CONCEPTUALISATIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF ACADEMIC LITERACY IN NAMIBIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Thesis submitted by

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DECLARATION

'Conceptualisations and Pedagogical Practices of Academic Literacy in Namibian Higher Education', herewith submitted, is my own work. Wherever I have used the works of other scholars, I have acknowledged them. This work has not been submitted to any other institution, in whole or in part, for the awarding of any degree.

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Date: 7 December 2020

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late Grandmother Emilia Ambondo ya Shimaliwa (Gwashimaliwa) who nurtured me from a baby boy into the man I am today. I am certain that she is proudly looking at me from heaven.

To my mother, Aina Kambadhimbi, who has continuously showered me with support, unconditional love and prayers.

Finally, to my lovely wife Evelina Tamukondjo Julius and daughter Tunomukwathi Evelina Julius, this is dedicated to you **Aantu yandje**.

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I must first thank God the Almighty, for the wisdom and his grace that sustained me throughout the course of my studies. This thesis would not have reached this stage without the support of various people from all walks of life to whom I would like to extend my profound gratitude. I will forever be indebted to them for having enlightened my academic journey.

Secondly, I would like to express my felt gratitude to my supervisors Prof Sioux McKenna and Prof Emmanuel Mfanafuthi Mgqwashu, who, in addition to their many commitments, kindly agreed to supervise this dissertation. I wholeheartedly thank you Profs, for your professional guidance, unmatchable kindness, expertise and for making this floundering process manageable for me.

Thirdly, I am greatly indebted to all the participants in this study who made this research possible. The success of this study depended largely on them. Your dedication and commitment to this study is a manifestation of your desire to ensure improved understanding and pedagogical practices of academic literacy at your respective Higher Education Institutions. I hope that this study serves these ends well.

Fourthly, my gratitude goes to my all friends and colleagues at the University of Namibia, for various support and motivation is this challenging academic journey. Special thanks to my good friends and fellow scholars, Job Shipululo Amupanda and Aletta Mweneni Hautemo. Thank you for those long discussions about our studies and for the moral support. Alleta Nuugwanga Amakali, thank you for always believing in me. Finally, special thanks and appreciations are conveyed to my wife, Evelina Tamukondjo Julius, and daughter, Tunomukwathi Evelina Julius, for accepting my habits of ‘leaving home early and coming back late’. Thank you, my people, for your love and moral support, I will forever be grateful for having you in my life. Tuno, Daddy is all yours now.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate academic literacy development lecturers' conceptualisations of academic literacy and resultant pedagogical practices in academic development courses at three different Higher Education Institutional types in Namibia. The research sites were a Traditional University, a University of Technology and a Comprehensive University. The focus was to understand the extent to which the academics' conceptions of academic literacy and the resultant pedagogical practices in the academic development courses at these three Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) facilitate epistemological access into students' chosen fields of study. Bernstein's Pedagogical theory (1990), Genre theory (1996) and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1978) were used as the study's theoretical lenses and analytical framework. An interpretative paradigm and a qualitative case study design were employed as the research approach. Semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and documentary evidence were used to generate data. Research findings revealed a common (mis)conception of the nature of academic literacy, the resultant inadequate learning support offered to students in the selected academic literacy development courses, and a clear divorcing of academic literacy interventions from the students' 'home' or mainstream disciplines at the three HEIs. The participants understood academic literacy from an autonomous position as a set of generic skills which could be taught outside of mainstream classes. Moreover, findings revealed that this understanding impacted on the design and assessments of all the academic literacy courses across the three universities under study. The study calls for a context sensitive model through which academic literacy acquisition can be scaffolded to meet the discipline-specific epistemological needs of the students.

EHUKU

Elalakano lyehokololoningomwa lyomapekapeko ndika olyo okukonakona ehumithokomeho lyomikalo dhokulesha nokushanga meilongngo lyopombada (oAcademic Literaci) maaputudhilongi, okukonakona omafatululo giisimanintsa moAcademic Literaci osho wo okutala iizemo yomikalo dhayooloka dhokulonga noku ilonga iilongwa yayooloka miiputudhilo yelongo lyopombada moNamibia. Omapekapeko ngaka oga li ga ningilwa miiputudhilo yomaukwatya ta ga landula; Oshiputudhiilo shopamudhigululwakalo, Oshiputudhilo shopaunongononi, nOshiputudilo shomailongo gaandjakana. Oshintsa shopokati shomapekapeko ngaka osho okuuva ko ondodo yowino osho wo euveko lyoAcademic Literaci maaputudhilongi nonkene euveko nontseyo ndjika tayi longithwa oku eta oshizemo tashi humitha komeho euveko lyopombanda lyaalongwa yomailongo geewino dhayooloka miiputudhilo itatu yelongo lyopombanda; shino otashi kwathele aalongwa yamone ontseyo ndjoka tayi ya kwathele meilongo lyawo. Omapekapeko ngano oga longitha omadhiladhiloukithi (eetheori) ga Bernstein's Pedagogical theori (1990), Genre theori (1996) na Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics theori (1978), mokufatulula nokundjandjukununa iizemo yomapekapeko. Omodela yokukonakona iizemo yongushu tayi ziilile maakonakonwa, oya tala ekonakono ndika onga oshintsa shopokati, oyo ya longithwa, opo ku monike uuyelele wothaathaa. Omikalo dha longifwa mokukonakona noku gongela uuyelele momapekapeko ngano ongaashi, eenkundathana dhayaali, omatalelo geetundi oshoyo omakonakono giinyanyangidhwa tayi kwandjangele nepekapeko ndika. Iizedjemo yepekapeko ndika otayi ulike kutya opena engwangwano montseyo nenge mefatululo lyuukwatya woAcademic Literaci, shoka sha eta enkundipalo meyambidhidho hali pewa aalongwa miilongwa yeewino dhayooloka. Shika otashi ulike kutya kapena etsokumwe pokati keenkambadhala tadhi ningwa kaapudhilongi dhokulonga oAcademic Litraci miilongwa ya yooloka mbyoka tayi ilongelwa kaalongwa miiputudhilo itatu yopombada. iizemmo yepekapeko olyo tuu mdika oya ulike wo kutya aalongwa mboka yaza komailongo ga yooloka oha yi ilongo nuudhigu opo ya pondole ondondo yomadhiladhilo gopombanda meilongo lyuukumwe. Mokukonakona euveko lyoAcademic Literaci, epekapeko ndika olya ndhindhilike kutya aakuthimbinga oyena euveko lyankundipala lyoterma 'Academic Literaci,' ano ya nyengwa okukwatakanitha oohedi dhopetameko ndhoka dhina oku ilongwa meikalekelo - ano pondje yiilongwa ikwao. Oshikwao, iizemo oya ulike kutya euveko ndika otali nwetha mo etungepo lyoAcademic Literaci onga oshilongwa, osho wo omakonakono

