

**LECTURER AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS
OF AN ACADEMIC WRITING TASK**

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This research considers the perceptions of an academic writing task held by a lecturer and first year students in the Philosophy department at the University of Zululand. The research takes as its starting point the following premises: that language is inextricably linked to learning; that each academic discipline has a particular discourse which students have to acquire in order to participate as accepted members of the academic community; that learning proceeds most effectively when teaching starts with what is known and moves into the unknown; and that learning takes place through experience and involvement, rather than transmission.

The research suggests that many first year students bring with them to university an understanding of the nature of learning and of knowledge which makes it difficult for them to understand the implicit rules of the discourse of analytical philosophy. My investigation uncovered several of these rules in the study guide written for the course, but it appears that students were not able to discover them and, as a result, experienced great difficulty in fulfilling the assignment task in a way which promoted their understanding of the content. The research also shows that the lecturer's expectations of the task were far removed from the manner in which the students implemented the task. It is argued that the students appear to have reverted to their established writing strategies which consisted of simply repeating what the 'authority' has said.

From this it is argued that unless rules of the discourse are made explicit to students, and students understand the content of the course, they will revert to copying and relying on other sources to tell them what to write. One way of making these rules explicit and encouraging students to integrate new knowledge with previous knowledge which they bring with them to university is through providing well-structured writing tasks, and where necessary, developing clearly defined assessment procedures. Writing is the principal means of mediation between the lecturer, who is trying to offer students entry into the discipline, and the student apprentice trying to make sense of the discipline and find his or her own 'voice' within that discipline.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

This study seeks to:

- 1) provide a substantial description of the perceptions held by a lecturer and his first year students about a selected academic writing task.
- 2) uncover some of the mutual difficulties in the performance and assessment of writing tasks experienced by lecturers and first year students in the department of Philosophy at the University of Zululand.
- 3) suggest practical recommendations, based on the findings of the research, to the department concerning the problems that students might experience in the course at present, particularly with regard to the completion of written assignments.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research took the form of an ethnographic case study in which I sought permission from a lecturer in the department of Philosophy at the University of Zululand to explore both his perceptions and those of some of his first year students regarding the first written assignment of the year. He agreed and I interviewed him about his expectations of the students for this first assignment and what he would be looking for when he marked it. After the assignment had been marked I selected 14 assignments, with marks ranging from the lowest in the class to the highest. I went to the class and explained to the students the purpose of my research and called out the names of the students I wanted to interview. I managed to complete five interviews with first year students.

My data consisted of one interview with the lecturer, one interview each with five students, copies of each students' assignment and a copy of the relevant section of the study guide.

1.3 ORIGINS AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

At the University of Zululand lecturers in many different departments have expressed concern with what they perceive to be the low standard of student writing at the University. Such lecturers often presume that problems which students experience in writing are simply the result of poor surface language skills, such as errors of concord, incorrect verb tense, spelling and punctuation mistakes. Their emphasis is thus on the finished product. Little consideration appears to be given to the difficulties which students experience in the process of interpreting, and then attempting to meet, the lecturer's expectations in their performance of the writing task, or the close link between language and thought.

Ballard and Clanchy (1988:27) argue that academic institutions constitute a particular cultural context, and becoming 'academically literate' involves learning the implicit rules and expectations of that culture. Every culture has one or more discourse, the mastery of which is intimately connected with the acquisition and maintenance of power (Fairclough 1989:33). Universities are no exception, and the assessment of written assignments and examinations performs an important 'gate-keeping' function. In the design and performance of written tasks, lecturers and students sometimes have different understandings of what writing at university entails. Lecturer expectations are seldom made explicit to students and students' problems are further compounded by variations from department to department and even from lecturer to lecturer in the same department, in lecturers' perceptions of what constitutes an acceptable assignment (White 1994:10). Students often simply rewrite what they have been told by their lecturer in an uncritical, unanalytical way, whereas lecturers expect students to take issue critically with the topic at hand. Students think they are doing the right thing and lecturers feel frustrated because the students are not producing what they

expect. These problems are exacerbated by the widely held view amongst academics at the University of Zululand that the correct use of Standard English is the most important indicator of academic literacy. In addition to having to internalize the rules of the academic discourse community, students are required to produce language which is grammatically correct and appropriate in register (Johns 1990:28). Confusion arises when the problem of academic literacy is identified as the need to produce accurate and appropriate language, rather than an ability - however imperfectly realised - to deal with the deeper underlying problems of conceptualization and the rules of the relevant academic discourse.

The need to develop aspects of literacy other than surface accuracy is facilitated by an approach which focuses on the *process* of writing rather than the product. Many theorists (Perl 1980; Zamel 1982; Smith 1983; Taylor *et al* 1988; van Zyl 1992; Boughey 1994) strongly challenge traditional writing conventions (what Smith (1983:81) calls the 'information-transmission' mode) which assume that writing is simply the act of putting down on paper what is already known in the mind and that problems which students experience in writing are simply the result of poor surface language skills. Smith (1983:81) argues that placing so much emphasis on how the final product of text is presented from the view of the reader allows three important aspects to be overlooked: a) the writer, b) the act of writing, and c) the role that writing plays in the developing thought of the writer.

Of central importance to the writing process is the design of the writing task and students' perceptions of the requirements of that task. Ballard and Clanchy (1988) and Johns (1990) believe that lecturers should be encouraged to make explicit their expectations of student writing. Following these writers, I would argue that lecturers need to be aware that these expectations can be made clearer to students firstly, by viewing writing as an integral part of the learning process and secondly, by supporting the student through the process of the writing task, rather than simply evaluating the task at its conclusion. Of central importance to students' understanding of the writing task is the design and presentation of the task itself. What might be perfectly obvious to the lecturer might be very obscure to the students.

Relevant research questions, therefore, are: Are students approaching the task the way that the lecturer expects them to? Does the lecturer present and design his tasks in a way which promotes an understanding of that particular task? Do students have the same understanding of what is expected of the task as their lecturer? In other words, how aware are they of the rules governing the academic discourse they are expected to produce for a given lecturer in a particular academic department?

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The theoretical background to the research project will be established in Chapter 2, followed by a discussion of the research theory and methods of ethnographic case studies in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will discuss and analyze the data collected for the research and Chapter 5 will contain my concluding remarks and recommendations as well as a discussion of the limitations of this piece of research.

Unedited transcripts of all my data are included in the appendices as I believe, in keeping with the ethnographic nature of the research, that my interpretation is only one among many and I believe the reader should have access to as much of the data as possible from which I draw my conclusions.

Chapter Two

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

The assumptions about language and learning underlying this research project are that

"language is a vehicle for learning, that modes of thinking and patterns of linguistic use are social processes, and that language simultaneously shapes and reflects experience from the earliest stages of child development" (Foley 1991:17).

2.1.1 THE ROLE OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE

Many of the students studying at tertiary institutions in South Africa are learning through the medium of their second language. However, before considering the implications of this, I feel it necessary to examine the role that the first language plays in learning and conceptual development.

Concepts play an important functional role in our understanding of the world around us. Firstly, concepts enable us to divide the world up into different categories which decreases the amount of information we have to deal with at any one time. If we didn't group things together we would have to refer to each individual item by its own name, which would require a mental lexicon bigger than we could possibly cope with (Smith 1990:105). Secondly, concepts enable us to bring our past experience to the present situation, by matching that situation with a similar one which we (might) have experienced before. No two experiences will ever be exactly the same; but from similar experiences we extract certain common properties and, once this abstraction is formed, any further experience of a similar kind evokes recognition of that abstraction (Skemp 1971:19).

Some concepts can only be derived by building on our understanding of other concepts. Language is the tool by which primary concepts are brought together to formulate and use secondary, or higher order concepts (Sutherland 1992:76). Vygotsky, according to Sutherland (1992:76), argued that it is not simply that concepts and language are inextricably linked, but that concept formation depends on linguistic development. Smith (1975:139) argues that while facts can be communicated through language, they can make no sense until they have been integrated into existing knowledge.

Vygotsky claimed that control over the written form of language has a profound effect on the achievement of abstract thinking. He believed that the constancy of the written language, combined with the immediacy of the spoken language, allows individuals to reflect upon meanings and in so doing gain a greater level of control, and a more critical awareness of his or her own thought processes (Britton 1970:23).

2.1.2 THE ROLE OF THE SECOND LANGUAGE

The theory of bilingualism held intuitively by most people is that first language proficiency is separate from second language proficiency in the brain and that there is a direct relationship between exposure to a language and proficiency in that language. Skills and content learnt in the first language cannot transfer to the second language (Cummins and Swain 1986:81). Cummins termed this the Separate Underlying Proficiency model of bilingualism (SUP). He argues, however, that despite its intuitive appeal, there is little evidence to support the SUP model. Instead Cummins posited what he called the Common Underlying Proficiency model (CUP). Underlying two languages is one integrated source of thought. Irrespective of the language of production or reception, cognitive activity is centralised and integrated. However, the operation and development of this proficiency can be negatively affected if children are taught in a second language where that language is poorly developed (Baker 1988:174).

Cummins (in Cummins and Swain 1986:152) made a distinction between what he called Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), and also a distinction between context-embedded and context-reduced communication. The BICS/CALP framework proposes that language proficiency can be conceptualized along two continua. The first continuum relates to the amount of contextual support available when expressing or understanding meaning. On the one extreme is context-embedded communication where the language is supported by contextual cues and participants can actively negotiate meaning by indicating, for example, whether or not the message has been received - i.e. draws on BIC skills - and on the other extreme of the continuum is context-reduced communication, which is based almost exclusively on linguistic cues to meaning, with very little, or no contextual support and this draws on CALP skills.

The second continuum relates to the degree of active cognitive involvement in the task. Cummins and Swain conceptualize cognitive involvement as the amount of information that must be processed simultaneously or in close succession by the individual involved in the task (Cummins and Swain 1986:153). The more cognitive involvement demanded, the more CALP skills will be used.

Cummins argues that if children do not have the opportunity to fully develop BIC skills in their first language, they will not develop CALP skills in that language. Changing the medium of instruction to another language retards the development of CALP skills even further, as they can only be developed once BIC skills have been acquired in the second language.

Mohan and Lo (in Kroll 1990:109) refer to a study by Das which showed that students who lacked particular first language writing strategies appeared to lack those same writing strategies in their second language. Edelsky (in Kroll 1990:109) comes to a similar conclusion when she argues that writers make use of their knowledge of writing in the first language when writing in the second language. In other words, writing strategies which have not been developed in the

first language will not be used in the second language.

Starfield (1994:177) argues that Cummins's theory of the role of language in learning clarifies the relationship between language and cognition and also explains why students coming from an ex-Department of Education and Training¹ (DET) background are inadequately prepared for the tasks which face them at university. She argues that in the DET schools, CALP skills are never really acquired in the first language, due to the change of medium of instruction in Standard 3. CALP skills then have to be acquired in a second language, but in reality, because of limited English proficiency and difficult content (Macdonald 1990:40), pupils are forced to rote learn and CALP skills are never sufficiently developed.

Jiya (1993:76), in a study of the language difficulties of black BSc students at the University of Fort Hare, argues for the importance of intervening at the point of cognitive interaction in order to encourage the appropriate use of language. Jiya's research suggests that English Second Language (ESL) students' difficulties stem not so much from the language itself, but from inadequate practise in using language as a tool for gathering, formulating, ordering, and sequencing of ideas.

2.1.3 SCHEMA THEORY

Schema theory, largely developed in the field of reading but applicable to any learning activity, states that meaning is constructed through the interaction of new information and the existing background knowledge of the individual (Carrell and Eisterhold in Carrell et al 1988:76). The emphasis moves from the encoded information to the interaction between the encoded information and the individual trying to make sense of that information. One of the fundamental tenets of schema theory is that the text itself, be it either written or spoken, does not carry

¹The Department of Education And Training (DET) was the education department providing schooling for African children under the Nationalist government.

a fixed meaning. The text only provides directions for individuals as to how they should construct the meaning of the text, based on their own background knowledge.

Meaning is constructed through the interaction between the text and the background knowledge of the individual. Schema theorists argue that the text is interpreted by mapping the input from the text against some existing schemata. However, not all learners are going to have the same existing schemata. ESL speakers, operating in an unfamiliar second language context in which a high degree of CALP skills are required, are unlikely to have available all the necessary schemata to interpret texts in a context-reduced environment.

For the input to be understood, all aspects of the schema must be compatible with the new input that is being received. This results in two different ways of processing the information: bottom-up and top-down processing. Very generally speaking, bottom-up processing involves grammatical skills and vocabulary while top-down processing involves activating the background knowledge, inferring information not explicitly stated in the text and fitting the input into one or other schemata. Bottom-up and top-down processing occur simultaneously (Carrell and Eisterhold 1987:218 in Carrell et al 1988:77).

2.1.4 EVERYDAY AND SCHOOLED CONCEPTS

Vygotsky differentiated between 'everyday' and 'scientific' concepts. The difference for him was that scientific concepts are systematic. They are acquired through formal instruction, whereas everyday concepts are not. Scientific concepts are systems of relations between objects. They are formulated by the culture rather than the individual, and are thus acquired through instruction in a process of cultural transmission (Moll 1990:272). This has important implications for our own institutions. The ability to manipulate language is a characteristic of the development of scientific concepts. Although both scientific and everyday

concepts develop through communication, one through formal instruction and one not, schooled discourse is qualitatively different because words act not only as a means of communication, but are also the object of study. These words are manipulated in the mind independently of their images (Moll 1990:9).

Gallimore and Tharpe (in Moll 1990:193) argue that the distinction between everyday concepts and schooled concepts is paralleled in the difference between written and verbal discourse. Everyday concepts are learnt primarily through speech and schooled concepts are learnt mainly through written symbols. Cazden (1992:14) points out that Vygotsky's scientific concepts need a foundation of spontaneous concepts in which to integrate themselves, much in the same way that Cummins' concept of CALP is dependent on a foundation of BICS skills on which to build. Everyday, or spontaneous concepts would be acquired in the BICS context, whereas the more abstract schooled, or scientific concepts would be acquired in the CALP context.

Lunsford argues that 'underprepared' students are able to formulate everyday concepts but are not able to "remove themselves from such concepts, to abstract from them, or to define them into the scientific concepts necessary for successful college work" (Lunsford 1979:39). In her experience she claims that these 'underprepared' students lack the ability to infer principles from their own experience, and thus are not able to form the necessary scientific concepts. This is very similar to Starfield's (1994:177) contention that students' coming from a DET background experience problems when required to work in a context which emphasises abstract, decontextualised reasoning. According to Lunsford (1979:40), Vygotsky strongly suggests that cognitive development moves first from doing, to doing consciously, and finally to formal conceptualization. In other words, students learn first by doing and then by extrapolating principles from what they have done.

2.1.5 STUDENTS' LEARNING BACKGROUND

Langhan (1993:3) argues that the teacher's view of knowledge and learning determines what happens in the classroom and what is taught. Barnes and Shemilt (cited in Langhan 1993:3) divided teachers into two main categories: transmission teachers and interpretation teachers. They define an interpretation teacher as one who will allow their students to play a role in determining what is knowledge and one who emphasizes understanding and meaningful learning. Transmission teachers are defined as teachers who do not allow students to take part in determining what counts as knowledge and who prefer to 'transmit' knowledge to students. Barnes and Shemilt (cited in Langhan 1993:3) argue that the transmission approach to teaching leads to passive learners who memorize and reproduce transmitted information, without necessarily understanding what they have been taught.

Criticos (in Boud, D., Cohen, R., and Walker D 1993:160) uses Paulo Freire's banking analogy to describe teaching styles in typical DET classrooms - the teacher deposits knowledge into the heads of the learners, while Hartshorne (1992:60) refers to the "authoritarian, teacher-centred, content-orientated and knowledge-based" style of teaching in secondary school classrooms.

Moll and Slonimsky (1989:161) argue that students from DET schools have only one groundrule for educational activity, "replicate what is given". Feedback they have received from their ex-DET students at the University of the Witwatersrand indicates that students get very confused when confronted with the possibility that there might be a whole range of groundrules.

It is also important to bear in mind Lanham's (1986:4) argument not to take cognitive level for granted, based on the assumption that the necessary cognitive foundation has been established in early education or through other forms of socialization. Lanham points out that this assumption is wrong in that different children from different cultural and social groups might be exposed to different

experiences which influence cognitive development and produce different cognitive states.

Moll and Slonimsky (1989:165) outline three possible ways of understanding learning difficulties at tertiary level: firstly, we could assume that some students have not developed the abstract cognitive structures necessary to perform academic tasks at a tertiary level; secondly, some students might be capable of abstract thought when using their mother tongue but have difficulty in expressing those ideas in English; and thirdly, students who have both the necessary abstract cognitive structures and linguistic competence to make sense of what is presented to them in class, but have never had to make use of these abilities in an academic environment. Moll and Slonimsky favour the third option as best explaining the position of the majority of their students at the University of Witwatersrand but I would argue that in the context of the University of Zululand, it is the first two scenarios that are more likely.

2.1.6 ROTE AND MEANINGFUL LEARNING

Entwistle (1987:60) characterises three approaches to learning which he identifies as deep, surface and strategic approaches. The deep approach is characterised by an intention to understand what is being learnt, the relation of new ideas and concepts to previous knowledge and experience and the ability to relate evidence to conclusions. The surface approach is characterised by an intention simply to complete the task requirements, with the emphasis on the memorizing of information. The task is treated as an external imposition and there is no reflection on purpose or strategies used to complete the task. The task is approached as a series of discrete elements with no integration and there is a failure to distinguish between principles and examples. Finally, the strategic approach is characterised by the intention to get the highest possible marks, cue awareness about marking schemes, and the ability to organise time and effort.

2.1.7 SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

Vygotsky believed that the development of the individual occurs on the social level within a cultural context, and that the structure of an individual's mental processes reflects the social context from which it derives. He also argued that an individual's intellectual development is dependent on him or her mastering the social means of thought, i.e. language. Thought and intellectual development depend on language (Foley 1991:18).

Nightingale points out that ESL speakers, and even some first language speakers whose cultural backgrounds are not Anglo-Celtic, do not always adhere to writing conventions favouring " linear structure, emphasizing relevance, avoiding digressions, eschewing repetitions, and so on, which are characteristic of preferred Anglo-Celtic discourse structures."(Nightingale 1988:272) Becher (1981:109) argues that "Disciplines are ... cultural phenomena: they are embodied in collections of like-minded people, each with their own codes of conduct, sets of values and distinctive intellectual tasks." This indicates the possibility of a gap between the socio-cultural background of our students, and the socio-cultural expectations of the University.

As mentioned previously, Ballard and Clanchy (1988:7) argue that language cannot be separated from the culture in which it functions. A particular culture, such as a culture of knowledge sustained by a university, elicits and shapes a distinctive way of using language. This applies at the level of general academic culture, as well as at the level of different academic disciplines within the university. Ballard and Clanchy (1988:7) propose that the key to improving students' literacy lies in exploring the relationship between the culture of knowledge and the language through which that knowledge is maintained and disseminated.

The culture that the student has to acquire also involves acquiring the values of that culture, learning to respect the rules and conventions which govern how language and thinking operate. Arguments should cohere, they must be internally

consistent, they should not contain conflicting propositions, and assertions must not go unexamined, to mention just a few of these rules. Knowledge is revealed through our methods of questioning. These ways of questioning have, over time, become more specialized and differentiated. These different ways of questioning can be identified with the disciplinary foundations of knowledge, which are marked off from each other most markedly by their distinctive mode of analysis. For a student to be considered 'literate' in the subject, he or she has to be able to competently manipulate this mode of analysis. (Ballard and Clanchy 1988:14)

In the same way that modes of analysis differ across disciplines, so too does language. For the student new to the discipline, the learning of the mode of analysis (achieving *cognitive competence*) is inseparable from the learning of the language of that discipline (achieving *linguistic competence*). The language informs the knowledge and the knowledge finds its form and meaning within the language (Ballard and Clanchy 1988:17).

2.1.8 THE ACT OF WRITING

Students pass or fail depending on the extent to which they convince their lecturers, through means of a written test, either an assignment or an exam, that they know what the lecturer expects them to know. Shay et al (in Angelil-Carter et al 1994:18) suggest that a writing task can be viewed either as a 'bridge' between a writer's thinking processes and the public forum of academic writing or as a 'gate' which denies writers' access to this public forum. Writing in an academic environment is a highly skilled activity and because of the emphasis placed on a student's ability to write, it is of fundamental importance that attention be focused on the nature of this process.

2.1.9 WRITING AS PROCESS

Many theorists (Perl 1980; Zamel 1982; Smith 1983; Taylor *et al* 1988; van Zyl 1992) are strongly challenging traditional writing conventions (what Smith calls the 'information-transmission' mode) which presume that writing is simply the act of putting down on paper what is already known in the mind and that problems which students experience in writing are simply the result of poor surface language skills. Smith (1983:81) argues that placing so much emphasis on how the final product of text is presented from the view of the reader allows a) the writer, b) the act of writing, and c) the role that writing plays in the developing thought of the writer, to be overlooked.

Zamel (1982:196) outlines some of the major findings on research into the composing process. She summarizes the work of Emig (*in* Zamel 1982:196) who argued that writing involved a continuing attempt to discover what it is one wanted to say, rather than simply transcribing thought onto a page. Murray (*in* Zamel 1982:197) identified this act of discovery as the main feature of the writing process. Flowers and Hayes (*in* Boughey 1994:6) argue that successful writers "do not view writing as a linear process which begins with planning and finishes with writing but move back and forth among the writing related activities of generating ideas, planning, transcribing, editing and revising."

Nightingale (1988:264) argues that it is important to realise that writing is a non-linear process which alters according to the context in which it takes place. She also argues (1988:265) that teachers need to make students understand the reason behind the structure of the text, which depends largely on the purpose for which the text was written and its intended readership.

Nightingale (1988:271) argues that Emig (1977) has been very influential in stressing that the writing process and products of writing correspond to certain powerful learning strategies, and that writing's permanence allows for re-examination of ideas. Importantly, learners who are not given the opportunity to

write are possibly losing the opportunity to learn.

