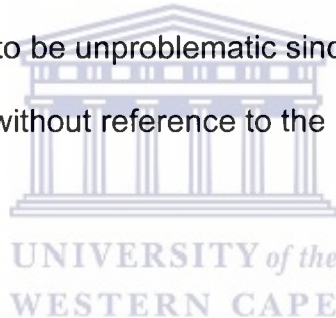
process are not often found in the educational systems of the Periphery, the likelihood of teachers being able to produce local knowledge is very small.

In more general terms, the questioning of the privileged position of “scientific” knowledge produced in the disciplines of linguistics and applied linguistics is related to Foucault’s understanding (1979:218) of “disciplines” as “techniques for the ordering of human multiplicities”. In discussing the notion of discipline, Foucault uses, as a metaphor, the *panopticon*, Jeremy Bentham’s innovative design for a prison which, instead of locking prisoners away in dark dungeons, imprisons them by placing them against a light so that they can be constantly observed from a tower at the centre of the prison. Incessantly visible, the prisoner, according to Foucault (p.203) “becomes the principle of his own subjection”. Panoptical control thus involves using the cold rational light of science to illuminate those held captive by that light. Bentham’s panopticon, with its central tower and backlit periphery, thus resonates with Galtung’s much later (1980) description of Centre-Periphery power relations.

Criticism of linguistics and applied linguistics as “techniques for the ordering of human multiplicities” (Foucault: 1979:218) has not only resulted because of the way the disciplines are perceived to exert control at practitioner level, however, but also because of the way in which the tradition which has become known as *general, formal or autonomous* linguistics, and which is derived from the work of Saussure (1916), is perceived to exert control on actual language use.

The idea that language functions to represent the world in a simple one-to-one correspondence has held sway in Europe since medieval times and has variously been termed *representationalism*, *correspondence theory* and *expressivism*.

Saussure made the first major challenge to representationalism with his argument that meaning is not dependent on a correspondence to an external reality but on structures internal to the language itself. In the tradition of *general linguistics*, therefore, language is perceived as an independent system composed of unvarying structural and semantic rules. More recently, the idea that this system is innate (Chomsky, 1965) or what Grabe & Kaplan (1996:176) term “a species specific phenomenon encoded into the genetic structure” has become central to much of the thinking of linguists working within the tradition. For these linguists, research into language is largely perceived to be unproblematic since the object of enquiry is a “neutral” system which exists without reference to the social context in which it is used.



Response to criticisms of linguistics as a “technique for the ordering of human multiplicities” usually takes the form of pointing out that, in modern times at least, linguistic analysis has been based on data collected “in the field” (and is therefore of language “in use”) and that linguists have been concerned with *describing* not *prescribing* language use. The fact that the sub-discipline of socio-linguistics has long been concerned with describing linguistic diversity is also noted in responding to such criticism. For those making the challenges, however, the fact that linguists are concerned only with describing language does not appear to be the issue. What is at



stake is their apparent lack of concern for the way in which these descriptions can be, and are, used to maintain and further social inequality.

That linguistics has the potential to do this is evinced in the work of Hutchings (1989,1990) who, in arguing for the study of linguistics to be part of the curriculum in departments of English at South African universities, uses as a premise the notion that most of the students studying English as a major will become teachers of English and will be called upon to pronounce on points of usage of the language. The idea that usage has long been used as a mark of social class is not considered.

The tradition of *general linguistics* is not the only area of disciplinary activity to come under attack because of the “ordering of human multiplicities”, however. Some work in the field of *discourse analysis*, where the term *discourse*<sup>6</sup> refers to stretches of language text longer than the sentence, has come under attack for a number of reasons. Feature counts, for example, are attacked because they have resulted in students of science studying those features identified as typical of scientific texts and students of business studying features characteristic of business discourse without anyone asking “why these feature concentrations appear in particular texts, or what personal or social features influence linguistic choices” (Johns, 1997:6). The identification of a number of “rhetorical modes”, or ways in which texts are typically organised (Meyer, 1975), and examination of the way knowledge of these modes stored as *formal schemata* influence both the comprehension and production of text

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<sup>6</sup> Gee (1990) makes a distinction between *discourse* and *Discourse* where *discourse* refers to stretches of text in a neutral sense and *Discourse* refers to ways of using language which are determined by socio-cultural beliefs and attitudes.

(see, for example, Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983) has, moreover, resulted in an understanding of reading and writing as “psycholinguistic” activities divorced from the social contexts in which they occur. This understanding is evinced in research which examines the rate and sequence in which rhetorical modes are acquired by children (see, for example, Englert & Hiebert, 1984). In this research no cognisance is taken of socio-cultural factors which might impact on the development of children’s literacy. Such understandings are thus characteristic of what Street (1984, 1993, 1995) terms the “autonomous” model of literacy which is discussed in 2.3.3 below. More important, from a critical perspective, is that both feature counts (Swales, 1988) and the identification of rhetorical modes (see, for example, Silva, 1990) have influenced the development of pedagogies which effectively impose the acquisition of dominant ways of using language on language learners. This is significant because research generated within the field of *contrastive rhetoric* (see, for example, Kaplan, 1966; 1972, cited in Connor 1996:30ff.) has shown that rhetorical conventions are culturally specific yet transfer across languages. A text written in English by, say, a native speaker of Arabic, might therefore manifest the rhetorical patterns of typical texts written in Arabic. Given that English lays claim to being an “international” language and that it is more appropriate to think of the plural “Englishes”<sup>7</sup> rather than the singular “English”, the idea that all texts written in English should carry the structures developed from one particular socio-cultural context is highly questionable.

One of the earliest challenges to work in the disciplines of linguistics and applied linguistics based on a perception of language as a self contained system isolated

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<sup>7</sup> As the title of the journal *World Englishes* suggests.

from the socio-cultural and political contexts in which it is used and taught, came from the enormously influential communicative language teaching movement. Stern (1983:177) points out that the “educational linguists” who drove the movement:

. . . no longer waited for the pronouncements of theoretical linguists; instead they used their own judgements and initiative in giving language pedagogy the linguistic direction they regarded as necessary. They were linguists in their own right but at the same time experienced practitioners or closely in touch with practice.

Yaldon (1983), amongst others, traces the development of communicative or functional approaches to language and language development to the work of the anthropologist Malinowski and the linguists Firth and Halliday. Concerned with the need to examine the context in which language is used in order to make sense of its meanings, both Malinowski and Firth, writes Yaldon:

. . . represent a view of language as context-dependent and sociological in orientation, as opposed to a more internal view in which language is a self-contained system, psychological in orientation (p.60).

This sociological orientation to language involved focusing on the uses, or *functions*, of language. Hymes' (1972:278) call to identify the “rules of use without which the rules of usage would be useless” is most frequently cited in this regard and stems from a paper which begins with an attack on Chomsky's notions of *linguistic competence* and *communicative performance*. Hymes is critical of Chomsky's understanding of competence as an idealisation of the “ideal speaker-listener”

operating with “a completely homogenous speech community” (Chomsky, 1965:3). As competence is never realised in performance, which is full of false starts and “errors”, performance is considered to be of little relevance to linguists who are intent on uncovering the general laws of competence. Hymes argues, however, that since language is used by speaker listeners who are far from ideal in speech communities which are never homogenous, linguists should be primarily concerned with performance. Such an examination of performance, argues Hymes, would not only take into account whether the language was appropriate in relation to the context in which it was used but also whether it would actually be used.

Thanks to the citation in the very accessible teachers' handbook *Communication in the Classroom* (Johnson & Morrow, 1981:1), possibly the best known illustrations of the need to teach the “rules of use” are Newmark's (1966) “Have you fire?”, “Do you have illumination?” or “Are you a match's owner?” All these utterances are grammatically correct and could be expected of what Newmark terms the “structurally competent” learner. However, none of these utterances would be used by a native speaker of English in order to ask for a light for a cigarette from a stranger.

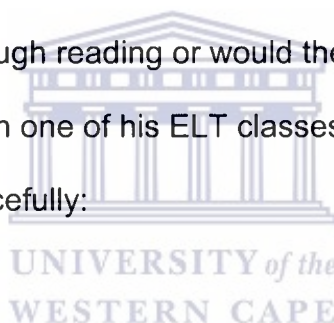
It was Wilkins (1976) who, as part of the work of the Council of Europe Modern Language Project, attempted to develop a framework in which these “rules of use” could be explicated. Wilkins' resulting concept of a *notional syllabus* has, as its starting point, the question of “*What* does the student communicate through language” rather than “*How* does the student communicate in language”, although this latter point is not ignored. Wilkins begins with the identification of two categories

of language use, *notions* and *functions*. The concept of *notions* encompasses the need to describe items such as space, time and quantity, and that of *functions* the actual uses to which language is put, such as greeting, suggesting, requesting and inviting. *Exponents* of functions and notions are then identified. Some exponents of the function of suggesting, for example, are “Why don’t we . . .”, “How about . . .” and “Let’s . . .”. These exponents are not analysed grammatically but are taught to students as whole units comprising the means of making a suggestion. When it first emerged, the communicative approach to language teaching was revolutionary in that it challenged the assumption that learners first needed to build a repertoire of language structures before putting those structures into use. Beginning with language in use, the communicative approach developed knowledge of syntactic structure over time, effectively reversing the order of traditional teaching.

The starting point of a notional syllabus is the identification of the language needs of the learner, with syllabus designers asking questions such as “What are the functions, or uses, for which these students will need language?” Once the uses of language have been specified, an inventory of exponents of each function can be drawn up. Munby’s (1978) *Sociolinguistic Model for Defining the Content of Purpose-Specific Language Programmes* led the way in providing a model for such needs analyses.

Although the communicative language teaching movement has been enormously influential in moving away from a focus on questions of linguistic structure by examining language in context, it nevertheless invites critical comment because of its

failure to take account of underpinning ideologies. Crucial questions to be asked of communicative approaches focusing on language use are “Whose use?” and “Which context?” A glance at many of the communicative language teaching textbooks in use in many parts of the world or a visit to the majority of communicative language teaching classrooms would suggest that the use of language which is being taught is predominantly the British or north American “mainstream” use. Consideration of the question of “Whose use?” has to go beyond asking whether or not the language function being taught would actually be part of the language needs of the learner and would not only encompass issues such as gender (in which circumstances and to whom would a Muslim Arab woman make a suggestion, for example) but also the mode of language which would be used to carry out the function (would these learners seek information through reading or would they normally use oral means?) Writing of a student, Kostaki, in one of his ELT classes in Greece, Prodromou (1988:79) makes the point forcefully:



Our modern books are full of speech acts that don't act, don't mean anything to Kostaki.

This point is particularly true of the area which has become known as the teaching of *English for Academic Purposes* (EAP). Within a communicative language teaching approach, EAP is conventionally defined by an inventory of language functions (Wilkins, 1976) derived from an analysis of academic discourse. Such functions traditionally include classifying, generalising, explaining, exemplifying and contrasting. Although one of the fundamental tenets of communicative language teaching is that the teaching of meaning should precede the teaching of form,

attention given to the teaching of meaning is not only often cursory, but also ignores a number of important questions regarding whether or how the meaning being taught corresponds with the understandings students bring to the teaching situation.

Consider, for example, the function of generalising. In order to make a generalisation, students not only need to appreciate the status and value of generalisations in Western academic discourse but also the very specific “rules of evidence” under which they can be made. Assuming that students know this ignores factors pertaining to the making of a generalisation as varied as students’ conceptions of learning (see, for example, Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983; Marton *et al.*, 1984) and understandings of the purpose of writing related to those conceptions of learning as well as culturally and linguistically specific rhetorical conventions in writing (Kaplan, 1966, cited in Connor, 1996).

Brown (1980:191) also takes up the issue of culturally specific differences in communication in his discussion of register and communication. Using Joos’ (1967) classification of five different levels of formality, Brown points out that registers also manifest themselves through paralinguistic features such as eye contact, body language and gesture and that knowledge of what is appropriate in terms of register variability is extremely complex when cross-cultural differences are taken into account. The fact that US usage, for instance, tends to accept less formal registers than Japanese native usage, for example, leads him to claim that “the acquisition of registers thus combines a linguistic and culture-learning process” (p.193). What he does not point out, however, is that socially dominant usage is likely to be elevated to the position of “correct” usage with those from less privileged contexts being required

to take on this usage for themselves. While the communicative approach to language teaching did represent a challenge to dominant analyses of language use and dominant methodologies to teach those analyses generated by the disciplines of linguistics and applied linguistics at the time, it was not “critical” in the sense of work which came some time later.

This later, more critical, work is based within the approach which has been termed by Lather (1991:13) *Discourse on Discourse* which was discussed earlier in this chapter and which focuses on the use of language to *construct* “reality” and of “reality” to construct language. The idea that language can construct reality, where reality is defined as the way in which individuals perceive the world, is far from new. As long ago as the 1930s, for example, Whorf (see, for instance, 1956), under the influence of Sapir (see, for example, 1970) argued that the grammar and lexis of a language determined what speakers of that language would perceive. Where contemporary approaches differ, however, is in moving from a perception of language to discourse, in the sense discussed earlier and defined by Kress (1989:7), and in acknowledging the role of power in that perception. Texts, the embodiments of language, are perceived as social strategies historically located in institutional sites and cultural fields in a mesh of power relations (Fairclough, 1992a:10).

Such understandings of the way language functions to construct reality have the potential to have profound implications for ELT. Teaching based on such perceptions would focus on making learners aware of the way in which language is used to position and construct worlds on the basis of ideologies and would allow



them to resist the subject positions set up for them. In Britain, the work of what is termed the Lancaster School<sup>8</sup> is already influential in this regard, and in South Africa Janks (1993a; 1993b) has led the way in producing a set of teaching materials based on an approach which has become known as “Critical Language Awareness”. Whether this work will ever have the capacity to challenge more dominant understandings has yet to be seen, however.

### **2.3.2 Challenges to Understandings of Second Language Learning**

Enormous shifts in understandings of second language learning have occurred over the last sixty years or so. Discernible amongst the numerous theories of language learning and teaching generated during this time, has been a shift from understanding the learning of a second language as dependent on factors inherent to the individual to acknowledging factors in the wider social, cultural, political and economic environments which impinge on the process.

From about 1940 to 1965, the time when both linguistics and language teaching were enjoying their greatest period of growth, approaches to second language teaching were dominated by behaviourist psychology and structural linguistics. As a result of these two influences, successful language learning was seen to be dependent on:

- the availability of a set of graded materials developed by linguists from a structural analysis of native speakers' use of the target language;

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<sup>8</sup> This term arises because the work was done at the University of Lancaster under the leadership of Norman Fairclough.

- learners being repeatedly drilled in these materials until they had acquired the structures as a set of language habits.

The emphasis was primarily on the spoken form of the language and the audio-lingual or audio-visual methods developed in response to these beliefs about effective language teaching, made extensive use of new technologies such as the tape recorder and slide projector.

The first major challenge to this set of beliefs came with the development of Chomsky's (1965) *transformational generative linguistics*. In his exposition of language, Saussure (1916) had proposed the constructs of *langue* and *parole* where *langue* or *competence* is the underlying form of the language which allows *parole* or *performance* to be generated. Structural linguists had long been concerned with the study of performance and this concern had then generated the structurally graded materials of the audio-lingual and audio-visual approaches. For Chomsky, what was important was not *parole* but *langue* or *competence* since it is *langue* which gives birth to *parole*. Along with this shift in interest from performance to competence was a rejection of learning as a behavioural response in favour of an understanding of learning as cognition involving the construction of frameworks of the underlying rules and principles which were used to generate language.

The shift to understanding language acquisition as an issue involving both cognition and affect rather than mechanistic response had a profound effect on second language learning research, which moved towards an examination of the cognitive and affective variables involved in the process.

Investigation into cognitive variables included the identification of a number of *cognitive styles, learning strategies and communication strategies*, all of which were perceived to be individually determined. Brown (1980:89), for example, offers the following definition of cognitive style:

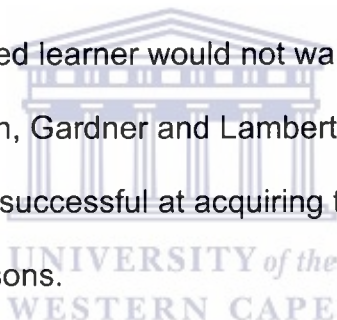
The way we learn things in general and the particular attack we make on a problem seem to hinge on a rather amorphous link between *personality and cognition*; this link is referred to as cognitive style (my emphasis).

Brown goes on to discuss five cognitive styles he deems to be pertinent to second language learning: *field independence/dependence, reflectivity/impulsivity; tolerance/intolerance of ambiguity, broad/narrow category width and skeletonization/embroidery*. Of field independence/dependence, Brown writes:

Affectively, persons who are more predominantly field-independent tend to be generally more independent, competitive, and self-confident. Field-dependent persons tend to be more socialised, tend to derive their self identity from persons around them, and are usually more empathetic and perceptive of the feelings and thoughts of others (p.91).

A great deal of research went into examining *communication strategies*, understood as attempts by the learner to make the best of her knowledge of the second language to communicate in any situation. A common strategy would be to use paraphrase or explanation when a lexical item was not available in the target language in order to “talk around” the missing item.

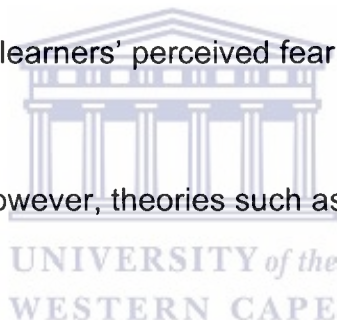
Recognition of the role of affect in language learning brought an interest in aspects of the personality which could impinge on learning. These included the effect of *high or low self esteem* (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Brodkey and Shore, 1976), *inhibition* and empathy (Guiora *et al.*, 1972a, 1972b), and *motivation*. This last factor of motivation was extensively investigated by Gardner and Lambert in the late 1960s and 1970s (see, for example, Gardner and Lambert, 1972). As a result of their research, Gardner and Lambert identified two kinds of motivation in second language learning: *integrative* and *instrumental* motivation. Integrative motivation involves a desire to learn the language in order to be integrated into the culture and way of life of the target language group. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, involves a desire to learn the language for practical reasons such as the desire to get a better job. An instrumentally motivated learner would not want to be assimilated into the target culture. In their research, Gardner and Lambert found that integratively motivated learners were more successful at acquiring the target language than those motivated by instrumental reasons.



Krashen (1981, 1982) also examined the role of affective factors in language acquisition, hypothesising that *comprehensible input* in the presence of a *low affective filter* was a major factor in language learning. Pertinent to this discussion is the fact that the components of the affective filter, motivation, self-confidence and level of anxiety, all pertain to the individual and not to the context in which language is acquired.

The role of affect in second language learning was also investigated by Schumann, (1978) whose *acculturation model* argued that individual's or groups' perceptions of the target-language-speaking group are important in determining whether or not the language will be learned. Higher status groups, claimed Schumann, will tend not to learn the language of lower status groups and vice versa. Lower status groups in a majority language situation are likely to take up one of three strategies: *assimilation* into the culture of the target language group; *rejection* of the target culture; or *adaptation*, which involves preserving a positive attitude towards the home culture and values while at the same time developing an equally positive attitude towards the culture and values of the target language group. Schumann's research identified, as key factors in the acquisition of the target language, the degree of contact with speakers of the language and learners' perceived fear of assimilation into it.

As Peirce (1995) points out, however, theories such as those of Schumann, Krashen and Lambert and Gardner:



. . . have been developed on the premise that language learners can choose under what conditions they will interact with members of the target language and that the language learner's access to the target language is a function of the learner's motivation (p.12).

Such views of the ability to learn a language as being, to a large extent, *individually* and *voluntarily* determined were developed in a series of enquiries, of which the study by Naiman *et al.* (1978) study is probably the best known example. This sought to identify the skills and strategies "good" learners used so that they could be

taught to those who did not employ them. Of such approaches, Wenden (1987:8) writes:

One of the leading educational goals of the research on learner strategies is an autonomous language learner. It is intended that insights derived from the research guide the development of learner training activities so that learners become not only more efficient at learning and using their second language but also more capable of self directing these endeavours.

As will be seen later, the questioning of learner autonomy is one of the main features of critical challenges to ELT discourses.

The advent of communicative approaches to language teaching based on analyses of language in use, described in the previous section of this chapter, heralded an enhanced interest in the language-related activities of reading and writing in the second language. Although the shift towards using cognitive rather than behaviourist psychology as a base for understanding language learning meant that complex processes such as reading and writing could now be studied, oral language use had remained the primary focus of much language teaching. The new focus on language in use, however, meant that reading and writing had to be included in that definition of use. To a large extent, the same research methods which had revealed language learning skills and strategies were also used to report on reading and writing skills. In reading, for example, “good” readers were shown to use “top-down” processing strategies in order to organise and analyse the mass of “bottom-up” data on the page (see Carrell *et al.*, 1988, for an overview). This gave rise to the teaching of reading skills and techniques requiring learners to survey whole texts in order to instantiate

relevant knowledge stored as cognitive *schemata* (see, for example, Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983) about both the content area of the text (*content* schemata) and the way in which texts are conventionally organised (*formal* schemata). Learners were also taught to skim and scan and to match their reading style to their purpose for reading, and teaching often focused on developing metaknowledge of appropriate use of styles, skills and strategies.

In writing, the “think aloud” protocol analysis pioneered by Emig (1971, 1977) revealed that “good” writers, for example, identified their readers and entered into a silent dialogue with those readers as a means of shaping and developing those texts. Their writing was recursive: they drafted and redrafted and found what it was they wanted to say through this recursiveness rather than trying to follow a point by point plan or outline. They also did not allow “surface” concerns such as spelling, grammar and punctuation to interfere with their composing processes, but rather corrected or edited their work for these features once they were satisfied with the meanings they had constructed. What became known as “process” approaches to the teaching of writing attempted to teach students do what these “good” writers did. The acquisition of these writing “skills” was seen to be dependent on will: they could be acquired and their acquisition would develop the learners’ capacity to produce “good” texts.

What might be termed “skills” approaches have dominated the teaching of reading and writing for many years. Although theory developed in the field of *New Literacy Studies* (see, for example, Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; 1993; 1995), which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, challenges the idea that “good” writing and

“efficient” reading is merely a matter of the acquisition of a “skill”, the “skills” approaches continue to dominate and, in doing so, continue to locate the ability to read and write in socially sanctioned ways in the individual.

One of the most powerful challenges to the siting of factors determining success or failure in language learning in the individual has come from Tollefson (1991). Writing in the area of language planning, Tollefson identifies two approaches to language acquisition research: *Neoclassical approaches* and *Historical Structural approaches*. Neoclassical approaches are concerned with learner variables such as those discussed above. Historical Structural approaches, on the other hand, examine the socio-cultural contexts in which language is used, as well as the influence of those contexts on language itself, as a means of explaining individuals' apparent success or failure in language acquisition. Using a series of compelling case studies, Tollefson challenges dominant understandings and provides new and important insights into the way in which individuals are constrained by wider forces in society in their attempts to develop language and, more importantly, the varieties of language which are socially prestigious. Tollefson's work is echoed by McKay's (1993) exposition of the way in which socio-political, economic, familial and educational agendas influence the attainment of English by immigrants to the USA. In many respects, Tollefson's work initiated what might be termed *ideological* approaches to understanding language learning which, in Kuhn's (1970) terms, constitute an emerging paradigm, and which are elaborated upon in the work of Rampton (1995).



Drawing on the distinction between understandings of language acquisition as determined by factors inherent to the individual and understandings which root the success or failure of acquisition in wider social structures, Rampton follows Street's (1984) identification of *autonomous* and *ideological* models of literacy in making a distinction between *autonomous* and *ideological* models of second language acquisition. Pointing out that *ideological* models have become increasingly prevalent in British applied linguistics, Rampton attributes the interest in ideological models to what he terms the "crisis and transformation of liberalism" (1995:237). Citing Gray (1986) and Frazer & Lacey (1993), Rampton lists the following features as characteristic of liberalism:

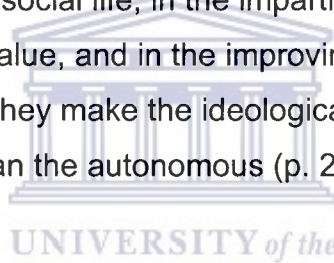
- an understanding of the individual as a-historical whose character is determined by her very humanity;
- an "ambiguous" disposition towards the state which is manifest in a "deep-seated aversion to state power" stemming from a focus on the moral individual and, at the same time, a "belief in the power of state policy as the promoter of social change and, especially, social progress" (Frazer & Lacey, p. 47);
- an understanding that the legitimacy of the liberal state is rooted in consent;
- a trust in impartial reason;
- the understanding that "social policy and technology can be used to ameliorate poverty, unhappiness and other ills" (Frazer & Lacey, p. 50).

According to Rampton (again following Frazer & Lacey), critiques of liberalism focus on:

- the perception that liberal politics have largely failed to protect equality, liberty and the rule of law, all of which are central tenets of liberalism;
- a rejection, in some cases, of the actual values of liberalism which centre on the individual;
- an understanding that the liberal values of individuality, freedom and equality are biased in the favour of powerful groups.

The result is that:

In concert (or cacophony), these lines of attack make it very hard to maintain an undiluted faith in the autonomy of individuals, in consensus and voluntary contract as the basis of social life, in the impartiality of reason and the separation of fact and value, and in the improving mission of social science. In one way or another, they make the ideological model of language use seem a safer starting point than the autonomous (p. 239).



Ideological models of language use are seen in the work of writers such as Gee (1990) (which will be discussed later in relation to the notion of multiple *literacies*) and Peirce (1995).

Using a longitudinal study of the way in which twelve immigrant women in Canada experienced opportunities to use English to communicate, Peirce (1995:11) argues that extant theories of language acquisition largely fail to acknowledge the way in which power and inequality work to control participation in communicative events:

In the field of SLA, theorists have not adequately addressed why it is that a learner may sometimes be motivated, extroverted, and confident and sometimes unmotivated, introverted, and anxious; why in one place there may be social distance between a specific group of language learners and the target community, whereas in another place the social distance may be minimal; why a learner can sometimes speak and other times remains silent.

Since language acquisition is dependent on participation in communicative events (Savignon, 1991), Peirce goes on to argue that an investigation of the way power and inequality function in facilitating this process is essential. Going beyond Hymes' (1972) definition of communicative competence as understanding the "rules of use" and citing Bourdieu (1977), Peirce argues that competence should include "an understanding of the way rules of use are socially and historically constructed to support the interests of a dominant group within a given society."<sup>9</sup> Challenging work which perceives learners' motivation to learn a language as a fixed personality trait (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985), Peirce coins the term *investment* to describe the extent to which learners will persevere in challenging dominant rules of use. Crucial to the amount of this investment is the learner's sense of social identity which is "multiple and contradictory" (p.15). Using one example from her study, Peirce shows how one participant's investment in English was structured by her identity as primary caregiver in her family. This identity allowed her to overcome what could have been described as a high affective filter and challenge what she understood to be appropriate rules of use governing communication between native English speaking Canadians and immigrants. She did this in order to get a return on

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<sup>9</sup> Developing this idea, Angélie-Carter (1977) shows how such rules are not fixed but can change even within the space of one interview.

her investment. Investment is more than instrumental motivation since the pursuance of the right to speak effectively involves an investment in the social identity of the speaker which is dominant at the time.

The value of work such as Peirce's is that it challenges a-historical perceptions of the individual and places language acquisition firmly in a social structure in which power and inequality have dominant roles. If Rampton's (1995) analysis of trends in British Applied Linguistics is correct, this will increasingly become the case.

### 2.3.3 Challenges to Understandings of Literacy

Parallel to these challenges to dominant understandings of language learning are challenges to understandings of the nature of literacy. Street (1984) identifies two models of literacy: an *autonomous* model and an *ideological* model. The following characteristics of the autonomous model are challenged by the ideological model.

#### 2.3.3.1 *Literacy as the decoding and encoding of script.*

The idea that literacy is a neutral ability involving the decoding and encoding of script is challenged by alternative understandings which perceive activities relating to written language as deeply embedded in the socio-cultural contexts in which they occur. Such activities might not actually involve the decoding or encoding of script and will often involve both spoken and written language (see, for example, Heath, 1983; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996). The idea that literacy is a unitary phenomenon is thus replaced by an understanding of the multiplicity of the many varieties of literacy,

some of which have acquired dominance because of their use by socially privileged groups. Literacies are understood to be acquired in socio-cultural contexts and their acquisition is seen to be dependent on the acquisition of the values which underpin them as well as on the acquisition of some level of technical decoding and encoding skills. The perception of literacy as consisting solely of the acquisition of a set of neutral “skills” which can be taught, characteristic of the “autonomous” model, has led to labels such as “basic literacy training” being applied, for example, to adult literacy classes. As Larson (1996) also points out, it has led to the main debates in literacy acquisition being focused on approaches<sup>10</sup> to developing technical literacy skills rather than on understanding the way in which the socially constructed nature of literacy privileges dominant forms to which many people are denied access because of the socio-cultural contexts into which they are born. What Larson terms the “current dichotomous argument between Whole Language and Phonics” (p.440) as a solution to the allegedly high rates of illiteracy in countries such as the United States and Britain is thus a “false” debate since it addresses a minor issue of technical skill rather than the more major issue of the difficulties people have in acquiring dominant literacies.

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<sup>10</sup> Larson refers to the “Whole Language” versus “Phonics” debate here. “Whole Language” approaches (see for example, Smith, 1971) emphasise “top-down” processing in which the reader uses information she already has to construct meaning around the text. Phonic approaches concentrate on building meaning from the “bottom-up” and rely on sight-sound correspondence. “Back to basics” approaches instituted by the US and British governments as a reaction to the alleged failure of more “modern” (i.e. Whole Language) approaches, favor Phonics.

### 2.3.3.2 *Literacy and cognitive advantage.*

Enormous claims have been made for the ability to decode and encode print including the fact that literacy allows individuals to function at higher, more abstract levels of cognitive functioning (Vygotsky, 1978; Luria, 1976). Such an understanding leads to the identification of literacy as a key factor in contributing to human progress and has led to a distinction being made between oral and literate cultures which has become known as the “great divide” theory (Ong, 1982). The work of, for example, Goody (1977) and Havelock (1986) (summarised in Gee, 1990), is used to support this distinction. One of the earliest challenges to the claim that literacy bestows cognitive advantages came from Scribner and Cole (1981). Working among the Vai people in Liberia, who use three separate scripts (Vai, Arabic and English), each of which is acquired in different settings through different means, Scribner and Cole found that non-literates were able to perform just as well as literates on many of the tasks used in their research. Where literates performed better than non-literates, they did so only where the task required skills they had used to acquire their particular variety of literacy. Vai people who, for example, had become literate in Vai, a script which is taught outside formal schooling, could use language to discuss grammar (something they had done in order to acquire literacy) whereas non-literates could not. Similarly, Vai people literate in Arabic, who had acquired their literacy through memorisation of the *Qur’an*, were able to perform better than non-literates on tasks of rote memorisation. Possibly the most important finding, however, was that skills such as logical reasoning, traditionally attributed to literacy by people such as Goody (1977), Havelock (1986) and Ong (1982), were associated not with literacy *per se* but with the variety of English literacy taught in schools. Scribner and Cole

were thus able to challenge the idea that literacy is a universal phenomenon and the idea that this phenomenon bestows universal mental consequences.

### 2.3.3.3 *People as literate or illiterate.*

If literacy is assumed to be the ability to use neutral technical skills to decode and encode meaning in print, then it is possible to dichotomise people as literate or illiterate. Those who are able to encode and decode meanings are literate and those who are not, illiterate. Following on from Scribner and Cole's (1981) work, researchers such as Heath (1982,1983) and Street (1984,1993,1995) have developed a paradigm which understands literacy as a socio-culturally based phenomenon. Within this paradigm, literacy is not perceived as a uniform, monolithically neutral skill but as a set of *practices* which are embedded in socio-cultural contexts. In research conducted in the Piedmont Carolinas in the USA, for example, Heath (1983) shows how people in two communities, "Trackton", a black working class mill community, and "Roadville", a white working class mill community, not only read different sorts of texts for different reasons but also position themselves in relation to the text in very different ways. In "Trackton", for example, reading tends to be a communal event with neighbours jointly constructing meaning around a brochure advertising a new car or a pamphlet detailing welfare benefits (Heath, 1983:196ff.). The text is something to be contested using knowledge that the neighbours jointly bring to the act of reading. In "Roadville", on the other hand, reading is a very different matter with residents viewing texts such as religious tracts, as a mirror of "right" reality (Heath, 1983:211ff.). This means that they do not contest the text but revere it and treat it as something to be learned from.

From work such as Heath's comes the idea that the construct of a single, monolithic phenomenon termed *literacy* has to be replaced by an understanding which encompasses the idea of many literacies. Central to Heath's work is the concept of a *literacy event* which she defines (1982:50) as any occasion:

. . . in which writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretative processes and strategies . . . In such literacy events, participants follow socially established rules for verbalizing what they know from and about the written material.

Street (see, for example, 1995:2) develops this idea of a *literacy event* into the concept of a *literacy practice* which:

. . . is pitched at a higher level of abstraction and refers to both behaviour and the social and cultural conceptualisations that give meaning to the uses of reading and/or writing.



The concept of multiple *literacy practices* is important, as the understanding of literacy as single, monolithic phenomenon views only one set of interactions and interpretative processes around text as "right". The plurality of the concept of *practices* opens the way for the value of those practices to be perceived as relative to the social context in which they are used. As a result of such understandings developed within the field which has become known as *New Literacy Studies*, it has become common to write not of *literacy* but of *literacies*.



Gee (1990) develops and defines the plurality of the concept of literacy and links it to the idea of *Discourse*. For Gee (1990:143), a Discourse is:

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

*Literacy* involves knowing how to use language within a *Discourse*. Since there are many Discourses there are also many literacies. People acquire membership of their *primary* Discourse through the socio-cultural context into which they are born:

. . . many lower socioeconomic black children use English within their primary Discourse to make sense of their experience differently than do middle-class children. This is not due merely to the fact that they have a different dialect of English . . . . Rather, these children use language, behaviour, values and beliefs to give a different shape to their experience (Gee, 1990: 151).

If literacy is viewed as a means of giving "shape" to experience and if the idea that there are many different ways of giving "shape" is accepted, then the watertight distinction between literate and illiterate has to fall away.

#### 2.3.3.4 *Illiteracy is an inferior state of being*

When added to claims of the cognitive benefits said to be bestowed by literacy, the dichotomous distinction between the state of being *literate* and that of being *illiterate* leads to the assumption that *illiteracy* is an inferior state of being and is something to be eradicated in the name of "progress" or "modernisation". Such an understanding

is challenged, for example, by the work of people such as Street (1995) and Prinsloo and Breier (1996) who contest the idea that literacy is a single, unitary phenomenon favouring, instead, the idea that there are many *literacies* each of which is rooted in socio-cultural practices. Street (1995), for example, shows how the modernisation of the education system in Iran under the late Shah in the 1960s and 1970s led to older varieties of literacy being devalued when contrasted with the variety taught in the modern school system. Villagers who had been educated in the *maktab*, the traditional school taught by the *mullah*, or religious leader, and whose ability to read and write stemmed from a study of the Qu'ran, had been able to adapt their literacy to activities such as the selling of fruit. Their literacy was, however, devalued by those schooled in the modern state system who saw themselves as superior. As Street shows, however, modern literacy might actually have been inferior to more traditional forms since it not only fostered "uncritical belief in specific 'modern' renderings of the world" but also contributed to "a weakening of the kinds of sensibility and scepticism that may have been fostered in oral tradition" (p.66).

Street's work is taken up by South African researchers such as Kell (1996) who shows how a woman who has successfully acted as a political activist and community leader for years and who has constantly been involved in literacy practices in the process of doing so, sees herself as illiterate, and therefore inferior, because she has been constructed as such by the formal system. Within her own environment however, the woman, Winnie Tsotso:

. . . is able to exercise considerable power in certain areas of her life. . .  
Within the welfare and political domains, for example, her role is that of a

leader and an authority. Despite her own inability to decipher much print, she plays a very important and highly valued role as a literacy mediator. In a process of reciprocity, she draws on her well-developed networks of support . . . and also on the extensive knowledge and skills she has acquired informally through apprenticeship and guided participation in liberation politics and the welfare bureaucracy (p.242).

The result of this kind of research is that the idea that illiteracy is an inferior state has to be challenged on two counts: firstly because of the construct of "illiteracy" itself becomes highly problematical and secondly because of the socially constructed nature of inferiority. As Street (1996:4) points out:

Researchers now argue that the 'standard' [view of literacy] is a cultural artefact, not a universal given . . . . According to that 'standard', the problems people face [in meeting its demands] are simply resolved by placing them in appropriate classes. . . [As a result] the rich, elaborate and varied meanings and uses of literacy in different cultures across time and space become marginalised and treated as failed attempts to access the dominant standard form represented by western-type schooling.

#### 2.3.3.5 *The speech-writing distinction*

The issue of whether or not a distinction exists between spoken and written language and, if it does, arguments about the nature of that distinction, have long been contentious. Linguists such as Biber (1988) Halliday (1985), Chafe (1982), Kress (1989) and Tannen (1982,1985) have pointed out a number of ways in which speech and writing overlap and differ. A major conclusion drawn from this work is that the speech-writing distinction does not exist as a single dimension. The dimensions along which overlaps and differences between speech and writing have been noted

include the extent to which producers are personally involved in their texts (Chafe, 1982; Tannen, 1982) and the extent to which ideas are integrated into more complex structures using language devices (Halliday, 1985).

The ideological model of literacy rejects this view, arguing, instead, that spoken and written forms of language are fused together in any one literacy event. Heath (1983:197), for example, observes that in "Trackton", residents frequently sat together jointly constructing meaning as they tried to make sense of a letter or pamphlet. In this example, cohesion, which is often cited as a property of written texts, comes as a result of interaction *around* the text and is not a property of the text itself. The ideological model also notes that many language communities produce oral texts which display many of the features characterised as typical of written texts in other communities (see, for example, Chafe, 1981 and Gough, 2000). As a result of this, it is argued that the distinction between literacy and orality and written and spoken language should be replaced by an understanding of the distinction between planned, ritualised, formal discourse and everyday interaction either of which can be enacted in spoken or written form. The fact, moreover, that everyday interaction with members of the speech community is generally acquired as a primary discourse ( a discourse, which, as Gee (1990:150) points out, comes "free") and that ritualised formal interaction has to be acquired through a period of apprenticeship to some secondary discourse, parallels the primacy of speech and the learned nature of writing. An ideological model of literacy therefore challenges the socially elevated status of writing because it is writing *per se* and would recognise some forms of oral language use as having the same socially elevated position in some communities.

### 2.3.3.6 *Literacy research as neutral and objective*

The construction of literacy by the “autonomous” model as a technical ability to decode and encode print allows literacy research to be construed as objective and politically neutral. Once the idea that literacy is a single unitary skill is discarded and replaced by an understanding of literacy as a set of social practices each of which is embedded in specific contexts, then it is no longer possible to separate literacy from the people who use it. Researching literacies therefore involves seeking an understanding of the groups and institutions who socialise people into their specific literacy practices. This necessarily entails an ethnographic approach which can provide an account of the socio-cultural contexts in which those practices have meaning. The negative effects of not being able to manipulate dominant forms of literacy posited by the “autonomous” model also means that such accounts will encompass the features of “critical” research outlined at the beginning of this chapter: a focus on questions of social and cultural inequality in literacy education; an aim to change the conditions which produce this inequality and a focus on the broad question of knowledge production. Work of people such as Baynham (1995), Gee (1990), Heath (1983), Luke (see for example, 1988), Street (1983, 1993, 1995) and (focusing on literacy practices in South Africa) Prinsloo and Breier (1996) is characteristic of such an approach.

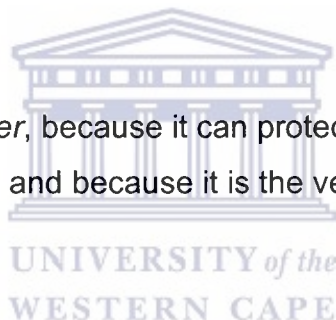
### 2.3.3.7 *The ideological model of literacy*

As its name suggests, the “ideological” model of literacy is concerned with investigating the way literacy is implicated in the relationship of individuals to society by focusing on the concept of *ideology* and particularly on the way in which ideology

is frequently construed as “common sense”. The “ideological” model acknowledges the way in which, for example, socially prestigious forms of literacy are constructed as “natural”. It also seeks to make clear the effects of such a construction on those who do not have access to dominant forms of literacy because of the socio-cultural context in which they grew up. The model thus shows how “common sense” conceals true interests and fosters injustice.

The desire of those working with ideological models of language and literacy to bring about social change is apparent in Gee’s (1990) closing words to his book *Social Linguistics and Literacies*. Understanding the ideological underpinnings of dominant practices in language and literacy, Gee argues, is important because:

Such knowledge is *power*, because it can protect all of us from harming others and from being harmed, and because it is the very foundation of resistance and growth (p.192).

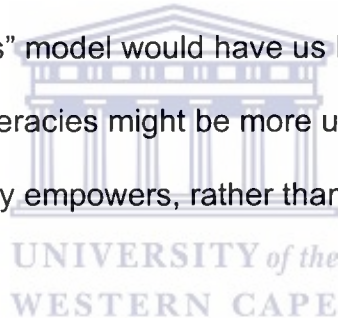


Using such knowledge, Gee goes on to claim (*ibid.*),

. . . is a moral matter and can change the world.

As might be expected, response to a model of literacy which opposes dominant understandings has been critical. Street (1996:2) outlines the three main areas of criticism directed at the field of *New Literacy Studies* in general, and the “ideological” model of literacy in particular, as “Relativism, Romanticism and Relevance - the three Rs”.

“Relativism” refers to the idea that the identification of multiple literacies is potentially dangerous because of the way in which the resultant affirmation of literacy practices, which are no longer appropriate in “modern” globalised contexts, marginalises those who use them. As a result, the ideological model is said to contribute to oppression by denying access to powerful genres. Street’s response to this criticism is to point out that the “ideological” model only relativises literacy at an analytical level. By recognising that literacy is not a set of autonomous skills, it allows educators and policy makers to make decisions about which literacies should be taught. Such decisions are important since research based on the ideological model (see, for example, Brier and Sait, 1996; Gibson, 1996) has shown that the relationship between the formal literacies taught in schools and power is considerably more complex than the “autonomous” model would have us believe. The understanding, on the other hand, that local literacies might be more useful and more relevant than other formal literacies ultimately empowers, rather than oppresses, local communities.



For Street, “romanticism” refers to the criticism that the “ideological” model romanticises local literacies in a “vision of rural paradise left pure and unsullied by urban or modern interference” (p.6). Street’s response to this critique is to point out that the “ideological” model is not committed to a continuation of the *status quo*. Rather, by recognising the complexity of the relationship of local literacies to the socio-cultural contexts in which they are practised, the “ideological” model is able to identify which literacy practices “are more central to immediate ‘needs’ (and

empowerment) than the imparting of formal primer-based knowledge and skills” (p.7).

The “ideological” model thus has as its aim the betterment of all people.

The third point of criticism, “relevance” refers to the argument that local literacies are not relevant to the processes of globalisation and modernisation. As Street points out, however, this criticism lays itself open to charges of being élitist, Western and centralist because of the way in which it fails to:

. . . comprehend the endemic variation and interconnectedness of modern society: people in rural South Africa as much as in urban settlements and middle-class Cape Town are all part of what goes to make up contemporary communications practices and networks (p.8).

The claim of “relevance” thus relies on an assumption about the world which is shown to be untenable by research rooted in the “ideological” model.

What would appear to be the case, therefore, is that, in challenging long-held assumptions about the nature of literacy, the “ideological” model also challenges other assumptions about the nature and processes of modernisation and globalisation. Implications of the model are thus far-reaching and, in many cases, uncomfortable since they question the way in which constructs such as “progress” and “development” have long been understood.

#### **2.3.4 Challenges to Dominant ELT methodologies**

It is not difficult to see how the “ideological” model of literacy fits into challenges to dominant ELT discourses. Much English language teaching is based on an



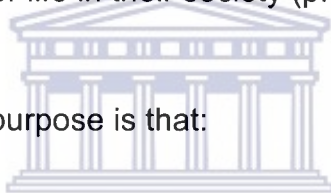
understanding of reading and writing as neutral technical "skills" and the ideology  
\* underpinning the teaching of certain types of texts or certain reading and writing  
practices as better, or more efficient, than others is often left unexplored.

Communicative approaches to the teaching of reading, for example, are based on the assumption that reading occurs for a *purpose* (see, for example, White, 1981). The idea that all socio-cultural groups do not share the same purposes for reading (and therefore do not read the same types of texts) often remains unacknowledged however, with the result that the reading behaviours of dominant social groups are taught as norms. Similarly, the behaviours identified by research as characteristic of "good" writers are often held up as models to learners regardless of their linguistic or socio-cultural background and without any consideration of the way in which those behaviours are rooted in those "good" writers' socio-culturally based understandings of the purpose of writing (see, for example, Boughey, 1998b) and of their own relationship to the texts they produce.

Challenges to dominant ELT methodology go beyond examining the validity of the "autonomous" model of literacy, however, as writers increasingly begin to question pedagogies produced within the Centre-dominated field of ELT. Pennycook's (1994) indictment of the way in which communicative methodology, with its focus on games, trivialises learning has already been mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis. In many respects, this criticism stems from what Phillipson (1992) terms the "disconnection" of ELT from wider educational structures (also mentioned in the introductory chapter) and what Holliday (1994:94) identifies as the need of teacher

groups in state education to “socialise” their students “into membership of the wider society.” Holliday distinguishes between two models of language pedagogy: the “British/Australasian/North America model” (BANA) and the “tertiary/secondary/primary model” (TESEP). The “BANA” model, developed in British, Australasian and North American private language schools or annexes to university departments, is essentially instrumental in that it aims to equip mainly adult learners with the language they need to further other purposes. The purpose of the “TESEP” model, on the other hand:

. . . is primarily not only to teach language skills according to the learner’s sociolinguistic needs, but also to take students or pupils through a complex process in preparation for life in their society (p.94)




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The result of this difference in purpose is that:

. . . the two scenarios constitute two *cultures* in English language education, which contain different parametres for what happens between people in the classroom, and which must be considered, in all their variety, if appropriate methodologies are to be found (p.13, original emphasis).

Unfortunately, however, the high status of the “BANA” model means that many of its methodologies are exported to “TESEP” environments uncritically. According to Phillipson (1992), in many cases this has resulted in established values regarding teaching and learning being challenged. Edge (1996:17) takes up and elaborates on Phillipson’s point thus:

. . . the TESOL professional abroad who is deliberately moving away from a teacher-centred style of teaching is seen as threatening the position of colleagues in that country for whom the centrality of the teacher is the culturally sanctioned base for their teaching. The TESOL professional is introducing a lack of proper respect for teachers and, by extension, for elders in general. The TESOL professional who insists on peer correction in order to foster student autonomy is, from another perspective, demonstrating a lazy and self-indulgent lack of real interest in whether the students' work is correct or not. If the teacher doesn't care, why should the learners? 

A number of researchers report in detail on this "mismatch" of values. Ellis (1996), for example, describes how the Vietnamese learners in his study had difficulty with the focus on process (learners using language in order to learn language) rather than content (explicit teaching of language rules) in their communicative language teaching classes. Underpinning this difficulty was the emphasis placed on meaning, rather than form, characteristic of communicative language teaching. Shamim (1997) reports on the problems experienced in introducing a skills-based, discovery-oriented, collaborative methodology into a class of postgraduate students in Pakistan. Students resisted the innovation by failing to engage in group work and not submitting assignments. Shamim concludes that her action in introducing an alternative methodology had effectively broken an unwritten contract with her students who expected her to behave in traditionally sanctioned ways. Once she had broken the contract, her learners also felt able to do so.

Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) point out that, in Vietnam, the group work which is often the focus of activities intended to negotiate meanings in the communicative classroom can be highly problematic. This is because the associations formed by

students in Vietnamese classes are more intimate than those in Western classrooms, with many students continuing “close relationships throughout their lives, forming ties that encompass financial, familial and social obligations” (p.203). In such a situation, as Kramsch & Sullivan’s analysis of classroom discourse shows, the focus of language exercises is not on individuals negotiating meanings but on the group “celebrating language use”:

. . . the terms ‘build’ and ‘collaborative’ are inappropriate to describe the conversational give-and-take, the verbal sparring, the rhapsodizing and ‘sounding’ that go on in these classrooms. The metaphor is not one of efficiency, problem-solving, and goal-oriented task, but rather of verbal creativity and poetic licence. Though individuals are sometimes called upon to answer questions, much of the learning is a ‘growing into knowing’ (Heath, 1983) that occurs through listening to the teacher and experimenting with various responses (p.203).

In such a situation, splitting the class into groups can be “divisive and inhibit learning” (p.203), as it goes against the grain of what students are accustomed to and expect. Kramsch and Sullivan also point at that, in the Vietnamese class they observed, the teacher functioned as mentor and moral leader in the Confucian tradition. The idea of teacher as mentor or moral guide is contrary to the role of the teacher constructed in the majority of Centre teacher education programmes where teachers are developed as “learning managers”. Such a role has none of the connotations of socialisation embodied in the Vietnamese construct.

In a similar vein, O'Neill (1991) uses Wong-Fillmore's (1985) research to challenge what he terms the "plausible myth of learner-centredness" which has been dominant in the field of ELT for many years. Beginning by describing his observation of a lesson which was so "learner-centred" that students were left with very little direction and even less language input from the teacher, O'Neill goes on to argue for the need for teachers to be critical of the claims made for "methods" by experts. He concludes:

There is good teaching and there is bad teaching. Good teaching is characterised by a *variety of styles* to promote learning. Bad teaching can just as easily be of the 'student-centred' type, favouring group work and no teacher intervention, as it can be rooted in 'chalk and talk' (or 'droan and 'groan') traditions (p.303, original emphasis).

The result of these challenges to dominant Centre-generated methodologies is an increasing awareness of the need for pedagogy to be *appropriate* to local conditions. This abandonment of claims that methods can be "best" and "most efficient" has profound implications for teacher development however, especially, in the light of Pennycook's (1994a) claim that

. . . for many English language teachers, especially those trained in North America (but increasingly those trained elsewhere too as the power of the scientific discourse of applied linguistics infiltrates more and more domains), to consider the role of English and English language teaching in the world is to have available only questions of linguistic structure and decontextualised teaching practices (p.142).

For teachers to be able to develop pedagogies *appropriate* to whatever local conditions they find themselves in, their training will need to equip them with the means to be aware of, consider and reflect on those conditions as well as develop methodologies appropriate to them.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The implications of the challenges to dominant ELT discourses discussed in this chapter are not only relevant to those involved in teacher education since they most impact on the work of actual practitioners. At tertiary level (which is the focus of this thesis), understandings of the socially constructed nature of Discourses (following Gee, 1990) and literacies have led to an interest in understanding the nature of *academic* literacy. Fuelled by the work of people such as Fairclough (1989), debate has turned its attention to the so-called “rightness” and common-sense “obviousness” of much academic writing. Ivanič and Simpson (1992) summarise a popular area of interest thus:

Our way of studying language is ‘critical’ in the sense that we are not studying just the ‘proper’, ‘correct’ or ‘appropriate’ way of writing. We are looking at ways in which the standardised conventions of academic writing often leave people out. A lot of academic writing is impersonal: it doesn’t appear to be about people, and it excludes readers and writers who aren’t familiar with it. We are interested in challenging this by making the writer’s responsibilities and rights more explicit, and by recognising that the type of language a person is using is a part of them (p.169).

For educators working at tertiary level, the result of this sort of questioning of dominant forms of literacy is a sense of conflict. Kramer Dahl (1995) speaks for many language/composition teachers when she writes of the dilemma she faces as she sits down to plan her teaching of a course intended to introduce students to academic reading and writing. Two choices lie before her. She can either:

. . . agree with social constructionists like Bizzell (1982a,b) and Bartholomae (1983,1985) that my students, as newcomers to the university need to be taught the conventions of the socially privileged discourse of academia and the public sphere

or she can agree with

. . . radical educators like Knoblauch & Brannon (1984) and others that by teaching these conventions I could easily be accused of complicity in the cultural task of education, reproducing existing knowledge and power relationships. So should I instead, following their advice, favour a pedagogy that encourages collaborative work in which students are allowed to speak their own non-academic discourses, however socially underprivileged, within or beside academic discourse? (p.21)

As Smitherman (1999) shows, the battle for the acceptance of students' home languages (and home discourses) within the academy in the United States has been going on for many years and still has not been won. What many educators favour, therefore, is a compromise which aims to induct students into academic discourse, while, at the same time, attempting to develop their capacities to be critical of it. The ultimate aim of such a strategy is to empower students to challenge from within.

“Challenge from within” is, indeed, a strategy which has been adopted by many academics from marginalised communities as Smitherman’s own writing, which moves effortlessly between the conventions of academic prose and her “home” challenging black vernacular discourse, shows. Describing the fight within the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC<sup>11</sup>) for the right for students to use their “own” language, she writes:

Others accused CCCC of a “sinister plot” to doom speakers of “divergent” dialects to failure in higher education by telling them that their stigmatized language was acceptable. A few simply said that CCCC had done lost their cotton-pickin minds (p.362).

Even when a choice, rather than a compromise, between the two positions of enlitterating students into academic discourse and allowing them to use their home discourses has been made, however, critical challenges still have implications for the classroom practitioner. If one decides to work towards equipping students with the conventions of the “socially privileged discourse of academia and the public sphere” (Kramer-Dahl, 1995:21), understandings derived from critical challenges impact on the way this should be done, for much in the way of what is “done” to students in the name of enliteration can be highly questionable. It is this issue which is at the core of this thesis. In order to question what is “done” to students, however, it is first necessary to ask how the nature of the “problem” of not being able to reproduce the conventions of socially privileged discourses is understood, for it is understandings of

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<sup>11</sup> CCCC is a sub division of the US based National Council of Teachers of English.



the “problem” which underpin the nature of remedial work. It is to this task that this thesis now turns, beginning with an examination of the research methodology used.



### An Examination of the Research Methodology

These days, trying to learn about social research is rather like walking into a room of noisy people. The room is full of cliques, each displaying a distinctive jargon and cultural style. There is, of course, a large group talking quantitative research much as it has been talked for decades. But there are new, flashy groups heatedly discussing “constructivist”, “postmodern”, “postpositivist”, and “critical” research. Most of these people are talking about qualitative social research, but they disagree with each other on such basic issues as the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge, and the concept of truth. You cannot get more basic than that! (Carspecken, 1996:1).

. . . neat categories are the realms of texts and courses in research methods (Avison, 1997:92).



#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to achieve two goals. Apart from providing a description of how I went about doing the research on which this thesis is based, it also aims to provide a theoretical background for that process by discussing it as an ethnographic approach, enacted with a *critical* orientation. In order to do this, however, I will need to provide more information about the research setting: the University of Zululand, a historically black university in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa and, more specifically, a first year Systematic Philosophy class at the University.

### 3.2 Setting the Scene

The research on which this thesis is based was undertaken as part of my work as a member of the Academic Support programme at the University of Zululand, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa in the period between September 1994 and December 1998.

The University of Zululand was founded in 1960 by the apartheid government as part of the policy of separate development for the citizens of rural Zululand. Situated near the coast about 180 kilometres north of Durban, the nearest metropolitan centre, the University initially existed as a college of the University of South Africa and achieved its status as an independent institution only in 1970. For many years, graduates of the University's six faculties (Education, Arts, Science, Law, Commerce and Agriculture) were mostly employed by the former KwaZulu government either as teachers or other government officials. The demand for teachers in the government service meant that Education grew to be one of the largest faculties, with many students studying for the B.Paed. degree.

Following the 1994 democratic election, a large number of students entered South African universities in order to fulfil their hopes of a better future. Although other universities had admitted students regardless of their race and geographical origin for more than a decade, local students still looked to *their* university, the University of Zululand, as the main provider of tertiary education. Between 1994 and 1995 student numbers rose by one third<sup>1</sup>, putting enormous strain on the already

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<sup>1</sup> The University of Zululand Three Year Rolling Plan 2000 - 2002 gives the following figures for students enrolled at the University:

historically underfunded resources of the institution. Many of the students who took up the offer of a place at the University after the election did so without any secure funding and the period of the research was plagued by student unrest as the University tried to enforce the payment of fees and students resisted. Student numbers at the University peaked in 1996 and, thereafter, started to fall partly as a result of the realisation that courses at other institutions were open to all students and partly because of a crisis in funding for fees. Following the 1994 democratic election, many students had enrolled at historically black universities thinking that funding would be available. This was in spite of the fact that the new government had made it clear that its obligation was to support education at primary level. When the expected funding was not forthcoming, fewer students applied to universities as they had no means of supporting their studies. The funding crisis was then exacerbated by a reduction in the number of job opportunities open to graduates of the University. The employment traditionally available to graduates in the KwaZulu government service was no longer available and cuts in the number of teaching posts at a national level meant that students were increasingly unwilling to incur debts to pay for an education which was no longer a guarantee of secure employment.

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1994	6000
1995	8000
1996	8000
1997	7500
1998	7200
1999	6000

As I have already indicated in the introduction to the thesis, my brief upon appointment to an Academic Support post at the University of Zululand was to contribute to students' "language" development where "language" was understood to be their ability to use English for "academic" purposes. Previous incumbents of posts similar to mine had worked in the adjunct fashion typical of Academic Support programmes outlined in Chapter One. This had involved running initiatives such as the Achieve<sup>2</sup> programme which provided tutorials and lectures in academic reading, writing, listening and notetaking. When, thanks to funding from the Independent Development Trust, the staff complement of the Academic Support programme was augmented and I was appointed as co-ordinator of what was termed the "Academic Literacy Unit",<sup>3</sup> the expectation of the majority of academic staff members at the University of Zululand was that the increased, more structured capacity of the programme would result in a more prolific, and possibly more efficient, version of the Academic Support programme which had existed in the past. This assumption was made in spite of the acceptance of a proposal to the University Senate (J. Boughey, 1993) which had argued for a model of *Academic Development* focusing on the sort of systemic development at an institutional level characteristic of the shift from *Academic Support* to *Academic Development* outlined in Chapter One. In the proposal, the name *Academic Support* was retained for the programme on the grounds that its staff members would be available to *support* staff as they developed and transformed curricula and teaching methodologies.

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<sup>2</sup> Magda Pritchard, one of the previous incumbents of a post such as mine, provided details of the *Achieve* programme in an oral interview.

<sup>3</sup> At the time I took up my post, the term "academic literacy" was becoming increasing fashionable in South Africa as more and more people became acquainted with Taylor *et al.*'s *Literacy by Degrees* (1988).