gasho miiputudilo yombombanda itatu yakwatelwa momapekapeko. Hugunina, epekapeko ndika otali ulike/gandja oshiholelwa shomodela ndjoka oAcademic literacy tai vulu okulongwa opo yi kwatelemo eilongo lyiikwatelela kiilongwa osho yo komaitaalo nokeempumbwe dhaalongwa miiputudhilo yopombabda.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CIE	Cambridge International Examinations
EAP	English for Academic Purposes (at NUST)
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
HEIs	Namibian Higher Education Institutions
IUM	International University of Management
JSC	Junior Secondary Certificate
LEA	English for Purposes (at UNAM)
LiEP	Language-in-Education Policy
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MBESC	Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture
MLA	Monitoring Learning Achievement
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOI	Medium of Instruction
NLS	New Literacies studies
NQA	Namibian Qualification Authority
NSAT	Namibia Standardised Achievement Test
NSSC	Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate
NSSCO/H	Namibia National Secondary Certificate
NUST	Namibia University of Science and Technology
PC	Professional Communication
RtL	Reading to Learn
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
ULCE	English Communication and Study Skills
ULEG	English for General Communication
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNIN	United Nations Institute for Namibia

CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTANDING THE NAMIBIAN EDUCATION TERRAIN

1.1 Introduction to Study

This study is concerned with academic literacy in higher education within the context of Namibia. A review of academic literacy research, as provided in this thesis, portrays academic literacy as a complex and contested concept with different subjective meanings. For academics, these subjective meanings have inevitable influences on their pedagogical practices. In essence, this study aimed to explore how the concept of academic literacy is understood by those practitioners tasked with developing it within three Namibian higher education institutions (HEIs). It also interrogated the extent to which these understandings impact on the pedagogical choices in the courses designed to promote academic literacy development. I begin this chapter with an introduction to the study context.

1.2 Introduction to Namibian Education System

'Western' education was introduced in Namibia (formerly known as German South West Africa) by the Missionaries of the London and Wesleyman society (1805), Rhenisch Missionary Society (1842), and the Finnish Missionary society (1870) (Amukugo, 1993). According to Amukugo (1993), other missionary groups then followed the above-mentioned groups to Namibia, namely, the Anglican and the Catholic missionaries (Amukugo, 1993). According to Katzao (1999, p. 20), "the missionaries who came to Namibia established schools in order to supplement the work of Christianization to give a rudimentary education to catechists and, equally important, to change cultural patterns that were considered to be pagan". As such, different missionary societies at the time established their own schools among various Namibian ethnic groups to advance their own agendas (Thorsten, 2012).

In teaching at their schools, it is worth pointing out that these missionaries adopted different languages to be used as the medium of instruction (MOI) (Amukugo, 1993). The Rhenish missionaries, for example, adopted Cape Dutch as the MOI, whereas the Anglican and Catholic missionaries adopted English as the MOI (Amukugo, 1993). In contrast, "the Finnish missionaries made an effort to learn vernaculars spoken by local people which they later

implemented as MOIs" (Amukugo, 1993, p. 43). As Katzao (1999, p. 21) puts it, "missionaries learnt the vernaculars, elevated them to written languages, compiled dictionaries and textbooks and translated the Bible". This, according to Katzao (1999, p. 69), was done in order to realise the main objective of the missionaries: to spread Christianity. It was clear that if this was to be done effectively, it was better for the educational institution to integrate the language that people were most familiar with, their mother-tongue, rather than converting them through a second language. The *modus operandi* which was used to choose a MOI during the pre-colonial era changed somewhat with the occupation of Namibia by Germany.

Germany occupied and colonised Namibia from 1884 to 1915 (United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN), 1984, p.1). At this time, "German was introduced as the official language, and hence the MOI" (Cluver, 1992, p. 118). However, the introduction of German as the MOI was not practically reinforced. This was because, upon their arrival in Namibia, Germany concentrated on planning and organising the education of white children only, completely ignoring the education of African children (UNIN, 1981) and "the education of Africans continued to be in the hands of the missionaries" (UNIN, 1984, p. 4). This meant that different missionary societies maintained their respective medium of instruction that they had implemented before the Germans arrived in Namibia.

"The missionaries even went to the extent of writing in local languages" (UNIN, 1984, p. 1). The Finnish missionaries, for instance, "gave prestige to the dialects of Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama, which are even today the only components of the Oshiwambo language group which have significant literatures, and which are taught as school subjects [for Oshiwambo speaking learners] at both primary and secondary school level" (Harlech-Jones 1990, p. 73). This weakened the dominance of the German language in Namibia, especially amongst black communities. This state of affairs remained until Germany was defeated in World War 1 and South Africa took control of the administration of Namibia from 1915 (Cluver, 1992).

Upon occupying Namibia, South Africa introduced segregation policies which forced black people to settle in "Bantustans" (homelands) (Angula & Lewis, 1997), the total of which were 11. Each had its own Bantu Education system, characterised by low quality teaching and learning compared to the education provided to the minority white ethnic group (Angula & Lewis, 1997). This socially engineered, legislated oppression replicated the apartheid political agenda of South Africa and resulted in inequalities and inconsistencies in the education

provided to the country's 25 diverse ethnic groups in terms of access, quality, curriculum structure and content, and resources. The curriculum content and pedagogy, coupled with assessment strategies, failed to meet the needs of all leaners, particularly those from black communities. Writing about the Namibian education system, Harlech-Jones (1990, p. 1) points out that it is "a tale of two worlds: one black, bleak and deprived; the other white, rich and comfortable".

Before Namibia's independence in 1990, Afrikaans, the language spoken by not more than 10% of the population, was the MOI in many Namibian schools (Amukugo, 1993). Most (if not all) policies relating to education were focused on "apartheid ideology and traditions. ... There was a need, therefore, for the [post-independence] government to develop and introduce a new philosophy for education and culture" (Ministry of Education and Culture,1993, cited in O'Sullivan, 2004, p. 587).

