A DESCRIPTION OF THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES OF ENGLISH SECOND-LANGUAGE STUDENTS ENTERING THE ACADEMIC DISCOURSE COMMUNITIES OF RHODES UNIVERSITY

THESIS

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List of Abbreviations

ASP	Academic Skills/ Support Programme
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CALP	Cognitive/ Academic Language Proficiency
DET	Department of Education and Training
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ELAP	English Language for Academic Purposes
EL1	English First Language
ESL	English Second Language
HWESU	Historically-white English speaking university
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language

ABSTRACT

This study is a description of the language experiences of English Second Language students in their first year at Rhodes University. It took place in the context of the changes that are currently occurring in higher education in South Africa in terms of student populations. More and more students are entering tertiary education institutions, including HWESUs, such as Rhodes University, who are considered non-traditional. These students typically have English as their second, or additional, language, and have not been adequately prepared for university study by their secondary education.

This study describes the experiences of three such students in their first year at Rhodes University. Entry into a university is seen not just as acquiring knowledge, but as entering, or attempting to enter, a new culture. It is recognised that all students enter universities with other cultures or literacies already in place. In the case of non-traditional students these other literacies are usually at some distance from those of the university. The work of James Gee (1990) is particularly useful in understanding this process of adjusting to the demands of university study and the effect that previous experiences have on this process. This study is an attempt to discover and describe the literacies that these three students brought with them to university and the effect these literacies had on their attempts to enter academic discourse communities of the university. An ethnographic research method was adopted in order to do this.

The study is also an attempt to evaluate, from the perspective of the three students, the appropriacy of the various changes that Rhodes University has made since the numbers of non-traditional students has started to increase.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT AND AIMS

This study is a description of the language experiences of English Second Language students as they enter the academic discourse communities of Rhodes University, which is an historically-white, English-medium university situated in Grahamstown, in the Eastern Cape. It focuses on three students and is concerned with how their experiences in other discourse communities affect their adjustment to the demands of the university.

1.1. The Context of the Research

This study took place in the context of a growing awareness of the need to examine the kinds of teaching and learning taking place in universities (Ballard & Clanchy, 1988; Chiseri-Strater,1991: Gee, 1990; Murray, 1993). The need for research of this nature has been recognised by universities all over the world and it is usually prompted by the entry of increasing numbers of students who are considered 'non-traditional' because of their language, culture or class, or a combination of these factors. One of the results of this increase in numbers of 'non-traditional' students in universities all over the world has been the recognition that traditional methods of teaching are no longer effective or appropriate. The use of what Starfield (1994) describes as "osmosis pedagogy" (17), which assumes that students will just absorb, and spontaneously begin to use, the language and ideas appropriate to university study, is no longer having the desired results. University lecturers often have little or no training as teachers (Raaheim & Wankowski, 1981: 34) and may resort to teaching the way they were taught (Rosenthal, 1996: 27), with limited success, since the students they are teaching are often different from them. Although it has been widely recognised that

traditional teaching methods need to change, there has been less agreement about what the change should entail and who should be responsible for it.

It has been observed that gaining entry to a university and gaining access to the knowledge and 'goods' of the university are not the same thing. Morrow (1993) distinguishes between "formal" and "epistemological" access (215). There is little point in universities opening their doors to 'non-traditional' students and then denying them epistemological access if the opening of doors is to have any real results. Ramphele (1994) writes,

> Institutional culture remains a major challenge to equity. It is not simply a matter of opening the door to those previously excluded, and continuing with business as usual. The reality is that the level of alienation of new entrants in an insensitive institutional framework is underestimated (94).

In South Africa it is the historically-white universities in particular, which, with the end of apartheid, have found that they are admitting more and more students who are not sufficiently prepared by their secondary schooling to cope with the demands of tertiary education. Historically-black universities have always admitted such students. A 1996 Discussion Document issued by the National Commission On Higher Education (NCHE) states that the "curricular organisation and funding of higher education programmes continue to be based on assumptions about starting levels that no longer hold for most entrants" (68). The same document suggests that,

> given the constraints on the schooling system, it seems highly unlikely even in the medium term, that schooling will provide higher education with substantially increased numbers of students prepared for the traditional entry level demands of higher education programmes (68).

The entry of 'underprepared' students into tertiary education is not just a short-term issue. It cannot be assumed that within a few years the secondary educational system will be producing students who are ready for university study at its current levels. The kinds of

students who are now considered non-traditional may soon be making up the majority of student populations, even at historically-white institutions, if tertiary education is going to respond to transformations in South Africa and move from being an elite system to a massified one.

The response of the historically-white universities to 'underprepared' students has taken place on a number of levels. These include the provision of Academic Support Programmes (ASP), Foundation Courses, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Courses and curriculum development in mainstream courses. These responses vary in the degree to which they are oriented to changing students to suit the requirements of the university versus changing the university to suit the needs of the growing numbers of 'non-traditional' students.

Universities have not always had an overarching guiding philosophy or plan behind the provision of various kinds of support for both students and lecturers. The NCHE Document (1996) refers to the "largely *ad hoc* introduction of academic development and support initiatives" (68).. Drewett (1993) describes Academic Skills Programmes as operating in a "hand-to-mouth" manner and says that their "programmes and goals seemed to emerge more from immediate difficulties on the various campuses than from well-researched and analytical planning" (105). This is even truer when the combination of ASP, EAP and Foundation courses is considered. It is not always clear how the different kinds of courses and programmes in universities are actually supposed to work together or how these changes and developments have affected the lives of the students for whom they are designed.

There is obviously a need to describe and evaluate these courses and programmes, as well as mainstream disciplines, but Bond (1993) suggests that it is also "important to retain cross-curricular perspective from the student's point of view" (149). Leki (1995a) argues that,

> we need at once closer looks at individual students and broader looks not only at their English classes but at their lives as they negotiate their way through higher education once they step outside the safe threshold of the ESL classroom. Little ESL research reports on the classrooms ESL students enter across the curriculum (236).

Chiseri-Strater (1991) conducted research like that suggested by Leki except that the two students she studied were English L1 speakers. Her research took place in a university in the U.S.A. and she describes it in the following way:

> As I trail after college students across the curriculum while they read, write, and talk in different disciplines, I am interested in listening to **them** talk about what it means to be initiated into the culture of a university, what it means to **them** to learn the discourse of a particular discipline, what their interpretation is for literacy. And while I do attempt to slice off one aspect - academic discourse - to examine, I find other factors outside of the academy seep through this boundary to inform me of the holistic nature of literacy (xvi).

It has been recognised that one of the ways in which students make sense of and negotiate their way through higher education is in terms of their previous knowledge and experiences, particularly in other educational institutions such as schools, and it has been argued that this is a necessary area for research (Benson, Gurney, Harrison & Rimmershaw, 1993; Bizzell, 1986; Earwaker, 1992; Ruth, 1993). Thesen (1997) warns of the necessity to look beyond students' experiences of formal schooling even though the school experience is what universities "use to define students as disadvantaged or underprepared" (492).

Research into the lives and experiences of university students in South Africa needs to take place in order to understand how they negotiate their way through higher education and make sense of their experiences. Although this kind of research would be of some value, no matter

what kinds of students were involved, Leibowitz (1993) argues that research of this type needs "to focus of the students who are most silenced in the educational system ... - in the South African context, the working class, blacks and women" (123).

Thesen (1994), who works in Academic Development at the University of Cape Town, argues that,

> This kind of research has an important role to play in developing a fuller description and understanding of what the other realities and non-school experiences of traditionally excluded students have been... Since we give weight to the idea of educational disadvantage, it is part of our responsibility to see what other areas of experience have been meaningful, and begin to understand how they affect students' entry into, or avoidance of, the academic conversation (79).

1.2. A Description of the Nature of the Study

This study is intended as both a "closer look at individual students" and a "broader look at their lives as they negotiate their way through higher education" (Leki, 1995a: 236). Although the focus, like that of Chiseri-Strater (1991), is on academic discourses, it is recognised that these are related in important and sometimes complex ways to the students' other discourses and experiences. In fact these previous experiences and the way they are used by students to make sense of their experiences at university, are one of the foci of the study.

The study focuses specifically on the **language** experiences of these students because of the recognition of the important role language plays in any student's entry into the university. Bartholomae (1988) describes this process of entering a university:

> The students have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse ... they have to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language, finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal

> history, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline. They must learn to speak our language (273).

The focus on language is particularly relevant because the students who were studied are not first-language speakers of English, the language which is used as the medium of instruction at Rhodes University.

The study is ethnographic. Mehan (1982) recommends the use of an ethnographic research method in educational settings "not because it has a list of answers to pressing educational problems, but because it provides an entirely different way of looking at schooling and asking questions about educational processes" (59). The study is longitudinal and took place over the 1996 academic year with three first-year ESL students at Rhodes University. The three students, Lusanda, Kerry and Tshepo[1], were all registered for English Language for Academic Purposes (ELAP) and were all from ex-Department of Education and Training (DET) schools. Starfield (1990) argues that DET students "have been subjected to a severely underresourced system, taught by underqualified teachers in schools where facilities are extremely poor" (143). All three students could, thus, be described as 'at-risk', 'non-traditional', 'underprepared' or 'disadvantaged'[2].

[1] The names of the three students have been changed in the study. Kerry has been given an English name because her real first name and surname were English.

[2] These terms are all in use but I use the term "non-traditional" in this thesis since it points out that these students are "different" but does not necessarily suggest that the "difference" is a problem. It has fewer negative connotations.

1.3. The Aims of the Research

The central goal of the research is to provide a description of the process of acculturation, through language, into the academic culture and disciplinary subcultures of Rhodes University as experienced by individual ESL students[3]. Particular attention is paid to the students' previous experiences and the way in which their experiences at university were understood by them in terms of these previous experiences.

All three students were members of the 1996 ELAP class. According to Rosenberg (1995b) the ELAP course was designed "with the knowledge that relevance and transfer would be problematic" (484). Thus, a further aim of the study is to examine the relevance of the ELAP course to the experiences of the three students and to understand in what particular ways relevance and transfer are problematic.

As described above, there have been a number of responses by historically-white universities, at a number of levels, to the entry of increasing numbers of non-traditional students. Through an examination of the language experiences of three students, two in foundation courses and one in mainstream classes, the relevance and success of these responses at one particular university are examined. A third aim of the study is, therefore, to examine how the various programmes and courses at Rhodes University did, or did not, succeed in fulfilling the needs of these individual students.

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[3] The reference to entrance into a university as "acculturation" and university "culture" and "subcultures" will be explained in section 2.4.

1.4. Chapter Outline

Chapter two is a review of the literature which is concerned with how students experience their entry into school and university discourse communities and how language affects this process. Particular reference is made to the "anthropological approach" and the work of critical discourse theorist James Gee (1990).

Chapter three is a general description of the nature of ethnographic research methodology, as well as a more specific description of the ethnographic methods used in this study and how these have, at times, been adapted to suit the nature of the study.

Chapter four presents the data collected in the study, using a framework based on the ideas of James Gee which are discussed in chapter two.

Chapter five discusses the implication of the study both for further developments at Rhodes University and for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

There are increasing numbers of students in universities in countries from Australia to England to South Africa who, for various reasons, do not fit the profile of the 'traditional' university student. The reasons vary from language to social class to previous educational experiences. In South Africa in the mid 1990s most of the 'non-traditional' students entering tertiary education are black students who speak English as an additional language but who have had some of their secondary education in English. They come from schools that used to be part of the former[1] Department of Education and Training (see section 2.3).

Much theorising and research has been done on this situation in the various countries in which the difficulties experienced by such students in entering academic discourse communities has been recognised. Some of the theories and research will be discussed below and their relevance to the South African situation will be evaluated, particularly in relation to the kind of education that DET students receive, which will be described in section 2.3. The areas covered include the work of Cummins who identified different kinds of language proficiencies and the relationship between them in the first and second language (section 2.2.). Another theoretical approach that will be discussed is the "anthropological approach" (section 2.4.) which sees entry into the university as a process of initiation or acculturation. Following from this is the idea that students come to university with other cultures or literacies already

[1] Although the Department of Education and Training no longer exists, the term DET schools will be used here, since the students in this study received most of their education while the DET was still operating.

in place and that these affect the acquisition of academic literacy (section 2.5.). The chapter looks at the various responses of the historically-white universities to the entrance of increasing numbers of 'non-traditional' students (section 2.7.) and then focuses on one of these responses, namely the provision of English for Academic Purposes courses (section 2.8.).

2.2. Cummins - Different Kinds of Language Proficiencies

Cummins's theory was initially developed to explain why, on the basis of research findings, "preschool children who immigrated to Sweden did not do as well academically as older children who had had some schooling before immigrating" (Adamson, 1993: 32). In an early version of the theory, Cummins distinguished between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive/ Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 152). BICS refers to the skills required to hold an informal conversation while CALP is needed for most classroom communication. This helped to explain the research findings by suggesting that the older children had already developed CALP in their first language and that there was transfer of this proficiency from the first to the second language (Collier, 1987: 619). Cummins explains this using the idea of a "dual iceberg" in which a common underlying proficiency provides a base for the surface features of both the first and the second language (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 82).

The BICS/ CALP distinction was later modified to reduce its simplicity. Cummins suggested that "language proficiency" can be divided into four quadrants in terms of two continua. The horizontal continuum is from context-embedded to context-reduced communication. During context-embedded communication "participants can actively negotiate meaning ... and the

language is supported by a wide range of meaningful paralinguistic and situational cues" (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 152). Context-reduced communication relies on linguistic cues with "little or no opportunity to negotiate shared meaning which in turn increases the likelihood of information being misunderstood" (Rosenthal, 1996: 47). The vertical continuum runs from "cognitively undemanding" to "cognitively demanding". This refers to "the amount of information that must be processed simultaneously ... by the individual in order to carry out the activity" (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 154). The location of a particular instance of communication on the two continua depends not only on the type of communication but on the language proficiency of the participant. An L2 speaker may find a simple conversation cognitively demanding if he or she is consciously working at using correct syntax and finding the right words (Cummins & Swain, 1986: 156).

This later theory relates to the earlier distinction in that BICS is needed for context-embedded, cognitively undemanding communication while CALP is required for context-reduced, cognitively demanding communication. This helps to explain why children usually develop BICS in the L2 a number of years before developing CALP, and why a child's academic proficiency cannot be judged on his or her ability to participate in an informal conversation.

While the work of Cummins is often referred to in writing on academic literacy, it is not without problems, especially in a South African context.

2.2.1. Criticism of Cummins's Model

Adamson (1993) claims that the vertical axis "seems to imply that as one masters difficult linguistic structures, one also masters tasks requiring reasoning" and that the model thereby "appears to include in the notion of language proficiency abilities that are more than purely linguistic" (35). This may be problematic if it is used to suggest that children who have not acquired certain levels of language proficiency are cognitively deficient. Adamson (1993) also refers to research by Biber which suggests that the horizontal axis of the model "simplifies the linguistic differences between casual conversation and academic discourse by conflating several distinguishable dimensions into the single dimension of reduced versus shared context" (1993: 36). Angelil-Carter (1995) questions the appropriacy of describing academic writing as "context-reduced" and points out that "a text can only mean within a context" (14). Cummins uses the idea of "context" to mean a physical context but does not consider the context of academic writing in light of the epistemology of the discipline, how it has developed over the years and the ideas that are presently most accepted, all of which are unfamiliar to first-year students. Adamson (1993) suggests that shared background knowledge can aid communication in a similar way to shared physical context (36).

The above criticisms refer to the model generally but I will look now at the appropriacy of the model for a tertiary education situation in South Africa.

2.2.2. How Appropriate is the Cummins Model in South Africa?

Starfield (1990b) provides a reminder that this "framework grows out of the tradition of research into bilingual education in North America particularly, and has been developed in response to the specific situation prevailing there" (84). The model was also developed with

reference to primary and secondary rather than tertiary education, which is the focus of this study.

The implication of this theory, and the idea of a common underlying proficiency in particular, for L2 speakers in tertiary education settings, is that it can be assumed that students already have knowledge and academic skills (i.e. CALP) acquired in their own language and that what is required is to teach them how to transfer this knowledge and these skills to the language used in the university. This approach, which Starfield (1990b) refers to as the "translation approach", is associated with Widdowson (1979) and his colleagues (87). Murray (1990) used this approach while teaching EAP in England to students from other countries but found that it was less successful when she started teaching in South Africa.

She found that South African students often had better oral communication skills than the students she had taught in England but weaker literacy skills, which suggests that, in terms of Cummins's model, they had acquired BICS but not CALP. Murray (1990) suggests that DET schools did "not encourage the development of CALP either in the mother tongue or English" (140). The 1992 DET annual report states that "black pupils who obtained their Standard 10 certificate are still not fully literate and consequently neither adequately prepared to be accommodated in the labour market, nor fit to be thoroughly trained" (in Gasa *et al,* 1994: 49). The teaching of EAP in South Africa can not, therefore, start by assuming that students have an underlying proficiency of academic skills and just require help in transferring them into English. Boughey (1997) suggests that to do so would "collude in denying" students "access to much of what they hope and expect from a university" (1). In order to understand this situation it is necessary to describe the kinds of teaching and learning that

occur in DET schools.

2.3. DET Education

According to Ralekhetho (1991) "the National Party government adopted the functionalist view that knowledge must be acquired to suit and respond to what was thought to be society's needs: a continued reproduction of mental (for whites) and manual (for blacks) division of labour" (102). The fact that DET students do not acquire CALP during their years of schooling is, thus, not accidental but part of a scheme to maintain racial division and white political and economic dominance. Apartheid may have officially ended several years ago but it has left its mark on education.

Cummins and Swain (1986) suggest that literacy-related skills should be taught in only one language and that in the case of language minority students this should be the first language of the students. They claim that once these skills are well-established in one language, "they will transfer readily and rapidly to the other language (provided it is mastered)" (41).

The language policy in DET schools was, until their dissolution in 1994, that the mother-tongue should be used as the medium of instruction for the first four years with English taught as a subject and from the fifth year English became the medium of instruction "at least in theory if not always in practice" (Hartsthorne, 1992: 206). If Cummins and Swain are correct, this system should lead to bilingualism and the development of CALP in both languages. In South Africa this does not seem to have been the case. There are a number of reasons for this: Firstly, the switch to English may occur too early for CALP to be established in the L1. Starfield (1990b) refers to research by Macdonald which "suggests

strongly that many of the learning problems that persist throughout the child's schooling can be traced to the fundamental disruption that occurs with the switch of medium" (85). Pupils usually have not learned enough English in the first few years of school to cope with suddenly having to use it for all their subjects. Secondly, to further complicate matters, the teachers themselves have come out of the same educational system and "are often not proficient enough in the language to teach adequately in it" (Starfield, 1990a: 143) and may not have developed CALP in either language themselves[2].

Cummins and Swain (1986) claim that "the development of bilingual skills on the part of the students will be enhanced by the separate use of languages on the part of the teachers" (105) but, as suggested by Hartshorne (1992) above, this is not always the case in DET schools where teachers may switch languages, perhaps because of the limits of their own English. Cummins and Swain (1986) suggest that children "learn to ignore the language they do not understand" if "the same, or a related message is typically given in both languages" (106). This would suggest that in addition to not acquiring CALP in either language, DET students are unlikely to acquire English to any great degree of proficiency. This is exacerbated by the segregation of South African society along racial lines which results in black children having little or no contact with English first-language speakers[3].

The net result of all of these factors is that many ex-DET students enter historically-white, English-medium universities with neither the language abilities nor the academic skills

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[2] See Walters (1996) for a discussion of the teaching that occurs in black primary schools.

[3] The situation is changing, particularly with regards to greater racial integration in schools but there are still schools which have mostly, or only, black students. The description of DET schools given here probably still applies, for the most part, to these schools.

necessary to succeed easily in gaining "epistemological access". This helps to explain why, in South Africa, both "osmosis pedagogy" and a "translation approach" to teaching are, in most cases, doomed to failure.

A framework that helps to explain why "osmosis pedagogy" works for some students and not for others and what the experience of entering a university really involves is the "anthropological approach".

2.4. The "Anthropological" Approach

The "anthropological approach" is associated primarily with Ballard and Clanchy (1988) from Australia but it has been widely applied in South Africa and other countries. This approach sees the process of entering a university as initiation, enculturation, acculturation or socialisation and sees students as novices, initiates or apprentices.

According to Ballard and Clanchy (1988), acquiring academic literacy :

> involves learning to 'read' the culture, learning to come to terms with its distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behaviour (8).

Academic acculturation is thus a process of learning the "rules and conventions" of the university. Murray (1993) suggests that the value of this perspective is that:

> it does not separate language, cognition and epistemology, and it provides us with a way of considering how together they shape and are shaped by the academic practices of the university (99).

The relationship between education and culture has long been recognised by ethnographers of schooling but has only more recently been applied to tertiary education. Erickson (1981), for example, suggests that "[e]ducational settings...are especially appropriate for study from" an ethnographic perspective "because they aim to transmit knowledge about how to perceive,

believe, evaluate and act" (29).

Further support for linking education and culture comes from an understanding of knowledge that Bruffee (1993) calls "nonfoundational social construction"(3). He quotes Kuhn who claims that knowledge is "intrinsically the common property of a group or else nothing at all" (in Bruffee, 1993: 3) and describes university education as "a process by which students become members, to one degree or another, of the knowledge communities to which their teachers belong" (1993: 3). Gutierrez (1995) points out, however, that "the knowledge that individuals appropriate is not simply a duplication of the knowledge of the larger community" (24).

Guthrie and Hall (1981) refer to ideas in anthropology that culture exists on two levels, the implicit and the explicit.

> What people can talk about and be specific about, such as traditional customs and laws, constitutes their overt or explicit culture. What they take for granted, or what exists beyond conscious awareness, is their covert or implicit culture (4).

This is also true of academic culture. What makes the acquisition of academic literacy particularly difficult is the fact that so many of the rules and conventions are implicit. Snyder (1973) refers to this as the "hidden curriculum". Paxton (1993) suggests that:

> ...sometimes the only guidance [students] get about the rules and conventions by which they should behave is the comments in the margins and at the end of their essays. These comments are often not explicit - they are written in an informal sort of language but they appeal to formal criteria (56).

When these comments are vague and general and do not explain the underlying need for referencing, or "clear" argument or "relevance", they may be of little use to the student in discovering the rules and conventions of the discipline. The obvious solution, from the point

of view of the student, is to make these rules and conventions more explicit. (Explicit teaching will be discussed further in section 5.4.3.)

Seeing education as initiation into a kind of culture moves the focus from students' language and skill 'deficiencies' to the experience of entering a university and the nature of university education more generally. This approach "challenges the commonsense notions that knowledge is somehow natural, immutable and universal, and that assessment is scientifically 'objective'" (Rule, 1994: 100). Ballard and Clanchy (1988) suggest that a student's "cognitive and linguistic behaviour" is assessed in terms of its "appropriateness to cultural context" (8). It is obviously easier for lecturers, who are embedded in the culture, to judge appropriacy than for students who are novices or initiates.

This understanding of the links between knowledge, language and culture leads Gee (1990) to define Discourses with a capital D as "saying(writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations" (142). He describes a Discourse as a "sort of 'identity kit'" which can be "used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'" (1990: 143). I will be making extensive reference, in chapters 2 and 4, to Gee's book *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. This work is an example of what has been written in the area of 'new literacy studies' or 'critical discourse theory'. Other theorists in this area include Fairclough (1989) who views language as "a form of social practice" (22), and Street (1995). Thesen (1997) suggests that what these theorists have in common is that they "see profound links between literacy and social processes, though the authors vary in the weight they give to social processes in determining individual action" (493). Fairclough, Gee and Street all

discuss the relationship between Discourses or literacy and educational institutions but Gee focuses on education to a greater extent than the other two theorists.

I have chosen to focus on Gee's work, not because his ideas are significantly different from those of others writing from this perspective, but because he provides a comprehensive set of clearly defined terms with which to talk about the acquisition of academic literacy. His views of discourse have been described as "static" (Moore, 1994b: 40) and "deterministic" (Angelil-Carter & Murray, 1996: 16) but they nevertheless provide useful insights into the process of acquiring academic literacy. A description and critique of Gee's (1990) entire theory lies beyond the scope of this study. I have selected from his book terms and ideas that are useful and relevant to this study and I have chosen to omit other terms and ideas. Thesen (1997) suggests that while both Gee and Fairclough argue that more attention should be paid to "real examples of people doing, saying, or writing things" both theorists fail to take note of "what people say they are actually doing" (505). This study uses a framework based on Gee's ideas in order to pay attention to real examples of people doing, saying and writing things and to what they say they are doing.

2.5. Multiple Literacies

The anthropological approach allows an understanding that students do not enter the culture of tertiary education without any culture of their own. According to Moore (1994a):

> Learners arriving at a university are already literate in other domains - those of the school, the home and possibly other contexts. These primary literacies are seldom adequate for the communicative demands of the academe, and new competencies are needed for survival in the new discourse community (51).

Gee (1990) distinguishes between primary and secondary Discourses. The primary Discourse is acquired in "face-to-face communication with intimates" and is used to "signal our

membership within a particular local community" (150). Secondary Discourses "involve, by definition, interaction with people with whom one is either not 'intimate' (with whom one cannot assume lots of shared knowledge and experience) or they involve interactions where one is being 'formal'" (1990: 152).

2.5.1. Primary Discourse

The primary Discourse is acquired within the family and involves the native language. The primary Discourse "serves as a 'framework' or 'base' for the acquisition and learning of other Discourses later in life" (Gee, 1990: 151). These later Discourses can in turn influence the primary Discourse in various ways.

Bruffee (1993) suggests that "when we learn something new", we "leave one community of knowledgeable peers and join another" (115/116), by which he seems to mean that membership in one community is **replaced** by membership in another. Gee's understanding is rather that as a person grows older he or she will be a member of a number of different discourse communities. Some of these may be temporary but it seems unlikely that the primary Discourse will ever be lost altogether. It may be reshaped in various ways, but it is not likely to be replaced.

2.5.2. Secondary Discourses

Secondary Discourses exist on a continuum from more local, community-based Discourses to more globally oriented, public sphere Discourses. Secondary Discourses are used in "schools, national media, and in many social, financial and government agencies" (Gee, 1990: 152). According to Gee (1990: 152), the Discourses of schools are on the public

sphere end of the continuum, though this would differ from school to school, particularly in South Africa. University Discourses are clearly oriented to the public sphere and are presumably further along the continuum than schools. Of relevance here is Fairclough's (1989) notion of "formality" which he suggests

> ... is a common property in many societies of practices and discourses of high social prestige and restricted access. It is a contributory factor in keeping access restricted, for it makes demands on participants above and beyond those of most discourses ... It can also serve to generate awe among those who are excluded by it... (65).

Public sphere Discourses, including those of the university, could be described as "formal" in the sense in which this is used by Fairclough.

2.5.3. Movement from One Discourse to Another

2.5.3.1. Moving from the Primary Discourse to the Secondary Discourses of the School

Discourses can interfere with one another and aspects of one Discourse can be transferred to another (Gee, 1990: 152). There may also be tension or conflict between the Discourses an individual uses (ibid: 157). This understanding of the relationship between different literacies or Discourses helps to explain the varying experiences that different children have when entering the Discourses of the school.

Gee suggests that middle-class children find it fairly easy to acquire school Discourses because their primary Discourse is close to the Discourses of the school and because they are less likely to experience conflict between their Discourses. This is due to the historical influences of secondary Discourses on the primary Discourse of their parents, which is passed on to the children. Working-class children, whose parents have not had the same access to

educational and other socially valued secondary Discourses, will usually have greater difficulty acquiring the Discourses of the school because of the greater distance between these Discourses and their primary Discourse. This is especially problematic because this is not how the 'problem' is usually perceived by teachers who often see the difficulties these children experience as a sign of a lack of ability or intelligence on the part of the children. Bourdieu and his colleagues (for example, Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) make a similar point when they refer to "cultural capital" which is "a set of cultural outlooks and predispositions that children receive from their home environment and invest in formal education" (Collins, 1979: 9). Children from upper- and middle-class homes generally have a higher level of "cultural capital" and it "is these children who are rewarded in school when their social gifts are interpreted as natural ability and interest" (Whitty, 1985: 67).

Gee, like Bourdieu, discusses the difference between children mainly in terms of class. In the 1960s and 1970, Bernstein (1971) also wrote about the relationship between class and language and the effect this had on educational success. Fasold (1990) summarizes Bernstein's writing in this area as follows:

> Bernstein wrote that two kinds of English 'code' could be distinguished: "elaborated code" and 'restricted code'. Restricted code is used by everyone, but some children also acquire the elaborated code, which Bernstein saw as essential for success in school (270).

"Restricted code" cannot be identified with "primary Discourse" since, to combine the two sets of terms in a way not intended by either writer, a "primary Discourse" will be more or less "elaborated" depending on the historical influences on the primary Discourse. Gee's notion of Discourse also includes behaviour and values which are not included in the term "code". Gee sees a continuum from Discourses oriented to the home and intimates to those oriented towards the community to those oriented globally towards the public sphere, rather

than using the simple dichotomy used by Bernstein. The two writers do, however, have similar ideas about the effect that different "codes" or "Discourses" of different classes have on academic success. Dittmar (1976) writes:

> According to the terminology used by Bernstein, lower-class children do have less verbal ability and less motivation to learn, and are inferior to middle-class children who use elaborated speech, in that the educational norms are tailored for the latter; and teachers, who have been socialized by the norms of the same class, base their behaviour on its scale of values (19).

Gee would presumably not agree that lower class children have less ability and motivation than middle-class children but he probably would see the effect of the difference in Discourses acquired by, or the differences in "socialization" of, teachers and pupils as one of the problems experienced by lower-class children entering schools.