At the time I took up the post, my understanding of the term *academic literacy* was based on Street's (1984) ideological model of literacy, described in 2.3.3 of this thesis. I therefore understood academic literacy to consist of a set of practices which had arisen out of particular understandings of the way individuals related to texts. The acquisition of academic literacy was dependent on understanding this relationship and, since those texts embodied the knowledge constructed within the university, was also dependent on understanding the "rules and conventions" which defined the construction of that knowledge (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988). In a paper written at the end of 1994 (Boughey, 1994), I therefore argued:

. . . the development of academic literacy is related in a rich and complex way to the development of learning. [This observation] leads naturally into an argument for the need to develop academic literacy not as an adjunct "skill" but by and through engagement with *learning* in the mainstream disciplines themselves (p.26. original emphasis).

In the paper, I go on to list the following implications of such an understanding of academic literacy and its development:

- The term "language specialist" is problematical. Although many AD practitioners have a background in language development work, we are actually required to work with *learning* and, as an AD practitioner, I increasingly find myself mediating *concepts* (see, for example, Boughey & Van Rensburg, 1994) by initiating and supporting activities such as writing in relation to mainstream teaching. A focus on learning and on the need to see reading and writing as means of exploring and constructing knowledge rather than as "skills" has helped me to reconceptualise my own work and, I believe, has been more productive in persuading lecturers that they should view and use reading and writing in the same way.

- In persuading lecturers to take up the task of enliterating their students, the role of the AD practitioner is to help the lecturer create contexts conducive to the development of learning. The activities of reading and writing help to create those contexts. Since those contexts must encompass a large, diverse, multi-cultural, multi-lingual student body, the AD practitioner must identify and research new ways in which these contexts can be created and enriched.
- The use of literacy-related activities to enrich the learning environment require that resources other than AD consultancy be made available to lecturers. The use of activities such as a process approach to writing, dialogue journals or reading logs, for example, means that students' writing must be read and responded to in some way. This may well mean that AD practitioners have to take on part of this task or find the resources for others to do so, since reading and/or providing feedback to hundreds of pieces of writing is more than can be expected of any mainstream lecturer even if that feedback is provided according to the most efficient and effective principles identified by current research. This does not mean that AD should take on the lecturer's work but rather that we need to find resources to *support* the lecturer in that work because of the large numbers of students involved.
- The efficient use of AD resources may well mean that we need to look at faculty wide approaches where resources are concentrated in certain areas but are supported by practice in other areas. This might mean that some courses will be identified as courses which will be supported by AD resources and which will provide a rich exposure to the use of reading and writing to construct and explore knowledge. A variety of these courses could be made obligatory at first year level. If such courses were obligatory, they could then be supported by activities requiring less AD support in other areas. One effect of supporting the development of reading and writing as a means to explore knowledge in disciplines other than the "languages" would be to detract from the idea that skill in manipulating the form of the language is the core of academic literacy.

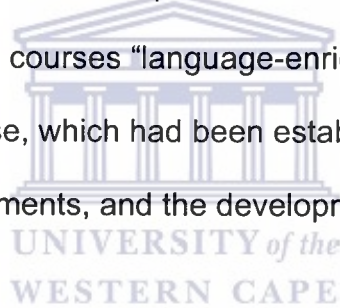
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- Crucial to the success of faculty-wide approaches will be the development of those approaches by faculties themselves. In order for this to happen, both “top-down” and “bottom-up” strategising is necessary (p.27).

By the end of 1995, the implications of my understanding of the concept of “academic literacy” listed above had led to my working on a number of initiatives at the University. As two of these initiatives are central to the research process on which this thesis is based, I will describe them in some detail in the next section.

### 3.2.1 Putting “Language” into the Curriculum

The two initiatives central to the research process on which this thesis is based were a proposal to designate certain courses “language-enriched” as an alternative to the existing *Practical English* course, which had been established to meet students’ language development requirements, and the development of a *Writing Respondent Programme*.



#### 3.2.1.1 “Language-enriched” courses ✓ ✓ ✓

The concept of the “language-enriched” course arose from the US practice of developing courses in each discipline which are designated as “writing-intensive” (Weiss, 1988). Students are then required to take one or two of these “writing-intensive” courses as a faculty requirement. The US practice of designating one or two courses in each discipline as writing-intensive occurs in order to draw on the capacity of writing as a tool for learning (Emig, 1977), and thus provide a more in-depth learning experience within the discipline, as well as to learn about the way



language is used to construct learning in disciplinary specific ways. Lecturers teaching writing-intensive courses in the US usually undergo professional training in order to learn how to incorporate writing as an integral part of the learning process.

The US model of writing-intensive courses was developed within a long tradition of teaching basic writing to college students, many of whom were native speakers of English. The idea that students needed to acquire the ability to use writing as a mode of language use *per se* was therefore well established there. At the University of Zululand, however, the “writing problem” appeared to be equated with the “language problem”, with many staff expressing the opinion that their students had difficulty in writing purely because of their status as speakers of English as an additional language. In developing a proposal for the introduction of writing-intensive courses within the Faculty of Arts, therefore, I decided that the use of the term “language-enriched” to designate a course intended to develop students’ capacity to produce academic text would meet less opposition at Faculty Boards and Senate than the term “writing-intensive”.

Another way in which the concept of “language-enriched” courses introduced at the University of Zululand differed from the US writing-intensive model was in its position within a faculty rather than within a discipline. The US model designates several courses *within each discipline* as writing-intensive. Reasoning that students needed exposure to writing development at first year level<sup>4</sup> in particular, my proposal was

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<sup>4</sup> In the US, “writing intensive” courses often exist in addition to “Basic Writing” courses at first year level. In the first year *Practical English* course at the University of Zululand, writing appeared to be perceived as a “study skill” equal in status to

that entire first year courses should be designated “language-enriched” and that these courses should stand as alternatives to the four courses<sup>5</sup> currently identified as fulfilling the language requirement for degree purposes. I also thought it unlikely that staff would be willing to undergo the period of training in order to learn how to incorporate writing/language development into their own teaching required by the US model. I reasoned, however, that this could be overcome by members of the Academic Literacy Unit (which I co-ordinated) being available to provide intensive support to lecturers teaching language-enriched courses. This support could take the form of consultancy and team-teaching.

The proposal for the establishment of “language-enriched courses”, submitted to the Faculty of Arts in 1995 (Boughey, 1995b), argued for provision for language development to be made within the study of the mainstream disciplines. It proposed that departments should be able to designate their first year courses as “language-enriched” provided a number of conditions were met. Once designated “language-enriched”, these courses would fulfill the language requirement for degree purposes. After a number of courses had acquired “language-enriched” status, it was argued that students would be exposed to a wider measure of language development than that currently on offer in the *Practical English* course and the other language courses which were recognised as alternatives to it.

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listening, notetaking and reading.

<sup>5</sup> In 1995, students in the Faculty of Arts needed to take one year of Practical English, Afrikaans, Zulu or General Linguistics in order to fulfill the language requirement for degree purposes. The Faculty of Commerce required students to take the Practical English course while the Faculty of Science “recommended” students to take it.

The initial proposal to the Faculty of Arts was referred to a committee consisting of Faculty Board members<sup>6</sup> who looked at the criteria for “language-enriched” status.

The criteria recommended to Faculty were that:

- Students should complete a minimum of three<sup>7</sup> major pieces of written work in each semester of a course designated “language-enriched”. These major pieces of written work should be supported by other, more informal, written pieces.
- A committee would be formed to monitor the work of departments who had applied for “language-enriched” status for their first year course. This committee would ensure that the courses were indeed “language-enriched”.

The proposal for the establishment of “language-enriched” courses in the Faculty of Arts was accepted by the Arts Faculty Board in late 1995. The Department of Philosophy then applied for “language-enriched” status for their first year Systematic Philosophy course and thus became the first course to join English, Zulu, Afrikaans

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<sup>6</sup> Professor Myrtle Hooper of the Department of English and Professor Willy Burger of the Department of Afrikaans served on this committee. In 1995, both departments were having difficulty teaching the large numbers of students enrolled in their first year classes for language requirement purposes and looked to other departments applying for “language-enriched” status for their first year courses to share the load. The first department to apply for “language-enriched” status for one of its first year courses was the Department of Philosophy. Philosophy had very low student numbers and one of the factors influencing the decision to support language development at first year level was the need to attract more students into the department. It is interesting to speculate whether the proposal would have been accepted by Faculty had departments been competing for students in the way they are in the current higher education environment.

<sup>7</sup>The requirement that students should be required to produce *three* major pieces of written work should be seen against the fact that in many courses multiple choice tests were used as the only form of assessment. This meant that no formal pieces of writing were required of students whatsoever.

and General Linguistics as courses which met the language requirement for degree purposes in the 1996 Academic Calendar.

### 3.2.1.2 *The Writing Respondent Programme*

In the early 1990s, a number of South African universities had followed the US lead in establishing Writing Centres as sites conducive to the development of students' writing<sup>8</sup>. In very simple terms, a Writing Centre is a place offering students one-on-one consultation about writing in progress. Typically this would mean that a student would take a draft of a piece of writing to the Writing Centre and would discuss it with a writing consultant. The task of the writing consultant would be to respond to the writing, not as a teacher of writing, but as an intelligent reader who helps the writer to develop her writing through the negotiation of meaning. A student would then use the experience of the consultation to redraft the piece of writing. The system of drafting, consulting and then redrafting thus accords with what are commonly termed *Process Approaches* to the development of writing (see, for example, White & Arndt, 1991). A number of visits to the Writing Centre might be required to develop a piece of writing, depending on factors such as the requirements of the writing task and both the writing experience and conceptual knowledge of the content area of the text of the writer.

Although the feedback provided in one-on-one consultations in Writing Centres has been shown to be more conducive to the development of students' writing than other

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<sup>8</sup> The first campus-wide Writing Centres were opened at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Western Cape in 1994.

forms of feedback (Carcinelli, 1980; Sokmen, 1988; Zamel, 1985), a number of problems related to the use of Writing Centres in the South African Academic Development context have been identified. Possibly most significant of these relate to the Academic Development aim of institutional transformation since Writing Centres can be perceived as places where staff can send students to have their writing “fixed” and thus absolve themselves of any responsibility for the development of academic literacy. Other problems relate to the nature of the consultation itself. In a piece of research conducted at the University of the Western Cape, Cloete and Goodman (1994:21) used video recordings of consultations in the Writing Centre and interviews with students and writing tutors to explore perceptions of writing consultations. In interviews, students pointed out that:

- it is difficult to remember oral feedback;
- when feedback is given orally, it is easier to remember surface issues than more complex issues relating to coherence and argument;
- it is difficult to control the direction of one’s writing when faced with a persuasive tutor and power relations do not permit challenge;
- it is easier to get written rather than oral feedback because of its impersonal nature.

Tutors, on the other hand, indicated that:

- although students tended to agree with oral feedback, they often did not incorporate this feedback into subsequent drafts of their writing;
- many students who were speakers of English as an additional language did not understand oral feedback;

- tutors' accents tended to lead to misunderstanding (p.22).

Similar concerns about writing consultations are raised by Goldstein and Conrad (1990:457) who point out that students often do not understand “the purposes of such conferences, the rules of speaking, and the respective roles of participants”. Goldstein and Conrad’s research also suggests that teachers need to consider whether they control the discourse to the extent of discouraging students from participating and whether equal opportunities to contribute to the discussion and thus negotiate meaning are offered to all students (p.458).

In considering whether or not a Writing Centre was a viable proposition at the University of Zululand, however, practical problems tended to be of more significance. Calculations showed that the cost of a single forty minute consultation could be as high as R70. Since it was highly likely that University of Zululand students would require more than one consultation about any piece of writing and since a large number of students would be likely to seek help, the establishment of a Writing Centre did not emerge as a viable option because of the costs involved.

Developed as an alternative to a traditional Writing Centre, the Writing Respondent Programme used “respondents” to provide written comments on drafts of students’ writing. Students then used those comments or “responses” to redraft and develop their writing. The programme aimed for the sort of systemic development characteristic of Academic Development by demanding that access to the programme be negotiated by mainstream lecturers. The Academic Literacy Unit

staff running the programme were then able to comment on the demands of the task and use insights gained from reading students' writing to feed back into teaching. A fuller explanation of the theory and practice of the programme is provided in Boughey (1995c).

### **3.3 The Research Site**

Shortly after I took up my post at the University of Zululand, I was approached by Professor Eldon Wait, of the Department of Philosophy, who invited me to come into his first year class and observe his use of what he termed the "end-note" system. The "end-note" system involved setting a short writing task at the end of each class requiring students to answer a question which Professor Wait considered to be seminal to the day's teaching. Students wrote the "end-note" in class and these were then collected and read by Professor Wait, who commented upon them in his next lecture. When he commented on students' work, Professor Wait was concerned with meaning rather than form in the sense that he was not troubled by issues such as poor grammar and spelling. The writing of "end-notes" was therefore fairly informal and was an attempt to get students to put their thoughts in writing.

The invitation to observe the "end-note" system marked the beginning of a long relationship with the Department of Philosophy. My suggestion that "end-notes" should receive individual written responses and my own involvement in providing those responses led, eventually, to the development of the Writing Respondent Programme. The interest with which members of the department took up an "across

the curriculum” approach to developing students’ academic literacy also contributed to my proposal for “language-enriched” courses as alternatives to the existing provision for language development at the University of Zululand.

My involvement with the department was such that, from late 1994 onwards, I began to attend all lectures in the first year course. At times, I team-taught with the lecturer. At other times, I helped facilitate group work. At all times, I was involved with the provision of written responses to “end-notes” and drafts of pieces of written work set in the class.

Once the first year Systematic Philosophy course had joined the list of courses for which students could receive a language credit for degree purposes, numbers grew quickly. In 1994, the first year class number approximately 45 students. By 1996 (the year in which enrolments at the University peaked), 278 students registered for the course and the Department of Philosophy was forced to hold classes in the University chapel,<sup>9</sup> the only venue on campus large enough to provide seating for all students.

My work in the Philosophy class spanned more than four years (from late 1994 to the end of 1998). Although I collected data in the form of field notes throughout the entire period, the student-related data on which this thesis is based was collected during the 1997 academic year. Before a more detailed explication of the research

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<sup>9</sup> Other departments with large numbers split the class into a number of parallel groups. The small number of staff in the Department of Philosophy meant that this was not a viable option and all students had to be taught in one group.



process is provided, however, it is necessary to offer an examination of the orientation and approach of my research.

### 3.4 Orientation and Approaches

As the quotation from Avison (1997) at the beginning of this chapter points out, research rarely fits into neat categories and invariably contains elements of many different investigative approaches. This thesis has evolved as the result of an enquiry which was essentially ethnographic in nature but which also exhibited characteristics of action research. Underpinning the entire research process was a desire to do research which, following Habermas (1972), produced *emancipatory* knowledge (see 2.2.2 above).



#### 3.4.1 A Critical Orientation to Research

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As both Carspecken (1996) and Pennycook (1994b) point out, a *critical* approach to research should not be perceived as one way of doing research among many but rather as an orientation which, regardless of specific methods, stands in opposition to much “mainstream” research. It does this by identifying the predisposition of much mainstream research to be inherently supportive of the social status quo which is perceived to be “unfair, unequal, and both subtly and overtly oppressive for many people” (Carspecken, 1996:7). The aim of “critical” research is thus to act as a form of social and cultural criticism and, ultimately, to change the conditions which result from the posturing of ideologies as “knowledge”.

In terms of the theory underpinning a critical orientation to research, many writers (see, for example, Gibson, 1986; Hammersley, 1992) stress that it is important to think of critical *theories* in the plural rather than a unified critical *theory*. In recent years, one of the greatest difficulties facing researchers working from a critical perspective has been the problem of reconciling postmodern insights with their central aim of identifying the way ideology works to bring about oppression. The way in which Husserl (1962, 1970) challenged positivist understandings of an independent reality by pointing out that, at any one time, perception can only apprehend one facet of the object of study and that the “complete” object is brought into being through a process of synthesis unique to the individual, has already been discussed in Chapter Two. So, too, has Derrida’s (1973, 1976) claim that individuals move constantly between perception and an awareness of perception and that the image, or sign, we are aware of is but an ever-changing trace of the object of study itself. The ever-changing nature of the sign then has profound implications for the construct of “reality” which, for Derrida, becomes obsolete because of the impossibility of apprehending it. This challenge to “reality” is significant for critical theorists who assume that “the oppressed are able and willing to comprehend a reality that is ‘out there’ waiting to be captured and communicated by social inquirers” (Lather, 1991:12). If this “reality” cannot be apprehended, then the entire critical quest is undermined. As Carspecken (1996:15), points out:

Why do research to help the disadvantaged if there are no grounds for claiming this sort of activity to be desirable, moral, good, and right? Why study oppression if any theory of social structure and power is deconstructable?

The task for the critical researcher is therefore to retain some notion of “truth” whilst acknowledging insights from postmodern theory.

One of the most obvious ways to respond to this challenge is to acknowledge the existence of multiple realities and, as far as possible, to reveal the researcher’s bias in constructing this reality. This position is taken by many researchers. Roseneil (1993), for example, cites Gadamer (1976) in explaining that critical feminist research:

. . . begins with the acknowledgement that the identity of the researcher matters. She is unavoidably present in the research process, and her work is shaped by her social location and personal experiences. As Gadamer (1976) argues, ‘prejudice’ is the ontological position of human existence in society, and thus, no researcher comes to her research a tabula rasa. Rather than seeking to ‘bracket’ our ‘prejudgements’ (our existing values and experiences), which is impossible, we should make ourselves aware of them and expose them to the prejudgements of others (p.181).

For Roseneil, acknowledgement of her identity involves exploring her “intellectual autobiography” in order to reveal the role of values and, importantly, emotions and feelings in the research process.

According to Carspecken (1996), however, acknowledgment of the existence of multiple realities and the bias which constructs them does not constitute a viable response to the postmodern challenge. Research conducted within a critical perspective, he argues, moves away from sense perception as a basis for

apprehending truth altogether, preferring, instead, to acknowledge the existence of *multiple ontological categories*. Once the reliance on sense perception is removed, the challenges which come from Husserl and Derrida become insignificant.

These *multiple ontological categories* are based on Habermas' (1981, 1987) distinction between the three kinds of validity claims made by language users:

- claims about the truthfulness of propositions (and it is important to note that Habermas acknowledges a “reality” common to *all* individuals);
- claims about the truth of the norms and values at work in specific contexts;
- claims about the truth of the speaker’s attitude in the speech act.

Each of these truth claims is directed at a different part of human experience.

Claims about the truthfulness of propositions are derived from our experience of the external (objective) world, claims about the truth of norms and values from our experience of the social world and claims about the truth of the speaker’s attitude from our experience of the internal, subjective world. The three *ontological categories* are therefore the:

- *objective* category which makes claims about objects and events which any observer could notice;
- *normative-evaluative* category which acknowledges the “rightness”, “goodness” or “appropriacy” of actions and events;
- *subjective* category which involves making claims about states of mind and other aspects of experience to which only the subject has access.

The validity of truth claims is established not through sense perception but through *consensus* reached through critical thought and discussion. Genuine rational dialogue takes place, however, only in what Habermas terms the “ideal speech situation” where there are no conscious or unconscious constraints on participation, including violence, oppression, and exclusion (for example of women).

Critical research sets out to explore the way evidence is accumulated to support different kinds of truth claims and, importantly, the role that power plays in the accumulation of this evidence. The result of such research is improved understandings of concepts such as social structure, power, culture and subjectivity, not “reality”.

As Carspecken (1996) points out, however, Habermas’ approach to epistemology is not only appropriate for research which is critical in orientation but for *all* qualitative research. What distinguishes critical research from other forms of qualitative research is its concern with social inequality and its aim to produce social change. This concern for social inequality opens the way for charges of bias to be made against critical research. Since, however, the validity of critical research is not reliant on sense perception but on the validation of truth claims through the achievement of *consensus* within a speech community, these charges can be rebutted. Carspecken (1996), for example, is adamant that the move away from sense perception means that claims about researchers constructing their object of study, typical of research oriented from a social-constructivist perspective, do not apply:

The value orientation of the researcher does not “construct” the object of study: the same “object” can be examined for a variety of reasons, under a large variety of motivations, and yield the same findings (p.6).

Similarly, he argues that a critical epistemology does not guarantee that the researcher finds facts relating to her value orientation.

Given that the validity of critical research is dependent on the achievement of consensus, the way the researcher goes about achieving that consensus becomes critical. Lather (1986) identifies four ways in which this can be done. These involve:

- the use of multiple sources, methods and theoretical frameworks which are then triangulated against each other;
- a check on the validity of constructs by constantly looking for the weak points of theories being used. Crucial in this process is “a ceaseless confrontation with and respect for the experiences of people in their daily lives to guard against theoretical imposition” (p.271);
- the establishment of face validity by recycling findings back to participants in the research process for verification;
- an attempt to establish, what Lather terms *catalytic* validity or the extent to which the research findings reorient research participants towards action which transforms their lives.

Questioning of the apprehension of reality is not the only challenge to critical researchers posed by poststructuralism, however. In her later work, Lather (1991:13) identifies the understanding that “no discourse is innocent of the will to

power” as also being significant. Following Foucault (1972, 1979, 1982), poststructuralists argue that, regardless of whether the aim of research is to predict and control, to interpret and understand or to emancipate, it nevertheless aims to discipline and normalise behaviour. Poststructural insights therefore require that the researcher should focus on “the productivity of language in the construction of the objects of investigation” (p.13) and the concomitant need for “dialogic text production” (p.15). Since critical research requires that validity should be established through consensus, however, this objection holds less significance for critical research than for other forms of research.

A second major challenge addresses the construct of ideology. While orthodox Marxists define ideology as false consciousness, opposed to the “true” knowledge immanent in the teleological<sup>10</sup> view of history held by Marx, poststructuralists replace this notion either with an understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge or with an understanding of ideology as constitutive of reality. The significance of this observation is that critical research itself becomes inherently ideological in nature. The need for researchers to be critical of the ideological content of their own work through the rigorous use of validity checks thus becomes paramount.

Having discussed the nature of a *critical* orientation, I will now move on to examine the ethnographic approach which dominated my research.

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<sup>10</sup> A teleological model of history holds that it is possible to realise an ideal human existence. Marx argued that history had arrived at the point where that ideal was about to be realised.

### 3.4.2 An Ethnographic Approach

Attempts to define ethnographic research tend to emphasise a number of characteristics (see, for example, Watson-Gegeo, 1988; Wolcott, 1995; Johnson, 1992; Hornberger, 1994). According to these definitions, ethnographic research:

- studies human behaviour in natural, ongoing settings;
- focuses on the cultural interpretation of this behaviour and, in doing so, concentrates on the group rather than the individual;
- seeks to paint a complete picture by describing at length and in detail.

Other forms of research based on surveys and experiments are rejected by many ethnographic researchers (see, for example, Hammersley, 1992) on the grounds that:

- it is impossible to make claims about what happens in natural settings on the basis of experiments conducted in artificial ones;
- making claims about human behaviour on the basis of what people say they do, without actually observing what they do, is problematic.

Ethnographic research seeks to avoid these problems by producing what are usually referred to as “thick”, “analytical” or “theoretical” descriptions of social processes and human behaviour. The ethnographic researcher produces these accounts by entering into close and relatively long term contact with the group being studied. For the researcher working from a critical perspective, this process ideally benefits participants in the research process by producing *emancipatory* knowledge.



### 3.4.2 The role of the ethnographic researcher

Key in the core ethnographic process of describing and interpreting cultural patterns, is the ethnographer herself, since it is she who, through the process of observing, recording and interviewing, effectively becomes the "research instrument" (Wolcott, 1995).

Gold's typology (1958) of four possible field roles for the ethnographic researcher is frequently quoted in the literature on ethnographic methodology. According to Gold, the ethnographer can adopt the role of *complete participant*, *participant-as-observer*, *observer-as-participant* or *complete observer*.

Adoption of the complete participant role requires the ethnographer to conceal her identity and gather information covertly whilst participating fully in the activities of the group being researched. The rationale behind the adoption of the complete participant role is that other participants will not be influenced by the presence of the researcher and will therefore behave "naturally" and that participation in the group's activities will allow the researcher to understand them more fully. Scott (1996), however, questions whether complete participation is ever possible since the need for the researcher to withdraw from the group under study at the end of the research process means that she can never be fully committed to the role. The need to record data covertly also tends to inhibit participation. In addition to problems with the viability of the role of complete participant, there are also ethical problems since

permission to observe, record and, ultimately, publish data will not have been granted.

The participant-as-observer role requires the researcher to negotiate access to the group being studied in order to take part in its activities. All participants are therefore aware that they are being researched with the result that they may modify their own behaviour when the researcher is present. In spite of the fact that the participant-as-observer has to announce her identity, the role is still not without problems since the nature of ethnographic research might well mean that the focus and intention of the researcher changes as she responds to data. Conditions under which access to the research site has been granted might then be transgressed, with the researcher finding herself in an unethical position.

The third role identified by Gold, that of observer-as-participant, requires the observer to be more detached and observe without taking part in activities. This role is often adopted by educational researchers. It is often argued that awareness of the presence of the researcher will lead to participants altering behaviour.

Gold's final role, complete observer, involves the creation of distance between the researcher and researched in an attempt to minimise the way the researcher can affect their behaviour. The researcher therefore tries to be as unobtrusive as possible and avoids interaction with the researched.

Crucial to Gold's typology is the extent to which the researcher makes her status evident. For the research to have a critical orientation, however, it is impossible for the researcher to conceal her identity since she must consciously cycle her understandings back to participants in order for them to be verified and in order for participants to benefit from them. The role of complete participant is therefore unavailable to the researcher working from a critical perspective. Since the researcher also consciously seeks to lead participants to using understandings to change the way they act, the role of complete observer, adopted in order to minimise the way in which the researcher can influence the behaviour of participants, is also untenable.

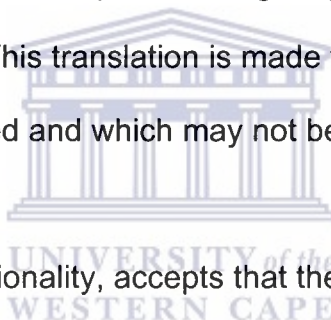
To my mind, a fairly obvious comment on Gold's typology, and one arises out of my own experience, is that it is probably more fruitful to conceive of the roles along a continuum rather than as isolated entities, with the researcher moving along that continuum during various periods of her research. I will return to this point below.

Scott (1996) argues that three possible epistemological positions are available to ethnographers as they make decisions about which role they should adopt. These are: *cultural incommensurability*, *tradition-bound rationality* and *universal rationality*. The position of cultural incommensurability holds that there are many different ways of understanding the "world" and that the researcher cannot understand an alien culture using the values and schematic framework of her own culture. Understanding is only possible if the researcher abandons her own values and

frames and takes on those of the alien culture. In order for this to happen, complete participation in all its activities is necessary.

The second position, tradition-bound rationality, argues that, at any one time, there are many different ways of seeing the world and that, at any one time, any number of these traditions of thought are in competition with each other. The importance of this position for ethnographic research is the belief that observers operating within one tradition of thought can understand others in spite of the fact that, when they enter the field, they are never able to divest themselves of their beliefs, values and schematic framework and take on those of the group they plan to observe.

Understanding the alien culture takes place through a process of translation of one way of knowing into another. This translation is made from a standpoint which is alien to the culture being studied and which may not be accessible to that culture.

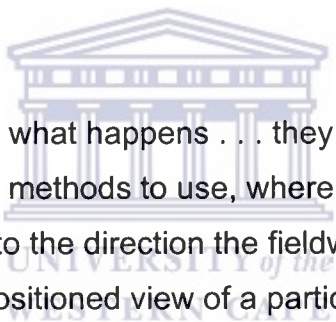


The third position, universal rationality, accepts that there are any number of ways of seeing the world but argues that common to all of these is a set of universal tools which are used to investigate social reality. These tools allow the researcher to translate, and therefore understand, the beliefs and values of the alien culture.

In making a claim to produce knowledge, therefore, at issue for the ethnographer is whether or not she claims to have achieved the full participation necessary to divest herself of her own belief system and to take on that of the alien culture, or whether she claims to have participated sufficiently to have developed an empathetic understanding of the group she has been studying through a process of translating

their beliefs and values into one with which she is familiar. The critical ethnographer, however, is not forced into making either of these choices since the requirement that she should use a research design which allows participants to be “actively involved in the construction and validation of meanings” (Lather, 1986:268) means that the responsibility for determining the accuracy of understandings does not fall to the researcher alone. Meanings, in critical research, are constructed through negotiation and are not individual constructs.

In providing descriptions which claim to represent reality, conventional ethnographic researchers acknowledge that the researcher is not neutral. As Scott (1996:150) points out, ethnographers:



. . . have an influence on what happens . . . they have already made a series of decisions about which methods to use, where to be and what to record. Their values are central to the direction the fieldwork takes, and their account therefore represents a positioned view of a particular culture or cultural setting.

In order to counter their “positioned” view, researchers usually make recourse to the process of triangulation in order to make assurances about the reliability and validity of their findings. Triangulation involves using more than one method, one source, one analyst or one theory in order to reach a position of greater certainty about the research findings.

In spite of the use of triangulation to validate understandings in ethnographic research, the method is not without problems (see, for example, Cohen and Manion,

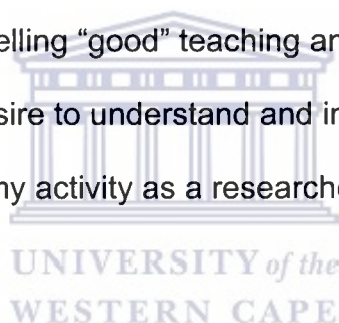
1994). A researcher, might, for example, begin her research with a questionnaire and then use interviews to validate her findings. The researcher cannot guarantee, however, that the lapse of time between the administration of the questionnaire and the interview will not affect her data. Similarly, there is a problem in that the method of data collection itself affects the type of data that is collected. It might therefore be argued that the use of different research methods means that like cannot be compared with like. A final problem with triangulation concerns the process of respondent validation whereby the researcher tries to fit accounts of one respondent with those of others. Since all respondents speak from a particular position there is a problem in attempting to triangulate those accounts. The requirement that research conducted from a critical perspective should establish validity through a process of gaining consensus tempers these problems, however, since it is not the researcher alone who makes decisions about the validity of her findings. In the process of gaining consensus, research findings are "fed back" to participants who are then required to comment upon the validity of those findings. Questions about whether, for example, a lapse of time in the collection of data using two different methods affects the validity of that data, are dealt with by examining participants' responses to the findings.

### **3.4.3 Action Research**

As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, in many respects my research contained elements of action research. According to McKernan (1996:3):

The aim of action research, as opposed to much traditional or fundamental research, is to solve the immediate and pressing day-to-day problems of practitioners . . . [It] is carried out by practitioners seeking to improve their understanding of events, situations and problems so as to increase the effectiveness of their practice.

As I have already described, my research in the Philosophy class was grounded in my status as an Academic Development practitioner at the University of Zululand. In this role, I aimed to assist staff in using their teaching of the mainstream curriculum to develop students language' and the language-related activities of reading and writing. In doing so, I was in a position not only to directly influence much of the teaching that went on in the class but also to initiate activities of my own. My need to practise in the class by modelling "good" teaching and by interacting with students around their writing and my desire to understand and improve that practice, therefore meant that much of my activity as a researcher could be classified as action research.

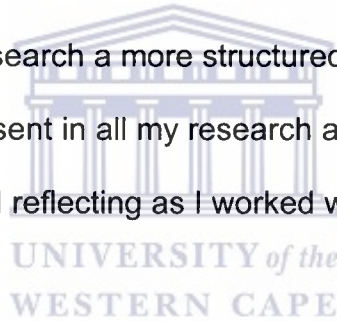


Possibly the clearest statement of a critical orientation to action research is Carr and Kemmis' (1986) *Becoming Critical*. For Carr and Kemmis, the first requirement of educational research is for:

. . . methodological strategies that do not simply test and refine 'scientific knowledge' but rather expose and eliminate the inadequacies of the beliefs and values that are implicit in educational practice and that are regarded as self-evidently true by educational practitioners (p. 123).

Critical action research seeks to provide a method which will allow individual practitioners to examine the beliefs and assumptions underpinning their practice in a way which will reveal a relationship to wider social structures. It does this by using a series of successive cycles in each of which the practitioner plans a course of action, acts upon the plan, observes the action as it occurs and, finally, reflects on what has been observed.

Action research shares much common ground with ethnography. The teacher engaging with action research is a participant observer, planning, observing and reflecting upon her own activities as part of a group. Where it differs from ethnography is in its use of recursive cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, which give action research a more structured form. This formal action research structure was not present in all my research although there were cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting as I worked with Professor Wait in the philosophy class.



In the section which follows, I will describe my own research within the frameworks constructed in this and the preceding sections of this chapter.

### **3.5 The Research Process**

As I have already pointed out, the research on which this thesis was based took place over a four year period from late 1994 until the end of 1998. My claim that my



research was essentially ethnographic in nature rests on the close and relatively long-term contact I enjoyed with both staff and students at the University of Zululand during this period. For the five years I worked there, I interacted with staff on a daily basis both professionally and personally. As an Academic Development practitioner, I worked with staff on the language development initiatives described earlier and, in doing so, sat on committees, working groups and faculty boards. As a colleague, I participated in countless conversations related to teaching and learning which took place both on and off campus. This allowed me both to observe and participate in the life of the University, and my role as researcher ranged along a continuum of positions. At times, my role was close to that of Gold's (1958) complete participant as, for example, I joined battle with other staff members in formal and informal debates about the nature of students' "problems". On such occasions I participated as an equal and my own awareness of my role as researcher fell away as I became involved in the heat of the debate. I was then left to rely on recorded minutes and my own recollections of what had taken place for the purposes of my research. Although members of the University community were aware of my research,<sup>11</sup> I believe that on many occasions they interacted with me as a colleague rather than as a researcher. On other occasions, I was aware of initiatives being undertaken in various parts of the University (and often enquired

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<sup>11</sup> The idea that I should register for doctoral studies arose from my initial work in the department of Philosophy. I was able to discuss my plans with members of the department and I received their encouragement. Within the department, therefore, my activities as a researcher were negotiated and, at all times, overt. In the course of my research, I reported back to the department both informally and formally on a continuous basis. Within the University as a whole, I also made my research as public as possible. My research project was registered with the Senate Research Committee and I took every opportunity to talk about it informally as well as to make more formal presentations.

about them from my position as researcher) but played no direct part in them. At these times, my role was more akin to that of participant-as-observer or observer-as-participant.

In the lecture room, I also assumed the role of complete participant in the teaching and learning process on the many occasions I “team-taught” with members of staff from the Philosophy department. Team-teaching involved planning class activities jointly and taking over from each other at various stages of the class. On occasions, and especially when I was working with Professor Wait, this involved collaboration to the extent that we were both on our feet at the same time, “throwing” management of the class to each other. I always co-facilitated the group work which was a regular feature of the class. To the extent that a teacher is a complete participant in the teaching and learning environment, on these occasions I took on the complete participant role. At these times my research was probably closest to being action research in that I would plan activities, either solely or in conjunction with Professor Wait, observe the activity in action and then discuss the activity after the class. On other occasions, my involvement was limited to that of participant-as-observer or observer-as-participant when the lecturer taught the class and I watched teaching and learning behaviour from my seated position amongst students in the chapel. In any one class, my role might range through all of these positions.

### 3.5.1 The Generation of Research Questions

As I have already pointed out, my research eventually focused on three questions:

1. How does the University of Zululand construct students' literacy-related experiences?
2. Is there a way to understand students' literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?
3. At the University of Zululand, what is the educational significance of an alternative way of understanding students' literacy-related experiences?

These questions emerged as a result of my work at the University generally, and in the philosophy class more specifically, between late 1994 and mid 1996, when I first set about registering for a doctoral degree. In many respects, this was a period of "informal" research in that I kept a record of my observations and thoughts regarding both my work in the philosophy class specifically and my work in the University generally as I went through the process of setting up the Writing Respondent Programme and making the proposal for courses to be "language-enriched", as discussed earlier. The questions were generated as a result of:

- taking part in both informal and formal debates with staff members about what could be considered "appropriate" language intervention;
- interacting with students in the philosophy class both formally and informally;
- responding to countless pieces of written work produced by students.

### 3.5.2 The First Research Question

The first research question was answered during a more “formal” period of research which took place during study leave taken in 1998.

#### 3.5.2.1 *The collection and analysis of data*

In order to answer the first research question “How does the University of Zululand construct students’ literacy-related experiences?”, my primary sources of information were:

1. Field notes taken during or after meetings and conversations which took place over the entire period of the research;
2. Semi-structured interviews with 11 members of academic staff from 10 different departments and three faculties conducted during the first semester of 1998;
3. A number of documents which I examined during an intensive period of research in 1998.

These documents were:

- Senate and Faculty Board documentation dating from 1960 to 1998;
- Extant study and course guides;
- Archived examination papers;
- Quality assurance documentation produced during the South African University Vice Chancellor’s Association’s (SAUVCA) Quality Promotion Unit’s visit to the University in 1997.

A detailed list of these documents appears as Appendix I of this thesis.

When I initially identified this question, I had no clear idea of the discourses I would eventually describe. For example, although I was aware from meetings, conversations and the comments made on students' scripts that many members of staff thought students had a "grammar" problem, I had no understanding of what authors such as Cope and Kalantzis (1993) and Johns (1997) term the "traditional paradigm" of literacy instruction. According to Cope and Kalantzis (1993:3) this paradigm embodies an understanding that "the [linguistic] world can be described in terms of 'facts', rules and regularities epitomized in tables to conjugate verbs or decline nouns" and that language "is something that can be meaningfully visualised into tables arranged across the two-dimensional space of the text book." The process of examining the documents listed above therefore involved identifying a number of what, at that stage, I termed "themes" and listing references under each theme. As my examination of the documents progressed, I was also reading extensively and some of the initial "themes" were subdivided whilst others were conjoined with other "themes". At the same time, my understanding of what constituted a "theme" was substituted by the construct of a discourse.

#### 3.5.2.2 *The triangulation of data and analysis*

I have already discussed how the validity of research with a critical orientation is achieved through a process of obtaining consensus from participants in the research

process. In order to do this, I took my initial understanding to academic peers<sup>12</sup> for comment and used their responses to further develop my own understandings. Finally, I produced a paper (Boughey, 1998a) reporting on the discourses I had identified, which I then presented in the English department's seminar programme. I then used comments made in this presentation to develop my ideas further and write Chapter Four of this thesis.

### 3.5.3 The Second Research Question

A similar process was used in order to answer the second of my two research questions, "Is there a way to understand students' literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?" My work in the philosophy class began long before the question was identified and during this time I recorded observations and thoughts which arose from my participation in the class and as a result of responding to numerous pieces of writing produced by students. In the first half of the 1997 academic year, I began to collect data in a more systematic and rigorous fashion. Appendix II lists the data collected and analysed in order to answer the second research question.

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<sup>12</sup> I am indebted to many ex-colleagues for their help in this process but am particularly grateful to Professors Eldon Wait of the department of Philosophy and Professor Myrtle Hooper of the department of English who were always willing to discuss and comment on my findings.

### 3.5.3.1 *Primary data collection and analysis*

I began this more rigorous period of research by seeking permission from the entire class to make photocopies of all the written work they produced. I explained that I was conducting research into their literacy-related experiences and wanted to analyse their writing over the course of the year. A form asking for students' permission to photocopy and analyse their work was then distributed for students to sign.

The political philosophy component of the Systematic Philosophy class comprised a short module entitled "What is a democracy" taught by Professor Gerrit van Wyk, Head of the Philosophy Department, and another module taught by Professor Eldon Wait, which explored the concepts of liberalism and Marxism.

In order to define the concept of democracy, Professor van Wyk used the following criteria: popular sovereignty, political equality, popular consultation and majority rule. Students were then expected to use his teaching to inform their response to the following questions set as a writing task:

1. What is a democracy?
2. Is South Africa a democracy?

Because of the short time available to present the module, students were asked to write their response to these questions in a double class period. I was able to collect and photocopy the work of 80 students.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Although the assignment was written in class, many students did not attend and permission was given for them to complete the assignment at other times. I was not able to collect the work of these students in order to photocopy it.

Professor Wait began his module by comparing the liberal idea of justice with the Marxist idea. He then went on to explore the political philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, both of whom use a philosophical method entitled *resolutivo compositivo* (see 5. 3.2 below) to answer the question “What are the functions of a legitimate government.” His module then concluded with an examination of Macpherson’s (1962) neo-Marxist critique of Hobbes’ and Locke’s political works.

Professor Wait required students to complete two assignments. The first assignment required students to write in response to the following questions:

1. What is the liberal idea of justice? What are the weaknesses of this idea?
2. What is the Marxist idea of justice? What are the weaknesses of this idea?

Students were invited to submit a first draft of this assignment to the Writing Respondent Programme and were encouraged to use responses and comments made by writing respondents to develop and refine their writing.

In order to assess their engagement with the political philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, students were asked to complete an essay entitled “Compare and contrast the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke”.<sup>14</sup> Again, students were invited to submit a draft of their assignment to the Writing Respondent Programme and to use responses to develop their writing further.

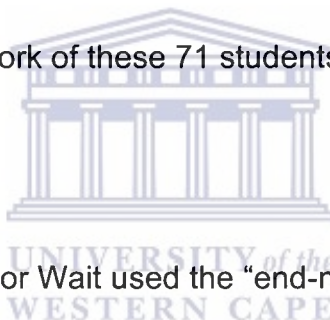
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<sup>14</sup> The title of the assignment was accompanied by the following rubric: “Show how differences in their conception of human nature lead to differences in their conception of the legitimate power of government.”



Although an assignment to assess students' understanding of Macpherson's work was planned at the beginning of the year, disruption of the timetable due to student boycotts meant that work towards the end of the module had to be rushed. The assignment on Macpherson was therefore cancelled and the proportion of marks awarded to the other two assignments adjusted to make up the number of marks needed for continuous assessment purposes.

I was able to collect and photocopy the final drafts of 71 students who completed *both* the assignment on liberalism and Marxism and the assignment on Hobbes and Locke. There may well have been other students who completed final drafts of both assignments but I was unable to collect their work as it was handed in after the formal submission date. The work of these 71 students was then analysed for the purpose of this thesis.



Throughout his course, Professor Wait used the "end-note" system whereby students spent the last few minutes of a class writing in response to a question or issue he considered seminal to the learning he hoped had taken place. Although students were usually required to submit "end-notes" on an individual basis, Professor Wait occasionally invited groups of students (see 3.5.3.2 below) to negotiate a response to a question. "End-notes" were then collected so that writing respondents could provide comments. The need for a swift "turn-round" in the collection and handing back of "end-notes" meant that it was not possible to

photocopy the work of the entire class.<sup>15</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, end-notes from three groups of students ( a maximum of twenty three students) were collected and photocopied as often as possible. These “end-notes” then formed part of the corpus of student writing analysed for research purposes. Not all students produced “end-notes” at the end of each class so the number of pieces of work produced in relation to each task varied enormously. Appendix III contains a list of the questions requiring a response in “end-note” form.

I set about analysing students’ writing by using a word processing package to set up a number of files each of which corresponded to a number of “themes” which emerged as I read students’ work. Initially I identified these “themes” as *conceptual understanding, language usage, academic literacy, relationship to the lecturer, self positioning and writing*. In using the term *conceptual understanding* I tried to categorise the difficulties students appeared to be experiencing in understanding abstract and other concepts dealt with in the political philosophy course. *Language usage* referred to difficulties students appeared to be experiencing with the forms of language such as spelling, grammar and punctuation while the term *academic literacy* encompassed elements of their writing I considered to be inappropriate to academic genres. The *relationship to the lecturer and self positioning* “themes” related to observations concerning the way students appeared to perceive their relationship as writers to their reader, their lecturer and subject positions they adopted in order to do this. The final “theme”, *writing*, contained observations about

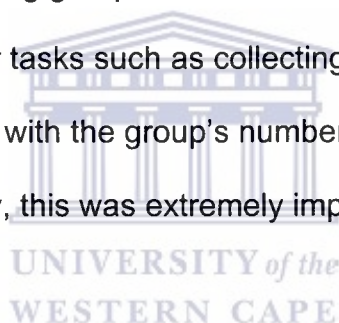
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<sup>15</sup> On average, Professor Wait set an “end-note” two to three times per week. The writing respondent programme aimed to return “end-notes” to students within three to four days.

their writing which appeared to related to the practices students had employed in order to write.

### 3.5.3.2 *Triangulation of data and findings*

By the beginning of the 1997 academic year, a decision had been made by members of the philosophy department that students in the class would be divided into groups of between 6 and 10<sup>16</sup> on a permanent basis in order to facilitate a more interactive teaching and learning methodology and, importantly, to assist with the administration of the class. Students were required to sit in their groups and, in Professor Wait's class at least, teaching moved between a whole-class lecturing style and a methodology involving groups tasks. Each group appointed a group leader who was responsible for tasks such as collecting the group's written work and submitting it in a folder marked with the group's number. In a large class following a "writing-intensive" methodology, this was extremely important for administrative purposes.



Having sought permission from the entire class to photocopy and analyse their writing, I appealed for volunteers who would assist me with my research in a more focused way. My aim was to find three groups of students who would make themselves available for:

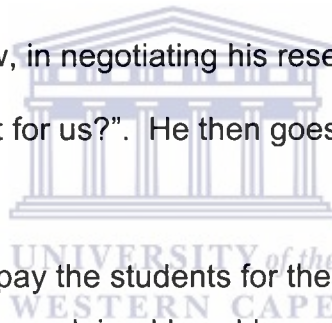
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<sup>16</sup> As I have already pointed out, registration at the University of Zululand usually continues into the second semester. As new students joined the class, groups tended to grow in size with some eventually containing as many as seventeen students. The groups were also a means of giving latecomers an "anchor" in the class, as other members were available to explain past work and share notes.

- observation during the course of each class;
- discussion before, during and after class;
- two formal interviews in the course of the first semester.

My aim, therefore, was to use the three groups of students to triangulate observations derived from my analysis of students' writing. I sought to feed back to the groups insights and understandings which developed during the course of the first semester in order for group members to be able to contest and/or expand upon those insights and understandings. Following my appeal, three groups of students (approximately 23 students in total) agreed to work with me.

Volbrecht (1995) describes how, in negotiating his research with students, he was asked the question "What's in it for us?". He then goes on to describe how:



I suggested that I could pay the students for their participation but this offer was not accepted. I then explained how I hoped the study of academic literacies might make a contribution to the development of sound teaching and learning practices in the university, but I sensed that this was not good enough either (p.20).

In a later interview, one of Volbrecht's students provided an explanation for the question by outlining how, as a black feminist, she felt she had been exploited by white feminist researchers. This would suggest that Volbrecht's students were aware of the ideological implications of research which, in order to be participative, has to focus on questions such as "Whose interests do the outcomes of the research serve?" and "Who benefits from the research?" (Auerbach, 1994).

I do not believe that any of the students who agreed to participate in my research consciously asked the questions posed by Auerbach. The students who agreed to participate were, however, overt in their determination to succeed at university and were keen to make contact with a lecturer who might help them to do that in a situation where contact was not easy because of the ratio of students to staff. The agreement to participate therefore came as a result of the desire to pursue personal success. I note this observation not with the intention of being critical of the students, but to point out the ethical implications for my research. My aim as a researcher working from a critical perspective was to change the conditions contributing to social inequality. At the University of Zululand, this meant that I wanted to see if an understanding of students' literacy-related experiences which was alternative to dominant understandings could be arrived at. My purpose in seeking an alternative understanding was to explore the implications for an improved pedagogy. If my research was to have any effect, it would be in the long, and not the short, term and would benefit future, rather than present, students. Although the element of my work in the philosophy class which I have described as action research was intended to "help" students, in the sense that I aimed to contribute to the development of an enriched language learning environment for *all* students, it was not "help" in the sense that I believe the students who agreed to participate in my research were looking for.

When I began meeting students who had agreed to participate, I tried to make these understandings of the aim of my research clear. I explained that my research probably would not benefit them but that hopefully it would benefit future students.

Groups provided little response to this explanation possibly because they could not wholly comprehend what I was trying to do. Some students did “drop out” of the research process in the sense that they did not come to the interview sessions I arranged and this could be attributed to a realisation that they were not getting the sort of “help” they had envisaged. Alternatively, however, it could also be attributed to the fact that it was group leaders who tended to be the driving force behind getting their groups to agree to participate and that individuals did not “buy in” to group leaders’ enthusiasm in any long-term sense.

In spite of these reservations about participants’ expectations and what I intended to do with my research, I believe individual participants did receive some measure of benefit. I responded personally to all their written work and made myself available for them to talk about those responses. Of the twenty three students in the three groups who initially agreed to work with me, seven brought drafts of the main class assignment to me repeatedly for discussion and comment and all claimed to be very happy with the mark they eventually received for the final draft. One participant, Rosetta, repeatedly told me that I “had helped her a lot” and that now she “understood” what she needed to do in order to write in an academic environment.

As my research progressed, I used observations in class, and informal and more formal group interview sessions to refine and develop the “themes” I identified through reading students’ writing. I interviewed each of the three groups of students who had agreed to work with me about half way through the first semester. A copy of the interview schedule and a transcripts of two of the interviews appear as

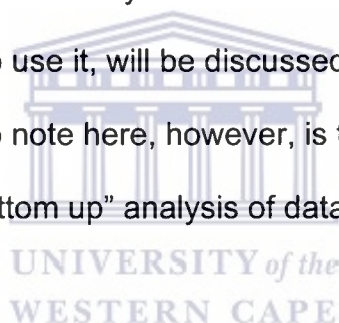
Appendix IV of this thesis. In my initial research design, I had planned to conduct two interviews with each of the groups: one as the course began in order to explore their previous experiences of writing and another as the course ended in order to explore their experience of writing in the philosophy course. In the event, this proved impossible to arrange as work at the beginning of the course was disrupted due to boycotts and it was very difficult to find a common time for all students in the groups to come to a formal interview session. One interview was therefore used to elicit information about previous experiences of writing as well as writing in the philosophy class. In addition to the formal interview, I spoke to the groups on an on-going basis throughout the first semester either before, during or after lectures. I then made notes about these conversations in my research journal. These conversations were very successful as a means of exploring students' experiences in the class. The many students who had been silent in the group interviews<sup>17</sup> were often prepared to speak to me on a one-to-one basis. Moreover I was usually able to make more immediate reference to the class they were attending / had attended and to work they were in the process of completing / had completed. In many respects, therefore, the informal engagement I enjoyed with students was a more successful means of gaining insights into their experiences of the philosophy class than the formal interview.

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<sup>17</sup> As the tapescripts which appear as Appendix IV of this thesis show, group interviews tended to be dominated by one or two students who were more confident than others. For this reason, I believe the more informal conversations were more useful in revealing information about *all* students.

In addition to using on-going engagement with students as a means of finding out more about their literacy-related experiences, I also used these opportunities to feed back to students observations and conclusions I had made as a result of my research. Students were then able to deny or confirm and expand upon the inferences I had drawn.

At the same time as I was collecting and analysing data, I was reading extensively. Eventually, this reading led me to choosing to use a theoretical framework, Halliday's *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Halliday, 1973, 1978, 1994) to give coherence to my construction of an alternative understanding of students' literacy-related experiences. The reasons for my decision to use a Hallidayan framework, and the way in which I chose to use it, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five of this thesis. Important to note here, however, is that the choice of a framework emerged from a "bottom up" analysis of data and was not imposed on the data in a "top down" fashion.



Early in 1998, I wrote a conference paper to be presented at an international conference which detailed the findings of my research in the philosophy class. Although many of the students who had participated as informants in my research were no longer studying philosophy, I still met many of them in the Arts Faculty Building. I offered these students drafts of the paper outlining the results of the research process. None of the students took up my offer however. If they had done so, I believe they would have experienced great difficulty in accessing my



construction of their experiences because of their lack of background knowledge in the field of applied linguistics, composition theory and New Literacy Studies.

In addition to using data generated through observation, interview and conversation to triangulate the results of my analysis of students' written work, I also used the results of two questionnaires. The first questionnaire, distributed at the beginning of the third week of the semester, was an attempt to find out more about students' previous writing experiences and about their expectations of studying at tertiary level. The questionnaire (a copy of which appears as Appendix V of this thesis) consisted of three open-ended questions. Students wrote their response to these questions in class and handed in the completed forms immediately. The second questionnaire (which also appears as Appendix V of this thesis) was administered towards the end of the semester and was intended to elicit students' perceptions of the philosophy class. Both questionnaires proved to be an important means of triangulating data obtained through other means.

For Carspecken (1996), consensus is not only achieved through negotiation with research participants but also through consultation with peers, who are specifically asked to look for bias in the research. Again, I consulted with fellow academics at the University of Zululand about the understandings which were developing as a result of my research. In 1997 and 1998, I worked as a member of the team teaching the *Practical English* course run by the Department of English. The *Practical English* team were keen to develop new materials for their course and

were interested in hearing about my research. I was therefore able to seek and use their opinions in order to refine and develop my understanding further.

In 1998, I presented a draft of the paper I had prepared for the international conference<sup>18</sup> at seminars held by the department of English and the department of Philosophy. These seminars were open to all members of staff, and academics from the departments of Afrikaans and Linguistics attended. I then used comments and questions at the seminar presentations to develop my conference paper further. The conference paper was then used to guide my drafting of Chapters Four and Five of this thesis.

### **3.6 Summary and Evaluation of the Research Process**

The research process described in the preceding section of this chapter is summarised in the table below.



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<sup>18</sup> *Global Conversations on Language and Literacy*, University of Bordeaux, 5th-8<sup>th</sup> August 1999. This conference was convened by the Conference on College Communication and Composition, a division of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) of Urbana, Illinois.

When?	What?	How?	Who with?
Late 1994 - late 1996	Identification of research questions & preparation of research proposal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reading and responding to students' writing.</li> <li>2. Teaching and observation of students in philosophy and other classes.</li> <li>3. Working with staff as Academic Development practitioner.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students in a number of classes</li> <li>2. Staff from across the university</li> </ol>
Semester One 1997	Collection of data needed to answer second research question: "Is there a way to understand students' literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Photocopying writing submitted for assessment in philosophy class.</li> <li>2. Collecting "end-notes" from three groups of students.</li> <li>3. Observing students at work in philosophy class.</li> <li>4. Engaging with students in three groups before, during and after class.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students in philosophy class</li> </ol>
Semester One 1997	Preliminary analysis of data	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reading students' writing. Identifying "themes" in that writing.</li> <li>2. Developing a data bank of entries under "themes"</li> </ol>	
Semester One 1997	Triangulation of data and findings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Administration of two questionnaires.</li> <li>2. Observation, conversation and interviews with three groups of students.</li> <li>2. Discussion with other members of the academic staff.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students in philosophy class</li> <li>2. Academic staff members</li> </ol>
Semester Two 1997	On-going analysis of students' writing	Revisiting corpus of student writing in order to use insights gained from triangulation process above.	
Semester Two 1997	On-going triangulation of findings with students.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discussion with groups of students in philosophy class.</li> <li>2. Informal presentation of findings to staff members.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students.</li> <li>2. Members of academic staff.</li> </ol>

When?	What?	How?	Who with?
1998	Triangulation of findings with academic peers.	1. Preparation of conference paper. 2. Presentation of draft paper in two departmental seminars. 3. Presentation at conference.	1. University of Zululand academic community.  2. Wider academic community.
Semester One 1998	Collection and analysis of data in order to answer first research question: "How does the University of Zululand construct students' literacy-related experiences?"	1. Examination and analysis of Senate and Faculty documentation in University library. 2. Examination and analysis of extant course guides and other documents. 3. Semi-structured interviews with 11 members of the academic staff.	
Semester Two 1998	Triangulation of findings.	1. Discussion with members of staff. 2. Preparation of journal article. 3. Presentation of journal article at departmental seminar.	1. University of Zululand academic community.

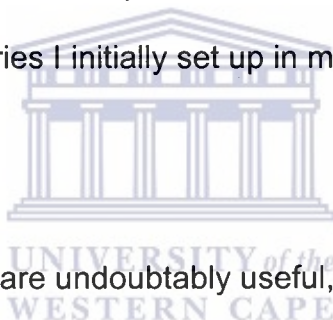
Table 3.1. Summary of research process

### 3.6.1 Evaluation of the Research Process

I began my description of the research on which this thesis is based by making a claim that it was essentially ethnographic in nature. Whilst I believe an ethnographic approach was appropriate given that the research questions required in-depth engagement with the socio-cultural context in which teaching and learning occurs at the University of Zululand, the approach was not without problems. In this final section of this chapter detailing and theorising the research process, I therefore propose to look at some of criticisms which might be levelled at it.

### 3.6.1.1 *The reliance on qualitative research methods*

One of the most serious points of concern which might be expected to be raised is the reliance on qualitative research methods at the expense of a more quantitative analysis of data. This criticism is particularly significant in the light of the existence of analyses of academic register using the Hallidayan framework which is also used to analyse data in this thesis (see, for example, Gibbons, 1999) and research examining literacy practices (Gibbons, in press) located within a quantitative paradigm. The analysis of student writing collected as a primary source of data used to answer the second research question, “Is there a way to understand students’ literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?”, for example, does not rely, in the first instance, on the quantification of the categories I initially set up in my data base (see 3.5.3.1 above).



Although quantitative analyses are undoubtedly useful, from the outset it was not my intention to work within a quantitative research paradigm. In spite of the fact that I have used a Hallidayan framework, my analysis of students’ writing is thematic rather than narrowly “linguistic” in the sense that it does not attempt a fine grammatical analysis in order to examine the way in which register variables interact with context and which are subsequently investigated in terms of statistical measures. However, since the absence of quantification might be considered a possible shortcoming, Appendix VII is included to provide an indication of numerical trends by furnishing an analysis of the number of students whose work manifests aspects of the register variables of field, tenor and mode which I identify in Chapter

Five. This analysis is for the assignments on liberalism and Marxism and Hobbes and Locke only (see 3.5.3.1 above) and is intended to provide an added dimension of detail to the “thick”, more inclusive analysis used in Chapter Five rather than to provide the basis of the analysis of itself. The idea that the indication of numerical trends provided in Appendix VII should be considered as an added descriptive dimension is important given the fundamental objections to empiricism as means of engaging with concepts such as “truth” and “reality” outlined in 3.4.1 above. As I pointed out in this section, the idea that “reality” exists in any absolute sense is replaced within a critical orientation to research by the construct of multiple ontological categories which are validated through the attainment of consensus within speech communities. If this view is taken, the role of quantitative data could be viewed as supportive of a larger and more inclusive process through which people achieve consensus. It is with the aim of providing such assistance that the indication of numerical trends in Appendix VII is provided.