At independence in 1990, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO)-led government had to make a distinctive educational choice that would:

> enhance socio-economic possibilities with the broader international community needed to institutionalize a language policy which could unify Namibians across the ethnic and racial divide enforced by the extension of apartheid in the form of the eleven educational departments, and to adopt a language policy which would facilitate mobility among Namibians within the country and across international borders. (Jansen, 1995, p. 48)

Consequently, SWAPO's policy document *Towards a Language Policy for Namibia* was adopted as the new language policy (Ausiku, 2010). Although at that time English was only spoken by 0.8% of the population, it was chosen as the only official language in Namibia because it was considered to have met the country's criteria for an official language: "unity, acceptability, feasibility, pan Africanism and wider communication*"* (Ausiku, 2010, p. 2). This included advancing the teaching of English as a subject and also its use as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in schools and universities (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010). As per Namibia's language policy for education, English currently serves as the LoLT from Grade 4 onwards. The choice of English as an official language (and hence the LoLT) for Namibia was intended to address two related needs: "the need to combat the South African engineered divisiveness and the [need for] unity of all Namibians" (Brock-Utne, 2001, p. 306).

As Frydman (2011, p. 183) puts it:

> The decision to establish English as the sole official language in Namibia was based on an ideology informed chiefly by the sociopolitical circumstances of the country. Oppressed and divided by South Africa's apartheid regime, Namibians sought liberation and unity. English, they believed, would be the vehicle to achieve these ideals. If Afrikaans was the language of oppression, then English was the language of resistance and liberation.

It is clear that the main criterion proposed was unity which had become the primary goal of the independent Namibia. With regard to this criterion, indigenous languages were deemed unsatisfactory on the grounds that choosing one local language over another could be seen as being based on tribal preference and might lead to further linguistic and ethnic divisiveness, rather than unity. In other words, the use of the English language in this multilingual country would prevent possible accusations of favouritism regarding one ethnic language over the others, and that no ethnic group would be considered as being superior to the others.

Maho (1998) argues strongly against this claim, maintaining that it was the apartheid regime that used Namibian languages as a means of divisiveness. Maho (1998) further argues that the idea of domestic infighting, and even war along the lines of language groupings, was a selfish argument that has never been proven. Instead, Maho (1998) argues that English has commonly been used throughout Africa to suppress the use of vernaculars as official languages. Moreover, linguistic unity as the main criterion to choose English as the only official language and LoLT took for granted Namibians' communicative competence in English, given that Namibians had no historical ties with the language. Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2001, p. 303) for example, maintain that the stated criteria such as 'ease of learning', 'cultural authenticity', and 'empowering the under-privileged' were all overlooked in the selection of English as the official language.

At a pedagogical level, research has shown that the more learners are exposed to the target language outside of classroom activities, the easier the acquisition of communicative competence in that language will be (Ellis, 1994). It should be highlighted that, whereas in many other countries the official language is that of the country's former coloniser, in Namibia this was not the case. While English has indeed replaced Afrikaans as a lingua franca in Namibia, a large proportion of the Namibian population still does not have competency in English due to lack of exposure to English (Frydman, 2011). Consequently, the majority of

learners and teachers in Namibia faced the double challenge of acquiring a new language and, at the same time, developing the appropriate reading and writing proficiency needed to meet the requirements of the curriculum. This situation created numerous teaching and learning problems which ultimately have contributed to poor literacy levels among many Namibian learners.

With English as the sole official language, the new government embarked on serious education reforms to address and redress the injustices and inequalities left by the apartheid segregation policies (Iipinge & Kasanda, 2013). Today, Namibia's formal education system comprises two sectors: Basic Education and Higher Education. The Basic Education consists of the Junior Primary Phase (pre-primary, grades 1-3), Senior Primary Phase (grades 4-7), Junior Secondary Phase (grades 8 and 9), and Senior Secondary Phase (grades 10 and 12), which is the final phase before students enter the Higher Education sector. At the end of grades 11 and 12, learners are expected to be well prepared for further study or training or to enter employment. Figure 1.1 below illustrates this structure:

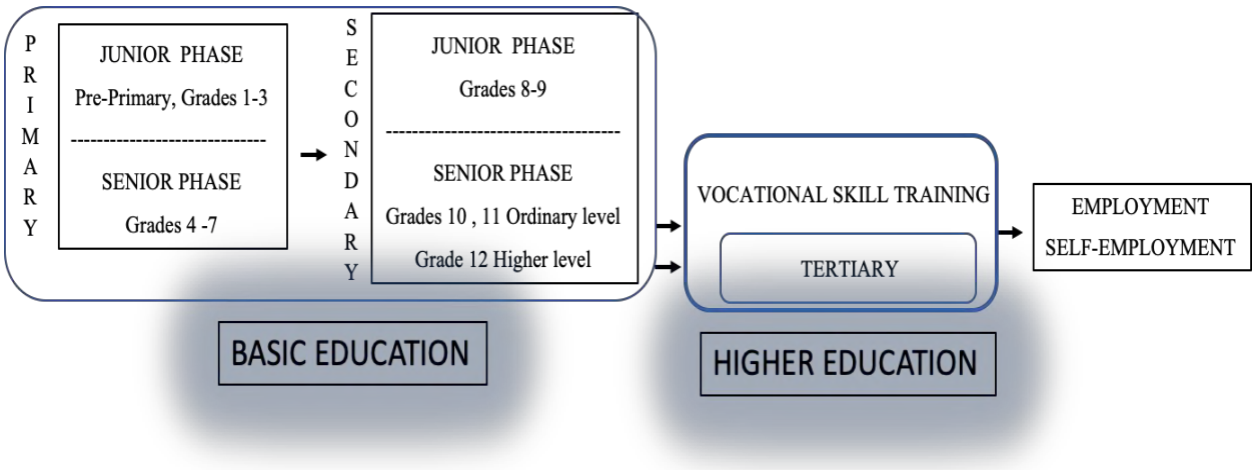


Figure 1.1: The structure of Namibia's Basic Education (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2019)

Students are expected to learn to read within the early years of schooling. As a result, students' inability to perform according to predetermined 'literacy' curriculum goals at specific phases of schooling worsens students' chances of reaching appropriate reading and writing goals at a

later stage, given the cumulative learning expectations in the hierarchical education structure (Millin, 2016; Rose, 2004; 1999).

Like many countries in Africa and across the world, there are assumptions in Namibia's education system which are dominated by the view that each of these phases sufficiently prepares learners for the next phase until higher education.