In South Africa race and class are closely linked and it is likely that white, middle-class children have an easier route into the Discourses of both school and tertiary education than black children, at least partly because of the greater access their parents have had to schooling (Thesen, 1994: 27). Murray (1993) suggests that:

> ...the primary discourse of DET students does interpenetrate that of the school. However, in universities - especially HWESU's[4] - an academic discourse which has virtually no connection with the students' primary discourse is 'privileged' (99).

2.5.3.2. Moving from the Secondary Discourses of School to those of University

School and university Discourses are both discourses of education so there must be some similarities between them, but schools and universities are different kinds of institutions, so their Discourses will also show corresponding differences.

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[4] HWESU - Historically-white English speaking university.

One thing that all educational Discourses seem to have in common is their separation from primary Discourses. Cope and Kalantzis (1993) suggest that this is because the school (and by association the university) needs to divide the world up into different subjects and ways of knowing and that students move "from common senses to a kind of uncommonsense" (8). Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) claim that:

> The divorce between the language of the family and the language of the school only serves to reinforce the feeling that the education system belongs to another world, and that what teachers have to say has nothing to do with daily life... (9).

Sheeran and Barnes (1991) describe the divorce of school knowledge from everyday, commonsense knowledge as "disembedded logic" (6). Students who have understood the separation between school and real life may have difficulty reflecting on their real-life experiences within an educational Discourse as they are sometimes required to do.

There are also numerous differences between school and university Discourses. Swanepoel (1995) points out that schools prepare a "large sector of society for viable societal functioning" and prepare some students for tertiary education while universities prepare "a small sector of societal members for specialized functions" (318). Thus, while almost the whole of society has access to some school Discourses, only a minority have access to the Discourses of tertiary education. This 'exclusiveness' is part of the nature of university Discourses, and helps to explain their value to individuals in acquiring them. It may also, as will be discussed later, provide some explanation for the resistance shown by those who have acquired them to opening them up for discussion and evaluation.

A further difference is that teachers are primarily concerned with their students and their teaching, and training pupils to pass external examinations while the "first loyalty" of

university teachers is to "the 'reference group' of other academics, scattered throughout the world, but working in the same field of research" (Raaheim & Wankowski, 1981: 53). This may be because most lecturers have received little or no training as teachers and are often rewarded for research rather than teaching. Students who expect to be 'taught' in the same way at university as they were at school may find the change quite disturbing.

Students may take time to recognise the differences between the two kinds of educational institutions and their various Discourses and this may be made more difficult by the apparent similarities between them. Kapp (1994) suggests that both the tasks set at university, such as writing essays, and the "rhetorical context" of students writing to their teachers, seem similar enough to students that they "assume that they are required to perform the same comprehension and knowledge-telling exercises" (115). This is unlikely to receive the same response at university as at school, although differences may exist between different faculties and subjects.

Some of the differences between schools and universities are likely to be experienced by all first-year students. Ballard and Clanchy (1988) describe the process of entering the university as essentially similar and similarly problematic for all students, which in South Africa is not likely to be the case. Just as some children's primary Discourses prepare them more successfully for the Discourses of school, so acquiring the Discourses of the university is easier for students whose other Discourses are relatively close to those of the university and not in a relationship of tension or conflict. The acquisition of university Discourses is usually particularly influenced by the school Discourses the student has access to.

Bond (1993) admits the usefulness of the "anthropological approach" but warns that conditions in South Africa and Australia are not identical. He points out that:

> The 'new' or 'non-traditional' South African university student has graduated from an education system which for years neither sought nor claimed to prepare its scholars for university study (150).

To rephrase this using Gee's terms is to suggest that most black ex-DET students come to university and attempt to enter university Discourses with their primary and other secondary Discourses at a significant distance from those they are trying to acquire. There is also little historical influence of university Discourses on the primary Discourses of most students because, until recently, only a tiny minority of black South African were allowed into historically-white universities. Some may have gone to black universities but it is likely that the Discourses of these universities are still at some distance from those of historically-white universities. This also helps to explain why school teachers, who studied at black universities or teacher training colleges, and who could potentially help bridge this gap, are unable to do so.

Entering a university is further complicated by the fact that students are required to acquire not one Discourse of **the** university culture but the various Discourses of the subjects they are studying. I will now attempt to clarify what is I mean by "secondary Discourses of the university" and discuss how they are related to those beyond the university.

2.5.4. Secondary Discourses of the University

According to Ballard and Clanchy (1988):

> The task required of the student ... is to learn not only the general rules of discourse and argumentation that sustain the culture but also the appropriate disciplinary or **sub-cultural** rules which govern how thinking and ... language may function in specific contexts of knowledge (14).

It is unclear what the "general rules" of "university culture" actually are, though there are things that a student needs to know how to do in order to survive at university and which could be considered part of his or her university Discourses. Dison and Rule (1995) introduce the idea of "institutional competence" which includes everything from "computer literacy and information-handling skills" to "how to secure accommodation and funding, and how to access counselling resources" (428). This competence mostly lies outside of any particular discipline but without it a student is unlikely to remain in a tertiary education institution long enough to acquire a disciplinary Discourse. It is also necessary to remember that academic Discourses take place on various levels of formality from "casual hallway chats" to "lectures" to "scholarly papers" (Bergvall in Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995: 11).

Gee (1990) proposes that Discourses are ways of showing that one is playing a socially meaningful role, and there may be times when the role of 'student' is relevant without any reference to the particular subjects the person is studying.

> There are shared ideas of what it is to be a student, of how a student will behave, even of what a student will look like, and part of the transition to student life is falling in with these role expectations to some degree or other (Earwaker, 1992: 27).

These "shared ideas" should probably be considered part of university Discourses a novice student has to acquire but these are "rules and conventions" that are more likely to be learned from other students than from lecturers.

The connection between knowing, writing, behaving and believing is much clearer at the sub-cultural, discipline-specific level. At this level Ballard and Clanchy (1988) claim that what students have to learn is:

> the exact scope of the territory (the domain of the subject), the means of

> travelling (the mode of analysis), the boundaries and the manner of speech (the disciplinary 'dialect') (14).

They also suggest that different disciplines are distinguished "less by the uniqueness of the area of reality or experience they set out to investigate than by their distinctive methods of investigation" (14). Chiseri-Strater (1991) suggests that disciplines, rather than just representing "fields of knowledge", also "embrace methods of understanding and interacting with the world" (141).

2.5.4.1. Discourses of the University and Discourses Beyond the University

The Discourses of the university exist in various relationships to those outside the university. These other Discourses include primary Discourses and secondary, school Discourses. There are also Discourses which seem very similar to those acquired at university but which are not quite the same. For example, it may be necessary to distinguish the Discourses an undergraduate acquires from true "disciplinary" Discourses and to distinguish "disciplinary" discourses from "professional" Discourses.

Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) suggest that undergraduate students learn "pedagogical genres" which "contain **some** of the textual features and **some** of the conventions of disciplinary genres" but that these genres "are also linked to and instantiate classroom-based activities" (13). Johns (1995) distinguishes between "classroom" genres (e.g. the essay examination, the summary, lecture notes) and "authentic" genres (e.g. the bid, the proposal, the journal article) (282). Paxton (1993) refers to research done by White which suggests that teachers read student texts differently from other kinds of writing, with the expectation that they will find errors. "White says that teachers belong to a particular 'interpretive community' which assumes that student texts exist in order to be criticized" (Paxton, 1993:

55). This suggests that the Discourses an undergraduate needs to acquire are related to but not the same as those used by their lecturers outside of their roles as 'teachers'.

The "pedagogical" and "disciplinary" Discourses of a university are different again from other, related, Discourses that exist outside of the university. Bruffee (1993) claims that "even when academic and public professionals talk about the same things, they talk about them in different ways" (127). A question that can be asked about university Discourses is how successful they are in preparing students to acquire the Discourses they will have to use once they leave university. Johns (1993) points out that many Engineering students write very little but may be required to do a lot of writing when they start working. It has also been suggested that "students who graduate with BSc degrees are not adequately equipped in the area of technical writing on entering employment in industry" (Makina-Karunda & Allie, 1993: 97). Fielding (1990) and Sieberhagen (1994) both emphasise the importance of communication skills in gaining and succeeding in jobs in commerce and industry. These professional Discourses lie outside the immediate scope of this study but they need to be considered in curriculum planning for the future.

2.5.5. Inappropriate Transfer from One Discourse to Another

Some of the problems students experience in entering university Discourses may be a result of a 'misreading' of the university culture. They may 'read' a task or event as similar to others they have already experienced and attempt to transfer aspects of the relevant Discourse to those of the university. Alternatively they may have no way of 'reading' the culture and may resort to transferring from another Discourse, in the absence of any other strategy for dealing with the task.

Students are most likely to transfer from school to university Discourses but they may also access other Discourses with which they are familiar. For example, students may write university essays by drawing on their knowledge of newspapers, magazines or soap operas (Ballard & Clanchy, 1988; Bizzell, 1986).

Students may also misunderstand or 'misread' the way particular terms are used within the academic context. Kapp (1994) reports that students "frequently interpret the word 'critical' to mean fault-finding" and understand "argument" as "a process whereby the opposition is proved wrong" (116). Nightingale (1988) explains this understanding of "argument" by referring to the conceptual metaphor common in Western culture that "argument is war" (65).

Students who attempt to transfer behaviours and ways of speaking and writing from school to university may find that they are not appropriate. It is likely that most students attempt this transfer of Discourses because it makes sense for them to model their behaviour at university on what led to success at school since these are both educational institutions and the differences between them may not be immediately obvious. For example, Raaheim and Wankowski (1981) suggest that students will use the style of learning used at school when they enter the university but points out that this is unlikely to be successful because "this style of learning has been developed and perfected ... in some **very specific tuition milieu at school**" (71) and is unlikely to be suitable for the different situation found in universities.

Most students will attempt some inappropriate transfer of Discourses until they discover more about the Discourse they are attempting to enter, but some students obviously take longer to find out what is appropriate and this is, at least partly, dependant on the nature of the

Discourses they already have. In South Africa most 'at-risk', 'non-traditional' students come from DET schools where the Discourses they acquire are not intended to prepare them for the Discourses of historically-white universities and they thus often experience additional difficulty in acquiring these Discourses.

2.6. How Appropriate is the "Anthropological" Approach in South Africa?

It should be clear from section 2.3. on DET education above that the secondary Discourses of most DET schools are at some distance from those of universities such as Rhodes. Rule (1994) suggests that initiation into university Discourses is particularly difficult for "those coming from a school background where rote learning and regurgitation bring success, and where the authority of teacher and textbook is absolute in relation to what counts as knowledge" (101). He goes on to say that in South Africa many students "have not been acculturated into any kind of culture of learning at all because of the educational disruptions and political upheavals of the last two decades" (101). Kapp (1994) argues that writing academically is especially difficult for students from DET schools "where emphasis is placed on documenting as much factual evidence as possible" (116).

The "anthropological approach" (see section 2.4.) does not consider the fact that some students speak a different language to that which they have to use in their university Discourses at all. Gee (1990) states that "Discourses include much more than language, and in them language has no necessary pride of place" (xv), but he is writing about children who speak different dialects of the same language. Language, in the sense of completely different languages, must surely be given more recognition than this. Bond (1993) acknowledges the value of the anthropological approach but warns that "some of us may be in danger of

reducing the second language factor to irrelevance, in our attempts to understand the cognitive and epistemic demands of academic literacy" (150).

In contrast, a typical response by HWESUs is to acknowledge that most 'non-traditional' students are ESL speakers and to concentrate on their 'language problems' without acknowledging the close relationship between language and ways of knowing, valuing and believing. In other words the attempt to 'support' non-traditional students has often worked at the level of language, not Discourse (see section 2.8.).

As will be discussed below, the first response of most HWESUS to the entry of small numbers of students from DET schools was to try to change the students by giving them the skills they were seen as lacking, while the university stayed the same.

2.7. The First Response of HWESUs to the Entry of 'Non-traditional' Students

When black students from DET schools began to enrol in historically-white, English-medium universities in the 1980s, the universities' first response was to provide Academic Support Programmes (ASPs) for these students[5]. While this response may have been adequate when the numbers of black students were small, it may not be sufficient now that the numbers are increasing. In 1996 almost half the students registering at Rhodes University did not have English as their first language, although proficiency in English as a second language obviously varies and not all ESL students can be considered 'at-risk'.

[5] See Drewett (1993), chapter 4, for a description of ASP at Rhodes University from 1982 to 1992.

Moulder (1991) describes the provision of ASPs as a "strategy for avoiding organisational change" (117) since it is the student rather than the university that has to do the changing. The students are perceived as having "learning and language problems, and so a small unit ... is established to 'fix-up the problem' which is seen as located within the student" (Starfield, 1994: 17). Rose refers to this as the "myth of transience" which is that "if we can just do x or y, the problem will be solved ... and higher education can return to its real work" (in Angelil-Carter & Thesen, 1993: 3). This solution is not unlike the idea of "compensatory education" which was a term used in the United States and Britain as long ago as the 1950s. Bernstein (1971) writes:

> The concept 'compensatory education' implies that something is missing in the family and so in the child ... If only the parents were interested in the goodies we offer; if only they were like middle-class parents, then we could do our job (192).

This response marginalises the 'problem', the students and those who are involved in academic support. According to Clarence:

> it is all too easy for the university as a whole and for individual academics to sidestep current challenges, to direct the 'problem students' to an EAP course and then, from a comfortable distance, criticise it for not fulfilling roles which, in part at least, belong elsewhere (in Starfield, 1990a: 145).

As will be discussed in section 2.8. below, the kinds of EAP courses provided by many universities are problematic in a number of ways and this is partly a result of the fact that they exist in a marginalised position within the university. The work they do is often seen by other departments as being outside the 'real' work of the university, yet the same departments send students to them to have their language and academic 'problems' solved so that they will be easier to teach. This attitude may be changing but the change is slow in coming. A staff member in the Psychology Department of Rhodes University said in an interview in 1996:

> Our role is to teach Psychology, recognise student's weaknesses and those students who can't cope we refer out to specialists ... I'll teach you Psychology ... come back when you can come to grips with it (in Caldwell, 1997: 74).

2.8. English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

The central difficulty for EAP courses, and other general writing courses, is their responsibility for preparing students to write and learn in the other subjects they are studying. This is often made more difficult because of a lack of contact or communication between EAP teachers and teachers of content subjects. Johns (1988) suggests that:

> though the literature is chock-full of EAP needs assessments and EAP coursebooks, we are still having difficulty identifying the skills which are actually transferable to a variety of academic contexts, therefore we may be inappropriately preparing students for the total academic experience (56).

Johns seems to suggest that it would be possible to prepare students for the rest of their academic work if only "transferable skills" could be identified and taught.

Even if this were possible, there are still difficulties for EAP courses. Leki (1995b) points out that teaching writing in a general writing course is based on the idea that writing teachers and others in the university know what "good writing" is. Her research, however, suggests that this is not necessarily the case. Although students, content teachers and language teachers may agree in principle on what a good essay should look like, she found considerable disparity among these groups in deciding on whether a particular essay was "good" or not.

In situations where students from different faculties enrol in the same EAP course, a further difficulty arises in finding content to teach that will interest and motivate a range of students

and which language specialists feel confident about teaching.

If EAP courses are not credit-bearing there is an additional problem of learner motivation, particularly because those students who are having the most difficulty succeeding at university are required to do more work than other students, with little or no recognition for this time and effort.

In South Africa some EAP courses have been stigmatised as "racist" because they are only for certain students and those students are almost exclusively black and from ex-DET schools. These students may not accept that the university perceives them as 'underprepared' or 'lacking' in various ways. Agar (1992) describes the entry of these students into HWESUs as "an arrival against all odds" (98). These are people who have been accepted into university despite, rather than because of, their previous education, which they may perceive as an achievement while universities perceive it as a problem (Gasa *et al*, 1994: 52).

Moulder (1991) argues that ASPs (and by extension EAP courses) are caught in a contradiction:

> The contradiction is generated by two beliefs: the belief that the education which DET matriculants receive is vastly inferior to the education which white matriculants receive, and the belief that one needs only about 30 weeks ... to bridge the gap between the education that DET matriculants receive and the education that white matriculants receive (120).

The amount of time required to develop academic literacies probably needs to be measured in years rather than in months. It is more likely that this will be recognised by EAP teachers than by the rest of the university which may have unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved in an EAP course. The 1996 Rhodes ELAP report states that "it seems that many

university staff believe ELAP to be a quick fix solution to poor-quality education. It must be understood that ELAP cannot be expected to redress 12 years of bad and often chaotic education in one year" (12). The time required to achieve academic literacy is problematic in a university environment where students are not expected to be completely acculturated into their subject Discourses in one year but do need to be sufficiently acculturated at least to pass their assignments and exams. If they are not, they seldom have a second chance at acquiring the Discourses of the university.

While some EAP practitioners perceive the problems with their courses as primarily practical and solvable, others have argued that this is not the case. Starfield (1994) argues that the EAP courses are problematic because they misconceive "of the nature of academic literacy and attempt to teach 'skills' largely in isolation from the disciplines" (17).

To accept that entering a university involves acquiring the Discourses of the university and that Discourses involve more than just language but are "a way of being in the world, a way of being a 'person like us', in terms of action, interaction values, thought and language" (Gee, 1990: 174/5), is to accept that language and skills cannot be taught outside of Discourses.

EAP courses have no clear discipline/s of their own. From Gee's perspective they attempt to teach the "saying (writing)" and perhaps some of the "doing" of a Discourse without the "being-valuing-believing". Most EAP teachers are part of the "knowledge community" of English Second Language teachers but they are not trying to help their students become "people like them". Instead, they are supposed to help their students become "people like"

a whole range of different content teachers, while having little or no contact with these content teachers. Gee (1990) suggests that as a result of this, a "pseudo-Discourse" is constructed (173). This pseudo-Discourse can easily become "a discourse of institutional gatekeeping, racial separation, linguistic disadvantage, before teaching has even begun" (Angelil-Carter & Thesen, 1993: 14). The "practical" problems of EAP courses take on a different shape when seen from this perspective.

The obvious step that follows from this argument that language and skills have to be taught from within Discourses, is to call for greater attention to these matters in content classes and greater explicitness in teaching. This is certainly important in destroying the "myth of transience" and in helping students in their apprenticeships within specific disciplines but does this also mean that language and skills courses should not be run at all?

It has been argued that there is a place for general language and skills courses at universities, in a slightly different form and with a different philosophy behind them. Gee (1990: 173) suggests that language courses need to justify their content, the Discourse they apprentice students to. Spack (1988) argues that English teachers should not be responsible for teaching disciplinary writing but rather "general inquiry strategies, rhetorical principles and tasks that can transfer to other course work" (40/41). According to Kapp (1994):

> EAP attempts to provide students with a metalanguage about academia and its discourse, a metalanguage which serves as a tool with which to decode and discuss the concept of transition to the new learning environment. Our tasks attempt to demystify and explain the processes students encounter in the mainstream (120).

Angelil-Carter and Thesen (1993) argue that the lack in a typical EAP course of a disciplinary discourse "is at once its problem and its strength: In standing outside of many disciplines, it

is in a unique position to relativise knowledge" (14). While EAP courses are potentially in a position to achieve what Kapp, and Angelil-Carter and Thesen claim they can, it is less clear whether EAP courses such as the one at Rhodes University actually do this. This is probably especially true for science and commerce students whose other subjects often seem to have little or nothing to do with what they learn in their English Language for Academic Purposes (ELAP) classes. The lack of contact and communication between content and language specialists may also be an obstacle to achieving this ideal. It is unclear how EAP teachers should go about demystifying and explaining "the processes students encounter in the mainstream" when they usually do not know what these are.

It is clear that EAP courses are problematic in a number of ways. It was recognised by Rhodes University that such problems exist but there was a decision in 1993 to initiate such a course nonetheless. I will now describe the English for Academic Purposes course that is run at Rhodes University.

2.8.1. English Language for Academic Purposes at Rhodes University

An ad hoc committee was established in 1993 to initiate an English for Academic Purposes course at Rhodes. This was a late start in comparison both with other universities in South Africa and with other countries, so "much of the planning and design of the course was carried out with a sense of *deja vu*" (Rosenberg, 1995b: 485). Although aware of many of the issues and problems described above, the course was still designed as a language and skills course run by language specialists with content serving primarily as a medium for teaching skills.

The English I AP course, as it was originally called, was to run for two experimental years with extensive continuous evaluation. In 1994 the course had 31 students. The numbers rose to 60 in 1995 and 89 in 1996. Students are enrolled on the basis of their matriculation symbol for English (E or lower for English First Language, or C or lower for English Second Language).

The course, unlike some similar courses at other universities, is credit-bearing. It was originally designed for students from the Faculty of Arts but it has subsequently become compulsory in the Commerce Foundation course and optional as part of a Science Foundation course. It also admits Social Science and Music students. This range of faculties has made the choice of course content problematic.

The course was planned in difficult circumstances. Funds were limited and responsibility for the course was originally divided between the Academic Development Programme and the English Department. The course moved to the Department of Linguistics and English Language in 1996. Most staff members involved in teaching the course to date have had other responsibilities in either Academic Development or their respective departments. The course started with three half-time tutors but by 1996 had a full-time tutor and course co-ordinator and 3 part-time tutors.

As discussed above, the course was envisaged as a 'solution' to a 'problem' which meant that the university as a whole did not need to change. In other words it was forced to support the "myth of transience". While this course was expected to remove responsibility from mainstream lecturers for coping with 'non-traditional', 'at-risk' students, the same lecturers

perceived this skills-based course as "trivial and less legitimate than a content-based course ... Initially there was a misconception that making academic discourse transparent amounted to lowering standards 'so that anyone could pass'" (Dison & Law-Viljoen, 1995: 502). In reality, far from passing being made too easy, "EAP teachers feel the pressure from academic departments" to "account for persistent failure rates of students who have been through these courses" (Dison & Law-Viljoen, 1995: 502).

According to the 1996[6] ELAP course guide, the aims and objectives of the course were[7]:

* To facilitate the students' maturation into **independent learners.**
* To enhance students' ability to cope with the University's **linguistic demands.** This will involve improving their academic vocabularies and general efficiency in **communication in English** in the three main areas of spoken language, reading and writing.
* To enhance students' ability to master the University's **cognitive demands.**

ELAP at Rhodes is a theme-based course. Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989) describe such courses as differing from tradition language courses in that

> ... the organizational principles inherent in the theme or topic dictate to the language syllabus a rich array of language items or activities, ensuring their contextualization and significance ... materials ... are usually teacher-generated or adapted from outside sources, and an attempt is often made to integrate the topic into the teaching of all skills (15).

The three themes used in 1996 were "Language and Power" (1st term), "Culture" (2nd term) and "Ecology, Economics and Human Rights" (3rd & 4th terms). There have been changes every year in the exact nature of the themes used, based on student feedback and interest. There has been an increasing trend towards "drawing on [students'] knowledge and life

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[6] Since 1996 was the year in which this study took place, I will focus on ELAP in that year rather than from a comparative perspective.

[7] For a fuller description of these aims and objectives see appendix A.

experiences, especially initially, and to shift from working with familiar, real-life experiences to more abstract, decontextualised, academic tasks" (Dison & Law-Viljoen, 1995: 499).

In 1996, the class was divided into four groups. The whole class usually met together for a double period on a Monday, during which time there was usually a lecture, often by a lecturer invited from another department, or a workshop, or a debate presented by the students, or a video. The students met for five other periods in their four groups. Four of these periods were taught by the tutors and the fifth was a grammar lesson taken by a graduate assistant. Students who were not studying Computer Science or not doing a computer literacy course through their Commerce Foundation course, were required to attend computer lessons.

Each student was required to purchase copies of Murray and Johanson's texts, *Write to Learn: A Course in Writing for Academic Purposes* (1990) and *Write to Improve: A Guide to Correcting and Evaluating Written Work* (1989).

In addition to assignments, ELAP students are required to write dialogue journals, at least in the early part of the year. The tutors and the graduate assistants respond to the students' journal entries. These journals have been used since the course has been in existence and have continued to be used because of their popularity with students (Rosenberg, 1995b: 493), although this seemed to decrease in 1996 (1996 ELAP course evaluation). According to Peyton and Reed (1990):

> The value of the dialogue journal lies in the open exchange of ideas that can occur and the concerned and warm acceptance by the teacher of the student's writing (4).

ELAP aims to teach the skills of academic reading and writing, note-taking, discussion and summarizing but as there is particular emphasis on academic writing and this I will discuss this in greater detail.

2.9. Academic Writing

Academic writing is particularly important in the lives of university students since as Ballard argues,

> while a students is 'inducted' into a particular discipline through lectures, discussions, readings, and laboratory work, 'it is through **written** assignments that the success of his (sic) acculturation is most commonly judged' (in Schneider & Fujishima 1995:4).

Learning to write academically is often a particularly difficult task for novice university students, particularly those for whom the language of the university is not their first language. Unfamiliarity with the kind of writing required at university is the main difficulty. The enormity of the task is described by Bartholomae (1988):

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he (sic) has to invent the university for the occasion - invent the university that is, or a branch of it... He (sic) has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluation, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community or... the **various** discourses of our community... (273).

It would be a gross simplification to suggest that the difficulties experienced by ESL students in writing academically are merely due to a lack of knowledge of English vocabulary and syntax which shows in the language errors typically made by these students. There is an increasing understanding on the part of language practitioners, if not other academics, that language or surface errors are manifestations of much deeper difficulties. Taylor (1988) argues that,

> many errors in the forms of syntax and other linguistic structures are traceable to problems of meaning external to the forms and conventions of English syntax itself. That is to say, much poor syntax arises because students do not know, or only dimly know, what they are talking about. It also arises because ... students only dimly know what their lecturers and tutors want them to do (58).

If students only dimly know what they are talking about, this is often because they have failed to understand what they have had to read in order to write the essay.

Kucer (1985) suggests that as we read and write we create a "text world" which consists of "the cognitive meanings and relationships underlying the surface structure of any text". He goes on the say that although the "visible surface structure" of a text "can be directly observed, the text world exists only in the mind of the reader or writer" (318). Baijnath (1992) argues that,

> with unsuccessful writers there is a poverty of input at the reading stage of the process. This results in the development of inadequate text worlds, lacking in the richness of understanding and insight that is necessary to deliver a competent piece of writing... Consequently, the (poor) quality of the product is determined at this stage. The later stages of writing are doomed to be virtual blind stumblings through unfamiliar territory (75/76).

2.9.1. Teaching Academic Writing

ELAP at Rhodes University makes extensive use of the process approach in teaching writing. This approach is also starting to be used in some other departments, although less extensively. The process approach is based on research into what good writers do when they write, and focuses on the **process** of writing rather than just on the final **product**. It builds on the idea that writing is a circular rather than a linear process and that writers go back to what they have written, and edit and rewrite it in order to find and express meaning. This approach views writing as a way of exploring new ideas (Raimes, 1991; Rule, 1994; Stewart, 1989;

Taylor, 1984). Linguistic accuracy is "often downplayed, delayed until writers have grappled with ideas and organization" (Raimes, 1991: 410).

ELAP students typically write two drafts of each assignment, a first draft which is responded to by the ELAP tutors and a final draft which receives a mark. Ideally, students should write as many drafts of an assignment as necessary in order to focus their meaning and language but this is impractical in terms of time and marking so students usually only write one draft before handing in the assignment.

This chapter presented some of the theories that have been used in various parts of the world to try and describe and understand the process of entering university Discourses. The appropriacy of these theories to the situation in South Africa was assessed in terms of the kind of teaching and learning that occurs in DET schools here. The problems associated with EAP courses was discussed and the EAP course that is run at Rhodes University was described.

In the next chapter I will define ethnography, discuss the features of the ethnographic research method, and describe the relevance of ethnography to the theory of the "anthropological approach" which see entrance into a university as initiation into a culture or a number of disciplinary sub-cultures. The research methods and the data collected in the study, and the limitations of each, will be described.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY - ETHNOGRAPHY

3.1. Introduction

This study looks at the university from an anthropological perspective, as discussed in section 2.4., and it therefore adopts a correspondingly anthropological research methodology. Ethnography is a research method developed by anthropologists in order to study and describe the culture of a society or community (Mehan, 1982: 60). Initially the society in question was typically unfamiliar to the ethnographer, non-western and not technologically advanced and the goal was to describe as much of the culture as possible. Later, however, ethnography came to be used to study western cultures and to describe specific settings rather than entire cultures.

In this chapter I will define ethnography and discuss the use of this research method in educational settings. I will describe the features of an ethnographic study and discuss how, and to what extent, this study is ethnographic in terms of these features. I will describe all the data collected in the study although not all of it will be referred to in chapter four. The chapter ends with a discussion of ethnographic writing.

3.2. Defining Ethnography

Brodkey (1987) defines ethnography simply as "the study of lived experience" (25), and Watson-Gegeo (1988) defines it as "the study of people's behaviour in naturally occurring, ongoing settings, with a focus on the cultural interpretation of behaviour" (576). The settings which are studied are natural rather than artificial or contrived because ethnography is

concerned with understanding behaviour within the context that it actually occurs. Ethnographies need to be ongoing or longitudinal because it takes time to enter, observe and begin to understand a culture or setting. These observations and understandings are interpreted from a cultural rather than an individual, psychological perspective because it is believed that people "collaborate to construct their realities socially" (Cumming, 1994: 685). Watson-Gegeo's definition is relevant to both large scale studies of entire cultures and smaller scale studies of educational settings, such as this study.

This study is a description of the "lived experience" of three ESL students in their first year at Rhodes University. It seeks to study their behaviour in the university and to understand their actions and attitudes from their own perspective.