Perl (1979:332) found in her study of the composing processes of unskilled college writers that the students wrote from an egocentric point of view. They did not see the importance of making their references explicit, did not make the connections between their ideas clear, and did not contextualize their writing. She also argues that because surface errors in the writing of unskilled writers can seriously disrupt understanding of the meaning of the writing, teachers tend to focus on teaching the correct surface forms. The result of this is that students come to believe that attention to surface detail is more important in the writing process than the development of ideas.

Applebee (1984:582) outlines the following findings which have emerged from research into the writing process:

- 1) Writing is not a linear sequence, but rather involves many recursively operating processes such as planning, monitoring, drafting, revising and editing.
- 2) Writers do not all use these processes in the same way.
- 3) The processes used depend on the nature of the writing task.

Applebee and Langer (1987:137) point out, however, that unless methods of evaluation change to account for new understandings of the writing process, the deeper processes of instructional change which these theories hope to bring about will not occur.

2.1.10 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

Applebee (1984:581) emphasizes that the role of written language focuses on logical rather than interpersonal language functions, and separates those functions from the immediate context. He also argues that these two developments make writing the preeminent tool for rational thought.

Emig (1977:73) defines four features of writing that are important to its role in thought. These are that writing is (a) integrative, drawing on a variety of different modes of representation, and entailing the active participation of both the left and the right hemispheres of the brain; (b) available for review and reevaluation; (c) a medium which requires the establishment of systematic connections and relationships; and (d) active, engaged, personal and 'self-rhythmed'.

Applebee (1984:586) argues that research into the relationship between writing and reasoning highlights three important points. Firstly, the more the writer must manipulate a given body of content in the process of writing about it, the better he or she will understand that content, especially if understanding is measured as the ability to apply new concepts in new situations, rather than simply to recognize previously presented material. Secondly, the effects of writing on understanding is usually strongest for the particular content that the writing is focused on. If writing tasks differ in terms of the amount of new information to deal with, then they are likely to differ in the kind of learning they promote. If students are expected to learn a general body of information, then a writing task that focuses on a specific, limited problem is not likely to encourage general understanding and vice versa. Finally, because writing tasks differ in the amount of information drawn on and the depth of processing of that information, different types of writing tasks are likely to produce different effects on learning. Choice of the writing task is therefore a case of emphasizing what is important within the subject matter being studied.

Scardamalia and Bereiter (in Applebee 1984:587) suggest that the writing processes of novice writers may actually hinder thought. They present the following reasons:

- 1) their writing tends not to be sustained for any length of time
- 2) it involves very little revision (and thus very little rethinking)
- 3) it lacks overall coherence
- 4) it lacks any high level of critical examination of ideas.

Applebee (1984:563) argues that research evidence appears to suggest that development of writing skills can contribute to the development of higher level reasoning skills and better subject understanding.

Nightingale (1988:81) conceptualizes the relationship between language and knowledge as interlocking spirals which the learner moves along in an uneven fashion. At points where the language and cognition intersect the learner is able to articulate that knowledge. At other times learners may have the vocabulary but lack an understanding of the concept. At yet other times the learner may grasp the concept but not have the necessary vocabulary to express it. Because it is impossible to separate the language from the content, the language of the subject must include the processes of analysis and argument acceptable to the subject.

She (1988:66) argues that there is a considerable body of informed opinion which argues that the language the students generate when they speak and write is as important to their learning as the language which they read and hear. This implies that writing and speaking must be included in the learning process.

2.2 PERCEPTIONS OF THE WRITING TASK

2.2.1 Academic Literacy

Mainstream lecturers and students tend to express the belief that if second language skills are improved, students' comprehension difficulties will disappear. However, the solution is not so simple. It has been argued (Nightingale 1988, Taylor 1988, Jiya 1993) that more than language skills are needed for success at university.

Ballard and Clanchy (1988:17) suggest that not only is there an important link between language and thought, but the type of language and thought required at university is very discipline-specific and learning a particular mode of analysis is

indivisible from the task of learning the language of that discipline.

Kress and Knapp (1992:4) propose that in any society there are types of texts of particular form. These texts become recognizable and recognized in a society by its members. Once these texts are recognized, they become conventionalized, and once they become conventionalized they appear to have an existence of their own with recognizable (though often unexplicit) rules. Knowledge of these forms and of their social meanings can and should be taught.

Academic writing is one such particular genre (or number of genres) which can be taught. However, a common understanding of academic writing or 'academic literacy' is made difficult, according to Ballard and Clanchy (1988:8), because there are so many diverse meanings attached to the concept of 'literacy'. Their definition of academic literacy involves the "student's capacity to use written language to perform those functions required by the culture in ways and at a level judged acceptable by the reader". (In the university context the reader is the lecturer; the requirement usually an assignment and the function some type of analytical reasoning.)

Ballard and Clanchy (1988:8) argue that there is a fundamental notion of 'judgement', an understanding of the rules surrounding academic discourse, which shapes the entire process of student writing. This understanding of the rules of academic discourse sets limits for the student as to what is 'acceptable' and what is not. These rules, according to Ballard and Clanchy (1988:8), are the crux of the problems students experience with academic writing tasks because they are very seldom made explicit to the student. The lecturers know what they expect from their students but their students don't always know what is expected by their lecturers. An additional complicating factor is that these implicit rules of academic discourse can change from one subject to another, making it even more difficult for a student to make sense of these rules. Craig (1989:171) argues that we have to make explicit the usually implicit rules of the game to those students whose socio-cultural background has taught them a different set of rules.

Each assignment requires students to make sense of unfamiliar and intellectually taxing material. In terms of schema theory, although this material is unfamiliar, students would be able to internalise it provided they had the relevant schema into which to slot this new information. The problem facing many students coming from a DET background is that they do not necessarily have that existing schema, and hence have no way of internalising new knowledge presented to them. Taylor (1988:58) argues that one way for students to deal with this situation is to plagiarize the language of the sources, or splice phrases and clauses taken from the source with bits of their own language to create the impression of a superficially plausible answer, relatively free from surface errors. Weaker writers who avoid this strategy pay for their honesty by losing control over their language. Taylor (1988:58) argues that poor language skills are often the result of insufficient understanding of the material and what to do with it. He argues (1988:64) that students' problems are not caused simply by an inability to control the surface forms of the language, but rather are caused by an inability to control these forms in unfamiliar or intellectually taxing contexts of meaning. In other words, the problems arise as a result of the interdependence of meaning and form.

Hull and Rose (1990:242) examine how students learn the rules of the different academic discourses by "trying on" the voices of legitimate members of the discourse community. Through exploring the discourse of these authorities in the discipline, students slowly establish their own voice and come to understand the rules of academic discourse.

2.2.2 The Institution as a Discourse Community

Bizzell (1986:296) argues that we have to take into account differences in dialect, discourse conventions, *and* ways of thinking to include the complexity of the basic writer's experience. She argues that seeing students' problems in just one of these ways does not account for the whole experience. According to Bizzell, we can overcome this narrow focus through the notion of a language community, a

community that shares common language-using practices. The academic community can be considered a language community, with a preferred dialect ('Standard English') in a convention-bound discourse (academic discourse) which organizes and creates the knowledge of that community's world view. If we take the relationship between dialect, discourse conventions and ways of thinking as constituting a language community, then we cannot accept dialects or discourse conventions as simply conveyances of thoughts. Rather, dialect and discourse generate thoughts and help to constitute world view (Bizzell 1986:297).

In order to participate in this community, one must learn its language practices. Thus new students, entering the academic community, must learn a new dialect and new discourse conventions, which result - to a greater or lesser extent - in the acquisition of a new world view. There is sometimes a great distance between the world view the student brings with him or her, and the new world view they are expected to acquire, and this is when students have problems reconciling the two.

Chiseri-Strater (1991:143) however, points out that, from a student's perspective, "discourse community" is a misnomer as community implies a place where the norms of behaviour are shared and understood by all, not only those in control. From the students' perspective, the literacy norms of a discipline usually remain invisible, not offering access to membership of any discourse community.

2.3 TASK DESIGN

Vygotsky (Moll 1990:4) has an illuminating understanding of the role of the task in learning activities. He would present his subjects with a task that was too difficult to complete using existing knowledge. He would then provide (as the teacher or 'mediator') support for the learners by way of new stimuli which would enable the learners to complete the task. According to Vygotsky, learning takes place by integrating the old knowledge with the mediated knowledge to complete the task, with the mediated knowledge being central to the whole learning process. In other

words, the task facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge and skills rather than merely being a test of existing knowledge and skills. If one were to implement this understanding of the nature of a task in a university environment, one can see how important it would be to have a well designed task with clear objectives and to ensure that students understood what they were expected to do to successfully complete the task. Of vital importance, if the task is to be a learning experience for the students rather than simply a test of existing knowledge, is the involvement and availability of the lecturer as mediator throughout the process of completing the task.

Vygotsky makes an important distinction between development and learning. He also distinguishes between an individual's *actual* developmental level and an individual's *potential* developmental level. The difference between these two levels is called the zone of proximal development. Underlying this theoretical construct is the belief that the level of actual development determines what type of task an individual is able to complete unassisted. The level of potential development, on the other hand, determines what type of task an individual can perform, initially in collaboration with another person. As individuals complete the task collaboratively, they will begin internalizing the knowledge and skills needed to complete the task independently. Potential development then becomes actual development through the zone of proximal development. It is important to note here, however, that if the task is too demanding for the individual in terms of his or her actual level of development, he or she will not internalize the processes necessary to complete the task independently. The learning task must, therefore, be *proximal* to the individual's actual developmental level (Hedegaard *in* Moll 1990:349).

Until an individual achieves control over a new function or conceptual system, the teacher performs the function of 'scaffolding' the learning task to facilitate the learner's internalization of the new knowledge (Foley 1991:20).

This is further supported by Polanyi (*in* Lunsford 1979:40) who argues that it is

important to serve an apprenticeship in acquiring a skill or an art. By this he means that it is better to learn by doing *with* an expert than by studying or reading abstract principles.

Langer and Applebee (1987:139) propose a view of instruction based on the work of Vygotsky and Bruner. This view holds that writing tasks, indeed any task, rather than being used primarily to test and assess a student's learning, should provide an opportunity for the student to internalize new information and new strategies in a supportive or *scaffolded* environment. Once this new knowledge and skill has been internalized, the student will be able to complete a similar task independently. Instructional scaffolding is a central component in literacy instruction by providing the learner with the framework and rules of procedure that will gradually be internalized until this instructional support is no longer necessary.

2.4 ASSESSMENT

Balla and Boyle (1994:17) argue that assessment of student performance is a crucial element in the teaching-learning environment, and that it should not be viewed in isolation from other elements in the teaching-learning environment. In a study conducted by Applebee (*in* Ruth and Murphy 1988:109) he found that students get little opportunity to practise the writing skills on which they are going to get formally assessed. Most of the writing done by students takes place in a testing context, rather than an instructional one. Wiggins (1993:214) argues "Instead of testing whether students have learned to read, we should test their ability to read to learn; instead of finding out whether they 'know' formulas we should find out whether they can use those formulas to find other formulas, and so on." Also, importantly, Angelo and Cross (1993:9) argue that students need appropriate and focused feedback to aid their learning, and need to learn how to assess their own learning.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

3.1 RESEARCH OUTLINE

This chapter will outline the reasons for choosing to do my research in the Philosophy department and the setting up of the research process. This will be followed by a discussion of the research theory applied in this particular study, as well as problems encountered in the research process.

3.2 CHOICE OF DEPARTMENT

I chose to base my research in the department of Philosophy at the University of Zululand for a number of reasons. Firstly, I was an Academic Support Program (ASP) staff member working with the first year Philosophy students at the beginning of the year. In the course of my work certain issues revealed themselves for further investigation. Lecturer and student perceptions of academic writing tasks was one of these issues. Secondly, the Philosophy department is undergoing major curriculum changes in their first year course and I felt that my research findings could feed into this process. Thirdly, all the staff members have shown great interest in improving the teaching and learning in the department and the first year lecturer was willing to allow me to do my research with him and his class. Fourthly, the Philosophy I course has in 1995 been granted the status of a Language-enriched course by Senate, which means that students can opt to do Philosophy I as their compulsory language course instead of the more traditional courses like English, Afrikaans or Zulu. The Philosophy department put this proposal to Senate with the encouragement of ASP who recognized the potential of the Philosophy I course to develop students' academic

literacy skills. The Philosophy department has agreed to this and my research is intended to feed into the process that the department is undertaking in defining what they understand by academic literacy and how they intend to teach it to their students.

3.3 SETTING UP THE RESEARCH

At the beginning of 1995 I approached the lecturer of the Philosophy I course in the first semester for permission to do the research in his department. I explained to him that I wanted to explore both lecturer and student perceptions of academic writing tasks and gave him a copy of my research proposal to read. He felt that the research would be valuable in that the findings could feed back into the department and provide a basis for further discussion on writing assignments given to students.

Initially I selected fifteen students to interview from the first year class (from a total of about 240). The students were selected on the basis of the marks they received for that particular assignment: students with the highest marks, students with average marks and students with the lowest marks in the class. I eventually managed to complete five student interviews. (This will be discussed later under section 8 of this chapter.)

I waited until the assignments had been marked before I approached individual students for permission to involve them in the research process. I did this because I felt that students might get confused if they thought they were writing the assignment for me, rather than writing an assignment which would contribute to their semester mark.

All the students were interviewed individually after their assignment had been marked. The lecturer was also interviewed individually, at the beginning of the study before the task had been assessed. All the interviews were semi-structured, relying on a broad outline of areas to be discussed, but also allowing for other relevant issues to be discussed as they arose. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The

writing product was examined together with the data collected through the interviews, and the relevant section of the study guide.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

I felt that semi-structured interviews would be the most appropriate form of interview as there were some questions which were going to be common across the interviews, but at the same time I wanted flexibility to follow up on particular issues that certain individuals might raise. Each participant in the research was interviewed individually, as I was worried that if I conducted the student interviews in groups, some people would dominate the discussion. Individual interviews also provide a higher degree of confidentiality which might encourage people to speak more freely.

I used a micro-cassette recorder to record all the interviews as I wanted to capture as much detail as possible. The use of the tape recorder freed me from focusing too much attention on writing down what was being said and gave me time to think about other questions, to consider the interviewee's responses to my questions and to decide whether or not to follow up on certain comments or observations. It also enabled the interview to flow at a natural pace which, particularly for the students, created an atmosphere more conducive to them 'speaking their minds'.

As soon as possible after the interviews I transcribed each interview in its entirety to ensure that I had all the data available as quickly as possible. I chose not to edit my interviews because with hindsight I might find something important which I perhaps initially dismissed as not being relevant. These transcripts, together with copies of each student's assignment, formed the corpus of the data.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In attempting to discover the perceptions of lecturers and students with regard to

certain academic writing tasks I decided that the research would take the form of a series of ethnographic case studies, with the semi-structured interview as the main research tool.

3.5.1 ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnomethodology, according to Cohen and Manion (1994:33), is primarily concerned with how people make sense of their everyday world. When ethnographic research is applied to the educational context, Wiersma (1986:233) describes it as "the process of providing scientific descriptions of educational systems, processes and phenomena within their specific contexts." Goetz and Le Compte (1984:127) suggest that the purpose of educational ethnography is to "provide rich, descriptive data about the contexts, activities, and beliefs of participants in educational settings." Agar (1980:79) argues that ethnography is about "the ability to decode rather involved sequences of verbal and non-verbal behaviour, and then encode our understanding of the meanings of that sequence into some utterances to check whether or not we understand what just occurred." What appealed to me about ethnographic research methodology was its focus on a specific context. In the context of the Philosophy Department at the University of Zululand the lecturers had identified a problem, and ethnography allowed those involved in that context to describe their perceptions of the problem.

Charles (1995:148) identifies the features that make ethnography a unique research methodology:

- 1) it focuses on social behaviour within natural settings
- 2) it relies on qualitative data
- 3) its perspective is holistic
- 4) it is not necessary to begin with a hypothesis. The hypothesis or research question may emerge from the data
- 5) the procedures of data analysis are contextualized and interpreted with reference to the group, setting, or event being studied.

Wiersma (1986:236) argues that "the researcher attempts to interpret the situation from the perspective of the individuals being studied". Charles (1995:149) suggests that the appeal of ethnographic research is that "it can construct, better than any other type of research, a richly detailed picture of human life, a picture that is interesting, informative and potentially filled with implications". The use of this methodology allowed my research to reflect the voices of the research participants, which was important for me.

Charles (1995:149) outlined the following general procedures which are employed when conducting ethnographic research:

- 1) a question or concern for research is formalized
- 2) a group is identified in which to study the identified question or concern
- 3) the researcher explains the proposed research to the group and obtains their consent
- 4) the researcher has the choice of operating as an observer or as a regular participant in the group activities
- 5) the researcher observes and records all relevant information, which makes up the data of the study
- 6) the duration of the research can vary from a couple of weeks to several years
- 7) the analysis of the data involves mostly verbal analysis and interpretation. Researchers must look for patterns that provide insight into the group's activities and concerns. Once these patterns have been identified, they need to be carefully described, interpreted, and explained.

3.5.1.1 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Charles (1995:151) argues that ethnographic research in education is valued for its holistic nature, as opposed to some other research methodologies that focus on events or behaviour isolated from its normal context. Ethnography is able to provide much richer detail than other types of research and Charles (1995:151) argues that this "is more likely to reveal implications that can be used to improve education". My

experience of working within this framework is that ethnography does indeed reveal 'a rich detail'. Particularly in educational research, I feel that one cannot isolate events or behaviour from the context in which it takes place, as the context, to a very large extent, determines those events or that behaviour.

Charles (1995:151) argues that the principal concern about ethnographic research is the reliability of the data which in turn calls the validity of the research findings into question (see Section 3.8). He identifies the problem of ethnographic research frequently only being conducted by one researcher as allowing questions about the expertise and bias of the researcher to be raised. A further problem raised by Charles (1995:152) is that ethnographic research findings are not easily generalizable to other groups and settings, thus "limiting the practical value of the research". While this research project might well allow the question of expertise and bias to be raised, I feel that this is not necessarily negative. My research does not claim to be the final word on the subject, and I anticipate further dialogue with the department concerned, where the process of sharing perceptions and refining our understanding of the problem will continue. As regards the suggestion that the research findings are not easily generalizable, that is not the primary intention of the research. Through a thorough description of the context of this particular research, and the procedures followed, other individuals may find similarities to their own contexts, and may be able to make use of the findings, but the primary intention of this research is to understand the perceptions of writing within the context of the University of Zululand, and does not claim sweeping generalizability.

3.5.2 CASE STUDIES

Yin (1984:23) defines a case study as "an empirical enquiry that:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which

- multiple sources of evidence are used."

Cohen and Manion (1994:124) state that researchers focusing on a case study typically *observe* the characteristics of an individual unit, which in this case is the Philosophy department at the University of Zululand. The purpose of the observation is to "probe deeply and to analyze intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that unit belongs" (Cohen and Manion 1994:125). So for the purposes of my research it is possible that what I have discovered about the students' perceptions of writing tasks in Philosophy could generalise across the Philosophy department, and possibly across other first year departments in the University. This need not happen though, for the research to be of value.

Yin (1984:14) argues that a case study "allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events."

Cohen and Manion (1994:123) argue that case studies are capable of serving multiple audiences, in that both the language and form of presentation should be less dependent on specialized interpretation than conventional research methods and thus make the research process itself more accessible. If this research is to be of value, it is important that the findings are accessible to a wide audience. Given that the Academic Support Programme at the University of Zululand (of which I am a member) has committed itself to facilitating the improvement of teaching and learning at the University, my research findings should be described in a way that does not exclude mainstream academic staff.

3.5.2.1 CRITICISMS OF THE CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Yin (1984:21) outlines three major criticisms aimed at case study research methodology. He argues that possibly the biggest concern has been over the lack of rigour of case study research, and warns that case study researchers should guard

against sloppy research which allows bias and equivocal evidence to influence the findings and conclusions.

The second criticism mentioned by Yin (1984:21) is that case studies do not provide much basis for scientific generalization. However, he argues that neither do single experiments. Scientific facts are generalized from several experiments, which replicate the same phenomenon under different conditions. The same can be done with multiple case studies. Stake (in Simons 1980:70) argues that the situation often calls for a generalization about that particular case, or generalization to a similar case, rather than generalization to a population of cases. As long as the target case is properly described, readers will recognize similarities to cases of interest to them, which establishes the basis for naturalistic generalizations.

Thirdly, case studies are criticised for taking too long and resulting in large amounts of reading to discover the research results. However, Yin (1995:210) argues that this is not necessarily the case, but depends on the method of data collection. Some methods take longer than others and some data needs more analysis than others.

3.5.3 THE INTERVIEW

Patton (1982:161) states that the purpose of an interview is to access the perspective of the person we are interviewing. We use an interview to find out from people the things we cannot observe directly, the assumption being that the perspective of the person being interviewed is meaningful, knowable, and capable of being made explicit. The role of the interviewer is to make it possible for the person being interviewed to bring the interviewer into his or her own world. "The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms" (Patton 1982:166).

Cicourel (in Cohen and Manion 1994:311) lists five unavoidable features of an interview situation which can be regarded as problems:

- 1) Factors such as mutual trust, social distance, and interviewer's control differ from one interview to another.
- 2) The respondent may adopt avoidance tactics if questioning is too deep.
- 3) Both interviewer and respondent may hold back certain thoughts or opinions.
- 4) Meanings which may be clear to one may be opaque to the other.
- 5) It is impossible, as in everyday life, to control every aspect of the interview.

These features were certainly evident in the interviews I undertook for this research, particularly the interviews with students. Lack of trust and social distance were, in my opinion, definite barriers to communication (see Section 3.9). Another problem which I experienced often was lack of common understanding. Sometimes the students would not understand what I was saying and sometimes I would not understand what they were saying. I attempted to overcome these problems, when they could not be resolved in the actual interview, by triangulating the interviews with other sources of data.