### 3.6.1.2 *The research as critical discourse analysis*

A second possibly problematic aspect of my research results from its links with critical discourse analysis (CDA). Widdowson’s (1998) critique of CDA focuses on the lack of a coherent theory of language which will account for the kind of close analysis typically associated with the field (see, for example, Fairclough, 1995; Kress, 1989). For Widdowson, attempts by analysts such as Fowler (1996) and Kress (1996) to bring together theory as diverse as Grice’s co-operative principle (Grice, 1975), schema theory (see, for example, Anderson, 1984; Rumelhart & Ortony, 1984), Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1973, 1978) and

Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar (Chomsky, 1965) suggests that CDA is not the "systematic application of a theoretical model, but a rather less rigorous operation, in effect, a kind of *ad hoc* bricolage which takes from theory whatever concept comes usefully to mind" (p.137).

One observation to be made in defence of the approach to research underpinning this thesis, is that it does not engage in the sort of close analysis which attempts to explain the way in which "ideological significance is written covertly into texts" (Widdowson, 1998:146). It is thus not dependent on the "development of a new social theory of language which may include a *new grammatical theory*" (Fairclough, 1995:10, my italics) and therefore does not call upon the pulling together of a range of theories identified by Widdowson as constituting a "bricolage" (p.137). While, therefore, I would argue that these aspects of Widdowson's critique are not applicable to the approach to research which underpins this thesis, I would, however, admit that my analysis is akin to the "sort of ingenuity one associates with the discourse of literary criticism" (Widdowson, 1998: 136). What distinguishes it from literary criticism is the use of the well established and researched Hallidayan framework to structure and organise the broad thematic analysis it engages in. This is true both of my analysis of the way students' literacy-related experiences are constructed at the University of Zululand described in Chapter Four and my analysis of other texts in order to construct an alternative understanding described in Chapter Five. Such broad thematic analyses are not uncommon in other disciplines. In psychology, for example, Potter & Wetherell (see, for example, Potter & Wetherell,

1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) use an approach in examining the way social identity is constructed which is similar in a number of ways to this approach.

### 3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has described the research site and has examined the approaches and orientation to research which drove the research process. The research process has then been described in some detail. This attention to methodology has been necessary for, as Hammersley's (1992) points out:

. . . the 'theoretical descriptions' that ethnographers produce are little different from the descriptions and explanations that are employed by all of us in everyday life. What distinctiveness they ought to have concerns not their theoretical character but the explicitness and coherence of the data collection and analysis on which they are based.

The next three chapters of this thesis will go on to provide such theoretical descriptions as responses to my research questions.



## Chapter Four

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### Dominant Language-Related Discourses at the University of Zululand

'Language' and 'Education' share two disadvantages that many other areas of study avoid: they are both too familiar. We all use language – and many of us have strong views about it; we have all been educated – and we all have strong views about that. Expertise confronts experience and people must be bold to defend their expertise against others' experience (Brumfit, 1987:1).

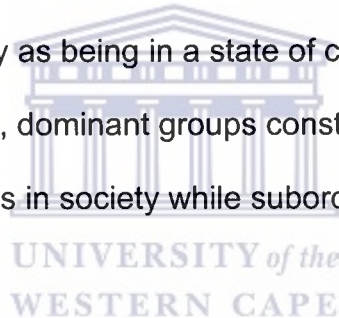
#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the answer the first of my research questions "How does the University of Zululand construct students' literacy-related experiences?" As I have already indicated in Chapter One, my aim in this thesis is to explore the appropriacy of dominant understandings of students' literacy-related experiences to one particular context: a first year Systematic Philosophy class at the University of Zululand. This will then allow me to examine the extent to which students are facilitated with the epistemological access to the institution which they need in order to succeed and obtain a degree. This chapter describes dominant understandings of students' literacy-related experiences and, in doing so, also examines the ideologies which underpin them. The discussion in this chapter is then set against my response, in Chapter Five, to the second research question "Is there a way to understand students' literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?", in order to arrive at an answer to the

third question “At the University of Zululand, what is the educational significance of an alternative way of understanding students’ literacy-related experiences?”

In answering the first and second research questions, I have worked loosely within an approach to discourse analysis developed in the field which has become known as *Critical Linguistics* and which is explored, for example, in the writing of Fairclough (1989, 1992a, 1992b, 1995) and other members of the Lancaster School such as Clarke & Ivanič (1997).

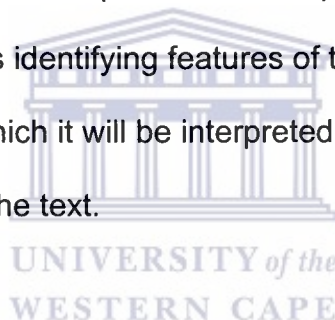
In opposition to *functionalists* (see, for example, Durkheim, 1982) who understand that society typically exists in a state of co-operative equilibrium, critical linguists such as Fairclough view society as being in a state of continuous conflict and social change. In this state of conflict, dominant groups constantly strive to build and maintain their powerful positions in society while subordinate groups work to wrest that power from them.



This struggle for power can involve coercion or “the manufacture of consent or at least acquiescence towards it” (Fairclough, 1989:4). The manufacture of consent, a more insidious way of building and asserting power than coercion, leads to the state which Gramsci (1971) terms *hegemony*. For Gramsci, the term *hegemony* is used to refer to the dominance of one social class over others. This dominance is not only achieved through political and economic measures, but also through the ability of the dominant class to project its way of seeing the world so that those who are subordinated perceive it as “common sense” or “natural”. The questioning of the

oppression of subordinated classes is thus made to seem “unnatural”. By definition, this process involves the use of language. In order to explore the way in which language is implicated in this struggle for power, however, it is necessary to have an understanding of language as *discourse*.

By *discourse*, Fairclough (1989:24) refers to the “process of social interaction of which the text is just a part”. This “process of social interaction” involves the production of the text and the interpretation of the text. Producing and interpreting texts involves using resources, such as language, values, beliefs, assumptions, which people bring to the processes of production and interpretation. Traces of the process of production and cues to the process of interpretation can be found in texts and discourse analysis involves identifying features of the social interaction which produced the text and within which it will be interpreted. Analysis of *discourse*, for Fairclough, thus goes beyond the text.

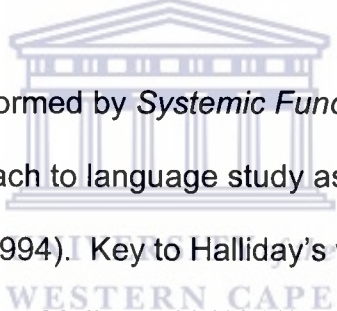


In using resources such as language, values, beliefs and assumptions to produce and interpret texts, people are not only constrained by the nature of the resources which have been available to them in society, and which they have thus internalised for their personal use, but also by conventional expectations about the way these resources should be used. Fairclough terms these conventional expectations about the way resources should be used *orders of discourse*. *Orders of discourse* are resources for representing reality and are intricately bound up with values and beliefs related to various positions of power in the social world. Dominant groups use orders of discourse in order to establish and maintain their power over

subordinate groups by representing the assumptions about knowledge, identity and social relations embodied in them as “natural” or “common sense” and by pathologising the orders of discourse of subordinate groups. In this way the existence of social conflict is masked.

For Fairclough, therefore, in engaging with discourse analysis:

. . . one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures (p.26).



*Critical discourse analysis* is informed by *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (or *Systemics*), a theoretical approach to language study associated with the work of Michael Halliday (1973, 1978, 1994). Key to Halliday’s work, and following on from the work of other linguists such as Malinowski (1946) and Firth (1968), is the identification of two levels of context for any text: the *context of situation* and the *context of culture*. The *context of situation* refers, literally, to the situation in which any text is produced and/or interpreted and will affect the sort of subjects a text can deal with, the way relationships between those producing and interpreting the text are realised as well as whether the text is spoken or written. The *context of culture* is a more abstract concept than the *context of situation* and encompasses a cultural group’s expectations of what can take place in any context of situation. Clark and Ivanič (1997) elaborate thus:

[The context of culture] consists of all the values, beliefs, constructions of reality, possible social roles and relationships, and associated norms and conventions for practices, genres and discourses which are in principle available to members of that culture (p.67).

In this chapter, I do not propose to use Fairclough's model (1989) of discourse analysis or Halliday's *Systemic Functional Analysis* to undertake "fine" linguistic analyses of the way in which ideologies, values, attitudes and beliefs are encoded (cf. Widdowson's, 1998, critique mentioned earlier in 3.6.2.1 above). My analysis will, rather, be limited to an exploration of some aspects of what Fairclough terms "the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures" (which I take to correspond to Halliday's *context of culture*) of the University of Zululand. More specifically, I will be attempting to explore the values, beliefs and understanding actualised in what Fairclough terms *orders of discourse* and what other linguists (see, for example Kress, 1989 and Gee, 1990) term *discourses* which "name" the literacy-related experiences encountered by students as "problems" and which identify solutions to those "problems".

In order to write about these discourses, it has been necessary to describe them as separate entities when, in practice, they overlap and compete with each other in constructing an understanding of students' experiences which is never stable. This should be borne in mind as the rest of this chapter is read. The discourses described in this chapter are:

- a discourse which constructs language as a means of communicating ideas and thoughts which are constructed independently of language;

- stemming from this, another discourse which constructs students' problems as resulting from their status as speakers of English as an additional language. This second discourse assumes that if students had control of English, the medium of communicating ideas and thoughts, they would not encounter problems in engaging with study at tertiary level. By implication, it also assumes that students have sufficient control of their mother tongue in order to construct meanings appropriate to the university;
- a discourse which constructs literacy as a neutral, a-social, a-cultural set of "skills" (cf. Street's, 1985, 1993, 1995, "autonomous" model of literacy described in 2.3.3 above). According to this discourse, literacy-related skills can be acquired independently of the context in which they will be used and, once acquired, will enable students to retrieve the meanings encoded in texts;
- related to the construction of literacy as a set of neutral "skills", another discourse which focuses on the need for students to be able to analyse and construct academic arguments. Analysis and construction are thus perceived to be dependent on a set of "formal" operations which will allow arguments to be constructed or analysed independently of the contexts in which they exist;
- a discourse which centres on the need to master the formal rules of English as a means of decoding and encoding meanings in texts;
- a discourse which perceives that the study of linguistics will achieve the same end as the study of the formal rules of English. Both this and the previous discourse therefore hold that learning *about* language will allow students to use language in ways appropriate to the university;

- a final discourse which roots students' apparent inability to construct meanings appropriate to the university in the individual. This discourse therefore exonerates the institution and the society in which it exists and places blame on students for what they are unable to do.

This chapter will now proceed to explore the discourses listed above more thoroughly.

## 4.2 Language as an Instrument of Communication

In her book *Language Education*, Christie (1985:1) makes a distinction between a model of *language as an instrument of communication* and a model of *language as a resource*. For Christie, a model of language as an instrument of communication centres on the understanding that information, thoughts, ideas, beliefs and attitudes are constructed independently of language which is then used as a "vehicle" or "tool" to communicate these to others. Christie goes on to point out that, although the model of language as an instrument of communication is commonplace, it is:

. . . at best superficial . . . [since] such a judgement touches not at all upon the particularly powerful role of language in the ordering of experience. It is with language that we create that which is to be communicated: information is born of experience, but, equally, experience for normal members of the community is largely shaped and articulated by language (p.1).

The understanding that language shapes experience is termed, by Christie, a *model of language as a resource*.<sup>1</sup>

The need for students to understand the way language is used to structure experience within the university is critical since this is different to the way experience is typically organised by other, non-academic, discourses (see, for example, Bock, 1988). One example of this difference is the way the university uses language to explore and construct claims. Outside the university, a claim can be based on “common sense” understandings of the world and evidence for the claim need not be provided. Within the university, language is used to construct a claim which is often more tentative (or “hedged”), more precise and which is rooted in research. These differences are related to the way “reality” is perceived inside and outside the university. In spite of the need for students to be inducted into understanding the way language is used to organise experience, at tertiary, as well as at other levels, language teaching often focuses on the teaching of language as an *instrument of communication* (Christie, 1985; Taylor, 1988). When this happens, the chances of students acquiring the various *genres*, or “socially legitimated ways of using language” (Clark & Ivanič, 1997:13) which both shape, and are shaped by, ways of experiencing the world within the university are diminished.

Taylor (1988:53) provides an excellent example of the inadequacy of a model of language as an instrument of communication in his demonstration of the way

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<sup>1</sup> This understanding relates to the discussion of ontological and epistemological considerations in the approach to “reality” described as “Discourse on discourse” in 2.2.2 above.



modification of the instrument (through the correction of grammatical errors in a piece of student writing) does not facilitate the communication of meaning. After errors have been corrected, the writing is still confused and the reader struggles to construct meaning. As a result of this exercise, Taylor concludes that:

. . . formal excellence in writing is largely a function of what is being said and what needs to be said. Our attention needs to shift from form alone to the connections between the forms of language and the possibilities of knowledge. In short, we need to study and teach how language hooks on to the world (p.55).

At the University of Zululand, the influence of an understanding of language as an instrument of communication is discerned in the traditional, adjunct structure of language development initiatives. Over the years, the task of providing language development activities has traditionally fallen either to Academic Support initiatives or to the Department of English and its *Practical English* course. Development of the language necessary to succeed at university is therefore understood to be possible outside mainstream learning. It is thus perceived to be divorced from understandings of the way mainstream disciplines experience the world. An indication of this understanding can be seen in the following submission made by the Faculty of Law to the South African University's Vice Chancellors' Association's (SAUVCA) Quality Audit Team which visited the University in 1997. The Faculty begin by stating their goals and objectives which, amongst others, are:

- 2.1 To develop students' ability to think critically, independently and creatively.

- 2.2 To enhance the students' learning ability and communication skills.
- 2.3 To equip students with the necessary reading and writing skills and to develop computer literacy.

They then go on to outline the programmes and courses put in place to achieve those aims and objectives, making a clear distinction between the role of the Faculty in developing knowledge of law and the role of the English department:

- 3.1 All students are required to take a course in the English language as a compulsory course.
- 3.2 Most of the undergraduate courses have as its [sic] basic aim to ensure that the students have a sound knowledge of the law. They are required to refer to the prescribed handbooks and relevant legislation.

The task of the Faculty, then, is to develop legal knowledge. The role of developing the language competence to "receive" that knowledge and to convey it elsewhere is left to the Department of English. Other Quality Assurance reports express similar opinions. The report from the Department of Economics, for example, suggests that a "crash course" in communication skills should be offered to students before the beginning of their first year at university while the report from the Department of Home Economics argues for the need for "bridging courses" in communication skills.

At the University of Zululand, the influence of an understanding of language as an instrument of communication is not only evident in the adjunct manner in which language development is addressed but also in the materials used in courses to develop language. A study guide entitled *Improve your Writing Skills* produced by the *Language and Learning Centre*, and still in use in 1993, begins:

Like many other students struggling to write correctly and effectively, you may have been accused of not knowing what a sentence is. Of course you 'know' - you have been speaking in sentences most of your life. But you may not know enough about the possibilities and limitations of written sentences to be able to communicate your ideas as effectively in writing as you do in speaking . . .

The guide then embarks on an exposition of the component parts of the sentence and an analysis of sentence types. In doing so, it assumes that the communication of meaning is dependent on getting the medium "right". If the tool of communication is used "correctly" then "pre-formed" meanings will be sent and received. This sort of instruction to students takes no account of research which shows that writing is a process of discovering meaning (i.e. that it is a resource for constructing thoughts) and that writers only succeed in writing coherent sentences as the thoughts contained in those sentences themselves become coherent (see, for example, Emig, 1977; Zamel, 1982; Taylor, 1988). The course focuses on sentence correctness, suggesting that the thoughts already exist and only have to be encoded into a grammatically correct form in order to be conveyed to others.

*A Language Laboratory Course Guide* (n.d)<sup>2</sup> begins in a similar vein to *Improve your Writing Skills* by stating:

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<sup>2</sup> Although no precise date is available, the guide has clearly been produced using a word processing package which suggests that it could not have been written before 1990 at the earliest. 1990 is taken to be the date when personal computers first became available to academics.

. . . our mutual goal is to ensure that you will become a good writer, by knowing how to write a sentence, how to expand a sentence and how to combine sentences, thereby improving the quality of your academic work (p.2).

The guide then proceeds to examine the elements of a sentence before proceeding to examine, amongst other things, “connectives”, “phrases”, “clauses” and “sentence fragments”.

This focus on “getting the medium right” is also evident in materials produced for the Practical English course. Unit One of the *First Year English APE & AEN 115* (Phelps *et al.*, 1995) course guide, for example, begins by stating:

This unit has as its main AIM the improvement in the expression of your MEANING. The foundation of all expression is the sentence, and this unit asks you to work with the sentence and to work with linking sentences together (p.4).



The course guide then proceeds to another section entitled “Writing Sentences” which begins:

The sentence is the basic unit of spoken and written communication. There are many rules which govern the correctness of a sentence’s construction . . .

Definition: A sentence is a complete thought expressed in words. Sentences are of three kinds, simple, compound and complex . . .

For the writers of the guide then, meaning exists and needs to be “expressed”. That expression then takes the form of sentence units each of which contains “a complete thought”. The power of the model of language as an instrument of communication is evident in spite of the attention paid by the guide to an understanding of writing as a mode of learning and making meaning. By 1995, the year in which the guide was produced, I had made a number of presentations in the Department of English on process approaches to teaching writing and on understanding writing as a mode of learning (see, for example, Emig, 1977). The introduction to the guide includes a section entitled “Writing is a process” which includes the following:

Modern research on writing has shown how important writing is as a thinking process in its own right. Writing requires concentrated and sustained thinking to be effective. This is why writing must be understood as central to the learning process itself (p.2).

The guide then includes an (unacknowledged) copy of White & Arndt’s (1991:11) model of writing as a recursive process of generating, evaluating, drafting, reviewing, structuring and focusing ideas.

Another *Practical English* course guide (Louw, 1995:3) announces the importance of “listening skills” in the University and its intention of teaching them in a section which begins:

Many people do not know that listening is a language skill. Most people think that learning language is about PRODUCING it oneself, so they concentrate on getting their grammar right. While it is important to try to improve your

grammar, it is also very important for communication in English that you develop your listening skills. If you do not correctly RECEIVE what someone is saying to you your own speaking skills are useless (p.3).

In this extract, the predominant metaphor is that of language as a conduit to receive information, thoughts, ideas and beliefs constructed independently of it. At the same time, the idea that one produces language (by “getting grammar right”) takes no account of the way in which our experiences shape the grammatical/syntactical choices we make (see, for example, Halliday, 1973, 1978).

The understanding that language can be separated from the way in which meanings are constructed often influences the way students’ work is marked. The following extract is taken from a memorandum detailing marking standards in the Faculty of Theology and Religion Studies:<sup>3</sup>



#### FIRST YEAR

The emphasis is on the intelligent reproduction of knowledge. Students must show that they understand the work, are able to summarise and follow the main arguments.

Students are given special encouragement to avoid grammatical and spelling errors. The marking therefore does not only concern the contents, but also the formal aspects. Students should receive a firm indication of their standard. If necessary they have to rewrite their assignments in good and understandable language. While flawless Oxford English cannot be the

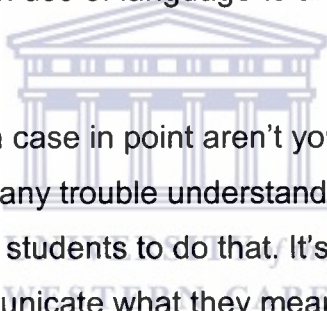
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<sup>3</sup> This document (S472/98) reached the University Senate as the Faculty of Theology and Religion Studies “franchised” its courses to various biblical colleges throughout Kwa Zulu Natal. These colleges enquired about marking standards and the document served before the Faculty Board before reaching Senate.

norm, the language should conform to basic standards. Inevitably insufficient language skills will also be reflected in the marks.

Other marking memoranda used in departments in other faculties frequently specify the number of marks to be awarded to content against the number to be awarded for “language”. On one occasion, I was asked to assist with marking students’ scripts in the department of Sociology, the idea being that the lecturer would mark the content and I would mark the language.

Interviews and discussion with academic staff also revealed evidence of an understanding of language as an instrument of communication. In an interview, one staff member referred to my own use of language to argue:



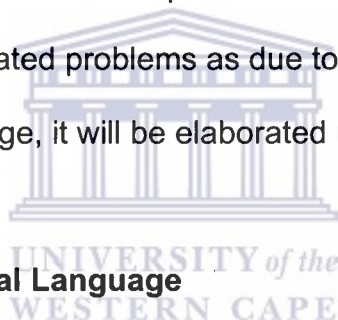
. . . well, I mean, you’re a case in point aren’t you? You speak the Queen’s English . . . I don’t have any trouble understanding what you have to say. I get the message. I want students to do that. It’s not difficult . . . I just want them to be able to communicate what they mean clearly and concisely.

Another staff member roots students’ difficulties in teaching at school level:

. . . at our schools the teaching is so bad. No one . . . the teachers they didn’t show us to use English properly so how can we say . . . how can we give information clearly?

Much of the reluctance on the part of mainstream staff to become involved in “language across the curriculum” work can be attributed to the idea that thought is independent of language and that students need to learn to use language as a tool

for communication. In my time at the University, attacks on the Academic Support Programme for not taking on the task of developing students' language proficiency were extremely common.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, staff resisted opportunities to make use of initiatives intended to support language development and which required their involvement (such as the Writing Respondent Programme) claiming that it was their job to teach the discipline and not to develop language. In a University which has long been underfunded and which has battled with the problem of large classes because of this underfunding, possibly the most compelling evidence of the reluctance of staff to become involved in developing students' language competence is the willingness to pay extra staff to teach in language departments and in the Academic Support Programme. Since this point also relates to the belief which constructs students' literacy-related problems as due to their status as speakers of English as an additional language, it will be elaborated upon in the next section.



#### **4.3 English as an Additional Language**

Linked to the understanding of language as an instrument of communication which is used to “pass on” thoughts and ideas developed elsewhere, is another which constructs students' problems as being predominantly related to their status as speakers of English as an additional language. According to this understanding, problems arise not because of students' lack of familiarity with using language to

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<sup>4</sup> A letter written to the Director of the Programme by the Head of the Department of Missiology, Faculty of Religion Studies and Theology in November 1994, complaining that the Academic Support Programme should “pay more attention to improving [students'] language skills”, is typical in this regard.



construct thought in new and unfamiliar ways (i.e. in ways which are specific to the university) but because they cannot manipulate the forms of the additional language in a way which will allow them to receive and pass on the thoughts developed in the disciplines.

Framing the problem in this way has long been important in the history of South African liberalism since it allows one to reject the view that black students might be experiencing problems in white institutions because of differences in ways of thinking. The construction of black students' problems as "second language problems" persists post-apartheid, however, in spite of the celebration of difference epitomised in the concept of the *Rainbow Nation* and despite a considerable body of research which argues that differences in ways of thinking do exist both between discourses (Geisler, 1994) and between cultures (Scollon and Scollon, 1981, 1995). The idea that problems are related to students' status as speakers of an additional language, moreover, appeals to superficial understandings of language evinced in models such as Christie's language as an instrument of communication and, as such, is inherently attractive as a diagnosis.

\* The power of English language teaching discourses described in earlier chapters of this thesis also contributes to the construction of students' problems in this way. In Britain and the United States, pre-sessional courses for speakers of other languages are common at English-speaking universities. Such courses often use a notional syllabus (Wilkins, 1976) focusing on functions of "academic English" and supported by instruction in academic study "skills" such as note-taking and essay writing. The

following description<sup>5</sup> of a “scientific English” course (Donovan, 1978) intended for use at tertiary level is fairly typical:

- [The course] teaches the language required for performing such tasks as describing, hypothesizing, speculating, accounting for results and summarizing, which are necessary for any kind of scientific enquiry. ✕
- It builds up students' language skills so that in the course of the eleven units they move from simple tasks, such as expressing values and formulae in English, to the description of complete experiments, explanations and accounts of processes.

Students who enrol on pre-sessional courses in Britain and the United States are usually graduates who have travelled overseas to do some sort of post-graduate diploma or higher degree. They therefore generally understand how functions such as describing, hypothesising and speculating are used in academic discourse and need only acquire ways of expressing those functions in English. The situation of South African undergraduates who come to university with nothing more than an inferior “Bantu” education is qualitatively very different, however, since these students have to learn the significance of the functions in academic discourse as well as ways of expressing them in English. More often than not, their lack of understanding of language functions is intertwined with a lack of understanding of concepts necessary for study at tertiary level. Both linguistic and conceptual knowledge therefore has to be developed and any course which sets out to merely teach the form of the functions in the additional language does not address the problem.

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<sup>5</sup> This description appears on the publisher's web site: <http://www.oup.co.za>

There is a general perception at the University of Zululand that universities overseas are very successful in equipping speakers of other languages to study through the medium of English. However, while such courses might be successful overseas, the needs of students are qualitatively different to those of their peers in overseas institutions, a point which is taken up in more detail later. The resulting demand for English as a second language to be taught either in courses such as Practical English or by courses developed by the Academic Development Programme is thus problematic.

Historical evidence of the influence of the discourse which constructs students' experiences with academic discourse as resulting from their status as speakers of English as an additional language is not difficult to find. In 1980, a report from the Language and Audiovisual Centre<sup>6</sup> (LAAC) appearing in Senate Minutes<sup>7</sup>, shows the 39 position language laboratory operating from 7.30-15.45 each day in order to offer 40 periods of instruction in English as a second language. To this day, copies of *English Fast*, an audio-lingual laboratory drill course used extensively in those sessions, still lie on the shelves of the English Department's seminar room. The shortage of staff prevented the language laboratory from opening for longer hours and Senate Minutes<sup>8</sup> throughout the late 1970s and 1980s report debates about the

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<sup>6</sup> The language laboratory and the reading laboratory were merged in the mid 1970s to form a Language and Audio-visual Centre with a full time director. The LAAC later grew into, first, the Bureau for Tertiary Studies and, later, the Academic Support Programme.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of a meeting held on 13 May 1980.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of meetings held on 26 June 1976, 17 September 1979 & 12 September 1984.

need for extra staff to be appointed either to the the department of English or to the LAAC to deal with what is termed the “language problem”. These debates relate to others concerning the necessity of providing small-group tuition in language departments as a means of developing students’ language proficiency.<sup>9</sup>

The 1981 annual report from the language laboratory accounts for its work with students from the Practical English course as follows:

### 1.2 Practical English

“Success with English, Course book 2, by G. Broughton, a Penguin series was presented as a compulsory course. Eight periods per week were spent on this. Each student attended one lecture per week over ten weeks.

The *Success with English* course was based on the following principles (Barnett *et al.*, 1968):

- Learning by doing. The course is described as “an integrated audio-visual course in which the learner gains mastery of the basic skills of English by actually practising them” (p.11).
- Speech first. The teacher’s handbook stresses the primacy of speech in the language acquisition process, arguing that practice in listening is necessary before learners are asked to reproduce spoken forms. At the same time, it is acknowledged that written forms differ to spoken forms with the aim being to

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<sup>9</sup> Minutes of a meeting held on 8 May 1973. To this day, the system whereby student numbers determines the staff complement in departments favours those teaching languages.

introduce learners to “patterns of language: not specifically the patterns of speech” (12). In following these patterns, the handbook argues, “students will not be wrong in either speech or writing, yet they will understand the colloquial form when they hear it, and they can soon adopt it into their own speech at will” (p.12).

- The structural approach. The course claims to be based on the “most common and useful structures of English” (p.13). A structure such as “He is going to telephone on Friday” is broken up into substitution tables which are then used to produce more examples of the same basic structure.
- Language Practice. By this it is meant that the course aims to provide the learner with practice sufficient to allow them to internalise the structures as language “habits”.



An example of a typical language laboratory drill taken from the course (Barnett, 1968:22) is:

Drill 2(c) [Subject + was/were –ing ....]

1. Yesterday morning , while I was cleaning the car, my wife was going shopping.

What was I doing?

You were cleaning the car.

What was my wife doing?

She was going shopping.

Although the language laboratory has long since been dismantled, calls for its re-establishment because of its value in alleviating students' language “problems” are

still made. The most recent of these occurs in the 1997 Minutes of the Student Guidance Committee and accompanies a demand that the Academic Support Programme should establish a “language competence” course. When I attended a meeting of the Student Guidance Committee to present a document which I had prepared as a response to the request, I was told, by a committee member who had recently spent sabbatical leave in Israel, that if Israeli universities can develop students’ abilities to use Hebrew as medium of instruction in a six-month course, the Academic Support Programme at the University of Zululand could do the same. I pointed out that the educational experiences which, for example, a Russian Jew, could be expected to bring to an Israeli university would be very different to those rural Zulu students would bring to the University of Zululand. As well as having enjoyed the advantages of a well-organised, free, educational system, which provided access to dominant literacies, the student immigrating to Israel from Russia might also be expected to have had greater out-of-school exposure to dominant discourse types than his/her Zulu counterpart. These remonstrations were ignored, however, and the recommendation that the Academic Support Programme should develop a “language competence” course was referred to Senate.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In response to this recommendation, Senate appointed a committee to investigate ways of improving students language competence. The committee, which was chaired by Professor Eldon Wait of the department of Philosophy, recommended that language should be developed in mainstream classes (Proceedings of a Senate Committee looking into ways of improving students’ ability to express themselves in writing in English, Minutes of a Meeting of Senate held on 30 November 1998).

This request for a “language competence” course from the Senate Committee for Student Guidance was not the first time such a course had been requested in the history of the University. In 1989, for example, Senate<sup>11</sup>:

- g) noted that students of this University generally had a poor command of English and that this language is a medium of instruction;
- h) further noted that the University was doing nothing to assist students with a poor matriculation background of English;
- i) considered a suggestion for the introduction of an English Language Competency Course aimed at assisting students with a problem in the English language.

Although the English Language Competency Course was not introduced, it is interesting that such a course was deemed to be necessary in addition to the Practical English course. In this case, then, the need to develop students’ capacity as speakers of English as an additional language appeared to exist in addition to the need to develop their language as a “instrument of communication”. This understanding is confirmed by the report from the committee set up to look into the establishment of the English Language Competency Course. The report recommends<sup>12</sup>:

- i) the expansion and/or redesignation of Practical English in order to achieve two objectives i.e. the original aim of teaching Practical English and the improvement of the language competency of all students.

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<sup>11</sup> Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting held on 2 August 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of Senate held on 14 June 1990.

What is arguably more interesting than the mere existence of a discourse constructing students' problems as due to their status as speakers of English as an additional language is the way it manifests itself in actual teaching. In the time I worked there, few members of staff had qualifications<sup>13</sup> in, or experience of, teaching English as a Second Language. Many, however, were aware of various approaches to teaching English language and used these, often in a very uninformed way, in their teaching. In the 1995 academic year, for example, the Department of English adopted what might be termed an "English for Special Purposes" approach to teaching the enormous Practical English class of 1,600 students. This involved splitting the class into a number of groups according to faculty or, in the Faculty of Arts, according to the subjects students had indicated as intended majors. Separate courses were then developed for each group and a set of study guides produced. The *Reader for the Science English Grouping* (Hooper, 1995), for example, consists of texts taken from *New Scientist*, *School Science Review* and *The Sunday Times* as well as texts (and their accompanying exercises) taken from a scientific English course (Lander, 1983) found in the University library. The exercises printed in the course guide consist of *Scanning Practice*, *Skimming Practice* and what are termed *Comprehension Checks*, the latter usually consisting of referential type questions on the accompanying text. "English for Science", in the 1995 academic year, therefore consisted of a focus on reading scientific texts.

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<sup>13</sup> Some staff members had qualifications in applied linguistics. I will return to this point later.



The *History Module Course Guide* uses an entirely different approach as the introduction to the course shows:

This course is intended to develop the skills which you may need in studying history. These skills include the ability to gather the main information from a piece of writing, the ability to turn the information in your head into a well-structured piece of writing, and the ability to make more general connections between differing themes, or take a theme apart and see what ideas it is made up of (Blatchford, 1995:1).

The course guide goes on to explain that group discussion will be an important feature of the course with group members being nominated to take notes and give feedback on group discussion to the class as a whole. The list of topics to be discussed includes: the technological differences between settlers arriving in South Africa in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and “Iron Age locals” and whether or not society in the Cape before the first British occupation looked very much like the society in South Africa under apartheid.

The *English for Law Students: Communication and Thinking Skills* (Louw, 1995) course guide shows yet another approach. The course sets about teaching what are termed the *Communication Skills* (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and *Thinking Skills* (developing a logical argument: cause and effect, statement and evidence, deductive and inductive reasoning, comparison and contrast, valid and invalid arguments, integrating different points of view). Within the “communication skill” of listening, a number of strategies are taught to deal with “situations in which you do not understand everything the speaker is saying” (p. 3). These include

interrupting, repeating what has been said, asking for documents and dealing with a speaker's impatience. These strategies are then taught as language "functions" (Wilkins, 1976) with a number of exponents of each function provided for each.

Exponents of the function of interrupting appearing in the guide are:

- Could you possibly repeat that?
- Could you possibly repeat what you've just said?
- I'm not quite sure that I follow.
- Could I possibly stop you here . . .? (then go back to the detail that you did not understand).
- Could you explain the exact meaning of that?
- What do you mean by that? (p. 4).

In the "reading skills" section of the course guide, students are taught to "read for specific information" and read to "get a general idea" using authentic texts such as cash sale slips, a business card and extracts from guarantees. The "writing skills" section deals with coherence in writing using exercises in which students must identify redundant "incoherent" information,<sup>14</sup> and edit printed letters for grammatical errors involving concord and cohesive devices.

Of the three courses reviewed in this section, the *English for Law Students* course probably owes most to communicative approaches to language teaching with its

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<sup>14</sup> One such exercise is:

I write on behalf of the above named, regarding his Workman's compensation. He has worked at Corobrik (pty) Ltd for 14 years. On 15/8/94 he was hurt at work , where the people are having a Christmas party on 10/12/90. He would like to know whether you have applied for his Workman's compensation for him yet.

focus on reading for a purpose (see, for example, White, 1981) and the teaching of exponents of language functions . The differences exhibited by all three courses, attributable to lecturers' experiences of, and personal theories about, second language teaching, means that students "problems" and needs were not only understood in very different ways but were also dealt with differently all within the same credit bearing course.

Significant in this discourse which constructs students' problems as related to their status as speakers of English as an additional language<sup>15</sup> is the lack of reference to the issue of multilingualism. Although the claim that students' learning difficulties would be eliminated if Zulu were used as a medium of instruction at the University was made fairly frequently by Zulu nationalists (see, for example, Maphalala, 1998), the idea that both Zulu and English should be used to facilitate the sort of language development required by students was not explored in any systematic way. Many Zulu speaking staff members did use Zulu in classes I was invited to attend but invariably apologised for having done so, claiming that if only students' English were "better" they would not have needed to provide explanations in the mother tongue. The belief that the exclusive use of English would maximise the acquisition and development of the language often lay at the root of these apologies (cf. Phillipson, 1992 and Pennycook, 1994, discussed in Chapter One). For these staff members, students' "problems" were rooted in the channel of communication. If their English

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<sup>15</sup> Although I use the term construct of English as an "additional language" here, students difficulties in using English within the academy are usually constructed as "second language" issues regardless of the fact that English is frequently a third or fourth language for students deemed to have "poor" language skills.

had been better, students would have been able to access the information provided by the lecturer more successfully. The idea that the use of other languages alongside English could facilitate the acquisition of the academic discourses students needed to engage with learning and succeed at university was therefore alien to the majority of the staff.

Although the idea that students' problems in using language in the academy is a result of their status as speakers of English as an additional language connects to other discourses, it is particularly pertinent to the discourse which constructs literacy as "autonomous" and which is discussed next.

#### 4.4 The "Autonomous" Model of Literacy

One of the most pervasive discourses at the University of Zululand relates to the so called "autonomous" model of literacy (Street, 1984) which has been contrasted with the "ideological" model (Street, 1984) in Chapter Two of this thesis (see 2.3.3 above). In this section I will relate one specific type of literacy, so called "essayist" (Olsen, 1977) or "essay text" (Scollon & Scollon, 1981, 1995) literacy, to a discourse which perceives all texts as "autonomous".

In a seminal article written in 1977, Olsen examines two contrasting assumptions about the location of meaning in texts. One assumption holds that meaning is "in the shared intentions of speaker and hearer" (p.258) and is therefore dependent on contextual and private knowledge which individuals bring to their interpretation of the

text. In recent theory, this knowledge has been termed “background knowledge” (see, for example, Bransford *et al.*, 1984) and is thought to be “contained” in cognitive schemata (see, for example, Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983; Carrell *et al.*, 1988). The other assumption holds that “meaning is conventionalized in a sentence itself, that ‘the meaning is in the text’” (Olsen, 1977:258) and that the text is therefore “autonomous”. Assumptions about the location of meaning in text have implications for understanding the nature of language, the nature of comprehension, the nature of logical reasoning and problems associated with learning to speak and read.

According to Olsen, the idea that meaning is located within the text and that texts are therefore “autonomous” can be traced to the development of literacy. In pre-literate societies, important cultural information was passed down in the form of poetry and stories in which the language had been “poetized” in order to make it more memorable. This process of using oral mnemonic devices such as rhyme and rhythm meant that the statements themselves lost some of their explicit nature. However, since the information contained in the stories and poems was not new to those who heard them, the fact that they were not explicit was not important as listeners were able to supply relevant background knowledge to aid the process of comprehension. Where ambiguity remained, wise men, scribes or clerics were available to provide an “authorised” interpretation. The invention, by the Greeks, of an alphabetic writing system which could represent speech accurately meant that the ambiguities of oral language could be avoided and that knowledge which the reader brought to the text no longer had to be relied upon for comprehension and

interpretation. Writing became explicit, “containing” meaning, where oral language had been inexplicit and had needed meaning to be “supplied”.

Once written language had become available for examination, the Greeks identified a set of abstract categories and concerned themselves with explaining the meaning of terms. In doing this, they believed they had discovered a way of ascertaining objective truth. As Olsen points out, however:

Their rules for mind were not rules for thinking but rather rules for using language consistently; the abstract properties of their category system . . . were not true or unbiased descriptions of reality but rather invariants in the structure of their language (p.267).

The invention of the printing press and the resultant rise of print literacy many centuries later furthered this process of making written language explicit. Where the Greeks had been concerned with eliminating ambiguities at word level, later scholars concerned themselves with eliminating ambiguity at sentence level. Sentences were written as explicitly as possible in order to avoid the construction of more than one meaning. The task of the writer was now to:

. . . create an autonomous text – to write in such a manner that the sentence was an adequate, explicit representation of the meaning, relying on no implicit premises or personal interpretations. Moreover the sentence had to withstand analysis of its presuppositions and implications. This fostered the use of prose as a form of extended statements from which a set of necessary implications could be drawn (p.268).

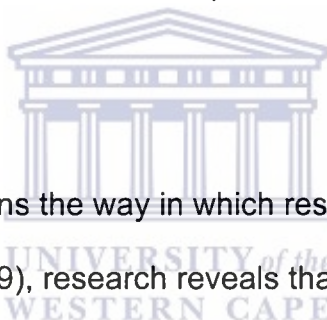
The task for readers now came to be that of determining the exact meaning “contained” in the prose.

This specialized use of written language came to be adopted by British essayists such as John Locke and by the Royal Society of London. The socially privileged position it thus came to occupy led to its further adoption as a norm for written language and also, on occasions and very mistakenly, as an ideal for spoken language. The practices associated with producing and interpreting “autonomous” essayist prose have, in addition, come to be acknowledged as an “ideal” for literacy.<sup>16</sup> This particular form of literacy, the essayist or essay text literacy mentioned at the beginning of this section, is taught at school with middle class children from what Heath (1983:236ff.) terms “mainstream” backgrounds being progressively inducted into its use in pre-school years (see Scollon and Scollon, 1981, for specific examples of this process). Other forms of literacy, such as those explored in a South African context by Prinsloo & Brier (1996) or Gough (2000) are not perceived as literacies and therefore ignored. For children from homes where dominant forms of literacy are not practised, learning to read therefore not only involves learning the decoding skills necessary to make sense of the alphabet but also acquiring an understanding that “reading” requires decontextualised interpretation.

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<sup>16</sup> This form of literacy is also implicated in the debate about the alleged cognitive advantages bestowed by literacy examined in Chapter Two.

In a book which sets out to examine the nature of academic expertise, Geisler<sup>17</sup> (1994) questions the value of this “autonomous” variety of literacy at levels of engagement with learning beyond schooling by pointing out that texts written by academics for academics are *not* autonomous. She bases this claim on a number of observations made by authors such as Bazerman (1988) who examines texts written by scientists for fellow scientists. The first of these observations is that an academic text, such as a research report or a journal article, typically begins by *creating* rather than *denying* context. Research reports and journal articles, for example, typically begin with a review of the previous literature in order to imply that their own research, and the results it obtains, is a “natural” extension of the field. This process of contextualising research, then provides a position for peers to “read from”.



The second observation concerns the way in which research is reported in academic texts. According to Geisler (p.19), research reveals that much experimental work, in the sciences at least, is tacit and acquired through apprenticeship in laboratories. The methods sections of research reports and journal articles do not supply the explicit information necessary for readers to replicate the experiments but rely on the tacit contextual knowledge readers bring to the text and which will allow them to reconstruct this work.

The final way in which Geisler (p.11) uses her review of the research to challenge the autonomy of academic texts is by noting that texts written by academics for

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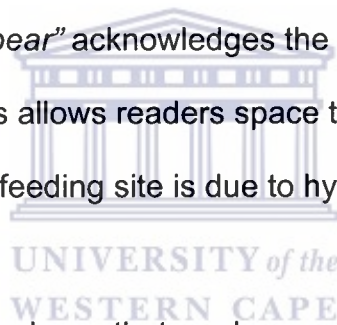
<sup>17</sup> See also the review of the same literature in Grabe & Kaplan, 1996.



fellow academics typically include metadiscourse, or discourse about discourse. Metadiscourse allows researchers to acknowledge their roles as observers who make inferences about the phenomena they are observing in specific contexts. This acknowledgment of context provides peers with a means of interrogating the certainty of the claims made in the text. Geisler cites the following extract from Fahnestock (1986) as an example of such metadiscourse:

The bees masticate and consume flesh at the feeding site. They do not carry pieces of flesh to the nest, but *appear* to hydrologise it with a secretion produced by either mandibular or salivary glands, which gives the feeding site a wet appearance (p.283, original emphasis).

In this example, the hedge “*appear*” acknowledges the context in which the observation was made and thus allows readers space to contest the “knowledge” that the wet appearance of the feeding site is due to hydrolyzation.



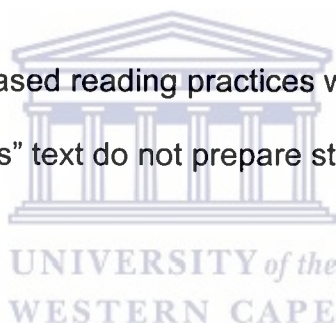
Geisler’s review of the literature shows that readers, and not only writers, of academic articles and reports use contextual knowledge as they work with texts. Citing Bazerman (1988), for example, she notes that:

[Readers] were highly critical when writers appeared not to follow procedures or consider factors that they knew from firsthand experience to be important determiners of good experimental results. And they were highly gratified when writers provided small details about their laboratory procedures that, although not sufficient to tell the uninformed how to replicate the work, did strongly indicate that the researcher had attended to the kind of details that make a difference (p.22).

In contrast to academic texts which require readers to use contextual knowledge to construct meaning and which explicitly provide ways for readers to contest the findings of the research they report upon, school text books, according to Geisler, are the very embodiment of autonomous literacy:

Linguistically, they emphasize the definition of terms, use complete unmarked grammatical forms, and provide explicit logical structure. In terms of interpersonal relations, they have the authority of presenting “the authorized version of society’s valid knowledge” (Olsen, 1981:108). They require students to assume the “responsibility . . . primarily . . . of mastering this knowledge” (ibid:108). And they separate text from writer thus “put[ting] the words ‘above criticism’” (ibid:32).

For Geisler, therefore, school based reading practices which centre on the text book and the idea of the “autonomous” text do not prepare students to be “expert” readers in the academy:



. . . the entire school system seems to be regulated by the ideal of the autonomous text. Discord does arise, however, from a mismatch between the avowed goal of these practices and the actual outcome for students . . . All in all, the literacy practices of the schools, then, appear to be crippled in just those places where education might edge students closer to expertise (p.82).

Given this damning indictment of school based literacy practices, it is indeed disturbing that one of the most pervasive discourses at the University of Zululand relates to the idea of the “autonomous” text and holds that accessing meaning from the text is dependent on reading “skills” and proficiency in the English language.

Evidence of this discourse can be seen in the focus on the teaching of reading “skills” in much of the work of the Practical English course, some of which has already been cited, and also in examination papers purporting to test students’ reading ability. The final examination for the collapsed Practical English (APE 125) and General English (AEN 125) courses in the 1996 academic year, for example, uses an extract from Chinua Achebe’s (1958) *Things Fall Apart* (pp. 93-95) to test reading (see Appendix VI). The multiple choice questions accompanying the extract require the text to be scrutinised in order to find answers within its structure.

Question 9, for example, asks:

9. Who is the head of the family and to whom do the children belong?
- a) the mother and the children belong to her.
  - b) the mother’s parents and the children belong to them.
  - c) the father and the children belong to him.
  - d) the father and the children belong to him and his parents.

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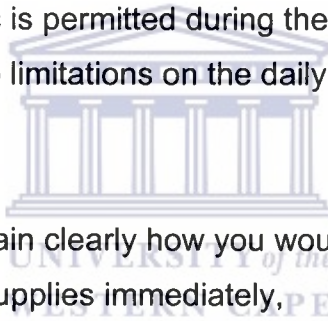
The answer to the question is found in the text in the following form:

. . . We all know that a man is the head of the family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to its father and his family and not to its mother and her family.

Of the ten multiple choice questions in the test, five test the ability to consult the text to find exact answers. This sort of referential questioning is typical of much of the teaching of reading comprehension at school level (see, for example, Heap, 1985; Baker and Freebody, 1989 and, for South Africa, Macdonald, 1990).

Another exercise in the 1996 *Language Skills Workbook* produced for the first year English course appears thus:

There has been a severe earthquake in the country of Lexicon, and 24,000 Kg of medical supplies have to be moved in as soon as possible. You have been given the task of arranging the movement of these supplies from Alpha to Omega. All of them are urgently needed, but 1,500 Kg of emergency equipment is needed within 24 hours if lives are to be saved. As a result of the earthquake, all railway lines are out of action and no date can be given for their restoration. There is no serviceable landing ground at Omega or Delta and no helicopters can be made available for at a least week. You will therefore have to rely on the transport available at your base, Alpha, consisting of trucks, details of which are given below. Because of the bad road conditions, no traffic is permitted during the hours of darkness (18.30 - 05.30) and there are also limitations on the daily distances which trucks may travel.



In about 400 words, explain clearly how you would

- i) move the emergency supplies immediately,
- ii) complete the whole operation as quickly as possible.

Details of the trucks include, for example, information that “Truck A” is in poor condition, can carry a maximum load of 3000 kilograms and can be used only on good, level roads for up to a maximum of 400 kilometres per day. A stylised “map” is then provided of the district through which supplies must be moved and which includes descriptions of roads. Road (i) between Alpha and Delta, for example, is 200 kms long and is described as “narrow, with dangerous bends”.

The expectation, on the part of the workbook compilers, that students will be able to complete the task (“In about 400 words explain . . .”) using only the linguistic cues contained in the text is testimony to an understanding that meaning resides there. In practice, students found the task extremely difficult and staff members found themselves providing background knowledge to students who had little understanding of what a relief operation was and who, in many cases, had never even seen television news reports of one.

Evidence that the understanding that “good” reading is a matter of technical skill involving the extraction of meaning from text has a long-standing history can be seen in the University’s purchase, in the 1970s, of a reading laboratory. A reading laboratory report from the second semester of the 1981 academic year shows tests being administered at the beginning of the academic year to test for reading ability with those students scoring below certain levels being referred to the laboratory for remedial instruction. Progress was construed as an improvement in the original score:

Student number 1 : Registration Number 9013

The performance of this student in the test conducted on arrival to the university was as follows:

<u>Comprehension</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Rate : (WPM)</u>	<u>Median</u>
30%	8 min	150	145

Biometrics Reading Eye 11 Test:

A biometrics reading eye 11 test was administered to this student after ten controlled reading sessions yielded a reading rate of 225 wpm. His reading performance was rated as efficient. He read 100 words with 82 fixations and only 2 regressions. He read 100 words in 26,6 seconds with rather prolonged

durations. He was tested on card 2 of the Junior High grade and scored 70%.

One can only wonder how this student with a score of 70% on “card 2 of the Junior High grade”, managed to cope with academic text in the “critical” manner sought after by lecturers.

#### 4.5 Critical Thinking

Related to the discourse which constructs texts as “autonomous” is another focusing on the need for the teaching of *critical thinking*, which is usually taken to be synonymous with teaching the skills of “argument”. This discourse holds that the ability to analyse and construct an argument is key to academic reading and writing and that, if students are taught to analyse and construct arguments, they will then be able to process academic texts. The teaching of the skills of argument is seen to be the province of the department of Philosophy. Thus, in its submission to the South African University Vice Chancellor’s Association’s Quality Audit Process in 1997, the department of Philosophy notes:

Various Senate and Faculty reports in the seventies and eighties listed that our students had serious problems at three levels, viz. *language, study methods* and *critical and creative thinking skills*. The Department of Philosophy was entrusted with the task of doing something about the latter problem . . . [and] decided that with the limited staff available it could do no better than to restructure its first year course in Systematic Philosophy and offer it, since 1993, as a full credit bearing course in *Critical and Creative Thinking*.

The report goes on to elaborate:

. . . in line with the unique characteristics and features of Philosophy, this department finds its mission in inculcating and developing *fundamental, radical, and universally applicable thinking skills* transferable to each and every aspect of human life.

The inculcation of these critical thinking skills within the department consists of the teaching of what is termed “informal logic”.<sup>18</sup>

The course used to teach this informal logic (Mitchell, 1997) aims to teach students how:

- to recognise arguments;
- to understand how arguments are put together and how they work;
- to judge good arguments;
- to use language to write unambiguous definitions (p.2).

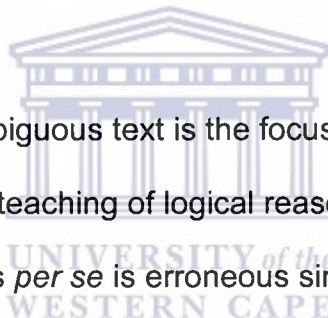


Judging whether or not an argument is “good” is dependent on deciding whether or not premises are acceptable and whether grounds thus exist for the conclusion which is advanced.

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<sup>18</sup> The teaching of informal logic continued even after the first year course had been declared “language-enriched” in 1996. Informal logic then became a module within what was essentially a writing intensive course. Although the incongruity of the two different approaches was pointed out by one staff member, the fact that the teaching of informal logic had long been central to the discipline of philosophy and that the department had the expertise to teach it meant that this challenge went unheeded.

The idea that “universally applicable thinking skills transferable to each and every aspect of human life” can be taught in this way is highly questionable, however. In the article referred to in the previous section, Olsen (1977:268) identifies essayist prose as an attempt to construct explicit, unambiguous text which can withstand the application of logical reasoning. Logical reasoning is then defined as the drawing of conclusions from sentence meanings without recourse to prior knowledge or other contextual factors. Much ordinary language use defies the use of logical reasoning, as its inexplicit nature requires the use of prior and other contextual knowledge in order for premises to be interpreted and conclusions evaluated. As a tool for constructing and evaluating argument, logical reasoning by itself is therefore only of value in relation to the goals of essayist prose.



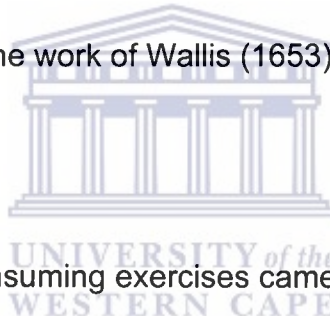
While the construction of unambiguous text is the focus of much writing activity at the university, the idea that the teaching of logical reasoning can further the ability to identify and evaluate arguments *per se* is erroneous since “explicitness of meaning . . . may be better thought of as a goal rather than an achievement” (Olsen, 1977:275). That academic text indeed does not succeed in meeting its criterion of explicitness is seen in the teaching of strategies intended to instantiate prior knowledge as a reading “skill”. While the need to teach skills of argument might make perfect common sense, therefore, it is perhaps ironic that there is a perceived need to teach them in conjunction with study skills when skills of argument are dependent on a text being autonomous of context and reading skills assume that texts are context dependent.



#### 4.6 The “Received Tradition” of English Teaching

Yet another, particularly powerful, discourse centres on the teaching of what Christie (1993) terms the “Received Tradition” of English Teaching. This discourse is especially significant in that the teaching it advocates is often perceived as a means of remedying the “problems” identified by other discourses.

In a chapter which identifies the rise and development of the “Received Tradition” and which echoes the work of scholars such as Graff (1987), Ball *et al.* (1990), Kalantzis and Cope (1993) and Johns (1997), Christie (1993) distinguishes between the teaching of *rhetoric* and the teaching of *grammar*. Tracing the development of the teaching of grammar from the work of Wallis (1653) and Johnson (1755), she shows how:



. . . a number of time-consuming exercises came to absorb the energies of teachers and students alike: exercises in parsing and analysis, in correcting ‘faulty sentences’, in rehearsing the creation of simple sentences, in copying improving tales, in writing paraphrases of the writing of others – particularly excerpts from literature (p. 77).

These exercises displaced the teaching of rhetoric described as:

. . . a robust tradition for examining language as a resource used for the construction of meaning (*ibid*)

and which dates from the work of the orators in ancient times. Much of this shift from rhetoric to grammar is ascribed to the spread of literacy and the availability of a

“fixed” form of the language (i.e. written language). Christie follows Ong (1982) and Halliday (1985) in pointing out that the availability of the written form of the language brings about a difference in the way people are aware of language:

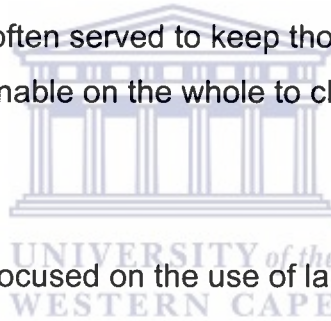
In particular, it brings about a consciousness of the syntax of the language and a curiosity about how this works (p.80)

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the result of this shift in consciousness was that language came to be studied and analysed. This, in turn, resulted in the identification of a set of rules of grammar and spelling. At the same time as language was being studied in this way, the development of the new genre of “argumentative composition” (or what Olsen, 1977:268 terms the “essayist technique”) meant that the use of language to persuade, move and inform audiences became the province of *written*, rather than oral, language. According to Christie, since this written language could be analysed, the use of language to construct meanings came to be construed as requiring the mastery of the rules of grammar and spelling which could then be applied in practice (cf. Olsen, 1977).

Christie follows other writers such as Graff (1997) and Ball *et al.* (1990) in identifying other reasons for the rise of the study of grammar, however. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain, the growth of urban society began to threaten the established social order which was dominated by the landed ruling classes and an emerging middle class. Cities were perceived as sources of political unrest and social disorder and other problems for which two discourses soon proffered solutions. The first discourse saw a solution in building churches and missions, the second held that the solution lay in

educating the working classes (Ball *et al.*, 1990). The resulting growth in the provision of elementary education for the working classes meant that large numbers of children began to attend school for the first time. The need to discipline the behaviour of large classes of these children required activities which would keep them quiet and occupied. The rehearsing and drilling of grammar, parsing of sentences and copying and correcting “faulty work” filled this role. Although Christie does not specifically make the link with Foucault (1979), she goes on to expand this definition into a Foucauldian understanding of the meaning of “discipline” arguing that, in nineteenth century schools:

. . . the preoccupation with the trivial and the largely meaningless in the name of language studies too often served to keep those who came to school ignorant and unskilled, unable on the whole to challenge their political masters (p.87).



The teaching of rhetoric which focused on the use of language to construct meaning and compose persuasive arguments had no place in a system which aimed to produce labourers for the factories of the industrial revolution since:

. . . where a school prepares for poverty, it cannot tolerate a pedagogical theory which seeks to develop the capacity to argue, challenge or change<sup>19</sup> (Christie, 1993:87).

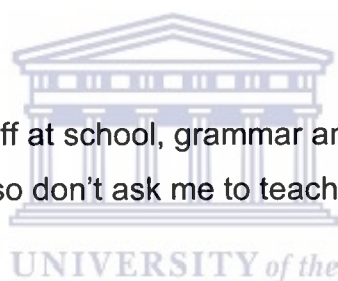
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<sup>19</sup> This observation has been made of the Bantu Education System in South Africa. See, for example, Morrow, 1989.

As other writers show (see, for example, Walker, 1990), the idea that grammar teaching could provide a solution to social problems was not limited to Britain but was a pervasive influence throughout the colonies.

The effects of the development of grammar teaching, or what Christie calls the “Received Tradition”, prevail even today. The majority of present day academics will themselves have been schooled in the tradition with the result that it is not surprising that they find it difficult to conceive of any other form of language development, shy away from attempts to develop language within mainstream curricula and insist on the existence of adjunct service courses such as Practical English. As a staff member pointed out to me:

I was no good at that stuff at school, grammar and that stuff. I got matric but that was it . . . I hated it so don't ask me to teach it now.



Possibly even more harmful, however, is the legacy of schooling on adjunct courses where people employed on the basis of their expertise in researching and teaching literature are called upon to teach language. All too often, these people can envisage no other way of teaching language than repeating the experiences of their childhood. Unfortunately, the effect of that teaching is to discipline, rather than empower, those who are taught.

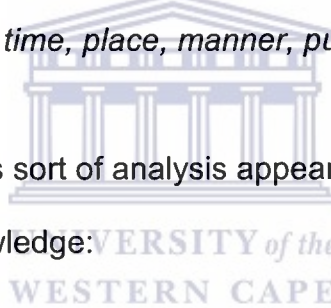
As Hutchings (1989:149) points out, the “Received Tradition” was well established in South Africa at secondary school level at least until the end of the 1980s:

A large number of text books, and most of our public exams (JMB exams are an honourable exception) still adopt a shibboleth approach to drilling real and phoney distinctions of usage, most of them trivial, in order to separate those to be spared from those to be slaughtered.

At the University of Zululand, its manifestations are to be seen historically as well as in course guides used to this day. Consider, for example, the following extract from the *Improve your Writing Skills* course guide still in use in 1993:

We have looked at one example of a complex sentence with a subordinate adverbial clause: 'Although I sat at my desk for hours, I could not think of anything to write.' Here, 'although' signals a relationship of contrast - specifically of concession. Other subordinate conjunctions may be used to indicate a relationship of *time, place, manner, purpose, reason, or condition*.