Broad definitions of ethnography abound but it is rather more difficult to define exactly what ethnography is, and exactly what ethnographers do that is different from other research methods. Qualitative research is "concerned with identifying the presence or absence of something and with determining its nature or distinguishing features" (Watson-Gegeo, 1988: 576) Naturalistic research takes place in natural settings where people actually conduct their everyday lives. Ethnography is qualitative, naturalistic and descriptive but this does not serve to differentiate it from all other research methods. According to Watson-Gegeo (1988) ethnography "differs from other forms of qualitative research in its concern with holism and in the way it treats culture as integral to the analysis (not just as one of many factors to be taken into consideration)" (577). Heath (1982) suggests that ethnography, "because it is descriptive, has a highly individualized and particularistic quality about it that provides vivid details and concreteness and allows readers to identify with situations described" (44).

3.3. Ethnography and Education

Ethnographic research exists in a state of tension within educational research generally. Heath (1982) points out that,

> Ethnographic research does not lend itself to being categorized, tabulated, or correlated, and it will not necessarily identify specific indicators that predict success of either programs or students. In short, ethnographic research does not meet the criteria of traditional research in education in either methodology, format, or results. It cannot be carried out in a brief time period. It does not generalize the findings from one setting to another without comparable work elsewhere (44).

The difficulties in defining exactly what ethnography is tend to exacerbate the difficulties in finding a role for ethnography in education. A further problem is that the yardsticks used to judge most educational research such as adequate sample size and statistical significance are not relevant to ethnographic studies and it is difficult to provide a similarly rigid set of criteria by which to judge ethnographic research (Gilmore & Smith, 1982: 11).

Gilmore and Smith (1982) suggest that the value of ethnography to education is "a listening, learning posture", that is "based in respect for informants" (5). Informants become the centre of an ethnographic study in a way that is not possible in other research methods. Ethnographies are, therefore, open to new ways of understanding and seeing based on the informants' ways of seeing and understanding rather than those of the researcher.

Leki (1995a) investigated the coping strategies of ESL students in writing tasks across the curriculum using similar data collection methods to those used in this study. She argues that,

> ... the advantage of a qualitative research methodology for this type of research is precisely the rich picture we achieve of individual's complex motivations, talents, energies, and histories as they struggle with varying external demands and more internally driven factors (241).

3.4. Features of Ethnography

3.4.1. The Role of the Ethnographer

Doing ethnography in a setting familiar to the ethnographer, such as an educational institution, poses special problems for the researcher. Mehan (1981) describes this situation in the following way,

> The ethnographer working in a foreign land is attempting to make the strange familiar, while the ethnographer in local scenes must reverse the process and make the familiar strange in order to understand it (47).

Agar (1986) advocates the cultivation of an attitude of "anticoherence" in which "understanding is suspect; you self-consciously try to show that 'what I think is going on probably isn't'" (50). Long (1980) questions "how free from preconceptions a **classroom** ethnographer" can be "given that most researchers will have had at least fifteen years of formal education themselves" (27) and may even have been teachers. My study is of the experiences of second-language students in their first year at Rhodes University. I have been a first-year student at Rhodes so I cannot pretend that I know nothing about that experience. It was, in fact, an experience that I sometimes drew on to understand what my informants told me. Because the three students started the year as strangers to the university and the study is concerned with their becoming familiar with it, in a sense the "strangeness" here comes from the perspective of the informants rather than that of the researcher. It was easier for me to see the familiar as strange because that is how my informants viewed it. What I have not experienced, however, is being an ESL student at Rhodes, so that aspect of the study was strange to me. I had also not been in ESL classes until I began observing ELAP classes during this study, but the informants were more familiar with these classes, since they had been in ESL classes at school.

Ethnographers studying education not only have had experience in the setting which they are studying but they often have specific interests in the setting, depending on their personal and disciplinary background. Agar (1986) points out that,

> An ethnography is first of all a function of the ethnographer, who brings to his or her work the tradition in which he or she participates, including the training received in professional socialization (18).

I am a linguist writing a thesis in the field of linguistics and my focus started as a focus on language. As the study progressed and I read more about the anthropological approach (see section 2.4.) which sees entering a university as initiation into a culture or a number of subcultures, and about Gee's (1990) notion of Discourse which includes, but is not restricted to, language, my focus broadened from language alone to language and Discourses more generally.

The ethnographer's role in a study is often seen primarily as that of observer, but this may gloss over the effect that the ethnographer may have on the setting, as well as the fact that different observers will see different things in the same setting. This may not be due only to disciplinary interests, as discussed above, but also to the personality, attitudes and assumptions of the researcher and the relationships that he or she develops in the field. As Hymes (1982) says: "The particular characteristics of the ethnographer are themselves an instrument of the enquiry, for both good and bad" (29). It is not possible to measure the effects that the ethnographer has on the situation but it is possible to be aware of and explicit about them.

Erickson (1984) states this quite emphatically:

> It was I who was **there** doing the fieldwork, not somebody else. My fundamental assumptions and prejudices are part of **me**. I cannot leave them

> at home when I enter a site. I must study the place as **me**. But you are not me, and you are not there. It's I who have **been there**. So I should at least make explicit to you the point of view I brought to the site and its evolution while I was there, as well as the point of view with which I left. The desirable goal is not the impossible one of disembodied objectivity (I am a subject, not an object) but of clarity in communicating point of view as a subject, both to myself and to my audience (60).

Long (1980) suggests that the recognized, admitted biases of the ethnographic researcher may be preferable to the "implicit and often **unrecognized**" biases of the experimental researcher (28). This has repercussions for the writing of ethnographies, which is discussed in section 3.6. below.

3.4.2. Holism

One of the aspects of ethnography that differentiates it from other research methods is its emphasis on holism, and this is one of the advantages of this research method. According to Hornberger (in Cumming, 1994),

> The holistic view refers to the ethnographer's goal of creating a whole picture of the particular culture, cultural situation, or cultural event under study - a picture that leaves nothing unaccounted for and that reveals the interrelatedness of all the component parts. The value here is that the approach allows, indeed it is the very essence of the approach to ensure, comparison and contrast between what people say and what people do in a given context and across contexts in order to arrive at a fuller representation of what is going on (688).

In order for an ethnography to be holistic, it is not necessary for the ethnographer to study the entire culture (Erickson, 1981: 19). It is the way in which the behaviours which are studied are related to the larger culture, or the parts are related to the system of which they are a part, which makes an ethnographic study holistic (Watson-Gegeo, 1988: 577). Heath (1982) points out that "no completely holistic study of a culture exists and that by definition, such a study is impossible ... the concept of holism is a guiding concept, one that holds out for anthropologists the constant reminder of the interdependent nature of culture" (42).

This study is not holistic in the sense of trying to describe the entire culture of South African society or even the entire culture of Rhodes University. It is focused specifically on the experience of entering the culture of the university and more specifically on the experiences of three ESL students entering the culture of Rhodes University. It is holistic, however, in the sense of trying to relate the parts to the larger system as a whole. The experience of entering the university only makes sense in terms of the other experiences these students have in other educational institutions and at home. I have also tried to keep in mind the larger academic culture when examining and describing the points of entry of these students into that culture.

3.4.3. Emic/Etic principle

According to Wilcox (1982):

> The goal of ethnography is to combine the view of an insider with that of an outsider to describe a social setting. The resulting description is expected to be deeper and fuller than that of the ordinary outsider, and broader and less culture-bound than that of the ordinary insider (462).

The terms emic and etic originate with Pike who extended the phonetic/ phonemic distinction from linguistics to culture. The emic view "refers to the ethnographer's attempt to infer the 'native' point of view: to describe the culture as its members understand and participate in it" (Hornberger in Cumming, 1994: 689).

> Emic terms, concepts, and categories are... functionally relevant to the behaviour of the people studied by the ethnographer. An analysis built on emic concepts incorporates the participants' perspectives and interpretations of behaviour, events and situations and does so in the descriptive language they themselves use (Watson-Gegeo, 1988: 580).

The advantage of trying to see the context through the eyes of an insider is the "potential for new, unexpected, and unpredictable understandings to emerge" (Hornberger in Cumming, 1994: 689). This goal of seeing things from a native or insider's perspective is the main

reason why ethnographic research has to take place over a long period of time and include a lot of contact with the people or society being studied. Mehan (1981) suggests that an ethnographic description should "resonate with the members' point of view" (47). I like his term "resonate" since it suggests that the reader of an ethnography should constantly be able to hear the voices of the insiders even though the ethnography has been written by the researcher. On the other hand, it does not suggest that the emic perspective should dominate the ethnography. It is a balance between the two perspectives that is required.

It would not be sufficient to describe the view of an insider since, as Hymes (1982) suggests, "all of us are only partly able to articulate analyses of our lives and their contexts. The meanings which the ethnographer seeks to discover may be implicit, not explicit" (26). One of the goals of the ethnographer is to go beyond what is said and done by the participants in the setting to discover the implicit, tacit knowledge behind these words and behaviour. My informants, as ESL speakers, had particular difficulty expressing their perspective on what they were experiencing, and at times seemed to lack the ability to self-reflect and to see larger patterns in their environment, so in this study it was particularly necessary to move beyond the insider's perspective.

Mehan (1982) claims that in ethnography "the categories for description are determined by the scene itself" and not "imported to the setting from the outside" (62). I think that this is stating the case too strongly. There may be things happening in the setting that the researcher, from the perspective of an outsider, can see and that are not seen by the participants. It would be a very superficial ethnography that referred only to the categories used by participants. Alasuutari (1995) argues that etic categories are necessary since doing

research "always entails concepts used as tools in making sense of the object of research" (68). In this study, reference is made to Gee's (1990) ideas, which provide many of the etic terms used.

Some use of outside categories is also beneficial when making comparisons across contexts or settings. As suggested earlier ethnography is "individualised" and "particularistic" (Heath, 1982). Ethnographies do not result in generalisable data but some use of etic categories should allow for at least a tentative comparison across settings.

Watson-Gegeo (1988) warns that "etic terminology is rarely culturally neutral because its source is typically either the culture to which the researcher belongs or what we might call the 'culture of research' itself" (580). This is problematic in that it moves away from the perspective of the insiders, but it may be an advantage in that the etic perspective can make the ethnography more accessible to other researchers who participate in the culture of research. The ethnography needs ultimately to balance these two perspectives.

This study is fairly unusual in that I am more of an insider in the culture than the informants are. If the aim of the ethnography was to describe the culture/s of Rhodes University, I would make a far better informant than any of my three informants would have done. I have been participating in the culture of the university for far longer and am in a position to describe both the explicit rules and some of the implicit ones. I have participated in the academic, residence, social and sporting activities of the university. The focus of the study is, however, on the experience of entering and becoming, to some greater or lesser extent, part of the culture and subcultures of the university. I have experienced this too, but the

study focuses even more specifically on the experience of entering Rhodes University as an ESL student. This is the point at which I become an outsider, reliant on the perspectives of my informants.

3.4.4. Ethnography as an Interactive-Adaptive Method

Since the ethnographer aims to discover the insider's view of the setting being studied, he or she cannot enter the field with a precise set of questions to be answered and hypotheses to be tested. According to Wilcox (1982), since "one is attempting to understand a system in its own terms, according to its own criteria of meaningfulness, one cannot predict in advance which aspects of the system will have significance or the kind of significance they will have" (459). This is sometimes stated so strongly that it seems that the ethnographer should go into the field completely open to what might be observed there. Erickson (1981) describes this as the "hypertypical" view of ethnography as a process "in which one begins atheoretically with no prior conception about the setting, then 'hangs around' letting the setting 'tell you what's going on', and finally decides what the problems were after returning from the field" (25). This is rather unrealistic and counter-productive. Hymes (1982) warns that ethnography should not be "open-minded to the extent of being empty-minded" (24) and that in fact the "more the ethnographer knows on entering the field, the better the result is likely to be" (25).

It is unrealistic and perhaps even dishonest for an ethnographer to do research in his or her own society while pretending to know nothing about it. According to Erickson (1984),

> Fieldwork is heavily inductive, but there are no **pure** inductions. The ethnographer brings to the field a theoretical point of view and a set of questions, explicit or implicit. The perspective and questions may change in the field, but the researcher has an idea base to start from (51).

He suggests that this is true especially of more focused studies which are concerned with particular aspects of a setting rather than a whole culture (1981:24).

Again what is required is a balance. The researcher needs to have some ideas about what he or she is interested in and how to go about finding out about it, but also needs to be flexible and allow both the questions and the method to adapt to the situation. According to Alasuutari (1995),

> Because of the utmost importance of the theory and method chosen, it is characteristic of qualitative research to collect materials which make many kinds of questions and problematics possible. One has to be able to change the viewpoint, lens and focal distance as freely as possible, not to gather data that consist of observations made through a single methodological lens (42).

If we accept that ethnographers do not enter the setting as "blank slates", it becomes necessary for the ethnographer to be explicit about both his or her original theoretical position and how and why any changes occurred in the field (Erickson, 1981: 25; Lutz, 1981: 61).

I could not begin the research completely free of preconceptions, since, as I have already stated, I am familiar with at least some aspects of the setting I studied and with at least some aspects of entering a university. I also started with a specifically linguistic interest in the experience of entering the discourse communities of Rhodes university and with an interest in **academic** discourse communities in particular. I knew before I started the study that I would want to find out about the informants' primary and other secondary Discourses (see section 2.5.) although I only discovered these terms halfway through the study. I knew that I wanted to find out about the informants' attitudes to English and their own L1s. I knew that I would be interested in the differences between what was going on in their ELAP classes and what was going on in their other classes and whether there was a transfer of skills.

These are all general interests which became more specific questions as the study progressed.

3.4.5. The Unit of Study

According to Erickson (1984),

> the unit of analysis for the ethnographer, need not be a nation, linguistic group, region, or village, but any social network forming a corporate entity in which social relations are regulated by custom (52).

It is necessary at this point to distinguish between macro- and micro-ethnography. Micro-ethnography is the study of face-to-face interaction in small groups such as classes and is very common in educational research. Common concerns are turn-taking or question-and-answer patterns in classrooms. The focus of such studies is typically very narrow, which Lutz (1981) considers problematic since the "narrower the focus of a study of schooling processes, the more likely important, perhaps necessary, variables are to be unseen and unaccounted for" (54). Lutz (1981) describes macro-ethnography as "research that seeks explanation within a broad cultural content, regardless of where the focus begins, and couches that explanation in an even broader cross-cultural approach" (56). One of the characteristics of ethnography, according to Spindler (1982), is that the "significance of events is seen in the framework of relationships of the immediate setting being studied but is pursued, as necessary, into contexts beyond" (6). It is in this sense that this study is ethnographic, even though it focuses on three individuals.

Since this study is concerned with the experience of entering the discourse communities of the university rather than with the nature and characteristics of those discourse communities, it made more sense to follow the progress of a few students through this experience in some detail rather than to have more informants and less data from each informant. Nevertheless,

while there is a focus on three individual informants, my interest goes beyond their status as individuals, since "ethnographic studies are concerned with group rather than individual characteristics because cultural behavior is by definition shared behavior" (Watson-Gegeo, 1988: 577). My interest in the three individuals is in terms of their membership in the ELAP class and other classes as well as in their residences and other groups on campus, however loosely defined. It also became increasingly evident that they made sense of their experiences at university in terms of their experiences as members of other groups, such as school classes, groups of friends or families. Heath (1982) writes:

> Every anthropologist ... must make a decision as to the specific social group, setting, and focus he or she will treat ... If an ethnographer chooses to carry out ethnographic research within a school or classroom, problems of definition seem simple; problems of reason for the choice are more complex (37).

I decided to focus on three students as this would provide me with enough data for comparisons to be made and would allow me to concentrate on them in a way that I would not have been able to do if I had had more informants. One of my first tasks was to select the students I wanted as informants. I decided to invite particular students to participate rather than to call for volunteers because this would give me more control over who my informants would be.

My interest was in ESL students entering the discourse community of the university. I specifically wanted informants who not only had English as their second language but who would be considered 'at-risk' because of their low level of proficiency in English and because of the kind of schooling they had received. My first criteria for informants was that they should be ESL speakers who had been to ex-DET schools and who were in the ELAP class. I knew that this was one course where they would receive explicit language and academic skills training and one of my aims was to discover whether the students transferred this

training to their other courses.

Before students had even registered I had an (incomplete) list of students who were required by the Dean to complete their degrees over four years. The list included their matric points and whether they had been accepted for foundation or mainstream[1] courses. I compiled a shortlist from this list but had no way of knowing at that stage whether possible candidates would be doing ELAP or not.

Using a combination of this list and the forms filled in by students when they register for ELAP, which includes their address and their subjects, I selected a shortlist of 15 students. I only identified three Science students doing ELAP so I gave questionnaires to all of them. The other 12 were split equally between Arts/Social Sciences and Commerce. I then drew up a short questionnaire for these students to fill in[2]. The completed questionnaires provided information about the students' gender, age, home language, other languages, faculty, subjects, year of matriculation, matric results and where they lived (both home and in Grahamstown).

I had compiled the questionnaire on the basis of the assumptions I held about what would be relevant to an ESL student's experiences of entering the discourse communities of Rhodes University. For example, I assumed that home language would be relevant because the majority of ESL students at Rhodes are Xhosa first-language speakers and that a student who

[1] Foundation courses are courses designed specifically for "at-risk" students. Some courses consist of the mainstream first-year course split over two years while others have a specific first-year introductory course, in which case the students enter the mainstream first-year course in the second year of study.

[2] See appendix B

did not speak Xhosa would have little choice but to speak English most of the time, whereas a Xhosa speaker would probably be able to speak Xhosa, at least in informal situations. Another example of a factor that I assumed would have a bearing on a student's experiences was whether he or she lived in residence or in a Grahamstown township with family members. My assumption here was that students who live in residence with speakers of other languages are more likely to hear and have to speak more English than students who go home at the end of the day and who may not hear or speak any English until they return to campus the following day.

I wanted to know which faculty the students were in and what subjects they were registered for, because I knew that I wanted one informant from Commerce, one from Science and one from either Arts or Social Science in order to compare their experiences. I assumed that there would probably be fewer opportunities for transfer of skills from ELAP for a Commerce or Science student than there would be for an Arts or Social Science student who would be required to write many essays - one of the main skills taught by ELAP. I was also interested in whether the students were doing foundation or mainstream subjects apart from ELAP, since I assumed that students in classes aimed at ESL students would have different experiences from those in classes where the majority of students speak English as their first language.

I received permission from the ELAP course co-ordinator to hand the questionnaires out at the second ELAP class. Unfortunately I was not able to collect the completed questionnaires that afternoon but the tutors collected them for me within a few days.

Once I had all of the questionnaires I had to select three students to approach as possible informants. I started with the Arts/Social Science group because all of the Commerce and Science students were doing foundation courses so I knew that I wanted an Arts or Social Science student doing mainstream courses. I also wanted a student who was doing 'typical' courses i.e. large classes and an emphasis on written assignments. Of the two students who fit these criteria I selected Lusanda because he lived in the township which, as I have explained above, I thought would give him a very particular kind of experience and because he was doing subjects which I had not studied so I thought this would allow me, as well as him, to view these discipline from the perspective of an "outsider".

I then needed to select a Science student. I had a choice of three and I selected Tshepo because he was from the Northern Province, spoke Northern Sotho as his first language and did not list Xhosa as one of the languages he spoke.

I thus had a male Xhosa speaker doing a Social Science degree and living at home, and a male Sotho speaker doing a Science degree and living in residence. I decided that my third informant should be a female student who spoke Xhosa (since the majority of black students do speak Xhosa) and who lived in residence (since the majority of first-year students live in residence) and who was studying Commerce subjects. This gave me two options and I chose Kerry because her symbol for English was lower and I was interested particularly in 'at-risk' students.

Towards the end of 1996 I asked my informants about their experiences of participating in the study and if they thought I should have done anything differently. I only have data for

two of the three students since at that stage of the year Lusanda was not responding to my requests for him to come to meetings.

Tshepo told me that he thought I should have asked for volunteers instead of selecting informants myself but when I told him why I wanted particular kinds of students he understood my need to select the students. Kerry said that if I had called for volunteers I would not have had a response.

> *If people ask, when they come to you others will have no choice and say "Ok I will" but if you say "I want someone to help me with my research" there may be few, you know, who will come. And they will dump on you because they volunteered themselves.*

Table 1: Summary of data obtained for the three informants from the questionnaires

	Lusanda	Kerry	Tshepo
Sex	Male	Female	Male
Year of Birth	1970	1979	1978
Home Language	Xhosa	Xhosa	N.Sotho
Other Languages	English	English	Tswana
Home	Grahamstown	Uitenhage	Seshego
Rhodes address	Home/Residence	Residence	Residence
Matriculated	1994	1995	1995
Matric points	28	23	28
Faculty	Social Science	Commerce	Science
Subjects	Politics History	Mathematics Accounting Statistics	Mathematics Physics Computer Science
Courses	Mainstream	Foundation	Foundation

By the standards of experimental research, my selection procedure may seem rather intuitive and haphazard. I had no way of knowing what a 'typical' ELAP student would be like and my group of three informants could not be considered a "representative sample". The criteria that I used did not ensure that my informants represented the rest of their class but I hoped that it would ensure that they would have a range of different language experiences. According to Hymes (1982), "One has to think of people, not as the intersection of vectors of age, sex, race, class, income, and occupation alone, but also as beings making sense out of disparate experiences, using reason to maintain a sphere of integrity in an immediate world" (26). In this sense my selection of informants could not be "wrong" because any first-year ESL student would have had an interesting story to tell about the experiences of entering the university. Most of the criteria I used to select the students turned out to be relevant in some way, though I was not able to predict in advance exactly **what** relevance they would have.

Most of what guided my selection could not strictly be referred to as "theory". It would be dishonest, however, to ignore the commonsense understandings I had of the situation I was going to study and the way these understandings guided my selection procedure. These assumptions did not limit the research since I was still free to explore areas outside of my original ideas but they gave me a point from which to start formulating questions and areas for study.

3.5. Data Collection

Hymes (1982) suggests that,

> [Ethnography] is continuous with ordinary life... Our ability to learn ethnographically is an extension of what every human being must do, that is,

learn the meanings, norms, patterns of a way of life (29).

Ethnographic data-collection techniques include observation (participant and non-participant), informal and formal interviewing of informants, compilation of biodata on informants, administering questionnaires, collection of relevant written materials, and keeping field notes (Heath, 1982: 34; Long, 1980: 24; Watson-Gegeo, 1988: 583). According to Philips (1982), in "the strictest sense of its meaning, participant observation refers to the simultaneous occupation of a structural position within a social system and study of that system" (202). A broader definition is that "the observer takes a regular part in the activities he or she is studying" (Long, 1980: 22). Non-participant observation occurs when the researcher observes a setting without participating in it. These two types of observation are the ends of a continuum, as the researcher can participate in the situation to differing degrees.

Wilcox (1982) suggests that:

> The variation in types of data gathered and techniques employed may bewilder nonethnographers, since it makes it difficult to define what an ethnography will or should look like, and thus to judge its quality. Traditionally, from the ethnographer's point of view, the gathering of many different kinds of data has been seen to increase the validity and reliability of the study, and the uniqueness of each setting and each area of study has been thought to require a tailor-made set of methods and techniques (460).

As the ethnographer adapts the focus or perspective of the study to suit the setting, he or she also has to adapt the data collection methods used.

My data was collected from a wide variety of sources, with varying degrees of success and with varying degrees of relevance to the final shape the study took. Most of the data which appears in chapter 4 was taken from the interviews I had with students. Some of the data which I collected does not appear in chapter 4 at all, but I collected it before I was sure of

what the final study would look like. Although some of the data, for example what was being read in ELAP, is not presented at all, the fact that I collected this data means that I can assess the differences between what students were reading in ELAP and in other classes, based not only on what students told me but also on my own observations.

After I had selected the three informants, I met with them and told them what the study involved and asked them if they would be willing to participate. I told them that I would want to speak to them regularly and that I would ask them to give me access to their tests and assignments during the year. I stressed the importance of their making a commitment for the whole year as it was a source of great concern for me that an informant might leave the study at some stage. After explaining the potential advantages to them of participating in the study (e.g. the opportunity to speak to an English L1 speaker regularly and to get occasional help with assignments) I gave them a few days to make their decision. I told them that they would be paid R5 for each meeting with me. All three of the students I approached agreed to participate in the study. Once the three students had agreed to participate, I sent them each a letter confirming what I had told them in this meeting[3].

At the end of the study, Tshepo said that he did not think I should have paid them to come to meetings because "*I think you are helping us. It's not just for you only because you are helping us in speaking English*". I told the three students that they could come to me for help with their work. Tshepo only did this once, with the first ELAP assignment. When I asked him why he had not done this more often he said: "*I thought maybe if I bring my essays, assignments to you and you help me I think maybe I will be cheating*" but he also said that

[3] See appendix C for this letter.

he regretted not having brought me assignments to look at. Lusanda did not ask me for help with any of his assignments, probably because his assignments were usually written just before or even after the due date. Kerry only asked for help with one assignment. Her reasons for not taking up my offer more often were practical rather than ethical.

> *I didn't do that because I was like, I don't have enough time to write my essays before I handed them in so I didn't have time to do it and to show it to you. Maybe it will due tomorrow and maybe I start it today. So I don't have enough time. That's why. But there's nothing wrong in that [in getting help with assignments].*

The three students had different motivations for agreeing to participate in the study. When Lusanda agreed to participate he wrote a note which read as follows:

> Ms Judy
> I Lusanda _____ I do agree to be involved your research. I think your research will be of help to my studies.
> Yours
> L. _____

Tshepo told me that he agreed to participate in order to improve his English.

> *I knew that if I speak to a person who speaks English as a first language my English will be better... So I know if I take part in your research then I'll get used to speaking to people who speak English as a first language. And then I'll start to get more confident.*

Kerry also wanted to improve her English but she had another reason as well.

> *It's because you ask me and then I wanted to help you when you asked me because I like to help people if someone asks me something although sometimes it is difficult. But I'll try my best to help her. So that's why I did.*

3.5.1. Interviews

I had planned to meet with the informants every week either on their own or as a group. While I had anticipated that an informant might leave the study altogether, I had not anticipated that some would not attend meetings for a few weeks at a time and then return,

which is what actually occurred. I eventually had ten meetings with Kerry, fifteen with Tshepo and nine with Lusanda. I had one meeting with Tshepo and Kerry together.

It is necessary at this point to make explicit the conditions under which these interviews occurred. I am white, female, middle-class, English speaking and more of an "insider" in the university than the students I interviewed. I do not know exactly what effect this had on the interviews though I would suggest that if I had been different, the data may have been different in some way. I think that gender was relevant in my interviews with Kerry and I suspect that she would not have opened up to a male interviewer in the same way, though I can only guess at this. Race is almost always an issue in South Africa and may have had an effect on my relationships with the three informants. Vilakazi and Tema (1991) describe black and white students as,

> actors in [a] weird social situation [who] are much more than strangers. Both groups encounter each other in adulthood, without having had any sustained relationship with each other previously on a par as human beings (131).

The interviews took place in English which is my first language and my interviewees' second language. Paxton suggests that power relations in an interview might be different if the interviewer uses the students' L1 (in Paxton, Garraway & Murray, 1994: 83). My status as an insider and my offer to help students with their work if they wanted me to also placed me in a dual role of "teacher" and "interviewer". This is often a problem for researchers in educational settings. Thesen (1994) suggests that in her research she was "part teacher, researcher, participant observer and sometimes gave contradictory messages" (15) and I probably did too. I suspect that my informants saw me as connected to ELAP in some way which could have made them more reluctant to criticise the course than they might otherwise have been, though Paxton suggests that "weaker" students may be unwilling to criticise

because of "their need to please, to be doing the right thing, to be showing signs they were joining the academic discourse" (in Paxton, Garraway & Murray, 1994: 81). Despite these potential problems, I believe that the data collected in the interviews is valuable and enlightening.

The interviews, or "meetings", as I referred to them with my informants were not as open and unplanned as ethnographic interviews are supposed to be. According to Spindler (1982),

> ... the ethnographic interview must not predetermine responses by the kinds of questions asked. The conversational management of the interview or eliciting interaction must be so carried out as to promote the unfolding of emic cultural knowledge in its most heuristic, 'natural' form (7).

I decided that this was not ideal for my situation after observing an early ELAP class taken by an outside lecturer. He gave a lecture and then in the second period he tried to run a "workshop" in which the students were asked to respond to various questions and statements. I had seen the students do the same thing after working in smaller groups, discussing the question or issue and then reporting back to the larger group and it had worked very well. The students on this occasion said very little and only a few students spoke at all. I realised that the difference was that they were not being given time to think about or discuss the questions before being expected to answer them and to "display" their answers in the class. I saw a parallel between what happened in this lecture and what I was expecting my informants to do. I realised that as ESL speakers they would probably be more confident in speaking and have more to say if they had some time to consider and plan what they were going to say.

My solution was to send "letters" to the students before the meeting telling them what I wanted to talk about at the following meeting. I either gave the letters to my informants at

a previous meeting or sent them to their residences. The letters were also a useful way of reminding my informants to bring assignments or tests to meetings.

The letters sometimes listed the questions I wanted the students to answer and sometimes they simply described the general area I wanted to discuss, and asked them to think about it before the meeting[4]. This was quite useful in ensuring that I got information on similar topics from each student. I tried to cover everything in the letter but if I thought of other questions before or during the interview I would ask them too. If the informant brought up issues I had not expected or that were relevant to the study as a whole but not the topic for that week I would follow that topic before returning to my original one. Some of the topics covered in the interviews included the difference between school and university, the language used by my informants in different situations, their experiences of learning English over the years, their impressions of Rhodes and an evaluation of the courses they were doing. These general topics were covered in my interviews with all three informants but I also had a few interviews which covered topics relevant only to individual informants such as the language of Science or Commerce, or the experience of writing a particular History essay.