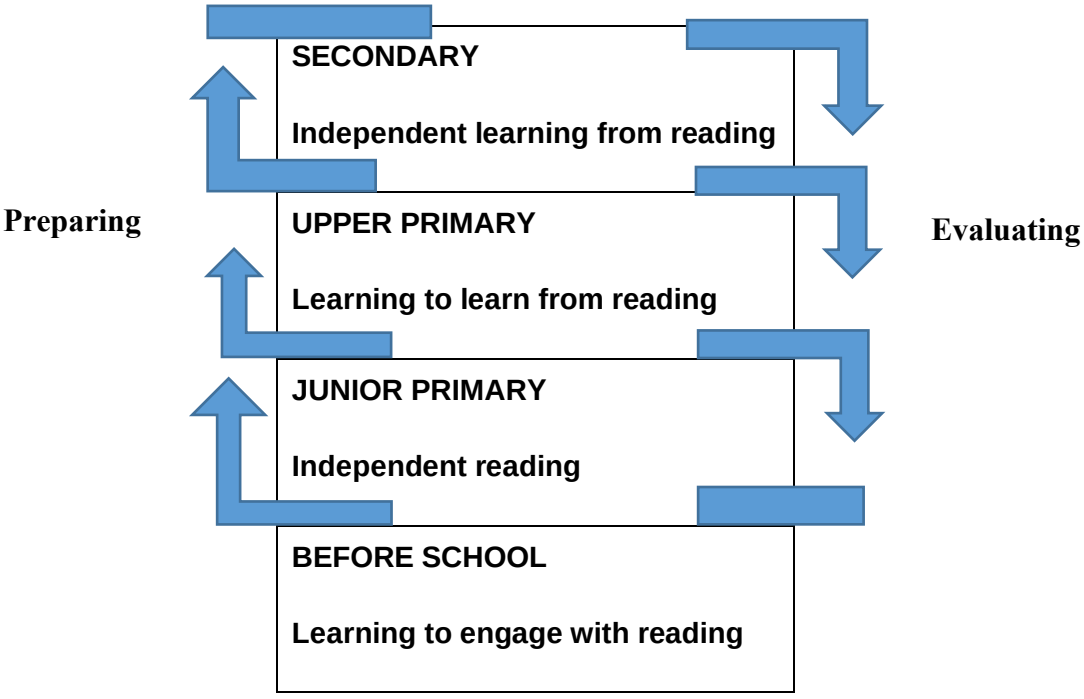


Figure 1.2: Stages of literacy development sequence (adapted from Rose, 2005)

As per the figure above, each stage of the reading development curriculum from parent-child reading onwards, is assumed to be preparing learners with the skills they need for the next stage (represented by upward arrows). However, since these skills are not explicitly taught in the ensuing stage, what learners are evaluated on are skills they have acquired in the preceding stage (represented by downward arrows) (Iipinge & Julius, 2016). Since the majority of the assessment tasks in formal education, especially at secondary and tertiary levels, are designed to evaluate whether or not students have learnt from reading, failure to pay explicit attention to the teaching of reading across the curriculum means that classrooms perpetuate inequalities.

This is the reason, Iipinge and Julius (2016) argue, that the literacy levels of Namibian learners are generally impervious to the grade level, and this manifests itself at all levels of schooling. Students' inability to perform according to predetermined 'literacy' curriculum goals and objectives at specific phases of schooling worsens their chances of reaching appropriate reading and writing goals at a later stage (Rose, 2006). The underlying curriculum goal of the Grade 12 Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) English second language syllabus ought to prepare these students for independent reading and writing of academic and other texts. However, when they further their education at university level, the majority of these students are still underprepared and find it difficult to engage with the university discourse (National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), 2009). Figure 1.3 below provides a graphic representation of this phenomenon.

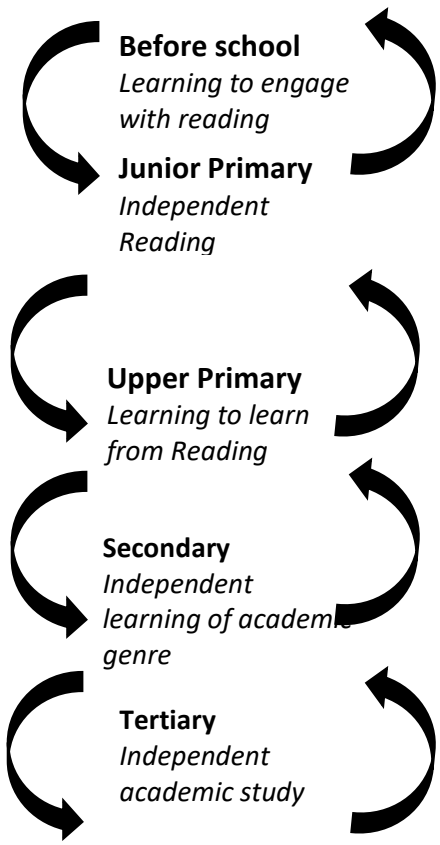
Curriculum expectations and goals	Actual reading development in schooling
	**Before school** Limited pre-school reading experience **Junior primary** Limited explicit instruction of reading skills for students from low-literate homes; focus on decoding not comprehension: 'barking at print' **Upper primary** No teaching of reading skills; fluency assumed; limited access to textbooks or reading materials (14 year olds reading at age 7-8 levels) **Secondary** Inability to learn from reading independently; reading below grade specific levels **Tertiary** Inability to understand complex academic texts; lose interest; Reading levels low

Figure 1.3: Curriculum expectations for literacy and students' actual competencies (Adapted from Hart, 2009)

The above figure partly explains why Namibia's participation in regional and international assessment tests such as the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) project and the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) project, both of which focus on content, quality of teaching and learners' participation in various subjects, have clearly revealed the consequences of these unexamined assumptions (Kanjee & Sayed, 2013). The results of SACMEQ III, for example, indicated that Namibian learners performed below the SACMEQ mean in both Reading and Mathematics (Makuwa et al., 2013). Furthermore, in 2009, Namibia introduced its own nationwide standardised tests in English, Natural Science and Mathematics at grades 5 and 7, focused primarily on monitoring learners' progress in these subjects (Namibian Ministry of Basic Education, 2014). Learners' performance in these tests are ranked as follows: Below Basic (insufficient knowledge and skills), Basic (sufficient knowledge but limited skills), Above Basic (Proficient knowledge and skills), or Excellent (excellent knowledge and advanced skills). Figures 1.4 and 1.5 summarise the national scores in English, Mathematics and Natural Science for Grades 5 and 7 in these tests:

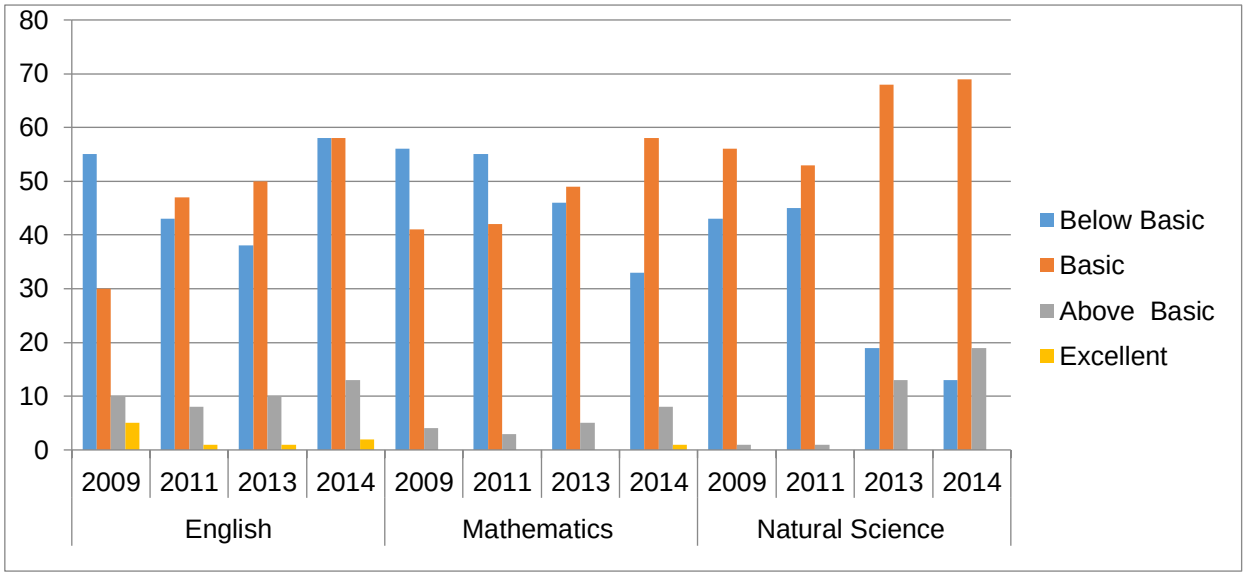


Figure 1.4: Grade 5 English, Mathematics and Natural Science NSAT performance level category comparison for 2009, 2011, 2014 (adapted from Iipinge & Julius, 2016)

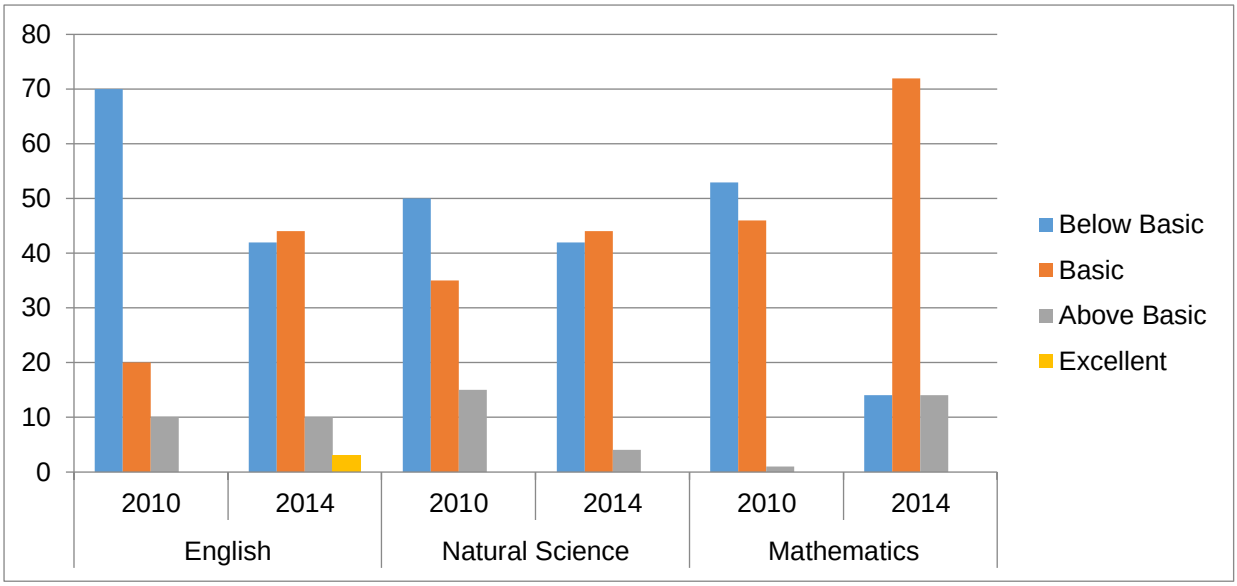


Figure 1.5: Grade 7 English, Natural Science and Mathematics NSAT performance level category comparison for 2010 and 2014 (adapted from Iipinge & Julius, 2016)

Data presented in the above graphs reveal that, in 2009, when the NSAT was written for the first time, more than 50% of learners demonstrated insufficient (Below Basic) knowledge and skills across Mathematics, English and Natural Sciences. These graphs, however, show an upward trend from 2011 to 2014 as the number of learners (up to 70%) began to demonstrate sufficient knowledge, but limited skills (Basic Achievement) across all three subjects. Only a handful (less than 20%) of the Namibian children demonstrated proficient knowledge and skills (Above Basic) in the tested subjects. It is also of interest to note that data represented in the graphs indicate that not a single learner demonstrated excellent knowledge and advanced skills across subjects tested in 2014. These results, coupled with the implementation of the MoE's policy of automatic promotion, would suggest that learners continue to progress to the next grade without mastering the required grade's appropriate competencies. The assumption that each phase within the formal education ladder prepares learners for the next phase in terms of reading and writing (as presented in Figure 1.3 above) is misleading but it is carried all the way until university.

Despite this, there has been a significant increase in access to education, especially after the declaration of free education. This noble state of affairs is marred by the fact that failure and grade level repetition keep on increasing across the board in Namibian schools. Indeed, there are multiple related factors that can be attributed to learners' failure and grade level repetition. Writing about poor academic performance among Namibian school learners, Namupala (2013)

categorised factors into teacher factors (lack of well trained, competent, knowledgeable and motivated teachers), curriculum factors (that much of the curricula used in Namibian schools are either foreign or not relevant to the needs of Namibian learners and that learners are not provided with "meaningful experiences") and cultural factors (various stakeholders in education – learners themselves, parents, teachers and the school community at large – can act in counter-productive ways and be an obstacle to learners' academic success).

Learners performed consistently poorly in English, the language that is spoken by less than 1% of the population. This is evidenced in learners' results in both reading and writing. Reading and writing are inextricably linked, as what and how learners write reflect the nature and quality of their reading abilities (Bower, 2011). Rose (2006) maintains that many academics work on students' writing without considering that the function of writing in school and university is primarily to demonstrate what students have learnt from reading. Similarly, Krashen (1985) argues that reading contributes significantly to the development of writing ability, and that writing is more significantly improved by increasing reading than by increasing the frequency of writing. Martin and Rose (2003), furthermore, maintain that students who have difficulties with writing are not experienced enough as readers to anticipate the needs of readers of their own writing.