The assumption in teaching this sort of analysis appears to be that writing involves the conscious use of such knowledge:

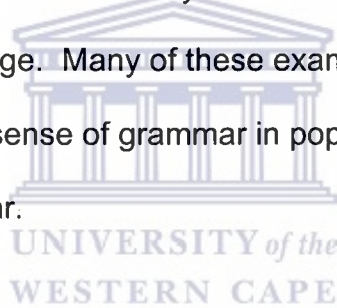


An adverbial clause may come before or after the main clause. It is easy to make mistakes in the main clause if you give the adverbial clause first, because when you have written the subordinate clause down you may forget that you have made it subordinate.

Similarly, an examination paper for the collapsed Practical English (APE 125) and General English (AEN 125) courses set at the end of the 1996 academic year, requires students to correct the following "faulty sentences":

- a) When an animal moult, it lose its hair.
- b) Rabies are dangerous.
- c) Gymnastics are difficult.
- d) The criteria for this decision is dubious.
- e) Anyone who wants to become a preacher must give up a lot of their personal pleasure.
- f) She was supposed to find a job by her own.

In order to correct three of the mistakes, students would require technical (and arguably not terribly important) knowledge of vocabulary items with Greek or Latin roots (“Rabies”, “gymnastics” and “criteria”). In sentence e) the alleged mistake (“their”) is increasingly used by writers who want to avoid sexist language and in sentence f) the phrase “by her own” was very common amongst local speakers of English as an additional language. Many of these examples thus confuse a knowledge of grammar (in the sense of grammar in popular usage) with a knowledge of *standard* grammar.



The need to correct “faulty” English is obviously considered so great that the exam continues with another set of sentences to correct:

- a) What were they discussing about?
- b) He doesn’t know what is he doing.
- c) He made me to scrub the floor.
- d) I am very much grateful.
- e) She taught me all what I know.
- f) I am having a cold.
- g) He is a generous somebody.
- h) The children are making noise.

- i) Other children are hard-working and others are lazy.
- j) "Although I am sick but I shall do my work."
- k) He asked that is the bus coming today.

Of this set of sentences, most reflect local African usage. The exercise thus represents an attempt to suppress "other" forms of English which are communicatively acceptable in local communities.

Several of the sentences in the exam are taken from a set of worksheets, entitled "Common Errors in South African Second-Language English", produced for use in the *Practical English* course. Errors on the worksheets are divided up into several categories including "Preposition Errors" ("He is good in Science. What is the reason of this?"), "Comparison/Degree Errors" ("She is the lucky one of them all. I enjoyed it too much") and "Countable/Uncountable Noun Errors" ("He gave me an advice. Can I have a plastic to carry my lunch in?") Those students who had studied the worksheets (which were not used in class and which were not even widely available as a resource) would have fared very well in the exam. Those students who were unable to recognise the error of local forms (*a plastic* meaning a *plastic packet/bag*) would not have fared so well.

Another course book (Shum, 1996) imported from the University of Natal and used as recently as 1996, is reminiscent of a school grammar in its instructions concerning the use of the "past perfect tense", a concept disputed in much contemporary linguistics which distinguishes between tense and aspect (see, for example, Huddleston, 1984). For most non-specialists, however, such concepts

have attained the status of commonsense obviousness which makes the “Received Tradition” difficult to challenge and allows its ideological implications to go unexplored.

#### 4.7 Linguistics and Language Teaching

Related, in many respects, to the discourse advocating the “Received Tradition” of English teaching as a solution to students’ problems is another which argues that the study of linguistics will achieve the same end. The study of linguistics is usually taken to encompass the study of phonology, morphology and sentence syntax, and the discourse promoting it links to that of the “Received Tradition” in that both rest on the assumption that learning *about* language will allow students to use it. The discourse manifests itself in the appearance of linguistics on the list of courses providing students with the “language credit” necessary for degree purposes as well as in English department teaching.

The appointment of applied linguists to posts in the Department of English has long been a feature of the department. In two articles written in 1989 and 1990, the late Professor Geoffrey Hutchings, Head of the Department of English and, more latterly, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Zululand, argued that the teaching of a synchronic analysis of the English language had a rightful place in degree courses offered by English departments at South African universities. Hutchings’ argument was based on the premise that the majority of students studying English for degree purposes would probably become teachers of the English language, either formally



or informally,<sup>20</sup> and that the idea that “three years study of the literary canon [would] confer by osmosis expertise on English linguistic matters” (p.149) was erroneous.

In the time that Hutchings headed the Department of English at the University, at least one post was reserved for a “language specialist” with qualifications in linguistics and applied linguistics who taught second and third year courses in the structure of the language. In his paper, Hutchings was adamant that the teaching of structure was not intended to develop students’ language proficiency:

The issue of students’ English usage and of the moves we should take to improve it is not part of this paper, but I do wish to acknowledge that a crisis exists, and to state that teaching students about the structure of English is very unlikely to cope with that crisis by directly improving their ability to use the language. I am, therefore, not recommending that students study structure primarily in order to cope with the problems of their own usage, but rather to improve the analytical skills of those who might have to cope in their subsequent careers with some aspect of the crisis (p.150).

Since Hutchings’ death, however, the idea that the study of structure can develop students’ “own usage” has become commonplace in the department and is supported, University-wide, by the acceptance of the first year course in General Linguistics<sup>21</sup> as a credit for language purposes. The result of this is that students

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<sup>20</sup> By teaching English “informally”, Hutchings refers to society’s expectation that “an English graduate to be capable of refereeing any disputes on points of usage” (p.148).

<sup>21</sup> The Department of Linguistics was “resurrected” in 1995 when a Head of Department was appointed to its single post, which had been frozen for several years. Numbers of students enrolled in the department remain small however.

enrolling for the first year English course<sup>22</sup>, which is specifically intended to develop students' language proficiency, study morphology and sentence syntax in what is termed the "language component" of the course. The rest of the course focuses on the study of a number of literary texts.

In the 1998 academic year, students objected to the study of language in this way claiming that the course they were forced to study had no relevance to their perceived needs. Their objections were overruled within a departmental meeting and students were then persuaded of the folly of their complaints in a mass meeting. In many respects, however, students' objections to the study of linguistics contradicted their calls, in course evaluations, for the study of "Received Tradition" grammar and the popularity of course guides such as Shum (1996). This is because both the linguistics taught by the English department and the "Received Tradition" perceive language as something that can be ordered and described as a set of rules and regularities. What appeared to be an issue for students, however, was that the study of linguistics required them to learn ways of categorising and describing language which were unfamiliar and which lacked the social sanction of their previous language learning experiences.

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<sup>22</sup> In 1996, the distinction between the *Practical English* course and the general English course was collapsed and students registered for either course started to follow the same course of study.

## 4.8 Pathologising the Individual

Tollefson's (1991) distinction between *neoclassical* and *historical structural* approaches to language acquisition research has already been discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. To recap briefly, however, *neoclassical* approaches view language acquisition as being individually determinable and dependent on factors inherent to the individual. *Historical structural* approaches, on the other hand, examine the socio-cultural contexts in which individuals seek to learn language and in which language is used as a means of explaining the success or failure of individuals in learning language.

Comment after comment in documentation from the University of Zululand Senate point to a *neoclassical* understanding of the acquisition of language and literacy. Reports from orientation programmes from the early 1980s onwards, for example, write of students "being encouraged to make use of" the services provided by the Language and Audiovisual Centre (LAAC, described earlier)<sup>23</sup> and of departments being asked to "recommend these facilities to all students and purposefully refer students who have not been identified as in need of additional support to these facilities".<sup>24</sup> In a similar vein, the 1981 Second Semester Report from the Reading Laboratory concludes by noting that:

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<sup>23</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of Senate held on 26 June 1980, for example.

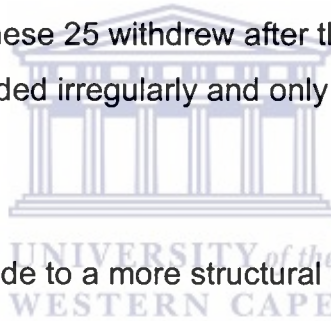
<sup>24</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of Senate held on 12 September 1984.

It would be to the greatest student advantage if the students would receive enough motivation and information about the reading laboratory early in the year. Any delay in revealing the need for remedial tuition to the students has proved to work very adversely.

*A Submission on the Re-organisation of the Work Procedure of the Reading*

*Laboratory* made to Senate in 1981 similarly notes:

Since registration with the reading laboratory is voluntary, not all the students with reading and comprehension problems come forward to receive remedial tuition even after being advised to do so. For example, out of the 439 students tested in 1980, 330 were found to need the remedial tuition offered by the reading laboratory. Out of this number only 138 students came forward to register. Of these 25 withdrew after the introductory lesson, 39 registered late and attended irregularly and only 74 actually benefited from the course.



Where any concessions are made to a more structural understanding of the difficulties students experience upon entering university, the constraints in developing language and language related skills are perceived to lie within the domain of school. Thus Senate notes:

The majority of students entering university appear to have language and reading difficulties which can hamper them in their studies. It seems that very little is done at school level to teach them to learn or develop the necessary learning skills which are so necessary for university study.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of Senate held on 26 June 1980.

The overall effect of this discourse of attributing success in language acquisition to individual endeavour is to pathologise those students who either fail to make use of the adjunct services offered to them or who give up in the process of using them.

An awareness of the dangers of labelling students as “deficient” is found in the following extract from an undated<sup>26</sup> memorandum to all Faculty Boards written by Professor A.J. Thembela who, until 1996, was the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and Research. The document uses labelling theory (no reference) to observe that:

The simplistic explanation that is usually given to the problems of Black students is that “they come from a poor school system.” Once that label is given, they are categorised as backward and need academic support services. They are usually labelled as deficient in *language skills*, *thinking skills* and *study skills*. The perpetrators of this “ideology” proceed to construct a variety of courses to “support” these students. A number of students accept this labelling and develop an image of self which is “deficient” in these areas. Some students resent these courses and regard them as a waste of time, an additional burden or another measure to discriminate against them in order to retard their progress. These inhibiting procedures decrease the ability of these students to use their learning potential to the full.

Compared to Senate documentation, this memorandum offers an extraordinary understanding of student experience. It does not, however, go on to explore the role of the university discourse community in contributing to students’ difficulties but attributes them instead to a poor socio-economic background, poor discipline in and

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<sup>26</sup> This memorandum was found in a file of unbound documents. Internal evidence would date it as having been written between the mid 1980s and early 1990s.

around the home environment, the absence of a tradition of intellectualism and the need to engage in political activity because of the inequalities brought about by South African history. In attributing students' difficulties to these factors, Thembe succeeds merely in shifting the focus of the pathologising discourse from students to their background. In spite of moving towards a *historical structural* understanding of students' "problems", therefore, the document does not really go far enough in exploring those structures since a more rigorous investigation would have encompassed the way the university itself can contribute to those problems.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

Over the past ten years, the change in political dispensation in South Africa has given formal access to university to many thousands of students who were previously denied it. As Morrow (1993) points out, however, if we are to move towards a more equitable dispensation, the crucial issue is not of granting *formal* access to the institution but of granting *epistemological* access to process of knowledge construction which sustains it.

In this chapter, I have described a number of discourses which centre on an understanding of language as a tool for conveying meanings constructed independently of it. The fact that, for the overwhelming majority of students at the University, that tool is an additional language means that students' "problems" are understood as a result of their lack of control of that language. The solution to those "problems" is seen to rest in the study of the mechanism of the tool provided by

traditional grammatical analyses or the contemporary analyses offered by the discipline of applied linguistics. Learning to manipulate the tool is therefore perceived to be the result of learning *about* the tool. Parallel to these understandings is an understanding of literacy as an a-social, a-cultural “skill” which exists in isolation from the context in which it is practised. Students’ difficulties in reading academic text are therefore constructed as resulting from their lack of skill in decoding the meanings contained in those texts. This process of decoding does not only involve sight-sound correspondence, however, but is also dependent on understanding a set of rules for constructing argument. If the elements of the argument can be identified and prised apart (or, in the case of writing, assembled) then meanings can be decoded from or encoded in text. The cumulative effect of these understandings is to divorce language from its social context and to negate the role of language in ordering and structuring experience. The way the structures of society work to impede or facilitate individuals’ acquisition of dominant ways of using language is also ignored and when students fail to acquire powerful discourses, their lack of performance is located in the failure of the individual to take advantage of the opportunities to develop language which the University has offered.

While such understandings of the language related problems experienced by students which impede access to that process of knowledge construction are informed by experience and “common sense” rather than by more rigorous investigation, it is unlikely that the epistemological access to the university identified as critical by Morrow (1993) will ever be granted. It is to such an investigation that the next chapter of this thesis now turns.

### **An Alternative Construction of Students' Literacy-Related Experiences**

Clearly, we need further information on what it is that cognitively and socially defines an underprepared student as underprepared. What kind of knowledge does an underprepared student bring to the classroom? How is the teacher representing the writing process and the writing task? How is the student representing the teacher's discussion of the writing process and the writing task? What occurs between the two in the classroom as they attempt to negotiate a common understanding of the task, and in what ways might that interaction further define the student as remedial? What happens when the student sits down to write? Researchers have few answers to those questions; not a lot of research has addressed them (Hull & Rose, 1990:235).

#### **5.1 Introduction**



This chapter reports on the answer to the second of my research questions: "Is there a way to understand students' literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?". In constructing an alternative understanding, this chapter therefore constitutes a response to Chapter Four of this thesis and works towards constructing an answer to my third research question: "At the University of Zululand, what is the educational significance of an alternative way of understanding students' literacy-related experiences?".



As I have already pointed out in Chapter Three of this thesis, when I set out to answer this question, I had no clear idea of how an alternative construction of students' experiences could be framed theoretically. During the course of my research, however, I became convinced that the framework which could provide the most comprehensive account of my observations was that of Halliday's (1973, 1978, 1994) *Systemic Functional Linguistics* or, more simply, *Systemics*.

My introduction to Systemics came through the work of critical linguists such as Fairclough (1989, 1992a,b, 1995) and Clark and Ivanič (1997) which informed the analysis of the language-related discourses described in Chapter Four. The decision to use a Systemic approach was based on more than the need for the thesis to be theoretically coherent, however, since the capacity of a Systemic framework to account for the student-related data I was collecting became increasingly apparent as my research progressed. In order to demonstrate this point, I will need to provide a more detailed description of the Systemic framework.

## **5.2 The Systemic Framework**

As many introductory texts point out (see, for example, Eggins 1994; Bloor & Bloor, 1995), Systemic Functional Linguistics is derived from the work of Michael Halliday (1973, 1978, 1994) which, in turn, was influenced by that of Firth (1968) and the anthropologist Malinowski (1946). Key to a Systemic framework are four claims (Eggins, 1994:2). These are that:

- language use is functional;

- this function is to make meanings which make sense of the world;
- these meanings are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged;
- the process of making meanings is semiotic and involves making linguistic choices.


In this process of using language to make sense of the world, three kinds of meanings can be distinguished: meanings about the “reality” being referred to (*experiential* meanings); meanings about the relationships between people interacting through language (*interpersonal* meanings) and meanings which refer to the way the text is organized (*textual* meanings). These three kinds of meanings are sometimes termed *metafunctions* (Bloor and Bloor, 1995:9). Certain aspects of the grammatical system of the language realise each of these metafunctions. Since these aspects of grammar operate in conjunction with each other, all three types of meanings are fused together in linguistic units. Because language is a semiotic system involving choosing, each linguistic unit comes into being because a set of choices has been made in relation to each of these metafunctions.

Key to a systemic functional approach is the understanding that these choices are made against a cultural and situational background which determines their appropriacy. For example, in the sentence “Kids from broken homes turn to crime”<sup>1</sup>, the language user was able to choose from at least two alternatives in naming the

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<sup>1</sup> This example was taken from a text written by a student at the University of the Western Cape and is discussed further in Boughey, 1995a.

subject of her sentence. The word she chose to use, “kids”, is more appropriate to some contexts than others. In the university, the context in which she is writing, the alternative “children” would have been more appropriate. One can assume the writer made an “inappropriate” choice either because she was unfamiliar with the context of the university and did not appreciate the ways in which it differed to other contexts with which she was familiar or because she was deliberately flouting the conventions of that context. Understanding realisations of language as the result of a set of choices allows us to talk about elements of those realisations not as “right” or “wrong”, but as “appropriate” or “inappropriate” (Egins, 1994:145). Critical linguists working within a systemic framework are then able to go on to challenge the notion of appropriacy because of its socially constructed nature.



In examining the background or context against which linguistic choices are made, it is possible to determine two separate levels termed, by systemic linguists, the *context of situation* and the *context of culture*. The construct of a context of situation refers to the immediate environment in which the text is constructed and, as many texts point out (see, for example, Halliday, 1985:5; Egins, 1995:50), is derived from the claim made by the anthropologist Malinowski that the situation in which language use occurs determines its intelligibility. The context of situation determines the choices available to language users within three areas: what is being spoken or written about (the *field* of a text); the relationship between the language users in that situation (the *tenor* of a text) and the role language plays in this interaction between language users (the *mode* of a text). Systemic linguists use the term *register* to describe the way the variables of field, tenor and mode interact together.

Choices about language which can be made in any context of situation are, in turn, constrained by factors in a wider context of culture. Using school-based text as an example, Halliday (1985:46) explains thus:

For any 'text' in school – teacher talk in the classroom, pupil's notes or essay, passage from a textbook – there is always a context of situation: the lesson, with its concept of what is to be achieved; the relationship of teacher to pupil, or textbook writer to reader; the 'mode' of question and answer, expository writing and so on. But these in turn are instances of, and derive their meaning from, the school as an institution in the culture: the concept of education, and of educational knowledge as distinct from common sense knowledge; the notion of the curriculum and of school 'subjects'; the complex role structures of teaching staff, school principals, consultants, inspectorate, departments of education, and the like; and the unspoken assumptions about learning and the place of language within it.

For Halliday and the critical linguists who follow him, therefore, institutions and institutional roles, as well as the concepts and ideologies associated with them, constitute the context of culture. Eggins (1994:34) provides the following diagram to illustrate the relationship of text to *contexts of situation* and *culture*.

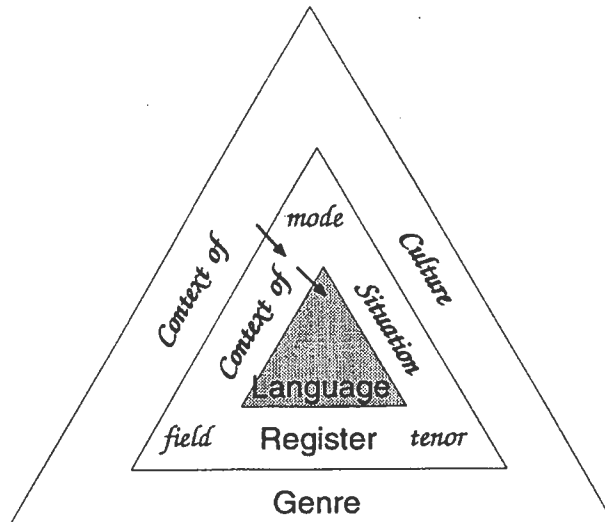


Figure 5.1 Genre and register in relation to language

A systemic framework is suited to an analysis of the literacy-related problems of the students in the context of my research since it is possible to account for the form of students' texts by referring to a mismatch between the expectations of the dominant context of culture and context of situation (the University and the first year Systematic Philosophy class respectively) and the context of culture and context of situation which students themselves use as a reference point and against which linguistic choices are made. In making the following pictorial representation of a student writing within a context of situation, Clark and Ivanič (1997:72) offer the possibility of such a mismatch.

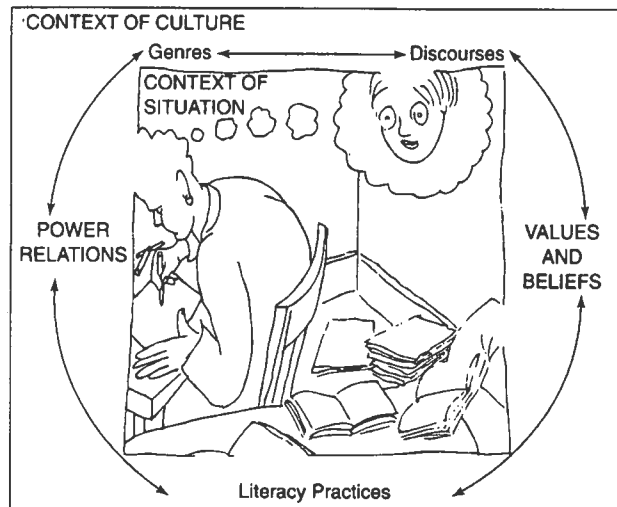
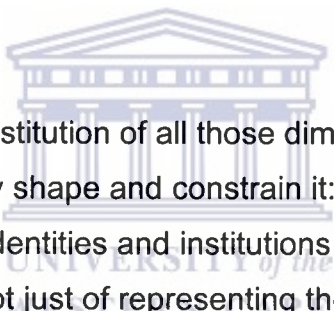


Figure 5.2 Writing in its context of situation and context of culture

In Clark & Ivanič's representation, the mind of the student writer and the mind of the university lecturer both "open up" into the context of culture. If each draws on similar understandings of this context, then the lecturer is unlikely to find the student's text overly problematic in that the text will be deemed appropriate to the context of situation. Should each draw on different understandings of this context however, then a different response is likely to result. In Clark & Ivanič's representation, both lecturer and student appear to be of the same cultural group. At the University of Zululand this was not the case since the lecturer was a white, middle-class male, educated to doctoral level within a privileged, historically white educational system, while the students were predominantly Zulu and had an educational background in the impoverished Bantu Education system. Given Halliday's understanding of the relationship of text to context, a difference in expectations about what should constitute an "appropriate" text would hardly be surprising in such a situation.

As I have already pointed out, using a systemic framework to account for students “problems” as a mismatch in expectations allows links to be made with the work of critical linguists, such as Fairclough (1989, 1992a, 1995), and so-called *social* linguists, such as Gee (1990), who explore the ideologies underpinning dominant ways of using language. In systemic terms, these dominant ways of using language would be equivalent to choices which have been privileged. Since my research was oriented from a critical stance, this point is particularly important.

For linguists such as Fairclough, the relationship of the context of culture to texts is not a simple one-way process for, as Fairclough (1992b, following Foucault, 1982) points out, language use itself:



. . . contributes to the constitution of all those dimensions of social structure which directly or indirectly shape and constrain it: its norms and conventions, as well as the relations, identities and institutions which lie behind it. Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning (p.64).

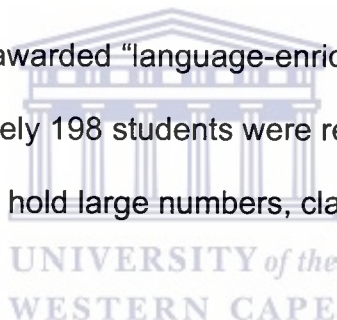
As I intend to show in the next chapter of this thesis, my research did reveal a two way interaction in which the social structures of the University determined student discourse with that discourse then contributing to the wider institutional culture in order to sustain it.

For now, however, I will proceed to using a systemic framework to explore the differences in understandings of the contexts of culture and situation against which

students make choices in language use and those which their lecturers use as reference points.

### 5.3 The Context of Situation

The context of situation for the language use I examine in this chapter was the Political Philosophy module of the first year Systematic Philosophy class at the University of Zululand which was taught in the 1997 academic year. In Chapter Three, details were provided of the status of the Systematic Philosophy course as “language-enriched” in terms of the requirements for a University of Zululand degree. The increase in the number of students enrolled in the course which came as a result of the course being awarded “language-enriched” status was also described. In 1997, approximately 198 students were registered and, because of a shortage of venues which could hold large numbers, classes were held in the University chapel once again.<sup>2</sup>



As a venue for teaching, the chapel was far from ideal. The chapel was built in an almost semi-circular shape and the seating area was divided by two aisles leading to a raised dais at the front. A movable wooden pulpit stood in front of the dais and was used by lecturers to support their notes. The only teaching aid was an old-fashioned blackboard and easel which stood on the dais. Although the number of students registered for the class meant that most seats in the chapel were filled, the existence of what amounted to three separate seating areas meant that the class

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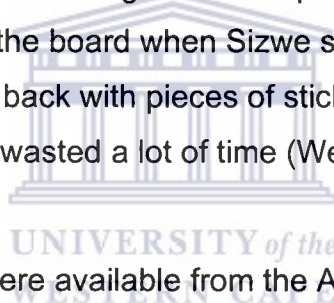
<sup>2</sup> Classes had been held in the chapel in 1995 and 1996.



was dispersed over a large area. Acoustics were not good and the size of the blackboard meant that many students found it difficult to see what lecturers had written. At the end of class, students who had been unable to read from the blackboard during the lecture often came to the front of the room in order to copy down any words or phrases which remained on the blackboard.

The poor teaching facilities in the chapel sometimes led to problems as my field notes show:

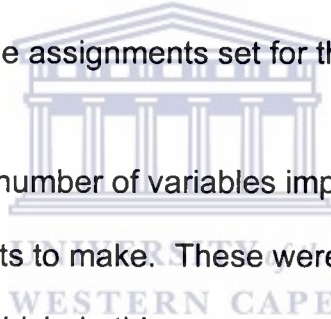
Disaster! When we got to class today, the blackboard wasn't on the easel. When Eldon [Professor Eldon Wait] lifted it to put it on, we noticed the pegs were missing so there was nothing to hold it up with. Eldon was about to start teaching and do without the board when Sizwe said he'd go and find some sticks outside. He came back with pieces of stick and we managed to get the board on the easel but it wasted a lot of time (Wednesday 19 March 1997).



Portable "suitcase" projectors were available from the Arts Faculty office and could be booked for use in specific lectures. The size of the chapel meant that an extension cable also had to be obtained from another department responsible for electronic equipment. A screen on to which an overhead transparency could be projected then had to be retrieved from a locked store room at the back of the chapel. However, the difficulties involved in gathering equipment meant that lecturers did not often go to the trouble of using an overhead projector.

In 1996, I worked with Professor Eldon Wait to produce an interactive study guide for use in the political philosophy course. In 1997, the year in which the data on

which the analysis in this chapter is based was gathered, the guide was available in the University bookshop from about mid April onwards. In the context of situation, therefore, students were exposed to two texts: their lecturers' oral exposition of concepts such as democracy, liberalism and Marxism and the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke along with Macpherson's neo-Marxist critique of those philosophies and the study guide which provided a written version of this exposition. The oral exposition tended not to be supported with written texts other than the study guide since overhead transparencies were rarely produced and the size and condition of the blackboard also made the production of other written texts difficult. In the course, students were then expected to produce both oral and written texts in the sense that they were required to engage in group discussions and produce written "end-notes" as well as the assignments set for the course.



Within this physical situation, a number of variables impacted upon the meanings which it was possible for students to make. These were:

- the subject of the class which, in this case, comprised a study of the concepts of democracy, liberalism and Marxism and the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke along with Macpherson's neo-Marxist critique of those philosophies;
- the lecturer-student relationship;
- the fact that interaction took place in both spoken and written mode.

Lecturers and students spoke to each other in class, students spoke to each other in groups and students wrote in response to a number of tasks set by their lecturers. Since the primary source of data for the research question addressed in this chapter comprised students' written responses to tasks set

by their lecturer, my analysis will focus on their understandings of what constitutes an appropriate written form.

These variables manifest themselves in the field, tenor and mode of the written texts produced by students. Details of the data set of texts analysed in order to answer the research question addressed in this chapter are provided in Appendix II.

My analysis of students' writing will not take a close grammatical form in the sense that it will not seek to identify the way meanings are realised syntactically. Rather, the systemic framework will be used to account for student writing using the concepts of field, tenor and mode at a broad thematic level. As I have already pointed out (see 3.6.1.1 above), my analysis of students' writing is qualitative rather than quantitative in that I aim to use the systemic framework to provide an account of my lived experiences of their texts together with specific exemplifications. In Appendix VII, I do, however, provide an indication of the number of students whose work exhibits aspects of the register variables of field, tenor and mode which I identify in this chapter. This numerical indication pertains to my analysis of the work of the 71 students who completed the assignments on liberalism and Marxism and Hobbes and Locke only. As such, it aims to provide an additional dimension in support of the overall descriptive approach used throughout this chapter, rather than the basis of the approach *per se*.

A number of complete examples of students' writing are provided in Appendix VIII. These include responses to the tasks set as assignments as well as "end-notes".

References to some of these examples occur throughout this chapter. The remaining examples are included as a background to the construction of students' literacy-related experiences offered in this chapter.

### 5.3.1 Field

According to Halliday (1989:19), the field of a text "can be thought of as representing the real world as it is apprehended in our experience". This representation is not, however, restricted to the representation of "concrete" objects but encompasses "the realm of an imaginative or oblique representation of that experience". This latter point is important in discussing the student-related data since many of the concepts students were expected to engage with in the philosophy class were highly abstract.

Conceptions of field can be seen to vary along a continuum ranging from technical to common sense. Eggins (1994:72) explains thus:

A situation which we would describe as technical would be characterized by a significant degree of assumed knowledge among the interactants about the activity focus, whereas in an everyday (or commonsense) situation, the only assumed knowledge is "common knowledge".

The context of the political philosophy class not only required students to use what Eggins terms "technical" classifications to describe what they perceive but also to understand the field in a way which goes beyond the common sense. One of the problems in the texts written by students, however, is that common sense

understandings appear to be particularly resilient and are not displaced by more academic, technical understandings.

The political philosophy module of the first year Systematic Philosophy class began with an introduction to the concepts of democracy, liberalism and Marxism.

Students then went on to examine the attempts of two liberal philosophers, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, to answer the question “What are the functions of a legitimate government?”

A major problem in the texts I examined was the imposition of common sense understandings of a legitimate government onto Hobbes’ and Locke’s understandings. Consider for example, the following piece of text in which the student discusses Locke’s understanding of the functions of a legitimate government:



Government give people all what they need. It is concerned with the basic need of the people.<sup>3</sup>

Nowhere does Locke argue that a legitimate government is a government that attends to the needs of the people in the sense conveyed here. (The meeting of needs is, in any case, a Marxist concept and postdates Locke.) What happens here, however, is that the student’s own ideas about a legitimate government developed

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<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I have not attributed examples to individual students except where interview data is used to support my claims. Where examples are attributed to individuals, pseudonyms have been used. In total, the work of 62 different students is represented in the chapter.

from her understandings of present-day South African politics, remain and other, more academic, understandings are not constructed. Other students ascribe concern with the meeting of needs to Hobbes. Consider, for example:

He [Hobbes] says he believes that kind of government will deliver goods and needs to people.

and

The function of government is to look whether people are getting what they need. Other function is to take from the rich and give to the poor.

The following extract from a response to the questions “What is a democracy?” and “Is South Africa a democracy?” is written in much the same vein. Here the student evaluates the new South African government’s performance as a democracy using the understanding, stemming from contemporary popular rhetoric, that a democratic government is a government which is concerned with meeting the needs of the people:

Unfortunately the government cannot satisfy every individual according to his or her daily needs. . .

In response to the same task, another student lists the achievements of the new South African government in order to demonstrate that it is democratic:

- There are free welfare
- At some lower primary schools they can eat free food during break time

before going on to end with the comment that:

It [the government] must do things as fast as it can because after ten years we will not regard this South Africa as a country that have democracy it will be undemocratic.

Yet another student argues:

. . . each and every group which wants people to vote for have to make sure that it will meet the needs of the people. So South Africa is not a fully democratic government as it have to be. The reigning political group does not meet all its people needs sometimes it turns its ear from people's grievances and maybe sometimes it makes promises and never fulfils those promises.

The resilience of common sense understandings does not stop at equating democracy or the legitimacy of a government with the meeting of citizens' needs, however. In introducing the concept of democracy, the lecturer concentrated on four criteria defining a democratic government: popular sovereignty, political equality, popular consultation and majority rule. Although these criteria were explained in a technical, academic manner, students superimposed their own understandings onto the understandings presented by their lecturer. The concept of popular consultation, for example, is understood as the need for a government to consult *all* individuals

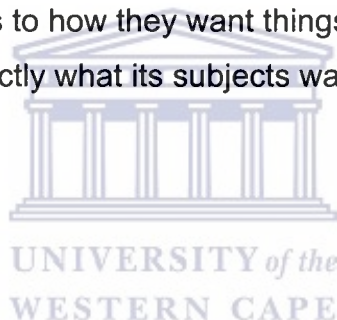
before taking any decision and the failure of the current government to do so an indication that it is not democratic:

This [popular consultation] means that before taking any final decision every person must be consulted. Government must ask people's point of view, not that it happens here we people don't know about the decisions in the Parliament. We are just being told what we are supposed to do and what the Government has decided to do for us or about us.

Similarly:

By this [popular consultation] I mean people on the ground must instruct the government at the top as to how they want things to go. This helps the government to know exactly what its subjects want . . .

and



There is no popular consultation in South Africa, people are not consulted on governmental issues. The only people who decide are those in power, the people who are supposed to represent the people do not consult people they decide on their own. The only consultation comes when decisions have been taken, the people are told of the outcomes only.

Nowhere in the texts from which these examples were taken, do the writers give any understanding of the concept of popular sovereignty, described by the lecturer (and outlined in course hand-outs as one of the criteria for democracy) as citizens giving a government the right to take decisions on their behalf. There is also no evidence of their understanding of mechanisms through which popular consultation is

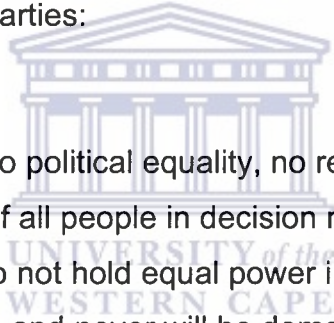


achieved without having to confer with “each and every individual”, as so many students claim.

Students’ lack of understanding of political processes in South Africa was evident elsewhere in their texts. For example, the following extract from the assignment on democracy shows a basic misunderstanding of the principle of “one man one vote”:

In Majority rule if the people are voted for “yes” the yes votes must be counted not more than two while “no” votes are counted one that unfair.

Other texts evince an understanding of political equality as involving the sharing of equal power between political parties:



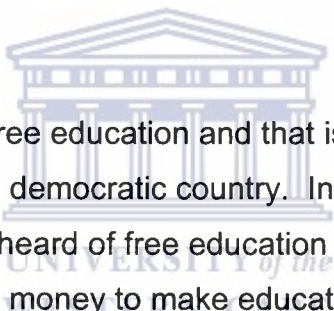
In South Africa there is no political equality, no respect of other people’s values, no consultation of all people in decision making, no government of national unity. Parties do not hold equal power in ruling and we can actually say South Africa never is and never will be democratic unless vast changes have been made.

Similarly:

. . . The ANC does not allow other political parties to say or do what they think is right. It is the ANC members only who are free in the government. Before the ANC the NP was ruling the country like this. South Africa is far away from democracy if the government will continue like this.

While suspicion of political processes is hardly surprising in a province which has been renowned for political violence, claims about political processes which might be permissible outside the university are clearly inappropriate in texts intended to demonstrate an “academic” understanding of democracy. Common sense understandings dominate however, and attempts of the lecturer to challenge them are largely unsuccessful.

Given that students were unknowledgeable about political processes in South Africa, it is hardly surprising that their knowledge of politics overseas was also very limited. In the following extract from an assignment evaluating South Africa’s performance as a democracy, a student writes:



The majority also wants free education and that is impossible if we want South Africa to become a democratic country. In Western democratic countries we have never heard of free education and where can the government find so much money to make education free.

In the course of his exposition of liberalism, capitalism and Marxism, Professor Wait attempted to explain the concepts of *left-wing* and *right-wing* by drawing a line on the blackboard, writing “Marxism” on the left-hand side and “liberalism/capitalism” on the right-hand side. He then “mapped” the various South African political parties onto the line, placing the South African Communist Party on the left-hand side of the line and the Inkhatha Freedom Party right of centre arguing that the African National Congress had moved to the right once it had taken power. He then asked students

to work in groups and decide where the governments of Britain, France and the United States would be placed on the line. My field notes record:

Eldon's line exercise was an absolute failure. Lungile's group could tell me Clinton was US president but they couldn't tell me anything about his politics and didn't seem to know who Bush was (were they too young when he was president??) They couldn't tell me anything about Britain either and had no idea Britain was a social state or what that involved (Friday 7 March 1997).

In an interview conducted in order to triangulate the findings of my first research question, "How does the University of Zululand construct students literacy-related experiences?", a staff member also complained about students' general knowledge:

They [the students] don't know anything. They haven't been anywhere, they haven't done anything, they haven't seen anything and the trouble is they don't try to make up for all this by reading. Half of them have never opened a newspaper and all they watch on the television are the game shows. If I had my way, I'd cancel first year, hire a fleet of buses and drive them all over the country just showing them things.

In an informal interview, Moses, a second year student doing Systematic Philosophy as an additional credit, confirmed that he had initially used general background knowledge in order to write assignments but had later realised that he needed to use other "academic" sources:

Moses: At level one I used not to go to the library and make research but at level one what I used to do was just to look at the topic and maybe and try to analyse it but not as much as I should be but I used to look at the topic and

write whatever comes from my mind not to do it from books, consulting other sources at level one.

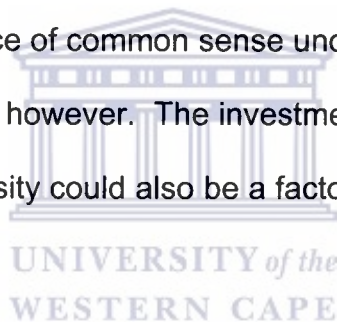
CB: And where did the “knowledge” in your mind come from?

Moses: Usually I used to use my general knowledge and I used to associate it with the knowledge from the lecturer but the knowledge I used to put down it used to be my knowledge. . .

CB: And when did you start using references and other sources?

Moses: Truly speaking I started on my second year. Because I have already adapted myself to university procedures.

The availability of knowledge which might challenge understandings dominant in communities outside the university coupled with a lack of the literacy practices which might allow more academic understandings to be constructed is not the only possible reason for the resilience of common sense understandings of concepts studied in the philosophy class, however. The investment students had made in their future by coming to university could also be a factor.



Most of the students in the class came from poor working class backgrounds, were the first generation of their family to experience an university education and had often struggled to get there. Bheki, one of the students who agreed to work with me on my research, describes his school career thus:

Bheki: My primary school I attended at Louwsbeck next to Vryheid, first at Morrison Farm School from 1982 to 1986. Then from there I moved to Louwsbeck it was far from my home almost 14km walking with my foot. OK and then I finished Std. V 1988 and then 1989 I didn't go to school because of some financial problems. I stayed at home for the whole year working on the farm to try to get fees to get myself at school. And then 1990, I went back

to school in Mtubatuba. I did get my Std VI to Std VIII at Mtubatuba. Then from there I passed VIII with distinction, I got symbol A, and I went back to Pongola to do my Std IX and X 1993 to 1994. And then I completed my school in 1994 with exemption.

CB: And all those moves, were they to get to a better school or for family circumstances or what?

Bheki: To change schools. The first thing that caused me to change schools like that was that from my home there were not so many schools. There were no high schools around my home. That was the main cause for me to move.

Once at university, the majority of students struggled to pay their tuition and residence fees and were often supported by extended families in their efforts to do so. In coming to the University, they often brought with them the hopes and expectations for a better future of entire communities. When this situation is considered, it is not surprising that students found the lecturer's linking of liberalism with a free market society difficult to appreciate. The idea that they might not get jobs when they had finished their degrees because of an oversupply of graduates in the humanities (the area in which most of them hoped to get their degree) was extremely unpalatable. As a result, although liberalism is often linked with capitalism in students' texts, the ramifications of that link in terms of skills and hard work not being rewarded because of an over supply of certain types of labour is usually ignored. Consider, for example:

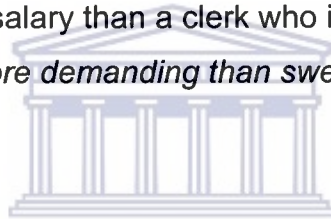
In the liberal idea of justice all people are given equal opportunity, the liberal idea of justice goes hand in hand with the capitalist society, people get what they have worked for because they get what they deserve.

Similarly,

They [the liberals] must give the equal opportunity. In liberal, the hard worker has become rich because they use the opportunity to put more effort. I think that in liberal they is no idle. Everybody must use your talent . . . If you must work hard they get a better life.

Another student attempts to describe the workings of a free-market society by pointing out that:

There are people that work very hard but get a small salary at the end eg A person who sweeps the roads and plant tree & grass. He/ she is working hard but she gets small salary than a clerk who is just sitting in the office. *It is because their work is more demanding than sweeping the roads* (my emphasis).



In this example, the explanation given by the lecturer that road sweepers tend to earn less than people doing other kinds of work because the supply of unskilled labour is plentiful and outstrips demand when compared to other sorts of labour is either ignored or not understood. The idea that people earn according to the “difficulty” of their jobs prevails.

My field notes report a conversation with a group of students on the subject of the free market economy thus:

Eldon tried (again) to get the idea of a free market economy across. In the group discussion Thabo’s group got the tomato story OK [the example of the

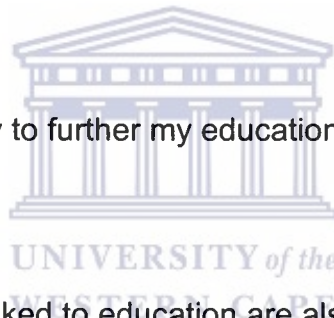
price of tomatoes rising after bad weather and falling after sunny weather had brought on a glut had been used] but found it difficult to apply to labour.

Lungile told me that she “couldn’t think about” the idea that graduates might not get jobs because there were too many of them. Said it wasn’t fair and that her father would be angry (Tuesday 11 March 1997).

The value attached to education because of the goods it can bring is also apparent in students’ responses to a “Getting to Know You” questionnaire (see Appendix V) distributed at the beginning of the academic year. The first question asked was ‘Why have you come to university?’ and the following responses are typical:

Just for the purpose of learning and to prepare myself for the better living in the near future. . .

I have come to university to further my education so that I can be someone tomorrow. . .



The values and expectations linked to education are also apparent in many of the texts students produced in the class. Consider, for example:

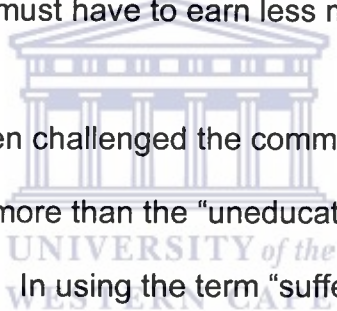
Even though this system of government [the Marxist system] tries to bring about equal opportunities to everyone but it is an unfair kind of government because an educated person should give chances as he is trained for his profession.

In another text discussing the weaknesses of the Marxist idea of justice, a student notes:

The weakness point [of the Marxist system] is that people are getting discourage to obtain high education because there are no something in return for doing that. Another thing is that there is no hard work among the people because nothing you can get with your qualification.

Consider also:

Marxist say you must get what you need and that system is unfair because professional workers will end up earning less money than unprofessional workers. Like lawyers . . . lawyers must have to earn more because they have been trained for his work. If you have trained for the work, you have an experience of your work you done than those who cannot trained for that work so because of your experience you have a right to earn more salary and those who cannot traine must have to earn less money than the professional.



In group work discussions, I often challenged the commonly held belief that graduates should be rewarded more than the “uneducated” because they had “suffered” to get their education. In using the term “suffering” students were not only referring to the financial struggle they were enduring but also to their actual studying which they claimed was very hard and unenjoyable. For them, university was something which had to be withstood for the good of the degree which would provide access to a better future. My field notes record:

. . . they [students in a group I had been working with] couldn't understand what I was trying to say about university being enjoyable. I kept asking them “But don't you enjoy studying? Aren't you interested in the subjects you are doing?” Some people laughed in an embarrassed way. Then Zola told me that the subjects were “good” (ASP [Systematic Philosophy] was “very good”!)

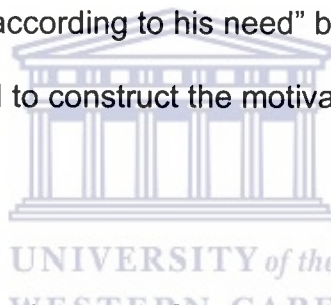


because they gave you lots of information and information was very important but he wouldn't say that he thought it was exciting or even interesting when I pressed him (Friday 14 March 1997).

The predominant idea that hard work is, and should be, rewarded also influences the way students write about Marxism. Consider, for example:

This system [Marxism] of getting what you need discouraged people to work hard because they know that they will get what they want. Marxist favored the people who are lazy.

In the next text, the student writer defines the Marxist idea of justice as "From each according to his ability to each according to his need" but still goes on to relate the lack of education to poverty and to construct the motivation to be educated as essentially instrumental:



The weakness [of the Marxist system] are that if you have a profession you can earn less than the non-profession, whereas you have undergo some certain stages until you get that profession but Marxist doesn't care about that. If Marxist was a president many people they will be illiteracy because there will be no person who can wish to have profession because he /she knows that she will get everything that he/she needs. It will discourage people to have education and there will be a number of poverty in the country.

In an interview, I challenged Remington, a member of one of the groups who had agreed to co-operate in my research, about the belief expressed in an "end-note"

that the Marxist idea of justice was “unfair” because educated people “deserved” to earn more than the uneducated. Remington responds thus:

Remington: Maybe I’m . . . a street-sweeper for instance and someone else is a medical doctor so if I’m at the level of a medical doctor so I deserve to earn that particular amount.

CB: But you see, maybe the street-sweeper did his best. Maybe he worked very, very hard. Maybe he went to school and he worked hard but he ended up a street-sweeper. Maybe he wasn’t terribly intelligent but he tried his best and he ended up poor.

Remington: So in other words we cannot guarantee how the street-sweeper his background was?

CB: No. So how can you use the word “deserve”?

Remington: So you can compare these two. According to my understanding, the medical doctor have been study so very hard compared to the street-sweeper.

CB: OK. Think of you Remington. You studied very hard didn’t you?

Remington: Yes!

CB: Do you deserve less than a medical doctor?

Remington: So that is different from the street-sweeper. He didn’t go into the university you know maybe it happened because God put him to be a street-sweeper just because of his laziness.

CB: It could be because of his laziness. . .

Remington: It could be. So I think just because of his laziness he deserves to earn less money than a medical doctor.

CB: But maybe he didn’t because he was lazy maybe he was born not so intelligent.

Remington: But usually it is a case of laziness.

It would appear, then, that dominant ideologies in students’ home communities are so persistent that “deeper” more academic understandings of concepts such as

Marxism and the Free Market system are not developed. Particularly persistent is what has been identified elsewhere (see, for example, Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Street, 1993, 1995, 1996) as part of the modernist quest: the idea that education (and in particular literacy) will bring material advantages. The desire for material advantages, in people long deprived of access to goods of even the most basic kind, then hinders engagement with what might be termed more “academic” understandings of concepts within the field.

Other problems related to the field of students’ texts concern Hobbes’ and Locke’s use of abstract, technical terms such as the *State of Nature* and the *Nature of Man* which are invariably confused or misunderstood. In philosophy, a State of Nature is a theoretical construct which imagines a place where man lives according to the “rules of nature” without any interference from government or any form of state control. The construct is used by Hobbes and Locke as a tool which enables them to think about the functions of a legitimate government. Each philosopher’s description of life in a State of Nature is determined by his understanding of the nature of man since, in a state without any form of control, the type and quality of life in that society is dependent on man’s innate characteristics. In the texts I examined, many students use the terms indiscriminately and even coin a new term, the “State of Man”. Possibly an even greater problem, however, given the importance of the theoretical construct to an understanding of Hobbes’ and Locke’s arguments, relates to students’ lack of understanding of the concept of a State of Nature itself.

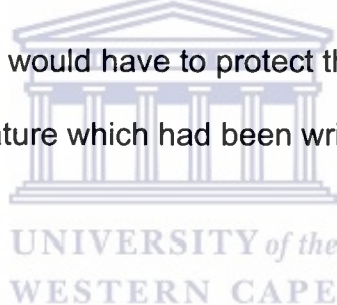
Consider, for example:

If everybody obeys the laws what would the state of nature look like?

and

The state of nature is made up by people together with the Government. There are police force and obvious there is court and the constitution for the government and the people's views. The state of nature remains peaceful because there are police who are looking after people who disobey the laws that are stated. Every person behave in a well mannered way because he knows exactly what can followed to him if he disobeyed the laws. The laws are written down and the people knows them.

Another student attempts to explain Locke's claim that life in a State of Nature would be "inconvenient" because men would have to protect their property from those who were not obeying the laws of nature which had been written in their hearts by God thus :



State of Nature will be inconviente because people know that they have Goverment which means the is police force. Therefore there is no one who can break the law. Unlike if the is no police, people would do whatever they like.

In this example, Locke's "inconvenience" stems from man being thwarted in his attempts to break the law because of the existence of a police force. What appears to have happened, therefore, is that, in reporting Locke's claim the student has imposed on Locke his own understanding of "inconvenient". This stems from a

misapprehension of the State of Nature on to which is “pasted” a common sense understanding that the existence of a police force reduces crime.

This misunderstanding of the construct of a State of Nature persisted in spite of the attempts to correct it. Field notes written after I had responded to a batch of “end-notes” report

End-notes today full of nonsense about the State of Nature. Even though many students say it is imaginary (Eldon stressed that over and over again) and is a place where there are no laws and no social structures in one sentence, they then go on to talk about police and laws in the next. Eldon will have to go over it again. (Wednesday March 1997).

In a submission to Senate<sup>4</sup> made by a committee appointed to investigate the establishment of a language competency course (see 4.3 above), Professor Wait, who chaired the committee and wrote the report on its activities, offers a possible explanation for the observation described above that students contradicted themselves when writing about the State of Nature:

A close observation of how students take notes will reveal that they do not even appear to hear anything other than ‘data’, the sort of information which is needed to answer a “what” question. I have found that I need to mention only once that Locke is regarded as the “father of Liberal democracy”. All students immediately take down this piece of information and from then on it appears in every essay and exam answer. But if I try to explain *why* Locke is

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<sup>4</sup> The Proceedings of a Senate Committee looking into ways of improving students’ ability to express themselves in writing in English, Minutes of a Meeting of Senate, 30 November 1998.

regarded as such students stop writing, look up and wait for the next “fact”. Whether they really understand what is meant by saying that someone is the father of a political system, whether they really understand what is meant by liberal etc. (sic) Rather than come to an understanding of the internal logic of theory, students will quite happily memorize a sequence of theses in the theory without having any idea about how each is dependent on the other.

It could be the case, therefore, that the explanation that the State of Nature was an imaginary concept was perceived by students as a “fact” and recorded as such.

This information then appeared in “end-notes” and assignments but was unsupported by any meaningful understanding of the construct of a State of Nature or of its use as a tool in the construction of Hobbes’ and Locke’s arguments.

With regard to the field of the texts produced by students therefore, a mismatch in expectation appears to have occurred. Lecturers reading the texts would expect students to engage with the field in a rigorous “academic” fashion. For a number of reasons, however, students’ engagement was superficial and informed by common sense understandings. As a result, their texts failed to make meanings which were academically satisfactory. The reasons behind this mismatch will be explored more thoroughly later in relation to the context of culture on which students appeared to draw.

This chapter will now turn to an exploration of the tenor of students’ texts. However, since one of the main claims of Systemics is that meanings are fused together in linguistic units, some of the observations I have made about the field of students’

texts will be carried forward into the next section since field and tenor can be seen to interact with each other.

### 5.3.2 Tenor

The tenor of a text is associated with interpersonal meanings or meanings concerning the relationship between speaker and listener, writer and reader. Writing of what they term the “essayist prose” style expected of academic essays, Scollon and Scollon (1981) observe that:

The ‘reader’ of an essayist text is not an ordinary human being. It is an idealization, a rational mind formed by a rational body of knowledge of which the essay is a part. The reader is not allowed lapses of attention or idiosyncracies. By the same token, the author is a fiction. The author as a person, by a process of writing and editing, seeks to achieve a state of self effacement. The author seeks to write as a clear communication from rational mind to rational mind (p.48).

In this section, I will argue that students’ lack of knowledge of the roles of author and reader appropriate to academic text did not only influence the texts *they* produced but also affected the way they perceived the relationship between the two philosophers, Hobbes and Locke, and *their* readers.

For many students, Hobbes and Locke function as preachers who are advocating a way of behaving rather than as philosophers trying to grapple with hypothetical concepts in order to answer a “real world” problem. They therefore understand

Hobbes to be saying that man *should* be egocentric and violent and Locke to be saying that man *should* be altruistic and law abiding and fail to apprehend that both philosophers are simply giving a description of what they believe to be man's nature. In many respects, this phenomenon is linked to the "concrete" understanding of the State of Nature described in section 5.3.1 above in that the hypothetical nature of both the State of Nature and the philosophers' descriptions of the nature of man are not appreciated. Consider for example, this opening paragraph to an essay:

Hobbes says everyone must be equal and is capable to get what he/she wants. In other words he says that if someone own a business if you want that shop you must use the power to take it . . .

Here, the writer understands Hobbes' claims about the Nature of Man (i.e. that all men are equal in the sense that they are equally capable of getting what they want) and life in a State of Nature as a statement about how man *should* behave. Any suspicion that the use of the modal *must* is a simple language error is denied by the same student's later claim that:

Hobbes says nobody is allowed to own a property . . .

Similarly, another student writes:

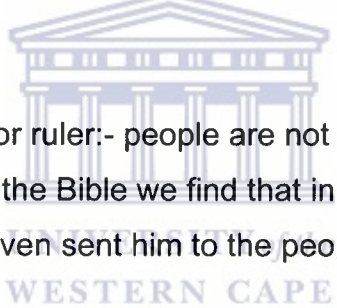
According to Hobbes and as the state of nature is concern, there is nothing such as mine and thine. Everything is acquired by force. If you want to obtain something, you have to be brutal and strong and because you are suppose to fight in order to get it. According to my own it is not wright, if you



need something that you do not have to go to those who have it and ask him to give it if he refuses just leave him because its belong to him and not to you. So what I think is that Hobbes description will cause a lot of problems.

In this example, the student writer goes as far as expressing an opinion (“According to my own” [opinion]) about how man *should* behave which is contrary to the behaviour she believes Hobbes is proposing.

The perception that Hobbes and Locke are advocating ways of behaving often prompts students to introduce ideas about appropriate behaviour from discourses dominant in their own communities. In the following example, the student cites the Bible as support for his disapproval of what he believes Hobbes is recommending:



There is no government or ruler:- people are not live the better life if there is no government. Even in the Bible we find that in every country there is a ruler and God work with and even sent him to the people and the country became prosperous.

In the following extract, Hobbes’ claim that man is essentially egocentric is applied to Hobbes himself (“Hobbes is the egocentric person”) and is contrasted with the writer’s own view of how man *should* be (“man should think of other people and share with others”).

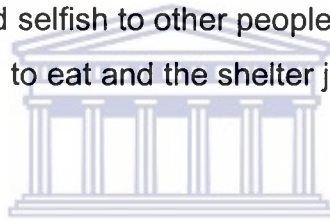
Hobbes is the egocentric person because he always think with himself not with the people like this. He believes that any person with own idea he means that there is no share of idea with other people.

The idea of community and of sharing evinced in the text above is related to the African concept of *ubuntu* which can be explained as the belief that man derives his being from his community with others.<sup>5</sup> It appears elsewhere in the sample of writing I examined either in condemnation of what students believed Hobbes was proposing or in support of what they believed Locke was proposing. Consider, for example:

Locke suggest that people should be genuine concern about others and this is good for in community communication and sharing is successful community

and

Hobbes is egocentric and selfish to other people e.g. the rich man would not give a poor man the food to eat and the shelter just because he think of himself.



For many students, then, it would appear that Hobbes and Locke function as preachers recommending a way of life rather than as philosophers exploring an abstract question. My field notes report on a group discussion in this vein:

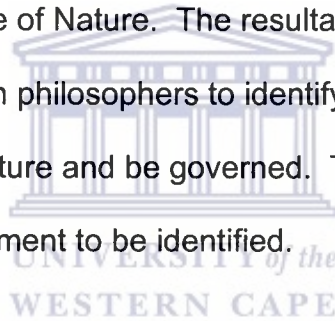
Lindani *et al.* were very upset about Hobbes. Said he was “mad” and that KZN was already like his State of Nature and that everyone was unhappy and “suffering”. I said Hobbes wasn’t saying we should be brutish etc. etc. but that we were cruel, violent and selfish naturally and that if KZN really was like Hobbes chaotic State of Nature then maybe he was right, maybe we really were like that. It’s difficult to explain what Hobbes was trying to do without

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<sup>5</sup> In Zulu, *ubuntu* is often explained by the expression “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” which translates as “a person is a person through people”.

revisiting the whole *resolutivo compositivo* story. When I went through the form of the argument (again!) I sensed I had lost them (Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April).

That students misunderstand what Hobbes and Locke were trying to do tends to be confirmed by their failure to grasp the significance of the method of *resolutivo compositivo* used by both philosophers. The method of *resolutivo compositivo* involves attempting to answer a larger question by first answering a series of smaller questions which will produce an answer to the larger question. In Hobbes' and Locke's cases, the larger question, "What are the functions of a legitimate government?" is answered by first asking about the nature of man ("What is man like?") and then using the answer to that question to answer another question about what life would be like in a State of Nature. The resultant description of life in a State of Nature then allows both philosophers to identify the reasons for man choosing to leave a State of Nature and be governed. These reasons allow the functions of a legitimate government to be identified.



The coherence of the method of *resolutivo compositivo* tends to be missed by students who perceive the philosophers to be writing on a series of semi-related "sub-topics". The force of this understanding is such that it is even incorporated into the title<sup>6</sup> of the task set by the lecturer as the following example taken from the cover sheet of an essay shows:

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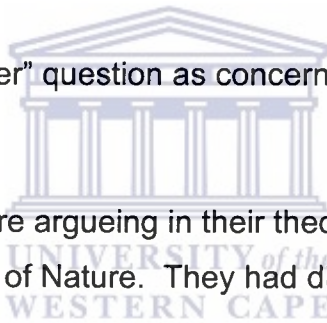
<sup>6</sup> The title provided by the lecturer was "Compare and Contrast the Political Philosophies of Hobbes and Locke." The essay title was accompanied by the rubric "Show how differences in their conception of human nature lead to differences in their conception of the legitimate power of government."

Compare and contrast the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke under the following subtropics: the State of Nature, Human nature, Reasons why people leaving the state of nature, Nature of contract and the reasons of having government.

Where the lecturer's explanations and attempts at demonstrating the coherence of the method do appear to have some effect, the "larger" question which the philosophers were trying to answer is often misunderstood:

Where these questions from the first question to the fourth question brake down to pieces what man is really like. When a person answers the first question it leads to the next question until you reach the last question.