Kerry had this to say about the letters:

> *At the beginning of the year I was confused and I didn't know you. I was thinking "what is she going to ask me ?" I was always like "what is going to ask?" And when you wrote me the letters I feel free because I have time to think, you know, what I am going to say. When you, the first time you didn't give me letter so I was confused. I didn't know what.*

The letters did not, however, completely overcome the students' communication difficulties.

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[4] For examples of the letters sent to the students see appendix D.

When I asked Tshepo if he thought he had had more to say because of having read the letters he said:

> *Ja. Because I think about these things but sometimes when I get here it seem like these things go out [i.e. of his head]. I don't know why. Even if I thought about things sometimes I feel like they went away.*

When I wrote the letters I tried to write at a level of English that would be fairly easily understood by my informants. Kerry said that she did not always understand the letters completely and that sometimes there were words she did not understand. Tshepo, on the other hand, said that he could tell from how I wrote that I was trying to make my English easier for them to understand. He said: "*Our problem with English is just that we can understand it but it's a problem when we come to speak*". He said that I should have made the letters more difficult to "challenge" them. There is a difficulty here in writing the same letter for three different students with different language abilities and motivations.

The meetings were between half an hour and an hour in length and all of them were audiotaped and transcribed. The audio tapes were vital but they were not unproblematic. The informants may have felt more free to speak without the recorder. Tshepo, in particular, always seemed very aware of the tape recorder. He said that he thought I recorded our meetings to listen to his mistakes. I had told the students at the first meeting why I would be taping our conversations but I should probably have repeated this once or twice more to avoid this kind of misunderstanding. He did, however, say that having a tape-recorder had not changed what he said. Kerry was less concerned about the tape-recorder.

> *No, I don't mind at all. When I'm talking to you, I even forgot about the tape recorder. So I'm just feeling free. And you understand what I'm talking while you are listening to the tape.*

It was sometimes difficult to hear everything on the tapes. My meetings with Tshepo were particularly problematic since he spoke very quietly and with little variation in tone which made his voice very unclear on the tapes. One of the advantages of transcribing was that because I heard each utterance several times as I transcribed, I became very familiar with the content of the tapes and was able to compare what an informant told me during an interview with what he or she had said to me during previous interviews and with what the other informants had told me about the same topic.

As Mishler (1986) points out:

> There are many ways to prepare a transcript and each is only a partial representation of speech. Further, and most important, each representation is also a transformation. That is, each transcript includes some and excludes other features of speech and rearranges the flow of speech into lines of text within the limits of a page (48).

I decided that since my central interest in the speech that occurred in the meetings was the content, I needed to transcribe in a way that drew attention to the content and not to the language. Although I did not correct the grammar used by the informants, I have not tried to portray their accents or to include hesitations, pauses, filler words such as "um" or repetitions of a word, except where it was particularly obvious on the tape. I also did not transcribe my responses in the middle of their utterances unless I felt that something I said affected what the informant said next or how they said it. I knew that I would want to quote the informants extensively in my writing and I wanted to make the quotes as easy to read as possible without changing what the informants actually said.

3.5.2. Data from ELAP

3.5.2.1. Observation

All three of the students were members of the ELAP class so that was an obvious starting point for my data collection. The fact that it is a language and academic skills course made it especially relevant to my study. I observed two or three classes a week for most of the year and these observations usually included the Monday double period in which the entire ELAP class met together. I audio-taped and transcribed three lectures by outside lecturers, a lecture on exam preparation given in June and one on time-management given in October. The latter two lectures were given by ELAP tutors to the whole class. I also observed other classes when the class was divided into its four groups. Almost all of my observation was done in the two groups that my informants belonged to.

These observations gave me insight into the kinds of skills that were being taught and into the assignments that were set and how students were coping with them. It also gave me an opportunity to observe my informants and to judge how much they participated in these group situations. Observing ELAP classes gave my informants and me a shared sphere of experience and it was often easier for me to understand and contextualise things that my informants told me about their ELAP classes because I had seen and heard them for myself. My observation was largely non-participant because I did not take part in group work with the students. On the other hand, I often took notes from lectures (particularly on Mondays) as though I was a student. What I had wanted to do with these notes was to compare them to the notes taken by my informants but this did not prove viable because I discovered that they seldom took notes.

Kerry said that she liked the fact that I observed ELAP classes and she did not think that her class behaved any differently when I was present. Tshepo also did not think that his class changed at all while I was observing them and said that he did not mind that I observed these classes since I had told him and the other informants that I would be doing so when I first met with them.

3.5.2.2. Writing

From spending time in ELAP classes and getting to know the co-ordinator and tutors, I was usually aware of when assignments and tests were occurring and I could ask my informants how they were preparing for these and I could also ask them to give me access to their assignments and tests when they were marked, so that I could copy them. The ELAP students wrote eight assignments in the year and for most of the assignments they wrote both draft and final copies. I should ideally have had copies of all the drafts and all the final assignments but my informants were not always cooperative and it was not possible for me to get them from the tutors before they were handed back to the students because of time constraints.

I was, however, able to get from the ELAP co-ordinator the examination scripts for all three students for all their June and November exam papers. I also obtained their ELAP test scripts from the first and third terms. While I did not get all the writing that the students did for their ELAP course, I do have most of it and some of it provided an unexpected source of data. I had wanted to look at the writing to see how it changed over time as the students became more aware of the conventions of the disciplines, what aspects of writing they had difficulty with and how writing drafts affected the final product. In other words, I was

interested in the "how" of writing, but "what" they were writing also became a source of data because they wrote ELAP essays on their own mother tongues and on the advantages and disadvantages of English as a medium of instruction, from which I was able to discover information about their attitudes to language (both English and their L1s).

Apart from assignments, tests and exams, the other kind of writing that students did in ELAP was dialogue journals. I had thought that the more personal nature of this kind of writing would provide me with issues and problems to discuss with the informants during interviews. I had hoped to be able to read the journals every week or fortnight but I soon realised that this would be impossible. I only saw the journals once so I have copies of approximately five entries for each student. I had expected that the journals would be written throughout the year but after the first term very little journal writing was done because it became voluntary. The dialogue journals were, thus, a less useful source of data than I had hoped they would be, although a few extracts from the journals will be presented in chapter 4.

3.5.2.3. Reading

I obtained a good sample of what the students were reading in their ELAP classes because I have many of the hand-outs that they were given by their tutors. I received these either while I was observing a class or by approaching the co-ordinator and asking for the hand-outs I had missed. Some of these hand-outs are notes that accompanied lectures, others are exercises that were done in class and others are readings given for assignments. I also had copies of the two textbooks prescribed for ELAP.

3.5.2.4. Additional Data

At the end of the year I obtained the marks for all the assignments and tests of all the ELAP students. This gave me a good idea of where my three informants fitted in, in terms of achievement, within the ELAP class. This is an example of quantitative data that is useful in a qualitative study. I also have the attendance records of all the ELAP students, again so that I can see how much my informants attended classes, compared with other students in their groups.

In the fourth term the ELAP students filled in course evaluations. I have both the blank questionnaire and the report that was written by the course co-ordinator based on all the replies. I do not have the questionnaires filled in by the three informants since they were done anonymously. I also have the 1996 ELAP annual report which refers to the questionnaire and gives the staff members' assessment of aspects of the course. The results of the evaluation and the staff perceptions are sources for comparison with the more informal course evaluation I obtained from my informants during interviews.

In November I interviewed the two ELAP tutors who had taught my informants. I wanted to know what their impressions of the students were, how much the students had participated in class and group work, how much interest they had shown in their work and their assessment of the students' English and academic abilities. This provided another source of data to add to my own observations and impressions and what the students themselves said.

A large proportion of my data was from ELAP. This is partly because it was the one class that was common to all my informants so any data collected was relevant to all three of them. Another reason why the ELAP data was important was that it teaches English and academic skills which was a large focus of this study. A third practical reason is that the ELAP course is housed in the same building and attached to the Linguistics Department so the tutors and I got to know each other. They knew about the research I was doing and they were always willing and available to give me data such as hand-outs or attendance records.

3.5.3. Data from the Informants' Other Courses

3.5.3.1. Lusanda - History and Politics

Lusanda studied History I and Politics I which are both mainstream courses. From his History course I obtained his June exam script and the first two essays that he wrote. The history assignment in the first term required the students to write a draft of the essay which was marked and returned to the students. The lecturer then spent two lecture periods discussing and workshopping the essay before the students had to write the second draft. I audio-taped and transcribed these two lectures because I was interested in the aspects of the essay that the lecturer focused on and what advice he gave to the students as novice essay writers. From the History course I have the department handbook, the course outline for the first term course and tutorial books for the first two terms which gave me examples of the kind of reading first-year History students have to do. Due to space constraints, this data is not referred to in chapter 4.

I obtained Lusanda's Politics essays from the first and third terms and his June exam script. In the first term I attended two Politics lectures and audio-taped and transcribed one of these. I found, however, that my own experience of listening to these lectures and trying to take notes gave me more insight into what it would be like to be a first-year student in this course than the taping and transcribing did. In the third term I attended a week of Politics lectures (i.e. four lectures) and audio-taped them. I tried to take notes during the lectures as though I were a Politics student, in order to compare these to the notes taken by my informant but I could not get him to give them to me so this aspect of my data collection was not successful. In terms of the reading required in Politics I, I have the hand-outs from the first term, tutorial handbooks for the first two terms and course outlines for the courses in the first three terms.

3.5.3.2. Kerry - Mathematics and Accounting

Kerry was a Commerce foundation student and her courses were Mathematics and Accounting. She also did a non-credit bearing course, Introduction to Business. I attended and audio-taped two Accounting lectures and again attending the lectures was more enlightening than taping them. I have the hand-outs and examples from the first term of Accounting. I have no exam scripts of Kerry's and nothing from Mathematics. She did not always respond to my requests for access to her work and I did not persist in asking her, partly because I was not sure that I would be able to observe much about her "language experiences" from Mathematics and Accounting texts.

3.5.3.3. Tshepo - Computer Science, Mathematics and Physics

Tshepo's courses were Computer Science, Mathematics and Physics and these were all foundation courses. The classes for these courses were very small (between 10 and 20 students) so I thought it would be too intrusive for me to attend and audio-tape any of the classes. Some of the classes were practical periods which would not have been suitable for audio-taping. From Computer Science I have Tshepo's June exam script, one assignment, two tests, a few pages of handwritten notes and one set of hand-outs. From Physics I have a large set of hand-outs, with some handwritten notes on them. From Mathematics I have Tshepo's June exam script and some handwritten notes.

3.5.4. A Reflection on the Data Collected

I had more difficulty getting data like essays and class notes from the students than I had anticipated so I certainly cannot claim to have seen/heard and described all the written and spoken language that they were exposed to and asked to produce. I do, however, have enough data to be able to present some of the language experiences of these three students in their first year at university and to be able to make a few comparisons across courses.

When I started the study I envisaged it as primarily a description of the language heard, read, spoken and written by the three informants. In other words I thought my informants would just serve as entry points into certain settings and I expected the interviews to be little more than a method of gaining some additional personal information and their comments on what I saw and heard them hearing, reading, writing and saying. This was a largely etic view with an emphasis on the "language" part of their "language experiences". As the study progressed the interviews interested me more and more and I realised that they were a far richer source

of data than I had expected them to be. I became more concerned with the emic views and started to see the study as more of a description of their "experiences" of language than of the language itself. I collected the same sources of data that I had intended to collect at the beginning of the study but the relative importance of the different kinds of data shifted over time, as my idea of what the research would eventually look like changed.

3.6. Ethnographic Writing

Ethnography, as a particular and particularistic kind of research method, results in a particular and particularistic end product. Many ethnographers draw attention to the literary nature of ethnographic reports. Russell (1995) argues that there is "no substitute for a good story, well told - especially if you're trying to make people understand how the people you've studied think and feel about their lives" (15). Geertz (1988) refers to Foucault's distinction between "literary" discourse in which the "author-function" remains fairly strong and "scientific" discourse in which it does not and points out that in these terms "anthropology is pretty much on the side of 'literary' discourses" (7/8). He goes on to say that this "does not make us novelists any more than constructing hypotheses or writing formulas makes us, as some seem to think, into physicists" (8). Geertz here points to a source of tension between ethnography and other social science research which is usually not accepting of "stories" as a source of knowledge. This places the ethnographer in a difficult position, since, as Geertz (1988) suggests:

> Finding somewhere to stand in a text that is supposed to be at one and the same time an intimate view and a cool assessment is almost as much of a challenge as gaining the view and making the assessment in the first place (10).

Hymes (1982) suggests that "implicit or remembered narratives" may sometimes be used to make sense of other kinds of research. He asks how often decisions are reached "on the basis not only of numbers and experiments, but also on the basis of privileged personal accounts, fleshing out the data to make it intelligible" (29). The strength of ethnographic writing is the ability to draw the reader into the setting being described, just as literature does. "Extensive quotes and lengthy descriptions of setting and interactions" (Wilcox, 1982: 46) help to do this. Chiseri-Strater (1991) argues that ethnographic and literary writing yield "a different kind of reality, another type of knowledge" and provide "a sense of the universality in life, as well as the feeling of 'being there', of having participated in the experience" (xxii).

Ethnographic writing is not just a story told by the ethnographer/ narrator but is a story told about the stories told by the informants. Brodkey (1987) points to the value of studying the stories people tell as a way of acquiring an emic perspective on the setting, "in order to learn about the terms on which others make sense of their lives" (46/7). Both Brodkey and Geertz point to the interpretive nature of writing about other people's stories. Geertz (1973) argues that "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (9). Brodkey (1987) suggests that "because narratives do not explain themselves ... an ... ethnography must be yet another retelling, another selection and reduction of reality" (48). Erickson (1984) refers to this process as "caricature" which occurs because the ethnographer cannot include every detail and aspect of the setting and because ethnographers tend to select the details they do include according to their point of view (58). This is inevitable but the ethnographer can explain to the reader what has been left out and why, and what has been included and why, so that the reader is in a position to evaluate this caricature.

Ethnographic writing may be characterised by its narrative nature but it should also be able to move beyond telling stories to reflect on these stories and give possible explanations of their meaning and significance beyond the obvious. McDermott and Morison (in Gilmore & Smith, 1982) argue that:

> There is a place in ethnographic analysis when the narratives can be broken down into pieces and the parts can be shown to relate to each other in quite specific ways (9).

I argued earlier for a balance between an emic/ insider's view and an etic/ outsider's view of the setting. In writing an ethnography this would require a balance between the stories told by informants and the researcher's perspective on and analysis of those stories. The outsider's view is necessary because the "deepest meaning and patterns may not be talked about at all, because so fully taken for granted" (Hymes, 1982: 26).

In the next chapter I will present a model based on the writings of James Gee (1990) which were discussed in section 2.5. I will use the model and Gee's terms, primary and secondary Discourses to describe the experiences of the three students of entering the academic discourse communities of Rhodes University. The Gee model provides the etic aspect of the study since it provides a set of common terms that can be used to draw attention to the differences and similarities in the experiences of the three students. The emic view is provided by the words, mostly spoken though some written, of the students themselves, as they talk and write about their experiences of language and university and the various Discourses they have acquired or are acquiring.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

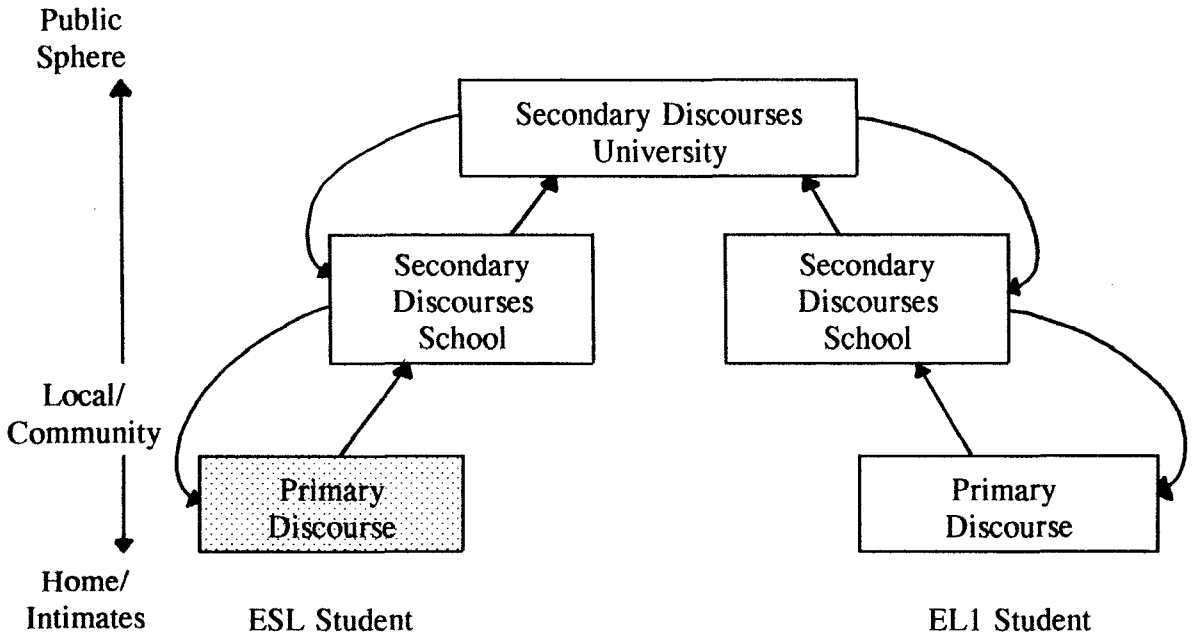
4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the experiences of the three students of entering the academic discourse communities of Rhodes University. As a framework for this discussion I will use a model based on the work of James Gee (1990). A general model will be presented first and then individual models will be drawn for each of the three students to show both similarities and differences in their experiences.

4.1.1. Model based on the work of James Gee

From James Gee's description of primary and secondary Discourses (discussed in some detail in section 2.5.), I have drawn the model below to show the movement of two hypothetical people, from their primary Discourses to the secondary Discourses of school and university. The model shows an ESL speaker on the left and an English first-language speaker on the right. While recognising that any person participates in a number of different Discourses, the model focusses on those that are relevant to education.

Figure 1. Hypothetical Model Based on the Work of Gee (1990).



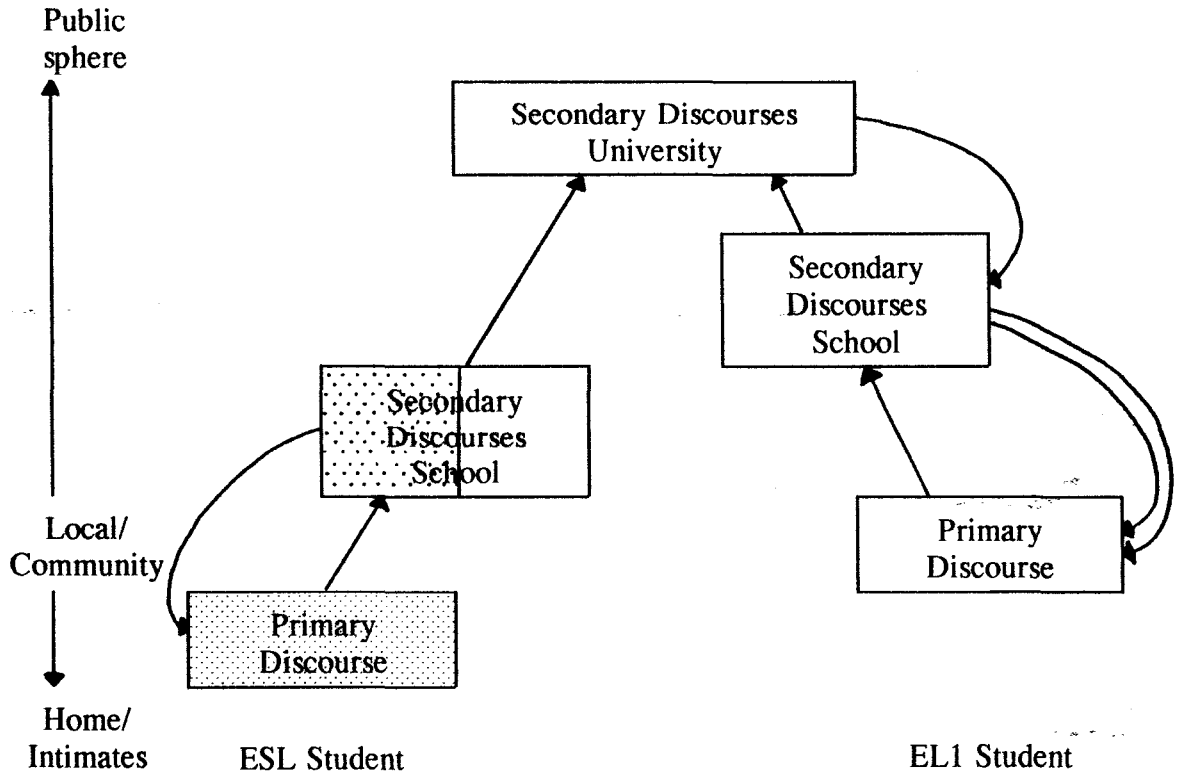
Key:

	English
	Black Language
↷	Historical influences

This model is hypothetical since it shows the school Discourse of the ESL speaker as being completely in English, which Hartshorne (1992: 206) points out is not always the case. It also shows little or no difference between these two hypothetical students apart from the language of the primary Discourse, but, as discussed in section 2.3., there are often significant differences between students from "white" and "black" education departments in terms of the distance between various Discourses, particularly between the Discourses of home and school, and those of the university. My revised version of the model, shown in Figure 2. below, shows a more realistic situation in which the ESL student has part of his or her school Discourses in English and part in his or her first language. The school Discourses of the ESL student are also shown to be at a greater distance from those of the university than the school Discourses of the English first language student. A final point is

that there are no historical influences from the university Discourses on the secondary or primary Discourses of the ESL student. In this and later versions of the model a dotted arrow will be used to show a weak influence, a single arrow a fairly strong influence and a double arrow a strong influence.

Figure 2. Adapted Model



Key:

	English
	Black Language
	Historical influences

This model may show a more "typical" South African situation, but ethnography is not about typicality or averages, so in the following three sections the model will be adapted to suit the experiences and life stories of the three students I interviewed in order to highlight both similarities and differences.

I use the term "model" but "schematic representation" may be a better description than "model" since it is merely intended to represent visually some of the similarities and differences between the experiences of the two students. A static model cannot easily portray a dynamic process. It is not possible to quantify, in a study of this nature, the exact amount of English used, for example, in the school Discourses but the model does help to highlight whether more or less English was used in the school Discourses of one student than the others. Also, the word "distance" is used metaphorically so the distance or space between Discourses on the model does not measure any real distance but merely represents the greater or lesser degree of **difference** experienced by particular students in entering university Discourses. Adapting the model for only one student would achieve very little but drawing three models for three students allows comparisons to be made so that it is clear which student used **relatively** more English at school or whose school Discourses were **relatively** more distant from those of the University.

4.2. Lusanda

When I think about Lusanda the first word that comes to mind is "problem". It is a word that he used a lot in the interviews and he was also a problem for me as an informant. Lusanda always seemed to have a problem with something, from losing his student card to not owning textbooks or being able to find books in the library. He started the year living at home, which was a problem because of transport to campus and the lack of suitable working conditions, but when he moved into a residence in the middle of the year he found noise and visits from friends a problem. Many of his problems could be traced back to finances but others he seemed to bring on himself.

His first ELAP tutor described him as "chancer, misses classes, contradictory, weak, especially writing" while his second tutor[1] described him in the following way:

> *I don't think he is at all stupid. I just think that life sort of gets him down. There was always, there was an ongoing sort of saga of some sort or another, his health or money. I think he's had quite a difficult time, he has quite a difficult life and that obviously has affected his work. But he is a chancer. I think he tells lies and I think he does the bare minimum. But I suspect that if somehow his life were easier and if he were more motivated he could actually do quite well.*

My impressions of Lusanda have probably been coloured by my frustration with him as an informant for my research and I think that frustration may even have shown itself occasionally during interviews. Of the three students, he was the only one that I feared would drop out of the study, and although he never left the study completely, for weeks at a time he would be difficult to find and he would miss two or three meetings in a row and then tell me that he had forgotten, or fallen asleep, or had other things to do. At times I also felt that he had his own agenda for the meetings and that he told me about his problems not only to elicit sympathy, but in the hope that I would do something to solve them such as giving him money to get a new student card. I did lend him my copies of the ELAP textbooks to use during exams. He did not return them to me and when I saw him the following year he told me he had lost them.

At first I saw my choice of Lusanda as an informant as an unfortunate one but later I realised that exactly the things that frustrated me and made him an unreliable informant were probably what made him a less successful student than he could have been.

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[1] Lusanda and Tshepo's ELAP tutor left Rhodes in the middle of the year to study overseas and was replaced by a staff member from the Academic Development Centre.

Lusanda lived in and was educated in Grahamstown. He was 25 years old when he started at Rhodes in 1996. He had experienced disruptions while he was in primary school and he had repeated matric in 1994 in order to improve his points and work for a matriculation exemption. He obtained 28 points in 1994. In his questionnaire he wrote that in 1995 "I was unemployed. I was just sitting at home". His first language was Xhosa and the only other language he could speak was English. He was accepted at Rhodes University on the condition that he only take three courses, one of which had to be ELAP. His other subjects were Politics I and History I which are mainstream courses.

An examination of Lusanda's primary and school Discourses helps to explain why he was the kind of student and informant that he was.

4.2.1. Lusanda's Primary Discourse

Lusanda's mother was a retired domestic worker and his father was a factory worker. Both parents had left school after standard 4. He had one brother who was still at school and his other brothers and sisters were working. It is clear that although there may have been some historical influence on his primary Discourse from the secondary Discourses of school, there was none from university Discourses. One of Lusanda's sisters was a cleaner at Rhodes which is likely to have given him a rather different perspective on the university as an employer rather than as an academic institution. On at least one occasion, Lusanda used his family's lack of knowledge of the ways of tertiary education to his own advantage. He failed all his exams in June but he did not tell his parents this and they did not know to ask. When I asked him what his family had said about his results he said:

My family, they said nothing because they don't know. They don't know a

thing about education. (1/8)[2]

This lack of familiarity with the requirements of education also worked to Lusanda's disadvantage when he tried to do academic work at home, which he found difficult.

Other problems he mentioned were being far away from the university library and having to help look after his father's cattle. Ridge (1990) argues that:

> Students need domestic support if they are to budget their time properly and without guilt or undue anxiety, yet most of them are first generation students. This means that their parents and family will have no idea of the philosophical pressures of study, and will probably view time spent on reading and writing somewhat equivocally, blending pride at having a student in the family with a sense that this is not proper work (172).

I was also interested in whether he used or was exposed to any English in his primary Discourse. He said that his mother could speak some English because of her job but that he doubted that his father spoke English. Lusanda read English newspapers and magazines and heard some English on radio and television but this seemed to be rather limited. When I asked him what language he spoke at home he said it was Xhosa unless he had friends from Rhodes who could not speak Xhosa but it is likely that this is a "rule" that he has internalised rather than a part of his everyday life since when I asked him what language most of his friends spoke he said that most of them were Xhosa speakers, though he had some friends who spoke Zulu which he could understand but he answered in Xhosa.

While writing about English as a medium of instruction in his June ELAP exam, Lusanda recognised that the role of English in a child's primary Discourse or home will have an effect

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[2] Numbers in brackets refer to the date of the interview from which the quote is taken.

on his or her later experiences at school but he seemed to see the issue almost entirely in terms of money. He wrote:

> [Pupils] from rich families have access to material such as videos, newspapers, magazines, etc to improve their English. On the other hand, their counterparts, (from the needy) do not, so they decide to leave schools[3].

I asked him in an interview about this.

J: *Do you think it actually works that way, that the rich children actually do speak better English?*
L: *They do, if they are not lazy. If their parents also interested in their children, their kids' education, they will try to encourage their children and they will buy them magazines, something like that.*
J: *And you don't think poor parents can do that?*
L: *No, they can't do that. Even my parents can't afford to buy those things. (1/8)*

Money, or rather a lack of it, was a great concern in Lusanda's life. In his first ELAP journal entry, under the title "The Memories of My Childhood", he wrote about the poverty experienced by his family.

> I had decided to chop woods and sold them so that we could at least get something to help us survive. I had also bought and sold empty bottles. During that period I was responsible for my family's survival.

In these journals, the ELAP students were also asked to write about their expectations of Rhodes. Lusanda wrote one sentence: "I expect Rhodes University to help me and other students financially". The graduate assistant who responded to his journal wrote "& academically ? Do you want to receive an education?" For one of our interviews I asked the three students to imagine that they had a friend who wanted to come to Rhodes and asked them what they would tell this friend. The first thing that Lusanda mentioned was the need to work hard and the second was bursaries. Despite Lusanda's concern with money, he did not show much interest in the money that he received for his interviews with me and this

[3] Original spelling and punctuation are retained in extracts of the students' writing.

money did not seem to provide sufficient motivation for him to attend meetings regularly.

This concern with money ran through both Lusanda's primary and secondary Discourses and probably affected him academically. Agar (1992) argues that "material conditions" such as a lack of money "lead to high levels of stress and anxiety and often influence motivation negatively" (94). Dison and Rule (1995) suggest that:

> Institutional factors, such as accommodation of students, funding, and issues of transformation, frequently impinge on the capacities of students to achieve disciplinary competence (426).