3.6 METHODOLOGICAL TRIANGULATION

Berg (1989:4) argues that different research methods impose different perspectives on reality. Different methods can reveal slightly different facets of the same problem. By combining different methods, researchers are able to obtain a fuller, more substantive understanding of the issue they are researching. This is known as 'methodological triangulation'. Wiersma (1986:246) defines triangulation as "qualitative cross-validation". He argues that triangulation is basically a comparison of information to find out whether or not there is agreement. Berg (1989:5) stresses that triangulation allows researchers to offer perspectives other than their own. In this particular research project, triangulation occurs primarily through using multiple rather than single observers of the same object, i.e. lecturers, students, and myself observing perceptions of an academic writing task.

Triangulation was effected by using transcripts of all the interviews with students and

lecturer, the original task design, the final product of the completed tasks, and the relevant section of the study guide.

3.7 TRANSPARENCY

When I was negotiating access to the Philosophy department, I sensed that both the lecturer and some of the students suspected that I might be looking for more than I was admitting to. The nature of the research discouraged any pre-determined expectations or prejudging without understanding the context. My perception was to be triangulated with the perceptions of the staff and the students, and thus would be one of many opinions, rather than the final, indisputable word.

I believe that research of the nature described in this dissertation has an important developmental role to play, and by involving research subjects in the whole process the research becomes a lot more beneficial than if I had simply gone into the department, collected my data, and retreated to write up a document for my own purposes. The responsibility of the researcher involves more than documenting one's observations or findings, but should also involve feeding those observations or findings back to the individuals concerned. This will be easier to do with the lecturer than the students that participated in the research as, by the time the research is completed the students will have written their final exams for Philosophy I and not all of them will be back in the department next year.

3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Lack of validity and reliability are criticisms often made about ethnographic research. This section will outline what is meant by these terms and consider their relevance to qualitative research methodology.

3.8.1 VALIDITY

Validity refers to the extent to which the research describes or measures what it is supposed to (Simon and Burstein 1985:210). Wiersma (1986:255) distinguishes between internal validity and external validity.

Internal Validity - allows research conclusions to be drawn with confidence. Establishing the internal validity of the research involves the researcher systematically considering the possible causes responsible for the data.

External Validity - the main concern of external validity is to what extent are the results of the research generalizable. Goetz and Le Compte (in Wiersma 1986:255) argue that external validity is the problem of demonstrating the extent to which a phenomenon compares and contrasts to other phenomena. Wiersma (1986:256) suggests that "when generalizing from an ethnographic research study, it is important to specify the conditions of the setting and the methodology, so that the bases for comparison (or lack thereof) can be established."

3.8.2 RELIABILITY

Reliability is essentially repeatability. It refers to the extent to which a procedure can produce the same results under the same conditions even when used by different people (Simon and Burstein 1985:209). The aim of reliability is to eradicate researcher bias in a study. However, it is important to note that in ethnographic research, the researcher does not claim that his or her interpretation should take precedence over anyone else's.

Goetz and Le Compte (in Wiersma 1986:254) discuss two types of reliability in ethnographic research - external reliability and internal reliability.

External Reliability - refers to the extent to which other researchers working in similar

contexts would obtain similar results. However, because of the nature of ethnographic research, which is conducted in naturalistic settings and focuses on processes occurring within a particular group of people, it is difficult to replicate in other settings (Wiersma 1986:254). He also argues (1986:255) that many ethnographic researchers are not concerned about the replicability of their studies. Goetz and Le Compte (in Wiersma 1986:255) suggest that the more clearly defined and discussed data analysis processes are, the more replicable the studies are.

Internal Reliability - refers to the extent to which other researchers working with the same data would come up with the same results. Wiersma (1986:254) argues that the use of multiple data collection procedures and triangulation makes it easier to obtain internal reliability.

Wiersma (1986:256) argues that absolute reliability and validity in any research study are impossible to obtain, regardless of research methodology. He argues that researchers, including ethnographic researchers, try to establish validity and reliability as far as they can by considering the different variables within the research context.

3.9 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED DURING THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The most problematic part of collecting my data was getting students to agree to come to an interview. My original research design called for interviews with eighteen students across first, second and third year. I finally revised the design after finding only five first year students and two second year students who were prepared to participate in the research. The students appeared to be suspicious of me and my motives. At first this surprised me as I expected the students to be interested in what I was going to be doing but the students' reactions forced me to reflect on my expectations. Volbrecht (in Leibowitz and Volbrecht 1995:20), when setting up a research project involving students was asked by one of his students "What's in it for us?". In this way the issue was brought out into the open and discussed. Unfortunately for me, the issue was not raised by the students I was attempting to

contact and it took me a long time to consider the possible message the students were sending me.

Why should they be interested? What interest, or stake, did they have in the research? As much as I intended to be collaborative and transparent, there was not much value in the research as far as the students were concerned. The findings were not going to make any fundamental changes to their lives as students so why should they give me half an hour of their time?

A related occurrence was that I only managed to interview one student with a poor mark. I would have liked to interview at least one more student with a low mark, but as one can see from the spread of marks, students with high marks were much more prepared to come forward to discuss their work. It is possible that students with low marks felt more threatened by discussing their 'failure' with a stranger, than students who had achieved higher marks.

There is also the possibility that I was seen as a white academic 'researching' black students. The very unequal power relations in this scenario could have dissuaded students from coming forward.

Another problem which affects the credibility of the research is that I assumed incorrectly that once I had transcribed the interviews I no longer needed to keep the tapes on which they had been recorded. I re-used the tapes to record subsequent interviews and therefore have no record, other than the transcripts, of the earlier interviews.

I would have liked to discuss my research findings with the lecturer before submitting my thesis but this was not possible. I feel with this type of 'collaborative' research, there can be a tension between intentions and outcomes on the part of the researcher, particularly when the duration of the research is determined by outside forces. During the design phase of my research, I had every intention of feeding my findings back to both the students and the lecturer. However, now that I have completed my analysis

of the data, the students are in the middle of exams and the lecturer is involved in end of year departmental activities. Better planning on my part could have avoided this but at the planning stage I didn't predict the problem. A valuable source of triangulation is therefore missing from my research. Obviously, for the research to have any value to the 'researched', it will have to be discussed, particularly with the lecturer involved. I do not, however, see the research process as ended now that I have written it up, and the lecturer concerned will be informed of all my findings.

Chapter Four

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

For the sake of readability I have divided the data into twelve different sections, although I was aware, throughout the process of data analysis, that in reality it is not so easy to conveniently separate out something as complicated as perceptions of a writing task. I have broken it up in the following way:

- Lecturer's Perception of the Task
 - Intention of the Task
 - Process
 - Language Ability
 - Use of the Library
 - Nature of the Task
 - Study Guide
- Students' Perception of the Task
 - Students' Perception of Language and Learning
 - Students' Sense of Audience
 - Process of Writing
 - Students' Understanding of the Topic
 - Problems Experienced in Writing the Assignment
 - Students' Estimate of their own Work
 - Strong and Weak Points in Assignments
- Assessment

Within each section I have first analysed and then discussed the data.

4.2 THE TOPIC

The students were instructed to write not more than two pages on 'What is Philosophy?'. It was the first assignment of the year and was due to be handed in on 17 March 1995. The task was laid out in the study guide and referred to continually in the lectures.

4.3 BACKGROUND TO THE ASSIGNMENT

Students in this Philosophy course work mostly from a study guide which is compiled by the lecturer and sold to the students at the beginning of the year. This is done to complement the often meagre resources in the library, and to avoid the necessity of students having to buy many expensive textbooks. In the study guide are 6 pages of notes on 'What is Philosophy?' followed by a 12 question comprehension test, based on the notes (see Appendix 1). The study guide also contains references to two books which are in the library. The lecturer and students together worked through some of the comprehension questions in class before writing the assignment. *"I actually tell them how to answer question number 1"* (Appendix 2).

4.4 LECTURER'S PERCEPTION OF THE TASK

4.4.1 INTENTION OF THE TASK

4.4.1.1 Analysis

"I would like them to understand what the essence is of Philosophy" (Appendix 2). The purpose of the assignment was for the students to show understanding of the

nature of philosophy. It was the first assignment of the year and the lecturer's main concern at the time seemed to be to get the students to gain insight into the nature of the subject of Philosophy, which he acknowledges is 'a bit vague' (Appendix 2).

"I told them that I must explain to you [the students] what is Philosophy because you did not have it at school and there will be a question in the exam paper about it (Appendix 2). He is concerned that the students have not studied the subject at school, and so probably have very little knowledge about the discipline. I told them that right from the start because it seems to motivate them a bit that this is really important work and because the whole topic is a bit vague it helps them, it encourages them a bit..." (Appendix 2). The motivation provided by the lecturer to encourage students to acquire this knowledge is to tell them that there will be a question in the exams on this topic. By working through the relevant section in the study guide with the students, and then working through some short comprehension questions in class with the students, he hoped to make the students so familiar with the topic that they would know what to do when it came to writing the assignment. The lecturer spent a large part of the first term working on this section, and was prepared to cut down on other areas so that this question of 'What is Philosophy?' could be properly addressed. He is concerned that students have a thorough understanding of this section before he moves on to other work, because he considers an understanding of this topic to be of fundamental importance.

4.4.1.2 Discussion

The lecturer has acquired his understanding of the essence of philosophy (or 'What is Philosophy?') over many years of study. The students have been studying philosophy for a few weeks. My interpretation of this particular teaching situation is that the lecturer has tried to 'distil' his understanding of that essence (his experience of philosophy over many years) into the study guide and present it to the students in

his first year class. In other words, he is providing them with a definition to learn. It is possible that this 'simplification' of the concept has actually made it more difficult for the students to understand. Vygotsky (in Rieber 1987:170) stresses that it is important to understand that a concept *develops*. When someone first learns a new concept or a new word, the development of its meaning has just started and gradually the understanding of the concept deepens until there is a complete, or fully developed understanding of that concept. Providing students with a pre-packaged summary, or 'transmitting' (Langhan 1993:3) the knowledge to the students, does not ensure an understanding of that knowledge. Presenting the knowledge to the students in such a manner may deprive the students of the opportunity to construct meaning for themselves, working from what they already know and matching new information to their previous knowledge.

Skemp (1971:19) argues that concepts only develop to the extent that people experience those concepts. The students in this study would probably not have had enough *experience* of the concept of philosophy to have an integrated understanding of the scope of the discipline which the task seems to demand. S2 explains: "*What I can say.. because.. the first time I didn't understand what he is talking about, in fact comparing to the Sociology, Psychology, you know, we know what we are talking about but Philosophy is just depressing. I think even if you can ask the whole of the class, you are not just right, we don't know exactly what are we talking about, where we are going to*" (Appendix 4). This student was awarded 64% for her assignment, but the process of writing had not yet cleared up her confusion about the nature of Philosophy. I believe this is an example of a student lacking the necessary 'foundation' or schema to make sense of the abstract concepts she encountered in her Philosophy course. Schema theory claims that meaning is constructed through the interaction of new information and existing background knowledge (Carrell 1988:76).

Here it is also important to note Lanham's (1986:6) point about the importance of not taking cognitive level for granted. All that we can presume is that many of our

students come from the secondary schools with an understanding of learning and teaching which sees the teacher as the only source of knowledge (Hartshorne 1992:60). I would argue that presenting students with the type of information provided by the study guide, in much the same way that knowledge was presented in textbooks at school, could cue the students into all the other associated behaviours such as memorization, plagiarism and passivity which the discipline of philosophy does not value. While a study guide is a valuable resource for students, perhaps the view of learning and teaching that lies behind it needs to be examined in more detail (see Section 4.4.6).

The lecturer attempts to motivate the students to master the work by referring to the exams. Unfortunately, this could also reinforce students' previous experience that learning is concerned only with identifying and memorizing information for exams. Students need to be encouraged to shift from a surface learning approach, which many have acquired at school, to a deep learning approach which would allow them to become critical learners (Entwistle 1987:60).

4.4.2 PROCESS

4.4.2.1 Analysis

"... I explained to them that philosophy is love of wisdom, and then I give them an example of how you break up a concept. For example, they get practice in the class that love means... and how you do philosophy, the method" (Appendix 2). This suggests to me that the lecturer wanted the students to use the methods of philosophy to philosophise, rather than simply to repeat the concepts in the assignment. In the lectures the lecturer felt that he had given the students the method by which to 'philosophize' and now they were expected to apply it in the assignment.

"in that essay they get practice on the method of philosophizing, making use of examples and generalizing from examples" (Appendix 2). In the assignment, the students were expected to first define philosophy as the love of wisdom, then show how one breaks up concepts such as love and wisdom by showing examples of 'love' and 'wisdom'. From these examples the students then had to generalize the meaning of those concepts. Then they had to analyze what is meant by the concepts they have discussed, and isolate rules for the correct application of concepts. In writing the assignment they were expected to engage in this method of philosophizing. (Table II). This appears similar to Vygotsky's argument that students learn first by doing and then by extrapolating principles from what they have done (Lunsford 1979:40).

4.4.2.2 Discussion

The lecturer was concerned that students distinguish between the different meanings of the word 'Philosophy' as in "*That person has got a very philosophical attitude towards life.*" *It means he doesn't get emotional about certain things. Now that is not the kind of answer I want at this stage because that is not what is the meaning of Philosophy as a subject at university. Those are peripheral meanings of the word 'Philosophy'* (Appendix 2). I believe that this was one of the implicit requirements of the task - describe philosophy as a discipline at university (extrapolate the principles). The question that arises from this is how much experience do students have of philosophy as a discipline at university? If they cannot draw on their own experience how can they give a meaningful response to the task? In Vygotsky's terms they have not *done* enough philosophizing to be able to extrapolate principles yet. The lecturer expected a traditional, analytical exposition of the term 'Philosophy'. I understand this to mean that the lecturer expected the students to respond to the task in a way that identifies them as members of the philosophical discourse community. If this was the case, the students would have found it very difficult to fulfil these expectations. Linguistically and cognitively they are not yet in a position to make sense of this

foreign discourse. The students find the abstract nature of this philosophy course difficult to define in a way that matches the knowledge that they bring to class with them. Ndaba (1995:590) argues that "the African experience, its world views and existential metaphors should not be neglected as an aid to discovering the new codes of knowledge." In other words, he is saying 'start with what the students know; the knowledge of the world they bring with them'.

4.4.3 LANGUAGE ABILITY

4.4.3.1 Analysis

The lecturer was concerned that students' lack of second language ability disadvantaged them when it came to writing a philosophy assignment. "*... students who experience problems with language, they have tremendous difficulty with Philosophy. If they've got a command of the language, automatically, even if they haven't worked so hard at studying Philosophy, they come through as making sense, but many of them study the work, study Philosophy and now they can't put those ideas, which are sometimes very abstract, into words and then it comes out as absolutely... you know, as complete confusion*" (Appendix 2). Ballard and Clanchy's argument (1988:7) that the key to improving students' literacy lies in exploring the relationship between the knowledge of a discipline and the language through which that knowledge is maintained and disseminated is an important one. In other words, don't view language in isolation. The language is linked to the discipline and vice versa, and the language (discourse) is learnt through the discipline.

4.4.3.2 Discussion

It is a common perception at this University that "students lack communication skills"

(Senate Committee for Student Guidance Services Minutes 19 October 1995). The belief is that if certain faculties or departments take responsibility for improving the students' English skills, then the students' academic performance will improve. I would argue that it is not language in the sense of grammatical rules and vocabulary that students have to master, but rather, the language (or discourse) of the discipline. The language (discourse) demands made on our students by the disciplines they study, go far beyond surface correctness, and I believe that their language needs can only be met by exploring with them the language of the discipline, rather than telling them to go elsewhere to 'fix up their English'.

The following paragraph comes from the assignment of S2, who claimed in her interview "*so I was just trying that I must just be as simple as possible*" (Appendix 4).

Philosophy is also thus a double aspects. It has, first, the aspect of something personal and it thus a fact in set of events, having causes and effects. It is foremost something arguable, discussable, subject to sets of validity and adequacy, and in this aspect it is not merely a set of what causes and effect but of ideas having truth value and claiming to be truth (Appendix 9).

It is impossible for me to determine whether this extract has been plagiarised or not as the student has no references in her assignment. My feeling is that the student lifted the paragraph from another source and then tried to make it her own by changing or adding a few words. However, whatever the origin of the above paragraph, it is not simple. I believe that this student's inability to make her explanation simple has less to do with a lack of communication skills than it has to do with her inability to comprehend the subject matter. If the subject matter is familiar, writing on that subject will be much easier. Writing as a process and not simple reproduction, allows one to discover what it is that one knows (Murray *in* Zamel 1982:197).

I believe that students need more than the ability to make semantic distinctions

between the meanings of words. Firstly, they need to engage in a learning process which starts with what they know (Carrell 1988:76) and secondly, they need to be explicitly taught the norms of the discipline, in terms of writing and reasoning. As Ballard and Clanchy (1988:8) argue, these rules are the crux of the problems experienced by students because they are very seldom made explicit to the student. White argues that because students do not know what lecturers want them to do, they "confuse plagiarism with research, passivity with seriousness, neatness with quality of prose, and fulfilment of word count with fulfilment of the assignment" (White 1994:15).

4.4.4 USE OF THE LIBRARY

4.4.4.1 Analysis

"I gave them a number of sources in the library that they may consult but I warn them that there are certain problems with this because the book will say, for example, in everyday life you would say 'That person has got a very philosophical attitude towards life.' It means he doesn't get emotional about certain things. Now that is not the kind of answer that I want at this stage because that is not what is the meaning of Philosophy at university. Those are peripheral meanings of the word 'philosophy'" (Appendix 2). The lecturer was concerned that students would be misled by a non-discipline specific understanding of the meaning of philosophy and not be able to distinguish it from the discipline-specific meaning. He thus cautioned his students against using books not recommended by him. Again, the lecturer is concerned that the students confine themselves to defining philosophy as a university discipline.

4.4.4.2 Discussion

In trying to prevent the students from using incorrect information, is it not possible that the lecturer is unknowingly leading the students to believe that there is only one 'correct' answer and that it is to be found in the study guide? S3 says "*... he taught me differently but I only take these information from the library. I didn't take her .. his information*" (Appendix 5). She believes that this is the reason she failed. Given the learning background that the majority of our students come from (as described by Langhan 1993; Hartshorne 1992; Lanham 1986) where knowledge is perceived as something owned by the teacher and transmitted to the passive student, I believe that it is possible that the over-emphasis on the study guide is reinforcing this perception. Another possibility is that the students do not have the schemata to access knowledge from other sources, and so were forced to rely on their study guides. As will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.5.3, four of the five students interviewed went to the library to find information but they did not find anything particularly useful.

The following table indicates the type of information in the study guide and the type of information provided by the students in their assignments:

TABLE I: Comparison between information provided in study guide and information provided in student assignments.

INFORMATION IN STUDY GUIDE

INFORMATION IN ASSIGNMENTS

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Etymology of the word 'philosophy'	X	X		X	X
The origin of philosophy			X		
Distinction between sophists and philosophers					
Definition of love	X	X	X	X	X
Definition of wisdom	X	X	X	X	X
The Socratic ideal					
The Platonic ideal					
Characteristics of philosophy	X	X	X		X
Mark awarded:	67%	64%	40%	72%	80%

As can be seen, all the students, even S3, who claimed not to have used the study guide, follow very closely the structure and content of the study guide. This does not require an understanding of the content or of the topic, but merely requires at most the ability to paraphrase the study guide (see Section 4.5.3). Only two students (S3 and S5) in this study did in fact use books other than their study guide. As mentioned previously, S3 felt that this was the reason she failed. *"But I also focus on this book only, I didn't focus on these notes [study guide]. That's why it made me to obtain this mark"* (Appendix 5) However, again, Table I shows that there is very little difference between the content of S3's assignment and the others who worked from the study guide. I believe the reason she failed was because she did not rely enough on the

study guide, which would have allowed her to disguise her lack of understanding. Taylor (1988:58) argues that one way for students to make up for lack of schemata is to plagiarize the language of the source, or put together parts of the source with pieces of his or her own language. This creates the impression of a superficially plausible answer, relatively free from surface errors.

4.4.5 NATURE OF THE TASK

4.4.5.1 Analysis

The task asked the students to answer the question "What is Philosophy?" in about two pages. This particular task seemed to require students to understand the essence of philosophy, and to apply the appropriate methods of philosophizing (see Section 4.4.1).

4.4.5.2 Discussion

I believe that this is a difficult task for two reasons: firstly, the task requires students to show an understanding of the subject matter, the processes and the methods of a discipline which they have only been studying for two months. *"If the students, in that essay, can explain to me that no dispute - by means of using various examples - if they can show to me that they understand that no dispute .. that debate cannot really get underway until you have spelt out the meanings of the key terms in that debate. And they must show that these questions of meaning are first questions. You have to answer them first before the debate can really get underway. They must also show that they are rational debates. You can argue to a certain answer. They must show it's a universal kind of debate. No issue can be settled without first tackling that philosophical problem. The more of these characteristics of philosophy that they can*

clearly identify in this essay, the more important..., the more marks they will get. But the basic issue is that they must understand that no debate can be resolved unless those key concepts have been explained and understood" (Appendix 2). I believe they do not yet have the *experience* of the discipline to have developed the schemata necessary to be able to fulfil the task as expected by the lecturer. Secondly, the material that the students had to work with relied heavily on language as a means of mediating the concepts. In other words, the content is based exclusively on linguistic cues to meaning, which is an extreme form of CALP (Cummins and Swain 1986:153). The following section from the study guide (Appendix 1) illustrates this:

We tried to explain the meaning of the concept of philosophy by relating it to other concepts like love and wisdom, and we tried to explain the meaning of love and wisdom in terms of other concepts like caring for, acting in the best interest of, identifying what is truly worthwhile and valuable, realizing what is truly worthwhile and good, and happiness, and then we tried to explain the meanings of these concepts and descriptions by relating them to examples and experiences from everyday life..."