Other students identify the "larger" question as concerning the State of Nature:



The two philosophers were argueing in their theories. Both were argueing in one thing about the state of Nature. They had different views in it . . .

and

This two men were arguing about the theories of the state of nature. They put their views in their different ways and each opposes his views in his way. . .

and

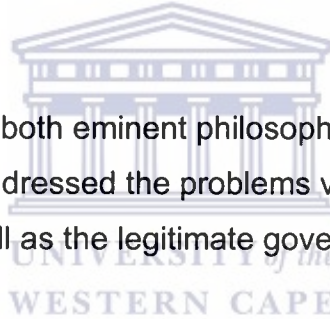
To conclude. Both philosophers are actually aimed at imagining on how men would might behave in one State of nature where there's no laws; police force as well. All they have said comes from their thoughts.

Other students claim that Hobbes and Locke are arguing about equality:

The equality of people is the best concept. In general we as human beings believe that to be equal is the most important thing. Because we all wish to have nice and good thing in our life. No on is wishing not to have a good and nice car or leaving a nice life like a king. But here we have two philosophers Locke and Hobbes who explain their ideas about the equality of people . . .

or a variety of problems (of which the nature of a legitimate government is just one):

Hobbes and Locke were both eminent philosophers who used *resolutivo compositivo* to try and addressed the problems vary from the nature of man, the state of nature as well as the legitimate governments.



The most compelling evidence of students' lack of understanding of the *resolutivo compositivo* argument is found in the way their essays are structured. Example A of students writing, included as part of Appendix VIII of this thesis, uses the following sub-headings:

State of Nature

State of War

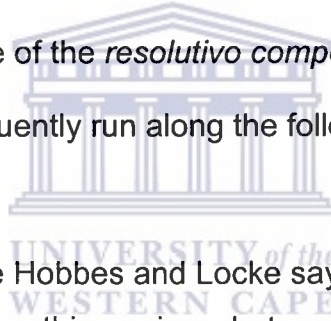
Government Institution

The limits to the Appropriate of property

Hobbes state of nature leads to enmity and strive

State of nature contribute to peaceful coexistence  
Hobbes description of man  
Locke description of man  
Locke describes the laws of nature  
limited government  
Men leave the state of nature  
In Locke  
Contract  
The relationship between reason for leaving the state of nature and nature of contract  
The important of government  
Legal positivism

Other assignments have an equally confused structure. As a result of this lack of understanding of the coherence of the *resolutivo compositivo* argument, comments written on students' scripts frequently run along the following lines:



Much of what you tell me Hobbes and Locke say is correct but you don't explain why they say these things - i.e. what are they actually trying to do?

Alternatively, students are referred to the appropriate page in the study guide which outlines the *resolutivo compositivo* argument in some detail. In developing a study guide for the political philosophy course, Professor Wait and I intended not only to summarise Hobbes' and Locke's arguments but to stress the coherence of those arguments. In an interview, however, students confirmed that they tended not to read the study guide in its entirety with the result that the coherence of the argument was lost:

S3: We are penalised today . . . you know what our problem is we didn't start from page 1 . . . let's say you are interested to look at the State of Nature . . .

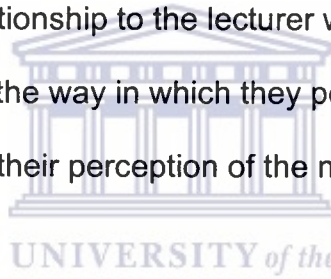
CB: You just looked at the State of Nature!

S3: We just jump from the State of Nature unknowing what is happening in the nature as a whole. So today I'll start from the Nature of Man then I went to the State of Nature and then to why people leave the State of Nature all these things so I know how to link them . . .

CB: OK because Hobbes and Locke had those links and you don't think the people read the links?

S4: We didn't realise there is a link. We simply studied because we see it.

The observation made above that "We simply studied because we see it" relates to students' understanding of their own role as writers of academic texts as well as to their understanding of their relationship to the lecturer who will read them. This understanding is influenced by the way in which they perceive the function of an academic text and is related to their perception of the nature of learning.



Researchers such as Entwistle (1987), Marton *et al.* (1993) and Van Rossum *et al.* (1985) distinguish between a number of *conceptions* of learning. Two of these, *constructive* conceptions and *reproductive* conceptions, are of particular importance to my claim that student's understanding of their relationship to their lecturer is related to their understanding of the nature of learning. Reproductive conceptions of learning value learning which reproduces or gives back what the lecturer has "given out" to the student. In contrast, constructive conceptions of learning perceive learning to involve using new knowledge to transform existing knowledge in some way. This transformation of existing personal knowledge then affects the way in which an individual perceives the world both inside and outside the lecture room.

Students working with reproductive conceptions of learning will not only relate to the texts, both written and spoken, produced by their lecturer in a way which is different to students working with constructive conceptions of learning, but will also understand their own roles as producers of texts differently. For students holding a reproductive conception of learning, texts produced by lecturers and others are things to be remembered and repeated. Their own role is therefore likely to be perceived as that of text *reproducer* rather than that of text *producer* and the role of the lecturer or reader of those texts to be that of arbiter of the accuracy of that reproduction.

Evidence of such an understanding is seen in comments made by students when the methodology of the course (the use of group work and in-class writing sessions) were evaluated (see Appendix V for questionnaire). Consider, for example, the following response made to the question “What do you think about doing writing in class?” posed on the evaluation form:

Writing have made a change in our understanding of the course as such. The end notes forces us to write what we’ve heard and how to respond to a certain questions asked. This kind of writing has taught us to be attentive because we know that the questions will come at the end of the lecture.

Similarly,

Writing in class makes us to pay attention in your lecture and it makes us to work hard. I know much of work because of writing in class. These will help



me even in exam time because I will not study to much work. Because I will already know the work, I will not spend hours and hours studying.

The following response to the question “What do you think about the responses to your writing?” on the same evaluation questionnaire is similarly indicative of a reproductive conception of learning:

As for me, I sometimes get discouragious when you tell me the facts i.e about Hobbes and Locke, I then write down what you say respectively, and answer your questions through the notes you have provided me with, but when my work comes back, I find that you reject most of the facts that I have derived from you.

Further evidence of students conceptions of learning as essentially reproductive in nature can be seen in work which has been redrafted following comments from their lecturer. In many cases, these second drafts are headed, in school fashion, “Corrections”. Other manifestations are more subtle. Consider, for example, the following short extract describing Locke’s understanding of the way in which property is appropriated in a state of nature:

Locke says there are three limitation on what we can take in nature. The second limitation on what we can take from nature is called spoilage limitation. Everybody has a right to punish those who break a law.

In this piece of writing, the student knows that Locke mentions three limitations on the acquisition of property. Possibly he cannot remember all three limitations or possibly he cannot access the information easily. He therefore writes what he

knows: that the second limitation is called the spoilage limitation. This disjunctive offering of knowledge, I would argue, is characteristic of an understanding of “knowing” as remembering. What counts is what is remembered so a successful learning strategy must therefore be to say what you know. In an interview, one student confirmed using this strategy thus:

I was just writing. . . just writing . . . putting the information, all the information that I know. . .

The many essays I examined which were no more than patchwork quilts of plagiarised quotations from the course study guide also bear witness to an understanding of the role of the author as being to reproduce knowledge for a reader who will judge the accuracy of that reproduction. Example A in Appendix VIII lapses into this form. Other essays are almost entirely copied from the study guide. What might be considered a more sophisticated form of this phenomenon involves copying from books students have found in the library. In some cases, however, students have consulted books on Hobbes and Locke but have not realized that these books do not refer to their *political* philosophies. The following example begins by paraphrasing a text on the “ethics of belief” but then lapses into copying directly from it:

Locke and the ethics of belief, he learn to be careful about what he say. If we live in such society it is still our duty, as Locke sees the situation, not to belief without examination. And in so far as to ascribe such a duty is to assume that belief can be voluntarily suspended. Locke is committed to the conclusion that belief lies under our control.

In an interview, students commented on the practice of copying from books adding that a common strategy was to produce a rough paraphrase so the lecturer would not know they had copied:

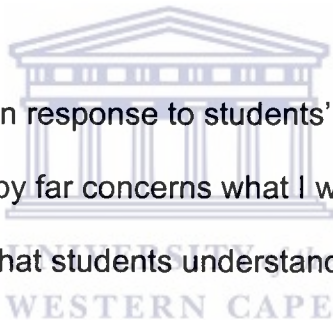
S3: Before I just copy it was . . . sometimes I will change there and there (Laughter and agreement at strategy) and she won't see that I have copied from the book. Maybe I will take the additional . . . maybe I will take . . . I will change "pre" and say "before" that is how I used to . . . using the easy words for myself.

CB: So when you copied from the book did you understand it?

S3: Sometimes I don't sometimes I just . . .

CB: So you just used the other words?

S3: Ya.



Although copying was a common response to students' understanding of their role as authors, a greater response by far concerns what I would term "rendering the text". In this case the "text" is what students understand Hobbes and Locke to have said and this is repeated without any direct points of comparison being made or conclusions drawn. The result is a piece of writing which typically elicits a "So what?" response:

Precious came to me today with Friday's "end-note". The respondent had written "So what?" and "So what - why are you bothering to tell me all this?" Precious couldn't make any sense of the comments. I explained that she had just been telling us things and that that wasn't enough. She had to draw points of comparison or explain the significance of what she was saying. I don't think she understood what I was trying to say (field notes, Wednesday 23 April 1997).

Example B in Appendix VIII is an instance of this sort of writing. In an interview, students confirmed that a typical strategy was to “give back” to the lecturer what they had taught. Interestingly, they then go on to describe how they seek to individualise their work by changing examples the lecturer has given. This is described as “deep thinking”:

CB: When you write, do you have a picture in your head of the lecturer? Are you writing to please your lecturer?

S1: No, really we are writing the work to please others we try to remember what [Unizul staff member] said I must write according to that . . . just writing.

S5: Sometimes you even remember an example which the lecturer does make in the class and you say “Oh Professor Wait said like this” and you put it like this. Usually it won’t be the same as the lecturer.

S1: Yes, let’s make an example of when Prof van Wyk gave something and if we take the State of Nature and Professor Wait gave us the example of picking oranges it is not just to say “picking the oranges and leave for others” you make your own example not that information that example which you have been given by the lecturer because it is his example but you are supposed to come with your own example. Let’s say you have to pick the apples instead of the oranges it seems as if you are thinking . . .

S5: Ya, ya . . . it requires more of your deep thinking. Maybe even don’t make with something like fruits. You just create your own example like a person who is educated and he requires . . . his requirements fits in every post so he must not take all those posts because his education fits those posts he must leave other posts for the other people so that they can earn their living.

The extent to which students individualise examples ranges enormously. In the following example, the lecturer’s example of a street-sweeper with six children

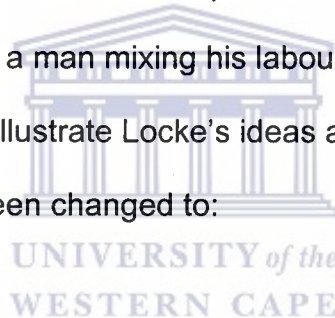
earning more than a doctor with two children earning more in a Marxist state has been changed to:

For an example Dentist have only one child and the street sweeper five children.

Similarly:

So an example to clarify my definition can be that of two people which can be a street sweeper and an industrial psychologist.

On other occasions, students substitute a comparative example. Below, the lecturer's use of the example of a man mixing his labour with nature by picking oranges from a tree in order to illustrate Locke's ideas about the rightful appropriation of property has been changed to:



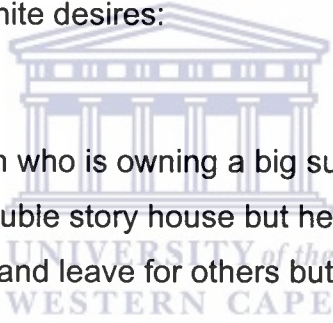
For example, the fish in the river belong to everyone. Once a man has mixed his labour with that fish by fishing it out of the river with a net that fish belong to him.

Similarly, the lecturer's use of the example of a race in the Olympic games to illustrate the liberal idea of justice has been transformed into an example of a school examination:

When it is at school and children are writing an examination the teacher will tell the children to start at the same time and no one will start writing without teacher's permission. The children will hold their pens question papers and

answer paper in front of them so when the teacher say start writing everybody start writing at the same time. They will all start writing at the same time but others will finish faster than other those who finish first will be the one who get good results. Others will fail but they were given an equal opportunity to start at the same time. Liberal say it doesn't matter whether others finish faster than others. . .

In spite of the elaborate manner in which this example is developed, however, it fails to capture the liberal idea since those who finish first in an examination will not necessarily be those who do well or even pass. Even more problematic, however, are examples from students' home discourses which sit uneasily in an academic text. Consider, for instance, the following example which is used to illustrate Hobbes' claim that man has infinite desires:



For an example, a person who is owning a big supermarket, ten taxis, four Dolphins, butcher and double story house but he can't stop now I had it enough then I must stop and leave for others but he still need more and more.

In this example, we learn a great deal about what is valued in the writer's home community (although most readers would be unlikely to understand the reference to a "Dolphin") but this sort of information intrudes unhappily in an academic text. The writer is assuming that her readers will have the same points of reference as herself and is unaware of the background or position from which an academic reader approaches the text. The following example used to illustrate life in Hobbes' State of Nature has much the same effect:

Example Mr Ncobo has a beautiful wife of whom they live in harmony because of egocentric and emotions someone try by all means to make them quarrel which will lead to fighting because Mr Ncobo will accidentally discovered that there is a third force which is similar to the state of war.

It would seem then that students' attempts to individualise their rendering of their lecturer's texts are often problematic and that the difficulties which arise from these attempts stem from a failure to understand their role as authors of an academic text as well as to understand the expectations of their readers.

More interesting than the repetition of knowledge evinced in essays which "render the text", is the way reproductive conceptions of learning manifest themselves in a failure to perceive the "voices" in a text. An academic text contains many voices. It contains the voices of the authorities the author cites and it also contains the voice of the author which appears in relation to those other voices as a soloist backed by a choir. The author/soloist conducts and musters these other voices to back her in the song *she* is singing. In the philosophy class, the students had to negotiate a song sung by another soloist (their mainstream lecturer) who was conducting the voices of the philosophers, Hobbes and Locke, as he sought to draw parallels and contrasts between their work. When the time came, the students then had to sing their own song of comparison and contrast and, in order to do this, they not only had to conduct the voices of the two philosophers but also the voice of their lecturer who had done some conducting of his own. In their writing, their difficulty in doing this manifests itself in an apparent inability to distinguish between the different voices.

Consider, for example, the following exposition of Hobbes' claims about life in a state of nature:

State of Nature is whereby there is no police, no government, no law. The people will be nasty, poor, brutish and life will be short. Imagine in the boxing ring with two fighters without referee. It will be nasty people will do what they like sometimes the supporters will get into the ring and fight the one they do not support.

In this text, we see two voices: Hobbes' (who says life in the State of Nature will be "nasty, brutish and short") and the lecturer's (who used the analogy of the boxing ring to explain Hobbes' claims about life in a State of Nature. The author of the text does not acknowledge these voices. She does not tell us, for example, that "According to Hobbes, life in a State of Nature will be . . ." Neither does she acknowledge the boxing ring analogy as an attempt to explain Hobbes' claim by writing something like "Life in a State of Nature could be compared to . . ." Rather, she writes her text in one voice which is not even her own. In class, I asked Nelisiwe, the writer of this text, to show me the notes she had taken in the lecture in which the boxing ring analogy had been introduced. The notes are very similar to the text of the essay. Further probing revealed that Nelisiwe had simply "written up" her lecture notes which she perceived as a single voiced "truth". She then produced this "truth" as this was the sort of learning she had been taught to value at school.

In the following extract, the student introduces the voice of the course study guide (which states "According to Locke, all men are made by God and are sent into the



world to do God's business", "men have equal moral worth" and "This means that no man exists for the use of another man"), Locke's own voice ("All men are the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise maker") and, interestingly, voices "from church" ("all of us we are the children of God, all men are created by God"):

According to Locke's point of view, all men are made by God and are sent into the world to do God's business because all of us are the children of God, all men are created by God they are equal and have equal moral worth. This means that there is no man which exist for the use of another man. All men are the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise maker. They are sent into the world about his business. No man is made for the use of another man. . . .

The introduction of voices from discourses outside the class is something I will return to in the next section of this chapter.



I have already described how some students consulted and copied from books in the library in order to write their assignments because of their understanding of themselves as "reproducers" of knowledge. In doing this, they inevitably introduced other voices into their texts. In the following extract, the voice of an unknown commentator on Hobbes appears:

All men are regarded as essentially egotist in striving for pleasure and avoidance of pain.

Later in the same text, the same, or possibly a different, voice appears, commenting on the liberal idea of justice:

. . . the individual must be seen as the fundamental component of society.  
People are free to pursue their own interest by using liberal ideology.

The student's own voice appears at the beginning of the text, revealing a common sense understanding of liberalism, influenced by discourses external to the university, which is in discordance with the more sophisticated understandings of the commentators which appear later:

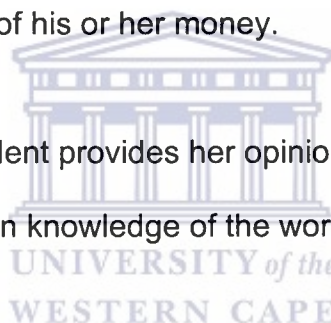
By liberal justice we are referring to all people who have equal rights all people have a right to say something which he/she didn't like. For example if a person do something which is against the law. Nobody must punish him her as if he's a dog. Equal rights must be taken into consideration, that person must be given the right punishment not to oppressed him.

The lecturer's attempts to help students find a soloist's voice in the class were often misunderstood. A common exhortation (which was matched by lecturers in other classes) was for students to give their "own opinion" and students often worked hard to fulfil this request. Giving one's "own opinion" in academic discourses is very different from giving an opinion elsewhere, however. In academic discourses, an "opinion" is constructed out of scholarship which involves examining the work of authorities and building a case which is personally meaningful out of their work and one's own research. In the world outside the university, giving an "opinion" might simply involve an "off the top of the head" response which is not considered or measured in any way and which is rooted in unexamined assumptions and beliefs about the world at large.

In the following example, which discusses the weaknesses of the liberal idea of justice, the student offers an opinion which is founded on her own understanding of the world. The understanding is not an “academic” understanding and does not link clearly to the point being made. Given this problem, the rather crude way in which the opinion is introduced is a relatively minor issue:

According to the Liberal’s weaknesses, he says, there is always two classes the poor and the rich and very few who are in between so it is impossible to guarantee equal opportunities. According to my view of point people or each person was a right to what is she / he doing. Like for instance if a street sweeper is compared to a doctor you can only find that they are not equal and never be equal but any one who works hard and earn less or more money must have to guarantee of his or her money.

In the following extract, the student provides her opinion of Locke's view of man as basically altruistic, citing her own knowledge of the world as evidence:



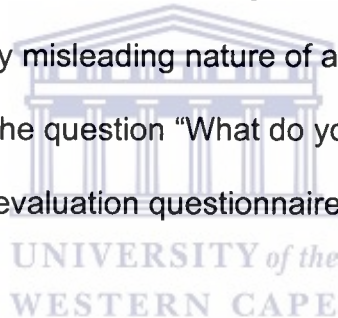
For Locke I do not think that he is right about people having an inborn sense of good or bad, because he cannot even be sure or positive that they are altruistic. He fails to describe people as altruistic because I don't think there are such people. I have never heard of people who share their clothes or give food or whatever good to help poor people because they think they are all valuable to God so they should also be valuable between ourselves.

In another assignment, the student's opinion is offered as a direct response to what the lecturer had said in class. However her opinion is based on a misunderstanding of taxation (since the lecturer had pointed out that, in a liberal state, taxation is used

to even out differences between rich and poor) with the result that the voice she develops is “inappropriate” for an academic essay:

I know that the equal opportunity is available but you just seem to be saying that it isn't. But there must be a sure made that everybody gets what he needs because if everyone has a chance to fill his own needs. I think liberal has this misunderstanding their point of fairness. It is not fair that people who earn less pay the same amount of money as the richer. I know they are basing it on equal opportunity or chance which is not sure wheather it will be used rightly or not. I think something must be done according to this problem of a poor person not using the opportunity given equally.

Difficulties students encountered in understanding the nature of an “academic” opinion as well as the potentially misleading nature of advice given by the lecturer are evident in this response to the question “What do you think about the responses to your writing?” on the course evaluation questionnaire:



Well, the response are good and also help a great deal but sometimes I do not understand the comments because I was made to know that in philosophy nobody is right or wrong so sometimes the comments seem quite leading, hence it does not become my opinion any more but yours.

Similarly:

This sometimes confuses me since one writes what he/she thinks. Therefore finding the response which will confuse. Sometimes that really can make one loose hope and can really never understand what you really want.

Apart from giving advice about offering an “opinion”, lecturers often tried to mediate the task and help students “find a voice” by explaining what they needed to do. This advice is often restated in very crude terms:

In this essay, what I have to talk about is justice. This justice is divided up into two sections such as Liberal idea and the Marxist idea . . .

and

Meanwhile I have to clarify what justice is, according to the point of view of Oxford dictionary . . . .

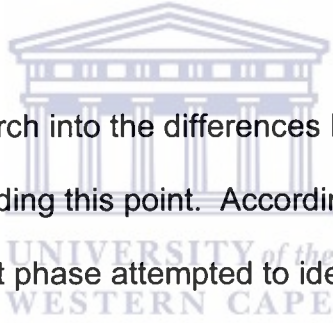
Recourse to dictionary definitions is fairly common in the texts I examined and is yet another indication of students’ lack of understanding of the way in which academic knowledge is constructed in these particular contexts. In all the examples of students attempting to comply with the lecturer’s exhortations, elements of what Poynton (1985) terms the *power* continuum of tenor can be discerned. For Poynton, tenor can be analysed in terms of *power*, *contact* and *affective involvement*. Each of these dimensions of tenor can be measured along a continuum with the *power* continuum ranging from situations where power is equal to situations where it is unequal. On the surface (and I shall return to this point in the next chapter), the context of situation of the philosophy class exhibited unequal power relations in favour of the lecturer. Students’ efforts to comply with his exhortations and advice can therefore be interpreted as manifestations of this dimension of tenor at work in their texts, thwarted by their lack of understanding of academic culture.

### 5.3.3 Mode

For systemicists, mode refers to the role language plays in an interaction. Martin (1984) conceptualises mode along two continua representing *spatial/interpersonal* distance and *experiential* distance. Spatial/interpersonal distance refers to the amount of interpersonal feedback which is possible between interactants in any communication. At one end of the continuum are face to face situations where feedback in a number of forms, including those which are visual and paralinguistic, are immediately available. At the other end are those situations where no feedback is available because no visual or aural communication between interactants is possible. Experiential distance refers to the distance between language and social processes. At one end of this continuum are situations where language is itself a form of action and has the same role as other physical actions. The role played by language in a card game would characterize this sort of experiential distance. At the other end of this continuum are situations where there is nothing but language since action never existed. Characteristic of such a situation is the use of language to create fiction or, in the context of this thesis, students' use of language to write about the abstract concept of the State of Nature.

Although Martin's constructs of spatial-interpersonal distance and experiential distance lend themselves to the drawing of a distinction between the use of language in speaking and writing, systemicists' insistence that language use is determined by *context* means that this distinction cannot be made to apply to all cultures and all languages. Eggins (1994), for example, uses the constructs of

spatial-interpersonal distance and experiential distance to distinguish between the way language is used in a face-to-face conversation, which is rich in feedback and which frequently involves using language to achieve some sort of action, and the use of written language to produce an academic essay. The writer of the essay is required to use language to reflect upon a topic rather than accomplish some sort of action and does not have the benefit of the sort of immediate feedback characteristic of a face-to-face conversation to help her make meanings. In her discussion, Eggins (1994:55) is careful to point out that she is considering written situations “in our culture” since it is the context of what might be termed “western mainstream” culture which has determined the appropriacy of the rhetorical strategies and literacy practices she identifies.



Barton's (1994) review of research into the differences between spoken and written language is useful in understanding this point. According to Barton, this research falls into three phases. The first phase attempted to identify structural differences between the two very distinct modes by contrasting the “vertical, layered syntax of writing with the horizontal, linked syntax of speech” (Barton, 1994:85) found in literary texts and conversation respectively. Although lists of differences were produced, these differences were not absolute. As Barton points out:

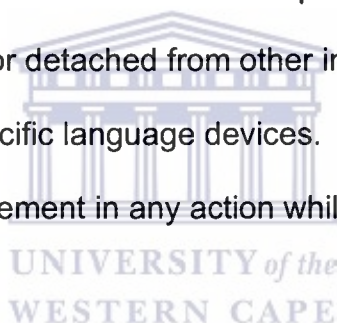
For every difference between the two, one is forced to say “typically” . . . There is a great deal of overlap between these two extremes [of literary text and conversation], and it appears that writing has developed no syntactic structures which are not also found in spoken language (*ibid*).

The second phase of research began with the recognition that casual conversation and literary texts could be placed at the extreme ends of a number of continua.

Chafe (1982), for example, contrasts speaking with writing along two continua: an *integration-fragmentation* continuum and an *involvement-detachment* continuum.

The integration-fragmentation continuum reflects the extent to which information “is packed” (p.39) into an idea unit. Typically, spoken language exhibits idea units each of which consists of a single clause. Chafe terms such language “fragmented”.

Written language, on the other hand, uses a number of devices in order to insert extra information into the idea unit. Such devices include nominalisation and the use of participles. The use of such devices gives written language what Chafe terms an “integrated” quality. The second continuum which represents the extent to which the language producer is involved or detached from other interactants is also characterised by the use of specific language devices. The use of the passive, for example, conceals direct involvement in any action while first person reference actively “owns” it.



The third phase of research identified by Barton (1994) challenges the idea that spoken and written language can be separated along such continua with the realisation that other instances of language use do not necessarily lie along a straight line drawn between conversation and the literary essay. Tannen (1982:14), for example, points out that:

. . . creative writing is a genre which is necessarily written but which makes use of features associated with oral language because it depends for its effect



on the interpersonal involvement or the sense of identification between the writer or the characters and the reader.

Moreover, as Heath (1983) shows in her study of the literacy practices of residents in two very different communities in the United States, written and spoken language are often so intertwined that it is impossible to categorise them in any definitive way.

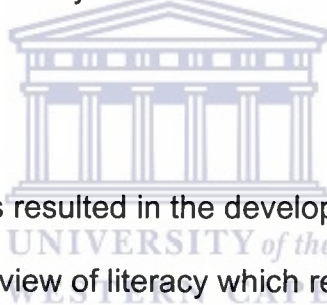
Possibly the most significant feature of this third phase of research, however, is the acknowledgment that initial research into the differences between spoken and written language was based upon:

. . . the idea that a literate culture shakes off the seeming inadequacies of oral culture and develops distinctly different ways of making meaning and communicating (Barton, 1994:90).

This acknowledgment comes as a result of the identification of features common to both spoken and written language which are characteristic of secondary discourses. In his work on Seneca, a language existing only in spoken form in western New York state, Chafe (1981), for example, points out that ritual and colloquial forms of the language parallel the distinctions often drawn between spoken and written language. Similarly, Tannen (1982) maintains that the strategies used to focus on communicator/audience interaction versus the strategies used to focus on content (categories used in her own research):

. . . are not limited to orality vs. literacy, and certainly not to spoken vs. written language, but rather can be seen to interplay in spoken and written discourse in various settings (p.4).

In South Africa, Gough (2000) uses Gee's (1990) distinction between primary and secondary discourses (where primary refers to discourses acquired through face-to-face interaction with intimates and secondary refers to those discourses learned through engagement with social institutions) to point out the ideological implications of associating secondary discourse with essentially western notions such as academic literacy. Using his own research, Gough goes on to illustrate secondary discourses in Xhosa which are oral in nature and which exhibit features of organization and structure traditionally associated with what he terms "colonial discourses" (p.51).



This third phase of research has resulted in the development of what Barton (1994:91) terms an "ecological" view of literacy which recognises that all language use is contextualised. Barton elaborates thus:

With a text, the shared knowledge, which all human understanding depends upon, is part of the context. This is knowledge concerned with the context of the text; it is also knowledge of the genre, the conventions of the discourse (p.92).

One implication of this view of literacy is that the mode of, for example, an academic text has to be understood as a result of the context in which it was constructed. The

use of language to make the text “autonomous” (Olson, 1977) is socio-cultural in origin and, as a result, is not shared by all cultures and all classes.

In the philosophy class, students constructed their texts using rhetorical strategies originating from discourses originating in a context of culture very different to that which influences “mainstream” academic writing. For example, rhetorical strategies which are more appropriate to contextualised discourse are commonly found in the texts I examined. The following first sentence of a piece of writing is typical in that it leaves the reader asking the question “Which theory?”:

According to this theory all men are equal to have the same worth and value because we are all sent into the world by God to do his business.

In beginning her writing in this way, the student, Patience, appears to assume that the context of talking about John Locke’s theory, which was created in class, will automatically be carried over into her writing. In a three-paragraph, page-long piece of writing, nowhere is Locke’s name mentioned as the student writer assumes her readers will know who she is talking about. In an informal interview, Patience was able to identify Locke as the author of the theory she is writing about and revealed that she had not specifically named him as she had thought her lecturer would “just know” who she was writing about as he had asked her to write about Locke’s theory. In contextualised discourse such as face-to-face conversation, she would not have had to provide this information as, to a large extent, a context defining the sort of things which could be spoken about would already exist. In writing an academic essay, however, Patience had not internalised the rule which says that even though

her reader had defined the topic of her writing for her, she must still contextualise it on her written page.

In another piece of writing entitled “Weaknesses of the Marxist Idea of Justice”, another student launches directly into a series of bullet points after the title. The first point is:

People do not work hard. People are tired of working hard and at the end they get a medal instead of money. So the economy of the country will drop.

The conventions of academic literacy require that students should contextualise an assignment on the weaknesses of the Marxist system by outlining or defining that system before explicating their own understanding of its weaknesses. This student, however, appears to conceptualise the task almost as a question and answer “revision” session characteristic of a classroom where the interaction could be imagined thus:

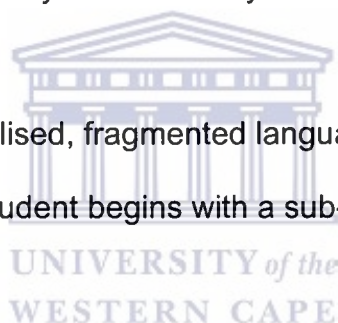
Teacher: All right. Who can tell me the about the weaknesses of the Marxist system of justice. Zanele, tell me one weakness.

Zanele: People don’t work hard. People are tired of working hard and at the end they get a medal instead of money. So the economy of the country will drop.

Teacher: That’s right! People don’t get extra money for working hard because they are rewarded according to their needs. People who work hard are rewarded with medals so people don’t work and then the economy suffers.

In the imagined dialogue, there is no need to contextualise as the context is created within the classroom situation. The student's response to the teacher is characteristic of this sort of interaction. She repeats herself producing, in Chafe's (1982) terms, "fragmented" language [People don't work hard. People are tired of working hard] and does not integrate the notions of not working hard and being tired of working hard. The teacher, typically, fills in with more detail. Unfortunately for the student, what might be effective communication in the classroom does not work in writing an academic essay and she is left with a decontextualised utterance in which propositions appear in fast and furious order without appearing to have any links between them [People are tired of working hard and at the end they get a medal instead of money. So the economy of the country will drop.]

Other examples of decontextualised, fragmented language use abound. In the following piece of writing, the student begins with a sub-heading "The nature of man" before going on to write:



Hobbes means that all men are equal in the sense that everybody is capable to be equal, like destroying everybody.

The writing respondent working with the piece of writing asks, of the subheading, "What's this? Why are you writing about it?", underlines "Hobbes" and asks, "Who's he?".

In the following example, the student begins by attempting to appropriate academic discourse:

In my assignment I am going to discuss or raise questions about Political Philosophy of Locke and Hobbes.

However, she gives no information about the two philosophers and makes no attempt to contextualise their political philosophies or explain the purpose of writing them. Instead, she offers a subheading and launches directly into Hobbes' description of the State of Nature:

Nature of man under Hobbes and the state of nature be a state of war  
Hobbes Begin by saying all man are equal in ability.

The respondent asks "What is the State of Nature?".

One way of describing the decontextualised, fragmented character of the language use described above is that it demonstrates a common sense approach to essay writing which has grown out of students' familiarity with primary discourses rather than an approach which has been developed by more formal, school-based secondary discourses. However, not all the rhetorical strategies found in students' texts originate in primary discourses. Consider, for example, the following extract from an essay contrasting Hobbes and Locke:

After God created heaven and earth, he gave a man the right to rule the land and to rule over the animals. Therefore man have the right to own land and to do everything if the land is yours. God does not like people who are lazy. God wants us to use our hands e.g. ploughing.

In this extract, the student begins by using church-based rhetoric [After God created . . . everything if the land is yours].<sup>7</sup> Having begun by using an “elevated” form of language, however, she then assumes her “own” voice, that of a church goer interpreting the words of the preacher for others [God does not like people who are lazy. God wants us to use our hands] before going on to end with a more “academic” voice [e.g. ploughing].<sup>8</sup>

Other examples of church-based rhetoric include:

God gave us domestic animals such as cats, donkeys, cattle to carry out our work. Evidence as follows:

God create human being more same like him and sent him to the world to carry on with God's work (Genesis: Chapter 1).

In this example, the student merges the church-based discourse with her understanding of academic discourse by providing evidence and by offering a paraphrase of an extract of the book of Genesis as a direct quotation.

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<sup>7</sup> There are numerous charismatic churches in Zululand and the attainment of elevated positions in those churches highly valued. Most students were church members and informal outdoor services were often held on campus. At lunch time, individuals would often preach outside the Student Centre. This preaching was highly rhetorical and speakers usually switched code in order to use both Zulu and English.

<sup>8</sup> This example also pertains to the failure to identify “voices” in a text discussed in 5.3.2 above.

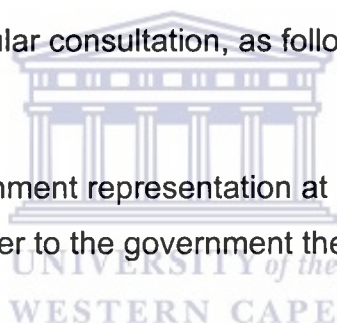
Another student uses the example of Satan to explain his understanding of Hobbes' idea that good and bad are relative to individuals and then supports his example with an unacknowledged quotation from the study guide:

For example let us look at Satan in the bible he tries to mislead other people in sin so that they would not see the kingdom of God.

According to Hobbes, good and bad, right and wrong, are relative to each individual. Good or right is what promotes our individual interest . . .

Other texts contain traces of popular political rhetoric. The following extract from the task asking students to answer the question "What is democracy?" discusses one of the criteria for democracy, popular consultation, as follows:

. . . there must be government representation at grassroots level. Those representatives will deliver to the government the grievances of the people.



For the same assignment, another student produces a text which declares:

Education is a cornerstone for every democracy. The government must embark on education schemes for its people to ensure that illiteracy does not exist . . . The government must be seen to be clamping down on crime. Every citizen must feel safe to live where she lives.

Both of these extracts are reminiscent of the use of language in current political rhetoric which uses terms such as "grassroots level" and "clamping down on crime" extensively. Gough's (2000) identification of the use of language derived from the



socially elevated forms of Xhosa in his students' texts suggests that it would be possible to identify similar rhetorical strategies in the texts I examined. Identification of these forms is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, since considerable knowledge of Zulu and Zulu culture would be required to recognise them.

Other rhetorical strategies found in students' texts originate in written genres but are still inappropriate for an academic essay. Consider, for example, the following extract from a piece on the weaknesses of the liberal and Marxist ideas of justice:

Weaknesses of liberal idea of Justice

-equal opportunity is like a race which means that it is where people they want to achieve better than other so they are compiting against each other.

-Competition is high

in a sense that people are not equal

They turn to be rich they work very hard

There are two classes those who are rich and those who are poor.

For the liberal idea of Justice it is very difficult to achieve.

In this text, the student uses forms of language more appropriate to the genre of note-taking. Beginning lines with a hyphen and jotting down ideas almost as a list, he fails to observe sentence and paragraphing conventions appropriate to a finished piece of academic writing. He does, however, draw on the strategies of a secondary, schooled discourse.

Other essays begin with a “Table of Contents”. The following is reasonably well structured in that it moves through a description of the Nature of Man although it fails to mention a State of Nature. In the essay which follows, the student also omits to make the connection between the Nature of Man and the quality of life in a State of Nature. What is significant, however, is the awareness of a rhetorical strategy which prompts the student to produce a table of contents for a piece of work only eight pages long:

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	Page 1
2.	Nature of man	2
2.1	Equality	2
2.2	Acquisition of Property	2
2.3	Concepts of Right and Wrong	3 - 4
2.4	Freedom	4
2.5	Rationality	5
3.	Reasons for leaving the state of nature	6
4.	What is a government	7

Students’ awareness of other strategies pertaining to academic text are also apparent. In the following example, the student begins her essay on Hobbes and Locke by declaring:

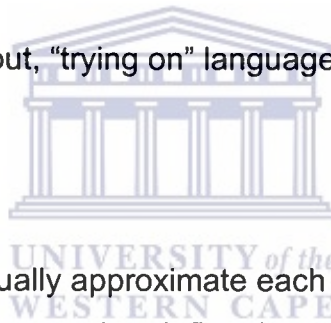
In this assignment Im going to discuss the theories of the two philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. I’ll compering their theories in this manner. I’ll start by the theory of Hobbes the nature of man and Lockes nature of man

and Hobbes STATE of Nater and Locke State of Nature. Hobbes  
LEGITIMATE Government and Lockes LEGITIMATE Government.

She then goes on to “try on” a style approximating to the “definition of terms” found  
in many research reports:

I will conclude by saying the differences of the theories. There are terms that  
I will use like EGOCENTRIC and ULTRUISTIC. EGOCENTRIC is when one  
thinks of himself and satisfy his needs and not only think about other people.  
ULTRUISTIC when somebody do things and think of other people. Like if you  
do something you must take according to you need and leave some for  
others.

As Hull and Rose (1990) point out, “trying on” language forms is fundamental to  
language use since:



. . . human beings continually approximate each other’s language to establish  
group membership, to grow, and to define themselves in new ways (p.242).

While many of the strategies adopted by the students in the philosophy class might  
not have been appropriate to the task defined by their lecturer, their attempts to  
approximate to what they perceive to be appropriate forms is significant in terms of  
their attempts to develop academic literacy and thus gain membership of academic  
discourses.

## 5.4 The Context of Culture

As I have already pointed out, a Systemic Functional understanding of language use relates linguistic choices made in any *context of situation* to understandings and beliefs prevalent in a wider *context of culture*. Related to the concept of a *context of culture* is that of *genre* which Martin (1984:25) defines as:

. . . a staged, goal oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture.

Offering a less technical explanation, Eggins writes that a genre:

. . . is a recognizable social activity in our culture. It may not be a social activity in which we participate, but we have the cultural context to make sense of it (p. 27)



and that a genre

. . . can be thought of as the general framework that gives purpose to interactions of particular types, adaptable to many specific contexts of situation that they are used in (p.32).

Genres, then, are culturally bound and certain genres achieve an importance because of the dominant position of the culture in which they are embedded and the purposes they achieve within that culture. In education, the genre of the academic

essay functions as a gatekeeping device since entrance into, and progress through, higher education is dependent on the ability to control the genre.<sup>9</sup> As a growing number of writers and researchers show (see, for example, Geisler, 1994, Luke, 1988), however, there is nothing intrinsic to dominant education genres which make them particularly suitable for the purposes they claim to achieve. Control over dominant genres nevertheless remains crucial to individual progress through the educational system.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the claims of schools to prepare pupils for higher education, there is a great deal of evidence that this is not the case even in countries where sophisticated systems of education exist (see, for example, Geisler, 1994). In places with more limited educational resources and widely differing cultural beliefs from those prevalent within the academy, the context of culture of the school will not facilitate the acquisition of the academic genres students will need to use in higher education. As my research among students in the philosophy class shows, this was certainly the case in the majority of schools in Zululand attended by the students.

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<sup>9</sup> This situation continues in spite of the arrival of educational philosophies and approaches such as outcomes based education (OBE). At higher education level, OBE focuses on the competencies required of learners as they enter the world of work. Teaching is then directed at helping learners acquire these competencies rather than on the content which has traditionally driven curricula at tertiary level. The genre of the academic essay is not required in professional fields (see, for example, Anderson, 1985, in Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) yet it continues to be used extensively even in institutions which have purportedly adopted an outcomes based approach.

<sup>10</sup> Genre based approaches to teaching writing (see, for example, Martin, J. 1989) are often motivated on these grounds. Expressivist approaches (see, for example, Elbow, 1979) with their focus on making meaning at an individual, personal level are also often contrasted negatively with genre based approaches for this reason.

In the interviews I used to validate my initial understanding of students' writing, I asked about the sort of writing students had done at school. One of the students I interviewed, Lungile, who was more fortunate than her peers in that she had attended a Roman Catholic mission school rather than the apartheid designated "Bantu" schools, explained that she had written "exercises and essays, not assignments" at school. When asked about the difference between an essay and an assignment, she responded:

I think an essay . . . when we are writing an assignment . . . no an essay . . . we have to write . . . we have to get more knowledge than the book. And in the assignment, I think you have to stick on the book and other relevant books.

She later added:



At school we have to write essays . . . we just write them all by our own and they marked them.

When asked about the titles of essays she had written, Lungile replied that she remembered writing an essay about "Diana's wedding". The conversation continued:

CB: And so what did you do to write that? Did you watch television?

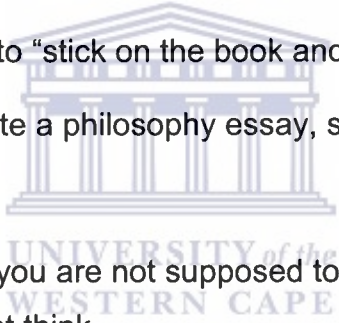
Lungile: Yes. I remember it clear until now. I wrote what I saw.

CB: And when the teachers marked your work, what sort of things did they say to you?

Lungile: He told me that “OK, fine.” I did write what was there but I was supposed to make it clearer as if somebody else was to read it. What they were . . . I remember writing about that gown that she was wearing and he told me that I was supposed to make . . . to picture it.

In spite of the fact that Lungile had enjoyed relatively privileged educational experiences before coming to university, it would appear that she still had not had practice at writing “assignments”, the sort of expository genres she was now expected to write in her new academic context.

The contribution her lack of experience in manipulating academic genres makes to her ability to write at university is compounded by her understanding that, in order to write an “assignment”, she has to “stick on the book and other relevant books” because, when she came to write a philosophy essay, she discovered that:



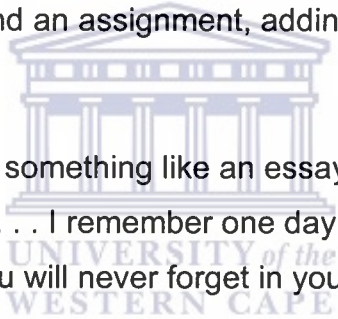
In philosophy, I find that you are not supposed to relate to books . . . you have to think. But just think.

Lungile’s conception of writing as the reproduction of knowledge found in books was overturned by her experiences in the philosophy class. Unfortunately, however, her previous educational experiences had not equipped her with a repertoire of practices which would allow her to use writing to construct knowledge since those experiences were located in a culture which perceived writing as a process of memorisation and reproduction.

Compared to Lungile, other students' school experiences of writing were considerably less privileged. Lindani, for example, described his experiences of writing in a class of sixty students as follows:

Well, in fact they used to give us a sort of homework. Maybe you find the teacher don't pay much attention to how to write the homework. They just stand in front of you and ask the answer for question one and you raise up your hand and then you answer him and he says "Mark it right" or "Mark it wrong" which means that they don't have the time to look at your writing.

When asked about essay and assignment writing, Lindani made the same distinction as Lungile between an essay and an assignment, adding:



We used to come across something like an essay especially in the test . . . . no . . . . assignment . . . I remember one day my teacher used to tell me "A journey that you will never forget in your life" and then I tried to convince him and tell him that my mother was going forth to Durban . . . to visit Durban and we were traveling by train and it was the first time to be on a train so I was very much excited . . .

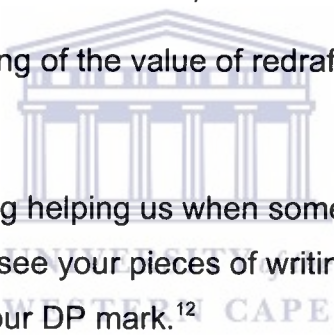
In spite of Lindani's focus on meaning evinced by his attempt to convince his teacher, his teacher's response to his essay focused on the mechanics of the language rather than on the meanings he was trying to make:

. . . and then they wrote back something to correct like spelling and maybe we used the wrong phrase so they underlining with red pen so you can see where you made a mistake and wrong spelling.



As Lindani's description of the writing instruction he received from his teacher shows, the problem is not only that students had not been exposed to the schematic structure of expository genres but also that they lacked experiences of the behaviours which would allow them to produce them.

Drafting and rewriting were alien activities to the majority of students and the take-up in the class on opportunities to redraft writing provided by the lecturer was generally low.<sup>11</sup> For many students, moreover, the value of being offered opportunities to redraft was perceived instrumentally rather than integratively. In the class, the lecturer attempted to reward redrafting and rewriting by making an allowance for this in his marking structure. The comment below, taken from an evaluation of the course, displays an understanding of the value of redrafting only in those terms:



I think the pieces of writing helping us when sometimes you do not get the DP the lecturer try to see your pieces of writing that you done in the class and then you get your DP mark.<sup>12</sup>

In a similar vein, another student writes:

I think the amount of writing we have done has given us more marks according to what we understood during the lecturer. And it replaces tests.

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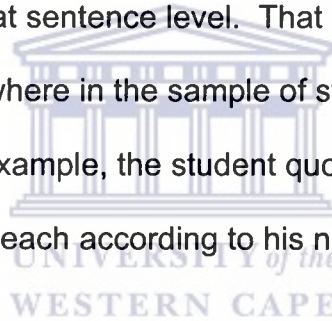
<sup>11</sup> Of the 71 students whose assignments on Hobbes and Locke I examined for the purposes of my research, 26 took the opportunity to redraft their work using comments made by a writing respondent.

<sup>12</sup> The DP (or mark of "Due Performance") relates to the amount of classwork deemed necessary for students to be able to sit examinations.

Lack of exposure to writing behaviours manifests itself deeper levels however. As Shaugnessy (1977) points out:

The ability to re-scan and re-work sentences . . . assumes several things: a memory for unheard sentences, an ability to store verbal patterns visually from left to right, as in reading, and beyond this, an ability to suspend closure on those patterns until, through additions, deletions, substitutions, or rearrangements, the words fit the intended meaning (p.80).

The fact that students had so little experience of writing at school in all probability impeded the development of the abilities identified by Shaugnessy as crucial to re-scanning and re-working even at sentence level. That re-scanning and re-working does not occur is evinced elsewhere in the sample of student writing I examined. In the following piece of text, for example, the student quotes the Marxist maxim "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" as:



From each according to his ability to each according.

Had the student been writing recursively (or even if he had edited his work after he had finished it) the omission of a significant part of the sentence would have been noted. Other examples of errors which could have been eliminated had students been writing recursively or edited their work around. Consider:

In order to understand politics you. the need for government both Thomas Hobbes and John Locke formulated political philosophies.

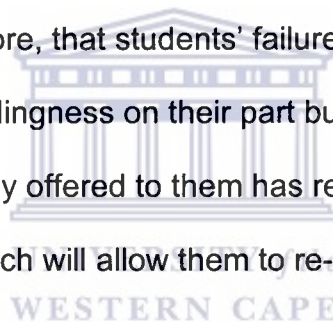
and

Lot of money money is needed.

On other occasions a lack of revision is apparent in statements which contradict each other or which simply do not make sense:

Hobbes argue that all man are equal in strength and cunning . . . He also realised that everybody is not equal in strength and physical, others are stronger than others.

It could well be the case therefore, that students' failure to rework and redraft should not be attributed to a lack of willingness on their part but to the fact that the paucity of writing experiences previously offered to them has resulted in a lack of development of the abilities which will allow them to re-scan and re-write.



The *Proceedings of a Senate Committee looking into ways of improving students ability to express themselves in writing in English* (1998) mentioned earlier (see 4.3 above) also takes up the point of students' lack of experience of writing:

The reason why their [students'] ability to explain something to someone is lacking . . . is because they have had no practice in doing so. They have had no practice in trying to explain, convince, demonstrate etc.etc. in their writing, because most of their writing up till now has either been conceptually too simple, (write an essay about your last holiday) or it has not been an act in which the student expresses himself, and uses language *to explain something*

*or other to someone* i.e. it has not been a form of concrete behaviour. Most of their academic writing has been abstract, i.e. it has be (sic) in the form of producing correct sentences, words or paragraphs for a teacher.

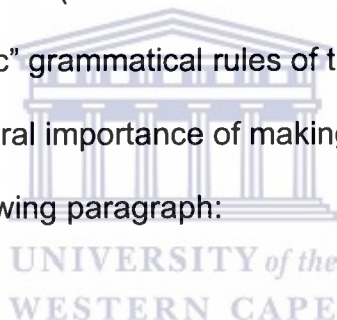
Given this background, it is hardly surprising that students had little understanding of academic genres.

A final point to be considered in relation to the context of culture concerns what is usually termed students' "language competence" or "language proficiency".

Shaugnessy (1977) repeatedly makes the point that writing is cognitively more taxing than speaking. For the students she terms "basic writers", the need to deal with complex meanings and, at the same time, manipulate the mechanics of writing such as handwriting and spelling which have not yet become automatic, results in a form of cognitive overload. It is possible, therefore, to argue that cognitive overload accounts for the observation that, in my study, students were sometimes able to control issues such as grammar and spelling yet at other times appeared to lose control and that this occurred often within the space of a single text. Ellis (1986:85), on the other hand, points out that such variability is related to the process of language acquisition itself and distinguishes between two forms of variability: contextual variability and free variability. Contextual variability stems from the fact that, typically, linguistic forms are acquired in one context. Language users learn to manipulate these forms in that context and, as language development proceeds, are able to extend their use of these forms into other contexts. As this occurs, variability decreases. Free variability involves the use of two or more forms to realise the same meaning. As language develops, form-function relationships are established

more clearly and variability falls away. Consistent use of a structure is thus related to the stage to which language development has progressed.

It is, however, possible to identify yet another reason for the variability in students' use of linguistic forms. Systemicists understand language use to be about making language choices. When working in an additional language, it is obvious that language users must have available items from which they can choose and it is likely that the number of choices which will be available to them will be more limited than the number which would be available to them in their first language. What appears to be significant, however, is not that the students whose work I studied do not have the language forms to choose from (in the sense that they actually lack knowledge of what might be termed the "basic" grammatical rules of the language) but that they are largely unaware of the cultural importance of making a choice which is *appropriate*. Consider the following paragraph:



Government give people all what they need. Locke argues there is a state of nature. Each person must protect his property which means that person should take care of the something that he use.

Here the final -s of the present simple third person singular appears and disappears (Locke argues / which means/ he use). The fact that the writer *can* produce the appropriate grammatical form is evidence of one kind of "knowing" about that form.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> My experience of teaching a grammar course (Shum, 1996) for the English Department in the 1997 academic year shows that the majority of students do "know" many of the basic rules of grammar since they usually scored high marks on the exercises in the workbook and could also "tell" me many of the rules as they worked through it.

What could be the case, however, is that students do not appreciate the social significance of that form as standard English and that the production of an academic essay with such elementary grammatical mistakes effectively functions as a kind of socio-cultural affront. When the forms of the language students are expected to produce do not carry meaning in the students' native language or when the variety of the additional language spoken outside the university does not use those forms, then students' failure to make the appropriate linguistic choice is all the more understandable.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In answering the question "Is there a way to understand students' literacy-related experiences at the University of Zululand which is different to dominant understandings?", this chapter has attempted to site the problems which manifest themselves in students' texts in their understanding of the context of situation which, in turn, is informed by the wider context of culture which informs those understandings. In doing so, it has examined "mismatches" between students' understandings of the way the field of a text should be engaged with and their lecturers' understandings. While lecturers expect engagement at a "technical", academic level, students offer common sense understandings of the field which stem from discourses prevalent outside the university. Engagement with more technical understandings of concepts such as Marxism and liberalism is then often impeded by the emotional investment students have made in coming to university

and which prevents them from constructing more “appropriate” understandings of these concepts.

Students’ understanding of the context of situation and the resources they are able to draw on in the wider context of culture also lead to differences in the way students and lecturers experience their relationship as writers and readers of a text.

Experience of texts in home discourses leads them to understand Hobbes’ and Locke’s roles as authors of their political philosophies as preachers advocating a way of life rather than as philosophers exploring an abstract question. Students’ responses as “recipients” of those texts is then to condemn the authors for their “wrong” thinking. A second problem related to the tenor of the texts stems from reproductive conceptions of learning which lead students to producing texts which at best “tell” and, at worst, simply repeat other texts. Lecturers’ attempts to convince students of the need to construct rather than reproduce meanings by exhorting students to “give an opinion” then result in the intrusion of comment and opinion which, in stemming from discourses outside the university, is inappropriate.

The final “mismatch” in expectation between students and lecturers concerns the mode of an academic text. Deprived of opportunities to develop expository writing and the discourses and rhetorical strategies associated with it, students are left to draw on home discourses and the strategies associated with the production of texts manifesting those discourses in their academic writing. Often this involves using rhetorical strategies more appropriate to highly contextualised discourse than the decontextualised discourse of an academic text. On other occasions student draw

on what they perceive to be “elevated” forms of discourse which are nevertheless still inappropriate to academic writing. As a result, the texts they produce fail to meet their lecturers’ expectations.

This construction of students’ literacy-related experiences is very different to dominant constructions of students’ “problems” at the University of Zululand described in Chapter Four of this thesis. The dominant construction pathologises students for their lack of knowledge of English and for failing to use a set of “skills” which are readily available to them. The alternative construction sees students using literacy practices to construct meanings in English which are drawn from a context of culture which is different to that on which the academy draws. In doing so, it questions the availability of appropriate resources on which students can draw to construct the sort of texts required by the university. Making such resources available has major implications for pedagogy intended to give students epistemological access to the university. It is to an exploration of these implications that this thesis now turns.



## Chapter Six

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### Resisting Pedagogy

We practitioners, and our students, come to classes with theories about what it is to be literate and how literacy is explored. Despite the hidden and sometimes incomplete nature of these theories, they influence how literacies are taught and learned (Johns, 1997:3).

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a response to my third research question: “At the University of Zululand, what is the educational significance of an alternative way of understanding students’ literacy-related experiences?”. The response to this question comes about as a result of the way in which my answer to the second research question, “Is there a way to understand students literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?”, “talks back” to the first research question, “How does the University of Zululand construct students literacy-related experiences?”. I will therefore begin this chapter by summarising this “conversation” before examining the significance of an alternative construction of students’ literacy-related experiences.

#### 6.2 Common Elements of Dominant Discourses

One of the most contentious debates in the history of composition theory is that which has taken place between social constructivists such as Bartholomae (1983,

1985) and Bizzel (1982) and radical educators such as Knoblauch and Brannon (1984). For Bartholomae (1985:134),

Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion - invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like history or anthropology or economics or English. The student has to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community.

The understanding that students have to be able to “invent the university” has implications for composition teachers whose task is then to demystify and teach its conventions. For Bartholomae, and others who subscribe to this view, teaching composition involves providing students with access to dominant discourses so that they should also have access to the socially prestigious positions that go with acquisition of those discourses. In doing this, the idea that teaching students the conventions of the discourse will serve to entrench and reproduce the dominance of its power and knowledge base is not necessarily considered. In attempting to provide their students with access to both dominant ways of knowing and using language, however, many educators also attempt to equip their students with the tools which will allow them to critique them.

In opposition to, for example, Bartholomae, radical educators such as Knoblauch and Brannon (1984) follow Freire (1968) in arguing for the need for students to develop a *critical consciousness* which will allow them to reflect upon the situations in which they live so that they can learn to “name” their own worlds rather than

having them "named" for them. The development of *critical literacy*, which *produces* rather than reproduces cultural forms, is crucial if students are to be allowed to "name" their collective and individual experiences. Knoblauch and Brannon (1984) attack what they term "limiting" models of literacy. These include the *functionalist* model, which emphasizes supposedly practical skills, the *cultural literacy* model, which inculcates dominant Western norms and the *expressivist* model which emphasizes personal growth at the expense of acknowledging political and social realities. Knoblauch and Brannon therefore advocate allowing students to import their own socially underprivileged discourses into the university so that they can be better equipped to "name" their own experiences there.

While dominant discourses at the University of Zululand clearly subscribe to a *cultural literacy* model, holding that students need to be assimilated into dominant discourse, unlike writers such as Bartholomae, such discourses do not acknowledge the socio-cultural difficulties students face in acquiring dominant Western forms of literacy. Students' lack of knowledge of these dominant forms is termed a "problem", which students themselves would be able to solve if only they were to take advantage of the courses on offer. Particularly significant in these discourses is the absence of any form of critique of dominant Western forms of literacy. The idea that, following educators such as Knoblauch and Brannon (1984), students should be able to produce texts which grow out of their own cultural forms rather than reproduce those of the academy is similarly unconsidered.

Having left unquestioned the “axiom” that students should acquire dominant Western forms of literacy, dominant discourses also overlap in the way they construct that literacy and the way they believe it should be acquired. Johns (1997:7) identifies what she terms the “traditional” view of literacy, which has its roots in the scientific positivism of the Enlightenment and which perceives language in terms of rules and regularities. In this view, literacy is acquired:

. . . through directed practice, focused on the production of perfect, formally organised language patterns and discourses. Good learning is good habit formation . . . [and the] learner is a passive recipient of knowledge and direction.

Building on this “traditional” understanding of literacy, the idea that writing is an incremental process which involves working from the phrase to the sentence to the paragraph to the essay is common in many of the discourses. Meaning exists independently of language and students simply need the linguistic tools which will allow them to encode those meanings in forms acceptable to the academy.

Although many discourses construct learners as passive and even lazy, the fact that students acquire language and literacies outside formal classes is not acknowledged since such forms of language use, at best, are perceived as inappropriate and, at worst, inferior. It is such forms of language use, however, which essentially “talk back” to the dominant understandings I have described.