In short, Lusanda's primary Discourse can be seen to be almost entirely in Xhosa and at some distance from the Discourses of the university due to a lack of contact by the members of his family with these Discourses. There are, however, some historical influences of the secondary Discourses of school on his primary Discourse, though even these are not likely to be strong.

4.2.2. Secondary Discourses of School

4.2.2.1. Language of Learning and Teaching

The language policy in DET schools, while Lusanda was at school, was that the mother-tongue should be used as the medium of instruction for the first four years with English taught as a subject, and from the fifth year English should be used as the medium of instruction (Hartshorne, 1992). Lusanda described his introduction to English at school:

L: *As from sub B we used to, our teacher, we are first taught English. We were given books to read.*
J: *You were given English books to read? And could you read them?*
L: *He taught us, he trained us so we were able. Even other students, some senior students can and help us. Then in standard one we are doing the same work we do in standard two. There is not much difference. There is one teacher, he taught from sub A to standard two. (21/8)*

Although by high school Lusanda should have been taught entirely in English, this was not the case.

J: *At school did your teachers talk English all the time?*
L: *No at school, teachers, they didn't speak English all the time you know. They were mixing languages especially English and Xhosa.*
J: *Would your teachers explain something in English and then...*
L: *They try first and then if there's anybody who don't understand he try to explain again in Xhosa. (22/3)*

As discussed in section 2.3., Cummins and Swain (1986) argue that children "learn to ignore the language that they do not understand" in situations in which "the same, or a related message is typically given in both languages" (106). This is what occurred in Lusanda's school and this use of two languages is unlikely to lead to the successful acquisition of English or the development of CALP-like skills. In the model (Figure 3.), Lusanda's secondary Discourse of school is shown as being partly in English and partly in Xhosa.

4.2.3. Attitudes to English and Xhosa

Lusanda said that he noticed the importance of English while he was at high school but he also said that in his township "*people don't care whether you know English or you don't know it*" but that "*it's better you know it for yourself*" (21/8). This suggests that the language (i.e. English) of the secondary educational Discourses Lusanda had acquired was not valued in the other, more local, community-based Discourses he had access to.

The ELAP class wrote an assignment on the advantages and disadvantages of English as a medium of instruction in schools. In his essay Lusanda wrote that English is an international language and that it is necessary to understand English in a "technological" society. He also wrote:

> The use of English language as a medium of instruction at school will equip

> the children with necessary skills ... thereby preparing the student for their future. Higher learning institutions and universities like Rhodes use English as a medium of instruction, so it is to the best of the school to make or prepare the students for their future at higher learning institutions and universities.

He added that English is "there to make or promote cooperation, peace and unity among the people particularly those used it as second language". As a disadvantage he wrote:

> Indigenous languages are threatened by it. Its use as a medium of instruction may lead to confrontation. Indigenous languages are make inferior in status socially and otherwise. The culture of the indigenous people will be devalued, because the use of it as a means of instruction forces the indigenous people to assimilate or absorb the culture of the foreign language. The majority will be subjected to minority group.

As part of his conclusion he wrote:

> It is clear that language and culture are inseparable, then respect for each an every language must be held firm by policy-makers. Indigenous languages are not economic that is true, but if these languages could be made to enjoy or has social prestige, it is up to those who use them to make them prosper by organising or forming social groups that will interact with other groups thereby teach their children what is of importance or note to languages.

If what Lusanda has written here can be seen to reflect his real attitudes towards English, which is not necessarily the case, then he appears to be showing signs of an instrumental motivation for learning and using English. According to Baker (1992) an "instrumental attitude to a language is mostly self-oriented and individualistic and would seem to have conceptual overlap with the need for achievement" (32). Kachru (1992) describes such a motivation as "utilitarian" (54). Lusanda recognises the need to use English in schools but he also recognises the negative effects the dominance of English has on other languages in South Africa. Laitin (1992) writes that there is:

> ... a deep ambivalence about language in Africa. On the one hand, reliance on European languages is considered to be a sellout of one's own heritage. On the other hand, its use opens up a world of interlocutors who could not be reached though the medium of African vernaculars (51).

4.2.4. Moving from the Secondary Discourses of School to those of the University

4.2.4.1. Language

As described above, Lusanda's secondary schooling took place in a mixture of Xhosa and English, so one of the changes he experienced on coming to university was being taught entirely in English.

Although he heard only English from his lecturers and tutors, he said that when he worked in groups in his History and ELAP classes, they would often use Xhosa to discuss the work. Lusanda also noticed a difference in the amount of English he was required to speak outside of the classroom when he moved from his family home into a university residence in May. He moved in order to improve the conditions in which he could do his academic work and the move was made possible by a financial loan from the university.

J: *Has coming to Rhodes made a difference to your English?*
L: *Ja, it is. The problem. In fact I am trying to get rid of my shyness. When I have to speak English. Even most of the time. Especially at _____, in my res we all communicate. I communicate with all the guys, not only the blacks but the whites. At least I speak English. I not only have to write it, I speak it.*
J: *Have you found that very different from when you were living at home?*
L: *Ja, very different. Because at home we use only Xhosa. And then, when I am at home, I only come across English when I watch TV... (21/8)*

When he says "I not only have to write it, I speak it," he is probably referring to the situation he experienced at school where all his written work would have been in English but a lot of what was said in the classroom would have been in a mixture of Xhosa and English. I noticed in his speech that he would sometimes use a word that he clearly knew the meaning of but was unsure how to pronounce. He would occasionally try out two or three pronunciations of the same word. It is likely that he knew these words from reading and writing but had seldom heard or used them in speech.

4.2.4.2. Teaching and Learning

One of the differences that Lusanda experienced between school and university was the responsibility he was expected to take for his own work.

> *The method of teaching. At school I'd expected the teacher to tell me what to do. But here it's my responsibility. (22/3)*

He studied History both at School and at university but when I asked him about differences between the two he answered the question purely in terms of content rather than in terms of the way the subject was taught or what was expected of students.

> *The History we did at school I'll say focused only on whites and the History here at Rhodes focused both on whites and blacks. So it doesn't matter if you didn't do History at school. (22/3)*

He said that ELAP was similar to his English classes at school, which I found difficult to believe. When I asked him what was similar he mentioned the grammar which was only taught one period a week in ELAP and was not really a focus of the course.

One of the changes that he found the most difficult was the need to take notes during lectures, a skill that he had not been taught at school and which he described as his "major problem".

L: *At school usually copied the notes.*
J: *Did the teacher put them on the board?*
L: *Yes and I copied them. At school I just listen. We used to listen in school and then write after the teacher has finished talking. Here at Rhodes you know it is different. I have to write while the lecturer is still busy talking so I find that disturbing.*
J: *Are there sometimes words that you don't understand?*
L: *Yes, yes the words.*
J: *Then what do you do?*
L: *I stop writing and think about that word. I just stop writing and listen until the lecturer has finished talking. And then I try and go to other guys [i.e. to borrow notes]. (22/3)*

Lebauer (1984) claims that for ESL students during lectures "there may be psychological problems, often fostered by previous English language training, which results in a fear of not

attending equally to each word" (43). The danger is that students who do not understand a word or an idea "may get 'lost' (tune out) for the rest of the lecture" (Rosenthal, 1996: 93).

After failing his June exams Lusanda realised that a learning strategy that he had found successful at school was also necessary at university. He told me that he needed to change his "study skills".

L: *When I was at high school I used to study and write down what I have read so I have to go back to my study pattern.*
J: *What did you do this time?*
L: *I was just reading. (1/8)*

He also, unfortunately, tried to transfer other things he had learnt at school to the Discourses of the university which were inappropriate and unsuccessful. For example the essays he wrote in his June History and Politics exams were very short. He thought that because each exam was out of one hundred marks that meant that each question was worth 25 marks and his experience at school was that one and half pages was an appropriate length of essay for 25 marks.

L: *My friends advised me [after the exams] to write at least about three pages just for one essay.*
J: *Do you think you had enough to say in June to write three pages?*
L: *Ja.*
J: *So why didn't you?*
L: *In fact I know nothing, I know nothing about that. I thought it was the same as high school. Writing for 35 marks only two pages so this was 25. I will write one and a half. (19/9)*

It is clear that Lusanda's school Discourses were at quite a large distance from those of the university, though he was not always aware of this distance himself. This distance helps to explain his difficulties in entering the academic discourse communities of Rhodes University.

4.2.5. The Relationship Between the Secondary Discourses of Education and Politics

Lusanda was very aware of the political aspects of education in South Africa and the effect politics had had on his own education. From mid 1984 (when he was in standard four) until the end of 1986, he was part of the school boycotts in Grahamstown. He eventually wrote his standard four exams in 1987, three years after he should have done. He said that the boycotts had delayed his life and his studies. Some of his schoolmates were sent by their parents to schools in what were then the Ciskei and Transkei and were able to continue with their education.

> *Because even my former schoolmates are doing their third year and I'm still doing my first. When I meet them I don't know what to do. But we are no longer friends but just meet them. (21/8)*

Going to Transkei or Ciskei was not, however, an easy solution. Lusanda said that his parents had refused to send him there.

> *No, what happened in '85, parents were threatened that if you send your child to former Ciskei, Transkei to continue their education, then they will be necklaced. (21/8)*

For those people who ignored this threat, there was still a price to be paid when they wanted to return to Grahamstown. Lusanda described how difficult it was for these people to be involved in the local community after their return. He called them "dissidents" who had "betrayed the struggle". By remaining in Grahamstown he may have delayed his education and his acquisition of educational Discourses but he sees himself as having remained true to his community, and he still has access to local, community-based Discourses.

Lusanda said little about what his schooling was like immediately after the boycotts but Hartshorne (1992) describes the situation in many DET schools in the following way:

> Pupils came to school at different times, left when they felt like it, did not bring their books to school, refused to do homework or tests and generally,

> increasingly began to reject any kind of authority. There was an over-confidence in what they could achieve on their own without the help of teachers, and when they failed there were ready-made excuses at hand - everything from apartheid, poor schooling, incompetent teachers, through to untrustworthy examinations - all the more seductive because of the large measures of truth in them (80).

Behaviours like these obviously are counterproductive in any educational situation and are unlikely to be tolerated or lead to success in a university situation, particularly in a university where the majority of the lecturers and students have not experienced schooling of this kind, and may not sympathise with or understand those who have.

Perhaps Lusanda's experiences at school help to explain his attitude to his work, his tendency to do what his ELAP tutor describes as "the bare minimum" and the frequency with which he missed or was late for classes and his seeming inability to hand assignments in on time. He may have been transferring behaviours and values acquired as part of his secondary Discourses of school to those of university. Lusanda should strictly have lost his Duly Performed[4] certificate since he missed more classes than he was allowed to but he was just one of many students in his group to miss a large number of classes. There was what the tutor described as a "culture of non-attendance" in his group.

He also transferred his interest and involvement in student politics to his life at university. In the first term a group of students were involved in protests on campus, revolving largely around the issue of transformation. Lusanda participated in these protests. When we talked about this in April he said that he had disrupted lectures but two months later he said:

[4] A Duly Performed Certificate is simply permission to write the final exams. Requirements differ from course to course. The requirements for ELAP are that students need to attend 80% of all classes and hand in all assignments and tests.

I didn't take part in disruption. I took part in toyi-toying outside and making this noise but not just to disrupt. (18/6)

Whether or not he had participated in the disruptions, the change in what he said seemed to reflect a change in attitude towards political Discourses, mainly due to the tension and conflict between these Discourses and his academic Discourses. Just as those who had not participated in school boycotts were able to continue with their education, students who did not participate in the disruptions were able to attend lectures that he missed. He said that he had learnt that he had to "look after" himself.

Ja, [the lecturers] went forward. They don't care about those who are toyi-toying, they are just doing their work. So I have to change my ideas. My ideas have changed about toyi-toying. I have to choose between toyi-toying. (18/6)

This is a clear example of two Discourses that are in a relationship of conflict or tension. Some political Discourses are clearly tied to those of education and are aimed, at least in part, towards changing educational discourses for the benefit of society but there is a personal price to be paid by those students who choose to participate in politics and in so doing disrupt their own education.

In 1996, Lusanda also had access to another kind of political Discourse, since Politics was one of the subjects he chose to study at Rhodes University.

4.2.6. Disciplinary Discourses

4.2.6.1. Politics

Lusanda said he chose to study Politics because he wanted to be an administrator or a broadcaster. Politics I in 1996 started with a course on Political Philosophy, including the work of writers such as Locke, Hobbes and Rousseau. Lusanda expressed particular

difficulty in understanding and taking notes in his Politics lectures in the first term. When I attended a lecture in March I understood his difficulties. While I have never studied Politics I had assumed that my experience at university would enable me to at least take competent notes during the lecture but this was not the case. After the lecture I wrote:

> Lectures incredibly fast, sibilance may make her pronunciation difficult to follow - uses terms from law that most students are unlikely to be familiar with [e.g. bona fide, artificial person, caveat]. Slows down and becomes easier to follow when giving examples or telling 'narratives' to illustrate points. Very little repetition or rephrasing. No definitions given of terms. I started to feel panic stricken by my lack of knowledge and inability to take coherent notes. No pauses after important statements or explanations to give students time to write.

It should be pointed out that the lecturer concerned was a first time lecturer who had an Honours degree in Politics but little or no training as a lecturer. The pace of the lecture may have been due to nervousness as much as anything else. When I spoke to this lecturer to obtain permission to audio-tape the lecture she showed concern for the difficulties of ESL students but she said that she did not know how to go about accommodating them in lectures. An extract of a transcript from a lecture I audio-taped about two weeks later should illustrate some of these difficulties. The lecture was a revision, summary and critique of Locke's theory.

> Now the rationale for government in Locke's theory of course, as we have seen, is what government can do for you, why do people submit to government? People consent to government in order to preserve their property, with property in the broader sense of the word: their lives, liberty, estate. Now government in civil society provide a certainty and a settled known law which the state of nature does not have. And it is therefore an attractive and a desirable state which they consent to, in order that they may get these benefits back from the government. So they submit to some of the constraints of government, but unlike in Hobbes's theory they don't give up all of their rights and all of their powers.

There are a number of words and phrases here, such as "property" and "powers", that are being used in very specific ways that are different from their use in everyday language. An

additional problem is what Boughey (1997) refers to, in her description of a very similar course at the University of Zululand, as "the hypotheticity of the whole discourse" (5).

In addition to the lectures, the Politics I students were supplied with readers containing extracts from the work of these writers. These readers were, if anything, even more difficult to follow than the lectures. Below is an extract from a Politics reader which contained excerpts from Hobbes's (1968) book Leviathan.

> The Nutrition of a Common-wealth consisteth, in the *Plenty*, and *Distribution of Materials* conducing to Life: In *Concoction*, or *Preparation*; and (when concocted) in the *Conveyance* of it, by convenient conduits, to the Publique use.
>
> As for the Plenty of Matter, it is a thing limited by Nature, to those commodities, which (from the two breasts of our common Mother) Land, and Sea, God usually either freely giveth, or for labour selleth to man-kind.
>
> For the Matter of this Nutriment, consisting in Animals, Vegetals, and Minerals, God hath freely layd them before us, in or neer to the face of the Earth; so as there needeth no more but the labour, and industry of receiving them. Insomuch as Plenty dependeth (next to God's favour) meerly on the labour and industry of men (175).

I asked Lusanda to read an extract a little over double the length of this one during one of our meetings. He took approximately 5 minutes to read it. He said that it was difficult to read because the English was *"very old. It's like Shakespeare" (12/3).*

Lusanda's experiences with a school Discourse which included reading Shakespeare allowed him to identify what made this difficult to read but his experience with reading Shakespeare is unlikely to be of any use to him in actually understanding the reader. Lusanda said that he had not read the Hobbes reader but that he had read an extract about Hobbes from another, easier book that he had learnt of from other Politics students.

Lusanda found a course in the third term on South African Politics far easier than Political Philosophy. I attended a week of these lectures, which were given by a more experienced lecturer than Political Philosophy lectures, and was able to take comprehensive notes during the class. I also found that I had enough background knowledge of the subject to understand what was said in the lectures. I asked Lusanda if this course was easier.

L: *Ja, they are easy. In fact I have got some understanding of the environment. Especially political.*

J: *And probably also because you are a bit older you probably remember more of, say, the mid 1980s. Some of the first years are too young. We would remember.*

L: *Even those who are younger than me, they can remember well. Except maybe the whites. Because most of this section's dealing with South African politics, especially the blacks [i.e. ANC, PAC etc]. (21/8)*

He perceived his knowledge and experience of South African politics as being of use to him in gaining access to the academic Discourse of Politics and other black students probably feel the same way. According to Angelil-Carter (1995):

> Part of the difficulty of this discipline [Politics] is that many of the black students have experienced the oppression of the old South African political system in a way that most of their lecturers have only theorized about. They feel they know it with a depth of understanding that for other groups is not possible (67).

Lusanda may, however, have been overestimating the relevance of his outside knowledge to that which is presented and valued in the university. Murray (1993) writes:

> My own observation of students in and from DET schools, is that they are generally more politically aware and more critical than their counterparts in more favoured educational circumstances. What they have difficulty in doing is bringing this to bear 'in very systematised academic terrain' and in a second language... (98).

While Lusanda perceived white students as being at a disadvantage in this course, it may actually have been the case that such students would be more successful in integrating and displaying the knowledge they do have in a way that is appropriate in an academic situation than their fellow black students.

The Political community-based Discourses to which Lusanda had access both inside and outside of the university are related in complex ways to the academic Discourses of the university.

Lusanda's History I course will not be discussed here, except for the fact that he consistently said that it was easier than Politics. Due to space constraints, only ELAP and one other subject will be discussed for each of the three students.

4.2.6.2. English Language for Academic Purposes

Of the three students interviewed, Lusanda should have found ELAP most relevant since the writing and other skills he was taught in ELAP should have transferred easily to the other subjects he was studying. When I asked him what he found most useful about ELAP he said:

> *Well, ELAP encourages me to give my work enough time. It pressurises me to cope with other work. And then there are some skills like writing skills and arguing skills. (17/5)*

Lusanda said that he found the Monday lectures by guest lecturers interesting and that the assignments were interesting.

L: *ELAP assignments are interesting, in fact are useful because they train you to write, to used to write essays. But what's boring is the first draft, you have to write the first draft.*

J: *Do you think it's useful though? When you get the first draft back does it help you to write the second draft?*

L: *Ja, it help me. To write the first draft is boring when you don't have much time to write it. But interesting assignment, it is good. I enjoy doing assignments. (17/5)*

Lusanda quite enjoyed writing a dialogue journal but it was not a priority for him when he had other work to do.

J: *Do you enjoy writing the journal?*

L: Ja, I enjoy writing journal when I have time. When I have a lot of work to do, I can't waste my time by writing it. But journal is good for me. I enjoy it because at least I can see my mistakes.
J: Do you think it's useful to write a journal. Does it help you?
L: It will help me. It's helpful.
J: How?
L: By arguing. The tutor responds, show me my mistakes. So I think it's good for me. I enjoy writing it when I have time. (17/5)

Lusanda said that the Friday grammar classes were boring and that they reminded him of "the days at higher primary school".

He said that in ELAP the work went faster than his classes at school but that ELAP was not as fast as his two mainstream subjects, Politics and History. The difference is clear in the comment below:

> *Especially for ELAP. For example, what we did on Monday, we will do it again on Tuesday. In my group we have two classes on Tuesday. One in the morning and one in the afternoon. So if you don't understand what, the morning's lecture, the tutor will try to go back in the afternoon and explain it. (21/8)*

Because Lusanda perceived ELAP as being easier than his other subjects he did not work as hard at it. He failed ELAP in the June exams with 36% although he had told me before the exams that he thought he would pass it.

L: In fact I took ELAP easily.
J: What do you mean "easily"?
L: I was not prepared for it. I just read ELAP, that two book. [i.e. textbooks]. I just started reading at about twelve. [The exam started at two o' clock]
J: At about twelve? You said you were going to spend the whole morning doing it.
L: I was concerned about History.
J: So you were doing History that morning? [before the ELAP exam]
L: Ja, I did History. (1/8)

Though the skills taught in ELAP should have helped Lusanda in his other courses, this did not always occur, sometimes because he did not make use of what he had been taught and sometimes because the degree of difficulty of his mainstream courses overwhelmed what he

had learned in ELAP. For example he participated in class discussions in ELAP and said that this helped him with the skills of "talking and arguing" but he was unable to put these skills to use in his Politics tutorials because he did not adequately understand the content and because of the mixture of English first- and second-language speakers.

J: *Is it easier to talk in ELAP where the other people are also second-language speakers?*
L: *In ELAP tutorials - no. No, it's easy, it's easy but it's not easy in Politics. No Politics, no Politics tuts are, it's not easy to speak there. When I listen to others who are English speakers, no I feel inferior. I think um. I want to avoid mistakes when I'm speaking English so it's not easy. (22/3)*

L: *But in my politics tutorials, no. I don't even talk.*
J: *Why?*
L: *I think I only talked once there.*
J: *Does the tutor not try and make you talk?*
L: *No, in fact my first tutor, no, he was trying but no. Sometimes I find it difficult to understand, to understand him. Because what happens that, in my group, we are three blacks, then the rest is whites. When they talk, first when they talk they speak right. We can understand. But as the arguments go on they end up talking and I don't understand.*
J: *So you can't get involved in the argument?*
L: *No. (17/5)*

What is even more concerning than the fact that he did not participate in Politics tutorials is that at times he could not even understand what other people are saying.

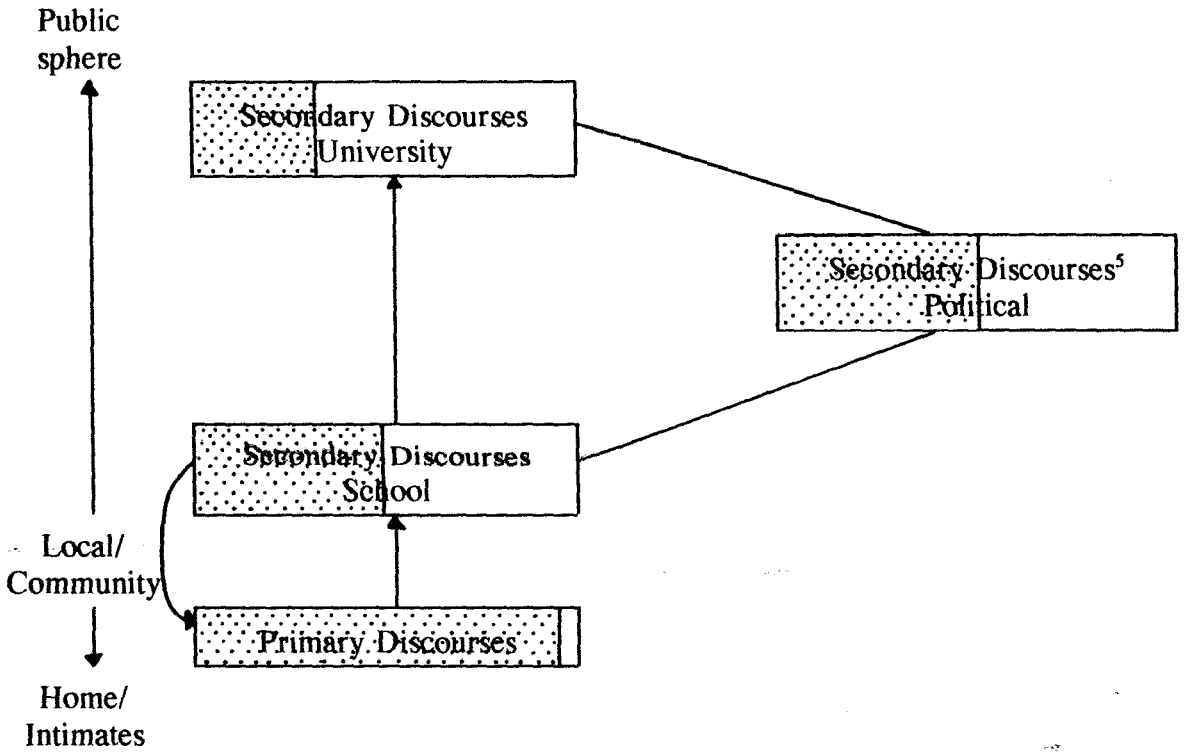
Lusanda also sometimes failed to take advantage of the skills he had been taught in ELAP. For example, the ELAP class had been taught to brainstorm and plan their exam essays before starting to write. I asked him if he had done this in his exams.

No, in fact for History, in fact for all my essays, I didn't plan. I just started and then I wrote what I read. History, I was panicking. (1/8)

4.2.7. Lusanda's Model

The Gee model presented above can be adapted for Lusanda in the following way:

Figure 3. Lusanda's Model



Key:

	English
	Xhosa
	Historical influences

The primary Discourse is shown to include a very small amount of English due to written and broadcast media. The secondary Discourses of the school are shown as being partly in English and partly in Xhosa. The university Discourses are shown as being partly in Xhosa to take into account the conversations Lusanda has with his Xhosa friends and classmates about their academic work, both inside and outside the classroom. There are historical

[5] The split between English and Xhosa in the Political Discourses is just meant to suggest that both languages would have been used rather than to represent any kind of proportion of each.

influences from school Discourses on the primary Discourse but none from the Discourses of the university. The discourses of the school are at some distance from those of the university and an additional, Political discourse has been added to the model and its links to educational Discourses shown.

4.3. Kerry

Kerry was a Xhosa speaker who listed English as the only other language she spoke, and she lived in Uitenhage, about 130 kilometres away from Grahamstown. She was sixteen when she came to Rhodes University and only turned seventeen late in the year. She had 23 matriculation points and was admitted to Rhodes University to do the Commerce Foundation course[6]. Her school subjects included Maths, Accounting and Business Economics.

It is more difficult to describe Kerry as clearly as I have described Lusanda mainly because of the many contradictory views I received of her. Her ELAP tutor had quite a negative view of her and her abilities, and from observing ELAP classes, I could see how that view of Kerry had been formed. Kerry's ELAP tutor described her in the following way:

> *She missed quite a lot of classes[7]...But I mean she missed the last test. She said she was sick. I don't know, I have a feeling she used to go home and not come back until Monday. She did miss a lot. I think she wasn't very interested. In one of her journals she said she was terribly shy, please never to ask her questions in class. So I kind of respected that but towards the last term she'd never answered anything. I sort of was trying to be gentle about it and saying "Would you like to read?" and "Kerry?". And then she would shoot me this furious look.*

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[6] This is a set course in which students do half courses in Accounting, Mathematics and Statistics, and ELAP as a full course. They also do Computer Studies and Commerce Foundation Studies which are not credit-bearing courses.

[7] Kerry missed 15 of the 22 classes ELAP students could miss before losing their Duly Performed certificate.

Her tutor also said that she had made a real connection with Kerry in the dialogue journals but when these had stopped being written, she had lost that connection. Through the journals she knew about the death of Kerry's grandfather early in the year and her problems with her boyfriend. She said that by the end of the year she actually started to feel angry with Kerry because she showed so little interest. She said that Kerry's "*presence was very anonymous in class*" and that sometimes her essays "*didn't seem to reflect anything that we'd discussed or talked about...I think it's as if she needed to be taught all over again by herself*". She said that she "*didn't get a sense of any development with her other than that she'd weathered the year*".

My experiences with Kerry were in some ways similar in that her attendance at meetings was not regular and she was not consistent about bringing me her assignments to look at. I didn't feel as frustrated with her as I did with Lusanda, mainly because when she did come to meetings she was usually interested in speaking to me and quite open with me. I also felt that I had made a personal connection with her and she told me about her problems with her boyfriend. There was a contradiction in her behaviour in that she hated to speak in class but she was very talkative in meetings with me. She explained her fear of speaking in class as not wanting to be laughed at, which she said did happen, even among a class made up entirely of ESL students. Kerry's reluctance to speak in class could be seen as being rooted in gender and cultural expectations but there were three females in her ELAP group who did most of the talking in class, so that explanation is probably too simplistic. I saw yet another side to Kerry when she told me that at school she had done drama and been a drum majorette.

And then when I am in front of the people and I know what I'm going to say

I was not afraid of the people, I just go and talk, just like that ... The things I'm going to say just come out and come out my mind, you know ... Even when the thing is not from the script, it just come out my mind and I say it. I was in the majorettes. I was a queen because I had confidence and I was so flexible. I didn't care about the people. I just did what I had to do. (27/8)

There was another contradiction in that I (and her ELAP tutor) viewed Kerry as immature, disinterested and rather disorganised but in an interview she described being left alone in charge of her mother's shop while she was still very young which is evidence of her mother's trust in her. Her interest and experience in her mother's shop also helps to explain her choice of subjects at school and university. I don't know how to explain these contradictions but I was only able to recognise them because of the longitudinal, ethnographic research method I was using.

4.3.1. Kerry's Primary Discourse

Kerry speaks only Xhosa with her family except for her *"littlest sister", "who learns in coloured school so sometimes she speak English so that she can try to speak it"* (8/8). She would sometimes use English in shops if her mother asked her to pay an account.

And my cousin sisters [female cousins?] are coloured so we speaking English and they were Afrikaans but I can't speak English and they taught me words. (8/8)

Kerry does not watch or listen to English television or radio at home. She said that although she speaks Xhosa a lot she does not read or write it much. In the model, Kerry's primary Discourse, like that of Lusanda, is shown as being almost entirely in Xhosa but with a small amount of English, to account for her conversations with her sister and cousins.

Her parents had not been to university but in 1995 her brother was at Vista University. She said that he was working in 1996 so that there would be money for her to go to university.