Spaull (2012, p. 4) argues that "the reading and writing competency of many African countries' low-SES learners' performance is but one of the ways in which the schooling system reinforces social stratification". Namibia has an extremely wide gap between the rich and the poor, with the unemployment rate currently sitting at 34% (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2018). A wide range of researchers confirm that there is a correlation between SES (sometimes loosely referred to as 'social class') and students' literacy and academic achievement levels (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Fleisch, 2008; Hart & Risley, 2003; Spaull, 2012). The converging evidence from these researchers further provides considerable indications that the literacy practices of students from low-SES households differ from those of their peers from middle- and upper-income households, and that the higher education system privileges the practices of socio-economically privileged groups.

Because the literacy practices of the education system do not sufficiently engage with and connect to students' home literacy practices, there can be a strong sense of exclusion and alienation. Students' home discourses are often marginalised and ignored, or are seen to be a

problem that needs to be fixed through the provision of remedial type courses (Kapp & Bangeni, 2009; Rose, 1990).

There is often an assumption that students come to university already equipped with the necessary skills to autonomously learn from what they are reading, as these abilities are assumed to have been developed at secondary phase (Rose, 2008). Given that only a small percentage of school-leavers ever enter higher education, and that the literacy practices of disciplines in the academy vary considerably from those of the home, school, and other social spaces, this is a particularly problematic assumption. As a result of this assumption, according to Rose (2008), students who are already disadvantaged in the secondary school system are further disadvantaged at university level.

This is because reading within the context of formal learning requires more than just the ability to decode letters, words and sentences. Instead, it challenges the reader to use the knowledge of other texts and of the world in order to interrogate what they read. Within the context of higher education, the expectation of the reader goes even further and extends "to include students' ability to take a different position derived from values and attitudes related to what counts as knowledge, and how it can be known within various disciplinary discourses" (Mgqwashu, 2011, p. 22). Students can only meet these expectations if the relevant form of critical thinking has been nurtured in the academy and students have been supported to recognise the critical thinking evidenced in different genres of writing in their various courses.

Like many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in post-independence and post-conflict societies, Namibia's three higher institutions, the University of Namibia (UNAM), Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), and International University of Management (IUM), strive to ensure that education plays an important role in bringing about equal opportunities for all (MoE, 2014). The literacy challenges illustrated by many undergraduates in these HEIs, however, seem to undermine this noble goal (Iipinge, Kaapanda, & Anyolo, 2016; Mukoroli, 2016). Students' low levels of academic literacy is a critical aspect of students' under preparedness and is key to the focus of this study.

As will be discussed in later chapters, language used in the academy is about far more than the LoLT and includes the nature of the field being communicated about. As the three HEIs represent three different institutional types: a traditional university (UNAM), a university of

technology (NUST) and a comprehensive university (IUM), field-specific literacies can be seen to be further shaped by the type of institution.

This is an important study within the context of a former colony; first under Germany and later South Africa. As part of the efforts to reform past fragmented education systems, four major national goals of education for all were introduced, namely: access, equity, quality, and democracy (Ministry of Education and Culture [MoEC], 1993). The goal of making education accessible has been intensified by the declaration in 2012 of free universal primary education for all Namibian children in government schools from grades 0-7. Moreover, secondary education for public schools was also made free in 2016, making the entire basic education for public schools free (Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture [MBESC], 2016).

Basic education in private schools is, however, not free, and this has widened the divide between the wealthy and the working class in terms of access and academic performance (Julius, 2015). Public schools continue to perform poorly in the grade 10 Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) and grade 12 Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC), compared to the same grades in private schools (MBESC, 2016; NAMPA, 2015). In 2015, the then Education Minister, Namwandi, attributed private school learners' good performance to "the fact that not only do private schools invest extra resources in their learners, but they only accept the 'crème de la crème' [the very best] while public schools accommodate all learners regardless of their background and level of performance" (NAMPA, 2015, p. 1). This suggests the problematic understanding that students' performance is largely a result of the inherent attributes of the learners who are either the 'crème de la crème' or who are somehow less intellectually suitable. There is no awareness of the extent to which schools can reverse or reinforce social divides through their practices.

Despite these disparities, more students are being admitted into higher education than ever before (Namibia. Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, 2016). Widening access to those social groups that were previously largely excluded from higher education began around 1979 (Amukugo, 1993). According to the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation (2016), in 2016 alone, 36.8% of learners that sat for examinations had access to HEIs compared to 29.8% in 2015, and less than 27% in 2010. This increase is attributed to the government's policies aimed at widening access. Such policies have given rise

to increased funding opportunities, especially for population groups that were previously unlikely to enter university.

1.3. Higher Education in Namibia

In Namibia, HEIs and their portfolios are accredited by the Namibian Qualification Authority (NQA). The NQA evaluates and accredits local and foreign obtained qualifications. HEIs are differentiated according to the extent to which they conduct research, enroll different levels and types of students, the programmes and qualifications they offer, and how these are directly linked to the job market. This differentiation informs the mission and purpose which subsequently informs the form of teaching and learning to be identified with each institution. Singh (2008, p. 247) shows how the differentiation of institutional programmes and levels of research can lead to differences along a number of other lines such as: "student profiles (race, class, gender, age, etc.), size of institutions, nature of ownership and control, levels of funding, and sharp differences of quality and academic effectiveness", all of which shape the textures of differentiation, as well as outline the field of contestations.

UNAM, a traditional university, was established in 1992. It focuses on niches of 'traditional' general formative and professional preparation of students; undergraduate and postgraduate programmes; conservation; research and social and intellectual critique (MoE, 2014). On its website, UNAM posits that "The University's programmes are designed to meet national human resource requirements through quality teaching, research, consultancy and community service" (UNAM, 2017, n.p.). It has eight academic faculties: Agriculture, Natural Resources; Economics and Management Science; Education, Humanities and Social Sciences; Law, Science and Health Sciences. It also has two schools: Nursing and Public Health and Medicine. UNAM has 12 campuses and nine regional centres across the nation. The latter is being managed by the Centre for External Studies, the distance education unit of the university (UNAM, 2017). The basic requirements for entrance to undergraduate degree programmes at UNAM is a Grade 12 (NSSC), with a pass in five subjects and a total score of 25 points or more in not more than three examination sittings. Furthermore, a good performance in the English language examination, at least a C grade or above, is a preliminary requirement.