### 6.3 Talking Back to Dominant Discourses

In contrast to the picture of students' literacy-related experiences drawn by discourses dominant at the University of Zululand, my research in the philosophy class offers another understanding. According to this understanding, students struggle to make sense of complex, abstract constructs such as the nature of man and the State of Nature whilst coping with the pressure to produce written texts which relate to these constructs in new and unfamiliar ways. Functions such as "giving an opinion" and "saying what you think" no longer mean what they used to in discourses outside the university and students flounder as they try to heed their lecturer's exhortations to take up a position in relation to concepts discussed in the class. Their struggle goes beyond the need to find an appropriate way to give an opinion, however, since "knowing" itself is not longer what it used to be. Ways of knowing which, in the past, had brought rewards, are now derided as "plagiarism" and "copying" and writing as a process of "knowledge telling" (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987:5) is dismissed in favour of the process of "knowledge transforming" (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987:6) approved by the university.

Students' previous experiences of producing texts which "tell" are not the only elements of their literacy histories to influence what they perceive to be appropriate ways of behaving in the philosophy class, however. For many students, Hobbes and Locke are preachers rather than philosophers, as the idea that texts can be discursive rather than didactic is itself unfamiliar.

Then there is the act of writing itself. Since literacy practices acquired through schooling do not centre on writing as a process of making meaning, students lack the behaviours which will allow them to do so as they sit down and try to write an academic essay. Writing is often a linear process with writers never looking back at what they have written and texts are full of repetitions and contradictions.

The final element of the alternative construction to “talk back” to dominant discourses concerns students’ knowledge of the rules and regularities of English. Although dominant discourses largely construct students as lacking knowledge of the rules of English *per se*, an alternative construction argues that there is evidence in their writing to show that this is not the case at least where the most “basic” structures of the language are concerned. In contrast, an alternative construction argues, as described in Chapter Five, that what is at issue is a failure, on the part of students, to appreciate the significance of using standard forms within the academy. This is then related to a failure to employ literacy practices such as editing which would allow the use of non-standard forms to be identified and eliminated. The insistence on attempting to enliterate students through the teaching of English grammar therefore can, at best, only be construed as a misconception and, at worst, following writers such as Graff (1987), Ball *et al.*(1990) and Christie (1993) as an attempt to subdue and control.

#### 6.4 The Educational Significance of the “Conversation”

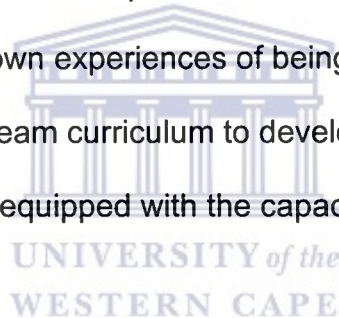
The implications of this “conversation” between dominant discourses and the alternative construction of students’ literacy-related experiences presented in this thesis are not hard to identify.

The first implication concerns existing strategies intended to address the students’ literacy-related “problems”. As I have already pointed out in Chapter Four, these strategies focus on the provision of adjunct courses which serve as “language credits” for degree purposes. For the majority of students, this means enrolling for the *Practical English* course run by the Department of English. The way in which language and language use is understood in the course is also discussed in Chapter Four. Although the course has changed over the years, its focus has tended to remain on teaching of the form of language. This teaching of form is then supported by the explication of various “study skills”. This narrow focus on linguistic form and an understanding of ways of relating to text as no more than a set of “skills” largely fails to address the issues revealed by the alternative construction of students’ literacy-related experiences summarised above. In contrast, the alternative construction suggests that students’ literacy-related difficulties need to be addressed through engagement with the mainstream curriculum since it is only here that issues such as appropriate ways of engaging with the field of a text, the relationship between student-writer and lecturer-reader and rhetorical strategies appropriate to different disciplines can be explored. This does not mean that any attempt to provide an introduction to academic literacy by means of a course should be

abandoned. The implication, however, is that any one course cannot develop all the understandings necessary to engage with academic text in a meaningful way.

Where such a course is offered, the focus on linguistic form needs to be widened in order to get students to engage with issues such as the way in which understandings of content and writer-reader relationships work to determine the form of a text.

The use of the mainstream curriculum and the development of a more appropriate course has major implications for staff development. As I have already pointed out, understandings of language and literacy and concomitant understandings of students' language and literacy-related "problems" tend to stem from common sense understandings and lecturers' own experiences of being taught. If lecturers are to be expected to use the mainstream curriculum to develop their students' academic literacy, they would need to be equipped with the capacities to do so.



The development of students' academic literacy is dependent on more than an "across the curriculum" approach, however, since it involves a change in perception of the purpose of writing at a fundamental level. As the alternative construction pointed out, expectations within the context of the university are that academic writing should be used to produce rather than reproduce meaning. This means that writing is central to academic learning. If students do not perceive the purpose of writing in this way then they are unlikely to adopt practices such as drafting, redrafting and editing which will allow them to use writing as a tool for constructing



knowledge.<sup>1</sup> For such an understanding to develop, the focus would need to be on getting students to understand the centrality of writing in academic endeavour. Writing would therefore need to be used to develop, rather than simply test, learning which is assumed to have taken place elsewhere and students would need to be encouraged to experience this process for themselves. Pedagogically, the metaphor of “coaching” could be useful here since my research in the philosophy class shows that explicit attempts to instruct students about the way academic knowledge is constructed by, for example, exhorting them to “say what you think” or “give an opinion” only succeed in prompting students to draw on inappropriate home discourses. A “coaching” pedagogy would show students where and how they had

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<sup>1</sup> One of my first attempts to use a process approach to developing writing involved getting second year students in a Biochemistry class at another historically black South African university to write an essay on the Human Genome Project (see Boughey & Goodman, 1994). The mainstream lecturer was extremely supportive. He identified a list of articles for students to read, provided an essay title, gave the essay an allocation of marks from his continuous assessment quota and turned an entire double practical period per week over to the task of developing the essay because of the importance he attached to his students’ use of writing as a mode of reasoning and a mode of learning. A critical moment in the evaluation of the intervention came with the following comment written by an anonymous student:

The presentation by the people from the English department was quite excellent, but I wonder whether it was necessary to do it. I mean when I entered myself for Biochemistry at the beginning of the year, well I didn’t quite think that I would be doing writing skills during my practical period. Say I got employment from an industry and they ask me to perform an experiment, what am I going to do? Told them that we did writing skills during our prac session?

Here, the student does not perceive the value of writing in the same way as his lecturer. For him, being a biochemist is about doing experiments and not about writing essays. His understanding of the social interactional rules surrounding “being a biochemist” effectively sets aside writing. The chances of his taking on board the practices introduced in the writing development intervention are therefore very slim unless he develops an understanding of the centrality of writing to scientific learning.

gone wrong and would guide them in providing a more appropriate response to the task of writing an academic assignment. At the same time, it would aim at the development of an awareness that the conventions of the academy are not, as Kramer-Dahl (1995:2) puts it, “ideologically innocent” and that they “legitimate particular forms of knowledge and power relations.”

Another related implication of the alternative construction of students’ literacy-related experiences arises from the difficulty students experienced in dealing with the complex and often abstract concepts they were required to engage with in the philosophy course and involves the need for university educators to move towards a form of teaching other than lecturing. One important observation to arise from my research was that students’ common sense understandings were particularly resilient and were not replaced by more academic understandings in the course of teaching the philosophy class. Such an observation is not new. In science education, for example, research (Driver and Erickson, 1983; Posner *et al.*, 1983; Driver *et al.*, 1985) has shown that learners continue to apply their common sense understandings to everyday situations in spite of the fact that they have been taught science models, rules and principles which would provide them with a very different understanding of those situations.

*Constructivist* theory (see Fosnot, 1996, for a recent overview) provides an explanation for this phenomenon. According to constructivists, information to be learned is not simply transmitted into learner’s minds in an unadulterated fashion but is integrated with information already stored as mental constructs. The result is a

restructuring of mental constructs and, thus, of the learner's knowledge itself. Where existing knowledge remains unchallenged by "new" knowledge, constructivists assume the process of restructuring has not taken place. Recent interest in the work of Vygotsky (1978) has meant that the school which has become known as *social constructivism* has grown in popularity. As its name suggests, *social constructivism* holds that socio-cultural context is influential in determining learning.

Constructivists hold that knowledge has to be actively constructed by the learner. This has important implications for teaching which, from a constructivist standpoint, has to be conceived as a process of facilitating the conditions which will allow the learner to construct this knowledge rather than a process of simply transmitting information. At tertiary level, constructivist understandings challenge the format of the traditional lecture in which the lecturer literally "delivers" information based on her own understanding to students. Understanding learning as a process of constructing knowledge would mean that students would have to be provided with a series of tasks which would allow them to restructure their mental frameworks. According to Vygotsky (1978), tasks requiring problem-solving skills can be divided into three categories: those which students can perform independently, those which students cannot perform even with help and those falling between these two extremes. This final category of task takes place within what is termed by Vygotsky the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD). The role of the teacher working within a Vygotskian framework is to design this category of task and then be available to guide students as they work on solving the problems associated with the tasks.

A major implication of an alternative construction of students' literacy-related experiences for the teaching of the philosophy class (and indeed for the teaching of all other classes on campus), therefore, would be that activities which would prompt students into restructuring existing mental frameworks would need to be designed and introduced. These activities would need to be varied since the resilience of common sense understandings is such that many attempts might be needed to get students to restructure their understanding. Since the introduction of such activities would mean that less time would be available for the transmission of knowledge which characterises the format of the traditional lecture, consideration would also need to be given to the amount of "content" covered in the course. The development of lecturers' capacity to "teach" rather than lecture as well as their capacity to develop content-reduced curricula also has major implications for staff development.



## 6.5 Developing Pedagogy

In many respects, the pedagogy in the philosophy class was already moving in the directions indicated in Section 6.4 above as a result of the use of emerging understandings of students' literacy-related experiences, derived as a result of my research, to inform classroom practice.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> My claim, in Chapter Three, that my research incorporated elements of action research rests on this aspect of my work.

For example, although lecturing was not completely abandoned in that lecturers continued to “tell” the class about concepts and arguments, in each class students worked in groups to complete tasks designed to help them to restructure existing mental frameworks. This process of restructuring was understood to incorporate the need to build more academic understandings of concepts which already existed as well as the need for new concepts to be accommodated within existing frameworks. Professor Wait justifies and explains the approach in the class thus:

I believe the practices in mathematics departments are revealing. No maths department has ever thought that instead of making students work out tutorial questions that they could simply give them more lectures or more material to read. It is well recognized in mathematics that *understanding* and being able to *solve* problems, *make* corollaries etc. are inseparable. We have to adopt the same approach in all subjects . . . . In philosophy one, we have found that one effective method is to lecture for only half the time period, and then to make students solve problems with the themes discussed in the lecture. For example if in a lecture I had distinguished between a Socialist and a liberal conception of Justice, then I might make them work out in a short assignment what laws they would change or introduce to make South Africa more just, or less just in accordance with these two conceptions, and then I would ask them to explain their answers. Under no circumstances can I ever ask them to repeat or reward them for repeating what I said, for then I would simply reinforce their belief that one can get some marks simply by memorizing something. Such a task generally turns out to be extremely difficult for a first year student. It is necessary first of all to allow students to ‘try out’ their ideas verbally with their peers. For this reason we generally divide the class in discussion groups.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Proceedings of a Senate Committee looking into ways of improving students’ ability to express themselves in writing in English, Minutes of a Meeting of

The interactive study guide produced for use in the class (see Appendix VIII) provides examples of other tasks intended to allow students to construct understandings of the concepts discussed in class. These tasks were available for completion in class as “end-notes” or for students to work on outside the class.

One of the problems in attempting to introduce a constructivist methodology was the difficulty in finding tasks which fell within students' ZPD. For example, what initially appeared to be a relatively simple task requiring students to complete a table comparing Hobbes' and Locke's descriptions of the nature of man left groups unable to proceed because they did not understand the nature of the task itself. My field notes report:

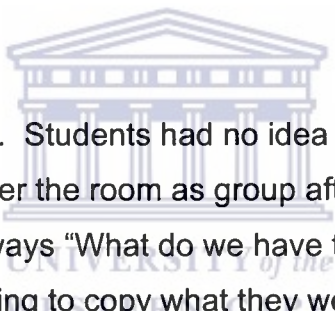


Table task VERY difficult. Students had no idea what they needed to do. Eldon and I rushed all over the room as group after group put their hands up and the question was always “What do we have to do?”. As some groups got going I noticed others trying to copy what they were doing. I kept asking students “Have you done anything like this before?”. No one told me they had (Friday 25 April, 1997).

On another occasion, my field notes report:

I saw Bheki had his study guide with him in class and asked if I could look at it. It was full of underlining (in fact nearly the whole guide was underlined). Asked him if he had completed the writing tasks and he said he hadn't. When

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Senate, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1998.

I probed it appeared that he didn't actually understand what most of them required him to do (Monday 12 May, 1997).

For students who had been accustomed to a methodology designed to get them to remember and reproduce therefore, tasks designed to facilitate the restructuring of mental frameworks fell outside the ZPD unless assistance was provided to help students understand the tasks themselves.

Another way in which the pedagogy of the philosophy class was moving in the direction indicated above, was in the way it placed writing at the centre of the learning process. Students were encouraged to "write to learn" in every class through the use of "end-notes". At the same time, the writing of assignments was understood as a learning process and students were encouraged to draft and redraft in order to develop their understanding. The Writing Respondent Programme (outlined in Chapter Three of this thesis) was then used to provide a response to "end-notes" and drafts of writing "in progress". The following example illustrates a typical response to an "end-note":

Do you mean 'peaceful  
but inconvenient'?

According to Locke State of Nature is peaceful inconvenience. Therefore  
Why must they protect their property? Didn't Locke say man wouldn't steal because he has the laws of each person must protect with own property. So if there is government, nature written in his heart?

people combine resources in order to protect society together. For an  
Do you mean that if many men came together they could hire a police force?  
example. There is many higher police force. Their function is to organised  
property so that government may be protected. Does the government need to be protected or does man need to be protected by the government?

In her response, the respondent uses questions to get the student to:

- explain and clarify (Why must they protect their property?)
- think more deeply or more clearly about what she is saying or the implications of what she is saying (Didn't Locke say man wouldn't steal because he has the laws of nature written in his heart? Does the government need to be protected or does man need to be protected by the government?)
- be more exact (Do you mean peaceful but inconvenient? Do you mean that if many men came together to protect their property they could hire a police force?)

By questioning in this way, the respondent aims to get the student to examine the propositions in her writing more deeply and thus use writing as a tool for learning. She also aims to make the student aware of the needs and expectations of a (critical) reader. In many respects therefore, the respondent's function is that of "coach" rather than of instructor. Although some writing "instruction" did occur in class when, for example, the lecturer gave "advice", the pedagogy of the class was essentially learning-centred and "coaching-driven".

In spite of the fact that the introduction of the teaching strategies described above came about as a result of understandings derived from research, students did not appear to experience the pedagogy in the way we hoped. It is to an examination of this observation that this chapter now turns.



## 6.6 Encountering Resistance

In an article which describes his adult students' resistance to his authority as a teacher, Branch (1998) details the way his status as "knower" in the class was quietly, subtly and repeatedly subverted. Branch offers his description "as an alternative to the heroic narrative now standard in the professional discourse of literacy, in which a teacher knows what students need, gives it to them, and thus enables their transformation" (p.207). This transformation comes in many forms. Students learn to love literature, to structure their writing more effectively or to read with increased comprehension. For Branch however, in all of these cases, the heroic narrative has the power to reinstate the "great divide" theory of literacy (Ong, 1982) since teachers are depicted as the "literate" and students as the "illiterate".

When I began working in the philosophy class, it was certainly my aim to produce a "heroic narrative" in that I wanted to use my intervention to transform students' learning. The pedagogy which developed as a result of that intervention was, however, resisted and the "heroic narrative" proved to be elusive.

An explanation for the resistance encountered in the class is provided by Paul Willis' (1977) much cited *Learning to Labour*. In his book, Willis describes the way a group of British working class boys (whom Willis, following their own practice, calls "the lads") create their own anti-school culture. This then allows them to cope with the society in which they find themselves. In order to discuss the significance of Willis'

description, however, it is first necessary to examine what Bowles and Gintis (1976) term the *correspondence principle*.

According to Bowles and Gintis, school learning is determined by the social class of the children being schooled. This learning is not structured overtly but through the content of the “hidden” curricula transmitted to children. This content includes beliefs and personal identities considered appropriate for the children for whom the curriculum was designed. In this process, what is absent in lessons and text books is just as important as what is present. The failure, for example, to show women or black people doing responsible jobs in illustrations in text books provides a subtle message to children about what is “appropriate”. Such messages are not only transmitted through texts but also through methodology and classroom and school organisation. These hidden curricula prepare children to engage in work which is the traditional province of their social class. Working class children are thus prepared for working class jobs by curricula which teach them to follow rules and which stifle creativity and critical thinking. The correspondence between the children’s social class and the labour they will eventually perform gives rise to the term *correspondence principle*.

Although the correspondence principle provides a particularly attractive means of describing education in South Africa during and even after apartheid (and also in describing the history of literacy education, see 4.6 above) it is problematic in that it denies agency to learners themselves. Willis’ (1997) study is important because it restores this agency. For Willis, “the lads” are not the passive recipients of a hidden

curriculum which will prepare them for the working class jobs they are destined to perform, but are rather active agents in constructing working class roles for themselves. This active agency allows them to construct positive identities for themselves and thus retain a sense of dignity and self-worth. Working class jobs are thus not their unavoidable destiny but are rather occupations which they themselves have chosen in preference to other possible occupations.

I have already described the way I worked with the lecturer in the philosophy class in order to bring about the “transformation” in students’ learning necessary for a “heroic narrative”. Together, we developed an interactive, learning-centred methodology which focused on problem solving. Students wrote in every class and their written texts were provided with a response aimed at development. In the four years I worked in the class, however, a similar pattern of behaviour developed each year. At the beginning of the year, students co-operated in forming groups, attempting group tasks and competing written work. As time progressed however, their resistance to this “new” curriculum increased and took several forms.

The most obvious form of resistance occurred when students simply left the room as group work began. The design of the University chapel made exit easy and students would come into the room to hear that part of the lecture devoted to “telling” but would leave as group tasks were being set up. Changing the format of the class had little effect on this pattern of behaviour. When the class broke up into groups relatively early in the lecture period, some students would leave in order to stand and chat outside only to return once the class moved into a plenary “telling” session

again. Others resisted group work by ignoring the task and speaking amongst themselves or by sitting idly.

Other resistance manifested itself in students' responses to writing tasks. At the beginning of the year, students almost unfailingly completed the tasks set both inside and outside class. As time progressed, however, the number of students completing tasks decreased and increasingly fewer students were prepared to redraft their writing once they had been provided with a response from a writing respondent.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of these negative reactions to group work and writing tasks, students did not respond unfavourably in evaluations. 111 students responded to the evaluation of the 1997 course (see Appendix V for the questionnaire). Comments made on evaluation questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive. Consider, for example, the following responses to the question "What do you think about doing group work in class?":

I think it is good to do group work because sometimes I find myself confused while the lecturer is lecturing but by discussing with a group everything becomes clear.

I think group work is good and right because it make us to understand something which you were doing as an individual cannot understand. If you

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix III provides an indication of the reduction in the number of "end-notes" submitted by groups who had agreed to participate in my research as the semester progressed. I have already noted that of the 71 students whose work I analysed only 26 made use of the opportunity to submit a second draft of their work.

are an individual there are concepts in which you cannot understand and don't know the answer but through contribution of others members of a group you gain a lot.

Doing group work is good cause you tend to understand what your fellow student explains sometimes more than the lecture.

It also helps improve our speech.

Where students make negative comments, these generally pertain to a failure on the part of all group members to participate or to the domination of the group by one participant:

Group work help a lot, but it is most helpful when all the participants are all prepared to participate as a team, in that case it is good because everyone contribute, but if it is only one person who is contributing and other members are only listening it is bad, but so far I could say it helped us a lot because you have responded to what we wrote.

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It help the student because we find the different views, but sometimes there are students who hide their views so the group not so well.

The group work is so helpful to me because a gain a lot. The problem is that some members of the group they just relaxe and expect others to come up with answers.

Responses to questions about writing were also overwhelmingly positive:

Doing writing make us to pick up. If it may happen that we doesn't write end notes, it may end up knowing nothing about that thing which we have talked

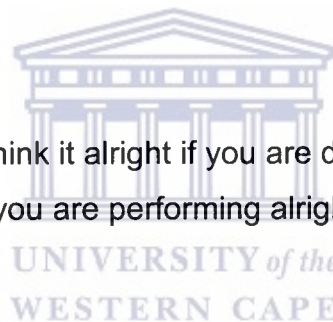
about because we could come here listen to a lecture and go out having heard nothing.

Doing writing in class is really interesting the matter is that writing is partially dictating what is in your mind. Above all that we gain more skills in writing, not only in philosophy. As communication student I can write my introduction coherently and logically.

Writing is the only thing which makes us to like what we are doing because every time we have to show how much we understood and it makes us to think and to be open.

Where students offered negative comments about writing, these generally related to group writing tasks:

Doing writing in class I think it alright if you are doing alone not in group because you can see if you are performing alright because everybody learn by mistake.



About doing work in class it's good but we need to individually write your point so that I can be obsessed how much do I understand. Because the group can show our group understanding but not individually.

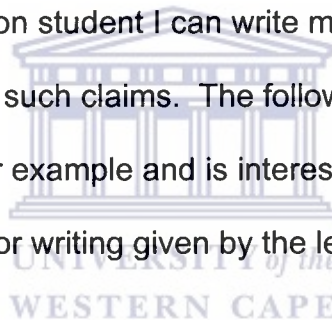
The only other negative comments related to the fact that the time available to write "end-notes" was sometimes insufficient:

It is important because we can reveal what we have understood. The problem is insufficient time, as a result we always make mistakes because we are writing in a big hurry.

The lecturer should also give us homeworks as we sometimes find ourselves getting late in other classes because of trying to complete the writing.

If students generally feel positive about the learning experiences available to them, their failure to make use of them is puzzling unless the positive responses are themselves understood as a form of opposition. Saying the “right” things while, at the same time, acting in a way which is contrary to those professed beliefs could be understood as a subtle, but firm, form of resistance.

That students were resisting our attempts at transformation tends to be affirmed by their claims that their writing had improved as a result of the class. The example cited above “As a communication student I can write my introduction coherently and logically” is but one example of such claims. The following comment from the class evaluation provides yet another example and is interesting because it is virtually a paraphrase of the justification for writing given by the lecturer:



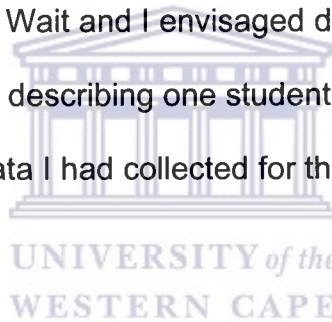
The questions and comments improve their thinking and reasoning skills of the students since they do their work systematically to avoid more questions and comments from the teacher.

In spite of students' claims to the contrary, I did not experience a marked improvement in their work as a result of having taken the course. Certainly, students continued to view writing as a process of writing down the “correct” answers as the following comments from the evaluation show:

The responses to my writing help me a lot because through them I am able to correct my mistake and to rewrite a good work . . .

Your comments also helps us to know where we are wrong. Sometimes you ask a question in a way that makes us to be clear about what we are suppose to say.

In claiming that their writing had improved as well as in affirming their understanding of writing and learning as a process of getting things “right”, I would argue that students are asserting their right to use a literacy which is alternative to the one I and their lecturer envisaged for them. This literacy is not critical of mainstream academic literacy in that it incorporates many of its features. It is, however, still “other” to the literacy Professor Wait and I envisaged developing as a result of our teaching. The following extract describing one student’s work taken from notes made as I was analysing the data I had collected for this thesis, explains this point in more detail:



. . . relies very heavily on study guide . . . the rhetorical style is “First we will . . .” but in the meantime all that is happening is copying out of/paraphrasing the study guide.

It was only after I had analysed this student’s work that I made an important observation: unlike the majority of students in the class, he was in his third year of registration at the University. In those three years, the student had internalised many of the “forms” of academic literacy without any of the “substance”. His assignment on Hobbes and Locke reads well as it is substantially correct in the way it explores the field and displays many of the features of mode appropriate to



academic discourse. The fact that the essay is little more than a paraphrase of the study guide, however, bears testimony to the writer's understanding of what it means to engage with the task. For me, the realisation that the writer of this particular piece of work was a third year student provided an important insight into the development of literacy at the University since I recognised many of the features of his work in that of other students. Example C in Appendix VII provides an other instance of this sort of work.

In an interview, I asked Vusi, the student who had written the essay, about his experiences at University and why he was taking the philosophy course. Vusi informed me that he was majoring in sociology and had regularly received "good" marks for his writing in other disciplines. However, he still needed a number of first year courses in order to graduate and had registered for the philosophy class as a number of his friends were also taking it. He claimed to enjoy the course although he was disappointed at the mark of 52% which he had received for his essay.

Three years at university had therefore not provided this student with an understanding of literacy which met the expectations of his lecturers in the philosophy class. His work was still based on an understanding of writing as a process of "telling". That this sort of understanding is reinforced within the wider environment of the University is confirmed by the following comments made in a group interview:

S3: . . . In other courses it is easy because there are many types of books and certainly if they ask you to write the assignment they will tell you “Go and read from page 55 up to there “

CB: And so when you “Go and read from page 55 up to . . . page 80” what do you do then to write that assignment?

S3: Before I just copy . . .

(Laughter and agreement at strategy).

In another interview, students compared the work in the philosophy class to work in other courses thus:

S1: But I can say it is good the way Systematic runs . . . really it’s good.

CB: Why? Why is philosophy good?

S2: I can say . . . we are not memorising when studying . . . we have to find that when compared to other subjects there is no “Name three functions . . . three characteristics” so it seems that we are just cramming but in this course we have to understand the work that we are given . . . we have to come with some ideas and developing our minds.

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That the “culture” outside the philosophy class validates “telling” is also affirmed later in the same interview when students comment on other lecturers’ teaching styles:

S5: You see with other lecturers a chapter is only 30 minutes . . . it’s just quick, quick, quick . . .

CB: And they actually lecture from the book?

S5: Yes!

S1: And some lecturers they say tututututututu [imitating reading aloud]

CB: They read aloud?

S1: Yes! There is no need to attend the classroom. If they just come to the classroom and just read the information as it is.

Students in another group also confirmed the existence of a culture amongst lecturers which validates “telling”:

S3: . . . [UZ Department] is different. Mrs [UZ staff member] teaches me [discipline]. And say if you give her any information from another book you can get 0. She says she needs his own idea. You mustn't take anything. Is differ from Systematic Philosophy. From Systematic Philosophy you are allowed to give your own idea but in [discipline] you have to use . . . you are not allowed to use any ideas but only from Systematic that is how for me it is difficult for me to write the assignment just because I have to use my own knowledge whereas in other courses I must use the prescribed book to write my assignment so if I even use I will get 0. But in Systematic I struggle by myself. It is quite difficult.

In the light of what would appear to be a culture of teaching and learning which validates reproducing knowledge, the claim made above that “ . . . in Systematic I struggle by myself. It is quite difficult” is significant in the light of students' resistance to the approach to teaching in the philosophy class. If responding to a constructivist approach is “difficult” and if rewards can be gained elsewhere for a more passive, reproductive approach to learning, is it surprising that students resist the alternative pedagogy? Equally significant is Willis' (1977) claim that “the lads” of his study were able to affirm their sense of self-worth, which was eroded in school, through the promotion of an anti-school culture. In their course evaluations some students did acknowledge a sense of discomfort, of not knowing what was expected of them and even of hurt. Consider, for example, the following responses to the question: “What do you think of the responses to your writing?”:

Your question guided me, but there are some of them that make me to not know what is exactly and what do you want really . . .

. . . Sometimes I'm a little bit confused by your responses. I usually find it difficult to respond to them and I don't know why, maybe the problem is with my understanding.

Sometimes I feel very very hurt about the question and comment you wrote on my work.

If it is the case that students' self-esteem is eroded by their inability to do (or even understand) what their lecturer wants, it is not surprising that they resist what is on offer especially if that sense of self-esteem is affirmed elsewhere with high marks and praise for "telling". However, in resisting a pedagogy which was intended to empower by facilitating access to the epistemological goods of the university, students, like Willis' "lads", could be accused of complicity in the cultural reproduction they resist so actively elsewhere. On the other hand, it could also be argued that in resisting a pedagogy intended to provide access to the epistemological goods of the university, students were asserting an understanding of those "goods" which was different to that of their lecturers.

Lemmer (1997) provides an explanation for this last claim. For Lemmer, the university is:

. . . a quintessentially modern institution . . . distinguished by . . . the search for disinterested Truth and the belief in Truth's emancipatory power (p.19).

Such an understanding of the institution is rooted in the Enlightenment, in the belief that knowledge is “Truth”, that “Truth” leads to human “progress” and that education is the means of achieving that “progress”. More recently, postmodernist discourses have challenged this understanding of the university and have posited an understanding of “knowledge” as “that which is technically useful”. In the course of this redefinition of knowledge:

. . . educational processes between learner and teacher are reconstituted as a market relationship between producer and consumer. Knowledge is exchanged on the basis of the value it has for the consumer. . . (Lemmer, 1998:21).

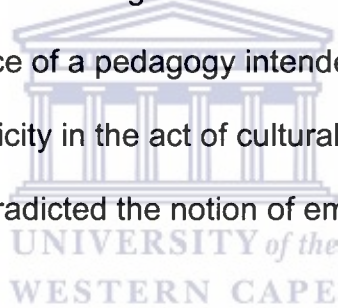
As a result of this redefinition of “knowledge”, the university is recast as an instrument for economic development, supervised by the state and subject to new definitions of quality. The understanding of the university as an institution striving for “progress” through the pursuit of “Truth” thus becomes outmoded and is replaced by an understanding which sees the institution as a producer of “able and highly qualified personpower” (Lemmer, 1998:23).

Boot and Hodgson (1987) elaborate on the distinction between these two perceptions of “knowledge” thus:

For some, knowledge can be conceived of as a (valuable) commodity which exists independently of people and as such can be stored and transmitted (sold). For others, knowledge, or more appropriately knowing, is best seen as a process of engaging with the world, including self in it. For the former, then,

learning becomes a process of acquisition and addition of facts and skills. For the latter, learning is the elaboration and change of the meaning-making processes and the enhancement of personal competence (p.6).

The understanding of the institution of the university as a producer of “personpower” was certainly predominant amongst students in the philosophy class. I have already described (see 5. 3.1 above) how students in the philosophy class perceived higher education as a means to a job and, thus, as a means to a better life. For these students, the “goods” of the university were “sold” (i.e. “transmitted” to them in the course of their learning) to be “re-sold” in the work place. If such “goods” could be accessed without the “pain” involved in accessing another sort of “goods” (involving “knowing” as a process of personal change and meaning making, cf. Boot and Hodgson above), then resistance of a pedagogy intended to “empower” was not necessarily equivalent to complicity in the act of cultural reproduction since students’ notions of “empowerment” contradicted the notion of empowerment which Professor Wait and I held.



## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter set out to answer the question “What is the educational significance of an alternative construction of students’ literacy-related experiences?”. In doing so, it discussed a number of implications for pedagogy but then described resistance to that pedagogy in the context of the philosophy class. The concluding chapter of this thesis will explore the implications of this resistance at the same time as it examines the contribution the thesis makes to higher education and other fields.

## Chapter Seven

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### Conclusion

Social life is reflexive; that is, it has the capacity to change as our knowledge and thinking changes, thus creating new forms of social life which can, in their turn, be reconstructed. Social and educational theories must cope with this reflexivity: the 'truths' they tell must be seen as located in particular historical circumstances and social contexts and as answers to particular questions asked in the intellectual context of a particular time (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:43).

#### 7.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I will evaluate the contribution of this thesis to the following fields: higher education in South Africa, critical pedagogy and Systemic Functional Linguistics.



#### 7.2 Transformation in South African Higher Education

In 2000, the South African higher education system is beset with problems. A recent document published by the Council on Higher Education (2000) identifies a number of problems which contribute to what it terms the "pervasive dysfunctionality" of the South African higher education system. Some of these are:

- a serious decline in the number of students entering higher education;

- an equally serious decline in the retention rate from year to year compounding the problem of poor enrollment;
- an “extremely poor” graduation and yearly pass rate relative to student numbers at most institutions (p.3).

In many respects, these problems are an indication of a failure on the part of the South African higher education sector to respond to the challenges which confronted it following the first democratic election in 1994. By the time of the election, the granting of access to all parts of the system was little more than a formality since nearly all institutions had been relaxing rules governing student admissions for more than a decade. The major task confronting the higher education sector after 1994 thus involved the provision of the epistemological access needed to complement the formal access which had already been granted. The provision of epistemological access was therefore linked to retaining those students who had been admitted to the system and, for many (see, for example, Walker and Badsha, 1993), underpinned the need to develop curricula relevant to a developing nation with a shortage of skills in many areas and a backlog of redress.

The acknowledgment that South Africa lacks a workforce which will allow it to join a rapidly globalizing economy but which, at the same time, has to address the injustices and imbalances of the past is but one of the factors which has contributed to the development of the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Deacon and Parker (1999) describe the framework, which uses the construct of the *learning*



*outcome* (see, for example, Spady, 1995) to register qualifications at a national level, thus:

The NQF is like a board full of holes with qualifications as pegs that can be placed in the holes. Outcomes are used to provide a level and field description of a particular peg — locating the qualification on the NQF marking the achievement of a certain number of credits. The South African Qualifications Authority becomes a lifelong learner's bank in which education capital is accumulated and used for investment in the occupational, academic and professional market-places (p.61).

The advent of *Outcomes Based Education* (OBE) and the need to register on the NQF has led to a flurry of curriculum development and, in many institutions, to the restructuring of academic departments and faculties into “schools” and “programmes” which offer new pathways to new qualifications which are often vocational in nature. In many cases, this process of transforming curricula and restructuring faculties and departments has been hastened by a decline in student numbers and institutions have sought to make the qualifications they offer more relevant, and thus more attractive, to students who perceive a tertiary qualification as a route to employment and, thus, to a higher standard of living.

The need for courses which will:

. . . provide for the development of required generic and foundation skills and which would include some broad discipline and multi-discipline based knowledge (Council on Higher Education, 2000:5)

and which will thus contribute to the student retention rate has also been acknowledged at many institutions. At the University of Natal, for example, the *Academic Learning in English* course attempts to develop literacy-related and basic research skills in addition to providing support for students as they explore topics understood to be seminal to the work of disciplines as diverse as psychology, sociology, anthropology and English literature<sup>1</sup>. At Rhodes, the *English Language for Academic Purposes* course attempts a similar task. Recently, the Council on Higher Education's Size and Shape Task Team (Council on Higher Education, 2000) has proposed the introduction of a four year bachelor's degree comprised of a two year foundation phase followed by a further two years of more specialised study in the disciplines. Should this proposal be accepted, then the need for re-curriculation at all institutions will become imperative. Such re-curriculation will have to occur at foundation as well as post-foundation level.

This thesis has the potential to contribute to the process of curriculum development outlined above for a number of reasons:

1. In exploring the way students' literacy-related experiences are constructed at one institution and, in doing so, by identifying the ideologies underpinning that construction, it provides a challenge for those involved in curriculum

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<sup>1</sup> One such topic is "Language and Identity".

development at other institutions to question their own assumptions about the “problems” they believe their students experience and which they attempt to remedy by means of their course design. Although some tertiary educators have constructed courses around the construct of “discourse”, others cling to questionable assumptions about the nature of their students’ “problems”<sup>2</sup> and structure courses around instruction in “formal” aspects of the language. In those institutions where the construct of “discourse” is used in course design, many academics teaching on those courses continue to cling to assumptions about their students’ “lack” of knowledge which are inappropriate given the design of the course.<sup>3</sup> The identification of discourses used to construct students’ literacy-related experience is, I would argue, a useful means of challenging inappropriate assumptions since it effectively “names” the discourses for those caught up in them.

2. The construction of an alternative understanding of students’ literacy-related experiences provides a template against which academics can interrogate their

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<sup>2</sup> In 1999, I was involved in the facilitation of a number of workshops run as part of the Tertiary Education Linkages Project (TELP) Student Development Programme funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). These workshops were intended to assist academics in the development of “language” foundation courses. In each workshop, academics named students’ “problems” using discourses identified in Chapter Four of this thesis.

<sup>3</sup> In 1998 and 1999, I was external examiner for the University of Natal’s *Academic Learning in English* course. Despite repeated attempts on the part of course designers to get those teaching on the course to adopt an understanding of their students’ experiences which acknowledged that they were working within unfamiliar discourses, the response of many academics marking students’ work was to tell them that they needed to work on their “grammar”.

own reading of their own students' texts. This alternative construction thus has the potential both to challenge existing assumptions (cf. point 1 above) and to prompt the construction of new understandings (which may well differ from the understanding offered in this thesis). The alternative construction, I would argue, is particularly powerful because of the way in which it relates language to learning and demonstrates that many of the "problems" attributed to students' lack of language proficiency are, in fact, related to their conception of knowledge and to the way in which resilient common sense understandings of concepts are affirmed by discourses both inside and outside the university.

3. The description of students' resistance to pedagogy intended to "empower" and the identification of reasons contributing to that resistance has the potential to challenge educators' assumptions about "appropriate" learning outcomes for the courses they design. In setting course and programme outcomes, many tertiary educators have the aim of producing "people like us" in that they aim to produce students who think, talk and write as academics. In resisting the outcomes their lecturers had in mind, students in the philosophy class effectively denied the roles their lecturers had constructed for them. This thesis opens the way for questions to be asked about the relevance of teaching "academic" literacy to students who plan a future for themselves outside the university. Even more importantly, it contributes to the debate about the future of the university (see, for example, Lemmer, 1998; Ritzer, 1998) and provides insights into the role of students in determining the nature of the institution in the new millenium.

This thesis, then, has the potential to contribute to the process of re-curriculation at an important juncture in the history of South African higher education. That this contribution is not necessarily “critical” in the sense identified in Chapters One and Two of this thesis will be explored in 7.3 below.

### **7.3 A Contribution to the Understanding of “Critical” Pedagogy**

In Chapter One of this thesis, I described the way in which critical theories of education had informed the shift from *Academic Support* to *Academic Development*. In Chapter Two, I then described the way in which “critical” orientations to research underpinned what I termed “critical challenges to dominant ELT discourses”. In Chapter Three, I went on to describe how, in conducting the research on which this thesis is based, I aimed to produce “emancipatory” knowledge which, ultimately, would inform teaching and learning and which would thus constitute a “critical” pedagogy. In Chapter Six, the relationship between “emancipatory” knowledge and a transformed social order was called into question by my description of students’ resistance to the pedagogy that knowledge underpinned. The implications of students’ resistance for what, in Marxist terms, would constitute a “base-superstructure” understanding between pedagogy and social change were thus made apparent. Posited instead, was an understanding which constructed students as agents in the process of social transformation. That transformation did not have to be constructed for them by critical pedagogues. Rather, students succeeded in “naming” that transformation for themselves.

In an article which questions the “repressive myths” of critical pedagogy, Ellsworth (1989:301) points out that the literature on critical pedagogy assumes that “students and teachers can and should engage each other as fully rational subjects”. As a result of this assumption, the focus in the “critical” classroom is on getting learners to arrive at understandings that are considered to be universally valid using logic and reason. As Ellsworth, citing Aronowitz (1987:103), points out, however:

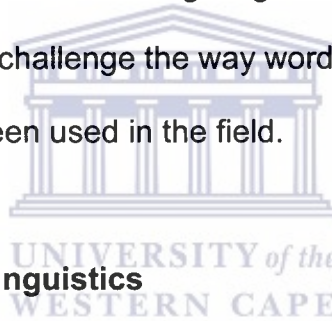
. . . poststructuralist thought is not bound to reason but “to discourse, literally narratives about the world that are admittedly *partial*. Indeed, one of the crucial features of discourse is the intimate tie between knowledge and interest, the latter being understood as a ‘standpoint’ from which to grasp ‘reality’”(p.304).

The idea, therefore, that critical pedagogy can lead to students acknowledging the universal critical “truths” which have already been acknowledged by their teacher is problematic since it privileges the teacher’s discourse over their own. As Ellsworth points out “critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change” (p.310). The result of this, for Ellsworth, is that critical pedagogy is, ultimately, as oppressive as the conditions it tries to change.

This thesis contributes to the understandings of critical pedagogy outlined above in the way it affirms Ellsworth’s understanding that the “voice” of the teacher does not represent a “truth” which is recognised by all parties in the class. For the students in the philosophy class, there was no recognition that the way their lecturers were encouraging them to learn was, ultimately, empowering. Rather, students affirmed

“other” ways of learning and “other” ways of relating to text which, from their standpoint(s), were more empowering than the ways their lecturers advocated. The thesis therefore provides an example other than Ellsworth’s and which contributes to a deeper understanding of what can constitute “critical” and “emancipatory” research and pedagogy.

This contribution to a deeper understanding of what can constitute “critical” and “emancipatory” research and pedagogy is particularly important for the field of Academic Development. As I pointed out in Chapter One, a great deal of practice in the field has been informed by critical theories of education and has looked to transform institutions and empower students. The insights generated by the account of students’ resistance to critical pedagogy challenge the way words such as “transform” and “empower” have traditionally been used in the field.



#### **7.4 Systemic Functional Linguistics**

The application of systemic functional linguistics to educational contexts has long been apparent. Bloor and Bloor (1995:220ff.), for example, describe how the systemic framework has been used to analyse scientific prose, identify the characteristics of what they term “valued” texts, inform language teaching and analyse the relationship between language and power. Much of this application has, however, involved the use of a systemic framework in “fine” linguistic analyses. This thesis differs from much previous work in that it uses the systemic framework to structure a broad thematic

analysis which is supported by the interviews and observation typical of ethnographic research. This sort of approach opens up the use of the systemic framework to researchers without a background in linguistics or applied linguistics and, in doing so, makes systemic functional linguistics more “accessible”. A broad thematic approach is not only suitable for text analysis but could also be applied to educational processes such as an examination of the way writing respondents’ comments (see 3.2.1.2 above) can help students to make ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This thesis began by surveying a number of critical challenges to dominant ELT discourses in order to frame the construction of three research questions: “How does the University of Zululand construct students’ literacy-related experiences?”, “Is there a way to understand students’ literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?” and “What is the educational significance of an alternative way of understanding students’ literacy-related experiences?”. In many respects, the thesis has not provided an answer to the third question since the description of students’ resistance to pedagogy which was intended to be “critical” in nature has opened the way for more inquiry into what could constitute “good” practice in South African universities at the beginning of the twenty first century. In questioning the assumption that “good” practice is “critical” practice, the thesis comes full circle in presenting a “critical” challenge to the Academic Development practitioners



who have long valued “critical” pedagogy and who would now do well to interrogate the ideologies underpinning their own practice.



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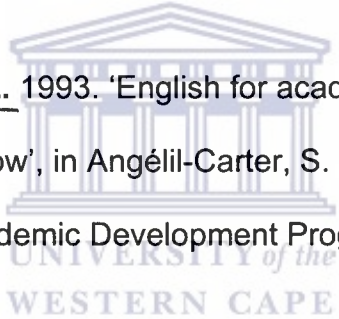
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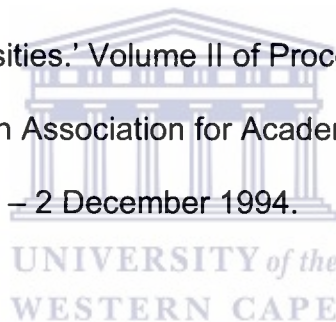
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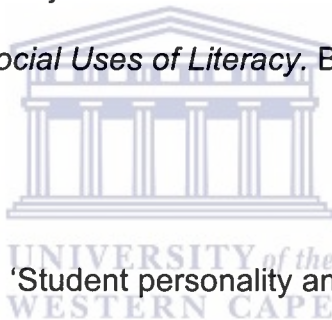
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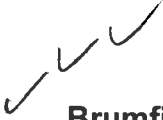


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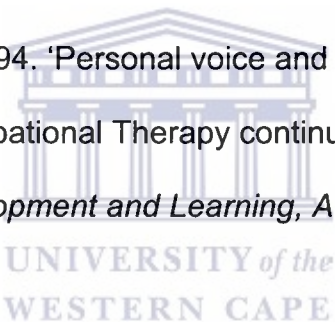
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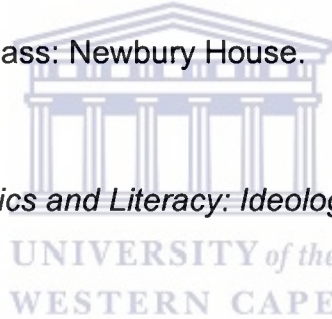
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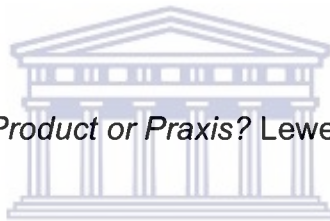
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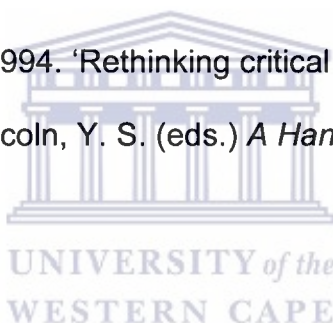
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## Appendices



## Appendix I

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List of documents examined in order to answer the question “How does the University of Zululand construct students’ literacy-related experiences?”.

1. *Agenda of Senate* and *Schedules of Senate* dating from 1960 to 1988. *Agenda of Senate* contain the Minutes of Senate meetings. *Schedules of Senate* contain documents which served before Senate and which are referred to in the Minutes. *Agenda of Senate* and *Schedules of Senate* are contained in bound volumes housed in the restricted stacks of the University of Zululand library.
2. Faculty Board documentation referred to in *Agenda of Senate*. Faculty Board documentation is also contained in bound volumes housed in the restricted stacks of the University of Zululand library.
3. Minutes of English Department Staff Meetings held during 1997.
4. Extant study and course guides:
  - *Language Laboratory Grammar Course* (n.d).
  - *Improve your Writing Skills* (n.d).
  - *First Year English AEN 115 & APE 115 Study Skills and Language Materials* (n.d.).
  - *English Department AEN 115 & APE 115 Language Skills Workbook* (n.d.).
  - *AEN & APE 115 Short Story Workbook* (n.d).
  - *AEN & APE 115 Poetry Workbook* (n.d).
  - Phelps, J.M., Bekker, H. & Vooght, J. 1995. *First Year English “Appearance and Reality.”*
  - Roberts, B., Macdonald, J.W. & Kast, C.N. 1995 *First Year English “Celebration.”*
  - Blatchford, M. 1995. *Department of English AEN 125 History.*
  - Hooper, M. 1995. *First Year English 2/1995. Reader for the Science English Grouping.*
  - Louw, P. 1995. *English for Law Students. Communication and Thinking Skills.*
  - Meihuizen, N.T.C. 1995. *English for First Year Performing Arts Students: A Source Book for Class Work.*
  - *Department of English AEN 125 Commerce AL14.* (n.d.).
  - *Essay-Writing Guide for the English Department.* 1997.
  - *Faculty of Education English Competence for Teachers Workbook 1a. Oral Communication in the Classroom.* 1995.

4. Archived AEN &APE 115 Examination Papers dating from 1984 onwards. Volumes of examination papers are bound from 1984 onwards and are housed on the open stacks of the University of Zululand library.
5. Departmental Quality Assurance Reports submitted in preparation for the Committee of University Principal's Quality Assurance Unit's audit of the University of Zululand in 1997.



## Appendix II

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Data collected and analysed in order to answer the second research question “Is there a way to understand students’ literacy-related experiences which is different to dominant understandings at the University of Zululand?”.

1. 80 students’ responses to the following questions set as a writing task:
  - i. What is a democracy?
  - ii. Is South Africa a democracy?
2. 71 students’ responses to the following questions set as a writing task:
  - i. What is the liberal idea of justice? What are the weaknesses of this idea? What is the Marxist idea of justice? What are the weaknesses of this idea?

as well as their responses to the following essay topic and accompanying rubric:

  - ii. Compare and contrast the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke. (Show how differences in their conception of human nature lead to differences in their conception of the legitimate power of government.”
3. “End-notes” from three groups of students. See Appendix III.
4. Formal interviews with three groups of students (approximately 23 in number). See Appendix IV.
5. Field notes taken during and after lectures in the first semester of the 1997 academic year.
6. Informal interviews with individual students and groups of students which occurred before, during or after lectures in the first semester of 1997. Details of these interviews were recorded in my field notes. Occasionally I was able to record the interviews.
7. Responses to two questionnaires administered to students in the first semester of the 1997 academic year. See Appendix V.
8. Responses to a paper presented at two seminars.
9. Discussions with staff members recorded in field notes.

## Appendix III

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A list of the questions used to elicit “end-notes” in the philosophy class along with the number of submissions for each “end-note” analysed for the purposes of this thesis.

“G” indicates that a response was required from an entire group and not from individual members of that group.

1. What is liberalism? (G)
2. Is it possible to give everyone equal opportunity? (G)
3. Why do doctors earn more than manual workers in South Africa? (G)
4. What are the principles of Marxism? (18)
5. Do you think that governments have the right to take from some to satisfy the needs of others? (G)
6. Would Marxism work in South Africa? (19)
7. What are the weaknesses of the Marxist system? (20)
8. Imagine what would happen if all the state "structures" (like the police force, the education system, the health care system, the system which takes away rubbish and provides fresh water) in KwaZulu-Natal suddenly disappeared. What would life in KwaZulu-Natal be like? (23)
9. How does Hobbes describe the state of nature? (22)
10. For Hobbes, why would the state of nature be a state of war? (G)
11. Do you agree with what Hobbes says about man's equality and desire for power? (20)
12. According to Hobbes, why would man agree to leave a state of nature? (11)
13. In a state of nature the fear of death would lead to man making a contract or series of promises. How would these promises end the state of war? (16)
14. Do you agree with Hobbes that men will accept any form of government in return for the security of their lives? (G)
15. According to Hobbes, what rights does a government have? How does he come to this conclusion? (14)
16. Hobbes and Locke both believed that all men are equal. Does equality mean the same thing to both philosophers? (8)
17. What do you understand by the terms “egocentric” and “altruistic”? (13)
18. According to Locke, why would a state of nature be peaceful but inconvenient? (11)
19. Think back to what you studied about Hobbes. How did Hobbes say that we come to own (and keep) property in a State of Nature? How does this compare to what Locke says? (G)
20. According to Locke, what are the limitations on what we can take from nature? If we cannot take from nature more than we can mix our labour with, does this mean that those who have the ability to work longer and harder than others can take more? (7)
21. What does Locke say about the way money can be used in the appropriation of property? (14)

22. How and why is Locke's description of a state of nature different to Hobbes'? (16)
23. According to Locke, why would man choose to leave a state of nature? (11)
24. According to Locke, what are the three functions of a just government? Where do these functions come from? (15)
25. According to Locke, why does man have a right to rebel against a government?  
Why doesn't man have a right to rebel against a government according to Hobbes? (10)
26. In South Africa there has been talk of the government nationalising (or taking ownership of) the mines. According to Locke, would this be within the power of a legitimate government? If not, why not? (G)
27. Would you prefer to live in a state where the government had unlimited power or where power was limited? (17)
28. Think about how religion could be said to work as a drug to dull the pain of the poor. What pain do the poor have? How does religion help them to suffer this pain? (9)
29. What is an ideology? Give examples. (G)
30. How does Macpherson argue that man is not egocentric? What does he have to say about Hobbes' claims that man is egocentric? (G)
31. According to Macpherson, how does Locke use money to justify the working of a free market capitalist system? (G)



## Appendix IV

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Group interview schedule and transcripts of two group interviews.

### Schedule

1. What sort of writing did you do at school?
2. How did you go about doing that writing?
3. What sort of responses did your teachers make to your writing?
4. What other writing have you done here at Unizul?
5. How do you go about writing here at Unizul?
6. What sort of marks do you get?
7. What do lecturers say to you about writing?
8. Is writing in philosophy different to writing in other courses?

### Interview with Group 1: 25 April 1997

CB = Chrissie Boughey, S1 = Student 1, S2 = Student 2 etc.

CB: I'd like you to go back to before you came to university and maybe for some of you that's a long time ago. I want you to tell me about the sort of things you wrote at school. What sort of things did your teachers ask you to write at school?

S1: Compositions. My teacher was the kind of teacher who wanted us to write a lot. He was an English teacher so he got us to improve our English second language so we did a lot of writing compositions.

CB: When you say "composition", give me an example of what you wrote. A topic that you wrote.

S1: A topic, I can't remember. Oh "My Childhood Memories" is a topic I wrote.

CB: And did you do things like history?

S1: No, I was doing Mathematics, Science and Biology. I wasn't familiar with the writing and studying but since I was doing sciences you see.

CB: What about you, what did you write at school?

S2: Assignments.

CB: What sort of assignments?

S2: Zulu assignments comparing two books.

CB: In Zulu?

S2: Yes, yes.

- CB: Anything else? Did you do history or . . .
- S2: Yes, I did history.
- CB: And what sort of things did they ask you in history?
- S2: I did also write assignments in history. Comparing two places where there is a war and a place where there is no war.
- CB: And when you wrote those assignments, how did you write them? Where did you get the information?
- S2: From the books.
- CB: So what did you do?
- S2: I have to read those books and then write what it is saying.
- CB: What about you? What did you do in school?
- S3: At school, the teacher English . . . the English teacher she used to give us composition like maybe "Tell me about yourself" and then I tell her but the thing I notice at school before the teacher give us the composition she will write on the blackboard and teach us about yourself. And then she will ask us to copy from the blackboard and then maybe after two weeks or one week, he will say "Write about yourself" and then we . . . according to whether we write what is on the blackboard she is going to write whether I will get ten out of ten. I didn't use my own ideas I copied from the blackboard or sometimes from the text book and I also do history at school. I do remember the teacher was teaching us about when Jan Van Riebeck came and then he teach us he write the notes on the blackboard. We have to copy them as he says. Nothing we have to change and when he want us to write these things about Jan Van Riebeck I'm going to give the same thing what he gave it to me. From here now at the university, I've learned a lot especially in the Systematic. We are not using the teacher's language. They want us to give our idea. That is how it was very difficult for me to get high marks in writing down the assignment just because I was so used of doing spoonfeed by the teachers. Now I struggle by myself to write what I know and what I also write from Systematic Philosophy that idea of let's say you have to make a pile of notes so that when you are writing your exam so that when you are writing your assignment you have to refer to these things but you are using your own ideas not from the teacher. If you are using from the teacher you get 0.
- CB: What about you? What did you write at school?
- S4: My problem is more or less the same that my sister because while I was at high school I was doing Bibs [Biblical Studies], biology, English, geography, Afrikaans. My teachers were used to saying that if he told you that here is a note if he asks you some questions during the test moments we are going to regurgitate what he spoonfeed you in the class. If you write at your own, he will write at the end of your writing "Where did you get this? Are you trying to make your own book? Why write on my own that's what I've given you in class?"
- CB: So the teacher actually punished you?
- S4: Yes, was punish me. I remember, I was writing a test on it was a test on . . . he was asking us to write about . . . I can't remember the title but I remember when I was writing my ideas about the viewers of the [indecipherable] communion of law (??) and I write my own that I was I was quoted to the Bible or to the prescribed books and then he said "It is not worthwhile that I

was given you to write I was giving you some notes. You must read it and say as it is." That is why I came across a big problem in Systematic Philosophy we have to write your own knowledge the one that you have think about not the one that you have taught by the teacher.

CB: So that's been a big thing. Is that the same for you two? Not the same . . .

S2: Some are the same.

CB: And what about you?

S1: In Systematic I don't have a problem with this because it's interesting me . . . I mean I'm the kind of person who like to read the papers now I get a lot of information from Systematic Philosophy . . . things like what is happening in our government you see. Now with that it's helped me a lot since I know that it's going to help me in understanding the kind of the government or those things I'm very much interested in it. I don't see any problems with that. It's interesting me.

CB: It's interesting you but was it the first time you'd done it? That you had to think for yourself and apply it to the government or . . .

S1: The first time since I came here in the university for registration . . . the first time I came in this class . . . I wasn't . . . I mean I didn't understand what they were actually doing but as the time went on I mean I managed to what they are doing as a result I got that . . . I was interested . . . I didn't encounter any problem since I was interested.

CB: What about other subjects? Do you have to write in other subjects?

(Agreement)

What sort of stuff?

S4: According to my own . . . as far as penology is concerned when I was coming for the first time the lecturer told me that the penology is about the study of punishment all various ways of offenses . . . no matter how much [indecipherable] the offender came across we have to generalise it as if this is the practical thing that you come across. Then that's where my mind came to grow up that I have to think for my own as far as the government is concerned nowadays. That is why I was able . . . because the penology and criminology is more or less the same courses. Penology is deal with punishment criminology is deal with crime. If I compare the crime of sentence I have to think which tool or mechanical that I am going to use in order to punish a certain offense. That is what made me to pass my courses.

CB: What about the rest of you?

S3: For me is different. [UZ department] is different. Mrs [UZ staff member] she teaches me [discipline]. And say if you give her any information from another book you can get 0. She says she needs his own idea. You mustn't take anything. Is differ from Systematic Philosophy. From Systematic Philosophy you are allowed to give your own idea but in Sociology you have to use . . . you are not allowed to use any ideas but only from Systematic that is how for me it is difficult for me to write the assignment just because I have to use my own knowledge whereas in other courses I must use the prescribed book to write assignment so if I even use I will get 0. But in Systematic I struggle by myself. It is quite difficult.

CB: So what you are saying then is that you have to learn to do different things for different subjects?



(Agreement)

S3: It's different. Even the way of writing the assignment is different.

CB: Tell me more. . .

S3: I can say it's quite different. I mean to say from Systematic you have to use your own knowledge and there is no prescribed books . . . That is how it is difficult for me to write an assignment. I don't have the [indecipherable] that is my problem really. In other courses it is easy because there are many types of books and certainly if they ask you to write the assignment they will tell you "Go and read from page 55 up to there. "

CB: And so, when you "Go and read from page 55 up to . . . page 80", what do you do then to write that assignment?

S3: Before I just copy it was . . . sometimes I will change there and there

(Laughter and agreement at strategy)

and she won't see that I have copied from the book. Maybe I will take the additional . . . maybe I will take . . . I will change "pre" and say "before" that is how I used to . . . using the easy words for myself.

CB: So when you copied from the book did you understand it?

S3: Sometimes I don't sometimes I just . . .

CB: So you just used the other words?

S3: Ya

CB: Without really . . .