As has already been argued, text itself does not carry meaning. The text only provides directions for individuals as to how they should construct the meaning of the text, based on their own background knowledge (Carrell and Eisterhold in Carrell et al 1988:76). It is important here also to note Vygotsky's notion of mediated knowledge (Moll 1990:4) where learning takes place by integrating the old knowledge with the mediated knowledge to complete the task. This task fails to draw on any existing knowledge and there does not seem to have been sufficient mediation to enable the students to come to grips with the demands of the topic. This seems true despite the fact that attempts were made to encourage students to submit a preliminary draft to ASP for comment. Mediation between old and new knowledge should possibly have started right at the beginning of the course, with ASP and the mainstream lecturer

establishing what knowledge the students bring to the class with them, and then using this knowledge as a base on which to lay the new knowledge. Ndaba (1995:590) argues that "a student comes into the classroom with a rich background of explicit and implicit knowledge and understanding. This capital should not be taken as a hindrance to be discarded but should be regarded as an aid to learning...".

4.4.6 STUDY GUIDE

4.4.6.1 Analysis

As the study guide forms a very large part of the students' preparation for writing the assignment I think it is important to spend some time considering how the study guide actually might influence students' perceptions of both the task, and on a wider level, their understanding of the subject. What I have attempted to do is to deconstruct the process of philosophizing that the lecturer attempts to show the students and then relate this to the methods that he uses. Following that I outline the characteristics of philosophy presented later in the study guide.

TABLE II: Analysis of method and process used by the lecturer.

METHOD USED BY LECTURER	PROCESS OF PHILOSOPHIZING
Asks question - what is philosophy?	Process centres on pursuit of definition. Begins with question.
Defines philosophy as love of wisdom.	Provides initial definition.
Then asks - a) What is love? b) What is wisdom?	Analyses definition.
a) Defines love. b) defines wisdom.	Identifies rules for defining love and wisdom.
Gives example of Socrates who fulfilled these conditions and therefore was a philosopher.	Concludes with example from everyday life.

After having discussed the method and process of philosophy, the lecturer then presents the characteristics that underlie the philosophic process.

TABLE III: Characteristics of Philosophy

CHARACTERISTICS OF PHILOSOPHY
Universal - applicable to every situation.
Necessary - philosophy is necessary for any problem to be solved.
Fundamental - questions of meaning must be settled first.
Abstract/rational - definitions are rules which help to identify certain things.
Radical - attempts constructive solutions to problems.

4.4.6.2 Discussion

Can these methods, processes and characteristics be defined as the rules of the discourse of analytical philosophy that the lecturer is presenting to his students? I think so. Ballard and Clanchy (1988:14) argue that knowledge is revealed through our ways of questioning, and that these ways of questioning can be identified with the disciplinary foundations of knowledge. For a student to be considered 'literate' in a subject, he or she has to be able to competently manipulate this mode of analysis. I believe that the lecturer has tried to make the process of philosophizing explicit, but unfortunately, as will be seen later in the discussion, not one of the students interviewed was able to discover this mode of analysis in the text (see Section 10.2).

I would argue that Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development (Hedegaard in Moll 1990:349) can possibly explain why this is so. The task of identifying these rules of the discourse was too demanding for the students at their existing level of linguistic and cognitive development (in other words it fell outside their zones of proximal development), and so they were unable to internalize the processes necessary to complete the assignment independently. As S5 says "... *writing an essay when you don't understand the topic is very hard. I think first you must understand the topic and then come up with something*" (Appendix 7).

Another way of considering this problem would be to follow Nightingale's (1988:81) argument which holds that, because it is impossible to separate language from content, the language of the subject must include the processes of analysis and argument acceptable to the subject. As stated earlier, I would suggest that the lecturer has attempted to do this, but because the students do not have the schema to make sense of the content, and because the content is mediated solely by language, there is nothing to mediate between this new knowledge and the knowledge they do have.

De Castell (1990:77) argues that teachers' beliefs about text interpretation shape the way they mediate their students' interactions with the text. The study guide (which was written by the lecturer and therefore I assume reflects his belief about text interpretation) is very dependent on language to explain concepts (see Section 4.4.5). In considering what makes textbooks (and here I'm drawing an analogy with the study guide) unique from other texts, de Castell (1990:79) argues that "it most typically attempts to systematize and simplify traditional fields and forms of knowledge comprehensively and in accordance with disciplinary canons up to and including the discipline's most recent developments." The view of philosophy that the study guide presents to students is that concepts are defined by other concepts, i.e. language mediates understanding, since concepts are simply defined linguistically. There is very little room for personal experience to integrate with the knowledge presented.

Students who are unable to grasp the language have nothing else to fall back on to mediate understanding. The methods and processes of analytical Philosophy are dependent on a sophisticated use of language. However, I feel that the students in this study do not yet have the necessary language skills demanded by the discipline.

4.5 STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE TASK

4.5.1 STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

4.5.1.1 Analysis

"My other problem is language. Sometimes I think the idea but in Zulu. I get difficulties if I want to put it in English now. There were other ideas that I wanted to put in this but because I don't have much vocabulary in English it was my other problem" (Appendix 3). The majority of students come from a learning background that rewards memorization and discourages critical, independent thought (cf Langhan 1993; Hartshorne 1992; Lanham 1986). Because of this background, S1 now has great difficulty in getting her ideas onto the page, a difficulty compounded by the fact that she is writing in a language in which she has little CALP skills (cf Starfield 1994; Cummins 1986). Writing is not seen as a means of generating learning and students have very little experience in writing the formal, academic discourse expected of them by a university. The students in Perl's study (1979:332) are similar to the students at this University in the following ways: they write from an egocentric point of view, do not make their references explicit, or the connections between their ideas clear and do not contextualise their writing. The concluding paragraph from one of the assignments serves as an example:

The aim of Philosophy on my own thinking is to bring back all those laws and phenomena by an apparently reverse way to that single source, but in such a

way as to grasp them as issuing from it.¹

This student is writing "*on my own thinking*" but because the writing is not explicit, no-one other than the writer can make much sense of these thoughts.

4.5.1.2 Discussion

Nightingale (1988:81) suggests that at points where language and cognition intersect the learner is able to articulate that knowledge. However, sometimes learners may have the vocabulary but lack an understanding of the concept. At other times the learner may understand the concept but not have the necessary vocabulary to express it. It is interesting that the S1 articulates a lack of vocabulary but not a lack of understanding. Is this possibly indicative of a belief that if one has the words, one automatically has the understanding, or as Somers (1980:381) argues, students think "that the meaning to be communicated is already there, already finished, already produced, ready to be communicated, and all that is necessary is a better word 'rightly worded'".

As can be seen in Table I, all five students interviewed closely followed the contents of the study guide. Also pertinent here is S3's belief that she failed because she did not use the content found in the study guide, although in reality, her assignment followed the study guide fairly closely (Section 4.4.4).

I feel that the students in this study copied from the notes in the Study Guide (Appendix 1), with little understanding or attempt to use their own ideas or examples. Again, as was mentioned in Section 7.1.1, this is probably indicative of the type of

¹This student was not one of the five interviewed. I used this example because none of the assignments of the students I interviewed showed sufficient evidence of an attempt to express their own ideas.

writing they have done at school, where notes are copied straight from the textbook or the board, and where one's own opinion is often not considered important enough to challenge the authority of the teacher or the text. Thus, when they enter university, writing is seen simply as a means of repeating knowledge for assessment purposes. This is compounded by the fact that when students enter the university they do not have the appropriate schemata, or background knowledge, to tackle an abstract assignment topic. Many students are not even aware of the need to reference their assignments. S5 says *"No, especially in African schools they don't. They were not exposed to that and writing things so I think it's new to them and I think that the lecturers are not understanding. They think that we know we must do it, so we should do it, it is our task"* (Appendix 7).

4.5.2 STUDENTS' SENSE OF AUDIENCE

4.5.2.1 Analysis

The lecturer told the students in class that when they were writing their assignment, they must write it in a way that their little brother could understand it. He did this because he felt it was *"important when they go home and they tell their parents, or their brothers and sisters 'We study Philosophy' that they must be able to answer that question at different levels"* (Appendix 2). His intention, as mentioned earlier, was to get the students to manipulate their knowledge to suit different audiences. In my interviews with the students, all five of them remembered (although only S2 had this in mind as she was writing) that they had been asked to write in such a way that their little brother could understand what they had written, but four of the five students said that they were writing specifically with the lecturer in mind. The fifth student (S3) was not writing for anybody in particular. I posed the following question to S1.

I: If you ... if I'd come to you, say, and I'd given you a whole lot of different information about what is philosophy ... and it was

completely opposite to what [the lecturer] had told you, would you have used ... chosen to use the information I'd given you or would you have used the information he'd given you?

S1: The information he gave me.

I: Why?

S1: It's because he ... let me say, you came second into class so I would have taken the first information that I got from [the lecturer].

I: OK, and would you ... if I'd been marking your work or giving you a mark for that, whose information would you have used?

S1: I beg your pardon?

I: If I'd been the person to mark this essay... if [the lecturer] had been the one to say to you you must write it, but Mrs Olivier is going to mark it, then whose information would you have taken?

S1: Yours!

I: OK, why?

S1: Because you are the person who is marking it and you know what did you tell me so I took yours (Appendix 3).

Another interesting revelation regarding an awareness of audience was made by S5 when asked whether she had a picture in her head of who she was writing her assignment for. *"Yes, it's only natural.. someone who knows more than I do, someone who has read more books, somebody who is perfect in English and all that and that part made me shake and want to do the best"* (Appendix 7). When this perception is linked to the observations made by Hartshorne (1992:60) about the "authoritarian, teacher-centred" style of teaching that is evident in secondary school classrooms, it is understandable that many students arrive at university with little confidence in their ability to impress 'the expert' with their insight.

4.5.2.2 Discussion

In the ability to distinguish between a real and an imaginary audience, I would argue that, in this respect, these students are showing what Entwistle (1987:60) regards as a strategic approach to learning. As S5 said "*... but knowing he was going to mark it, it was not a five year old who was going to mark the assignment, you know...*" (Appendix 7). Marks are very important to the students and they felt that the most obvious way to obtain good marks was to stick closely to the information they had been told in class. I believe that the lecturer's intention of making students' aware of a sense of audience was very good, but unfortunately, his intended audience was not realistic enough for the students. If one were going to explain to a little brother the meaning of 'Philosophy', that explanation would not be highly regarded as an academic task. The students' had a 'strategic' sense of who the authentic audience was - the person giving the marks. In real terms, the lecturer is the only audience that students are writing for, and marks are the biggest incentive.

It could also be argued that these students, being new to the discipline, are 'trying on' the discourse (Hull and Rose 1990:242) of philosophy. Perhaps they have developed a sense of what is considered to be an appropriate discourse within the discipline, and because they are unable to produce this independently, they resort to playing safe and giving back what they have received from the lecturer (see Section 4.5.4).

4.5.3 PROCESS OF WRITING

4.5.3.1 Analysis

Before the students submitted their final assignments, they had the opportunity to hand in rough drafts to me (ASP) for responses before their final draft. Four of the five students went to the library to look for information, but only S3 claimed to have

used the information she found in the library. (She subsequently failed). The others who used the library did not find the information very helpful and so returned to their study guides. S1, S2, S4 and S5 followed a similar process of reading their study guides, writing one or more rough drafts, and then writing a draft for submission. S1 says: *"I started by reading first. I used my study guide and the book in the library. I read and after that I noted down some thoughts and then I started writing it in a rough paper and then I write it in this paper"* (Appendix 3). S3 got a book from the library and 'quoted' from that. *"There is a book which I've quoted, I forget it.. so it makes me think that it can be relevant"* (Appendix 5).

4.5.3.2 Discussion

If what I have argued previously is correct (see Section 4.4.4), then the drafting process perhaps only gave students the opportunity to re-organize the information (Taylor 1988:58), but did not allow them to increase their understanding of the topic. Only S2 commented on the difficulty of the subject matter (see Section 4.4.1) and when asked whether they had learnt anything from writing the assignment S1 said *"... firstly, the word 'philosophy'...it is a Greek word which consists of two different words so he told us about 'philia' and 'sophia', that 'philia' being love and 'sophia' wisdom so I learnt how to love someone. How it is to love someone and how is a person who has wisdom"* (Appendix 3). S2 learnt that *"philosophy is wisdom"* (Appendix 4). S3 said that she learnt nothing (Appendix 5). S4 learnt *"the names that constitute the word 'philosophy' "* (Appendix 6), and S5 said that *"I should be more ready because at school I used to write my essays in the morning"* (Appendix 7).

The students showed very little insight into the process of writing they undertook to produce their assignment. The impression I got from the students I interviewed was that they did not understand the purpose of the assignment beyond its contribution to their semester mark. The general feeling appears to be not that knowledge is

generated by writing, or that their own knowledge is exhibited by writing, but that knowledge is copied from a book (the 'authority') onto a piece of paper for assessment (See Table I). S2's assignment includes this paragraph:

When you love something or someone means that you experience the beloved object whether it is a person as necessary to your own happiness. You regard it as valuable, good and worthy. You care and you are prepared to make sacrifices on behalf of what is beloved. The beloved one is cared for, improved, purified, strengthened and fully developed while the one who loves in turn also becomes happy in that his best potentialities are realised (Appendix 9).

What appears below is selected text from the relevant section of the Study Guide:

"To love someone or something means firstly that you experience the beloved object as necessary to your own happiness, well-being and fulfilment.... To love something or someone means, secondly, that you regard it as valuable, good, worthy.... To love something or someone means, thirdly, that you care for whatever is beloved, in other words, you are prepared to make sacrifices on behalf of what is beloved.... To love something or someone means, fourthly, that both the person who loves and whatever is loved are benefitted: the object that is loved is prized, cared for, improved, purified, strengthened and fully developed, while the one who loves, in turn, also becomes stronger, more fulfilled, purified, dignified, and happy in that his best potentialities are realised through strenuous effort on behalf of the beloved" (Appendix 1)

As can be seen by comparing S2's paragraph with the italicized parts of the paragraph from the study guide, S2 simply took sections from the study guide and rewrote them in her assignment. I believe that whether or not students understand what they are writing does not necessarily affect the way they complete their assignments. Until the institution sees the value of writing for learning, and until the dominant view of

knowledge as a discrete set of facts to be memorized or repeated is broken down, students will continue to write as shown in this example, especially if they are not penalised for doing so.

Emig (1977:69) stresses that writing processes and products of writing correspond to certain powerful learning strategies. My experience is that the majority of our students memorise large chunks of their work for tests and exams. If this is indeed the case, then it is evident that there is a discrepancy between trying to engage students in meaningful writing tasks when they can pass a course through memorising their work. The Philosophy department is trying very hard to move students away from this view of knowledge, but the point is that students entering the university bring their long-established (and up to now, successful) learning practices with them, and these habits are very hard to break.

4.5.4 STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE TOPIC

4.5.4.1 Analysis

All the students felt that they understood what the task asked them to do, i.e. explain what is philosophy. Only S5 mentioned that the lecturer wanted them to show their own understanding of the topic "... so he wanted, according to our own understanding, 'What is Philosophy?', not from the study guide..." (Appendix 7).

As a further illustration of the similarity of the assignments (see Table I), I looked at the information obtained from the study guide and then compared it to the relevant paragraphs of the assignments written by the students I interviewed:

Study Wisdom: To be wise means, firstly that one knows what is truly worthwhile and valuable in life, and secondly, that

one knows how to get or how to create that which is truly worthwhile or valuable or good, and thirdly, that one has the strength of character and integrity to actually and in reality bring about through work and effort and often sacrifice that which is worthwhile, valuable, good, that is, that one also has the drive and initiative and creativity to realize abstract ideals and values.

- S1:** WISDOM: Someone who is wise always see valuable and good things in life. He also knows how to get what is truly useful or good to him. He knows how to plan a goal and how to reach/achieve it. He always have progress in life a wise person is honest, fair and have justice (Appendix 8).
- S2:** A wise person live a carefully planned life. He knows what is really valuable in life. You must know how to realise values. A wise man have the strength of character to do what ought to be done to realize values (Appendix 9).
- S3:** Wisdom: The word "wisdom" means to be wise i.e. a wise man/woman planned life carefully. She or he knows what is really valuable in life and also knows how to realise values. Socrates then sought tirelessly for truth for himself and everybody else justice for society (Appendix 10).
- S4:** Wisdom comes from a verb "wise". To be wise means that one knows what is really valuable and worthy in life and that she/he knows how to get it that is worthwhile and valuable and s/he has the strength of character to bring about through effort that is valuable and worthy in life and that means s/he has the ability to realize the things that are valued in life, i.e. Socrates sought for the truth and justice for the society, so as

a philosopher he loved wisdom (Appendix 11).

S5: WISDOM: It is knowledge in its broadest sense, knowledge directed to the fundamental and pervasive concerns of existence. To desire wisdom is to seek principles that cut through superficial and trivial facts that clutter our intellectual landscape revealing the logical shape of things beneath (Appendix 12).

As can be seen, there is very little difference between the paragraph from the study guide and the paragraphs taken from the students assignments

4.5.4.2 Discussion

Again, as shown in Section 4.5.3 the students, to a large extent, simply rewrote what they had been told in lectures and read in their study guide. There is no indication that the knowledge taught has been integrated in a meaningful way. As has been argued earlier (see for example Section 4.4.1; 4.4.3; 4.4.5), students were not able to show their understanding because 1) they failed to understand the concepts prior to the task; 2) they were unable to use the writing process to explore and develop their understanding and 3) there was not enough mediation between prior knowledge and new knowledge. Because the students don't engage with the subject content, none of these elements of written text (Perl 1979:332) is present in their assignments, unless they have been copied directly from another source.

Nightingale (1988:81) argues that language and knowledge operate as interlocking spirals. Because it is impossible to separate the language from the content, the language of the discipline must include the processes of analysis and argument valued by practitioners of the discipline. I do not think that these students have any *experience* of the language of the subject, other than the example they have in their

study guide, which, while providing an excellent example of a philosopher using language to philosophize, does not provide the students with sufficient access to that specialised discourse.

As has been mentioned before (see Section 4.4.5), the assignment topic was abstract and did not draw on students' prior knowledge to answer the question. A process of scaffolding (Foley 1991:20), together with starting with what students already know (Ndaba 1995:590) might have assisted the students to make sense of the topic. In my interviews with the students after they had written the assignment, it was very apparent that they had not actually gleaned any deeper understanding of the topic from the experience of writing the assignment (see Section 4.5.3).

My feeling is that the students got so involved in explaining the meaning of the Greek words 'philia' and 'sophia' and then explaining that these words mean 'love' and 'wisdom' and then explaining the meaning of the words 'love' and 'wisdom' that they lost sight of the topic. The lecturer spent a lot of lecture time explaining the meaning of these words so it is possible that the students could have regarded them as extremely important to the course, whereas the lecturer's intention would have been simply to ensure that the students had a clear understanding of the etymology of the word 'philosophy', which he perhaps felt would enable them to gain a better understanding of what philosophy is. Again, this suggests the importance that the lecturer places on language mediating the concepts encountered in the course, exacerbated by the centrality of language to the discipline of analytical philosophy.

It is difficult to make definitive statements about the students' understanding of the topic because from looking at the assignments, with the exception of S3, it is very difficult to determine what the students understand and what they don't.

S1: Philosophy is characterised by universality, necessity, fundamentality, rationality and radicality. Universality means that every debate always have a philosophical aspect in other words it deals with question of

meaning (Appendix 8).

Does she understand what she has written, or is she simply repeating another authority? Looking again at S5's paragraph defining wisdom, and remembering that she was awarded the highest mark in the class for her assignment, can we argue that she understands the meaning of what she has written? How much of the following paragraph has been written in her words, based on her own understanding?

S5: WISDOM: It is knowledge in its broadest sense, knowledge directed to the fundamental and pervasive concerns of existence. To desire wisdom is to seek principles that cut through superficial and trivial facts that clutter our intellectual landscape revealing the logical shape of things beneath (Appendix 12).

I think Applebee's findings (1984:586) on the relationship between writing and reasoning are relevant to this discussion. Firstly, the more a writer must manipulate content in the process of writing about it, the better he or she will understand that content. Secondly, the effects of writing on understanding are usually strongest for the particular content that the writing is focused on, and thirdly, different types of writing tasks are likely to produce different effects on learning. The choice of a writing task is therefore a matter of emphasizing what is important within the subject matter being studied. I believe that this writing task correctly focused on the important material covered in the course. The problems with the task arise when looking at the task in the context of the broader teaching and learning situation. The questions that come to mind about this particular task are:

- How much manipulation of content did the task demand?
- Did students develop their understanding of the content by completing the task?
- What type of learning did this particular task encourage?

As I have argued previously (see Section 4.4.6), the gap between what the students

knew and what they were expected to do was simply too large. Because of this, I believe that students failed to learn anything meaningful from the task and were forced to plagiarize in order to have something to submit. Unfortunately, this reinforces the students' previous experience of writing as simply copying information from one page to another.

4.5.5 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED IN WRITING THE ASSIGNMENT

4.5.5.1 Analysis

The students interviewed experienced the following problems: S1 felt that her problem was not being able to put her thoughts into words: *"Sometimes I think the idea but in Zulu. I get difficulties if I want to put it in English now"* (Appendix 3). S2 had difficulty in defining the subject area: *"In fact, what do we know, what must we know? What are we studying? You see, in Psychology at the moment we are studying the mind but in Philosophy its puzzling"* (Appendix 4). S3 felt that her problem was consulting the 'wrong' book: *"I was going to look at it clearly so it means I didn't understand really what he needs for this assignment, I only take it easy that is I go to the library I take this one and written it down and so I submitted it to him, so he didn't want this"* (Appendix 5). S4 claimed not to have experienced any problems: *"I don't remember problems. I try to go through myself and I don't remember experiencing problems"* (Appendix 6). S5 had difficulty in condensing all her information into the required number of pages: *"...when I was writing my draft sometimes it was two, two and a half pages so I had problems in trimming it. I had to but it was so hard"* (Appendix 7). With the exception of S2, there does not seem to be an awareness among these students of their apparent inability to come to grips with the subject matter. As Scardamalia and Bereiter (*in* Applebee 1984:587) suggest, the writing processes of novice writers may actually hinder thought because a) their writing is not sustained for any length of time - S3's assignment was written in *"About an hour"* (Appendix 5); b)

it involves very little revision - S4 says *"I think I first read the study guide and then I wrote the first .. the one which I've said I first wrote and then I saw others writing it in this [book] so I wrote it again and I don't think I was referring to the first assignment when I wrote it, this second one (Appendix 6);* c) it lacks overall coherence - S3 says *"...so it makes me think that it can be relevant but so far if I received the scripts I thought that it is not relevant so I thought that [the lecturer] want something more and I must think clearly about it so it means its my fault"* (Appendix 5); and d) It lacks any high level of critical examination of ideas - S5 says *"... I had to use relevant information, not something that I think is right"* (Appendix 7).