One brother spending one year at an historically-black university is probably not sufficient to show historical influences on the primary Discourse from the Discourses of the university on Kerry's model, so these have been left out. There is, however, a connection between Kerry's primary Discourse and the Discourses of Accounting that Kerry was exposed to both at school and at university since she had practical experience of working with money in her mother's shop and of discussing financial matters with her mother. She had shown her mother how to record her income and expenditure for her shop. This shows that some of Kerry's educational Discourses were closely linked to Discourses beyond the school or university.

4.3.2. Secondary Discourses of School

4.3.2.1. Language of Learning and Teaching

Kerry started learning English when she was in standard one.

K: *And then this is standard two and I learn English but I didn't know how to speak it. I just know this is a desk, a chair.*
J: *Just words?*
K: *Ja. And then from standard three all our subjects was only English, history, science, geography. It was only Xhosa and Afrikaans. (8/8)*

She means that all the subjects except Xhosa and Afrikaans were in English. Like Lusanda, though, she was not taught entirely in English as she should have been, although her textbooks and exams were in English.

From her descriptions, it seems that her school Discourses were almost entirely in Xhosa rather than being a mixture of English and Xhosa, which was Lusanda's experience. Kerry said that the only teacher who spoke only English to the class was her standard nine English teacher who was not South African and who refused to speak, or let the students speak,

Xhosa even though she could understand it. She recognised that this use of Xhosa in the classroom had hampered her learning of English.

> *So we are students that didn't taught in English, we struggle to speak now, to understand. (30/4)*

4.3.3. Attitudes to English and Xhosa

Contrary to Lusanda's experience, Kerry said that being able to speak English was viewed very positively in her community.

J: *Did you enjoy learning English at school?*
K: *Ja, I did. You enjoy it because when you are in Xhosa people if you can't speak English you are just not somebody. So you enjoy speaking English so people can recognise you, that you are...*
J: *Even with other Xhosa speakers?*
K: *Ja. Even in the location if you can't speak English they think you are just a street girl. You were not taught how to speak English and you were not, what you call it in English, that you were not like, go to school.*
J: *Educated?*
K: *Ja, you are not educated. (8/8)*

She said she wanted to go to an English university:

> *Because I want to speak English and I want to know it, you know. Because my course is going to be in English so I have to speak English. (19/3)*

Kerry realised that she would need to be able to speak English if she was going to work as an accountant.

J: *Do you think you will have to speak English all the time in your job?*
K: *Ja, I think so. I think I will speak English every day. Because maybe I will be with other people who don't even speak Xhosa. And when you are doing the bookkeeping, then you do it in English. (27/8)*

In the conclusion of her ELAP assignment on the advantages and disadvantages of English as a medium of instruction in schools, Kerry wrote:

> In my opinion I think it is good and necessary to use English as our medium of instruction at schools in the new South Africa because many countries use English so in order to succeed you have to know English. In the universities they use English and the writers, the advertisement are in English so in order

to succed in future we must know English so that we can understand each other.

Like Lusanda, Kerry seems to show an instrumental motivation for learning English but she does not seem to experience the same kind of ambivalence about using it. Kerry's views of English seem very positive, especially considering her dislike of speaking English.

4.3.4. Moving from the Secondary Discourses of School to those of the University

Kerry applied to a number of universities for admission but her mother was insistent that she should go to Rhodes.

J: *Why do you think she wanted you to come to Rhodes?*
K: *She told me that Rhodes is the best university. Rhodes is so quiet, here.*
J: *And it's close? [to Uitenhage]*
K: *Ja, and it's close. "I can visit you whenever time I want to. So when you are in Cape Town or Pretoria it's far. And then when it comes to this thing of boycott you are maybe going to have accident." So it's far. So Rhodes here is close. (8/8)*

4.3.4.1. Language

Due to her experiences at school, Kerry found the change from Xhosa to English in and outside the classroom quite significant.

J: *Do you speak more English now that you are at university?*
K: *Ja, I speak more than I did at school, because at school I didn't even speak English. I just speak Xhosa. Always, always, always. Even the teachers when they teach us, they teach us in Xhosa, even though the subject in only English. They explain out to us in Xhosa. Even the English class they explain to us in Xhosa so we speak Xhosa... Here in the university, it's more than we've done at school.*
J: *Who do you speak English to?*
K: *When maybe the English girl, I speak to the English girl. And the classroom and the lecturers ask us. (18/4)*

K: *And our teachers when they teach us maybe the Accounting, they teach the Accounting in English but they also teach it in our mother-tongue. So to make us understand what is going on and even in Mathematics they make us understand in our own language.*
J: *Do you miss that now?*

K: Yes, I miss it. (18/3)

Kerry may have spoken more English at university than she did while she was at school but this does not mean that she spoke very much English at university. She wrote in her ELAP journal:

> The things I don't like is to talk in front of the people (public) in english because its my second language so when speak I'm not feeling free to speak it because its defficult for me and when someone say to me stand up and say thing that I was going to say It just went off and maybe I say the wrong words and people laugh at me and they say that I can [cannot] speak English

Kerry avoided speaking in class. She never spoke to her ELAP tutor even privately and I doubt that she spoke to any of her other lecturers. When she worked in a group in ELAP she told me that the group spoke in Xhosa: "*We just use Xhosa and explain it in Xhosa so to make us understand*" (18/4). Her ELAP tutor said that she did not seem to participate much in these group discussions and my observations confirm this. In fact, one of the few place Kerry did speak English was in interviews with me which she viewed as a 'safe' environment.

K: So I have at least maybe a day to speak English. Because a day sometimes end up even, the day end up without speaking English.
J: You can go a whole day without speaking English?
K: Ja, ja. So it's been good. It helps me [to speak to me]. (18/10)

It seems difficult to believe that a student at an English medium university can spend an entire day without speaking English, but for Kerry this seemed to be the case. She told me that she spoke to white girls in her residence in English, but from my experience in residence I would imagine that these conversations amounted to little more than a few words about the washing machine or where to find a subwarden. She said that other black girls in her residence would sometimes speak English but she did not join in these conversations because:*I feel like, it's like I feel embarrassed. I don't feel free to speak whereas sometimes I want to but I don't. (8/8)*

Although Kerry was hearing, reading and writing English in her year of university, she spoke it very little. This confirms the results of a survey carried out on Rhodes University campus in 1995 in which 73% of students who spoke Xhosa as their first language said that they used Xhosa "always" or "mostly" outside of the classroom (De Klerk, 1996: 121). It is thus necessary to show her university Discourses in the model (Figure 4.) as being partly in Xhosa, since for Kerry both group discussions in ELAP and any conversation she had about her work with friends outside the classroom took place in Xhosa.

4.3.4.2. Teaching and Learning

Kerry had done Maths and Accounting at school and she did not find the work at university very different from the work at school, although if she had been doing mainstream rather than foundation Commerce subjects this may have been different.

> *So the one that I like most is Accounting because at least I did understand because there were things that I was taught at school, they are taught here. So it's just a revision somewhere and then the new things. I enjoy it very much. And then the Maths, Maths there are too things that I was taught at school, like calculus, derivatives you know. So I did do it here, but here I just do it like, in a finance way. That Maths you did at school, like maybe the graph, straight line and then you take it to the finance thing. So it's just like that. I like it. And then the Stats, I didn't do Stats at school so I just met it here. (22/10)*

There were some differences in how these subjects were taught:

K: *Ja, I do the Accounting at school and the Maths I do at school. But in my course, the Accounting now is doing slowly. We do it slowly. Not like school. At school they just give you the exercises. They say this is the homework for today. You come for this exercise tomorrow. But here we just do it in the class and say go and do it at home. But then they didn't mark it like homework.*

J: *They just go through it in class?*

K: *Ja.*

J: *Is the work new to you?*

K: *No, it's not new. But it started at the bottom I think so. You think - "Oh, I forgot about this". We are started there at the back.*

J: *So it's nice to go over/*

K: *Ja, because you gain something. Even I didn't know what to, why the reason you must credit the things. So I know now. (18/3)*

Though Kerry found that Accounting at university was, if anything, easier and better taught than at school, her experiences of Maths were different.

K: *And I think here the Maths. At school they tell us, you know, they make us understand it. And they didn't go to that section until we understand it. Here they say whether you understand it or not we are going to write a test of that thing so we must finish the chapter... So it's a lot of work.*
J: *Is it fast?*
K: *Ja, it's fast, it's more fast.(18/3)*

She also found ELAP rather different from her English classes at school.

> *In my school we don't do it discussions. I'm not used to that, to doing discussions. And they [ELAP] used to give you the work you must do it yourself. You must go and find these things, maybe they give you the essay assignment. You must make your research on that topic. (18/3)*

> *Even at school, when I was doing Business Economics, we just read this thing in the book [textbook?], you are going to write it. There was no thing you must go to the library and check for the books or such things. (18/4)*

Like Lusanda, Kerry experienced particular difficulties with note-taking, though it seemed that the Monday ELAP lectures were the only lectures she attended in which she needed to take notes. According to Adamson (1993):

> Taking good notes from lectures is a complex linguistic task. It requires that the student (1) comprehend the stream of speech; (2) separate important information from unimportant information; (3) provide some sort of logical framework for the important information, sometimes, but not always, provided by the lecturer; and (4) write down the important information in its logical framework (86).

This gives some idea of why students, particularly those for whom English is their second language, have so much difficulty taking notes during lectures.

The Commerce Foundation course is a fixed course so Kerry was with the same class all the time except for her ELAP group which combined Commerce students with students from other faculties. The Commerce Foundation class had about 35 people. This would have made Kerry's experiences more like her experiences at school and different from those of most first-year students, such as Lusanda, who are usually in larger classes and are not with the same people in all of their classes. She said she liked having the same class because she was used to it from school.

Kerry did not experience enormous differences between school and university in her academic Discourses, but she did experience differences in other, more peer-related Discourses. She suggested that changes had taken place in herself in her time at university, particularly since she was no longer living at home with her family.

> *Because at home - I don't think it's changed. But maybe in some ways it's changed because I can think by myself. And I can do what I want to do. And I know what is wrong and what is right. I think first before I do something. Because I was just go for it, go with friends, so you don't think because your friends say. So here I just think - I don't want to go. (8/8)*

At university, Kerry did not participate in activities such as netball, drama and drum majorettes that she had done at school.

She found that her coming to Rhodes University had a negative effect on her friendships with girls from her school in Uitenhage. Of the group of six school friends, only two had passed the matriculation exam. Kerry was the only one to come to Rhodes while one friend had gone to the Port Elizabeth technikon and the other four were back at school. The group split in 1996. Kerry did not seem to be able to replace these close friendships with new ones at university. She would mention friends to me during interviews and when I asked her about

her friends here she said she had two particular friends, two Xhosa girls but that the friendships were not as close because "*I didn't go out with them. I just stay home but I didn't go out*" (8/8). She wrote about her first days in residence in her journal:

> They take me to the union where all the students are meet for the parties. The students they were drinking, smoking and dancing and I was bored and we go to the Great Hall and even there I was bored because I don't like social life. I'm indoor person till now I didn't go there again.

It seems that Kerry not only did not participate much in class but also did not participate much in other kinds of university activities. If the secondary Discourses of the university are seen as consisting of more than just academic Discourses, then it is clear that Kerry experienced as much, if not more, difficulty in entering these other, social, Discourses than in entering academic Discourses.

In the model (Figure 4.), Kerry's school Discourses are shown as being at a distance from those of the university because of the differences that she had noticed in the need to take more responsibility for her own work and to work more independently for some courses. The distance is not as great as that for Lusanda because she was in foundation courses which covered a lot of the same work as she had covered at school, and which were sometimes even easier than her classes at school. It is not that her school Discourses were closer to those of the university generally but rather that the kind of Discourses she was entering were intentionally closer to those of the school than Discourses such as Politics I and History I.

4.3.5. Disciplinary Discourses

4.3.5.1. English Language for Academic Purposes

The instrumental motivation that Kerry showed towards learning and speaking English was also a factor in her attitude towards ELAP but she felt that ELAP was not of much practical

use to her so her motivation was reduced. This may explain the classes she missed and her "anonymity" in ELAP classes. Kerry was sure she wanted to work as an accountant and anything that was not directly relevant to this goal was perceived by her as a waste of her time. I asked her if the ELAP lectures were interesting.

K: *They are just boring you know. And I don't think they are useful ... I didn't gain anything. Some of them they are not easy. They give us the things we must think of, like the hand-outs they give us when we talking about culture. Eesh, I don't know about that so I find it difficult for me to do all those things. And they are not clear. They are confusing us.*
J: *What, the lectures, the Monday lectures?*
K: *Ja.*
J: *So do you find the assignments boring as well?*
K: *Ja, yhu, assignments eesh. Everyone. Everyone is complaining about it. They are difficult. ELAP is demanding, too demanding. It's more work. (26/4)*

One of the problems for Kerry and other Commerce foundation students is that ELAP is the only subject in their first year in which they do any extended pieces of writing and in which they are assessed on their writing. Their other subjects are Accounting, Maths and Statistics so they work mostly with numbers and the emphasis is on getting the exercises correct rather than on original, critical thinking. Commerce Foundation students are not required to make much use of the skills they learn in ELAP in any of their other first year courses. If they continue with Commerce, though, in subjects such as Commercial Law, Management and Economics they will be required to write assignments. I suggested this to Kerry.

> *Ja. Maybe I will see. Because now I'm not doing those essays. It's only ELAP where I write essays and I must do research. Ay. And I'm lazy for doing research and how to write it down when you find it, some reasons. (26/4)*

In a interview that took place six months after the one from which I have quoted above, Kerry was more positive about ELAP and acknowledged that she would probably find what she had been taught in ELAP of some use to her later in her degree. She said that it was

useful knowing how to summarize, write essays and reference and that she would have to write essays for Management and Economics. She saw the relevance of the **skills** taught in the course but not the content.

> *Ja, but it's a bit boring. Like the way they apply it to us, it's not interesting. But when you sit down and realize it you know it's useful but the way they taught us it's not interesting. (22/10)*

Kerry did not think that she would be required to do any writing as an accountant although she did acknowledge that she would be required to speak English to the people she would work with. She seems to underestimate the importance of communication skills in the field of accounting. Sieberhagen (1994) writes:

> The Public Accountant and Auditors Board have stated that they ask for competence in skills such as communication. The Human Sciences Research Council in a research article on the current and future needs for Accounting expertise in South Africa, stress the importance of communication skills (137).

The one thing in ELAP that Kerry enjoyed was writing a dialogue journal. Porter *et al* (1990) argue that the dialogue that occurs in journals such as those used in ELAP "is especially important for those students who are hesitant to speak up in class" (236).

> *K: I think they are useful. We learn how to write and how to speak English from our writing. Even though we didn't think "what I'm going to write?". ... And then you know that it's only [ELAP tutor] who's going to read it and she's going to respond. That response makes you feel comfortable.*
> *J: So that's the one thing you like?*
> *K: Ja, it's only thing. Not other things. It's not only me who doesn't like ELAP. Many of us - "Oh we must go to ELAP", "Oh it's boring, I'm going to sleep." (26/4)*

Kerry's dislike of ELAP and her feeling that it was not relevant to her other courses, is probably typical of the people in her class. She says above that she is not the only one who doesn't like ELAP. In a 1995 ELAP evaluation report, Rosenberg (1995a) states that

"Commerce and Science students are far more tentative about the effectiveness of the course than any other students" (2) and that the "highest negative responses (not at all helpful with other majors) come from Commerce and Science students" (3). She suggests that these responses may be due to the "kinds of skill which are focused on in mainstream courses: the Commerce and Science foundation courses focus of 'technical' skills and content" (3). It is not possible to compare these responses with those of the 1996 ELAP class because in 1996 the students were not asked to fill in their other courses on their ELAP course evaluation.

4.3.5.2. Accounting

As described above, Kerry found that much of the work covered in her Accounting class was familiar to her from school. She told me about a course evaluation she had written for her Commerce Foundation course:

> *And then we write that Accounting feel good because Mr X takes care of us. He knows maybe we have a problem. He just stop and explain. He doesn't run. He stop with you until you understand what we have done. (27/8)*

I observed two Accounting lectures. The first observation of an Accounting lecture took place on the same day as my first observation of a Politics lecture and the two could not have been more different. After observing the lecture I wrote:

> Much slower pace than Politics lecture. Students answered questions and said things along with him. Can't speak for every student but there were definitely signs that at least some of them were following what was going on - could partly be the result of rote-learning formulas but even this may give the students confidence. Mr X did not call the students by name or ask individual questions - tended to be a collective mumble in answer to questions. No real lecturing - just went over work and recapped things they had obviously already been taught. Language kept pretty simple apart from discipline-specific terminology.

Below are two extracts from the Accounting 101, Module A hand-out for 1996. In the hand-out, extensive use is made of discipline-specific terms but most of the students would be

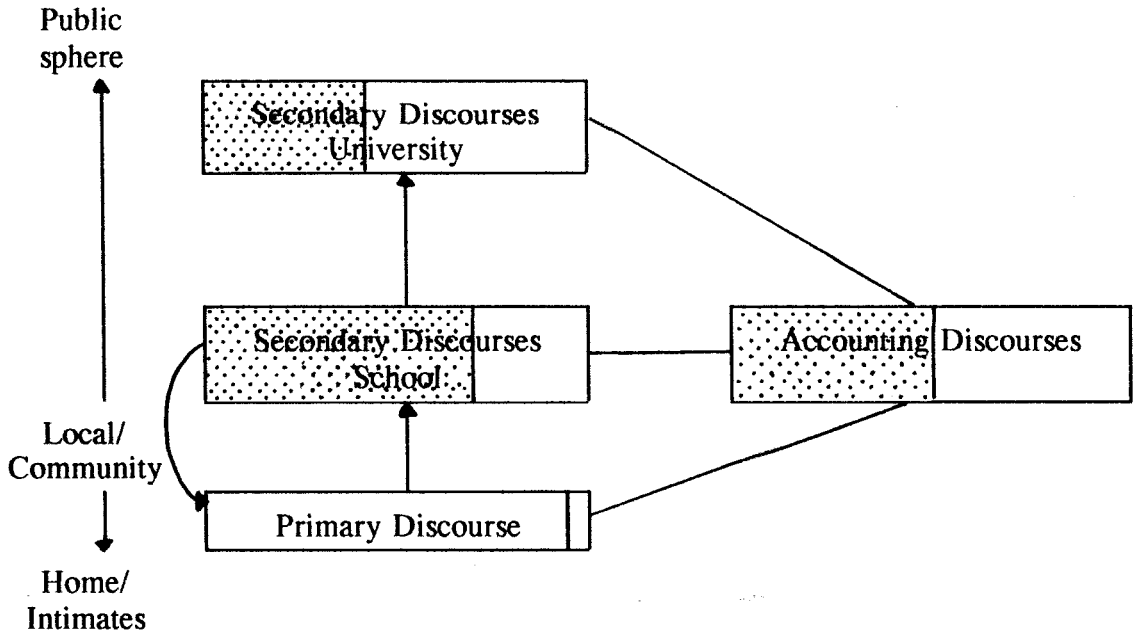
familiar with at least some of these terms from Accounting and/or Business Economics at school, and terms would tend to be used in one specific way which is different from a more theoretical discipline such as Politics in which different theorists can and do use the same words in different ways.

> The chief characteristic of the ledger account is that it simplifies the arithmetical problem of showing changes in an item by recording increases and decreases in separate areas or columns. Traditionally the **left-hand side of an account** is called the **debit side** and the **right-hand side** the **credit side** and the verbs "to debit" or "to credit" merely mean to record a transaction on the left-hand or right-hand side of the account respectively.
>
> A trial balance is simply a list showing all the account titles, codes and ledger account balances contained in a ledger at a given point in time. A ledger account balance is the total debit or credit value in a particular ledger account. **Asset and expense accounts should have debit balances and liability and** revenue account balances should have credit balances (a bank account, of course, could have either!).

The difference (apart from subject matter) between these extracts and the one shown in Lusanda's section from his Politics reader is due largely to the fact that the Accounting reader was written specifically with students in mind and it was written as a learning tool rather than being written decades ago as an exposition of a theory to be read by other political philosophers.

4.3.6. Kerry's Model

Figure 4. Kerry's Model



Key:

	English
	Xhosa
	Historical influences

The primary Discourse is mainly in Xhosa with a very small amount of English because of Kerry's conversation with her youngest sister and her cousins. The secondary Discourses of the school, like those of Lusanda, are partly in Xhosa and partly in English. It seemed from what Kerry and Lusanda said, that Kerry's school Discourses made even greater use of Xhosa than those of Lusanda and this difference is shown on the model although it is not possible to quantify. Kerry speaks very little English at university so her university Discourse is shown as being partly in Xhosa because it is likely that almost any discussion she would have had about her academic work or anything else relevant to university would have taken place in Xhosa. Again, it seems that Kerry used more Xhosa at university than Lusanda did so this

has also been shown on the model. There is no Political Discourse in Kerry's model as there is in Lusanda's model because she never spoke to me about anything directly political and she did not participate in student politics at all. Instead there are Discourses of Accounting which are linked to Kerry's primary Discourse, because of her discussions with her mother about her mother's shop, and to both her secondary Discourses since Kerry studied Accounting both at school and at university. There is not one, monolithic Accounting Discourse because some of her Discourses would have been more oriented to the home and intimates while others would have been more oriented towards the public sphere. Kerry's secondary Discourses of school are shown as being closer to those of the university than is the case in Lusanda's model (Figure 3.) because of the similarities between the Accounting and Maths she had done at school and the work she did at university. It is important to note that the greater proximity of these two Discourses is due to the nature of the Commerce Foundation Discourses rather than because the school Kerry went to was more successful in preparing her and her classmates for university Discourses more generally.

4.4. Tshepo

Tshepo would be viewed by the university as a 'non-traditional' student but at times he said things which made me see him as a very traditional student in the sense of belonging to a long tradition of learning. He was curious and interested in aspects of the university which did not directly affect him. He seemed to like gaining knowledge for its own sake and not just for the sake of the job he could get with his degree. He was studying Science but when I asked him if he thought ELAP was useful he said.

> *I think it's useful, because I like to learn everything. If it was possible I would do all the subjects. (24/4)*

Even at school, he would have preferred to do History instead of Biology with his Physics

and Maths but his school did not allow such 'mixed' subject combinations. He was the only one of the three students who asked me about my research and about my experiences at school and university.

Tshepo's second ELAP tutor described him as "very nice, kind of decent". She said:

> *He's kind of quite an earnest guy. I got the feeling that he was trying and that he wanted to. I certainly don't remember having hassles with him about say handing in.*

At first Tshepo was very reserved with me and he never opened up in quite the same way that Kerry did which was probably due to a combination of personality and gender differences. He relaxed more and more with me as time went on and in 1997 he continued to visit me once or twice a term. Of the three students he was by far the most organised and motivated in his work and the most reliable as far as attending meetings was concerned. He never missed a meeting unless he had contacted me in advance to let me know that he would not be able to make it. He would sometimes forget to bring me assignments but he usually only needed one reminder. The one area where I noticed a lack of organization was his files. I saw his Physics file and his ELAP file and they were both very messy with none of the papers punched and no sense of organisation at all. I don't know how he managed to work from these files for exams but in most other ways he seemed to cope with his work quite well.

Tshepo's ELAP tutor for the first half of the year described him as "very quiet" which his second tutor agreed with. His first tutor said that he "writes fairly well" but his second tutor said that his writing was very weak. The second tutor said:

> *You know how in a class there are certain students you get to know, well he wasn't one of them. He was just too quiet, kind of never drew attention to*

himself in any way, he was just sort of there.

From my observation of ELAP classes I think there were differences between Kerry and Tshepo although neither of them spoke much in class and they were both slightly "anonymous" or "just there". Kerry did not seem interested in ELAP and it showed in her facial expression during ELAP classes and the fact that she said very little even when they were working in small groups or pairs. Tshepo did not speak in front of the whole class but when they worked in smaller groups he did seem to participate and when lecturers, tutors or other students were talking he seemed to be listening and to be interested in what was being said.

Of the three students, Tshepo felt most like my equal although I am not entirely sure why. He seemed to be working **with** me in my research whereas with Lusanda in particular I sometimes felt that we were working against each other. Tshepo seemed to understand more of what I said in the interviews and wrote in the letters than either of the others. I found that by the end of the year I was simplifying my English less for him than for Lusanda and Kerry. All three students would sometimes say something that did not answer the question I had asked. Tshepo would sometimes realise that this had happened and stop speaking and the two of us could then negotiate the meaning of what I was actually asking. He may have been doing nothing more than responding to my facial expression but this is not something that the other two students ever did. The ability to recognise and repair breakdowns in communication, which Canale and Swain call "strategic competence" (Wolfson, 1989: 47), is probably of great use to second-language speakers but it is an ability that Lusanda and Kerry seemed to lack.

While my view of Lusanda may have been coloured by my frustration with him, my view of Tshepo may similarly have been coloured by his "niceness" and his reliability and the feeling of trust that seemed to develop between us over the year.

Tshepo was a Northern Sotho speaker from the Northern Province, a fact which had a significant effect on his experiences at Rhodes University. He listed his other languages as English and Tswana. In the matriculation exams he had received 28 points, which was the same as Lusanda. He was admitted to Rhodes University to do a Science degree, with the restriction that his degree had to be taken over four years. He could have done mainstream subjects but he had chosen to do Foundation subjects[8]. His subjects were Maths, Physics, Computer Science and ELAP.

4.4.1. Tshepo's Primary Discourse

Tshepo seems to have had two homes, one with his mother in a rural area and one with his aunt and cousins in a township outside Pietersburg which is where he lived while he went to school. He never mentioned a father or an uncle. Tshepo said that at home he only spoke Northern Sotho but he watched English television programmes and read English newspapers. He told me that his mother could speak Afrikaans but not English and that his aunt could speak English. In the model (Figure 5.) Tshepo's primary Discourse, like those of the other two students, is shown as having included a small amount of English.

[8] Unlike the Commerce Foundation course which is a set course, Science foundation students have a choice of subjects.

I asked him how far his mother had gone at school.

T: *I'm not sure but I think it's standard six. But some of her younger sisters are teachers. I think the reason why she didn't go for that is she is the eldest. So she had to help with her younger sisters.*
J: *What does your aunt do, the one you lived with?*
T: *She works at this magistrate's office. But I don't know what she do. I think it's administration. (14/8)*

He told me that his aunt had studied at the University of the North a few years before, so a weak influence is shown on his model (Figure 5.) between university Discourses and his primary Discourse although this has been done with some reservation since it must be recognised that the Discourses of the historically-black universities in South Africa are not the same as those of the historically-white universities. Jansen (1991) writes that "the black universities have long reflected a marginalised position in the national production and distribution of knowledge in South Africa" (25) and Ralekheto (1991) argues that these universities "were not meant to sharpen the critical skills of students as was the case at white universities" (104).

Tshepo's family life shows the danger of thinking of the primary Discourse purely in terms of a nuclear family. I did not recognise the significance of his aunt having studied at the University of the North until I discovered that he had actually lived with his aunt. In 1997 one of the cousins Tshepo lived with went to UCT and another one planned to start university, probably at Rhodes, in 1998. It is likely that with this entire generation starting to attend historically-white universities, there will be a significant impact on the primary Discourses they pass on to their children.

4.4.2. Secondary Discourses of School

4.4.2.1. Language of Learning and Teaching

In a meeting in March with Kerry and Tshepo, Kerry said that her teachers would use Xhosa to explain things to the students. Tshepo said:

> *My teachers, they didn't have this thing of explaining to us in our mother-tongue. We only used English. If you don't understand they don't care. They helped us to learn English. (18/3)*

In an interview in August, however, he said:

> *Sometimes when the Sotho teachers see you don't, you totally don't understand, then they explain it in Sotho. (14/8)*

Tshepo also told me that he had participated in study groups with his schoolmates and that the language they had used in these groups was English. It seems that although there was some Northern Sotho spoken in Tshepo's classes, this was less than the amount of Xhosa used in Lusanda and Kerry's classes. His secondary Discourses of school are therefore shown in the model (Figure 5.) as consisting of more English than the school Discourses of the other two students.

Tshepo wrote a short piece for me on his experiences of learning English and I think it is worth quoting the whole piece. He wrote:

> From 1978 to 1984 I don't think there was a single word of English I understood. From 1984 to 1988 I understood little of English because at this level we were taught how to greet, thank, etc. Let me say we were taught a basic.
>
> From 1989 I started doing all my subjects in English and that's where my English improved a little bit. But I can't say it improved like that because our teachers were not English speaking, they claimed to speak it. At this time we had T.V. at home, I used to watch cartoons and some films which were in English. Where I do not understand my aunt will explain for me if she is watching. This happened until 1991 when I went to high school.
>
> At high school we had English teacher who could speak English fluently because she has been at USA for a long time. My English was better at this time because she would not speak with us in Sotho. This made me to

> have a lot of interest in learning English. She would also arrange debates or topic which we will present in front of other students at all times.
>
> Unfortunately in 1995 in my matric she went back to the US and we had a new teacher who was lazy and didn't attend some of his periods. In 1996 when I came to Rhodes I realised that I still have more to learn. But I've noticed that I am better than before.

He shows an awareness of the problems of being taught English by teachers who are not themselves fluent in the language. Almost all of his English learning seems to have taken place at school, but there was some learning of English within the primary Discourse from watching television with his aunt.

4.4.3. Attitude to English and Other Languages

In his June ELAP exam, Tshepo wrote on the topic "Do you think English should be adopted as the major official language in South Africa?" He gave the advantages of English as being a language used in science, technology and economics world-wide and the idea that English is the language that "will bring South Africans together". He wrote that "if it was not because of english, we especially Africans we would be fighting for our languages to be the one which are official languages".