S3: Without any knowledge that is how sometimes we are failing I have seen. That's because maybe you will get 70 in an assignment and you don't know what is all about in the assignment. But in Systematic I was very clever. I said "Oh Jesus. I write Systematic first he gave me only 38. I was angry but I go back and I read the assignment and you said "quoting from the book" - I copied from the study guide and then I said "Oh" the second one - I received my assignment I think it was Wednesday. I didn't sleep Wednesday night. I went to the class I take out my piles as Dr Wait told us to do. I refer and refer and refer until I get the correct . . . I write the assignment. I do it twice and I said "No, this one is number one" because I only use my knowledge now even the examples I change everything. I just use my knowledge then I get good marks and you even say "Well done." I am very . . .

CB: (To S1) You disagree. You haven't done that - copying from the book and changing words. Why not?

S1: If I remember the assignment I have recently written in Sociology. The topic was "Compare and contrast the division of labour in different societies" I mean we were given three books to refer to. The lecturer also told us that if we've got other books to refer to those books. I did look at those books I mean after I've written "Division of labour" that is the topic after I'd compared division of labour in a certain society . . . our lecturer, Mr [UZ staff member], gave us permission to acknowledge to quote from . . . after you have written what you understand about the division of labour you can get a quotation.

CB: But you were writing what you understood, not what you didn't understand?

S1: What I understood. Yes I wrote what I understood. Well I didn't understand was that quotation. Not that I didn't understand maybe other words were difficult . . . but not that I wouldn't take that quotation when I didn't understand it I took it when I did understand. Maybe some of the words in it were difficult.

But so as it is if you look at those quotations that are from Hobbes and Locke the words in there are difficult but you do understand them you can you . . . I mean you can write about a certain thing you make an example you say "Locke say how to acquire property." You understand that and then if you read the quotation you will see what Locke say about the acquire the property. Maybe some of the words you don't understand but you understand the whole.

CB: You understand the gist?

S1: The gist that's it.

CB: You know lecturers complain about your English? Is that true? Is it difficult to write in English?

(Agreement)

S2: I think we are not used to use dictionaries. Why we have to use it yet we are failing to use dictionaries.

CB: For example some people spell words, simple words, and they make a spelling mistake. Why is that?

S4: They must give you a spelling of right you always . . . to me this is the wrong spelling . . . but if I check it I don't know why am I wrong.

CB: Somebody spelt for example, I don't know if it was you, "right" as "wright"

S4: No this one for human right.

CB: Oh no, it wasn't the spelling. It was rights and opportunities I was questioning because rights and opportunities aren't the same. But for example there is one student who spelt r-i-g-h-t as w-r-i-g-h-t so we've got r-i-g-h-t or w-r-i-t-e but this student wrote w-r-i-g-h-t. Why do you think they make mistakes like that?

S3: The reason is that we are not used to English and the second is that we are very poor in grammar especially for me. Sometimes I am able to write the assignment but poor grammar.

CB: But you see I don't agree because I remember reading your essay and thinking "This woman writes very well . . . the language is flowing like a river."

S3: Oh how I struggle. I didn't sleep for two days really! It took everything . . . I put it down. It was hard. Difficult, difficult. When it comes to write it down it is difficult.

S4: I think my problem is because of the manner of approach . . . I lack a lot.

CB: Explain some more.

S4: Even if I have something that you ask . . . I have an idea of it but even if . . . the process of writing I am usually lost.

CB: Why?

S4: Because sometimes I don't know where to start. I don't know how I am going to put this thing we have been asked to although I have an idea of it.

CB: So you don't know how to put it into an order, to organise it?

(Agreement)

S2: You can answer that question but you don't know how to write it down.

CB: But that 's true for me also. I mean I write a lot . . . I'm older than you and I still find it very difficult to write. I sit for hours writing something. It never goes away. It's always difficult.

S4: How come because it's your mother language?

CB: It's still difficult. It's still difficult to see how the ideas link to each other. I don't

have a problem writing in English but what I do have a problem with is saying this idea comes first and this idea joins to it like this but what comes next what do I say next? Do I say this or this or this or this? It's trying to . . . it's all messy . . . it's all over the place and I have to get it into a straight neat form and that for me is still very difficult.

S1: For myself, whenever I write even when I write in Zulu, say for instance I am writing a letter to my friend. I first write it roughly and thereafter I rewrite it looking at the mistakes that I've made because even in Zulu you still do make mistakes. You didn't put . . .

S2: Punctuation

S1: Yes things like that. I do make mistakes. But I don't think it's my English in Philosophy because when I'm writing in English I'm poor in speaking English I'm not good but I'm writing I can think . . . I've got a time to think to refer to the dictionary to look up the meaning of the word . . . I've got lots of time I don't think it's a big problems in English the problem is that maybe I because I do not re-write it . . .

S2: I think that's a big problem. I'm telling you even myself when I write those things as I said I've got to re-write because I do make those mistakes.

CB: What other problems do you have in Systematic?

S4: Is there any other venue not in the chapel?

CB: I don't think so . . . not that 200 students will fit in to. I agree that's a big problem that we don't have a good venue with a lot of blackboard that you can write on.

S4: In what ways are you expecting us to write . . . like essays?

CB: You mean what formats do we want you to write in?

S4: Yes.

CB: OK . . . We want you to be able to show us you understand by showing us that you understand how the ideas join together. It's like making a chain . . . you know a chain that links? Like that. Each one of those is an idea and each one of those are joined together like that. Now many students . . . they tell me one thing and then they tell me another thing and I'm thinking "How do these ideas join together?"

S3: Yeah but sometimes they don't understand the content . . .

CB: They don't understand the content?

S1: I mean . . . it's because they don't understand the content.

(Agreement)

CB: So for example the frequent one is that students would go through Hobbes and Locke and then they would talk about the contract and then they would talk about the reasons for leaving the State of Nature. But first of all man has reasons for leaving the State of Nature then he makes the contract and they just throw them in anywhere or they begin by talking about the legitimate rights of government then they talk about this then they talk about that and for that it's difficult for me to read.

S1: They don't understand.

CB: So you think it's because they don't understand?

(Agreement)

S1: I wish I was good in English then I would try to teach them. Unfortunately this is my problem I have been teaching students Systematic Philosophy. They

have been telling me that they didn't understand it but only now they understand it. They only problem with Philosophy is that they don't understand it. I don't think they don't understand the language that is English . . . maybe you've got to try another ways of teaching it. For instance, Mr Wait one of the problems they've told me they get when Mr Wait is lecturing say for instance when he talks about acquisition of property, they don't want that because it confuse them because if they both speak about it at the same time. It's better if Mr Wait would say "Hobbes talk about this and this and this" and that's all and then "Let's go to Locke" and talk about this and this and this.

CB: But didn't he do that the first time?

S4: Usually he makes it.

CB: I thought the first time, he told you the story of Hobbes then he told you the story of Locke then he went back and he started the comparison.

S1: Yeah I mean . . .

CB: So you think people write things badly because they don't understand?

S2: No the problem is that Systematic has got no books . . . all students

CB: What about the study guide?

S2: We do follow the study guide. What I am saying is that some do understand in the class but some do understand when they are studying alone. So you've got to sit down and get the knowledge . . .

S3: . . . and then submitting it what you say. Let me take Oedipus. We do have a prescribed book for Oedipus and also have the study guide. It means from the study guide they are summarising what is happening from Oedipus so as I told you that is our background that we want to be spoonfeed we don't want to study by ourselves we need the lecturers to do everything by us.

CB: But don't you think the Philosophy study guide did that? Because Dr Wait & I wrote the study guide together sitting here so he took everything Hobbes said and everything Locke said and we tried to summarise it for you. So we gave you the story of Hobbes and the story of Locke and then we asked you, the students, to make the comparison.

S3: We are penalised today . . . you know what our problem is we didn't start from page 1 . . . let's say you are interested to look at the State of Nature . . .

CB: You just looked at the State of Nature

S3: We just jump from the State of Nature unknowing what is happening in the nature as a whole. So today I'll start from the Nature of Man and then I went to the State of Nature and then to why people leave the State of Nature all these things so I know how to link them . . .

CB: OK because Hobbes and Locke had those links and you don't think the people read the links.

S4: We didn't realise there is a link. We simply studied because we see it.

S3: Yeah we want to [indecipherable] things that is our problem.

S1: And the other problem when Wait is speaking they just write and don't hear and don't understand what he is saying. What I do and I told this system . . . she mustn't write what Mr Wait is saying but she must first understand it and write it according to her understanding. I believe it I mean that's how one can understand Philosophy if he does not write what is said but what he understands.

- CB: Yeah because we are only checking . . . the only thing we can give you marks for is your understanding so when we mark we are just looking "How much does this student understand?" because you could teach a bird to speak, to repeat so we are looking for how much you understand. Can I ask you another question? You write in all the subjects and often you get bad marks, how do you feel when you get a bad mark? You've told me you don't sleep?
- S3: Yes I don't sleep but now I can show you I am getting high marks. My friends say I am clever and I say "No I am not clever it is because Systematic helps me." I don't use the book, I also give them my opinion.
- CB: Yes but do you ever get a mark and you don't know what to do? So . . .  
(Agreement)  
So you get a mark and you think "Why have I only got this many?" And then you don't know what to do? And what do you do then?
- S3: You go to your friends maybe to help you or sometimes you will say "I don't know what sometimes I copy the same thing, I get high marks" and then maybe I said "Maybe it is because my handwriting is not nice" and that is how I get low marks. We both copy from the book but when the marks come she's going to get high maybe I'll get low. And sometimes they don't even show you where is your mistake that's what worries me. They don't tell you where is your mistake but from Systematic you can see.
- CB: Did you read this? Remember we gave you that? Did you read it?  
(Feedback sheet from EW). Many students didn't read it. Why do you think they didn't read it?
- S3: They don't understand . . . they don't have time. Other people . . . they don't like to read. The thing is we do have so much things to do we are committed we are committed. Specially in Systematic. Every day we must submit the "end-notes." Also from other courses you must submit this thing and write this thing another assignment . . . so if they give us something to read we say "Oh no, no one is going to ask me about this thing . . . maybe when I'm going to have better I'll read this thing". . . Maybe you forget to read.
- S2: I forgot to read it.
- CB: You forgot to read it!
- S2: (Laughing) Yes! I won't lie.
- S1: I mean really we see Mr Wait and yourself you are trying to help us you are trying to develop thinking. I think something you must also develop in your students that is reading . . . develop skills of reading. I mean when I think of Philosophy, before even Professor Wait taught us I have already read McPherson.
- CB: You read it in the study guide?
- S1: Yes, I was through with the study guide and I waited for him to clarify . . . in fact I did understand it partly but after Mr Wait have tried to analysed what is in the study guide I have got more knowledge. What you have got to develop in your students now is this skill of reading.
- CB: Do you read? You don't read?
- S3: No time for reading. Instead of reading we have to do the other courses . . .
- S2: Assignments!
- CB: Do you read the newspaper?  
(Agreement)

- S3: I read the newspaper.
- S1: I love reading newspapers . . . because I love my country. I love the politicians of this country and I like their knowledge, their wisdom.
- CB: Did you always read when you were young?
- S1: Yes, I used to read a lot.
- S3: I used to read but sometimes my Mum used to read for me. Take a story . . . read a story even my sisters but the reason why I like to read newspaper, I want to improve my language. Sometimes I say to myself "How am I going to study in that class if I can't even know how to express myself?" So I even ask my husband and he says "The way you can improve is read the newspaper and try to practise English don't talk in Zulu. You must get used of speaking English." That is how sometimes I do it.
- S1: But I don't think you will ever solve this problem of understanding.
- CB: Do you remember when Dr Wait gave you that essay, can you remember he told you to write about 10 pages? What did you feel like?
- S4: Afraid.
- CB: And how did you write the first time?
- S4: I was trying to follow the previous study guide. The study guide for last year.
- CB: And so you were just taking the information from that?
- S4: We copied it. And we got 0.
- CB: So you learnt a lesson! And then what did you do?
- S4: I tried to write it and then I got the less mark and then I say "It is because I am no longer talented." I started to say "I am not good in Philosophy". But now I have some knowledge about this but my problem is my semester mark because I know will get . . . the problem is that my semester mark is lowest. How can I improve my semester mark now because it's too late?
- CB: You can write it again. If you want to you can write it again.
- S4: OK I'll try.
- S4: Why don't you do what our teachers do in the high school? If they teach us today the next day they will ask us questions?
- CB: Doesn't Professor Wait do that?
- S4: To revise the work.
- S3: Yes sometimes he does . . . sometimes he answers by himself and sometimes they don't even project . . . if he answering Dr Wait he doesn't shout. He is selfish. It's very bad. Sometimes I say "Why don't he tell the students to raise up their voice so we are all going to hear?" Even I only realise today that he can talk loud. In chapel he don't talk loud.
- S1: It's time. They are outside.
- CB: Yes, I'm sorry, I've made you late. . .

## Group 2: Interview 29 April 1997

Ch = Chrissie Boughey, S1 = Student 1, S2 = Student 2 etc.

- CB: Tell me, when you were at school . . . what sort of things did the teachers ask you to write?
- S1: The teachers were just asking us the questions but not teaching us how to

write some questions, essays and some assignments. They simply give us some topics and we took those topics to the home and we write them.

CB: Give me an example of a topic.

S1: In history for instance, they talk about "The Rise of the Peasants in France." They just give us the questions so as to memorise the work.

CB: So they wrote it on the board?

S1: Yes, they wrote on the board and we simply copy and write them and we simply take the [indecipherable] straight from the board from those books which are prescribed and bring information. It seems that we are just memorising.

CB: So, how did you get on in your matric exam? When you actually did the exam and there were questions on the page, how did you do those questions?

S1: In fact it was not so difficult because we were just repeating everything that we have learned in the classroom during the period, the time when they were teaching us. But we are . . . I found the problem that if the questions that were set from the Pretoria were differ from those of our teachers that is our big problem we faced.

CB: So what happened when you saw a different question on the paper to the one your teacher had given you and you had memorised?

S1: I was just thinking how to tackle that question and it was difficult to me.

CB: What grade did you get in matric?

S1: I got my exemption but it is because sometimes the questions were difficult because sometimes we were not having good teachers so we used to go and attend the other schools during the weekends that's why we had some difficulties.

CB: So is it true to say that before you came to university you had never completely on your own written an essay?

S1: Yes.

CB: It's true?

S1: It's true.

CB: OK. What about the rest of you? Was it like this for you? . . .

S2: Well in fact they used to give us a sort of homework. Maybe you find the teacher don't pay much attention to how to write the homework. They just stand in front of you and ask the answer for the question 1 and you raise up your hand and then you answer him and he says, "Mark it right" or "Mark it wrong", which means that they don't have the time to look on your writing. They just want to understand whether you answer it or you didn't. If you didn't they don't take any steps or . . . any measures to find out why you didn't write they just say "OK you didn't write . . . it's up to you, you won't pass at the end of the year. And then this will remain on your conscious. And it's up to you whether you write or not." Teachers they just give you work and just stand in front of you and they say, "Tick it. Correct it"

CB: And they were giving you questions to write?

S2: Yes.

CB: And did you ever write an essay . . . an assignment?

S2: Yes. I did. In Std X I was doing General Subject. We used to come across something like the essay especially in the test . . . no assignments. Or

sometimes . . . occasionally . . . but we used to come across something like this especially when you written a test.

CB: And can you remember any titles that you had to write?

S2: I remember one day my teacher used to tell me “A journey that you will never forget in your life” and then I tried to convince him and tell him that my mother was going to go forth to Durban to visit Durban and we were travelling by train and so I told him that it was the first time to be on a train so I was very much excited . . .

CB: OK. Did you ever, for example, have to write an essay saying “Compare and contrast” something?

S2: Well I don't remember very well. Sometimes they did say to compare the rural areas and what . . . the urban areas . . . although it was difficult for me to compare because I was not familiar to urban life. I only stay in the rural area. So when I tried my essay. . . we wrote and then they wrote back something to correct like spelling and maybe we used the wrong phrase so they underlining with red pen so you can see where you made a mistake and wrong spelling.

CB: What about the rest of you? What did your teachers get you to write at school?

S3: The rules of writing or the things I am supposed to write.

CB: The things you are supposed to write?

S3: OK. The first thing they taught me to write is the thing called the essay in a logical order, in a chronological order or in a chronological manner and the thing that I am writing it must be a logic thing. It must be logic.

CB: And how did they teach you to make something logical?

S3: To make logical? By arranging the aspects in a chronological way. For example, when we are writing history we are using years and an event took place in 1919, another one in 1920 you see it that way.

CB: OK. And can you remember the titles of any essays that you wrote?

S3: Titles. Let me think . . . “The Breaking of the Shackles of Versailles” when Hitler came to power. Then we were told that the first thing that he done you see he break the shackles of Versailles, the terms that were imposed to Germany so as to free Germany from those shackles then he break them all.

CB: And they told you you must write that in chronological order

S3: Yes in 1933, what did he done, in 1935 you see all those things.

CB: When the teacher took your essay, what sort of mistakes did they mark in it? What did they tell you to do again for corrections?

S3: For corrections? Maybe it was language as you know that language is not our mother tongue. The first thing was language. The tenses to be written correct and the years to be written in a chronological order.

CB: OK. Now tell me about your other subjects here at Unizul. Did they ask you to write in those subjects? Write essays?

S1: Essays? Yes, yes but they take as if we know how to write some essays and the assignments and they didn't show us . . . they did not show us the way how to write the assignments. But later on through the experience we have experienced at the university I find some ways of writing these assignments and essays.

CB: What are those ways you've found of writing?

S1: Firstly I was not familiar with the table of contents, the bibliography even how



- to arrange the work. I was not familiar.
- CB: How do you understand the “arrangement” of your work? How do you understand that you should arrange your work?
- S1: Through I can say also in Systematic I have learned a lot to arrange the work. I've seen some ways . . . that there must be a link when writing something . . . some work.
- CB: And you didn't know that before?
- S1: No.
- CB: So how did you write? If you didn't know there was a link, how did you write?
- S1: I was just writing . . . just writing . . . putting the information, all the information that I know.
- CB: As it came into your head? You just wrote it?
- S1: Yes, yes.
- CB: And now you know that there must be a link between things?
- S1: Yes, now I know that there must be a link between the things that I wrote but although it is difficult to say I am perfect in writing, but it is not the same as before. Yes, but I am still trying to progress.
- CB: So when you were doing the first year subjects, last year, you didn't know how to write, nobody helped you to write so you just did what? You . . . you wrote things as they came into your head?
- S1: Yes.
- CB: Is that true for the rest of you? Did you know that you had to make links between things or did you just write what came into your head?
- [Silence. S2 translates into Zulu. Agreement follows]
- CB: When you first came to university, what sort of marks did you get?
- S1: For writing?
- CB: Yes.
- S1: Last year. . . eh . . . the marks are it's not easy to say it was so good because I was just afraid of writing, shivering . . . the first time in the university everything was not clear to me but I tried by all means to . . . get more than 50% . . . 60% upwards. But because of the experience I was not having by that time . . . it is not easy to me to say my work was excellent.
- CB: When lecturers gave back your work, did they write comments on it?
- S1: Yeah.
- CB: And how did you . . . were those comments good? Did they help you? What were they like?
- S1: Sometimes they simply write the percentage. Sometimes they write the comments but if I can follow those comments I was just improving but sometimes they did not give you the opportunity to redo the writing the writing that we've done.
- CB: You re-wrote this time didn't you, in philosophy?
- S1: Yes.
- CB: What was your first mark?
- S1: My first mark was let me to remember now . . . but I . . .
- CB: And then you re-wrote?
- S1: Yes.
- CB: And did you use the Professor's comments?
- S1: Yes I did.

- CB: What . . . ? Can you remember which comments he told you?
- S1: The Professor put some comments and when writing “therefore”, “therefore” it means that it should be . . . it seems there is a conclusion now.
- CB: The result?
- S1: The result. And the Prof . . . when reading those comments, I saw my mistakes and I simply tried about those mistakes and then I re-write my assignment and he gave good marks. But I can say it is good the way Systematic runs . . . really it’s good.
- CB: Why? Why is philosophy good?
- S2: I can say . . . we are not memorising when studying . . . we have to come with some ideas and looking inside the mind of ourselves but we find that when compared to other subjects there is no “Name three functions” . . . “Three characteristics” . . . so it seems that we are just cramming but in this course we have to understand the work that we are given . . . we have to come with some ideas and developing our minds.  
[Knock at door. Another student arrives]
- CB: Come in, come in. Here. Sit here. What about the rest of you? Have you had that experience? Is philosophy different to other subjects. Is writing in philosophy different to writing in other subjects?
- S4: Yes. . . it is a matter of cramming a matter of memorising the work that we have been given but if I compare that to this philosophy, I have to . . . I got to distinguish that it is not the same because I have my use my own words . . . I have to analyse in my own words and to get the information not from . . . to add the information and ideas that I am just thinking . . . so if ever it happened that the information . . .
- (Another student arrives)
- S1: I can just that when talking about . . . I am supposed to come with some ideas that I’ve been experiencing outside the campus or outside the class. And trying to outline those experiences I came with so I think it’s not a matter of memorising and cramming the words word by word but it’s a matter of understanding how . . . you understand the information.
- CB: How do the others find it? Do you agree or not?
- S2: Yes I totally agree with my colleague because you see when you are studying philosophy, there is more of your own understanding you have to deep think and you have to collect information there and then and then put them together then look around to the life experience here at the present moment then you can now try to compare the kind of life we are leading now and the kind of life during the philosophers’ times. Then I couldn’t talk to those philosophers. In fact they are talking something which is exactly true. Because if you look at the way the government at the present moment some of their ideas are even applied to that government.
- CB: [To new student] Tell me, I asked earlier about the sort of things the others were writing at school. Can you remember the sort of things your teachers asked you to write at school?
- S5: Yes, some I do remember. Like English . . . when we were doing grammar, also literature I do remember some of them because of the situation here at the university maybe some of the things are [indecipherable] later on because it requires of your own ideas more of your own strength to learn.

- CB: When you did, say, English literature at school, did your teacher ask you to write something from your own head?
- S5: Yes but sometimes they want something which comes exactly from the book because you know English guides you that you must go on that path taking your own way yes if it applies to that kind of story or what yes they do agree with you but they need more, something from the book.
- CB: So when you came to university was it like that? Could you stick to the book?
- S5: No, no.
- CB: So, what did that do to your writing?
- S5: In fact it does improve my writing . . . there is little bit of my writing skills which need to be improved in fact and here the kind of situation we are in here at this university it gives me some more techniques and more skills in writing.
- CB: What do you think the techniques and skills that you've learned are?
- S5: Here at university?
- CB: Yes.
- S5: I mean first of all the technique to write. First of all I must take the notes and put them together and compile them and put them together make something solid, something one . . . one pile. Then must create some more images of what I've been taught by the teacher or the lecturer.
- CB: What do you mean by "images"?
- S5: I mean like in Philosophy they said "you get what you deserve". I must stress that . . . try to understand the word "deserve" . . . What does the word "deserve" mean and try to know what the lecturer is trying to tell us by the word "you get what you deserve". So I must try to understand that and then make some image of what the word "deserve" mean . . . like here in South Africa at the present moment you work . . . you go to school . . . as I am here at university and then I must learn as hard as I can and get my degree and then I'll go to the government and then I'll be employed by the government and then I work . . . I'll get what I deserve according to my education.
- CB: Because your hard work will be rewarded?
- S1: To add to this. The other skill that I do remember is to first write the work that you've been given. First write it and then again and again reading it and then you just . . . you simply take that work you have written and submit it to the lecturer. And then the lecturer will just see before you submit the real assignment you have rework your assignment sort of a draft and just submit it to the lecturer . . . they will not refuse to take your information . . . the draft of your work. And then when they give it back you will see the comments and the mistakes that you have made and you simply avoid those mistakes.
- CB: Do other lecturers do that for you . . . not only Professor Wait? Do they take a draft?
- S1: We had a problem with other lecturers because we are too many but Professor Wait can afford to look on our work each and every person.
- CB: How many is too many? Which other subjects do you do?
- S5: I'm doing English 2 as well as Zulu and in Zulu we are 1200.
- CB: In English 2 did you do that essay on "The Flavours of Exile"?
- S5: Yes I do.
- CB: You had a chance there, didn't you, to give a draft in?

- S5: Yes. We submitted the first draft then they corrected the mistakes and bring it back to us. That's it. Then I go for the second draft . . . for the final draft and then I did it. I don't know whether it's good or bad because it doesn't come back yet.
- CB: When you write, do you have a picture in your head of the lecturer? Are you writing to please your lecturer.
- S1: No, really we are writing the work to please others we try to remember what [Unizul staff member] said I must write according to that . . . just writing.
- S5: Sometimes you even remember an example which the lecturer does make in the class and you say "Oh Professor Wait said like this" and you put it like this. Usually it won't be the same as the lecturer.
- S1: Yes, let's make an example of when Prof. van Wyk gave something and if we take the State of Nature and Professor Wait gave us the example of picking oranges it is not just to say "picking the oranges and leave for others" you make your own example not that information that example which you have been given by the lecturer because it is his example but you are supposed to come with your own example. Let's say you have to pick the apples instead of the oranges it seems as if you are thinking . . .
- S5: Ya, ya . . . it requires more of your deep thinking. Maybe even don't make with something like fruits. You just create your own example like a person who is educated and he requires . . . his requirements fits in every post so he must not take all those posts because his education fits those posts he must leave other posts for the other people so that they can earn their living.
- CB: Suppose you had a son now who was doing Matric, Std. IX, Std. X. What would you want your son to study, to learn at school that would prepare him for coming to university? . . . So suppose you were back then or you were teachers now with your experience of being at universities, what would you teach to students now that your teachers didn't teach you?
- S2: Let me take myself now as if I am a teacher. I supposed not to be . . . to tell the students, the scholars to cram the work. But I must . . . there are certain ways to grow the students that the students fall into this category and then I must just make competitions among those students to encourage them to work more than before then other things that I must know is to develop the skills to the students not just to fit the information. I must tell them to go outside and come with other information but if it may happen that they fail to do that but I must try as a teacher to re-teach the ways of getting information or improving their standard of learning because some other students or some other scholars are deeper, some slow learners and some are half dead so it is not easy with the teacher to see that this student does not work. But I can see that this one do understand the work but then I must see and try to follow that work.
- S5: To add what he has said. First we have to encourage the government to make some more schools so students can be more allocated in numbers and the teacher in the class should have few students in the class so they are checking . . . so that they will be able to see that student lacks there and there and there so I must help the students so that he can afford to pass.
- CB: Can I ask you a question? What's it like sitting in a big class? In philosophy you sit in a class of about 170. Do you feel Professor Wait knows you? Does

- he recognise your face? Does he know what problems you are having? Does he know who understands and who doesn't understand?
- S5: To be in a big class it is really a big problem. Sometimes you . . . it's not clear . . . Maybe Professor will teach something, maybe you haven't hear clear what was trying to explain . . . maybe because of time . . . running out of time and maybe he's going fast and then I failed to say "Stop Professor! Let me hear what you are trying to say." Maybe I just lose it in that way.
- CB: When he asks questions, you know he asks questions? Well some people answer but not many people answer. Why is it difficult to answer?
- S1: The other problem if we are in a big class is some students are shy so as to rise up their voices and to try . . . to try . . . to try but they simply keep themselves why they are having problems that are not speak but only to find that if you know you have got a problem you must try by your own means to rise up your hand.
- S5: Another thing in university we are very much free to come to the lecture we are free after to come and ask for help. I think I can argue with my colleague that some students are very much shy and that result in the failure of the students.
- CB: Are you first year or second year?
- S5: (Indecipherable)
- CB: You're second year. . . so you'd written essays last year so when you had to write the big Hobbes & Locke essay which many people wrote about 10 pages . Had you done something like that . . . something that big, before?
- S5: No I hadn't, because even at high school level I was doing computer and typing and biology requires something from the book so I haven't done history and the likes that require big essays like the one that Professor Wait gave us. It was very, very much difficult for me . . .
- CB: Tell me how you did it? What did you do to write that big essay?
- S5: I collected some notes . . . "end-notes."
- CB: You did the "end-notes"?
- S5: Yeah, I did the "end-notes." Then I collected them and tried to make first of all to correct the mistakes in the "end-notes" then make the picture of what I'm supposed to be doing when I'm doing the big essay. Then try to everything what Professor Wait had been teaching me about men that's where I tried to write that essay.
- CB: And when you . . . you got a mark for that with comments and then did you re-write again?
- S5: Yes I did.
- CB: And how did you re-write?
- S5: With a little bit of improvment and when I was re-writing it I go to the other guys who are doing Philosophy 2 and I ask for their help and they helped me a lot and one of my brothers who is . . . I can' remember his name, who is doing Philosophy 3, yes he helped me a lot.
- CB: Did you read this? Remember the sheets that were printed out?
- S5: Yes . . . the sheet did a lot of work for me.
- CB: You see some students didn't read that. Often students come here and I say to them "Can you remember on the sheet?" and they haven't read it. Can you think why they might not have read it?

- S5: Some students are very much lazy . . . There is laziness because how can a lecturer give you something and say "Go and read it" so that you can make the work correct and you don't read that but you want to get something get some good marks . . . Yes I can say it is laziness. I don't know whether my colleagues??  
(Agreement)
- CB: Let me ask one last question. If you could ask the university to do anything to help you with your writing, what would you ask the university to do? How would you help first year students coming in with the writing?
- S1: I think the university . . . to come to the university is not easy for a first year student so they must just show the students . . . the Student Guidance Committee . . . they must . . . they are supposed to offer some Student Guidance Committee not just one person because you can't just work one person with three thousand people coming with different problems because even if I like to go to the Student Guidance Committee only to find that I wait there about 30 minutes because they are helping other students only to find that I must go now to attend my class. I think it is good if each and every in every department there is guidance.
- CB: What would the Guidance people talk to you about? Academic problems or personal problems?
- S5: It depends both of them academical problems and personal problems . . . you don't have money, you don't know who is going to pay for you. Sometimes they do some means to help you and advise you there and then.
- S3: Most of the students it is very difficult because they are shy first of all . . . they are afraid and they see those second year students and third year just coming with everyday easier, easier and they ask themselves "How could they do this?" And they are very shy with them . . . to tell them they don't know what to do to tell them they don't know where guidance and so many other things.
- S1: Some students come with confidentiality but only to find that they are not confident with what they are doing and they ask the senior students and the senior students say "Oh don't take that course, you mustn't do it." Because if they do that subject and you just follow them you will be in danger.
- S5: You see when I was busy registering this year I said to this other guy "I am going to register ASP115" and he said "Don't register that course, you mustn't go there." And I asked him why. He said "ASP 115 is very very difficult." And I said to "How? Are there some games some techniques that they want me? And I said "I want to fail. I'll attempt it so that I'll even fail myself and I'll prove that ASP 115 is difficult." But I am surprised I got 58 DP. 58% and I'm very much happy.
- CB: How have you experienced 115, why is it different?
- S5: I mean it's not that much difficult because when you give yourself enough time, try to study and every single unit of work you've done it's very much easy.
- S6: But it's difficult for first year students to come to the university because even myself I am one of these students who were confused because I knew in the university I am only going to do Paed. Education. I was not familiar that there are some special words . . . And so on and so on and the subjects that are

- offered at university. I know the subjects that we are doing at previous schools . . . but only to find it was not usual to see Systematic and psychology and only to find that I was confused.
- S5: You see when you come to the library and you see the notice board and you see the notice board and you see "ASP" and you say "What is ASP?" You see the government we have been living under was only offering us a little bit of information. Now when we come to the university to the tertiary level, we start to see different things and we become shy to take them and sometimes we even fail not because we don't know them . . .
- S1: You won't believe this year I found one of the students here at the university. He was standing there at the gate . . . and he says "How to study the timetable? What are these courses?" And he was afraid of telling other people that he was confused to . . . only to find that if, for argument's sake, this is sociology, "What is it all about? "What is sociology?" He could not . . . to be confident in the university during the first semester. I must just be confident. Do my work. Not waiting for the one to come after myself.
- CB: Often, I get pieces of work where students have copied. They have copied from the study guide or they have been to the library and I sometimes feel very bad because they have been to the library and I know they have spent a lot of time copying from books, looking in books, copying from books. And then I have to say "Sorry, I can't reward you for copying other people's work." Why haven't you ever copied? Why do you have this idea that it's about getting your own picture, getting your own image? Why didn't you copy?
- S1: Because if you are just copying the work from other books you are not showing your own idea or your own understanding of work you are just stealing the information of other people I can say you are just stealing because have been given time to do your work or to try to compile your own work.
- CB: Is that why you think people copy because they haven't taken the time to do their own work?
- S5: Yes. I think they don't listen in the class. Sometimes Professor Wait give us an assignment. When it is time to do your assignment alone, you don't have notes, you don't have anything not even a study guide. When it is time to submit the assignment you go and buy the study guide go and copy everything from the study guide because you don't know anything. You don't have knowledge. You don't know anything. That's why . . .
- S1: But it's danger to there are even some students who are using some words and saying you "bunk" you are "bunking that class" . . . it means I am not going to attend the class . . . So those bunkers are trying to justify the way they are upset in the classroom so they say "I bunk."
- S5: That's why when it comes to the assignment writing, they have problems.
- S1: You can't just work while you are not attending the class . . . If you are attending the class it means that each and every information, each and every advice that you are given by the lecturer you write down and then you are trying to work with it rather than sitting at home around the campus talking . . . doing everything only to find that no-one is going to look after you . . .
- S5: I have an example for that. I know one of the ladies who maybe attend the class since we have been coming from the holidays once! Once! And she is

crying now. She asked me "How did you manage to get such a DP?" And I said "I've been attending the class" and I give myself enough time to think and do the job as Professor Wait advised.

S1: And the only thing concerning your teaching . . . you rehearse the work. . .

S5: It's like a redundancy. . .

S1: You repeat the work.

CB: Do you like that?

(Agreement)

S1: Yes we like that. Even if you are a slow learner you are able to get information and understand the work rather than saying "Take Chapter 4, "Take Chapter. . ."

S5: You see with other lecturers a chapter is only 30 minutes . . . it's just quick, quick, quick . . .

CB: And they actually lecture from the book?

S5: Yes!

S1: And some lecturers they say tututututu [imitating reading aloud].

CB: They read aloud?

S1: Yes! There is no need to attend the classroom. If they just come to the classroom and just read the information as it is . . .

S5: They don't give you the example. They must raise such an example like that. They just read the book as it is.

S1: And the only thing for the students is to cram

S5: They go and cram. And they want it word by word, comma by comma.

CB: Really?

S5: Yes!

CB: So it must be quite difficult, then, knowing that this lecturer wants it like this word by word, comma by comma but this lecturer doesn't . . . this lecturer wants me to think to get my own . . . images. So can you work out which lecturer wants what?

S1: The one that information . . . the one the information. . . developed . . . rather than saying "OK, let's open our books on page 54" and read throughout the period without any information any explanation. . .

S5: And that creates students who dislike that lecturer and even commit this bunking because it's boring because they just listen to the lecturer . . . There are no examples . . . the book as it is the out of the class.

S1: Some students say "How many words have you underlined today? Some lecturers say "Chapter 4, Chapter 6, paragraph number 3." Without any information you can't just come out with that information. If I can just ask a question on the work that we have been given you can't explain the work to other people who are not in the classroom because you are just the same as those who were absent.

S1: The other thing that is helpful if lecturers are friendly to the students not that they are so much linked to them but if they are friendly the students will cope with them, do their work . . .

CB: Do you think lecturers are not friendly?

S5: Some are not friendly.

S1: Like I was doing Pedagogics last year and I go and ask another lecturer and said "I don't understand." And he said "It's for you to consult your books." Eh,



I was surprised. But you see it is interesting to go to philosophy because you play . . . the lecturer makes the situation like we are playing in the class. The lecturer wants some arguments there and then "Argue with it, argue with it" and another thing yes to work in groups . . .

CB: You like the group work?

S5: It is helpful. I like the groups.

CB: Because many people don't like the groups. And as soon as Professor Wait says "Go into groups" we have some students stand up and walk away.

S1: They are [indecipherable] I can remember last year doing Systematic Philosophy 125 they . . . it was Professor . . . .

CB: van Wyk?

S1: Yeah and you were all there at the time. Most of the students they were rising some hands and asking questions. That debate, it was debate . . . I was surprised at what the Systematic was all about because sometimes it was trying to give us some means of writing and improve the language like English . . . the problem of our English language . . . the same time trying to take the information from outside and bring in the classroom and the students were working on those topics and it was interesting . Like the first day I heard the Professor Wait talking about ideologies and I said "What are ideologies?" and I was working as a group and one of my colleagues one of the students said "Ideologies are something like that and that and that." Then I gained.

CB: So you learned from the other student?

S1: Yes, because we are not the same, some are good . . . some are not really good.

CB: Why do you think some students don't collect their work? Look what I've got here. I've got this file of "end-notes" which people haven't collected and it took hours to write on them but people didn't collect them.

S5: But the problem is that. . . if you are serious about the course you want the course, you really want the course you want the feedback from the lecturer then after writing the "end-notes", you want the feedback that the lecturer said like this and that so I must go and correct that mistake . . . so I take this like laziness or not being serious at all.

(Noise outside)

CB: I think our time is up. Thank you etc etc.

## Appendix V

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Questionnaires administered to the philosophy class in the first semester of the 1997 academic year.

### Questionnaire One

ASP 115

### Class Questionnaire

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME OR STUDENT NUMBER ON THIS FORM

Why have you come to university?

At school, what sort of things did your teachers ask you to write?



Do you think your lecturers at university expect you to write different sorts of things?

## Questionnaire Two

### ASP 115 Course Evaluation

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME OR STUDENT NUMBER ON THIS FORM

What do you think about doing group work in class?

What do you think about doing writing in class?

What do you think about the responses to your writing? (The questions and comments we wrote on your writing)



What do you think about the amount of writing you have done?

Is this class different to other classes you go to? If so, how is it different?

## Appendix VI

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**UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
AEN 125 & APE 125 LANGUAGE TEST: 04. 10.96  
DURATION: 1 ½ hours**

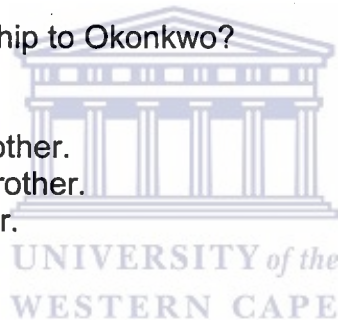
**PLEASE READ ATTACHED PASSAGE FROM THINGS FALL APART  
AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS WHICH FOLLOW ( WRITE DOWN  
SECTION A AND THEN THE NUMBER OF THE QUESTION WITH  
THE LETTER OF YOUR ANSWER).**

### SECTION A: MULTIPLE CHOICE

1) What is Uchendu's relationship to Okonkwo?

- a) He is Okonkwo's father.
- b) He is Okonkwo's father's brother.
- c) He is Okonkwo's mother's brother.
- d) He is Okonkwo's grandfather.

(2)



2) A man's Motherland is:

- a) the village in which he lives.
- b) his wife's home town or village.
- c) his mother's home town or village.
- d) the place where he was born.

(2)

3) According to the passage, one could describe a mother in the following terms  
(choose the correct answer):

- a) the dominant parent.
- b) a comforter or protector.
- c) a supreme, supernatural being.
- d) the disciplinarian of the family.

(2)

4) This passage could be described as focussing on an infringement of a human right. Which statement below best describes the right which is being infringed.

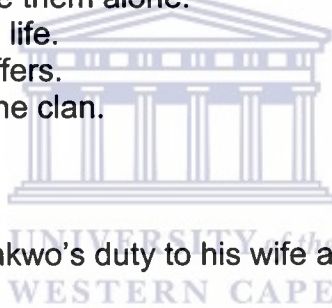
- a) Nobody has a the right to treat anyone else as a slave.
- b) All are equal before the law.
- c) Women should be treated the same way as men.
- d) Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. (2)

5) Okonkwo is in his motherland because he:

- a) is on holiday to visit relatives.
- b) is in exile from his fatherland.
- c) has been banished from his motherland.
- d) wanted to show his children where his mother was born. (2)

6) Uchendu called Okonkwo to him so he could:

- a) tell him to go home and leave them alone.
- b) explain to him his purpose in life.
- c) make him see everybody suffers.
- d) introduce him to the rest of the clan. (2)



7) According to Uchendu, Okonkwo's duty to his wife and children is to:

- a) make sure they have food.
- b) make sure they have shelter.
- c) make sure that they are safe.
- d) make sure that they return home safely. (2)

8) One of the commonest names given to the clan's children is Nneka, which means?

- a) mother is supreme.
- b) mother is all-protector.
- c) mother knows best.
- d) little-mother. (2)

9) Who is the head of the family and to whom do the children belong?

- a) the mother and the children belong her.
- b) the mother's parents and the children belong to them.
- c) the father and the children belong to him.
- d) the father and the children belong to him and his parents. (2)

10) "Why is that when a woman dies she is taken home to be buried with her own kinsmen?"

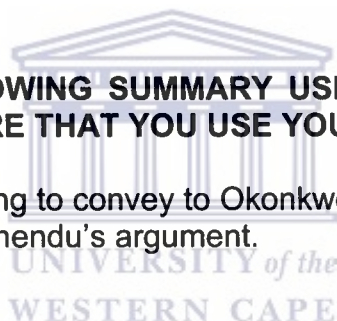
- a) they do not want a woman to be buried in the same place as men.
- b) her family want her to be buried with them.
- c) if she is buried in the motherland she can always be a comfort to her children.
- d) it is by her own choice that she gets buried with her family. (2)

(20)

#### SECTION B: SUMMARY

**PLEASE WRITE THE FOLLOWING SUMMARY USING NOT MORE THAN 100 WORDS. PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU USE YOUR OWN SENTENCES.**

What message is Uchendu trying to convey to Okonkwo in this passage? Using your own sentences, summarise Uchendu's argument.



(15)

#### SECTION C: SHORT ESSAY

Whose rights are more important? The rights of the individual or the rights of the community? Give reasons for your answer (do not write longer than half a page).

(15)

## SECTION D: SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1) Explain in your own words the following. Remember that your answers must relate to the context of the passage itself:

- a) picking his words (line 6)
- b) weigh you down (lines 50-51).
- c) When things are good and life is sweet.
- d) Known not her right or left (line 57).
- e) condemned (line 14)
- g) bidding (line 19) (12)

2. Who does the word 'he' in line 10 refer to ? (2)

3. Who does the word 'we' in line 18 refer to ? (2)

4. Each of the following sentences contains at least one common mistake in written English. Correct the mistakes.

- a) When an animal moult, it lose its hair.
- b) Rabies are dangerous.
- c) gymnastics are difficult.
- d) The criteria for this decision is dubious.
- e) Anyone who wants to become a preacher must give up a lot of their personal pleasure.
- f) She was supposed to find a job by her own. (12)

5. Correct these sentences in which errors have been made (rewrite the sentences on your answer paper):-

- a) What were they discussing about?
- b) He doesn't know what is he doing.
- c) He made me to scrub the floor.
- d) I am very much grateful.
- e) She taught me all what I know.
- f) I am having a cold.
- g) He is a generous somebody.
- h) The children are making noise.
- i) Other children are hard-working and others are lazy.
- j) "Although I am sick but I shall do my work".
- k) He asked that is the bus coming today. (22)

(40)

**TOTAL: 100 MARKS**

On the second day Uchendu called together his sons and daughters and his nephew, Okonkwo. The men brought their goatskin mats, with which they sat on the floor, and the women sat on a sisal mat spread on a raised bank of earth. Uchendu pulled gently at his grey beard and gnashed his teeth. Then he began to speak, quietly and deliberately, picking his words with great care:

'It is Okonkwo that I primarily wish to speak to,' he began. 'But I want all of you to note what I am going to say. I am an old man and you are all children. I know more about the world than any of you. If there is any one among you who thinks he knows more let him speak up.' He paused, but no one spoke.

'Why is Okonkwo with us today? This is not his clan. We are

only his mother's kinsmen. He does not belong here. He is an exile, condemned for seven years to live in a strange land. And so he is bowed with grief. But there is just one question I would like to ask him. Can you tell me, Okonkwo, why it is that one of the commonest names we give our children is Nneka, or "Mother is Supreme"? We all know that a man is the head of the family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to its father and his family and not to its mother and her family. A man belongs to his fatherland and not to his motherland. And yet we say Nneka - "Mother is Supreme". Why is that?

There was silence. 'I want Okonkwo to answer me,' said Uchendu.

'I do not know the answer,' Okonkwo replied.

'You do not know the answer? So you see that you are a child. You have many wives and many children - more children than I have. You are a great man in your clan. But you are still a child, my child. Listen to me and I shall tell you. But there is one more question I shall ask you. Why is it that when a woman dies she is taken home to be buried with her own kinsmen? She is not buried with her husband's kinsmen. Why is that? Your mother was brought home to me and buried with my people. Why was that?'

Okonkwo shook his head.  
'He does not know that either,' said Uchendu, 'and yet he is full of sorrow because he has come to live in his motherland for a few years.' He laughed a mirthless laughter, and turned to his sons and daughters. 'What about you? Can you answer my question?'

They all shook their heads.  
'Then listen to me,' he said and cleared his throat. 'It's true that a child belongs to its father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in its mother's hut. A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you. She is buried there. And that is why we say that mother is supreme. Is it right that you, Okonkwo, should bring to your mother a heavy face and refuse to be comforted? Be careful or you may displease the dead. Your duty is to comfort your wives and children and take them back to your fatherland after seven years. But if you allow sorrow to weigh you down and kill you, they will all die in exile.' He paused for a long

while. 'These are now your kinsmen.' He waved at his sons and daughters. 'You think you are the greatest sufferer in the world. Do you know that men are sometimes banished for life? Do you know that men sometimes lose all their yams and even their children? I had six wives once. I have none now except that young girl who knows not her right from her left. Do you know how many children I have buried - children I begot in my youth and strength? Twenty-two. I did not hang myself, and I am still alive. If you think you are the greatest sufferer in the world ask my daughter, Akueni, how many twins she has borne and thrown away. Have you not heard the song they sing when a woman dies?

'For whom is it well, for whom is it well?  
There is no one for whom it is well.'

'I have no more to say to you.'





## Appendix VII

Numerical analysis of the writing of 71 students who completed the following tasks:

- i. What is the liberal idea of justice? What are the weaknesses of this idea?
- ii. What is the Marxist idea of justice? What are the weaknesses of this idea?
- ii. Compare and contrast the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke. (Show how differences in their conception of human nature lead to differences in their conception of the legitimate power of government.)

in order to indicate the prevalence of trends identified in Chapter Five.

Field	Common sense understandings	Investment in future	"Concrete" constructs
number of students	51	32	34

Tenor	Hobbes & Locke as preachers	Failure to grasp coherence of 'resolutivo compositivo'	"Rendering the text"	Failure to distinguish voices in text
number of students	29	52	63	34

Mode	Rhetorical strategies of contextualised discourse	Rhetorical strategies from "inappropriate" secondary discourses
number of students	53	39

## Appendix VII

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### Examples of students' writing

- Example A: A response to the task "Compare and contrast the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke. Show how differences in their conception of human nature lead to differences in their conception of the legitimate power of government" which manifests a lack of understanding of the *resolutivo compositivo* argument and which lapses into copying out of the study guide.
- Example B: A response to the task "Compare and contrast the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke. Show how differences in their conception of human nature lead to differences in their conception of the legitimate power of government" which "renders the text".
- Example C: A response to the task "Compare and contrast the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke. Show how differences in their conception of human nature lead to differences in their conception of the legitimate power of government" written by a student in his third year of registration.
- Example D: An response to the task "What is the liberal idea of justice? What are the weaknesses of this idea? What is the Marxist idea of justice? What are the weaknesses of this idea?" provided as background to the analysis in Chapter Five.
- Example E: A response to the task "What is democracy?" provided as background to the analysis in Chapter Five.
- Example F: A response to the task "Is South Africa a democracy?" provided as background to the analysis in Chapter Five.
- Example G: An "end-note" written in response to the question "According to Locke, why would a State of Nature be peaceful but inconvenient?" provided as background to the analysis in Chapter Five.
- Example F: An "end-note" written in response to the question "According to Locke, what are the three functions of a just government? Where do these functions come from?" provided as background to the analysis in Chapter Five.

STATE OF NATURE

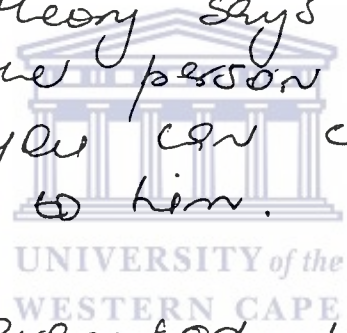
How do you know you know what it is

Both Hobbes and Locke argue that even in the state of nature all men are free and equal but:

Does Hobbes say they are free?

Hobbes says all men are free and equal if you got the power to get what you like because sometimes working take a lot of time and it is hard to work something which is yours is mine because of the power that the one have to claim that property.

Hobbes on his theory says that if you got the car the person who got the power upon you can claim and make it belong to him.



Locke says every body is sent by God in this world to work for God nobody is sent for the aim of somebody else and nobody is allowed to interfere on somebody's property Locke says something is yours when you mix with your labour

Locke mean that if fetch water with your bucket that water is belong to you because it is in your bucket so you have mixed with your labour

## state of war what is it?

Hobbes says (it) can be the state of war of every man against every man because all men are ego centric they think for themselves not <sup>for</sup> somebody else they are selfish so they do what satisfy them although others are not satisfied

So the state of nature will be the state of war because it like when you pick up the oranges on the tree if you pick all oranges it means you think for yourself only you don't leave for the others to survive so the ideas of the people clash.

Locke says it can be the state of peace be if people are altruistic which think for the others not for themselves only so nothing can be a problem. like when you see oranges on a tree and pick and leave on enough for the others to survive so nothing can cause a war they will be the state of peace.

The ideas are not clashing so the people are always satisfied nothing give them a problem and all people are capable to get what they want.

## Government Institution

Hobbes want the government who is  
absolutism, not the government who  
is answerable to the people and the  
people who is answerable to the  
government and the constitution  
limits the rule of government. Govern-  
ment does what the people like  
and some does not like. Not an absolute  
govt does what it likes.

Locke argue that the government is also  
governed by the laws of nature  
because he would be interfering  
with your property like it can not  
tell you to go to school but he  
wants you to go.

The government has no right to natia-  
nalise he must be the government of  
all the nations or races and he is  
not advisable to segregate people  
and nationalise people as well.

Locke says it is not so bad to over-  
throw the government because of the  
laws of nature and is interfering with  
the any property because his work is  
to record the laws of nature and  
appoint independent magistrate to decide  
how much punishment is needed for the  
one or who break the law.

## The limits to the appropriate of property

Hobbes has no limits to the appropriate of property.

Locke limitations are divided into 3.

1. When take from nature we must leave enough for others to survive also must not be of an inferior quality which means that something is belong to us when mix with our labour.

2. The second limitation on what we can take from nature is called the spoilage limitation. which means that we can not take from nature more than we can use without it spoilage

3. The third and final limitation on what we can take from nature is the amount of work we can do. We can not take from nature more than we can mix our labour with only.

## Hobbes state of nature lead to enmity and strife

You have already told me about a state of war.  
It can be happen because people fighting against every other man in order to get what he wants. The life in the state of nature would be solitary, poor, nasty it would be short because of the strong possibility of being killed in the pursuit of one's desires.

## State of nature contribute with to peaceful Coexistence

According to Locke the state of nature contribute with to peaceful coexistence because men naturally kept the laws of nature. Since men are naturally reasonable they would always be able to work out of application of these laws for themselves. The fact that we have this knowledge means that we know how to behave in the way which is in keeping with these laws.

Why are you telling me this  
Hobbes description of man KNOW?

Power is important not only because it enables people to acquire material possessions but also because it brings honour because people honour powerful people in the hope that they will be able to use that person's power to bring things for themselves and Hobbes rejected the idea that men have some universal sense of what is right and what is wrong. This is copied from the study guide.

According to Hobbes good and bad and also right and wrong are relative to each individual. Good is what promotes our individual interests but bad is what goes against our interests.

This also

## Locke description of man

Locke argued that all men are made by God. All men are equal and have equal moral worth. This means that no man exists for the use of another man. Locke made a number of deductions.

1. There can be no subordination among men which means no one is authorised to damage someone's ~~other~~ another without the authority of the owner because everybody is sent to carry God's plan.

2. God gave the common to the mankind since everyone is sent into the world by God and are all equal so we all have a right to survive therefore in the state of nature there must be a law been a natural private ownership.

## Locke describes the laws of nature.

The interfering of any property of government can lead to the overthrow of the government and also the laws of the government like the government who claim everything ~~to~~ <sup>and</sup> bring <sup>it</sup> on his rule by that time it belong to him and the government who is not answerable to the people and the people who is answerable to the government.

This is copied from the study guide



## limited Government

It means the government which is unable to give enough property to the people to survive the government which is ego-centric. So the state of nature is going to be chaotic they need the government which is strong and his laws.

In the limited Government Locke says nobody has a right to interfere with somebody's life. One can interfere when somebody wants help if somebody interferes with liberty you will assume with your right and you have no right to kill him for Locke government which is limited the laws he makes is recorded. All the laws must follow the constitution.

## NEVER LEAVE THE STATE OF NATURE

FOR HOBBS people are permissivist like machines their behaviour is double governed by own desires and fear of death and it led to the making of contracts which as follows

I will promise you not to kill me if you promise me not to kill me.

I will promise not to steal my chickens if you promise me not to steal my chickens

I will promise not to rape your wife if you promise me not to rape my wife. the

the people leave the state of nature because somebody will punish the people who break the contract before that people explains in different way divine rights which is the law which need no disagree because people did things according to the will of God.

### IN LOCKE

The men want to leave the state of nature because in the state of nature person who would have to protect his own property whereas in civil society men combine strength to protect their property against those who tried to take it.

The laws which is written in their consciences they are not equally clear to all men so it was necessary for the laws to be recorded in writing so that everyone could be sure of what they are as well as punishments for breaking those laws.

Locke believed that all men have the right to reparation for wrong suffered at the hands of other men and that was necessary to appoint independent magistrates who would decide on the appropriate amount and type of reparation

## Contract

It is the agreement between the people that was made at the beginning that contract sometimes expired after years.

In Hobbes each person agrees limit of freedom because all men are ego-centric.

In Locke the legislative or supreme authority cannot assume to itself a power to rule by extemporary arbitrary decrees but it is bound to dispense justice.

### The relationship between reason for leaving the state of nature and nature of contract.

FOR HOBbes the relationship is that the men leave the state of nature because because the people fear of death so the contract was to protect the people or keep the people secured in the state of nature.

FOR Locke the living by the laws of nature the state of nature would nevertheless be inconvenient so the contract will enlighten the laws that oppress them because the laws make them feel unsatisfied to live to the state of nature.

## The important of Government

According to Hobbes the government is important to sign the contract because of his purpose the government can not be force to do what the population like he must ~~like~~ do what he like he must be absolutism he must not be answerable to the people.

According to Locke it is not true to have government because everyone is allowed to punish any one who break the laws and there must be a government who is answerable to the people and the people who is answerable to the government.

## LEGAL POSITIVISM

It concerned with the law which based on things which can be seen or proved.

Where's the ~~natural~~ natural law theory is the law which everybody knows naturally and it does not base on reasoning.

Locke is against the rationalize government because he can think for his nation only not other people of other nation so he is ego centric everything if it is available pensions free medical aid etc and employment he can think for the people of his nation first or only.

Compare and Contrast the Political Philosophy of Hobbes and Locke and Their Differences in their Concept of Human Nature lead to Differences in their Conceptions of the Legitimate Powers of Government.

In this assignment I shall concentrate on the differences and similarities of the political philosophy of Hobbes and Locke under the human nature and the state of nature and their conceptions of the legitimate powers of government.

### 1. Human Nature

According to the philosopher, Hobbes, human nature can be described as the way of promoting self interest regardless of others' interest. + What about Locke?

2) Hobbes and Locke both talk about the idea of equality.

#### 2.1 Hobbes

According to Hobbes men are equally capable of destroying each other. This means that men are driven by desires and passions which can lead them to do things that are unreasonable. "From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope, in attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same

thing which never the less they cannot both enjoy they become enemies and endeavour to destroy each other."

(LEVIATHAM : CHAPTER 13)

He continues to say that men are driven by desires, passions and aversions. These desires, passions and aversions are provoked by stimuli and therefore man is not free. If he wants something, he reacts to that thing. This means that if a man desires something he will not think first whether it right or wrong before doing it, but he will simply do that thing without reasoning. For this reason, Hobbes believes that reason is the ability to promote self interest.

"For the thoughts are to the senses as scouts and spies to range abroad and find a way to the things desired." (LEVIATHAM : CHAPTER 6)

22 Locke

Locke on the other hand believes that all men are created by God and sent into this world to do God work. As for this reason, all men are equal and have equal moral worth. This means that each and every individual who live on earth live by God's will and not by other persons. "All men are the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise maker.

They are sent into the world about His Business. No man is made for the use of another (as cattle and other inferior creatures are)". (PARAGRAPH 6)

Locke also argues that all men have the right to live and have the same value. According to him, nobody has the right to interfere with somebody's life and property. As a result, life will be peaceful if the human nature goes along with this idea.

### 2.3 Hobbes

Hobbes also believes that men are by nature ego centric (which means that they are only capable of promoting their own interest) and not altruistic (which means that they are capable of being concerned for the welfare of other people). He says men are egocentric in nature because they are not capable of assisting each other and everybody does what he does to promote his own interests regardless of other's happiness.

2.4 Locke Can't we deduce that  
For Locke, <sup>Locke thinks</sup> men are neither ego centric nor altruistic. This means that he does not agree with either of them. Locke argues that if man mixes something in nature with

labour with that tree by picking its mangoes of that tree, those mangoes belong to him. Locke calls this mixing of labour with them as the natural law of Rightful Appropriation of Property.

3. Hobbes and Locke also talk about the idea of Ethical Relativism. NO, only Hobbes does

### 3.1 Hobbes

For Hobbes people do know what is right or wrong. This means that they cannot distinguish between right or wrong. They believe that something is right (or "good") only if it promote their own interests and wrong (or "bad") if it does not. This means that people will interfere with other people's property because there have no sense of right or wrong. They are mainly driven by desires, passions and aversions.

"But whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire that is which for his part calleth good, and the object of his hate and aversion evil."  
(LEVIATHAN: CHAPTER 6)

### 3.2 Locke

NO

According to Locke, people know and understand what ethical relativism is. This means that they know the sense of right or wrong, and therefore they do not interfere with other people's property.



Locke argues that people know the laws of nature because they are written in their hearts and they obey them. They do not do things anyhow without reasoning.

#### 4. The State of Nature

##### 4.1 Hobbes

Hobbes describes the state of nature as a state of war, where there is no government, no police and no laws and therefore people kill and fight each other in order to get what they want. He also says that life in the state of nature will be "lonely, brutish, empty, hopeless and short" and therefore people will not live long because of violence and chaos which will end destroying them. Only the survival of the fittest will overcome the situation and those who have power to keep their possessions. For this reason, there is a necessity for the existence of law that will protect people.