4.5.5.2 Discussion

My opinion is that all the students in this study, to a greater or lesser extent, had problems in coming to any meaningful understanding of the assignment topic. To repeat S2 (see Section 4.4.1): *"I think not so much. What I can say.. because.. the first time I didn't understand what he is talking about, in fact comparing to the Sociology, Psychology, you know, we know what we are talking about but Philosophy is just depressing. I think even if you can ask the whole of the class, you are not just right, we don't know exactly what are we talking about, where we are going to. That is the problem"* (Appendix 4). I find it interesting that only one student mentioned this. What does this suggest? Perhaps that students find it a common experience not to understand the content of the subjects they are studying, or perhaps that understanding is not important if one can rote learn and pass exams. My research has not been able to establish this conclusively but I think that it would be worthwhile to follow this line of investigation. Here too, it is important to note Vygotsky's observation (Moll 1990:4) that if the task is too demanding for the individual in terms of his or her actual level of development, he or she will not internalize the processes necessary to complete the task independently (see Section 4.4.6).

The other problem confronting our students *is* a language problem, insofar as the link between language and cognition has been argued. Many of our students have a limited proficiency in English and find it very difficult to express their thoughts in English. Because of this I would argue that lecturers have to be sensitive to the language that they expect the students to comprehend. As Ballard and Clanchy (1988:17) argue, the learning of the mode of analysis (of a particular discipline) is inseparable from learning the language of the discipline.

4.5.6 STUDENTS' ESTIMATE OF THEIR OWN MARKS

4.5.6.1 Analysis

TABLE IV: *Expected and received marks for the assignment.*

	Expected Marks	Received Marks
Student 1	±40%	67%
Student 2	50%	64%
Student 3	Pass	40%
Student 4	Not nearly 70%	70%
Student 5	± 70%	80%

As can be seen, none of the five students interviewed could predict what marks they were going to receive for the assignment. Four of the five students did better than they had expected to, and one student failed when she expected to pass. S1 says *"I didn't expect this because I wrote too short. All in all, 67 .. I didn't deserve 67%. I thought I was going to get 40 something"* (Appendix 3).

4.5.6.2 Discussion

White (1994:15) makes mention of the fact that students' experience of their marks is that they are often unpredictable, inconsistent, and sometimes more a matter of luck than of skill. I think here we see evidence of the unpredictability of the marks. However, because the students' interviewed were all first year students, were all doing the subject for the first time, and were writing the first assignment for the year, I think it is to be expected that the students were unclear as to what marks they could expect. What is important though, is that students should develop this ability to accurately assess the merits of their own work as the course progresses (Angelo and Cross 1993:9). This can only happen however, if marking criteria are made explicit by the lecturer and if students understand both the nature of the task and the content of the course.

4.5.7 STRONG AND WEAK POINTS IN ASSIGNMENTS

4.5.7.1 Analysis

The students were asked to identify what they thought were the strong and weak points of their assignments:

TABLE V: Students' identification of strong and weak points in their assignments

	STRONG POINTS	WEAK POINTS	MARK AWARDED
Student 1	Used examples	Copied and didn't use examples throughout assignment	67%
Student 2	Explanation of characteristics	Tenses and language	64%
Student 3	Explanation of meaning of philosophy	Didn't focus on the topic	40%
Student 4	Use of examples	Language	70%
Student 5	Used different sources	Copied and didn't always use examples	80%

4.5.7.2 Discussion

What interested me was the way different students evaluated their assignments according to similar criteria. The use (or not) of examples was cited 4 times, copying twice, language twice, and explanation of concepts twice. I asked students this question after their assignments had been marked and they were thus aware of the mark that the lecturer had given them. This started me thinking about the implicit nature of the rules of academic literacy. Are all these rules equally implicit or are some more explicit than others? Ballard and Clanchy (1988:8) say that an

understanding of the rules of academic discourse sets limits for the students as to what is 'acceptable' and what is not. While I will not argue that S1, S4 and S5 necessarily can apply the rules of referencing and using examples, they are certainly aware of the importance of these rules and, even if only at a very surface level, share an understanding of what is acceptable and what is not.

4.6 ASSESSMENT

13.1 Analysis

As can be seen when comparing Table I with the lecturer's requirements of the task that he spelt out in the interview, he did not get what he was expecting. Nevertheless, the marks were fairly high, with 40% being the lowest mark in the class. The table below compares the lecturer's requirements of the task with whether or not the students' assignments actually contained what was expected, and then the mark that each assignment was awarded:

TABLE VI: Comparison between lecturer requirements of the task and content of student assignments.

Lecturer's requirement	S1 Assignment	S2 Assignment	S3 Assignment	S4 Assignment	S5 Assignment
* Answer must be concise	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
* Essence of philosophy must be extracted	No	No	No	No	No
* Must show evidence of methods of philosophy	No	No	No	No	No
* Must spell out rules of debate	No	No	No	No	No
* Must use examples	No	No	No	No	No
* Identify characteristics of Philosophy	Yes	Partially	Partially	No	Yes
Mark awarded	67%	64%	40%	72%	80%

The students did not complete their assignments the way the lecturer wanted them to. S4 says *"I was a little surprised when I saw that I got 72% but that was because I think I had omitted the five characteristics of Philosophy. I thought perhaps I wouldn't get nearly this much"* (Appendix 6). In my interview with the lecturer he had said *"the more of these characteristics of philosophy that they can clearly identify in this essay, the more important ..., the more marks they will get"* (Appendix 2). Unfortunately, a possible weakness of this research was that this area was not explored in more detail with the lecturer.

13.2 Discussion

As can clearly be seen from the above table, the lecturer did not get what he hoped for, even from his best student (S5). The question that now arises is: why are the marks so high when the assignments clearly did not meet the criteria that he outlined in the interview? Added to this is the obvious plagiarism from the study guide. Bearing in mind that these are first year students writing their first assignment for the year, possibly the lecturer did not want to discourage them by marking their work too harshly. As was mentioned in the previous section, this is one point where triangulation would have helped, and may be a weakness of the research that this was not explored shortly after the assignments had been marked.

Nelson (1990:365) argues that students make use of feedback that they receive in initial assignments to refine their notions of what 'counts' in a particular course. When asked why she thought her assignment was worth 72%, S4 answered *"I don't know but perhaps it was because I .. actually I don't know. Perhaps other people also wrote it like this and explained the words the .. explained the words that make up the word 'philosophy' .. wisdom 'sophia' perhaps, but I think its because I tried to explain each and every word that is included in the word 'philosophy' "* (Appendix 6). How closely does this student's understanding of what is important compare to the lecturer's

requirements in Table VI?

Nelson's argument suggests that some students may also in fact be refining their notion of what counts in philosophy to include plagiarism and straight regurgitation of content. It might be difficult for this lecturer to penalise plagiarism later on in the year when students got away with it at the beginning.

Another question which comes to mind is to what extent has this writing task helped students to gain a foothold in the academic discourse? Are they being advantaged by being marked leniently, or are they being disadvantaged by being excluded from the process of acquiring academic literacy? There appears to be a fine line between the two and I believe that this area is in need of further exploration, particularly in the educational context we operate at present.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

I believe that there are two important tasks facing lecturers of first year courses at the University of Zululand - firstly, to challenge students' understanding of what it means to learn, and secondly, to begin the year by developing or filling in the necessary background knowledge to enable students to gain a firm foundation on which to build their further understanding. Language support is essential in the acquisition of this relevant background knowledge, and indeed in the acquisition of knowledge of the discipline (Nightingale 1988:81).

Through the process of analysing the data, I have gained the following impressions:

- 1) The students in this study did not appear to have developed a sound understanding of the content of the course.
- 2) They did not appear to engage with the writing task in any meaningful way and thus did not gain a deeper understanding through the writing process.
- 3) They seemed to fall back on writing strategies learnt at school such as direct copying from the study guide and avoidance of expressing their own opinions.

The model that I outline below takes account of the strong link between writing skills and thinking skills (cf Applebee 1988; Emig 1977) and proposes that the process of engaging students in performing well-structured writing tasks can mediate between student needs and lecturer demands in terms of knowledge of the discipline, and promote the development of an appropriate academic discourse.

5.1 WRITING AS MEANS OF GAINING ACCESS TO THE DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

In trying to explain the potential role that writing can play in allowing our students access to membership of the discourse community of the university, and in particular the Philosophy department, I will try to illustrate graphically the way I perceive the various factors outlined in this model to be operating, both in terms of the student (the newcomer to the institution) and the lecturer (and the institution he represents).

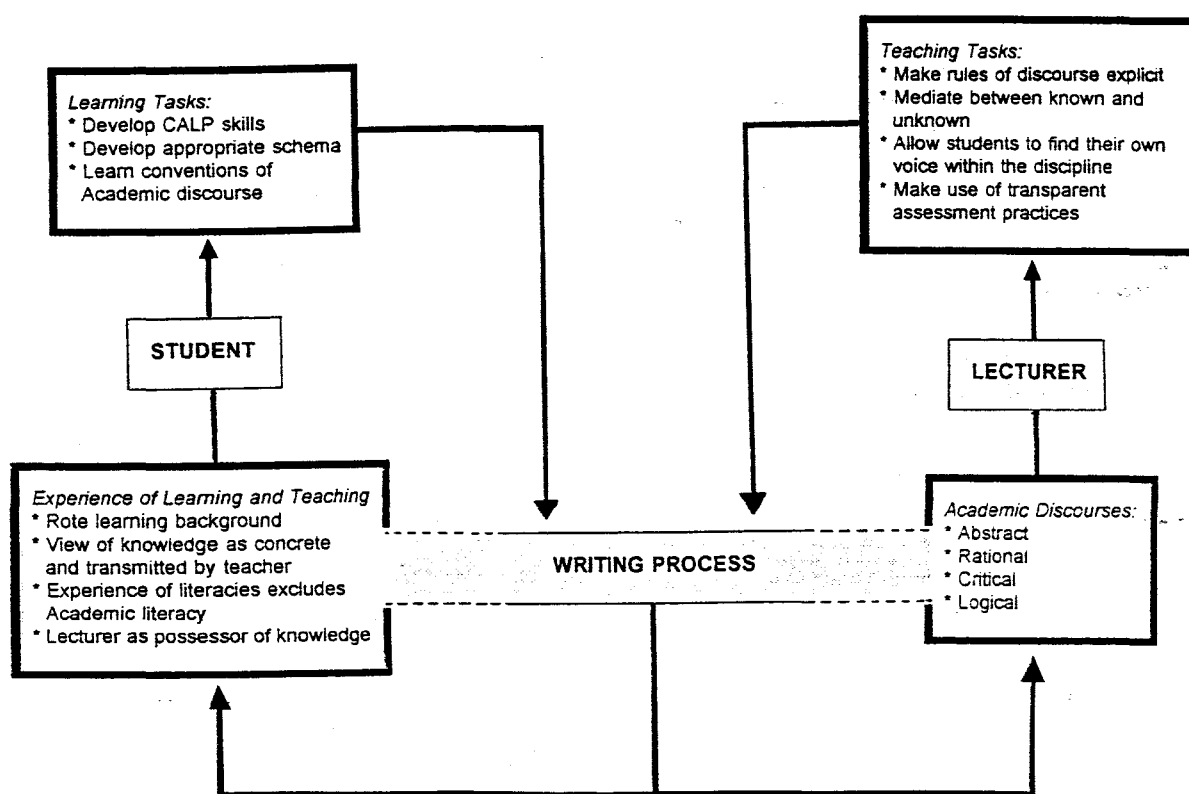


Figure 1: How the writing process can facilitate mediation between student and lecturer

First let me explain how I perceive the bridge spanning the gap between the student and the lecturer. I am not suggesting that the student alone has to change and be 'bridged' across the gap. Rather, I would argue that both the student and the institution have to work at narrowing the distance between them, and I outline some of the ways in which the two parties can together construct the bridge which allows students access to, in this case, the discipline of Philosophy. I consider the student's world view to include his or her previous educational experiences, which have led to the holding of certain beliefs about what it means to learn, and have led to certain attitudes towards learning. Although the diagram only lists those experiences outlined by the literature review as being the experiences the students bring from school, I realise that this is located within a much larger world view, what Gee would refer to as Discourses, which "integrates words, actions, interactions, values, feelings, attitudes and thinking in specific and distinctive ways" (Gee 1990:xvii). The Discourses that many of our students bring with them to university do not include the knowledge of how to 'crack the code' of the academic discourse and gain acceptance as a member of that community.

The lecturer, on the other hand, is immersed in the discourse. Because of this familiarity, he is able to see that the students are not managing to 'crack the code' but it is also because of this familiarity with the discourse that the lecturer finds it difficult to make explicit the rules and expectations of the discipline of philosophy in a way that the students will be able to understand.

The student and lecturer have several learning and teaching tasks respectively. My model suggests that both these learning and teaching tasks can be mediated by well-structured writing tasks. These writing tasks in turn can mediate between the experience of learning and teaching that students bring with them, and the literacy demands of academic discourse they are expected to internalize.

I would argue that it is the writing process that can mediate between the students and the lecturer; between the world view they bring with them and the world view that he represents. As Applebee (1984:581) argues, the more the writer must manipulate a

given body of content in the process of writing about it, the better he or she will understand the content. Through a well-structured writing program, students could be given the opportunity to explore their understanding of particular topics, and be given space to grapple with unfamiliar concepts, without always having to write for assessment purposes. Through feedback, the lecturer could show students where their writing is appropriate and where it is not. This could be an integral part of the scaffolding process outlined by Vygotsky (Foley 1991:20), as well as the apprenticeship discussed by Polanyi (Lunsford 1979:40).

To facilitate this writing process, the lecturer would have to design tasks in such a way that the students can work from the known to the unknown, integrating the knowledge that they already have with the new knowledge they are expected to acquire. The lecturer would also have to make explicit the operating rules of the discourse. This is where I believe transparent assessment practises can make it easier for students to understand what is expected of them and what is regarded as acceptable behaviour within the discipline.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

I would like to recommend that the Philosophy department consider implementing the approach outlined above with their first year students, in an attempt to develop students' literacy skills in the discipline and to make explicit the norms of the discipline to students. Linked to this would be the suggestion that assessment criteria be decided for each task that is to be evaluated, and shared with the students as a way of making students aware of what is considered acceptable in the discipline and what is not. I believe that only once assessment practices at the University of Zululand value and reward critical, independent thought, and discourage rote copying will students discover the benefit of writing to develop deeper understanding and critical awareness.

I would also like to recommend that the first year Philosophy course make use of the

knowledge of the world that students bring to class with them, as a start to developing the necessary schemata for the understanding of more complicated philosophical concepts.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

I feel that this particular research has just scratched the surface in terms of what has been revealed with regards the teaching and learning practices in the department. I believe that ongoing research into:

- 1) students' perceptions of writing tasks;
- 2) lecturer's attempts to mediate between 'known' and 'unknown';
- 3) attempts to provide a language-enriched classroom to assist the acquisition of literacy skills;
- 4) task design and assessment criteria;

will continue to elaborate our understanding of the teaching and learning process in the Philosophy department at the University of Zululand.

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Appendix 1

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

Philosophy, meaning quite literally the love (Gr: philein) of wisdom (Gr: sophia), is one of the oldest disciplines taught at select schools and universities today.

Philosophy originated in the cradle of Western civilization and development, viz. the Greece of five hundred years before Christ, when Greek scholars like Socrates and Plato taught that no dispute, no difference of opinion, no conflict in whatever field could be settled one way or the other unless and before key terms on which the whole debate turns have been carefully examined, understood, explained and defined. For example, a society cannot be made more just, or be developed, unless and before questions like:-

"What is justice?" or

"What is development?"

have been carefully considered, discussed and provisionally answered to the satisfaction of the disputing parties.

Right from the start a distinction was made between "sophists" or men who called themselves wise and who pretended to have all the answers to all questions on the one hand, and "philosophers", on the other hand, who admitted that they did not know and were not wise, but in love or desirous of knowledge and wisdom and therefore prepared to examine and test and improve what was taken for granted.

Love: To love someone or something means, firstly, that you experience the beloved object, whether it is a person, quality or possession, as necessary to your own happiness, well-being and fulfilment: without the beloved object you are unhappy, unfulfilled, unable to become what you want to become, unable to live a full, meaningful and happy life. Thus the philosopher experiences the lack of wisdom in his life as the absence of something that would make his life meaningful, worthwhile and happy.

To love someone or something means, secondly, that you regard it as valuable, good, worthy: you prize it. The philosopher values, prizes and therefore searches knowledge, truth and wisdom with the utmost zeal. If this zeal permeates every aspect of his life, he lives the philosophical life. All of us have philosophical moments, but the true philosopher finds his calling in this relentless search for knowledge, truth and wisdom.

To love someone or something means, thirdly, that you care for whatever is beloved, in other words, you are prepared to make sacrifices on behalf of what is beloved. A person who loves another finds happiness and fulfilment in caring for and serving the beloved. No sacrifice is too dear in order to make the beloved happy, satisfied or in one or other sense, better. To love is to act in the best interests of the beloved, joyfully, whatever the cost.

Socrates derided the men of Athens who cared so much for money, possessions, power, authority and property, instead of caring for truth, justice and wisdom. The philosopher tries to discover what is genuinely worthwhile and good, and then works towards realizing it, whatever the cost (sacrifice).

To love someone or something means, fourthly, that both the person who loves and whatever is loved are benefited: the object that is loved is prized, cared for, improved, purified, strengthened and fully developed, while the one who loves, in turn, also becomes stronger, more fulfilled, purified, dignified, and happy in that his best potentialities are realized through strenuous effort on behalf of the beloved. This reciprocal effect of love is very important, since it can become a truly creative force within a family, society, culture, activity or any relationship. Relationships that truly work and flourish are those wherein both partners win, or gain something valuable by their association, which otherwise would have gone to waste. In his search and love for knowledge and wisdom, the philosopher himself does not only become more knowledgeable and wise, but he also creates more knowledge and wisdom (changing false beliefs and traditions into knowledge and wisdom).

Wisdom: To be wise means, firstly, that one knows what is truly worthwhile and valuable in life, and secondly, that one knows how to get or how to create that which is truly worthwhile or valuable or good, and thirdly, that one has the strength of character and integrity to actually and in reality bring about through work and effort and often sacrifice that which is worthwhile, valuable, good, that is, that one also has the drive and initiative and creativity to realize abstract ideals and values.

Socrates, for example, sought tirelessly for truth for himself and everybody else, and justice for society (i.e. he knew that truth and justice are worthwhile ideals or values). He was supposed to have said: "The unexamined life is not worth living" meaning inter alia that to live a truly human and dignified life means that one should rigorously examine and test what people say and do, so as to determine whether it is true and just. To simply accept what everybody believes, and to do what everybody is already doing, without rigorously examining and testing it, is to live a life without human dignity, the life of a herd animal. That which makes us human, in contradistinction to plants, animals and things, is our ability to examine, evaluate, criticise, so as to distinguish what is good from what is bad, so that we can freely choose for the one and against the other, and so become imputable, i.e. so that we earn or deserve praise and reward if we do well, or condemnation and punishment if we do evil. Only a human being can be held responsible for his or her actions, i.e. be commended, praised or rewarded for free good behaviour, or be condemned and punished for free bad behaviour.

Things, plants and animals react blindly according to natural laws, tropisms, or instincts over which they have no control; they cannot be held responsible for their reactions, i.e. they cannot be praised or blamed, i.e. they have no moral imputability or human dignity, because they are unfree.

Socrates's best pupil, Plato, developed the Socratic ideals. The philosopher must examine and test what is traditional, apparently self-evident, appearance, apparently certain, accepted without question, and distinguish between appearance and reality, the world as it is, and a world of Ideas (or norms or criteria), and reform the world, so that what is may become through human effort the world as it ought to be. We cannot do what is right or good unless we know the norm, criterion or ideal of perfection, which he called

the Idea. The Platonic Idea is an ontological as well as axiological principle, the essence of something as well as its standard of perfection. These ideas distinguish traditional societies from Western civilization as it developed out of the Greek inheritance: in a traditional society, as the name signifies, education consists in transferring traditional ways and beliefs unchanged to the next generation on the principle of unquestioned authority, whereas the Greek ideal is to question, examine and test, and then to change through rational reform that which is criticised in public (freedom of speech and freedom from intimidation) so that through co-operative effort it may become closer to what it ought to be. Philosophy as well as democracy are Greek inventions.

Characteristics of Philosophy: Socrates and Plato taught the world that no dispute, difference of opinion or conflict can be resolved one way or the other, unless and before the key terms, ideas or concepts on which the whole debate hinges, have been carefully examined, clarified, understood and defined to the satisfaction of the parties concerned in the light of generally accepted principles or criteria.