When I asked him about this in an interview he said:

> *This black people, they have a problem with speaking their languages. Like, I speak Northern Sotho and another person speaks Tsonga, then we start to think that Tsongas are people of low grade. That's how it works and that's what I don't like. That why I think English should be an official language. And if that Tsonga person cannot speak, only Tsonga, I start to laugh at her or him, or think he's crazy. And the other thing - most of the Zulus, they think Zulu is number one South African black language. (5/8)*

It seems that his preference for English as the major official language is based as much on a rejection of other African languages as on the benefits of English itself. He told me that he could speak some Zulu and understand it because of the time he had spent in Alexandra

township but he had not indicated on the questionnaire I had given him that he could speak Zulu. This is probably because of the negative attitude he has towards its speakers.

In the same essay he wrote that another advantage of English is "freedom", "because if I didn't do my highschooling with English I wouldn't got admision at Rhodes. So, it gives me the freedom to go to what ever place I want to go". As a Northern Sotho speaker, Tshepo would never have been able to travel to the Eastern Cape to continue with his education without English so it is clear that English had played an important role in his own life. He also knew that he would need English in his job when he left university. He told me about a programme he used to listen to on Radio Metro about computers and hearing that "*if you want to use computers you need English*" (14/8).

By travelling to the Eastern Cape to study, Tshepo entered a student population in which the majority of black students speak Xhosa and found that the language of his own primary Discourse received no recognition. The fact that he could not speak Xhosa marked him as an outsider. He said that if people "*don't hear you speaking Xhosa, they think that you are from Zimbabwe*" (28/5).

In the exam essay, Tshepo wrote "in my township English has started to be used as the major official language and when children are born they get to be taught english rather than Northern Sotho". We talked about this in a meeting.

T: *Ja, that is what is happening. In the Zone that I was living at, Zone 4, most of the people are using that Sotho. All their children - they start to speak English all the time. They don't speak Sotho.*
J: *Did you hear quite a lot of English?*
T: *Ja.*

J: *Do you think that has helped you now?*
T: *Ja, I think so.*
J: *That's interesting, I didn't know that was happening.*
T: *Even my younger cousin, she was living with us, she's been in grade 2, sub B, she's not at this Model C school but she can speak English. It's because she speaks English to the kids who are at these schools.*
J: *Do you think that's a good thing?*
T: *Ja, I do. (5/8)*

As indicated above, English is clearly valued in Tshepo's community which should reduce the conflict between his Sotho Discourses and his English Discourses but this was not always the case. In his exam essay he wrote:

> We blacks lose our culture because of English. It make us to behave the strange way towards our culture since we start knowing english we start to act like real english speakers and adopt every action they perform.

This shows evidence of tension or conflict between Tshepo's different Discourses. He was critical of people who "lose their culture" and said that this happens to people who go to Model C schools. I asked him if this was from speaking English or from interacting with white children.

> *No, I don't think it's because of living with these people. I think it's from speaking English. When they speak English they have a tendency of thinking that, I don't know, maybe they think that they are no longer blacks. (5/8)*

He was critical of other people who did this but he also realised that there was a danger that other people would see him in this way because he had chosen to go to the university equivalent of a Model C school. He said that his family thought that this would happen to him. During this discussion, Tshepo was as emphatic and emotional as I ever saw him get. He was obviously very concerned about the tension that his coming to Rhodes was creating. Gee (1990) argues that tension and conflict are "particularly acute when they involve tension and conflict between one's primary Discourse and a dominant secondary Discourse" (158) and this tension can only be increased when the dominant Discourse is in a powerful,

dominant language while the language of the primary Discourse has legal but little societal recognition. Tshepo suggested that the problem was that he was used to using words from English while speaking Sotho which was normal in the township where he had lived with his aunt, but when he went home to his mother in a rural area this was seen as the result of attending an English university.

> *Sometimes, there are some words in Sotho, I don't know some words in Sotho, I only know them in English. And they do have names in Sotho. So when I mention them they tell me that "because now you can speak a little bit of English you start to use English all the time." And they are very wrong because I grew up like this - you use some words in English and some in Afrikaans. Maybe it's because now I am not staying at the same place as I was staying when I was at school. (5/8)*

Although his mother may have seen him as "too English", Tshepo was aware of the limitations of his English speaking abilities. He said that he did not know "the rules for speaking English" but by listening to other people, especially English first-language speakers, he could work out how to use certain words or constructions. He distinguished between how English L1 speakers and other ESL speakers reacted to his imperfect use of English. He said that most first-language speakers would simplify their language to accommodate him. He also said that they would correct him, not in a negative way, but by modelling the correct use of the word or structure. He said that he liked this although some people felt that they were being made fun of.

> *If they [EL1 speakers] see that you are not good in English they try to help, they don't use these big words. A black person, if he or she can speak English fluently ... That person if he or she hears that you can't speak English very well she's going to put more pressure on you by using big words.*
> *These second language speakers, they are the ones who put pressure on you if you can't speak English. I don't know why they are doing that. Because they were like everyone else before they can speak it. (25/9)*

This behaviour is a clear indication of the value of English in the lives of ESL students. The students who can speak English well are obviously aware of the social and economic

advantages that go with this ability and are unwilling to share these advantages. De Kadt (1993) suggests that,

> ...quite apart from the greater or lesser communicative success of first- and second-language English, the societal power these speakers wield will be a function of their closeness to the standard: it is the educated users of English, not of the vernaculars, who are recognised as elites in South Africa (161/162).

This was the clearest example in my data of the power and value of English Discourses.

4.4.4. Moving from the Secondary Discourses of School to those of the University

Tshepo applied to the University of the Witwatersrand and Rhodes University and was admitted to both universities but decided to go to Rhodes. Tshepo did not know anyone who had been to Rhodes but he had read about the university in newspaper articles on the Grahamstown Arts Festival. He also liked the fact that it was far away from home, although this was a problem when he could not afford to go home for short vacations.

> *I have this full [enough] of people I know. I used to think if I go to the university where there are a lot of people I know I think I will not get a chance to study. I will always fool around. (28/5)*

4.4.4.1. Language

Tshepo had been accustomed to using a lot of English in his secondary Discourses of school, so the move to an English medium university was not as great for him as for the other two students in terms of academic Discourses. He did, however, think that it was different being taught by English first-language speakers. The main difference that he experienced was in having to use English almost all of the time in his Discourses outside of the classroom. He only knew one or two other people who spoke or understood Northern Sotho so he had to speak English to everyone else. This supports De Klerk's (1996) finding that 72% of

speakers of South African black languages other than Xhosa, at Rhodes, speak English "always" or "mostly" outside the classroom (121).

Both Lusanda and Kerry told me that they would often use Xhosa when they worked in groups in ELAP. This was obviously quite common and it created a problem for Tshepo who could not understand Xhosa.

J: *Do you sometimes find that when you are working in a group they start speaking in Xhosa and you have to say "hey, I don't understand".*

T: *I have that problem on Monday last week when we are split into groups. The group I was in, they were all Xhosas and they speak Xhosa and I didn't know what to do. Then I tell them that I don't understand but then they didn't care they just spoke Xhosa. I sat back and I couldn't do anything. (27/3)*

This was not an isolated incident. When his ELAP group met with their class representative the discussion took place in Xhosa and Tshepo objected but they continued anyway. He said that he thought he was the only person in his group who could not at least understand Xhosa although there were other students for whom Xhosa was not their first language. Tshepo said that there was someone with whom he usually sat in ELAP classes and when it was just the two of them this student would speak English "*but if another Xhosa person comes, then they start speaking Xhosa*" (16/10) and that in this way they were forcing him to learn Xhosa. Tshepo is not the only student who has experienced this and it does not only occur at Rhodes University. Thesen (1994) quotes from a course evaluation of an EAP course in which a student wrote:

> You must try to enforce English to be the medium of communication in the groups because some people uses their mother tongues to discuss, of which we don't understand - otherwise abolish group work - please, please, please (60).

Unlike the other two students, Tshepo's university Discourses are shown in the model (Figure 5.) as being almost entirely in English since he had very few opportunities to speak Northern

Sotho. A small portion of the university Discourses is shown to be in Xhosa but these are Discourses that Tshepo has little access to, although by the time he leaves Rhodes University he may speak more Xhosa and have greater access to Xhosa Discourses.

4.4.4.2. Teaching and Learning

Tshepo acknowledged the lack of historical influences from university Discourses on his secondary Discourses of schooling. He said that his teachers had "scared" the class by telling them how difficult university work is.

> *What's surprising is that even our teachers they tell us these stories about university and some of them have not been to university, they have only been to teachers training college so you wonder where they got this information from. (18/9)*

Tshepo did not experience the same kinds of disruptions in his schooling that Lusanda had experienced. He did, however, describe some of the problems he had had at school, particularly with his teachers. He said that his Biology teacher had left the school in April and that the teacher who started teaching them in July was a first-year teacher. Tshepo said: *"I don't think he was qualified enough. He was not teaching us very well."* (24/4). To make up for the bad teaching he would watch the learning channel on television for both Biology and Science. This caused problems for him when what he saw on television was different from what he was being taught at school.

T: *So I used to watch it [learning channel] so when I go to class when my teacher just says this I start to argue with her because I didn't hear that person telling me these things.*
J: *Who do you think was right?*
T: *Ja, the television because the guy who was teaching this physics and chemistry is a professor of science at Wits. William Smith. And my problem was she had a short temper. If you argue with her, she used to leave the class.*
J: *So you used to chase her out of the class?*
T: *No, sometimes I just keep quiet because I don't want to chase her out of the class.*

J: *Maybe she felt quite unsure.*
T: *Maybe she thought that we think that she doesn't know anything. (21/8)*

The standard of teaching in DET school is generally low but the teaching of science subjects seems to be particularly problematic. According to Starfield (1990b):

> A situation has developed in schools in which science is being taught in English by teachers who are not adequately qualified in language or content, and whose academic literacy is not well-established in the L1 or English (87).

Tshepo's Science and Biology teachers may have been incompetent but it seems that there are students who have experienced even worse teaching. I showed Tshepo an extract from Starfield's (1990b) article which has a transcription of a maths lesson in which the teacher gives the students a definition of a graph with no explanation and the students repeat the definition until they "know" it. Tshepo said that his teachers were not that bad but that he knew that this kind of teaching did occur.

Another difference that Tshepo experienced in the teaching at university was in the amount of responsibility he was required to take for his own learning.

> *Actually the way they teach us is different. At school, I think, they spoonfeed us and here there is no chance of being spoonfed. You have to study all the time and you have to do examples. They expect you to do many examples at home. (21/8)*

An additional problem in many DET schools is the lack of equipment necessary to do scientific experiments. Tshepo said that at university in Physics most of the time was spent on practical work, doing experiments either individually or in groups which was very different from high school.

> *If they were talking about experiments, at school we students, we don't get to do experiments on our own. We just watch our teachers. Sometimes they make mistakes. And then it will not work and we laugh. (21/8)*

Tshepo had studied Maths at both school and university. I asked him if there were any similarities.

T: *No. Actually I can say school work is the basic, they [at university] apply more than school. We are going deeper.*
J: *And the lecturing, how it is taught?*
T: *It's fine because that guy he explain everything like we are maybe standard six.*
J: *So is it boring?*
T: *Sometimes I find it boring but I understand the reason why he does that. I think he understands that there are some students who have difficulty understanding because we were not taught well in matric. (2/10)*

When I asked Tshepo if ELAP essays were different from the essays he had written at school he said:

> *They are different but not a lot. With the school essays, second language they check your language and for this one they check the evidence and these things they want like evidence, support our evidence. (16/10)*

Tshepo, like the other two students, experienced difficulty taking notes during lectures. He found one of his Computer Science lecturers difficult to understand because of his accent which was unfamiliar to him. He said that the lecturer was from "somewhere in Africa". Flowerdew (1994) suggests that students will find it easiest to understand lecturers from their own language background and that the next most comprehensible will be "those lecturers with the accent closest to the model learners have been exposed to in their studies and in society at large" (24/25) which in Tshepo's case would be a White South African accent rather than any other African accent. Tshepo told me that his Maths lecturer wrote the notes on the board for the class to copy:

T: *But he likes to write things down, and that's how I write everything that I can. Because when I read them it's like I'm listening to what he is saying at the present time.*
J: *But if he didn't write it down, you wouldn't take notes from what he was saying?*
T: *Ja, I wouldn't take notes from what he is saying. (2/10)*

This shows far more student support than Lusanda experienced in his mainstream classes.

Tshepo experienced more general changes in his life by coming to university apart from the subject-specific differences.

T: *Ja, I think my lifestyle has changed. ... it is very much different to the way I was living before. Maybe it is because I meet with different people with different languages. I'm not living the same way as I was living before.*
J: *Do you think it's mostly being in res that is different.*
T: *Ja, I can say so. Maybe because I am very far from [home].*
J: *Are there differences in how and where you study?*
T: *Ja, I think there are differences in how I study. Here I study a lot unlike at school. It's more. That's what it's supposed to be. (28/5)*

Like Kerry, Tshepo did not experience an enormous difference between his Maths and Physics classes in terms of the difficulty of the work and there were clear similarities in the content of the subjects in the two places. Tshepo's school Discourses are thus seen in the model (Figure 5.) as being closer to those of the university than Lusanda's. This is partly because of the fact that he was doing foundation courses that take into account the fact that DET students have not been prepared properly for university study. These courses try to start from basics rather than taking for granted that students know how to do things from their secondary education. There were some links between Maths and Physics at school and at university but Tshepo's other Science subject was Computer Science which was a Discourse that was entirely new to him.

4.4.5. Disciplinary Discourses

4.4.5.1. Computer Science

Tshepo decided to study and major in Computer Science despite having never used a computer before coming to university. He said that he *"just used to hear about people who*

were doing this Computer Science." (13/3)

Tshepo chose to do foundation rather than mainstream courses. He said that this was because: "*I knew that I didn't have a good background with computers so I have to start with the foundation*" (28/5). Early in the year he spent a lot of time working in the computer laboratories not only on the work that he had to do for Computer Science but to get practice in working with computers. Later in the year, as he become more familiar with the computers, he would only work in the computer laboratories when he had Computer Science practicals to complete.

He said that there were a lot of new words in Computer Science but that this was not a problem because the lecturers explained them and he became accustomed to using these words.

T: *Sometimes they just give these names from English but they interpret them different.*
J: *For example?*
T: *Ja, loop. What is a loop in English?*
J: *It's like if you've got a piece of string and it's tied in a circle.*
T: *Ja, but in Computer Science we use that word for "repeating". But I think it's more the same [i.e. the meaning is similar]. (2/10)*

Shay, Bond and Hughes (1994) comment that:

> Students will firstly be confronted with new concepts. Even more disconcerting is what appears to be a familiar term or concept that in reality is unfamiliar, due to its discipline-specific meaning (131).

Clayton (1995) argues that part of students' problems with vocabulary lies in the fact that terms are taught "without taking into account the students' intuitive understanding" (1). English L1 speakers may have an intuitive understanding of a word like "loop" but Tshepo was not familiar with its meaning in everyday English so he would not have experienced the

false feeling of familiarity with the word that an English L1 speaker might have done. There are probably few subject areas that are more "jargon-filled" than Computer Science, and the situation is complicated by the number of programming languages that exist and the differences between them. Tshepo's hand-out for the first term of Computer Science included a vocabulary list for which the students were expected to find definitions. Some of the words on the list were: Input, Output, Data, I/O units, internal memory, ROM, RAM, EPROm, disk drive, Hardware, default drive, write protect, operating system and mouse. In the June Computer Science exam, the students had to define two terms and give the full names for seven acronyms, all of which Tshepo managed to do successfully.

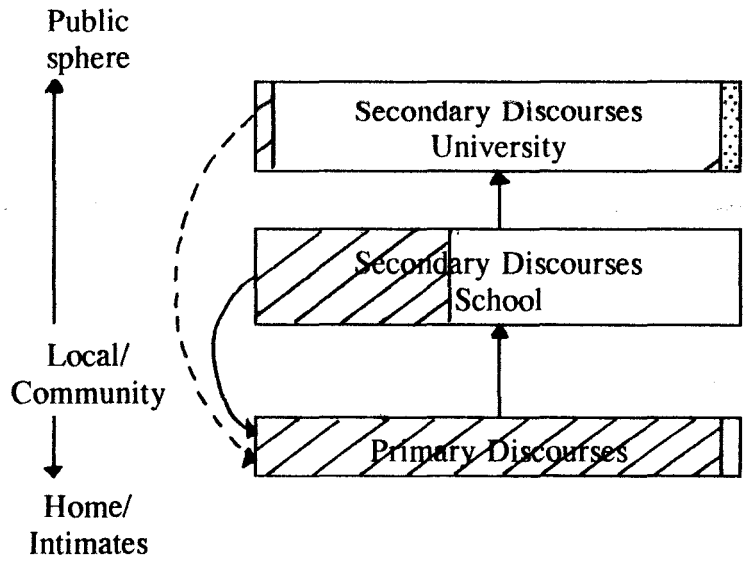
4.4.5.2. English Language for Academic Purposes

Tshepo had not been required to do ELAP but had chosen to do it. He said that he wanted to do ELAP to improve his English and to "*communicate well with everyone*" (13/3). He had expected ELAP to be more like his English classes at school which included learning a lot of grammar but in ELAP there is not much explicit grammar teaching. Tshepo said that he would not have taken ELAP if he had known more about it. Whereas Kerry found the content of ELAP boring she eventually realised that some of the skills would be of use to her. Tshepo, on the other hand, quite enjoyed the content of ELAP, particularly the Monday guest lectures, but did not think that the skills would be helpful to him in his degree. He did virtually no writing in his other subjects apart from taking down notes, and certainly none that was anything like the kind of writing done in ELAP. In his three Science courses he was assessed purely through tests. I told him about universities in other countries which have specific English courses for Science students and he thought that was better than having a general course like ELAP which he had realised was designed mainly for Arts and Social

Science students. He did not think that Science students should do ELAP although he was not as negative about ELAP as I would have expected him to be considering how little transfer of skills was possible. Although Tshepo told me that being taught how to take notes in ELAP was useful to him, he later said that he still had problems with this.

4.4.6. Tshepo's Model

Figure 5. Tshepo's Model



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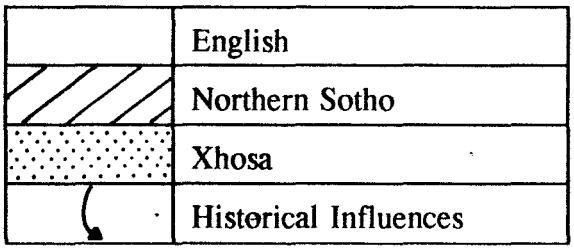

Like the other two students, there is some English shown in Tsehpo's primary Discourse to account for his use of English newspapers and television programmes. His secondary Discourses of school are more in English than either of the other two students but there is still

some use of the L1. His university Discourses are almost entirely in English since Tshepo found only a few people at Rhodes with whom he could speak Northern Sotho so he spoke English almost all of the time. Some Xhosa is shown in his university Discourses but Tshepo has very little access to the Xhosa Discourses to which he is exposed. This may change over time if he starts to learn Xhosa. A weak historical influence on the primary Discourse from a university Discourse is shown because the only source of influence was that his aunt had attended the University of the North. No political Discourse is shown in the model since Tshepo did not participate in any political activities though he was aware of political events on campus and in South Africa.

4.5. Comparing and Contrasting the Experiences of the Three Students

At the end of this chapter is a diagram (Figure 6.[9]) showing all three models drawn for the three students which makes it possible to draw attention to the similarities and differences between them. For all three students the primary Discourse is almost entirely in the L1, with a very small part in English. All three students had their secondary Discourses of school partly in English and partly in the L1, although there are differences in the degree to which this occurred. In a study such as this it is impossible to quantify exactly what proportion of each student's schooling took place in English but the model does show relative differences between the three students based on their descriptions. For example, Lusanda's school Discourse is shown as being half in English and half in Xhosa. This does not mean that this is the exact ratio of the two languages used in his classes. Rather, it is meant to show that his schooling made use of more English than Kerry's and less than Tshepo's.

[9] The table for this model is the same as that for Figure 5.

Both Kerry and Lusanda have their university Discourses partly in Xhosa since they both used Xhosa in group work in the classroom and in discussions about work outside the classroom. Kerry seemed to have used Xhosa to a greater extent than Lusanda since she seldom spoke English and this is reflected in the model. Again this is not meant to measure the amount of Xhosa used but merely to show the differences between the students. As described above, Tshepo's model shows his exposure to Xhosa Discourses at university although he did not really understand these in his first year.

In comparison with Lusanda, both Tshepo and Kerry have their school Discourses closer to those of the university since they were doing foundation courses which took into account the nature of their school Discourses and attempted to cover similar work to improve their understanding. Lusanda's school Discourses are at more of a distance from the university Discourses because the disruption in his schooling is at the root of at least some of the behaviour which he showed at university, such as missing classes or handing in work late, which is not valued by the university. Another reason is that his courses were mainstream courses that were not closely related to his school Discourses either in content or in terms of what was required of the students. Lusanda's model shows the influence of political Discourses on his educational Discourses. This is not present in the models of either of the other two students since they did not mention anything overtly political or participate in student politics as Lusanda did. Kerry has an Accounting Discourse shown on her model since Accounting was a topic of conversation with her mother, a subject she studied at school and university, and her chosen career.

4.5.1. A Reflection on the Model

As stated in section 4.1.1., it is not possible for a static model to portray a dynamic process. The model does not show tension and conflict between Discourses, such as that experienced by Tshepo between his primary and university Discourses, or that experienced by Lusanda between his political and educational Discourses. It also shows the relationship between Lusanda's educational and political Discourses, and Kerry's Accounting and other Discourses in the same way, as merely being linked in some way. Obviously there are differences in how these various Discourses are connected but this cannot be represented graphically. The model is not a substitute for all the findings presented in this chapter, since it cannot possibly represent the particularistic nature of the data gathered in an ethnographic study such as this one. What the model does achieve is to highlight some of the differences and similarities in the experiences of the three students. It shows the differences in the amount of English used in their school Discourses and it shows the relative distance between their various Discourses. It also shows other Discourses, such as political or Accounting Discourses that were particularly relevant to the Lusanda and Kerry's experiences at university. The model is not a substitute for the data presented in this chapter, but it does provide a graphic summary of some of the most important parts of the data.

4.5.2. November 1996 and Beyond

Table 2: The results of the three students at the end of 1996.

Lusanda		Kerry		Tshepo	
ELAP	52	ELAP	46	ELAP	48
History	36	Accounting	57	Computer Science	70
Politics	38	Mathematics	56	Mathematics	82
		Statistics	47	Physics	54

Both Lusanda and Kerry were excluded from Rhodes University on academic grounds since they failed two of their first year credits. Lusanda's marks are, however, far lower than Kerry's probably because History and Politics are mainstream courses. The fact that he passed ELAP after failing it fairly badly in the June exams suggests that he may have been capable of passing his first year, had he done other foundation subjects[10]. On the other hand, all of Lusanda's class records would have been at least a little higher if he had handed in all of his assignments on time and not been penalised by losing marks on his late assignments. This probably would not have affected his results to the extent of changing a fail to a pass but it does suggest that even if he had done foundation courses, his own self-destructive behaviour may have caused him to fail these too. In 1997, Lusanda registered for the Linguistics and English Language I after-hours course but he had dropped out of this by the middle of the year.

Tshepo failed ELAP by two percent but passed all his other subjects, including receiving a first for Mathematics. He was placed on academic probation but returned to Rhodes in 1997

[10] There are, however, very few foundation subjects available to Arts and Social Sciences students, as will be discussed in section 5.4.2.

to continue with his degree. He experienced difficulties with Physics, but, according to his own reports, seemed to be coping successfully with all his other subjects. In 1997 he received a bursary which requires him to continue to Honours level and which ensures him employment at the end of his time at university, providing, of course, that he continues to pass.

In the following chapter I will discuss what can be learnt from the experiences of the three students described above. I will discuss the implications of this both for further changes at Rhodes University and for further research that will help to provide a basis for these changes.

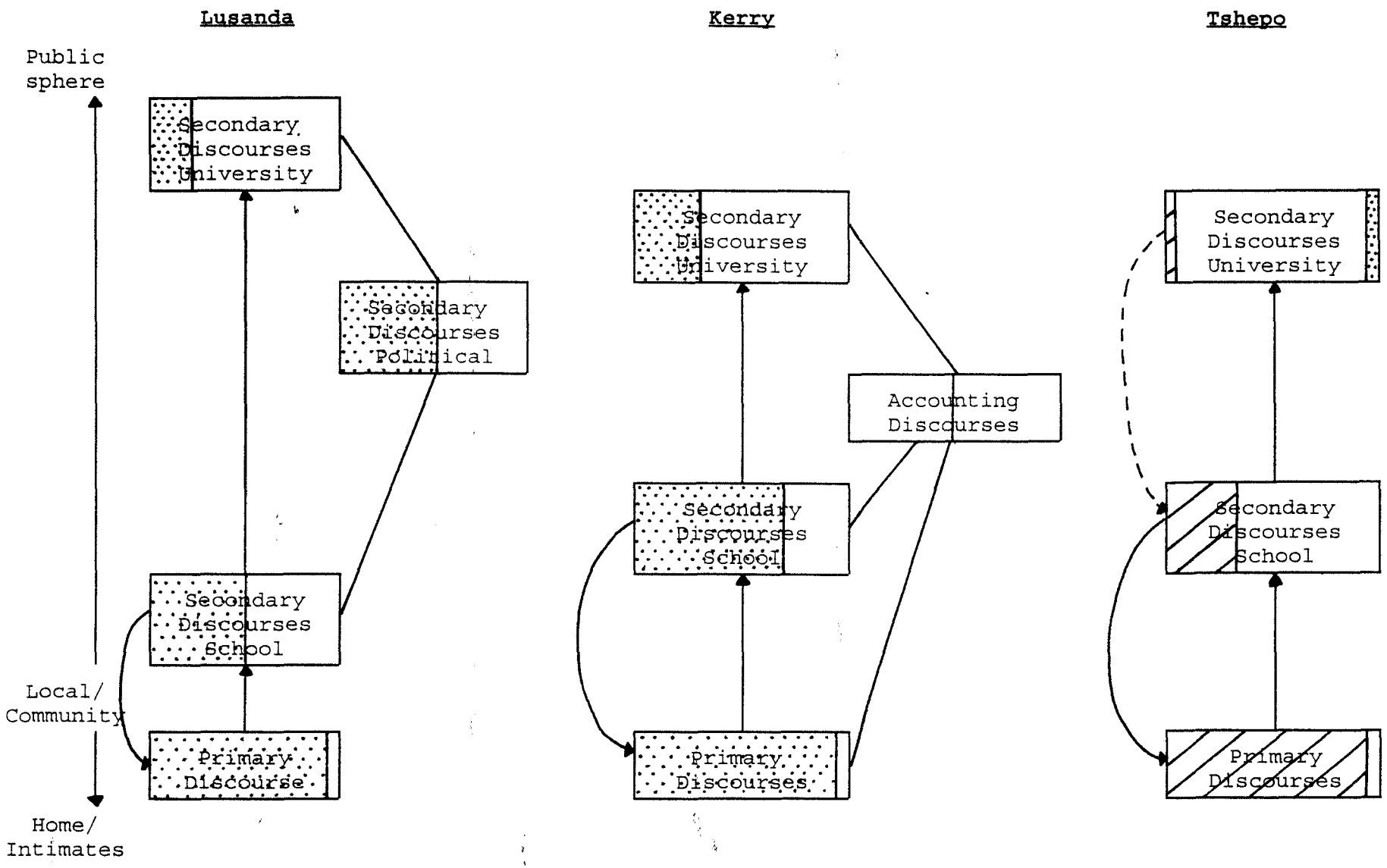

Figure 6. Model Comparing the Three Students

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter the data presented in chapter 4 will be discussed in terms of what it shows about the kinds of students who are currently entering tertiary education and how appropriate Rhodes University's response to these students has been. The implications of these findings for future planning in the university and for future research will also be discussed.

5.2. The Data as a Description of Three 'Non-Traditional' Students

The data presented in chapter 4 serves mostly as confirmation of what is already known about 'non-traditional' students. All three students have primary and other secondary Discourses at some distance from those of the university. The education that these students received in DET schools did not prepare them adequately for the demands of university study and, in Lusanda's case, his school experiences not only left him without some of the academic skills needed at university but also had a detrimental effect on his attitude to his work and his motivation. There is little or no historical influence on the primary Discourse of these three students from university Discourses although there is some influence from the Discourses of the school since all three had parents who had received some schooling but only Tshepo lived with someone who had attended a university.

All three students experienced at least a part of their school Discourses in their first language although the official policy was that they should have been taught entirely in English. It has been recognised that this policy was seldom put into practice (Hartshorne, 1992; Walters,

1996) so the language experiences of these three students at school cannot be seen as unusual.

The data from the interviews also confirms De Klerk's (1996) finding that ESL students do not necessarily use English all the time once they enter an HWESU and that the amount of English they do use outside of the classroom depends on what their L1 is. This is effectively determined by whether or not there are sufficient numbers of people at the university who speak the same language as them.

All three students showed a slightly ambivalent attitude towards English, the language of the secondary Discourses they need to acquire at University. They were all aware of the advantages of knowing English but were also aware of the effect it can have on other languages in the country. Furthermore, despite their awareness of the necessity of learning English for their job prospects, all three students showed a reluctance to speak English.