"It is consequent also to the same condition, that there be no property, no dominion, no mine and thine distinct: But only that to be every man's that he can get, and for as long as he can keep it." (LEVIATHAN: CHAPTER 13)

##### 4.2 LOCKE

In contrast to Hobbes, Locke believes that life in the state of nature will be peaceful and

bearable. This will be caused by the fact that people know the laws, they are written in their minds. They know what is right and wrong and therefore they can control themselves through what they know.

## 5. Reasons for leaving the State of Nature

### 5.1 Hobbes

According to Hobbes, people will have to protect their property, because there will be no government and no police. Hobbes also says there will be the fear of death caused by the desires and aversions of man. This fear of death will cause people to make a contract, which is the system of mutual promises. For examples: I will promise not to steal from you if you will promise not to steal from me.

I will promise not to kill you if you will promise not to kill me.

These promises are not made because people thought it was wrong to steal and kill but because of the fear of being killed too.

### 5.2 Locke

According to Locke, even though the state of nature will be peaceful, because men will be living by the laws of nature, but the state of nature will be inconvenient for these reasons: a person will have to protect his own property because there will be no police. Locke also says

that it is necessary for all laws of nature to be written down or recorded so that everyone understand them and beware of the punishment for breaking them. "For the laws of nature being unwritten and so no where to be found but in the minds of men, they who, through passion or interest shall miscite or misapply it cannot so easily be convinced of their mistake where there is no established Judge. (PARAGRAPH 136)

6. Hobbes and Locke both talk about the idea of the nature of contract which

6.1 Hobbes <sup>Why is this so?</sup> contract  
Hobbes says that the contract is between the people only. For the fact that people do not trust each other, the magistrate is appointed to enforce the contract. In this case the sovereign is not a part of a contract. However, Hobbes does not believe that a contract is enough to stop men from killing, raping and stealing because men can always change from what he promised and end up breaking the promise. The only solution for making man keep the promise is to threaten him by the punishment. "Because the bonds of words are too weak to bridle men's ambition, avarice, anger and other passions, without the fear of some coercive power. (LEVIATHAN 9)

62 Locke

Why is this?  
So,

For Locke, the contract is between the people and the government. He further argues that people say that if the sovereign make laws which are limited by the laws of nature then they promise to obey him but if he goes beyond the laws then they will revolt and overthrow him. They all agree with one voice and the laws of nature are written in their hearts, which means that they are universal.

7. Hobbes and Locke both write about the idea of finite and infinite desire.

7.1 Hobbes

According to Hobbes, man has an infinite desire. This means that man is not satisfied with whatever he possesses. He always want more and desires more than what he has. For example, he wants power and honour in order to be recognized by other people. Hobbes also says that men are unable to limit themselves and therefore they end up interfering with other people's property.

7.2 Locke

Locke argues that men do have limited desires. He argues that a man recognizes limits of what he needs. He also says if people are able to

9.  
limit themselves and therefore they are free. For this reason they will not interfere if other people's property.

8. Hobbes and Locke both talk about the idea of Limited Desire.

8.1 Hobbes

Hobbes says that if people are not limited they will not behave themselves properly. They will continue enying for other people's possessions and destroying each other. Life will then be unbearable and miserable.

8.2 Locke

For Locke, if men are limited they will be able to behave themselves. They will tolerate each other's desires and as a result live in peace.

9. Hobbes' concept of the nature of legitimate government

According to Hobbes; government gets its power from the people. This is because if the government does not agree with the people, they have the right to overthrow him and as a result he will lose power. Hobbes believes in absolute government, which means a government with absolute power. He also argues that the government should protect life. Moreover, these laws are limitless. This

means that the laws made by the government are not bound by certain factors which facts

10. Locke's concept of legitimate government  
Unlike Hobbes, Locke talks about the functions of a government. Locke says there are three functions of the legitimate government. These are as follows: (i) To give protection to the people

(ii) To record the laws of nature (constitution) and introduce the punishments for breaking the laws.

(iii) To appoint magistrates who will enforce those punishment according to the laws.

Where do these functions come from?

According to Locke these are the three major functions of a government and that if any government disagrees with them is an illegitimate government. He also says that a constitution made by the government is limited. The sovereign is guided by the laws of nature. "Thus the law of nature stands as an eternal rule to all men, legislators as well as others. The rule that they make for other men's actions must, as well as their own and other men's actions be conformable to the law of nature."

(PARAGRAPH 135)

Moreover a government which goes beyond the laws of nature goes beyond its legitimate power and by so doing it can be

overthrown in a revolution.



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## Introduction

The assignment is about the way which two philosophers see life in their own perspectives and how people react in the different situations that they found themselves in.

The aspects that will be looked upon are the following: state of nature, contract, laws of nature, appropriation of property and human nature.

This aspects will be looked into details in views or by comparing the two philosophers i.e. Hobbes and Locke.

Why are you writing about the state of nature /contract etc etc. Don't you need to tell me how these things fitted into what Hobbes + Locke were trying to do?



## State of nature argument

State of nature can be described as the life style or pattern in which individuals behave and live how they interact in that part of the society or community. It also include what resources are found in the society and how do people react to those resources. People are living freely.

According to Hobbas the state of nature will be chaotic and there will be war between men in the society.

The state of nature will end up as a state of war because everybody is living freely and in other or some cases without the concern of others. This means that everybody is doing what she/he thinks is suitable or right for himself/herself. People are absolutely free.

For example these person may be stealing other people's property and he/she is aware that people around that place are afraid of him/her because of his/her physical power.

This will people to abusing or misusing what nature provide. They may not allow others to benefit from or what nature produces.

In the state of nature there is freedom i.e. there is no controll of the government like police, courts, etc. And people will end up killing each other in order may be to protect his/her property not to be taken from him/her by force. This is where the state of nature of nature will change and become the state of war.

And in this case only those who have power will be able to own their property and be able to survive in this state of nature. ie. Ownership is controlled by power.

Something is yours if you have more power to take it from someone else. The stronger person will be able to control his/her property.

Hobbes also argued that <sup>not only in the state of nature - always,</sup> ~~in the state of~~ nature all men have limitless desire - always

there is no limit to what people desire or need. People do not need or want material

things eg. houses and also need or want non-material things eg. honour.

Hobbes also believes that every person has his/her own perception or ideas of what is

<sup>right</sup> ~~wrote~~ or wrong. There is no shared ideas. ie. he argues for ethical relativism



According to Locke's statement <sup>on</sup> ~~of~~ state of nature, it will be peaceful but also inconvenient.

All men are equal, and all of them worth the same. ie. equal rights, and we also

value of the same. Locke also argued that all men are sent to earth by God.

Nobody has been sent to the world to help any other person, with his or her

own problems. Everybody is put on earth to do his or her own work

not for others.

If we are sent by God we all have the right to survive. If you are born it is not the same as the time you were conceived, because when you are born you have the right to live and also have food in order to survive. This means everybody has the right to use nature, i.e. to have food and clothes from what nature produces.

Therefore it must be possible to own a piece of nature. You must be able to make something belong to you. You cannot make proper use to nature unless you make that piece of nature belong to you. Labour is important because inside everybody or every person there is respect for survival.

No one has the right to interfere with someone else's life, ability, liberty and property. This is something that all of the people know about it and it is called the law of nature.

This means that even if the people of the society are living in harmony there may be some who will try to inconvenience them may be with their property. They can use the Police force as their resources for seeing that justice is done and nobody is being robbed off his/her property. They must see to it that both their property and themselves are protected. But the main aspect about this state of nature according to Locke is that people are living peacefully with each

other.

Which contract? Don't you need to explain?

## 2. Contract

According to Locke, the contract is between the people of the society and the government. People promised to obey the laws provided and this laws conform to the laws of nature. But if you go beyond the laws of nature the contract is spoiled and the people will overthrow the government in the revolution. For Locke all the people make a contract because they agree on what is right and wrong and also because all the laws are written on everybody's heart and everywhere in the world. The laws of nature are universal and this makes people to agree on what is right or wrong.

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The contract according to Hobbes is between two people and must appoint a sovereign. It can be described as a set of mutual promises i.e. not stealing each other's property. Contract is imaginary i.e. it is the way the person understand the state. If there were no government people will make a contract. The two people who make a contract must appoint a sovereign and its task is to enforce the contract. The sovereign cannot be guilty of breaking the sovereign contract. The sovereign can be seen as a mediator between the two person in order to make the contract lively.

5.

men respect each other according to Locke?

### 3. Nature of the laws

According to Locke the main function of the government is to protect the lives of people. The task of the government is to appoint an independent magistrate. No one has to interfere with somebody else's life and liberty of property unless he interferes with that person's life or property. If somebody interferes with your liberty you have may assume that he is interfering with your life and you have the right to kill him.

For Locke all the laws of nature should be written down in order for everybody to be able to see and understand them clearly. The people must to the laws in order for them not to be caught up in trouble.

For Locke the government is limited and it has got to make laws in accordance with the laws of nature. The laws have to conform to the constitution. The <sup>govt</sup> person has the right to punish the offenders and pay or restore reparations for the people in order to keep peace and goodwill. All the laws should be written on every person's heart for her or him not to forget them. There is God-given rights to overthrow the government if it makes laws that are in accordance with the laws of nature.

According to Hobbes you lose almost everything or in some instances some of your property. A person has no right to take one another's life because that person is protected by laws of nature. Everybody has the right to punish offenders and pay reparations of the people. The government has the right to legitimate power.

The government is overruling people because they put on laws that are sometimes forbidden by the members of that society.

The natural laws are important but not all members of the society they do abide by them because others they do not control their desires and they get tempted to take what does not belong to them by stealing it or taking it by force from the owner.

There is no cooperation between the government and the people of that society. In Hobbes people are absolutely free and there are no restrictions and people are not working together in order to be able for them check on those who are transgressing against the laws of nature. The laws of nature are not visible or clear to everybody i.e. this means that some people are not aware of the laws of nature because they are not written down.

### 3. Appropriation of property

In Hobbes' view power is the only way to acquire your property. There is no limitations in this state of nature that is determined by force. There is no limitation on what you need. The behaviour in this type of setting is determined by passion.

This means that everybody takes according to what his/her desires tells him/her to.

People are not thinking about people in order for them to benefit.

Everybody can take according to what he want or to what his/her desires need. People are not thinking about other people, and this means those who are physically powerful will survive in acquiring more property than those who are weak.

Power and honour are important and they do not des limit the desire of wanting to gain more from the natural resources. People only think about themselves they only think about their survival.

There is no control over resources even if some of this things are not more important to get more because sometimes other people want and like to waste for others not to be able to gain from what nature provides for the people. People have infinite desires.

<sup>= Unnecessary</sup> <sup>Locke says man being created</sup>  
Appropriation of property according to Locke  
is that there is limitation to take  
something that does not belong to you.  
Everybody has got enough to the state  
of nature. No person is in control of  
what the natural resources offers. And  
this means that people must not be  
possessive were unnecessary.

A person must take and leave enough  
for other people to be able to benefit  
as well.

And this shows that people do respect  
the rights of other people. This means that  
a person must take a fair share and  
also leave enough for others to gain  
from the resources.

In the state of nature spoilage limitation  
is important. This means that a person  
can only take so much off ~~en~~ as he  
can make use of before it rots off  
or become spoiled. This also shows that  
just is not good because others may  
want to control the state of nature  
and also want to possess all the  
resources.

In case of property, it is controlled by  
the working together of people of the  
society and the government e.g. They can  
hire a police force in order to look  
after their property.



Why are you telling me this last?

## 5. Human Nature

According to Hobbes all men are not equal i.e. others are weak and other people are strong. This means in most cases the strong people are able to survive than those weak ones.

He also argued that men are not equal in status and honour. And this can mean that those who have power and strength are honoured and respected in their different societies or communities and some people within their setting are afraid to confront them even if they are doing what is wrong or what is bad.

Hobbes also said people are egocentric i.e. they only think for themselves and do not worry about other people around them. This type of a person is possessive i.e. he always want to gain from others and do not want them to benefit from him/her. Everybody has his or her own ideas of what is right and what is wrong. And this statement shows that all people are different and not equal and every person must struggle for his/her survival.

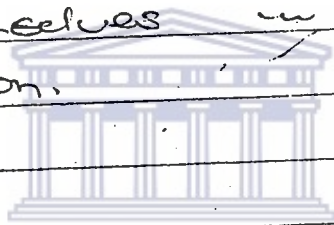
And when coming to philosopher John Locke he said all men are equal. This means that nobody is better than the other person in the eyes of God. He

## Conclusion

The two philosophers even though are discussing the same aspects they are having many differences on how they perceive life of individuals and how they interact with their fellow human beings.

Locke sees life as fair and people living peaceful with their families and their neighbours.

But Hobbes looks at it from this point differently and sees life as warful and chaotic and thus leading individuals to fend themselves in the very difficult situation.



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Is what you say  
line of a philosophy  
society?

A society is a group of people living in a ~~sa~~ one or same place. Are people in a certain place living together. They have their mutual in doing things.

They understand each other, ~~but~~ they share their opinions. They do the things which are comfortable to ~~as~~ one another, they use a certain method so to make their place superior or the better place.

This people has the diff

These people combine their ideas so how will they survive. Just like when there are things that they don't have in their country they use to talk to each other and try to find that thing. There is no one who is greater than the others, they equal. According to my opinion ~~id~~ I ~~as~~ can say the society has the equal interest because they do what they all like to their place (country). Their government is a democratic government because <sup>they</sup> do the ~~the~~ interests of all people. Because democracy is a government of, through and for the people.

Here the government is for all and

People has <sup>made</sup> taken their own decision, but the decision has not taken by one or by a few people. Society is not an authoritarian form of government, because there is no ~~sovereign~~ sovereign person or people who ~~it~~ could take decisions.

The democratic government where all people will raise <sup>their</sup> voice.

Democracy has the three criteria's.

Popular sovereignty, Political equality and Popular consultation.

In popular sovereignty we talk about people ~~not~~ <sup>making</sup> the laws and people who are ruling.

In political equality <sup>all</sup> people are equal in politics they do accept all the views of for all people who live in that society (place). And, practically, it also in the popular consultation is where there must be necessary machinery for public official to learn the will of people before vote. There must be toleration for public officials to the people. In a democratic there no dictatorship, there is no propaganda all people are equal. In a society there is democracy there that mutual working and the method of doing things which they had selected for their own or themselves. In a society there is that good relationship of the citizens where if there is democracy.

QUESTION 2 - "Is South Africa a democracy?"

South Africa is a democratic country. (Believe you me) It is still in process of proving that they are democratic. They (meaning South African government) are still putting into practice the real democracy. At this point in time we can not expect more than we can actual chew, we just need to know the exactly meaning for democracy.

Democracy is the government by people. Saying that because it is ruled by the people. South Africa is in a process of that it only need patient and participation to this new government. It is quiet young to this government. It is there to serve the interest of the South Africans, Steady but sure. At this point in time.

South Africa is a democratic country to this extent. We have a right to vote when ever it time for us to vote. Like when we had to vote for local governments, everybody had a right to vote for anybody who might serve the interest of that person. Like a person who can be incharge of looking after the scarcity of things around that particular area, looking after the complains that people utter or rather coughing it out. That kind of action prove the popular sovereignty because one

You clearly do not understand popular sovereignty

has a right to say streets in his/her area are not at all in a good manner so can somebody look after those, that <sup>in charge</sup> person will be of course the nominated person or rather the voted person. A person who is to look after streets to become tars, building new water towers, more schools to be build, library and electricity tariffs and so forth, that is actual to ~~to~~ serve the best interest of people.

This prove the point that South Africa is a Democratic country because people are to say what they need to be improved and their <sup>-actual</sup> needs. The ~~cret~~ criteria of a democracy that South Africa has proven of being democratic is also a majority rule in the sense to this point. It has been exercised that what the majority of the South Africans wants, like ~~more~~ mixed marriages has been the ~~an~~ exact thing that is taking place here in South Africa. a white lady can marry a black man also a black lady marrying a white man,

We are now free to live with white people where else we never given that right before this new Government. None of us has <sup>been</sup> given an opportunity to live in the suburbans before this government. Broadly It is a majority rule because people voted for ANC and the party ruling is ANC Government that is what all South Africans voted

We say it is <sup>about</sup> the people's government because most of the people's need are in exercise. The progress is seen by also the formation of truth commission which it is to look after the end crisis that people has experienced, that is to prove <sup>people</sup> that has equal rights now eg like if you feel like to sue a person who has committed you a crime you have a right to say something about that in a commission. We are now free to go to beaches. There are now no places called no go area. We move along where ever we want to.

So, with those practice it can be said that South Africa is a democratic country. With a fully participation of the South Africans more can be done for the prosperity of this country. Without further more South Africa is a country that people has been waiting for, for the past struggle years. Poverty will at the present moment be experienced but perseverance makes a lot to get you there so by that we can conquer non South Africans or rather people against this government.

You have a knowledge  
of common understanding of  
democracy.

GROUP 1

Was this the question  
Prof want gave  
you.

Why does the writing of  
constitution make state of  
nature consent.

It is easy to gauge for the  
people when they have contravene  
the laws of nature. It should  
be more peaceful because the  
government can hire the  
professionals to teach the  
people about the constitutions.  
It should help people to guide  
them whenever they do not  
know what to do.

Think! Once we have a constitution  
we no longer have a state of  
nature (because a state of  
nature is a place with no laws)  
Your question is therefore impossible  
to answer.



## Functions of Government

According to Locke, the laws concerning the equality of men and the appropriation of property are written in our hearts by God. As we have this knowledge it means that we know exactly how to behave in a way which is in keeping with these laws. ✓

Therefore, according to Locke the state of nature would be a peaceful place where men naturally kept the laws of nature. If this is so, why

protect their property? Don't you need to tell me about how some men forget the laws + this is the reason. The state of nature would be inconvenient as in the state of nature each person would have to protect their own property whereas in civil society men could combine their resources to protect their property against those who take it from them. ✓

According to Locke the laws of nature should be recorded in writing so that everyone could be sure of exactly what they must do or avoid, respectively. That men have the laws of nature written in their consciences.

Job of Government is to write the laws of nature down. Laws of nature need to be recorded no matter people know them. ✓

# Welcome to Philosophy: ASP 115

### About this course .....

In this course you will "do philosophy", as opposed to learning about someone else's philosophy. This means that you will be questioning and arguing about important issues and ideas which concern **all** people and not just students and lecturers at university. Philosophy is a very **active** subject. In order to "do" philosophy you don't only have to listen and think, you also have to talk, argue and, importantly, **write!** There will be lots of opportunity for you to talk and discuss in groups in class.

ASP 115 is a **political philosophy** course. There are **three main areas of learning** within the course:

### The content

In the course you will be learning about two opposing political views: **Liberalism** and **Marxism**. In order to do this you will study the work of two **liberal** philosophers, Thomas **Hobbes** and **John Locke**, and of a **Neo Marxist** philosopher called **C.B. Macpherson**. We have chosen to study the work of these philosophers because we believe it will help you to understand and, importantly, question many of the things which are happening in South Africa today.

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### Philosophical Methods

Philosophers use a number of **methods**, or ways of exploring and examining issues and questions. In this course you are going to experience **two** of these methods **in action** when you study the work of the philosophers named above. The first method is called **resolutivo compositivo**. The second is called a **historical materialist analysis**. It is important for you to learn about these methods so that you too can **philosophise** or "do" philosophy.

### Writing

At university you will be required to do a very different sort of writing to what you are used to at school. At school you probably did a lot of copying from the blackboard or from text books and study guides but very little **original** writing. At university, your lecturers are not interested in your ability to simply copy things from one place to another. They are

interested in your **ability to use writing to show what you understand and think**. In this course we will be helping you to develop this ability. In order to do this you will have to do **a lot of writing both inside and outside the lecture hall**. At university you are assessed by your ability to write. Learning to do **academic writing** is therefore very important if you want to get a degree.

The following **texts** were written by the philosophers you will be using in this course:

**HOBBS, T.** (1957) Leviathan. London: Dent.

**LOCKE, J.** (1956) Two Treatises of Civil Government. Oxford: Blackwell.

**MACPHERSON, C.B.** (1962) Political Theories of Possessive Individualism. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

There are also a number of **commentaries** on these texts:

**COPELSTON, F.** (1964) A History of Philosophy (Vol. V). Garden City: Doubleday.


**PLAMENATZ, J.** (1963) Man and Society (Vol. 1). London: Longman.

**WATKINS, J.W.N.** (1965) Hobbes System of Ideas. London: Hutchinson University Library.

**GOUGH, J.W.** (1950) John Locke's Political Philosophy. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

These books are for background reading only. When the time comes to write an assignment, we are not interested in reading large chunks which you have copied from these books. You should only use quotations from the books to prove to us that what YOU are saying is true. Remember, we are interested in YOUR understanding and YOUR interpretation of the work of the course. We can only reward you (with marks!) if you show your understanding. We cannot reward you for copying someone else's understanding.

In order to develop your ability to write, we will ask you to do **two** sorts of writing: **endnotes** and **assignments**.

**Endnotes** are short pieces of writing written in response to a particular question. In this guide endnotes are marked . We will collect your endnotes and **respond** to them. This means that we will read what you have written and tell you what we, as readers, do not understand or disagree with. You can then use our responses to rewrite your endnote. The questions we give you as endnotes are designed to develop the understanding you will need to write your assignments. In this course, you need to write **three** assignments.

## Some important terms and concepts .....

In order to benefit from this course, you will need to understand some important terms and concepts (or ideas). Let's begin with **Liberalism** and **Marxism**.

**Liberalism** and **Marxism** are two opposing political views.

**Liberalism** is based on the belief that a fair or just society is a society which involves giving **equal opportunity** to all its members. For the liberal, life is like a race and in that race some people are going to run faster than others and finish in a better position than others. What is important to the Liberal is that everyone starts the race from an equal position and that the race is run fairly so that everyone has an equal opportunity to get ahead. It does not matter that some people are going to win and some people are going to lose, what is important is that everyone has an equal opportunity of winning.



*What things can a liberal society do to make sure that all children have equal opportunity to succeed in life? Do these things really make sure that children have equal opportunities or are there some things which some parents can do to give their children an advantage? If there are some things which some parents can do, what sort of parents are most likely to be able to do them?*

Be careful when you are thinking about equal opportunities. Are equal opportunities the same as equal rights?



*Is it possible to achieve equal opportunity?*



**Marxism** is founded on the theories of **Karl Marx**, a very important philosopher who lived from 1818 to 1883. Marx has been called the "father of the Russian revolution" because it was his ideas which influenced the people of Russia to revolt against the **Tsar** (or king) of Russia in 1917. As a result of this revolution, Russia came to be governed by a **socialist** or **communist** system.

The **Marxist** view opposes the Liberal view because it rejects the view of life as a competition. According to Marx, a just society is a society where people contribute to society according to their ability but receive according to their needs. A Marxist believes that all contributions to society are equally valuable. This means that the work of a street sweeper is valued just as highly as that of a doctor as society needs both street sweepers and doctors. For a Marxist, it does not matter that some people are able to give more to society than other people because they are stronger and healthier than others, nor does it matter that some people need more than others, the important thing is that every person gives what he can to the best of his ability and takes what he needs.

What would this mean in practice? Read this story as an example:

Once upon a time, there were two farmers. The first farmer was a big, strong healthy man who also had a good understanding of farming. Because of his ability to work hard and understand farming, this farmer's farm was very prosperous. Every year the harvest was good and the animals produced lots of young. This farmer had two children.

The second farmer had bad health and because of this he was not able to work hard. In addition to this, the farm on which he worked did not have good land so that crops did not grow well and animals did not thrive there. This farmer had seven children.

As these two farmers lived in a Marxist system, at harvest time they had to give all the food they produced to the state. The state then redistributed that food according to need. In this process of redistribution, the second farmer (who had produced a small harvest) received more than the first farmer (who had produced a big harvest) because the second farmer's need to feed seven children was greater than the first farmer's need to feed only two children.

The two farmers took the redistributed food and lived happily ever after ..... or did they?



*What do you think? Do you think that the two farmers were happy? How do you think the "good" farmer might feel? How might you expect him to behave in a Marxist state? What about the "poor" farmer? How might you expect him to behave in a Marxist state? What would happen to the state if everyone behaved as you have said the "good" and "poor" farmers would behave?*



What are the weaknesses of a Marxist system?

## REMEMBER!!

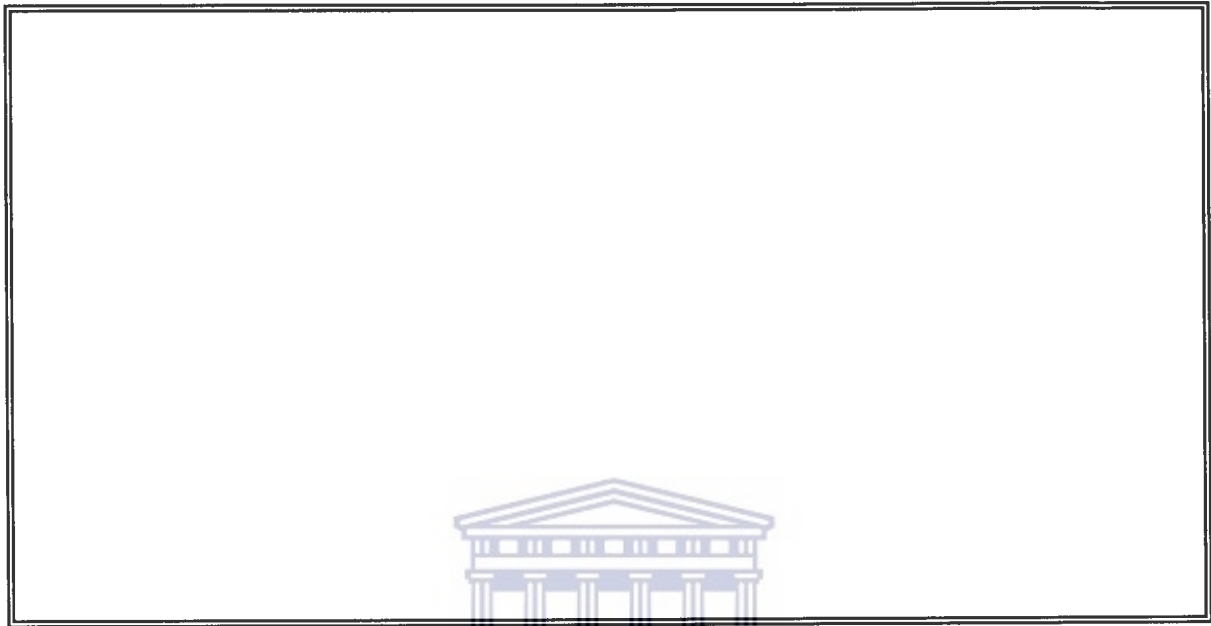
In the course you will be studying the work of two liberal philosophers, Hobbes and Locke and one Marxist philosopher, Macpherson. Hobbes and Locke both try to answer the question "What are the legitimate powers of government?". Macpherson is able to criticise their answers to this question from his standpoint as a Marxist.

When you study Hobbes and Locke, two other concepts (or ideas) which you will be hearing a lot about are the **State of Nature** and the **Nature of Man**.

In order to understand these concepts, you have to use your imagination.

**Imagine** ..... what would happen if all the state "structures" (like the police force, the education system, the health care system, the system which takes away rubbish and provides fresh water) in Kwa Zulu Natal suddenly disappeared. What would life in Kwa Zulu Natal be like?

Write your description here:



What you have just written is a description of a **State of Nature**, a place where man lives according to the **rules of nature** without any interference from government or state control.

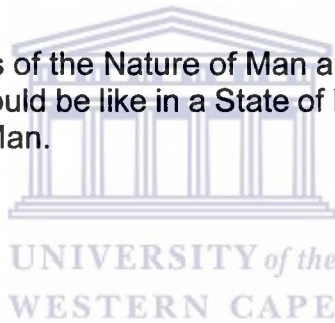
A state of nature is an **imaginary** idea. Man has never lived in a State of Nature because in all societies there are forms of authority which regulate man's behaviour. Philosophers use the idea of the State of Nature as a kind of tool which helps them to think about the **Nature of Man**.

Look back at your description of what life would be like in Kwa Zulu Natal if there were no government "structures". Have you made statements about how people would **behave**? If you have, then you must have made those statements because of some sort of belief about **how people really are**. Those beliefs are your beliefs about the **Nature of Man**.

Now write your beliefs about the **Nature of Man**. What do you think man's character is like? Is man naturally good or naturally bad? Is he **altruistic** (does he care about other people) or is he **egocentric** (does he care only about himself)?

Write your beliefs about the **Nature of Man** here:

Can you see how the concepts of the Nature of Man and the State of Nature are linked? We are able to say what life would be like in a State of Nature only because of the beliefs we have about the Nature of Man.



## Introducing a "method" .....

At the beginning of this course guide, we said that you would be studying the philosophy of **Hobbes** and **Locke**. Both of these philosophers try to answer the same question about government. These questions are:

### **What are the legitimate (or lawful) powers of government?**

These questions are important because they allow us to decide whether or not a government has the right to interfere with an individual's personal property and redistribute it (as it would have to in a Marxist system).

? *Why have questions about the legitimate powers of government been particularly relevant in South Africa over the past years?*

In order to answer this question, both men use a method which is called **resolutivo compositivo**. In order to use this method, a philosopher must take a subject apart, look at it and then put it together again in much the same way as a car mechanic takes apart an engine in order to find out how it works.

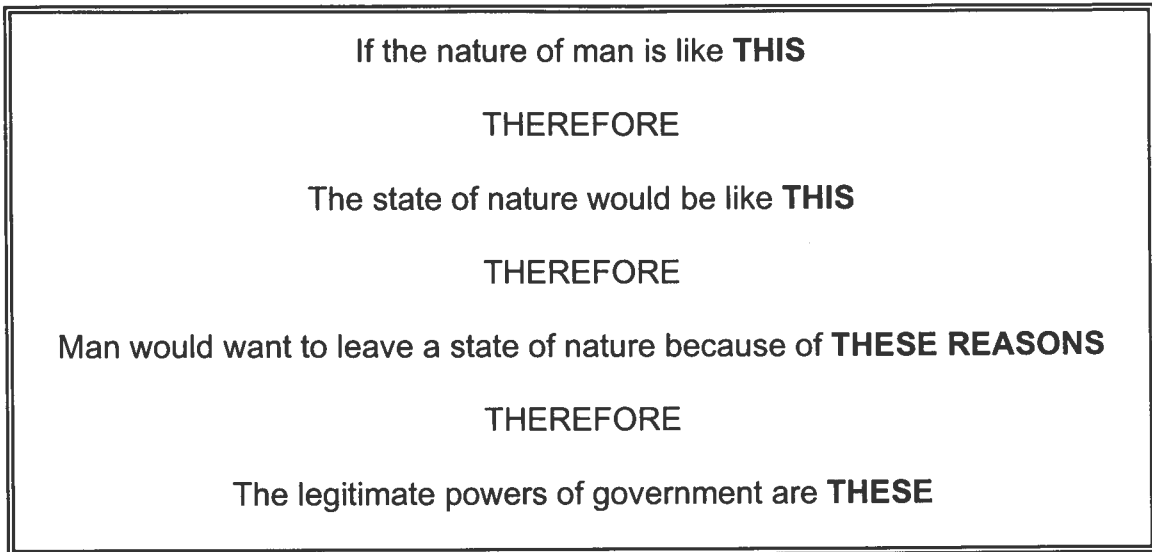
Hobbes and Locke "take the subject apart" by asking a series of questions which follow a **pattern**. They begin by asking the question:

1. **What is man's nature like?** Their answers to this question then allow them to ask another question:
2. **If man is like this, what would life be like in a place without any government? (that is in a State of Nature).** Their answer to this question then allow them to ask a third question:
3. **If life in a State of Nature is like this, why would man choose to leave such a state?** The reasons they give for man choosing to leave a State of Nature and live in a state with some form of government then allow them to answer the fourth and final question which is
4. **What are the legitimate powers of government?**

By asking these questions Hobbes and Locke are able to build an argument which



looks like this:



It is important for you to be able to **follow the pattern of this argument** if you are to understand the philosophies of **Hobbes** and **Locke**.

In the course you begin by studying **HOBBS**.



# THOMAS HOBBS (1588 - 1679)

## A Historical Background to Hobbes' work

The 17th century, when Hobbes lived and worked, was a period of great instability and insecurity with change (or revolution) in almost all areas of life.

The first area in which change occurred was **science**. Before the 17th century, people had mostly thought that things happened **for a purpose** and not **because of a cause**. This meant, for example, that they thought that diseases were sent to man for a purpose.



*What do you think people thought about the purpose of a disease? Did they think it happened to punish people? To teach people a lesson?*

Change came when people began to discover certain things. It was discovered, for example, that the heart pumped blood around the body. When the heart stopped, blood was not pumped and people died. The **cause** of death was therefore the malfunctioning of an organ of the body. People died because of a **cause** (their hearts had stopped beating) rather than for a **purpose** (to teach them a lesson or punish them). Discoveries such as these changed the way in which people thought about life and the world about them. Life (and the world in general) became less mysterious as people began to understand more. These new discoveries also changed the way people thought about themselves.



*How do you think people began to think about themselves. Did they continue to see themselves as powerless or did they start to think they could **do something** about the way they lived and what happened to them?*

One of the most important scientists of this period was Galileo. Galileo believed that you only understood something when you knew how it worked. In science, therefore, Galileo's method was to take something apart, examine it to see how it worked, and then put it together again. Galileo called this method **resolutive compositivo**. This approach to science was very important because it also began to influence what people did in other areas.



*Think back to what you read a few pages ago. Hobbes and Locke used the **resolutive compositivo** method. Can you remember the questions they asked and how they went about answering those questions?*

The second area in which change occurred was **politics**. In England, before the 17th century, the power of the King was **absolute**. This meant that the king could do whatever he wanted and no-one could challenge him. In the 17th century, a man called Oliver Cromwell challenged this power by fighting against the king in a number of battles. As a result of this, the king was executed and a lot of his power passed into the hands of parliament.



What effect do you think this had on people and how they thought about government? Do you think these events could have affected Hobbes' interest in what constituted a just form of government?

Another area in which change occurred was **religion**. Before the 17th century, people in Europe belonged to the **Roman Catholic** church led by the **Pope** in Rome. In the 17th century, the power of the Roman Catholic church was challenged by men like Martin Luther who accused the church of misunderstanding God's word in the Bible. As a result of this challenge, the **Protestant** religion (called because men like Luther *protested* against the church of Rome) was founded.

The final area in which great change occurred was the **economy**. Before the 17th century, the **feudal** system predominated in Europe. This meant that people were divided into two social classes, the **aristocracy**, who held all the power, and the **peasantry**, who literally gave their lives to the service of their **lords**.

The 17th century saw a move from a feudal system to a **freemarket** system where people became free to move to the cities and towns in order to work for themselves. A new social class, the **middle class**, appeared and the way people traded and earned money changed completely.

It is easy to confuse the words feudal system with the word federal system. Do you know what a federal system is? If you don't, you should find out because a feudal system is completely different to a federal system.

When this background of revolution and change is considered, it is easy to view Hobbes' work as being no more than the reaction of a philosopher to a period of political, intellectual, religious and economic upheaval. On the other hand, it is also possible that his work shows genuine insight into the nature of man and the true function of government. If he is right, then his conclusions are applicable to any and every society (including our own) and chaos or misgovernment anywhere in the world is due to the fact that people have not taken into account the truths about man and government which Hobbes has revealed. As you study this course, keep this question in mind as it is something **for you** to decide. Whichever point of view you decide to adopt, what is important is that Hobbes provides one of the first **scientific** theories of state (i.e. he asks how the state works when it works well).



Philosophers say that Hobbes developed a **scientific** theory of state. Why are they able to say this?

# Hobbes' theory of state

## 1. The nature of man

One of the most important premises which Hobbes makes is that **all men are equal** in the sense that they are **equally capable of getting what they want**:

FROM THIS EQUALITY OF ABILITY, ARISETH EQUALITY OF HOPE IN ATTAINING OF OUR ENDS. AND THEREFORE IF ANY TWO MEN DESIRE THE SAME THING WHICH NEVER THE LESS THEY CANNOT BOTH ENJOY THEY BECOME ENEMIES AND ENDEAVOUR TO DESTROY EACH OTHER. (LEVIATHAN:CHAPTER 13)

*Think! Do you understand why and how this quotation from Hobbes' actual writing was used? Look back at the sentence immediately before the quotation which says that Hobbes believed that all men are equally capable of getting what they want. The quotation is used as **evidence** that Hobbes did actually say this. Note that we put the **place** we took the quotation from in brackets at the end. This is the way you should use quotations when you come to write your essay.*

Although some men might be physically stronger than others (and therefore more likely to get what they want by using brute force), Hobbes believed that men who were not physically strong could make up for their lack of strength by using cunning and deception.

? *Think about this idea that all men were equal. Do you think it was a "new" idea in the 17th century? Why do you think what you think? If some people have a divine right to rule (i.e. they derive their authority from God) can we still say that all men are equal?*

As well as an equal ability to get what they want, Hobbes also believed that men have limitless desires not only for material possessions but also for honour, prestige and **power**.

ALL MEN HAVE A PERPETUAL AND RESTLESS DESIRE OF POWER AFTER POWER THAT CEASETH ONLY IN DEATH, AND IT IS THIS COMPETITION FOR RICHES AND POWER WHICH INCLINE MEN TO CONTENTION, ENMITY AND WAR. (LEVIATHAN: 6)

Power is important not only because it enables people to acquire material possessions but also because it brings **honour** because people honour powerful people in the hope that they will be able to use that person's power to bring things for themselves.

? *Think! Do you agree with what Hobbes says about equality and man's desire for power? Why do you agree or disagree?*

In addition to believing that all men had an equal ability to get what they wanted and an

unlimited desire for power, Hobbes rejected the idea that men have some universal inborn sense of what is right and wrong which comes either from i) God or ii) reason.

? *What is reason?*

According to Hobbes, good and bad, right and wrong, are relative to each individual. "Good" (or "right") is what promotes our individual interests. "Bad" (or "wrong") is what goes against our interests.

BUT WHATSOEVER IS THE OBJECT OF ANY MAN'S APPETITE OR DESIRE, THAT IS IT WHICH FOR HIS PART CALLETH GOOD, AND THE OBJECT OF HIS HATE AND AVERSION EVIL. (LEVIATHAN: CHAPTER 6)

? *Do you agree with Hobbes that men have no "natural" sense of right and wrong? What assumptions are made by the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation which is operating in South Africa today? If the Truth Commission shared Hobbes' beliefs about there being no "natural" sense of right and wrong would it be able to operate?*

Instead of believing that men are governed by moral constraints (or an **innate** sense of right and wrong) Hobbes believed that men are governed by **desires** and **aversions** (the opposite of desires). Hobbes opinion of man's psyche was that he is like a machine which reacts to a stimulus. Desires and aversions are provoked by stimuli. This means that the individual has no freedom. If he desires something, he reacts to that desire. If he is averse to something, he reacts to that aversion. This means that man is unable to choose one course of action instead of another. This would mean for example, that if a man wanted something which belonged to another man, he would not stop to think if it was "right" to try to take that thing as his mind would not be capable of this kind of reasoning. Rather, he would simply react to the desire for that thing and try to take it in much the same way as a machine reacts to the "start" button being pressed. For Hobbes, then, **reason is no more than the ability to promote self interest:**

FOR THE THOUGHTS ARE TO THE SENSES AS SCOUTS AND SPIES TO RANGE ABROAD AND FIND A WAY TO THE THINGS DESIRED. (LEVIATHAN: CHAPTER 6)

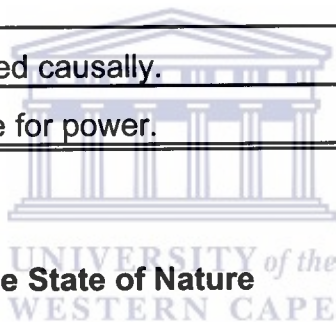
This means that men are essentially **egocentric** (which means that they are only capable of acting to further their own interests) and **not altruistic** (which means that they are capable of being genuinely concerned for the welfare of others).

? *Do you agree with Hobbes that man is like a machine which cannot think for itself or do you believe that we have the freedom and ability to think for ourselves and make choices? If you think we have freedom to think and choose for ourselves, what gives you this impression? Mother Theresa is a woman who is world famous for her work amongst the poor of India. How would Hobbes explain her actions?*

Have you understood what Hobbes said about the nature of man? Test yourself with

this yes / no quiz. We are not going to give you the answers to the quiz in this study guide. If you are unsure about your answer, discuss it with your friends. If you are still unsure, come to class and ask us.

Did Hobbes say this?	Yes	No
We are born with a sense of right and wrong which comes from God.		
Man is able to think for himself.		
Man is completely governed by desires and aversions.		
Men care about other men.		
Men are equally brutal.		
Man has a mechanistic psyche.		
There is a universal right and wrong which holds true for all men.		
Men realise that the more powerful you are the more property you are entitled to.		
All behaviour can be explained causally.		
All men have an equal desire for power.		



## 2. Hobbes' description of the State of Nature

From these ideas about the Nature of Man, Hobbes is able to go on to describe what life would be like in a State of Nature.



*What is the State of Nature? Did the state of nature ever exist?*

Hobbes describes the State of Nature as a state of war and chaos with every man fighting against every other man in order to get what he wants. Life in the state of nature would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." It would be short because of the strong possibility of being killed in the pursuit of one's desires.

In the state of nature, there would be no sense of mine and yours. The ability to "own" something would depend simply on the ability to keep other men from taking it:

IT IS CONSEQUENT ALSO TO THE SAME CONDITION, THAT THERE BE NO PROPERTY, NO DOMINION, NO MINE AND THINE DISTINCT: BUT ONLY THAT TO BE EVERY MAN'S THAT HE CAN GET; AND FOR AS LONG AS HE CAN KEEP IT.  
(LEVIATHAN: CHAPTER 13)



Think back to Hobbes' description of the nature of man. Can you follow Hobbes' argument that because of **how** man is, the state of nature would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short"? **It is important to be able to follow these two steps in the argument.**



Why is Hobbes able to argue that the state of nature be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short"?

### 3. Reasons for leaving the State of Nature

According to Hobbes, man is governed only by desires and aversions which determine his actions. There is, however, one aversion, which is so great that man will give up all his rights which allow him to act upon his desires so that he will get what he wants. This aversion is the **fear of death**.

In the state of nature, the fear of death led men to making a contract or system of mutual promises. The following are **examples** of the sort of promises men made:

*I will promise not to kill you if you will promise not to kill me.*

*I will promise not to steal from you if you will promise not to steal from me.*

*I will promise not to rape your wife if you will promise not to rape my wife.*

Such promises were not made because man thought it was wrong to kill, steal and rape but simply because of **enlightened self interest**. The promises are thus true to the egoistic nature of man. Man is not saying "I will not kill because it is wrong to kill." Rather he is saying "I will promise not to kill you so I need not be afraid that you will kill me."



Is it enough for men simply to make a series of promises like this? Is it enough to shake hands and agree to end hostilities? Is it in the nature of man to keep promises? Why do you think what you think?

According to Hobbes, however, this system of mutual promises is not enough to stop men killing stealing and raping simply because the moment any man thinks he can benefit himself by breaking the promise, he will do so. What is needed for men to keep these promises is a threat of the punishment which will be given if they do not keep them.

BECAUSE THE BONDS OF WORDS ARE TOO WEAK TO BRIDLE MEN'S AMBITION, AVARICE, ANGER AND OTHER PASSIONS, WITHOUT THE FEAR OF SOME COERCIVE POWER. (LEVIATHAN:9)

Hobbes uses this argument to account for the evolution of **government** in the form of a **Sovereign** who has the power to punish those men who break the contract. According to Hobbes, the threat of the punishment must be severe enough to persuade men that it is not worth breaking their promises. The sovereign must therefore be able to punish men severely if they break their promises.

Men agree to accept the sovereign only because they are afraid of death. In agreeing to the contract and in agreeing to accept the sovereign, men surrender all their rights except for one - the right to protect their own lives. They sign the contract and accept the sovereign only to do this.



*Do you agree that men will accept any form of government in return for the security of their lives? Think about South African history when you answer this question.*

#### 4. Hobbes' concept of the nature of legitimate government

By basing his argument on a description of the nature of man which allows him to describe life in the state of nature, Hobbes is able to describe how government came into being. From what Hobbes has said so far, we should now be able to **deduce** his idea of what constitutes a legitimate government.

Try this short quiz to see if you can deduce Hobbes' idea of a just government.

1. According to Hobbes, government gets its power

- i) from God
- ii) from the people
- iii) from itself

Motivate your answer! **Why** have you chosen the answer you have chosen? **Why** do you think it is correct?

2. According to Hobbes, the power of the sovereign is

- i) limitless
- ii) limited by what the people want him to do
- iii) limited by God

Motivate your answer! **Why** have you answered as you have?

3. If the people do not like what the sovereign does they can

- i) revolt
- ii) suffer in silence
- iii) appeal to a higher authority

Motivate your answer! **Why** do you think your answer is correct?

Now check your answers using what we tell you below.

According to Hobbes a legitimate or just government has absolute power (which means it can do anything it pleases). The function of the government is simply to keep men

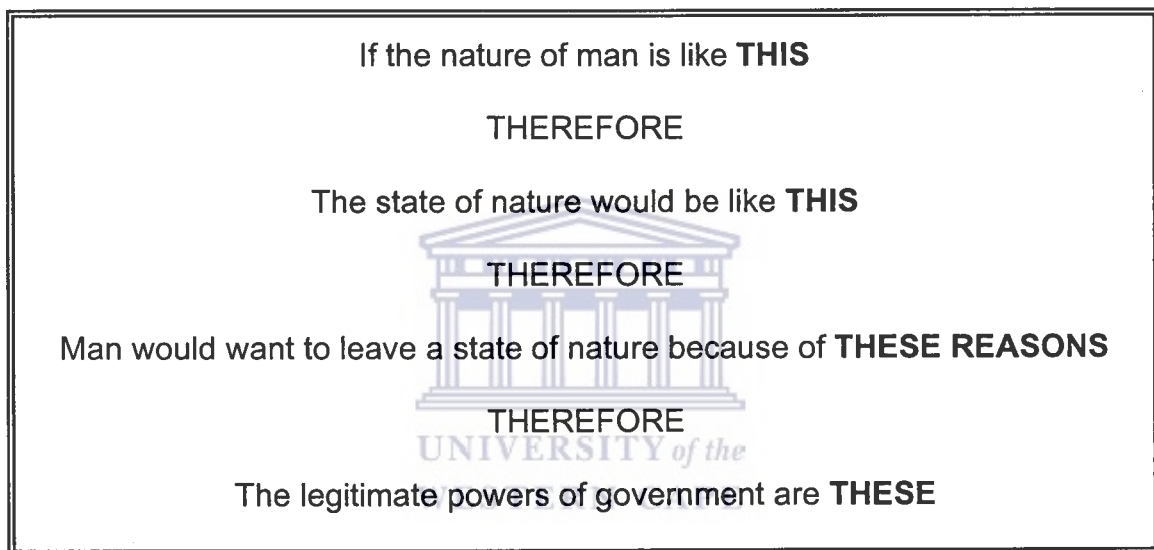


from killing each other in the pursuit of their desires. It can do anything it likes to stop men from doing this. The government does not get its power from God. Men give it power. They do so because they are afraid of being killed. Because of this fear they are prepared to give away all their freedom.



*According to Hobbes, would a government have the power to redistribute property (ie to take from those who have a lot of property in order to give to those who do not have any?) On what grounds would a government have this power?*

Now go back to the **pattern** of argument outlined earlier.



Why is Hobbes able to argue that, because of the nature of man, a just government is an absolute government?

## John Locke (1632 -1704)

John Locke has been called the father of modern liberal democracy in that his philosophy supports the ideas of justice held by powerful liberal democracies such as the United States of America and Great Britain.

Like Hobbes, Locke uses the method of **resolutivo compositivo**.



*Think back to what you read earlier in this course guide. What does **resolutivo compositivo** mean?*

Like Hobbes, Locke also uses the steps of describing the Nature of Man and then using this description to describe what life would be like in the State of Nature.



*Think back to what you read earlier. What exactly is a State of Nature. Did (or could) a State of Nature ever exist?*

Locke then goes on to give a number of reasons for leaving the State of Nature. By examining the reasons for leaving a State of Nature, he is then able to say what the functions of a legitimate government would be. There are, then, four steps in Locke's argument (just as there were four steps in Hobbes' argument).

### 1. The Nature of Man

Locke's fundamental belief is that all men are made by God and are sent into the world to do God's business. As all men are made by God, all men are equal and have **equal moral worth**. This means that no man exists for the use of another man:

ALL MEN ARE THE WORKMANSHIP OF ONE OMNIPOTENT AND INFINITELY WISE MAKER. THEY ARE SENT INTO THE WORLD ABOUT HIS BUSINESS. NO MAN IS MADE FOR THE USE OF ANOTHER (AS CATTLE AND OTHER INFERIOR CREATURES ARE). (PARAGRAPH 6)

**Why is a quotation from Locke's writing used here?**



*Locke's fundamental premise (or belief) was that all men are equal. Hobbes also believed that all men are equal. Equality for Hobbes means something different for Hobbes to what it means for Locke. When Hobbes said all men are equal, what did he mean? How do these different conceptions of equality lead to different descriptions of the State of Nature ?*

From this premise (or belief) that all men are equal, Locke made a number of **deductions**. Locke believed that all men are able to make these deductions which were that:

i) There can be no subordination among men. No man has the right to destroy or damage another man's life, health, liberty or possessions because everyone is here to carry out God's plan.



*Think! Locke says that because **everyone** is here to carry out God's plan no one can interfere with anyone else. Does this mean that there are limitations on man's freedom in the State of Nature?*

ii) God gave everything to mankind in common. Since we are all sent into the world by God and are all equal, we all have the right to survive. We therefore all have equal rights to the **means of survival**. Before man can use any of the produce in the world, however, he needs to own it. Therefore, in the State of Nature, there must have been **natural private ownership**. On what was this natural ownership based? According to Locke, all men are free and all men therefore own their own labour (i.e. they work for themselves).

THOUGH THE EARTH AND ALL INFERIOR CREATURES BE COMMON TO ALL MEN, YET EVERY MAN HAS A "PROPERTY" IN HIS OWN "PERSON". THIS NOBODY HAS ANY RIGHT TO BUT HIMSELF THE "LABOUR" OF HIS BODY AND THE "WORK" OF HIS HANDS WE MAY SAY ARE PROPERLY HIS. (PARAGRAPH 27)

If men therefore **mix their labour** with something in nature, that thing comes to belong to them. This would mean that the **water** in a river belongs to everyone. Once a man has "mixed his labour" with that **water by lifting it out** of the river in a container, that water belongs to him:

THOUGH THE WATER RUNNING IN THE FOUNTAIN BE EVERYONE'S, YET WHO CAN DOUBT BUT THAT IN THE PITCHER IS HIS ONLY WHO DREW IT OUT? HIS LABOUR HATH TAKEN IT OUT OF THE HANDS OF NATURE WHERE IT WAS COMMON AND BELONGED EQUALLY TO ALL HER CHILDREN AND HATH THEREBY APPROPRIATED IT TO HIMSELF. (PARAGRAPH 29)

The fact that things become ours by mixing our labour with them is called, by Locke, the natural law of **Rightful Appropriation of Property**.



*Think back to what you studied about Hobbes. How did Hobbes say that we come to own (and keep) property in a State of Nature? How does this compare to what Locke says?*

Although rights to own property are established by mixing our labour with what exists naturally in a State of Nature, Locke says there are **three limitations** on what we can take:

1) When we take from nature, we must leave enough for others to survive. What we leave also must not be of an inferior quality. This means that something belongs to us when we have mixed our labour with it only

WHERE THERE IS ENOUGH AND AS GOOD LEFT IN COMMON FOR OTHERS.  
(PARAGRAPH 27)

2) The second limitation on what we can take from nature is called the **spoilage limitation**. This means that we cannot take from nature more than we can use without it spoiling (e.g. we cannot pick more apples from a tree than we can eat before the apples go rotten).

AS MUCH AS ANYONE CAN MAKE USE OF TO ANY ADVANTAGE OF LIFE BEFORE IT SPOILS, SO MUCH HE MAY BY HIS LABOUR FIX A PROPERTY IN. WHATEVER IS BEYOND THIS IS MORE THAN HIS SHARE AND BELONGS TO OTHERS  
(PARAGRAPHS 31 & 46)

3) The third and final limitation on what we can take from nature is the amount of work we can do. We cannot take from nature more than we can mix our labour with.

? *Think! If we cannot take from nature more than we can mix our labour with, does this mean that those who have the ability to work longer and harder than others can take more?*

## 2. Locke's description of the State of Nature

According to Locke, the laws concerning the equality of men and the appropriation of property are written in our hearts by God. The fact that we have this knowledge means that we know how to behave in a way which is in keeping with these laws. According to Locke, the State of Nature would therefore be a peaceful place where men naturally kept the laws of nature. Since men are naturally reasonable, they would always be able to work out the application of these laws for themselves.

? *Remember Hobbes's description of the State of Nature? How is this different to Locke's description?*

## 3. Reasons for man agreeing to leave the State of Nature

According to Locke, although the State of Nature would mostly be a peaceful place, with men living by the laws of nature, the State of Nature would, nevertheless, be **inconvenient** as some men would still break the laws because they either "forgot" them or could not "read" them in their hearts. The State of Nature would be inconvenient because:

- i) Men would have to protect their property from those who steal
- ii) They would have to punish those who did wrong

It would also be inconvenient because the fact that the laws were not written down in a book means that it would be easier for some men to "forget" them.

#### 4. Locke's concept of legitimate government

By basing his argument on a description of the nature of man which allows him to describe life in the state of nature, Locke, like Hobbes, describes the reasons for leaving a State of Nature and therefore how government came into being. He is then able to go on to argue about the functions of a **legitimate** government.



*Look back at the reasons why the State of Nature was inconvenient and the reasons, therefore for leaving it. These reasons provide us with Locke's idea of the functions of a just government. What are these functions?*

According to Locke the three functions of a just government are to:

- i) provide protection for the citizens of the state
- ii) record the laws of nature and establish the punishments for breaking those laws
- iii) appoint magistrates who will administer those punishments according to the laws.

Locke says that these are the **only legitimate functions** of a government and that any government which goes beyond these functions is an **unjust or illegitimate government**.



*In South Africa there has been talk of the government nationalising (or taking ownership of) the mines. According to Locke, would this be within the power of a legitimate government? If not, why not?*

According to Locke, no government has powers which individuals in the State of Nature did not have since no one in the State of Nature may interfere with another's life, liberty or property unless his own life is threatened, no government may interfere with a man's life, liberty or property.

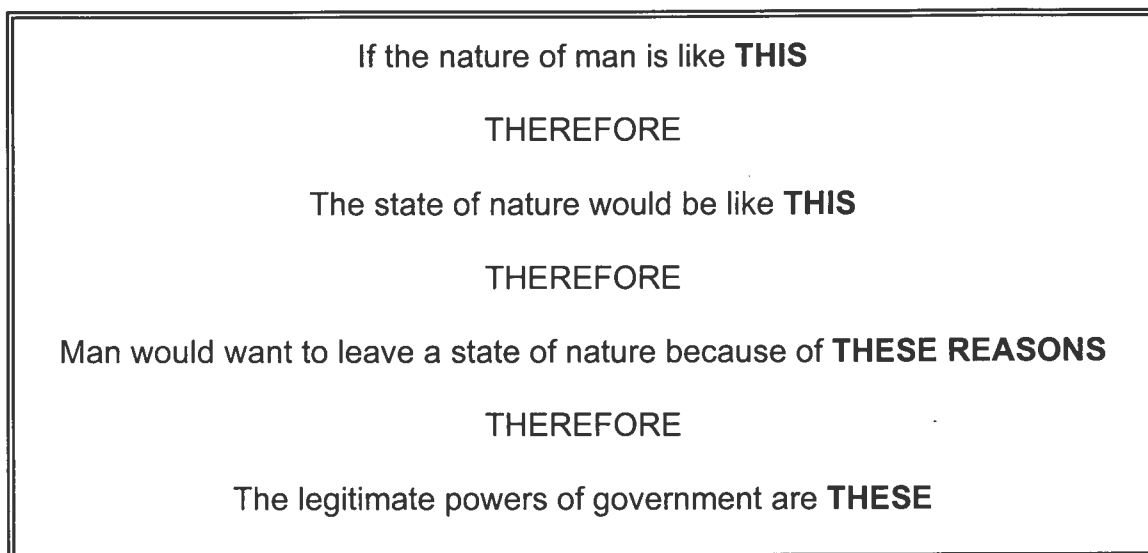
THUS THE LAW OF NATURE STANDS AS AN ETERNAL RULE TO ALL MEN, LEGISLATORS AS WELL AS OTHERS. THE RULES THAT THEY MAKE FOR OTHER MEN'S ACTIONS MUST, AS WELL AS THEIR OWN AND OTHER MEN'S ACTIONS BE CONFORMABLE TO THE LAW OF NATURE. (PARAGRAPH 135)

Any government which exceeds the laws of nature exceeds its legitimate power and can therefore be overthrown in a revolution.



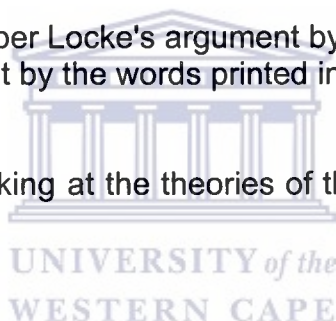
*Think! According to Locke, the nature of the social contract is between the people and government. How does this differ from Hobbes' idea of the nature of the social contract? How does the fact that in Locke the contract is between people and government affect the right of the people to rebel if the government exceeds its legitimate powers.*

Now go back, once again, to the **pattern** of argument outlined earlier. Remember, Hobbes and Locke both used the same pattern:



You can help yourself remember Locke's argument by using this pattern. You simply have to say what Locke meant by the words printed in **bold**.

You have now completed looking at the theories of the two **LIBERAL** philosophers, **Hobbes** and **Locke**.



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- 1) - Field descriptions, Analysis and "significance"
- 2) - students' perspectives on EAP at SETI
- 3) - Ts perspectives on EAP material
- 4) - Teaching documents, analysis, significance
  - EAP -
  - NLEC
  - Biology
  - MEE
  - EEE

### 5.1 Intro

#### 5.1.1 observations in language classrooms

5.1.1.1 EAP

5.1.1.2 NLEC



#### 5.1.2 Observations in science & engineering classrooms

5.1.2.1 Biology

5.1.2.2 Physics

5.1.2.3 EEE

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