- (1) "No dispute..." thus means that philosophy is universal discipline: no dispute, whatever the subject-matter, can be resolved or brought to a conclusion, unless and before key-terms have been clarified. Every (universality) dispute needs a philosophical input, irrespective of the subject-matter of the debate.
- (2) "... (U)nless and before" means that philosophy is necessary discipline, i.e. without some philosophizing, no problem can be resolved. Without the necessary philosophical input, debates drag on endlessly, apparently without ever reaching a satisfactory conclusion. The philosophical clarification, as it were, identifies the rules of the game. One cannot win a game if the rules are continually changed, as when the goal posts are continually moved farther and farther away.
- (3) "(U)nless and before" also means that philosophy is first or fundamental discipline in the sense that questions about meaning and definition have to be settled first. You cannot even begin to abolish apartheid or discrimination unless and before it has been carefully and exactly identified and defined; nearly every participant in the present debate defines it differently, and therefore apartheid will be seen to be "abolished" at a certain stage by some, whereas others will claim that only "cosmetic changes" have been brought about.
- (4) "(U)nless key concepts or ideas have been defined..." means that philosophy is an abstract and rational debate, that cannot settle questions merely by observation and experiment. Participants have to reach agreement on questions of meaning, questions of universal standards, before any progress can be made: not what I or my party want or desire, is the norm, but what is right, irrespective of whether I am at the giving or receiving end. What is must be examined in the light of an abstract ideal, i.e. what ought to be, for every one. For this reason the relativist's explanation for the fact that some call apartheid good, whereas others call it a sin... viz., that every

society has its own moral standards and that there are no universal standards, and that therefore apartheid is acceptable in society A, but not in society B, as people greet one another in one society with a handshake, and in another society with a kiss on both cheeks, without the one being better than the other, ...is extremely unconvincing. What is morally right or wrong differs as little from society to society, as that two plus two equals four differs from society to society.

- (5) "(U)nless and before..." also means that philosophy is radical science in the sense that it goes down to the roots of a problem; it formulates the problem and also tries to diagnose what went wrong and why, so that a constructive answer may be developed that has a profound effect on human life and practice. The philosopher does not try to define every concept, but only those that give rise to confusions rendering the debate undecidable.

Summary: Philosophy, quite literally meaning, the love or desire for knowledge or wisdom, originated several centuries before Christ when the Greeks of Attica taught developing nations that no dispute in whatever field of enquiry, be it psychology or politics, religion or everyday life, could be resolved and brought to a successful conclusion unless and before problems of meaning could be identified, examined and rationally and radically debated until some measure of agreement could be reached on standards of meaning, procedure and success. Whenever the object or subject-matter, methods and criteria for success of a field of problems could be philosophically identified a new science originated, making philosophy the "mother of all sciences". Questions of meaning have to be settled first, before questions of empirical fact, truth or falsehood, ethical or aesthetical value, or religious or existential commitment can be successfully addressed. A person cannot obey, or even disobey, the Biblical command to love one's neighbour, even if he wants to obey it, unless and before he understands what is meant by neighbourly love. Philosophy is thus characterized as universal (several senses of the word) total, rational, radical and fundamental thinking, the exercise of which will be a prerequisite for achieving success, in whatever field a dispute may arise.

Notes:

1. In this essay we have actually philosophized, i.e. we tried to answer the question: "What is philosophy?" We discussed questions about the meaning of philosophy.
2. We tried to explain the meaning of the concept philosophy by relating it to other concepts like love and wisdom, and we tried to explain the meaning of love and wisdom in terms of other concepts like caring for, acting in the best interest of..., identifying what is truly worthwhile and valuable, realizing what is truly worthwhile and good, and happiness, and we then tried to explain the meanings of these concepts and descriptions by relating them to examples and experiences from everyday life, so that in the end, we have related very general ideas to lesser and lesser general ideas, and then these to examples and

experiences from everyday life. Thus isolated and therefore problematic ideas could be shown to be part of a coherent whole, that is, the lived experience of everyday life.

QUESTIONS:

- ✓ 1. What does the word "philosophy" mean?
- ✓ 2. Give five characteristics of philosophy, and explain each one by using examples.
- ✓ 3. Do philosophers try to define or explain the meaning of every word or idea? Elaborate. *No, only those that create problems, due to ambiguity, vagueness, emotional & ideological bias.*
4. How do philosophical problems originate? Give examples.
5. Write a few lines, say twenty, on philosophical method and give examples.
6. To explain is to show how an isolated and therefore problematic entity can be integrated as element into a meaningful whole. Discuss and give examples.
7. Is it not a contradiction to say, on the one hand, that philosophical problems cannot be resolved by observation and experiment, and, on the other hand, that a philosophical conceptual clarification succeeds if and only if it can reach the level of lived experience?
- ✓ 8. Is the question "Is abortion morally good or bad?" a philosophical question or not? Discuss. *Phil part: What is meant by "abortion", "morally good & bad," etc. Each person chooses own moral standards;*
9. Write an essay on "What is the meaning of meaning?" *Phil cannot choose for you.*
- ✓ 10. What is meant by the universality and necessity of philosophy? Give examples. *without exceptions Cannot do without*
- ✓ 11. What is meant by the rationality and abstractness of philosophy? Give examples. *debate, not experience / questions of meaning, i.e. relations of ideas.*
- ✓ 12. Is every "What is XX"-question a philosophical question?
Only if interpreted as: "What does XX mean?" and not "What materials is it made of?"

Appendix 2

Transcript of Interview with lecturer - 27 February 1995

- I: This is the first task that you've set for your first year students?
- L: Yes
- I: OK, and why did you choose this particular topic?
- L: It is very important for them to know what philosophy is.
- I: And the assignment, do they have to write it just from lecture notes, or do they have to go to the library, or to textbooks or refer to those...?
- L: Firstly they write short notes which are linked up more or less to the class notes but later on they hand in one essay of about two to three pages on "What is Philosophy?" and they are also told that there will be a question in the exams on "What is Philosophy?". They must be prepared to answer that question in a few sentences, or in a longer essay of half a page, a page even so they know it's something they will get in the exams and for me it's also important when they go home and they tell their parents, or their brothers and sisters "We study Philosophy" that they must be able to answer that question at different levels. If you want one sentence then they must say something like "In Philosophy we study questions of meaning." That's just one sentence. If somebody asked me "What does that mean?" I must be able to give a more complete answer to that.
- I: So for this assignment you would want a more detailed...
- L: Yes, but they will get in class practise. You see, the class notes are about... I think, two pages or three pages, and then afterwards there is I think 10 questions and I go through these 10 questions with them in class and I actually tell them how to answer question number 1. Question number 1 is "What does the word Philosophy mean?" and then they must realise that the question is focused on the *word* "Philosophy" then they must be able to say "The word 'philosophy' comes from the Greek word, meaning love and wisdom. So Philosophy is the love of wisdom." A short question and they can see according to the marks whether it is a long answer or a short answer that is expected. I help them to answer the first question. The second question is "What are the characteristics of Philosophy?" and then they have to say that Philosophy is characterised by say, universality, rationality, radicality and so on. Then they have to give examples of what each of these concepts mean. That of course is a longer question and I might ask them, for example, just tell me as a written assignment for tomorrow, just in half a page, what is meant by the universality of Philosophy, and after they have gone through, shall we call it a comprehension test, then I feel they are ready to answer the question "What is Philosophy?" in one or two pages. That is their first assignment which I will mark and for which they will get a certain percentage. Sorry, and you said also whether they may use sources, I give them a number of sources in the library that they may consult but I warn them that there are certain problems with this because the book will say, for example, in everyday life you would say "That person has got a very philosophical attitude towards life." It means he doesn't get emotional about certain things. Now that is not the kind of answer that I want at this stage because that is not what is the meaning of Philosophy as a

subject at university. Those are peripheral meanings of the word Philosophy. Or people might ask you "What is your philosophy of life?" That's also an expression that you hear quite often but that is also not what is meant by Philosophy at university level in the first place, so I warn them about some of these things that might lead them away from answering the question "What is Philosophy?" as a discipline that you study at university.

I: What qualities would you expect to find in a good answer to this question? What sort of things would you expect the students to touch on.

L: Right, the first thing is that the essay, or the task, is very short. I don't expect more than two pages therefore they cannot repeat everything that's in the notes for example, so I would like them to understand what the essence is of Philosophy and the idea which I have been emphasizing in those notes is that in any dispute you first have to ask questions of meaning. If people say the earth is round and somebody else says the earth is not round the philosophical question there is "What do you mean by round?" Do you mean perfectly round? Then the answer is "No, the earth is not perfectly round. It's slightly flattened at the poles." But if you mean more or less round, then the earth is round and not flat. So even such a very simple debate or dispute cannot be resolved unless you spell out the rules of the debate. What do you mean by the concepts? Mr de Klerk said "Apartheid has been abolished." Mr Mandela said "No, apartheid has not been abolished" and then the debate goes on and on and on and this debate cannot really get underway properly unless they have asked the question of meaning. What the heck do you mean by apartheid? Then you can get the debate going so it literally means that no dispute under the sun can be resolved unless you ask "But what do you mean by the key concepts?" If the students, in that essay can explain to me that no dispute, by means of using various examples, if they can show to me that they understand that no dispute, whether it's in politics or science or in a TV program, or a dispute about the beauty of a poem, or how to interpret a plan, a building plan for example - practical life problems, have you paid the insurance? have you done your homework? you know. From the most mundane to the most - does God exist or not. That debate cannot really get underway until you have spelt out the meanings of the key terms in that debate. And they must show that these questions of meaning are first questions. You have to answer them first before the debate can really get underway. They must also show that they are rational debates. You can argue to a certain answer. They must show it's a universal kind of debate. No issue can be settled without first tackling that philosophical problem. The more of these characteristics of philosophy that they can clearly identify in this essay, the more important... the more marks they will get. But the basic issue is that they must understand that no debate can be resolved unless those key concepts have been explained and understood. In this essay I explained to them that Philosophy is love of wisdom, and then I give them an example of how you break up a concept. For example, they get practise in the class that love means... and how do you do Philosophy, the method. You ask them on a simple level, give me examples of love. A mother loving her child, a man loving his wife, a boyfriend loving a girlfriend, a man loving his dog, a man loving his motorcar. Then they have to generalize. If you talk about love, there

is a lover and a beloved object. You can't get love without that distinction. Sometimes the love is reciprocal. The girlfriend can love the boyfriend, or not and if a man loves his motorcar the motorcar can't love back so it is not by definition reciprocal. And then what is love? They must get the idea that love always involves caring, the lover cares for the beloved object. What does that mean? It means that you are prepared to make sacrifices for the benefit of the beloved object. A mother for example actually finds fulfilment and happiness in caring for her children. A person that really loves another person makes sometimes... Mother Theresa for example, she makes tremendous sacrifices but that's because she loves other people. And the philosopher loves wisdom in the sense that he's prepared to care for wisdom and to make sacrifices so that wisdom can flourish. That idea must be... if they can do that kind of thing, special marks for that. Then they must be able to analyze what is meant by wisdom. So in that essay they get practise on the method of philosophizing, making use of examples and generalizing from examples. And the important thing is to isolate rules for the correct application of concepts. The first example I used with them for example was a bachelor. A bachelor must be a person, you are talking nonsense if you say a table is a bachelor, or a stone or a dog. It must be a male person. If you say a girl is a bachelor you are talking nonsense. It must be adult. If you say your baby sister or your baby brother is a bachelor you are talking nonsense, and he must be unmarried. There you have scientifically isolated four criteria which you can use in court. You know, it's not mumbo-jumbo. You can be very precise and you can be very scientific in isolating the rules for the correct application of a concept and after doing now this with a bachelor we go to more difficult concepts like love and wisdom and later on we go to democracy, and later on we go to God and later on we go to existence. What do you mean when you say God exists. But the basic principles are: you take examples from everyday life, as many representative examples as possible and then you start generalizing from those examples to isolate very specific rules for the correct application of a certain concept. You see now you can stand up in court and say that that person can inherit the money because he is a bachelor or that woman can marry or inherit the money because she is the widow of that person. If two people live together and the man becomes a millionaire, or the wife dies, or the girlfriend dies then she wants to inherit the money and there is no testament, the question in court is "is that woman a widow or not?" It all depends on what's the meaning of a widow. The whole court case depends on whether that woman is a widow or not. And every debate is like that. And what the students must also understand is that if you talk nonsense whatever you do must fail automatically. If a statement makes sense you can check afterwards whether it's true or false. If it doesn't make sense, if there's a meaning mistake in it then it automatically has to be thrown out as rubbish. If a person says "I love God" for example, and he cannot spell out to you what is meant by loving God, what he is saying doesn't make sense. You cannot even test whether he loves God or whether he does not love God so even if you write a poem and the people that listen to the poem do not understand what is meant by the poem, you cannot evaluate it as rubbish or as aesthetically good. Even when you come to madness for example, Hamlet has to make as if he's mad and he has to act in

such a way that he convinces the people on the stage that he's mad but he convinces the audience that he's acting being mad. Ophelia, she really becomes mad and she has to convince both the people on the stage and the audience that she really is mad. Now there's a logic in this. There's a certain consistency that you have to maintain otherwise the people won't understand what's going on. So the idea that.. the most basic level of communication is meaning. There you have to work with the distinction between sense and nonsense. If it makes sense you can check whether it's true or false, good or bad, practically workable or not but if it's nonsense it fails everything else. That shows the basicness of Philosophy. If the students can bring something in their essay that ... it's universal, it's the first question that you ask, it has to do with basic issues. Those are the things I will be looking for when I mark the essay. But I'll be happy if they can show questions of meaning. Philosophy deals with questions of meaning.

I: It seems to me as you're talking that students need very good language skills when you are talking about very small distinctions in meaning.

L: Yes. That is why students who experience problems with language, they have tremendous difficulty with Philosophy. If they've got a command of the language, automatically, even if they haven't worked so hard at studying Philosophy, they come through as making sense, but many of them study the work, study Philosophy and now they can't put those ideas, which are sometimes very abstract, into words and then it comes out as absolutely... you know, as complete confusion. So I think linguistic skills will be very, very important in Philosophy and at this university there are many lectures which openly say "Language does not count at all when I give a mark to my students. If I can make out vaguely what the student wants to say it's good enough. Then I give him full marks for that." In Philosophy we cannot accept that situation. You know, you can't ignore the language in the essay because you know everything that we get in Philosophy is in the form of an essay question so you automatically have to mark the language, the content, the work that the student was supposed to study. You cannot really separate it. In Mathematics you can perhaps to a very large extent separate the mathematical skills from the language skills but in Philosophy that's very, very difficult.

I: When did you first tell your students that they had this assignment?

L: We had some practical problems this year. We expected 50 students and we got 200 so there weren't enough notebooks so we couldn't start immediately with the handbook in their hands. Those who did buy the study guides could immediately see there is an essay of three or four pages. There's a comprehension test, and there are certain tasks in the study guide so those who bought the study guide could immediately see what's going on. But I think about the second day. You know, they were not all of them in class the first day. It takes about three or four days before the whole class is there. So it's more or less from the second or third day and in practical terms right from the start. I told them that I must explain to you what is Philosophy because you did not have it at school and there will be a question in the exam paper about it. I told them that right from the start because that seems to motivate them a bit that this is really important work and because the whole topic is a bit vague it helps them, it encourages them a bit if they know they're going to get a

question "What is Philosophy?" and every day I can spell out that this is important for examination purposes and for the task. But they can see that first we study the text, and then we study the questions from the comprehension test and if they've done the comprehension test it should be very easy to answer that question "What is Philosophy?" They will feel comfortable. They shouldn't be in a panic, you know that "I don't know where to begin or what is expected of me." Or I hope it will be like that this year.

I: And do they have to submit the comprehension test or is that just work they must do on their own.

L: I handed out these exam books to them so that they can do the answers to the comprehension test in class and with 200 students it all depends on how much help I'm going to get there. The first few questions I give them the answer actually on the blackboard so it's not much sense there for me to mark that but some of the questions I'm going to ask their friends to discuss ... see whether they form small groups and say whether this answer answers that question. You see because I want to do two things. Firstly, they must learn to read the question very carefully. They must sort of find in that question what is the key word here. Question 1 was "What is the meaning of the word Philosophy?" They must then understand I want them to do something about the word "Philosophy". The second question "What are the characteristics of Philosophy?" In other words they must read through that whole section and see there specifically stands characteristic, characteristic, characteristic so firstly, they must be able to read the question very carefully and then they must check does the answer which I give answer the question that is asked there? So that's going to be very important but as you can see now we've been disrupted, there's been disruptions and we will perhaps devote more time than perhaps one week or two weeks to this question which has serious implications for the rest of the work this semester. We will perhaps have to cut certain other themes short. This first one for me is so important that I don't want to skimp on the first one.

Appendix 3

Interview with S1 - 5 May 1995

- I: OK, first of all let me ask you some background questions. Where do you come from?
- S: I'm coming from Durban.
- I: From Durban?
- S: Yes.
- I: OK, and where did you go to school?
- S: Where... high school level or...?
- I: Yes, high school.
- S: I went to ?? secondary school and then in 1993 and then I got ES and after that I go to finishing school in town to finish off high school.
- I: OK, and that was in Durban?
- S: Yes.
- I: Is this your first year at university?
- S: Yes, it is my first year.
- I: And why did you choose to come to university?
- S: It's because I ... I like to get degree and it's the university where I shall get a degree.
- I: And was this your first choice of university?
- S: The University of Zululand? No, it was my second choice. My first choice was the University of Natal.
- I: And what degree are you doing?
- S: I'm doing a BA in Social Work.
- I: In Social Work?
- S: Yes
- I: Why did you choose that?
- S: To do BA Social Work? Because I like to help people so I like to work with people. That is why I chose Social Work just because I have heard that if you are a Social Worker you are communicating with people and you just give help to them.
- I: OK, right. Let's get on to the essay. When Prof., when your lecturer, gave you this topic and he explained to you what he wanted you to do, did you understand what he wanted?
- S: Yes, after he had explained I understood it.
- I: I want you to tell me what you think you were expected to do in this assignment.
- S: OK, the assignment was that we must... He asked us the question that "What is Philosophy?" then I had to explain what is philosophy. What I was expected to say it was to explain philosophy and other causes of it.
- I: OK, and this might be a difficult question but I'd like you to try and think back to what steps you followed when you were writing this. How did you start? Did you start by reading? Did you start by just writing down everything you could remember. How did you start?
- S: I started by reading first. I used my study guide and the book in the library. I read and after that I noted down some thoughts and then I started writing it

- in a rough paper and then I write it in this paper.
- I: You first wrote it in a rough form and then you rewrote it?
- S: Yes
- I: I don't know if you can remember this but when you changed it from the rough form to this form what kinds of things did you change?
- S: From rough form here? There were too little... I mean there were few which I've changed. In the rough form I was just writing roughly so that I can easily remember when I'm writing.
- I: You say that you did some reading in the library. Can you remember how many books you read?
- S: It was one book, I don't remember the name, OK the author of the book.
- I: And did you use that information that you found in that book, did you use it..?
- S: Not much. I used that one in the study guide that Professor gave us and the information from class.
- I: OK, and did you find that was enough?
- S: Yes, I would say but it was difficult. I wrote very short because I didn't know how to continue.
- I: Was this the first assignment that you wrote?
- S: Yes, it was my first assignment.
- I: OK, I want you to discuss with me a little bit more the problems the problems that you had in writing this. Just think back to all the difficulties you had... like you said you didn't ... you found you didn't have enough to write...
- S: Yes...
- I: What other problems can you remember?
- S: My other problem is language. Sometimes I think the idea but in Zulu. I get difficulties if I want to put it in English now. There are other ideas that I wanted to put in this but because I don't have much vocabulary in English it was my other problem.
- I: Just as a matter of interest, have you tried ... you say that you think in Zulu... have you tried actually writing down what you think in Zulu?
- S: No, I haven't tried that.
- I: Not. So you just try and translate in your head...
- S: Yes
- I: ... and then just write it in English
- S: Yes
- I: Can you think of any other problems? Has anyone ever showed you how to ... if you take some information from a book ... has anyone ever explained to you the way that you must show that information in your essay?
- S: No
- I: Do you know that there is such a thing?
- S: No, I didn't
- I: So, for example, if I go and I take a book and I find this paragraph and I think "Gee, this is a really nice paragraph. I want to use it in my essay." Can you just take that out of the book and use it in your essay?
- S: I think you cannot
- I: Why not?
- S: Because you took paragraph in the book without writing or putting in your own

words, your understanding of that paragraph.

I: But you're not sure?

S: Ja. No I'm not sure.

I: No-one, none of your lecturers has mentioned it to you?

S: No

I: OK. The next question is did you learn anything by writing this assignment?

S: By writing this? Yes.

I: What?

S: That ... firstly, the word philosophy ... Prof explained to us that it is a Greek word which consists of two different words so he told us about 'philea' and 'sophia', that 'philea' being love and 'sophia' wisdom so I learnt how to love someone. How it is to love someone and how is a person who has wisdom. I don't know whether I put it correctly?

I: Ja

S: I've learnt that if you love someone you have to show by actions. You don't just have to tell him ... her that you love her without showing some actions. You have to act or give something that will show her that you love her.

I: Do you ever ... when you were writing this assignment, who were you writing it for? When you were explaining what philosophy means and what love and what wisdom means who did you have in mind that was going to read this?

S: It's Professor.

I: So you were writing for Prof? Did you ever remember him saying to you in class that you ... for this topic, you must pretend that you are explaining it to your little brother?

S: Yes, I remember!

I: Do you remember?

S: Yes, I know that.

I: But did you not think of that when you were writing?

S: I didn't.

I: If you had remembered it would you have written this differently?

S: No. I don't think so.

I: Do you think that your little brother would have understood it the way that you've explained ...?

S: Yes.

I: OK, you said that you were writing it for Prof. so were you ... when you were writing it did this influence what you wrote?

S: I don't understand?

I: If you ... if I'd come to you, say, and I'd given you a whole lot of different information about what is philosophy ... and it was completely opposite to what Prof had told you, would you have used ... chosen to use the information I'd given you or would you have used the information he'd given you?

S: The information he gave me.

I: Why?

S: It's because he ... let me say, you came second into class so I would have taken the first information that I got from the Professor.

I: OK, and would you ... if I'd been marking your work or giving you a mark for that, whose information would you have used?

S: I beg your pardon?

I: If I'd been the person to mark this essay... if Prof had been the one to say to you you must write it, but Mrs Olivier is going to mark it, then whose information would you have taken?

S: Yours!

I: OK, why?

S: Because you are the person who is marking it and you know what did you tell me so I took yours.

I: Um, right, now when you got this back and you saw your mark do you agree that this is worth 67?

S: I'm not sure really. I didn't expect this just because I wrote too short. All in all, 67 ... I didn't deserve 67 %. I thought I was going to get 40 something.