The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), on the other hand, offers vocationally oriented programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Universities of technology are "aimed to produce highly skilled graduates who could contribute to the social

and economic development of a new democracy that needed to compete in a globalised economy" (Boughey & McKenna, 2011, p. 3). This institution was established in 1980 as the first higher education institution in Namibia and was known as the 'Academy'. It only offered teacher training and secretarial courses at that time (NUST, 2017). In 1985, it was converted to a Technicon, offering diplomas and certificates in various vocational training. After independence in 1996, it was again converted to the Polytechnic of Namibia, offering vocational, engineering, management, and ICT programmes. The final conversion into Namibia University of Science and Technology was in 2016. NUST has six faculties: Management Sciences; Human Sciences; Engineering; Health and Applied Sciences; Computing and Informatics; Natural Resources and Spatial Sciences. The basic requirement for entrance to undergraduate degree programmes at NUST is a Grade 12 (NSSC), with a pass in five subjects and a total score of 25 points and minimum of D symbol in English language.

Namibia also has one major private university, the International University of Management (IUM). This institution was founded in 1994 but obtained university status in 2002. The university can be characterised as a comprehensive university as it offers a combination of general formative, professional, ICT, and vocational qualifications. IUM has six faculties: Information and System Development; Strategic Management; Business Administration; Tourism, Travel, Hospitality and Event Management; Educational Administration and Management; Humanity, HIV/AIDS and Sustainable Development. It also has two schools which are the School of Health Sciences and School of Postgraduate Studies. While management science, vocational, and ICT disciplines remain the university's anchor, IUM has also diversified into other disciplines at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Since 2015, for example, the university has launched two departments: Department of Education and the Department of Nursing; these provide pre-service training for teachers and nurses, respectively.

The requirements for entrance to undergraduate programmes at IUM depend on the type of qualification and mode of offer. For example, for undergraduate degree programmes, the requirement is a Grade 12 (NSSC/H), with a pass in five subjects (one of which should be English with a minimum of grade D) and a total score of 25 points. For stand-alone programmes, the requirement is a Grade 12 pass, with 20 points in five subjects and a minimum of grade D in English language; and for preparatory programmes, the requirement is Grade 12 with 18 points in five subjects with a 'D' in English language.

The difference in entry requirements is presented in Table 1.1 below:

Table 1.1: Entry requirements at the three HEIs

Institution	**Qualification**	**Entry Requirements/points from Grade 12**	**Performance in (NSSC/H) English language examination**
UNAM	Degree	25	C /Grade 4 or better
NUST	Degree	25	D/Grade 4 or better
IUM	Degree	25	D/Grade 4 or better
	Degree – through stand-alone programmes	20	D
	Degree – through preparatory programmes	18	D

Given the poor performance in the NSSC/H examinations (MBESC, 2016), the majority of students who do not secure admission at either NUST or UNAM flock to IUM to enrol for stand-alone or preparatory programmes where, as shown in Table 1.1 above, the admission requirements are somewhat lower. In some instances, minimum requirements in subjects such as English may be achieved through alternative means such as completion of a bridging 'English Short Course' done by students who have the required number of points, but less than the required D grade in English language (IUM, 2017). As indicated in Table 1.1 above, all the three universities' requirements for undergraduate courses are based on the ranking derived from the Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC/H) results. During a public lecture about challenges facing tertiary institutions in Namibia, Professor Tjivikua, the Rector of the then Polytechnic of Namibia (now NUST), claimed that "tertiary institutions in Namibia do not receive good applicants from the schooling system and are thus forced to spend money on bridging programmes to bring students up to par before they start their courses" (MoE, 2014, p. 2).

A study conducted by Mukoroli (2016, p. 56) on academic writing at the University of Namibia revealed that undergraduate students "possess low literacy levels". This lack of preparedness can compromise academic participation (Papashane & Hlalele, 2014). Part of this under preparedness, in Butler's (2013, p. 1) words, is because a "large proportion of students enter universities with inadequate levels of academic literacy". It can be argued, however, that these understandings of students' difficulties fail to conceptualise academic literacy development as something to be nurtured within the university. While underpreparedness of students and low English proficiency is undoubtedly a problem, the assumption that students should come to the academy with academic literacy practices needs to be challenged. Butler (2013) asserts that in a context where, progressively, more underprepared students gain access to higher education, universities are obliged to provide appropriate support to such students in order to reduce the risk of being academically unsuccessful with their studies. All three universities in this study have developed support courses which comprise the focus of this research.

1.4 The Courses Under Study

The mandatory courses that have been developed at the three institutions to ensure that students obtain the support they need to succeed with their studies are named: *English for academic purposes* (coded as LEA) at UNAM, *English for academic purposes* (coded as EAP) at NUST, and *Professional communication* (coded PC) at IUM. These courses form part of the required courses all students need to pass in order to graduate.

At UNAM, mandatory English core courses, including LEA, are taught by the Language Centre (LC). The LC has about 20 academics across UNAM's 12 campuses in the country, 12 of whom are based at the university's main campus in Windhoek (where this study was conducted). LEA at UNAM is a one semester course offered to all undergraduate students from various disciplines within the university. The course focuses on academic reading, writing, listening, and oral presentation skills for academic purposes (LEA study guide, 2012, p. 2). Some students enter directly into LEA, while others must first complete either a one-semester or a one-year language course. The prerequisites for doing LEA are:

- a B or better grade in English NSSC ordinary examination,
- or grade 3 or better in English NSSC higher level examination,

- or a pass in *English for general communication* (a year course done by students with a D in English language),
- or a pass in *English communication and study skills* (a semester done by students with a C in English language).

The LEA course is offered for four hours a week in a face-to-face mode.

At NUST, the *English for academic purposes* (EAP) course is taught by the Department of Education and Languages, with a total of 12 academics across the country, six of whom are based at the university's main campus. EAP is designed to "introduce entrance level degree students from various disciplines to the oral and written English skills required to enable them to use English effectively in the academic contexts" (NUST, 2017, p. 1). The course is offered in a blended approach, with 50% of the content taught face-to-face and the other 50% done online. Its prerequisites are:

- English in Practice Level 5 or students who obtained an A at NSSC,
- or grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 in English examination on Higher level.

At IUM, the Department of Languages and Communication is responsible for teaching English courses at the university, including *Professional communication*. The department consists of eight academics, four of whom are based at the main campus where the study took place. Initially, the course was broken into modules taught over two semesters. All entrance level degree students have to do all the generic semester English modules offered by the department, namely: Report Writing, Spoken Business English, Business Communication, Professional Presentations and Communication Skills. Since 2018, however, "all these modules were combined into Professional Communication (PC) offered in semester 1, an English module designed to provide academic literacy skills for entry level students" (IUM, 2018, p. 1). The course is offered for four hours a week.