5.3. The University's Response to the Three 'Non-Traditional' Students

Rhodes University admitted all three of these 'non-traditional' students on certain conditions. Lusanda was required to take only three subjects, one of which had to be ELAP. Kerry was admitted to the Commerce Foundation course which includes ELAP as one of the required credits. Tshepo was accepted on condition that he take his degree over four years. He chose to do Science Foundation courses and he chose to do ELAP. I will now discuss what can be learnt from the language experiences of each of these three students as they entered, or failed to enter academic discourse communities at Rhodes University, and the implications of the findings for the university.

The term "discourse community" has been used fairly broadly in this study but Chiseri-Strater (1991) suggests that:

> Community should imply a place where the norms of behavior and rituals and routines of language are implicit to all its members, not just to those in control. Unless the concept of community is consciously built onto a course ... the idea of discourse community(ies) refers mainly to professional scholars' circles... Rather than having **community** serve as a default term, I think it should be reserved for places that make an effort to initiate students into their institutions, disciplines or classrooms (143/144).

The various discourse groups that the students attempted to enter will be assessed in terms of whether they were "discourse communities" in the sense in which this is used by Chiseri-Strater.

5.3.1. Lusanda

Of the three students, Lusanda should have found the skills taught in ELAP easiest to transfer because these skills were fairly obviously required in his other subjects, History and Politics. He did not, however, always find it possible to make this transfer. He said that ELAP helped him with skills of arguing and discussing, but he was unable to make use of these skills in his Politics tutorials because of the complexity of the work and because of the need to "compete" with English L1 speakers. There was an enormous discrepancy between his experiences in ELAP and his experiences in other courses on a number of levels.

ELAP aims to draw on students' "knowledge and life experiences, especially initially, and to shift from working with familiar, real-life experiences to more abstract, decontextualised, academic tasks" (Dison & Law-Viljoen, 1995: 499). ELAP attempts to scaffold tasks so that students start with simpler readings and assignments and then move on to more complex tasks. The ELAP 1996 annual report states that for the following year "The level of each

written assignment will become progressively more sophisticated until by term 4 students are able to write an academic essay ... that is comparable to a reasonable first-year essay" (11). What this fails to take into account is that students in mainstream Arts and Social Science courses are expected to write "reasonable first-year essays" within weeks of arriving at university. While Lusanda was writing about his name and his language in ELAP, both fairly simple, concrete tasks, his assignment for the first term in Politics was to "Contrast and Compare the Concepts of the State of Nature in the Political Philosophy of Locke and Hobbes", which is cognitively a far more difficult and sophisticated task. He received 52% and 62% for the two ELAP assignments respectively but received 30% for the Politics assignment. Leki (1995a) suggests that,

> In many ESL writing classes, teachers purposely structure writing assignments for success. But to be meaningful, the success must come from overcoming a serious and challenging obstacle ... If writing successes in English class come too easily, these may be insufficiently challenging to serve the purpose of giving students writing experiences they can later refer back to in attempting to address tasks across the curriculum (256).

Some of the later assignments Lusanda wrote in ELAP may have been sufficiently challenging for him to refer back to but at the beginning of the year the writing tasks in ELAP bore little resemblance to those he was required to do in other courses. Both Politics I and History I made some attempt to "initiate students into their ... disciplines", particularly through the use of one or more assignments which made use of the principles of process writing (section 2.9.1.), but they cannot really be considered discourse **communities** in Chiseri-Strater's (1991) sense.

As was shown in Lusanda's section on Politics in chapter 4, the kind of reading Politics students were required to do was very difficult, certainly more difficult than what they were expected to read in ELAP and with far less support. It seems unnecessary, at first-year level,

for students to have read the work of writers such as Hobbes and Locke in the original. There must be texts available that explain the ideas of these writers but which are more accessible and which are at least written in more modern English.

Another example of the difference in what is required of students in ELAP and those in mainstream courses is that in the November exam, ELAP students write two essays in three hours while Politics and History students have to write four essays in the same time for both June and November exams.

The ELAP report states that there was a problem with the Monday lectures by guest lecturers since "despite meetings with visiting lecturers before the lecture to ensure that they understood the level of student and expected outcomes, some of the lectures were pitched at an inappropriately high level" (6). The level of the lectures may well have been inappropriate in terms of the abilities of the ELAP students but from my observations they were, if anything, at a slightly lower level than many mainstream first-year lectures and certainly at a lower level than the lectures Lusanda encountered in his first term of Politics I. The lecturers who visited the ELAP class certainly would not have made their lectures **more** complex than the lectures they usually give to their first-year students which again shows a discrepancy between expectations in the ELAP course and expectations in mainstream courses.

Lusanda was certainly expected to be able to do things in his mainstream courses which were very difficult for him. Some of his problems, however, were of his own making. He had, for example, been taught in ELAP to plan exam essays before writing them but he had failed

to do this. Morrow (1993) argues that learners are "necessarily" agents in their own "epistemological access" and that in order to gain this access they must be "trying to learn" (216). Lusanda may not have been excluded from Rhodes University if his experiences had been different and more suited to his needs and abilities, but his casual attitude to his work and his lack of motivation, which have roots in his previous schooling Discourses, suggest that even this may not have been enough to ensure his continuation in tertiary education. A university can teach students skills and try to be sensitive to their needs, but the university cannot teach motivation.

5.3.2. Kerry

Like Lusanda, Kerry failed two of her subjects and was excluded from Rhodes University, although her marks were not as low as those of Lusanda. I cannot comment on her Mathematics or Statistics classes but I observed two of her Accounting classes and her experiences in a class outside of ELAP were significantly different from Lusanda's. She said that the Accounting lecturer "took care" of the people in the class and that he knew that they "had a problem" (section 4.3.5.2.). My observations confirm this. This is a clear sign that this class was a community in the sense discussed above. Like the ELAP course, which is clearly a **community,** there seemed to be an understanding that the lecturer needed to start from what the students know and can do and work from there. There appeared to be a similar level of teaching and support and awareness of the students' language and learning difficulties in the Accounting foundation class as there was in ELAP. There certainly was not a discrepancy of the magnitude of that experienced by Lusanda when he "stepped outside the safe threshold of the ESL classroom" (Leki, 1995a: 236). Kerry failed two of her Commerce Foundation subjects, nevertheless, but I would suggest that this had more to do

with her emotional and intellectual immaturity than with the kind of teaching that was going on in her classes. She spent quite a lot of time on her work but she didn't want to be challenged and she said: *"I am not someone who thinks. I don't like thinking"* (18/4). In my opinion, she was, thus, not well suited for a university education.

According to Rosenberg (1995b), the ELAP course at Rhodes was designed "with the knowledge that relevance and transfer would be problematic" (484). Kerry's experiences show why this is the case. Her ELAP classes and other foundation classes may have been similar in that they tried to start with what the students know and are able to do, but they were very different in terms of the skills required of the students. Kerry's perception that the content and skills taught in ELAP were irrelevant to the rest of her course seemed to be an accurate and realistic one. If she had been able to continue with her course in 1997, she may well have seen the relevance of some of the skills taught in ELAP but it would then have been too late for her to make the most of the opportunity she had been given to learn academic skills. Because she did not need these skills at the time, this seemed to reduce her motivation in ELAP classes and she probably did not learn as much as she could have done if she had been more motivated.

5.3.3. Tshepo

Tshepo's experiences also help to explain why ELAP is often seen as irrelevant by Science and Commerce students. He did no academic writing at all outside of ELAP and, whereas Kerry would probably been able to apply the skills taught in ELAP later in her degree, it is likely that, as a Science student, Tshepo would never have been required to do any writing of the nature of that taught and tested in ELAP. For him the relevance of ELAP would not

only have been delayed, it would have been absent. The fact that Tshepo only wrote assignments in ELAP points to problems of relevance of ELAP to Science students but it also raises the question of why students are not doing any writing in their Science Foundation courses when there are at least two kinds of writing that they could and probably should be doing. These will be discussed in section 5.4.2. below.

I did not observe any of Tshepo's foundation courses but I could see from his Physics and Computer Science hand-outs that these courses did not take it for granted that the students were familiar with the subjects. What he said about his Science foundation courses suggests that they were all **communities.** As was the case with the ELAP and Commerce Foundation courses, there seemed to be a genuine attempt to ensure that the students received a good grounding in the subjects they had chosen to study before continuing into mainstream courses. This is confirmed by what Tshepo said about his Science Foundation courses and by the fact that he passed all of these subjects at the end of the year. The only subject that he failed was ELAP. The 1996 ELAP report states that,

> ... all tutors were satisfied that the students who passed have the potential to succeed at university and those who failed are not university material ... In addition, it is clear that a student who is unable to write a coherent academic essay in November would not be any better equipped to write one in February (7).

This may make perfect sense if it refers to Arts and Social Science students but it does not take into account the different skills and abilities required in different faculties. The fact that Tshepo passed his other subjects, some rather well, and the fact that he is still at university seems to prove that he is "university material", whether ELAP sees him as such or not. The second part of the statement above shows why this is the case. Tshepo's success in his Science courses is not dependent on his ability to "write a coherent academic essay", so his

failure to do so in ELAP has little bearing on the rest of his university education.

Tshepo's experiences as a Northern Sotho speaker also suggest that lecturers who teach classes of predominantly ESL students need to monitor the language being used by students when they work in groups. Xhosa-speaking students need to be made more sensitive to the difficulties of those students who do not speak Xhosa.

5.4. Implications of the Research for Rhodes University

Bond (1993) argues that there is a need "to adopt a very broad-based approach to developing academic literacy in the South African context" and to "ensure that locating language and learning development within other disciplines is complemented by a diversity of language and learning development programmes" (150). Ridge (1990) claims that "we are not faced with a choice between general academic development help (the infusion model) and specific help (ESP and EAP) but that both will undoubtedly and inevitably have to be presented to meet different needs" (172). So far, Rhodes University has taken a fairly broad-based approach with the development of the ELAP course, Foundation courses and, to a lesser extent, with curriculum development in mainstream courses. There have been calls for the latter to become more of a priority (Dison, 1994: 5). The implications of the study for these three areas will be discussed below.

5.4.1. English Language for Academic Purposes (ELAP)

As described in section 2.8., EAP courses are inevitably problematic, primarily because they are expected to prepare students for a range of different courses in a number of different faculties. All three students had difficulty transferring what they had been taught in ELAP

to their other subjects, though for different reasons. Kerry and Tshepo found what they were taught in ELAP irrelevant to their other courses. These skills were relevant to Lusanda's other courses, but these courses were so abstract and complex that he had difficulty transferring the skills.

All three students experienced particular difficulty with note-taking during lectures. This was taught as a skill during ELAP but this seemed to be a one-off series of classes that had little effect on students' actual problems and once this section on note-taking was over none of the tutors seemed to require the students to take notes during lectures or to check whether they were doing so, (which in many cases they were not). The 1996 ELAP report accepts that the teaching of note-taking was not very successful: "not systematic enough or with enough built-in repetition" (6).

Lebauer (1984) recommends the use of lecture transcripts in the teaching of note-taking skills. He suggests:

> For the non-native speaker, an awareness of the lecture's verbal and non-verbal markers and cohesive devices, and of the different assumptions and inferences that native speakers make when listening to the lecture, can lead to greater ease in predicting and in following the lecturer's thoughts (46).

Boughey (1997) suggests that teaching listening and note-taking skills has its limitations in helping students to take notes in mainstream lectures which she describes as "multi-voiced texts" (5). This suggests that helping students make sense of a lecture really needs to happen within the lecture itself.

Kerry and Tshepo both found that ELAP was not really relevant to their other courses, although it may be the case that ELAP is of more use to Commerce students in their later

years of study. Johnston (1992) writes:

> The degree to which the transfer of language skills to mainstream subjects is likely to occur must be related to the extent to which these subjects, and the lecturers teaching them, require the students to use these skills. It follows that the effectiveness and relevance of what is taught in the ESL programme is largely dependent on the level of demand for and reinforcement of these skills in mainstream courses (23).

Rosenberg (1994) argues that it would be helpful "if members of departments from the various faculties could talk about the direct relevance of EAP to their subjects right at the beginning of the course" (2). This does not seem to occur and one of the reasons for this is probably that it is not really clear to the staff members involved how exactly ELAP is relevant to other courses, especially Commerce and Science courses, or even if it is relevant at all. Rosenberg (1994) refers to the lack of contact between these two Foundation courses and ELAP and suggests that "there has not been much in the way of articulation of how these Foundation programmes see EAP as fitting into their course of study, or of the requirements of the course (in terms of skills and language)" (3). This lack of contact was described as problematic in 1994 but, as yet, nothing seems to have been done to improve the contact between the staff involved in the various courses.

Lusanda's main difficulty was the discrepancy in the level of difficulty of what he was required to do in ELAP and in his mainstream courses. There are two possible explanations for this discrepancy. The one would be that ELAP is just too easy and that it fails to take into account what goes on in other first-year courses. The solution would thus be to make the ELAP staff more aware of what first-year courses are like and to make the ELAP course more challenging, in order to prepare students more successfully for these courses.

The second explanation could be that ELAP is doing what it can to **prepare** students for university study and that it is unrealistic to expect these students to do in their mainstream courses in the beginning of the year what they are expected to do in ELAP only at the end of the year, after a lot of support and a series of graded tasks. The solution to this would be to prevent ELAP students from doing mainstream courses such as Politics I, since the whole reason that they are required to do ELAP is that they have been identified as 'underprepared' for university study. Allowing ELAP students to do courses such as Politics I virtually dooms them to failure and puts an end to their potential academic careers.

I believe that there is some truth in both explanations. ELAP tutors could probably benefit from being more aware of what happens in other courses and what is expected of students but they also need to balance this with the need to take into account their students' abilities. It would not be helpful to just make ELAP more challenging and more like mainstream courses since there are already students who fail ELAP, and it is not perceived by most of the students as an easy course. In the 1996 ELAP course evaluation 52 students described the course as "difficult" or "fairly difficult" while only 21 said that it was "fairly easy" or "easy". The second explanation is more valid but the proposed solution would be more difficult to implement. The suggestion that students who have been identified as needing to do ELAP should be carefully screened in terms of their choice of other subjects, would, ideally, mean that these students would be required to do foundation courses in which their needs are considered and met. Unfortunately, as will be discussed below, the way things stand at Rhodes University at the moment, this solution cannot be implemented immediately.

5.4.2. Foundation Courses

At present Rhodes University has Science and Commerce Foundation Programmes but no such programme exists in the Humanities[1]. There have been one or two foundation subjects offered, which some ELAP students have done, but there has been no comprehensive Foundation **Programme**. The ELAP staff have recognised the need for a Humanities Foundation Programme and suggested this to the Dean of Humanities, in 1997. Although he accepted that this was a good idea in principle, so far nothing has been done to research or set up such a programme (personal communication with ELAP course-coordinator. November 1997).

Rosenthal (1996) describes the advantages of "sheltered classrooms" such as those of foundation courses, in the following way:

> The professor can use specific teaching methods that will increase the students' comprehension by more closely meeting their linguistic needs. The students experience less anxiety since they are not forced to complete with classmates who are native English speakers. The comfortable and supportive environment which is characteristic of a sheltered classroom promotes content learning as well as L2 acquisition (142).

In foundation courses students are in "sheltered classrooms" for one or two years before joining mainstream classes for the rest of their degrees. Bock (1988) argues that "considerable time may be needed for educational measures to take effect" (35) and foundation courses seem to allow students the kind of time and support required to adjust to the requirements of university education.

[1] In 1997 the faculties of Arts and Social Science were combined to form the faculty of Humanities.

Both Kerry and Tshepo did little or no writing in their courses outside of ELAP. The two kinds of writing that they could have been doing are informal writing and writing that is similar to that which they would be required to do in relevant Discourses beyond the university. Informal writing is unlike most academic writing in that it does not have the same conventions or the same requirements. It is not intended to display knowledge for marks but rather to help students assimilate knowledge by making them think about what they know in order to write it on paper. Nightingale (1988) suggests that informal writing "seems to help students to order experience, including intellectual experience, such as reading, listening to lectures, and discussing" (75). Rosenthal (1996) refers to this kind of writing as "writing to learn". She discusses this it in the context of learning science but what she says about it could also be applied to other subjects. She argues that,

> Writing to learn science helps students clarify their thoughts, relate new information presented in class to previous knowledge, and can provide the instructor with feedback on what students do and do not understand. It helps all students overcome a variety of 'barriers to learning' such as difficulties with comprehending the text or making sense of their lecture notes. ESL students stand to gain even more from this opportunity to practice writing informally in English (108).

It was suggested in section 2.5.4.1. that students do not always leave university adequately prepared for the kinds of writing they will be required to do in the Discourses of their jobs. This is particularly problematic for ESL students who cannot be expected to learn the conventions of these kinds of writings by "osmosis" just as they cannot be expected to learn the conventions of academic writing by "osmosis". The second kind of writing that could and probably should be taught in foundation courses is that which students will typically be expected to do when they leave university and enter the workplace. Angelil-Carter (1995) argues, however, that "the limits of explicit teaching of genres outside of the actual contexts

where those genres occur, need to be understood" (9).

Foundation programmes are like EAP courses in that they identify certain students as being in need of help that other students do not require. They do to some extent ascribe to the "myth of transience" (see section 2.7.) because the 'problem' is seen to be solved outside of the 'real work' of the university. This is not, however, as problematic as it is in EAP courses since these foundation programmes are not marginalised in the same way. The have a place within a particular faculty and they are taught by lecturers who also teach mainstream courses. The lecturers obviously have a clearer idea of what will be expected of the students when they enter the mainstream than EAP tutors do. They know what courses the students will enter and they may even teach some of those courses themselves. Gee (1990) describes a Discourse as "a way of being in the world, a way of being a 'person like us'" (174), so the people who teach Foundation courses are in a position to apprentice students into being "people like themselves" in a way that is not possible in EAP courses.

To move beyond the "myth of transience" it is necessary for all lecturers in mainstream courses to accept responsibility for students' learning.

5.4.3. Development in Mainstream Courses

Moulder (1991) argues that academics need to accept that,

> ... because they have been employed to teach, they have been employed to teach all the students who register for their course. More specifically, one's contract does not say that one has been employed to teach only those students who have the skills and knowledge that one would like them to have (124).

He goes on to argue that this means that universities do not need academic support for students but for academics to help them be better teachers (ibid). The Academic

Development Centre at Rhodes University does run staff development programmes but for these to have any effect it is first of all necessary for lecturers to see themselves as responsible to and for all their students, instead of expecting ELAP and Academic Development staff members to solve their 'problems'. This requires, among other things, a recognition of the role language plays in learning. Schroenn (1990) suggests:

> There seems to be a need for a policy of Language-across-the-curriculum at tertiary level: every lecturer should not only be an expert in his/her subject, but should also be aware of the need to teach the language and communicative skills essential to master that subject discipline (174).

As discussed in section 2.4., there has been a call to make teaching the rules and conventions of the university more explicit. This is vital if universities really want to provide not only "formal" but also "epistemological" access (Morrow, 1993: 215). According to Craig,

> We have to make explicit and teach the nature of knowledge and knowing and the limits of these in order to allow for the adaptation of the learner to typical university tasks. If we are committed to a changed society and see open universities as one move in this direction, we are compelled to make explicit the usually implicit rules of the game to those who come with different 'rules' or who have developed in a different eco-cultural niche (in Moore, 1994b: 45).

University teachers need to teach not only the content of their discipline but also how it "poses and solves problems, how it conceives of and defines knowledge ... what forms of explanation and arguments are allowable" (Starfield, 1994: 20).

One of the problems with trying to teach the implicit rules of a discipline is exactly the fact that they are implicit and beyond conscious awareness. Lecturers may be so embedded in the culture of their discipline that they follow its rules and conventions without being aware of, or able to describe, them. The difficulty of making explicit the implicit is more than just practical. According to Ballard and Clanchy (1988):

> Making cultural values explicit means objectifying one's own culture, making a deliberate act of imaginative and intellectual disengagement. The results can be disconcerting. We are forced inevitably to an awareness of relativities (13).

This awareness of relativities, while perhaps uncomfortable for the lecturer, is precisely what students will benefit from. It is difficult for one or two university teachers to teach explicitly in an institutional context where such an approach is not widely practised, and is not valued by either the students or other academics (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994).

As will be discussed below, in order to teach more explicitly, lecturers would need to be made aware of the nature of the rules that they follow unconsciously so that they can in turn teach these "rules" to the students.

Changes in mainstream courses help to move beyond the "myth of transience" and to accept that the 'problem' cannot be solved by changing the students but that the university itself will also have to change. They are, however, rather difficult to implement because of resistance from those who need to make the changes. Rosenberg (1995b) suggests that "the notion still persists that induction into the university is a kind of trial-by-fire that few can and should survive" (487). Apart from an almost ideological resistance to more explicit teaching, this may also be resisted because of the perception that the different kind of teaching required will mean more teaching, taking up more of the lecturers' time, (although this is not necessarily the case).

5.5. Implications for Further Research

The first implication of the discussion above is that if lecturers are going to teach more explicitly, they need to be more aware of what the "rules and conventions" of their discipline actually are since, as Gee (1990) suggests, by the time you are an expert in a Discourse "you often can't say what you do, how you do it, or why" (xvi). This suggests that research needs to be done on the rules and conventions of the various disciplines in the university and that this research should not necessarily be conducted by those who are embedded in the Discourse themselves. Linguistics probably has much to offer in this area. Interviewing students who are novices in the disciplinary Discourse would help to highlight which aspects of the Discourse they find most unfamiliar or confusing. Examples of this kind of research that have already taken place are the study carried out in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University by Caldwell (1997) and Paxton's (1997) research in the Economics Department at the University of Cape Town. Such research not only needs to take place, the findings need to be taken seriously by those involved with teaching students if any real changes are going to occur.

The findings of this study also suggest that a Humanities Foundation Programme is necessary at Rhodes University. The planning of such a programme is another vital area for research if the programme is to be as effective as possible and to fulfil the needs of students. It is impossible to identify a university Discourse that is required by all students, or even all students in the faculty of Humanities, but it would be useful to have an idea of what kinds of things students in mainstream Humanities courses are required to know and do before setting up such a programme. It should be noted that such a programme would be subject to some of the same problems as EAP courses since it would be expected to prepare students

for a variety of mainstream courses, but it is necessary nevertheless.

Ongoing evaluation has been a vital part of the ELAP course since it was started in 1994 and many changes have occurred within the course on the basis of the findings of course evaluations in particular. This practice should continue, in order to ensure that ELAP remains aware of the needs of students and attempts to meet these needs as closely as possible.

An additional focus for research suggested by this study is a longitudinal study of ESL students during, and then **beyond** their first year at university. This would be especially useful in identifying skills that are taught in EAP that become relevant later in the students' academic career. At Rhodes, ELAP students evaluate how useful they think ELAP has been to them at the end of their first year, and although these perceptions may change the following year, this is never ascertained because the ELAP staff no longer have contact with these students when they finish their year of ELAP. This information would also give insights into how successful both EAP and Foundation Programmes are in preparing students for in mainstream courses. It would be necessary to begin with a fairly large number of students to make provision for inevitable attrition of students who do not return to university for various reasons or who drop out of the study while remaining at university.

Conclusion

This study has described the language experiences of three ESL students as they entered, or failed to enter, the academic discourse communities of Rhodes University. Their difficulties experienced in entering academic discourse communities can be traced to their primary Discourses and schooling which failed to prepare these students adequately for the demands of university study. The nature of education in former-DET schools is well documented and the problems experienced by students from such schools have been described in many other studies. The fact that students in such schools are not adequately prepared for university is certainly an issue for secondary education but universities, including Rhodes University, cannot afford to leave it at that. Improvements in secondary education will be slow in coming and, in the interim, tertiary education institutions need to adapt to ever increasing numbers of students who were in the past considered 'non-traditional'.

South Africa is in a period of political, economic and social transition and universities need to be able respond to the needs of this changing society. "Osmosis pedagogy" is no longer effective, if it ever was. Universities such as Rhodes need to take responsibility for all students and to take this responsibility seriously. Changes such as the introduction of EAP and foundation programmes are necessary, and should not be dismissed, but they are not sufficient. For universities such as Rhodes to really respond to the changes in the country, development needs to take place in **all** courses so that they all become communities in Chiseri-Strater's sense. University study should be challenging but it does not have to be a "trial-by-fire". Formal access should be accompanied by epistemological access. Universities need to become as 'non-traditional' as many of their students.

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APPENDIX - A

ELAP Aims and Objectives

A. To facilitate the students' maturation into **independent learners.** This will involve:
   i) **Attitude education**: orienting the students to an approach of open curiosity and questioning; encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning; fostering self-discipline.
   ii) Emphasising **creation of knowledge**, primarily through **research skills** such as library skills and collation/synthesis of discovered materials.
   iii) Help build up students' appropriate **background knowledge.**

B. To enhance students' ability to cope with the University's **linguistic demands.** This will involve improving their academic vocabularies and general efficiency in **communication in English** in the three main areas of spoken language, reading and writing:
   i) **oral skills** in the areas of listening comprehension, note-taking and -making in lectures, and oral participation and presentation in group contexts;
   ii) **reading skills** through maximum exposure to graded and relevant material;
   iii) **writing skills** in the areas of grammatical accuracy, the construction of expository or academic discourse up to essay length, and personally meaningful writing in the form of dialogue journals.

C. To enhance students' ability to master the University's **cognitive demands.** This includes:
   i) emphasising the making explicit of **meta-cognitive frameworks** (eg. knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation);
   ii) emphasising **critical thinking** skills;
   iii) **discourse competence** particularly the recognition of "academic" discourse and the recognition and construction of **argument;**
   iv) facilitating the mental shift from personal to impersonal, from concrete to abstract.

D. On the part of **tutors** themselves:
   i) to key in as far as possible to **students' background** knowledge and individual cultures;
   ii) to adopt the role of **listeners** as much as that of teachers;
   iii) to facilitate as far as possible a medium for **cultural exchange** rather than of insensitive imperialism.

APPENDIX - B

Questionnaire

1. Title and surname
2. First names
3. Date of birth
4. Home address
5. Grahamstown address
6. Home language
7. Other languages
8. Faculty
9. Other subjects
10. What year did you matriculate?
11. Name of last school
12. Matric points
13. Symbol for English
14. If you did not matriculate last year please give details of what you have done since you left school.

APPENDIX - C

Dear

This letter is to confirm what I told you last week. I told you a lot in a short time so I thought it would be a good idea to put it all on paper. It is important that you know exactly what you agreed to when you said you would help me with my research.

My research is about the language experiences of English Second Language students in their first year at Rhodes. I am interested in the language that you hear and read as well as in the language that you write and speak. I am also interested in your impressions, ideas and feelings about your language experiences at Rhodes. My research is very broad and I will get information from a number of different things. These include:

Observing and recording ELAP classes and your other lectures.
Reading and making copies of your dialogue journals.
Reading the textbooks or handouts you read in your various classes.

I will need to read the things that you write so I will sometimes ask you to bring me your essays, reports, tests, lecture notes etc so that I can make copies of them and discuss them with you.

Weekly meetings with all of you as a group or as individuals in which we will discuss what it is like to be at an English university when English is not your mother-tongue. Your dialogue journals will probably be useful to me to get ideas about what to talk about in these meetings. Sometimes I may ask you to bring something like an essay or test that you have written to our meeting so that we can talk about it.

I will want to quote some of the things you say and write when I write up my research. I assume that by agreeing to take part in my research that you also agree to me doing this. If there is something in particular that you have written in your dialogue journal or said to me that you do not want me to quote then please let me know and it can be "off the record".

When I write up my research I will not use your real names so the things you say or write will be kept confidential. For various reasons I have had to let the ELAP course co-ordinator and your ELAP tutors know who you are but if I need to tell any of your other lecturers or tutors who you are I will discuss it with you first.

You will be paid a small amount for each meeting that you have with me. You will receive this money in the middle and the end of the year.

If you are having any problems or you want to discuss anything with me or ask me any questions outside of your official meeting time please come and find me in Room 4 in the Linguistics department or leave a note for me in my pigeonhole and we can find a time to meet.

Please ask me anything you want to know about what is in this letter.

Thank you again for agreeing to take part in my research.

APPENDIX - D

Dear

At our meeting this week I would like you to tell me about the languages you use every day of your lives. I would like to know when you read/write/speak/hear English and when you read/write/speak/hear your own mother-tongue or any other language that you understand. I know that your lectures are in English but if you speak Xhosa while doing group work, that is interesting to me.

Other questions I want to ask you are:

What language do you speak to your friends in class and in res ? What language do you speak when you have to speak to your warden or sub-warden or other people in your res who are not necessarily your friends ?

If you watch television, what is the language of the programmes you watch ?

If you read books or magazines or newspapers, what language are they in ?

If you listen to the radio, what language do you hear ?

When you speak to your family or friends on the telephone or when you write them letters or read letters they have written, what language is used ?

I am interested mainly in the languages that you use now that you are at university but I would also like you to tell me about any changes from last year. For example, if you lived at home last year did you speak your mother tongue much more than you do at Rhodes ? Do you think you speak and hear more English in your classes this year?

Thank you for your help so far. I am looking forward to our next meeting.

Dear

For our first meeting of the 4th term I would like you to imagine that there is someone you know, perhaps a friend or a cousin, in the location, who is thinking about coming to Rhodes next year. Imagine that this person comes to you and asks you to tell them about Rhodes and what it is like to study here. Perhaps this person is thinking of doing the same course as you. What would you tell them? I don't want to give you specific question because then we just answer those questions and don't discuss other things but perhaps you could think back to this time last year and the questions you would have liked to ask if you had known someone who was at Rhodes. You could also think about the things that you have discovered about being a student at Rhodes that you did not expect and that this person probably would not expect either. Perhaps there are things that you found out after coming to Rhodes that you wish you had known before and that you would tell this person. It might be a good idea to have a piece of paper and jot down a few ideas for this meeting as you think of them.