I: Just because it was too short.

S: Ja, but now I realise that maybe Professor saw some points, some good points so I don't know, I'm not sure...

I: Have you got any other essays back, from other departments?

S: No

I: So this is the only one you've got.

S: Yes, this is the only one.

I: Have you written any tests?

S: Yes, I've written two ... yesterday I wrote another one so I've written three tests. OK, the other test it's criminology test and I got 68% on it.

I: And the others you haven't got back yet?

S: No, I'm waiting for the Psychology one. Maybe we'll get that one tomorrow.

I: OK, um ... if I had to ask you to tell me why Professor gave you 67% could you do that? You said earlier maybe he saw some good points ... but if I had to ask you why did you get 67?

S: It's difficult to answer.

I: Why not 70 or why not 50?

S: As I've said maybe Professor ... OK, you're asking why Professor gave me 67? According to him or according to my point of view?

I: Both. Can you understand what this mark of 67 means?

S: It means that I have passed the assignment so it means that my effort was ... not really that it was good but it was better. Let me put it that way.

I: Um, OK, if I had to ask you to tell me what is the strong point ... what you think is the strong point in this assignment?

S: It is to explain the word philosophy and give some examples. I think examples are very important so that the reader know what you are talking about.

I: OK, so is that what you think is good about this essay is that you used examples?

S: Yes, I used examples.

I: OK, now the opposite question. what do you think is the weak point?

S: Here? Here explaining the characteristics of philosophy, I didn't use examples. I just write them as they are. I didn't put examples so I think it is not good.

I: OK, how long did it take you to write this from when you started reading to when you finished?

S: About an hour.

I: From starting reading ...

S: Yes

I: OK, last question. I see here that Professor has written comments. When did you get your assignment back?

S: Now

I: Oh, only now. Um ... do these comments help you?

S: Yes

I: Can you understand them?

S: Others, I understand others but here I don't understand this one. "Likewise philosophers admire, care for..." I don't know whether he was adding to what I was saying or ...

I: Or what? Do you think he was contradicting you?

S: What is contradict?

I: To say ... to say the opposite.

S: No, he was not saying the opposite. Maybe he was adding.

I: OK, and the second comment?

S: And the second one too, he was positive about what I've said.

I: And this comment here "radius = root"?

S: I don't understand this one, no.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to say about this essay? Anything else you'd like to tell me about your experience of writing this?

S: OK, at first it was difficult because as I've said it was my first assignment and it is my first year at university level so it was difficult, I didn't know what to ... what he was going to expect from me. It was difficult but I managed to make it although it was difficult but I think the next one is not like this one.

I: Do you think it is going to be more difficult, or easier?

S: It is difficult but it is not like it's my first time. Ja, what make it difficult more is that I wrote it and I didn't know what I got for this one so I was not sure. I was having that doubt that I didn't know what I got in the first one so I'm writing the second one.

I: OK, I can't think of any more questions so thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 4

Interview with S2 - 5 May 1995

- I: OK, first of all, I'd like to start with a few background questions so that I can get to know a little bit about you. Firstly, where do you come from?
- S: I come from Springs.
- I: From Springs? That's a long way away. How did you end up here?
- S: Because I was just doing applications and I was accepted here.
- I: Oh, so is your family still back there?
- S: Yes, they are back there.
- I: Oh dear. Is this your first year at university?
- S: Yes.
- I: And how long was it since you left school?
- S: It's ten years. After I done my Std 10 I then went to the hospital and I trained as a staff nurse and worked at the hospital so I just decided to come to university to do Social Work.
- I: So that's what you're studying here?
- S: Yes
- I: Why did you choose to come to this university. Was this your first choice of university?
- S: No, it wasn't. It's because I applied to the nearest university which is Wits so I was late so I found that BA Social Work is full so I tried here and I was accepted. That is why I came here even though it is too far from my family.
- I: Yes. Um.. OK, let's get on to the essay. First question I want to ask you is when Professor gave you the topic and he said 'I want you to write this essay' did you understand what he wanted you to do?
- S: What Philosophy is. Yes, I did understand.
- I: OK, so um.. can you perhaps tell me what you think he wanted you to do?
- S: I think he wanted me to explain what Philosophy is.
- I: OK, the next question I'd like to ask you, if you can remember, is to tell me all the steps you went through when you were writing this essay. How did you start? What did you do next?
- S: I think firstly I revised the work he gave us in the class. Then I started by making a draft so I wrote the draft. I think the first draft, I gave you the first draft and then you've corrected me so in the first draft I've written many things so you just guided me to leave some things out and then I started doing the second draft.
- I: And was there a big difference between your first draft and your second draft?
- S: Yes, there was a difference because in the first draft I've included many things, and some of the things were irrelevant to the topic then after I've given it to you then you've shown me what was not important or relevant to the topic then I just take them out.
- I: OK, did you go to the library at all and use any of the books in the library?
- S: I did go to the library but I admit I was late so I didn't have enough time to prepare the books so I only took two books then because it was little time I just go to them.
- I: And did you find any information in those books that you used?

- S: Very little.
- I: Very little? Um.. did you have any problems writing this assignment?
- S: I think not so much. What I can say.. because.. the first time I didn't understand what he is talking about, in fact comparing to the Sociology, Psychology, you know, we know what we are talking about but Philosophy is just depressing. I think even if you can ask the whole of the class, you are not just right, we don't know exactly what are we talking about, where we are going to. That is the problem.
- I: So you think that's a problem with the whole course?
- S: Yes, with the whole course, because even if you are discussing; you have that problem 'where are we going with this subject?' In fact, what do we want to know, what must we know? What are we studying? You see, in Psychology at the moment we are studying the mind but in Philosophy it's puzzling.
- I: Difficult to understand what the subject area is?
- S: Yes, what the subject talks about. We are learning for instance, we understand what we are talking about. We are talking about morality and we are talking about the ethics. You know, but as a whole ...?
- I: Right, that's a good point. Um.. can you tell me, do you think you learnt anything by writing this assignment?
- S: Yes, I did learn something. That Philosophy is wisdom and then at least I got something, and then that 'love to know' more.
- I: Tell me, from what you've done so far, do you feel that Philosophy has some relevance for the other subjects that you're doing? Or can you not see any link?
- S: Yes, I can say I think it's got some relevant as a Social Worker. I'm trying to fit it for myself. I don't know whether it's right but as we are learning I can see and try to match it with the work of the RDP.
- I: That's an interesting way of looking at it. When you were writing this, who were you writing it for? Did you have a picture of someone in your head who you were presenting this information to? And if so, who was that person?
- S: I was presenting it to Mr van Wyk.
- I: Do you remember, I was in the class when he was talking about the assignment, and he said to you "I want you to explain it in such a way.. in a way that your little brother would understand."
- S: Yes
- I: Can you remember that? Did you remember that when you were writing?
- S: Yes, I was just trying to be that simple.
- I: So do you.. when you were writing you said you had Prof in your mind. Did you also have in your mind someone who doesn't understand what philosophy is?
- S: Yes, I have.. I had that point in my mind so I was just trying that I must just be as simple as possible.
- I: OK, um.. did you get this back today? Your assignment?
- S: Yes
- I: OK, I want to ask you.. your mark, you got 64%. Do you agree with that mark? Or were you expecting more or were you expecting less?
- S: No, I agree. I agree as it was the first assignment and the first time hearing about philosophy I agree on the marks.

I: When you submitted that assignment, what did you think you'd get?
S: Uh...
I: What were you hoping for?
S: I thought that it was just average.
I: What do you mean by average?
S: I expected to pass, yes, I expected to pass this assignment.
I: Then did you expect to get a mark like that?
S: No, 64 it's good, but even.. I was expecting even to get 50.
I: OK, if I had to say to you now you've seen the mark um.. why do you think you got that mark? Why did he give you 64 and not 50?
S: I think that I have understood the topic, or the subject.
I: OK, um.. if you had to look at your essay and I had to ask you what are the strong points.. what do you think were the good points in this essay which pulled your marks up?
S: The characteristics.. while I was talking about the characteristics I was ...
I: OK, so you think that that was a strong point?
S: Yes
I: OK, um.. and the weak points?
S: I think maybe it's the tenses and the language.
I: So you think maybe if your language had been better and your tenses better you would have got a better mark?
S: I think so.
I: Um.. I see Prof has written a few comments on the page. Can you understand what he's saying or ...?
S: I don't understand it.
I: Do you think he is um.. what's the word.. he's saying that what you've said in this paragraph is wrong or do you think he's saying it's correct and he's just adding to it?
S: I think he is adding. Am I right?
I: I don't know, you must tell me! And here where there are all these ticks, what do you.. what does that mean?
S: It means it's correct information.
I: Right, is there anything else you'd like to say about the assignment, anything that you feel is important that I haven't asked? Oh, there's one question I wanted to ask, how long did it take you to write this? In total, with your draft, with your reading, with your first draft and your second draft?
S: I think I've taken a whole week.
I: A whole week, and did you work on it every day?
S: Yes, every day. Yes, I've taken a whole week. First draft and then second draft.
I: OK, is there anything else you want to add? Alright, well thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 5

Interview with S3 - 10 May 1995

- I: OK, first I'd just like to ask you some background questions about yourself. Firstly, where do you come from?
- S: I come from Hammersdale.
- I: From Hammersdale?
- S: Yes.
- I: OK, and where did you go to school?
- S: Um.. I was at ?? school and OK, firstly I started my LP schools at ?? then I went to ???. Then my high school was at ?? high school then I came here.
- I: Um.. is this your first year at university?
- S: Yes
- I: And why did you ... was this your first choice of university?
- S: Yes.
- I: So you decided you wanted to come to Unizul?
- S: Yes.
- I: And why did you come to university?
- S: I want a professional career because every people here they have professional careers and if you don't have a professional career you can't satisfy your needs because needs are more sophisticated so you can live a better life if you have a professional career.
- I: OK, and what degree are you doing here?
- S: Social Work.
- I: Social Work? Do you enjoy it?
- S: Yes, but sometimes there are some difficulties in my studies. Sometimes I can read but I can not understand but as the times goes on I do understand it.
- I: Mmm ... what made you choose Social Work?
- S: I'd say in our area there is a lack of Social Workers and at my home there is a child who is sick. He is a ?? closer so that child is for my brother and so his parents are separate because they have a child at a young stage so his mother has married with another man so he stay with us at home. So if I look at him, so I feel sorry so I decided to seek Social Work as if he can come to me and explain his problems so he is going to say maybe my aunt is going to help me somewhere, somehow.
- I: OK, um.. now I want to ask you a few questions about that assignment. When the lecturer gave you that assignment to... when he gave you the topic, did you understand what he wanted you to do?
- S: Yes, I do.
- I: Can you tell me what you think he wanted you to do?
- S: He want to describe what is Philosophy, the meaning, and he continues one to think clearly about it, or to look some books from the library.
- I: OK, and um.. do you think that you did that?
- S: No, because I obtained 40%. I didn't do it well.
- I: OK, will you tell me, try and remember back to when you were writing the assignments what steps did you go through, what did you do first, what did you do next, what did you do after that? Did you start by reading? Did you start

- by writing?
- S: Firstly, I go to the library. There is a book which I've quoted, I forget it.., so it makes me think that it can be relevant but so far if I received the scripts I thought that it is not relevant so I thought that Professor want something more and I must have think clearly about it so it means it's my fault. I know, because it makes me ... I was going to look at it clearly so it means I didn't understand really what he needs for this assignment, I only take it easy that is I go to library I take this one and written it down and so I submitted it to him, so he didn't want this.
- I: OK, so did you get that from another book?
- S: Yes.
- I: OK, so you went to the library and you found a book and ... did you take most of your information from that book?
- S: No, I .. OK, that book was written about this Philosophy so I thought that it would help me.
- I: OK, so did you use some of that?
- S: Yes.
- I: How long did it take you to write the assignment?
- S: It's three days.
- I: It took you three days?
- S: Yes.
- I: OK...
- S: But I also focus on this book only, I didn't focus on these notes (studyguide): That's why it made me to obtain this mark.
- I: Alright, can you remember any problems that you had in writing this assignment?
- S: Yes, there was problems so I have to, maybe if there is something that I don't understand it makes me to consult Professor but I didn't come and consult him so if .. I think it is right to do it my own but there is not .. but I didn't go to her.. to him. So, so far sometimes if I have come to some problem I must see him so that I will obtain at least 60%.
- I: OK, so you said earlier that you understood what he wanted you to do but you just didn't .. you know that you didn't do what he wanted.
- S: Yes
- I: Um.. can you think of any other problems? Did you have problems finding the books in the library? Did you have problems knowing how to use that information from the books?
- S: This information I got it from the library, it was different from this one (studyguide) so I decided to take these from the library, that's why it made Professor confusing about it because he didn't taught me that. It means he taught me differently but I only take these information from the library. I didn't take her.. his information.
- I: OK, you said that you read that book in the library. Did you do much other reading before you wrote that. Did you read your notes?
- S: No.
- I: Not, so you just went to the library and read that book?
- S: Yes
- I: Did you learn anything from writing this assignment?

S: Did I learn anything from where?
I: From having to write this assignment. Did you learn anything about your mistakes? Did you learn anything about the content that you had to know?
S: No.
I: So do you think the assignment has helped you at all?
S: Huh?
I: Do you think the assignment has helped you at all?
S: No.
I: Not?
S: No, I was going to read it but at this moment I have to write a test so I put aside and I was going to read it and see professor what he's need here in this assignment because I'm not happy about this percent.
I: OK, when you were writing this assignment did you have a picture in your mind of who you were writing it for?
S: No, I was just writing without any picture so it means I didn't think clearly. I have to think clearly and makes a picture and think deeply about this assignment so if I'd done that maybe I would obtain maybe 60% so I see that I wasn't think clearly and deeply about this assignment and make some pictures in my mind.
I: Do you remember in the one lecture where Professor said you must write this assignment as if you were explaining what is Philosophy to your little brother?
S: Yes, yes I do.
I: And did you not remember it when you were writing?
S: Yes, I do remember if you explain as if a person does not know about Philosophy or doesn't go to any schools. If she or he wants to know what is Philosophy we must explain as if you know it, OK, I must explain I know it and this one must know what is Philosophy or she or he wish to study it in his degree.
I: Wouldn't you say though that if you were doing that, then that was the kind of person you had in your mind, who you were writing for? Would you say that or not?
S: I think I didn't.
I: So you were just writing because you had to write? OK, um.. you've answered this question already but I'd like to ask it again. Do you agree with that mark that you were given? 40%
S: Yes, I was.. according to my own I was agreeing because Professor cannot give me the other marks because I haven't done work so he can not give me 60% so this marks .. OK, this 40% it makes me maybe in next assignment I must think clearly so I obtain a more mark. Professor doesn't.. he can give me 40% because I afford to get this 40%. He can't give me 60% when I do not obtain 60% because there are many mistakes in this assignment.
I: When you handed it in, what mark did you expect?
S: Maybe, hmm I do not know.
I: Did you have no idea? Was that the first assignment you've written this year?
S: Yes.
I: The first one.. so you didn't have any hope or expectation. Did you think you'd pass?
S: Yes, when I was writing, I thought that I was going to pass it but when I

received the scripts I failed the assignment so it makes me next time to think deeply about the assignment and make it better than this one.

I: If I had to ask you to point out to me what you think is the .. are the strong points in that assignment, what would they be? What do you think are the good points in that assignment?

S: The good point is the meaning of Philosophy.

I: Do you think you explained that well?

S: Yes, I do explain but shortly.

I: OK, and what do you think are the weak points?

S: Maybe it's that I didn't focus on what is Philosophy only. I was delaying with the Philosophy that's why it makes confusing the Professor.

I: OK, is there anything else you'd like to say about the assignment?

S: No, I have to read it. I have to focus on my faults first.

I: Do you know what they are?

S: No, I have to start and read it afresh because in this week I have to write some tests so I thought maybe next week on Monday after the test I should read it again and pick some faults here because there's many faults because Professor written here that it's confusing so there are many faults.

I: OK, so you haven't actually had a chance to look at it yet. OK, well I can't think of any other questions. Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 6

Interview with S4 - 10 May 1995

- I: OK, first of all, I'd like to just ask you some background questions. Firstly, where do you come from?
- S: I come from Mooi River.
- I: Mooi River?
- S: Yes, it is in the Natal midlands.
- I: OK, and did you go to school there?
- S: From first year up to Std 10.
- I: OK, and the next thing I want to ask you, is this your first year at university?
- S: Yes, this is my first year at the university.
- I: And why did you come to Zululand?
- S: Well, to be frank, I think it is one of the varsities that is less than ... I think it's more cheaper than the other varsities. The other varsities ... they are expensive and I couldn't afford them. I still can't afford this one but it was a little bit less.
- I: Did you apply to any others?
- S: Yes, I applied to the University of Natal and I couldn't get in there because of my results. They have certain criteria for admitting students. They take a number of points and my points were not enough to get admitted there, which is the other reason why I had to come to this varsity.
- I: Why did you choose to go to university?
- S: Well, I think I always wanted to go to university since I was still at school. I knew I wanted to be a Social Worker so I knew that you only train for that profession at a university.
- I: OK, right, now let's get on to this assignment. The first question I want to ask you about it is when the Professor gave you the topic to write about, did you understand what he wanted you to do? Were you very clear in your head what he wanted you to do?
- S: Yes, I think I did understand the Professor because I think he said it very clear that he wanted us to tell him what is Philosophy.
- I: Did you ask your friends or anything or did you just go and write it?
- S: Ask my friends what I write here? No. I don't remember myself doing that. I think I went straight and wrote the assignment though I didn't write it the first day that he gave us but when I wrote it I think I just wrote it I didn't ask any ideas from anyone.
- I: OK, um... can you tell me now what you think he expected you to do?
- S: I think he expected me to tell him what is Philosophy and go into details about the word 'Philosophy', what it means and the real meaning of the name 'Philosophy', the other words that constitute the name. I think that is what he expected. Like the word 'philea' and 'sophia' to also explain that. Perhaps he wanted us to give him characteristics of philosophy but I think in this assignment I didn't realise that when I was writing. I don't think I gave the characteristics of philosophy.
- I: OK, can you now tell me what steps you went through when you started writing. Did you first read? Did you first write rough notes? How many times

- did you write? Can you remember that?
- S: I think I first read the study guide and then I wrote the first ... the one which I've said I first wrote and then I saw others writing it in this (book) so I wrote it again and I don't think I was referring to the first assignment when I wrote it, this second one.
- I: So are they different?
- S: I think ... when I was writing the first one I think I must have still had the idea in my mind what I had written in this one.
- I: OK, did you consult any other books, apart from the study guide?
- S: No, I didn't.
- I: OK, um.. did you have any problems when you were writing this assignment? Was there anything that you weren't sure about how to do or something that was confusing you?
- S: I don't remember problems. I try to go through myself and I don't remember experiencing problems.
- I: Did you copy much out of the study guide or did you put it in your own words?
- S: I did copy like the explanation of the words 'philea' and 'sophia', that I copied from the study guide. The rest I never copied it.
- I: OK, when you were writing this assignment, did you have the study guide open next to you?
- S: Yes.
- I: So did you regularly consult...?
- S: Yes, when I was writing, I would from time to time consult the study guide and try to put what was written into my own words.
- I: OK, why did you ... why were you concerned about putting it in your own words?
- S: I think I had to come up with my own ideas with my own understanding of the word 'Philosophy'. The way that I understand it is the way that it was written down in the study guide so I tried to read in the study guide and then try to understand what was written in the study guide to translate it and then write it.
- I: OK, um.. do you think you've learnt anything from writing this assignment?
- S: Yes, I think I learned a few things because I think I can still remember if one can ask me 'What is Philosophy?' I think I can tell them just a few things of Philosophy, what it means, the names that constitute the word 'Philosophy', what they mean and so on. I think I learned something from writing the assignment.
- I: OK, um.. I'm just thinking back now where you're saying how you were putting the work in your study guide into your own words, um.. I'm thinking to the ... were you in the Social Work lecture this morning?
- S: This morning, yes.
- I: When I was talking about referencing?
- S: Yes.
- I: Has anyone ever, before this morning, told you about referencing? In any of your other courses or anywhere that you can remember?
- S: Not that I can remember. I don't recall someone telling me that ... No, I think I knew it that you don't have to write what is written down in a book or lecture notes just take them as they are into your assignment but I don't think I was told about referencing. Perhaps I was but I don't remember it.

- I: Um.. OK, now I want to ask you when you were writing this assignment, did you have a picture in your head of the person you were writing it for. You know, like if you write a letter to someone, you know who you're writing it for. With this assignment, can you tell me ... did you have a picture of the person you were writing it for?
- S: Perhaps I did in the beginning because Professor had always stressed the point that he wanted us to when we are defining the word Philosophy, to take .. to write the words 'philea' and 'sophia' and put them in inverted commas and he would give us notes for them so in the beginning I think I recall that when I was writing the essay I did perhaps think of him but after that I don't think I think of him when I write the topic.
- I: Were you thinking of anyone else?
- S: At first I would think of him from time to time when I was explicating the other words like 'wisdom' I would think of him, what he told us perhaps what the word 'wisdom' means. At first I did think of him from time to time but I don't think I did on the other parts when I was writing this.
- I: Do you remember ... there was one lecture when he said to you 'When you are writing this assignment you must write it in such a way that your little brother could ... your little brother could understand it.' Do you remember that?
- S: Yes
- I: Did you have that in your mind at all when you were writing, or were you just writing for Professor?
- S: I think I just wrote what I thought initially ... perhaps I had thoughts about another person who doesn't know what Philosophy is and I tell him or her about Philosophy. I think I just wrote what I understood about Philosophy as if I was talking to the Professor, not to a person who doesn't know what Philosophy is.
- I: So do you think, no... let's leave that question... OK, now let's go to the mark that you got. Do you agree that this assignment should have got this mark? Did you expect this mark?
- S: I was a little surprised when I saw that I got 72% but that was because I think I had omitted the five characteristics of Philosophy, I thought perhaps I wouldn't get nearly this much.
- I: When did you realise that you'd left out those characteristics?
- S: After I'd submitted my essay I talked to other students and they said they'd written the characteristics and I thought because I haven't written them perhaps I will be penalised for that.
- I: OK, when you handed this assignment in, what mark did you expect?
- S: Perhaps I expected 60, perhaps 65 but I didn't think much about the marks I would get.
- I: Was this the first essay that you wrote?
- S: In Philosophy or other courses?
- I: In the whole ... in your whole course.
- S: I think it was the first assignment.
- I: OK, if I had to ask you can you understand why this essay is worth 72%, could you tell me, could you explain to me why it's worth 72.
- S: I don't know but perhaps it was because I ... actually I don't know. Perhaps other people also wrote it like this and explained the words the ... explained the words which make up the word Philosophy ... wisdom 'sophia' perhaps, but I

think it was because I tried to explain each and every word that is included in the word Philosophy.

- I: OK, a related question but maybe you can just expand on it. What do you think are the strong points of this assignment? OK, you've said that because you explained very carefully what 'philea' and 'sophia' mean. Can you think of any other reason why um... any other good points of this essay, that you feel are good points?
- S: Well, first, I think I did mention that Philosophy is about explicating words. Perhaps I tried to give some examples while I was writing.
- I: OK, and what do you think are the weak points? I think you've already mentioned one that you left out the characteristics. Anything else that you think is weak?
- S: I can't think of anything, except perhaps English, the language itself. I can say I made some mistakes.
- I: OK, let's go to this mistake here. I can see Professor has circled and drawn lines. Can you understand what that's about?
- S: I think perhaps he wants me to put the word 'one' instead of 'she' or 'he'.
- I: Is there anything else you'd like to say about writing this assignment? How you felt about it?
- S: No, I don't think so.
- I: OK, well thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 7

Interview with S5 - 18 May 1995

- I: OK, first of all I'd like to ask you some background questions to get some idea of who you are. Firstly, where do you come from?
- S: I come from Kwa-Mashu.
- I: And did you go to school there?
- S: Yes, first I went to an African school then to an Indian school.
- I: At Kwa-Mashu?
- S: No, at Phoenix.
- I: OK, um.. is this your first year at university?
- S: Yes
- I: OK, why did you choose to come to university?
- S: I wanted to be like.. I wanted to be a Social Worker so if you want to be a Social Worker you can't go to Tec and I wanted to do subjects that will make me think.
- I: OK, and why did you come to this University?
- S: The University of Zululand is regarded as a bush University. I should have gone to Natal.. they are the popular ones but I heard that the University of Zululand produces good Social Workers because of the Practicals that they conduct and they've got good lecturers so I came to Zululand.
- I: Did you apply to any other universities?
- S: I did. Just in case I was disappointed here.
- I: And where did you apply?
- S: I applied at Stellenbosch and Wits and Natal Pietermaritzburg.
- I: Just as a matter of interest, did you get accepted into the other universities?
- S: They sent me forms.. like with Stellenbosch they sent me forms which were written in Afrikaans so I couldn't fill them out and um.. in Natal they said they didn't have the course and at Wits they accepted me but I didn't go because it is very expensive.
- I: OK, let's get onto the assignment. Now when Prof gave you the topic and discussed it in class, did you understand what he wanted you to do? Were you confident that you knew what he wanted?
- S: It's like he was repeating it over and over and I felt I couldn't breathe, I felt irritated, you know, he's repeating something that I understand and after I hear about it, I mean, let's just get on with it and do it. but the other students, they didn't understand. They wanted to know more. I felt like I knew what I was supposed to do.
- I: Um.. what do you think he wanted you to do?
- S: He gave us the topic "What is Philosophy?" so he wanted, according to our own understanding 'what is philosophy', not from his study guide so I went to the library, I did research, I got all the information for myself, and I .. you know, I wrote the essay.
- I: Can you remember all the steps you went through when you were writing.. OK, you said you went to the library, you did research. Can you take me through the process from when you started to when you finished?
- S: OK, I sat and I read my study guide. I made sure that I understand the first

chapter. I read mainly on 'what is philosophy' and then I went to the library and read about four books and then I got information, I mean from the index pages you know, I read information and from that I wrote my introduction using quotations. Writing the essay I thought it was straightforward because I knew where I was going and the information was already in my head.

I: OK, when you started writing, how many drafts did you do?

S: I think I wrote about five or six drafts.

I: OK, did it change a lot? Did you submit the draft for.. to us(ASP)?

S: No, I didn't. I didn't submit. I was late. I did two, and then I did another two, or three..

I: And did they change a lot every time?

S: They did. After I started I thought 'Will he understand?' 'Will he accept this?'

I: Did you have any problem with the assignment? When you were writing.. did you have any problems, did you get stuck on anything, did you have any doubts about whether you were doing the right thing?

S: Yes, I did because Prof said he wanted one page and when I was writing my draft sometimes it was two, two and a half pages so I had problems in trimming it.. I had to but it was so hard. As I was writing the draft I was trying to cut down the information and I didn't know which information would fit so I was just cutting...

I: OK, um.. you said you read about four books before you started writing. Did you read the whole book or did you just select sections from the book?

S: When I do research I don't know if I'm doing it the right way but I usually go to the index and then I find those relevant to the topic 'what is philosophy' like, let's say you want to read about the existence of God, you read on Descartes um.. whatever, and then you turn to the page and read the topic, the whole topic, not the whole book, only the relevant information on the topic.

I: OK, how long did it take you to write this assignment? From start to finish?

S: It took me about.. um.. I'd say a week because I used to do one or two drafts and then do other subjects.

I: You mentioned that you used some quotes. Now a lot of students battle to know how to use quotes and when to use quotes um.. can you tell me what you think the correct way is to use a quote? And why do you use it?

S: You see, I don't know.. but in our school they were always giving.. we used to get marks for using quotations, for doing research, especially in History, so like say you're writing an essay on Social Work on 'Concerns and Needs' you have to find the right quotation that is relevant to that, and then you write the author and all that and um.. I don't know, you just quote!

I: OK, so you say you did have practise at school?

S: Yes, I did

I: You learnt a lot about it at school. OK, and referencing, you know where you write out not only where you take a direct quote, but when you get your idea from a book, do you then also put in the author and date of publication?

S: Yes, I have to, but here I didn't because I didn't take the names of the books from the library, I just photostatted the pages so I went back to get the names of the authors and I couldn't find them in the library but I'm used to writing a bibliography so I don't like.. lie to the teacher that it was my own work.

I: Do you have any references in here?

- S: No, I don't. I think that's why I got a low mark! (Laughs)
- I: Do you think you would have got higher marks if you had included a bibliography?
- S: I think so. Because it shows that I was interested in my work, I worked separately, I didn't just read my study guide. I went to the library and studied the subject.
- I: OK, um.. how much.. since you've been at university, how much emphasis have your lecturers placed on referencing and bibliographies?
- S: They haven't. In Social Work we are doing an assignment. They want us to do.. um.. She didn't tell us to go to the library so they are expecting us to use Johnson, our textbooks, prescribed textbooks so I think.. what they want from us is to write a bibliography so we can get an understanding of how to write a bibliography. That's what I think. But, I went to the library and I read the books so I wrote my bibliography according to the way that I was taught and you find some students they only use the prescribed textbooks and they wrote their bibliography.. you know.. very odd. Odd, yea, different way. They only write the surname of the author and then the book.. the title of the book.
- I: Do you think that the students were ever taught how to do a bibliography?
- S: No, especially in African schools they don't. They were not exposed to that and writing things so I think it's new to them and I think that the lecturers are not understanding. They think that we know we must do it, so we should do it, it is our task. I'm not saying I'm an expert but you know.. I can try and if a student comes to me and needs to write a bibliography I tell them what to write and which information is relevant and all that. But of course, I find it hard to tell them because I'm not an expert as well.
- I: OK, do you think.. Is this the first assignment that you wrote?
- S: Yes
- I: Did you learn anything from.. not only about the content but did you learn anything about the process of writing?
- S: I think that I should be more ready because at school I used to write my essays in the morning. I used to draft them and then write them in the morning but here I found it difficult because I didn't know what to write to come up with a final draft and.. you know, I kept on scribbling and you know.. not knowing what the lecturer wanted. It was my first essay at university, and I was kind of shaking and all that but I think I'm getting used to it.
- I: OK, you mentioned something about this earlier, but I want to come back to it. When you were writing this assignment, did you have a picture in your head of who you were aiming it for.. of who you were writing it for?
- S: Yes, it's only natural.. somebody who knows more than I do, somebody who has read more books, somebody who is perfect in English and all that and that part made me shake and want to do the best.
- I: So did it influence the way you wrote?
- S: Yes, you know I would sit and I would think "When he reads this will see my handwriting because it is bad? Will he understand what I'm trying to say?" so I was kind of worried about it.
- I: Do you remember when.. it was one lecture, and Prof said to the students.. he was talking about this essay. He said "You must write it as if you were explaining it to your little brother.."

- S: Yes, to somebody who doesn't know. I took that into consideration but knowing that he was going to mark it, it was not a five year old who was going to mark the assignment, you know, I had to use relevant information, not something that I think is right.
- I: So you were very much influenced by the Prof?
- S: Yes, rather than that five year old.
- I: OK, do you agree with that mark that you've been awarded?
- S: I beg your pardon?
- I: Do you agree with that mark? Do you think it is a fair reflection of your..
- S: My work? Um.. I was expecting about 70. I wasn't expecting the 80, so when I got 80 I was so surprised. I don't know.. I wanted to go to Prof and ask if this was my assignment because I was expecting to get 70-something, or 60's.. I wasn't sure about .. I had doubts..
- I: What did you have doubts about?
- S: Like um.. the way I wrote it, the subheadings, the information that I got from other books, I didn't know if it was correct and I didn't explain it the way he wanted like to a five year old, I used like words that a five year old wouldn't understand and I felt that he would ask "What do you mean?" because he usually asks that and I thought my script would be full of him asking me "What do you mean?" so I wouldn't know how to explain everything. That's what I thought.
- I: OK, if I have to ask you what is the strong point about this essay, what is very good about it, could you pick something out?
- S: Um.. I tried to show how philosophy differs from the special sciences like physics. That he didn't teach us and it doesn't rely on experiments but rather on ???. That is what he taught us in class. "Philosophy is the most relevant of studies and anyone who philosophises about his work instead of just taking ?? will be a better doctor, lawyer,??"
- I: OK, is that your own idea or something you got from a book?
- S: I got it from a book, but I think it was good.
- I: So it seems to me what you think is good about that essay is that you've drawn from a lot of different sources and you've come up with a coherent whole.
- S: I did use information from the books but not all that I [wrote] came from the books. You see I would sit with that information and think about it on my mind so I can write my own out of that information. That is my own, instead of using the words as they are.
- I: So that would be another strong point. OK, and the opposite, what do you think would be the weak point?
- S: Like um.. writing what the teacher told me because I took words from the study guide as it is. I didn't understand what it was so I just wrote it and with a lot of the characteristics here, I didn't have an example because I didn't know.. I'm not sure about them.
- I: OK, I want you to look at the comments that Prof has written. Can you understand what he means?
- S: Um.. partly I understand that, it's simple and "Philosophy differs from Science and Maths because it does not rely on ???" and he wrote "Philosophy differs from *the special sciences like physics...*" That's good, I should have written that but I wrote Science and Maths. OK, so what do you think he was doing

- here? Just adding something?
- S: No, he was correcting. It was a correction.
- I: OK..
- S: I should have used one word for both. Instead of Science and Maths I should have used special sciences.
- I: OK, and this here?
- S: Ja, I made a mistake. "Philosophy is characterised by five characteristics." I was up late and got pretty tired and made silly mistakes.
- I: And this 1, 2 and 3?
- S: I don't know.. I didn't write the numbers because I didn't think they were important.
- I: Do you think that's what he is showing you there? That you should have put in the numbers?
- S: I should have done that because there's five characteristics and I didn't indicate..
- I: Oh, OK.. and these ticks here. What do you think that means?
- S: I think it's what he wanted out of my essay because that is what he was expecting and that is what he thought was good. like you say "Philosophy means love of wisdom" and then you explain what is 'love', what is 'wisdom'. You know, like, you're explaining to him now. That's what he wanted.
- I: OK, I don't have any more questions. Is there anything else you'd like to say about your experience of writing this?
- S: The overall view? Well, I'd say writing an essay when you don't understand the topic is very hard. I think first you must understand the topic and then come up with something. Think about something and not just taking.. like in Social Work they give us the assignment and like we just run to our books and we copy it straight from our books. We didn't do any research for the first draft, and now for the second draft I'm thinking of doing research (laughs) because I know that I'm not going to get any marks and from such essays.. it's hard, very hard when you don't understand the topic.
- I: OK, well thank you very much.

Appendix 8

S1's Assignment

The word "philosophy" is derived from two Greek words PHILEIN and SOPHIA meaning love and wisdom respectively. Philosophy is always about a question of meaning, this implies that I have to give meanings of these two words i.e. love and wisdom. ✓✓

LOVE: To love someone means that you care for that person.

If you love a person you must make sacrifices for the beloved, you also find happiness in caring for the beloved. You must do things which will make the beloved see or realise that you love him/her. For example if a mother love her child her doings must show the beloved that she is loved, like a mother can give her child gifts and other valuable things.

To love something means that you admire it, you regard it as valuable to you and you can prize it too.

Likewise philosophers admire, care for, find happiness in

WISDOM: Someone who is wise ^{recognises} always see valuable and good Wisdom.

things in life. He also knows how to get what is truly useful or good to him. He knows how to plan a goal and how to reach/achieve it. He always have progress in life. A wise person is honest, fair and just.

these are truly valuable traits in a person! Good.

Philosophy is characterized by universality, necessity, fundamentality, rationality and radicality.

Universality means that every debate always have a philosophical aspect, in other words, it deals with question

of meaning.

2. Necessity means that problem can not be resolved without philosophical discussions i.e. questions of meaning have to be answered.

3. Fundamentality means that you must first answer the philosophical ~~discuss~~ ^{question of} meaning.

4. Rationality means that you can not get a solution to the problem "unless and before" key ideas have been discussed.

5. Radicality means that philosophy is a radical science. If you want to solve a problem you must get to know the cause of it also know why did such a thing happened.

radix = root

67% 24/3/95

Appendix 9

S2's Assignment

The name "philosophy" is derived from the two Greek words "philein" which means love and "sophia" which means wisdom. Thus philosophy is the love of wisdom.

When you love something or someone ^{it} means that you experience the beloved object ^{or thing,} whether it is a person ^{or thing,} as necessary to your own happiness. You regard it as valuable, good and worthy. You care ^{for it} and you are prepared to make sacrifices on behalf of what is beloved. The beloved one is cared for, improved, purified, strengthened and fully developed while the one who loves in turn also becomes happy in that his best potentialities are realized. Thus the phil^{osopher} finds happiness in, cares for, and makes sacrifices in order to become wise. A wise person lives a carefully planned life. He knows what what is really valuable in life. You must know how to realize values. A wise man has the strength of character to do what ought to be done to realize values.

Philosophy is characterized by universality which means that every debate whatever the subject matter, be politics, religion or geography, always has a philosophical aspect, i.e. it deals with question of meaning. Necessity means that the problem can not ^{be} resolved without a philosophical question about meaning and definition. You can not even abolish apartheid or discrimination before it has been carefully identified and defined.

Rationality means that philosophy is an abstract and rational debate that can not settle questions merely by observation and experiment. Participants have to reach agreement on questions of meaning and universal standards before any progress can be made.

Radicality means that philosophy is radical science in the sense that it goes down to the roots of the problem and ^{that it tries} try to diagnose what went wrong and why so that a constructive answer may be developed.

23/3/95 64% Good

Appendix 10

S3's Assignment

Since my concern with the academic "Philosophy" I will speak simply of "philosophy." This word has a long history, in order to understand how it is now used one needs to have some knowledge of how ^{it} is related to it. This word has its root in ^{the} language of the ancient "Greeks" of 500 B.C.

"Philosophy" is the oldest form of systematic, scholarly enquiry. The name comes from the Greek ^{philos} "loving" ^{philia} "wisdom." We also derived the word "philanthropy" from the Greek word "philos" meaning love or desire and "sophos" meaning wisdom. "Philosophy" is also a technical discipline, demanding rigorous habits and development of mind and is the intellect.

"Philosophy" is also thus a double aspect. It has, first, the aspect of something personal and it thus a part of events, having causes and effects. It is known something arguable, discussable, subject to error of factuality and adequacy, and in this aspect it is not merely a set of words causes and effect but of ideas having such value and claiming to be true.

Love: To love someone or something means
that one has a deeply experienced of beloved object, when
you love a person you feel happy and
make sacrifice for that person in other words
a person, parent but the examination you
must appreciate for that or any congratulation
to him/her because of the done well
in the examination. You show him the
great love in other way you are
praising him/her to the top.

Wisdom: The word "wisdom" means to be
wise is a wise man/woman lives a
carefully, she or he knows what is really
valuable in life and also knows how
to realize what

seems then might tirelessly for both
for himself and next body also justice for
society.

? You need understand every problem has "philosophy" aspect
Necessary without "philosophy" you cannot solve problems.
Fundamental questions in the world that question
about meaning definition how to be existed how
concepts or ideas have been obtained means that
"philosophy" is an abstract and rational debate.
"Worship and love" also means that "philosophy"
is a rational process in the sense that it goes
down to root of problem.

Confused & Confusing! -40%

24/3/95

Appendix 11

S4's Assignment

The word "philosophy" is derived from two Greek words "philein" and "sophia" meaning love or desire and wisdom respectively, therefore the word philosophy means love or desire of wisdom i.e. a philosopher loves wisdom.

Since philosophy is about explicating words, we will have to explain what do the words love and wisdom mean. Starting with love, when one loves someone or something, it means one values that particular thing and finds it necessary to his/her life. Without it/she is unhappy and unable to live a happy and worthwhile life. So if we say the philosopher ~~yet~~ loves wisdom we mean that she values it and therefore he searches for wisdom, truth and knowledge. To love something also means that you care for it i.e. you can sacrifice anything for it. That means that a philosopher also cares for knowledge and wisdom.

verb "to be wise"

Wisdom comes from a verb "wise". To be wise means that one knows what is really valuable and worthy in life and that she/he knows how to get it that is worthwhile and valuable and she has the strength of character to bring about through effort what is valuable and worthy in life and that means she has the ability to realize the things that are valued in life, i.e. Socrates sought for the truth and justice for the society, so as a philosopher, he loved wisdom.

Appendix 12

S5's Assignment

THE WORD "PHILOSOPHY" IS DERIVED FROM TWO GREEK WORDS, PHILEIN AND SOPHIA MEANING LOVE OR DESIRE AND WISDOM RESPECTIVELY. THEREFORE, PHILOSOPHY IS THE LOVE OF WISDOM.

LOVE

TO LOVE SOMEONE OR SOMETHING MEANS THAT YOU CARE FOR WHATEVER IS BELOVED. YOU MAKE SACRIFICES ON BEHALF OF WHAT IS BELOVED. YOU ALSO FIND HAPPINESS AND FULFILMENT IN CARING AND SERVING THE BELOVED

WISDOM

Wisdom

IS KNOWLEDGE IN ITS BROADEST SENSE, KNOWLEDGE DIRECTED TO THE FUNDAMENTAL AND PERVASIVE CONCERNS OF EXISTENCE. TO DESIRE WISDOM IS TO SEEK PRINCIPLES THAT CUT THROUGH SUPERFICIAL AND TRIVIAL FACTS THAT CLUTTER OUR INTELLECTUAL WORKING REVEALING THE LOGIC BEHIND THINGS BEHIND.

Good
the special sciences like physics,

PHILOSOPHY DIFFERS FROM SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS BECAUSE IT DOES NOT RELY ON EXPERIMENTS BUT RATHER ON THOUGHT. IT IS DONE JUST BY ASKING QUESTIONS, ARGUING, TRYING OUT IDEAS AND THINKING OF POSSIBLE ARGUMENTS AGAIN THEM AND WONDERING HOW OUR CONCEPTS WORK.

PHILOSOPHY ^{Now} IS CHARACTERISED BY FIVE CHARACTERISTICS VIZ:

- 1
- 2
- 3

UNIVERSALITY: MEANING EVERY DEBATE ^{WHATEVER THE SUBJECT} HAS A PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSION

I.E. IT DEALS WITH QUESTIONS OF MEANING

NECESSITY: MEANING NO PROBLEM CAN BE RESOLVED WITHOUT A PHILOSOPHICAL

DISCUSSION I.E. QUESTIONS OF MEANING HAS TO BE ANSWERED

FUNDAMENTALISM: MEANING ONE HAS TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS OF PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING

RATIONALITY: MEANING PHILOSOPHY IS AN ABSTRACT AND RATIONAL DEBATE, HAVE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON QUESTIONS OF MEANING.

FIRST SCIENCE MEANING CONSTRUCTIVE ANSWERS ON QUESTIONS OF MEANING

“

IF WE REALLY GET INTO PHILOSOPHY IT WILL GET INTO US FOR THERE IS GREAT POWER IN IDEAS.”

PHILOSOPHY IS THE MOST RELEVANT OF STUDIES AND ANYONE WHO PHILOSOPHIZES ABOUT HIS WORK, INSTEAD OF JUST TAKING HIS ASSUMPTIONS FOR GRANTED, WILL BE A BETTER DOCTOR, LAWYER, POLITICIAN AND A BETTER PERSON

THEREFORE PHILOSOPHY STANDS BEHIND AND AT THE BEGINNING OF MANY HUMAN ACTIVITIES AND CONCERNS. IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT IT HAS BEEN REFERRED TO AS THE “QUEEN OF ALL SCIENCES” AND AT TIMES AS THE “MOTHER” OF ALL SCIENCES LEARNING. AT ITS BEST IT COMBINES HUMAN WONDER AND CURIOSITY WHICH HAVE INITIATED ALL HUMANITY'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITH ANALYSIS AND CAREFUL REASONING, THAT IT CONSISTS OF PURSUIT OF TRUTHS AND WISDOM.

✓
Excellent!

80%

22/8/95