The course outlines for *English for academic purposes* (referred to as LEA) offered at UNAM, *English for academic purposes* (EAP) offered at NUST, and *Professional communication* (PC) offered at IUM, are summarised in Table 1. 2 below.

Table 1.2: Summary of the LEA, EAP and PC contents (adapted from the LEA, EAP and PC course outlines for academic year 2018)

LEA course contents offered at UNAM	EAP course contents offered at NUST	PC course contents offered at IUM
•Academic listening, comprehension and note taking •Basic academic skills •Academic reading & vocabulary •Functional situations in academic writing •Selecting and sythesising •Applied writing •APA reference •Avoiding plagiarism •Introduction to other types of referencing •Extensive and intensive reading •Semantic relations •Academic paragraph writing •Academic speaking	•Language and usage review •Library and information skills training •Academic reading •Academic writing •Text organisation •Introduction to research and writing •Report writing	•Course introduction and overview •Presentations •Meeting procedures and documentations •Business communication documents •Interviewing skills •Arguments •Fallacies •Problem solving •Interpersonal skills •Editing •Revising

In addition, although it is not the main objective of this study to measure students' performance, students' performance in both LEA and EAP for the past three years were obtained from the universities' examination offices and presented below. Since PC was only taught for the first time as a combination of four modules in 2018, the only statistics available during the time of preliminary data collection in 2018, were those from the first semester of that year.

Table 1.3: Students' academic performance in the academic literacy development courses at the three HEIs

English for Academic Purposes (UNAM)					
Academic year	Total enrolment	Total Pass	Total Fail	Blank (exempted/ dropped out/ did not qualify for examination)	Pass rate %
2016	2780	1641	600	539	59
2017	2250	1553	480	217	69
2018	2283	1666	381	236	73
English for Academic purposes (NUST)					
2016	2989	1263	1057	669	41.4
2017	2875	1301	1065	509	42.3
2018	2986	1493	900	593	50
Professional Communication (IUM)					
2018	780	700	80	0	89.7

Table 1.3 shows the highly uneven pass rates across the universities. The statistics also show a disturbing number of students that enrolled for the course but did not write the examination. The explanation may be that some students did not achieve the minimum exam entrance requirements from their class assessments, which is 40% at all three institutions. Further consideration of the results shows that the majority of students who passed did so with averages between 50 to 59% (D symbol which is the borderline for passing).

Statistics compiled by Mathys (2015) (for UNAM) and Haufiku (2014) for (NUST) indicate a 20% and 17% overall dropout rates of students from UNAM and NUST respectively in a five-

year period of 2008 to 2012. According to Mathys (2015, n.p.), distance students at UNAM had the highest dropout rate of 39.4%, followed by fourth year students at 33. 4% and first year students at 29.3%. At NUST however, it is the first years who had the highest dropout rates at 32% followed by fourth years at 27% (Haufiku, 2014). Some of the reasons given by the institutions for the high dropout were that "some students had to terminate their studies because they were not able to fit in both work and study, while others who do their studies on a distance mode, due to their work pressure found it difficult to continue. Some students moved to their preferred programme at another tertiary institution, while there were students who were unable to cope with tertiary level study and consequently opted to pursue other studies at other academic institutions." (Haufiku, 2014, n.p.).

1.5 Study Focus

As indicated thus far, the Namibian higher education system is characterised by low retention and throughput rates, and this has been ascribed both to students' low proficiency in the LoLT and their challenge with disciplinary discourses (Mukoroli, 2016). Students thus have double barriers to overcome: the language barrier and the barrier of having to take on the expectations, norms, and practices of their various disciplines (Julius, 2013). It is in this context that the three HEIs under study have developed courses to address what they see as a gap in student development.

This study was thus designed to explore the lecturers' understandings of academic literacy in the three HEIs, and the extent to which these understandings impact on the pedagogical choices used in courses designed to develop academic literacies. Although scholars such as Boughey and McKenna (2016), Boughey (2013), McKenna (2010), and Mgqwashu (2007) and many others, have conducted studies on pedagogical practices in courses aimed at overtly addressing academic literacy development at various institutions of higher learning, to the best of my knowledge, no research on the phenomenon has been conducted within the Namibian context, particularly on how the construct has been conceptualised by those tasked with such development.

It is against this background that this study sought to explore what the lecturers' conceptualisations of academic literacy are, and how these conceptualisations underpin the pedagogic practices of academic literacy development courses at the three HEIs under study. Thus, this study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1) to explore the academic literacy lecturers' understandings of academic literacy at the three universities under study;
2) to investigate how the lecturers' understandings of academic literacy relate to the facilitation of epistemological access into students' chosen fields of study and
3) to investigate how academic literacy lecturers' understandings of academic literacy inform the design, assessment and teaching of the current academic literacy courses in the three universities under study.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the selected academic literacy lecturers' conceptualisations of academic literacy?
2) How do the academic literacy lecturers' conceptualisations of academic literacy inform the design, teaching, and assessment of the academic literacy development courses at the three universities?

This study aimed to provide a conceptual discussion on possibilities to rethink the development of academic literacy in Namibian HEIs. The study argues that, as the demographics of Namibian HEIs continue to shift rapidly toward a black working-class majority, there is an urgent need to ensure that higher education meets the needs of students in ways that address the epistemic injustice found in the country's education system more broadly. Taking on the academic literacy practices of a field of study is central to students' success in higher education, an issue to which I return in Chapter Two, and so it is an issue of epistemic justice for teaching and learning to occur in ways which enable such access.

The study aimed to contribute towards an understanding of academic literacy in higher education within the Namibian context. This is the reason the study also embraces views presented in McWilliams and Allan's (2014) Best Practice Model, Rose's (2005) conceptualisation of Reading to Learn (RtL) and Scaffolding Academic Cycle (Rose, 2008) as

some of the possible innovative approaches to developing academic literacy in higher education. While generalisations are not encouraged regarding academic literacy pedagogy, this study attempts to point to useful theoretical questions that might otherwise not be raised in the Namibian context about what entails academic literacy at each of the three HEIs, and how academic literacy development courses can be designed to facilitate epistemological access into students' chosen fields of study and developed in ways that take the specific target literacy practices into account.

1.6 Thesis Organisation

Having outlined the context and the scope of this study, the focus and its rationale, in Chapter Two, I focus on reviewing relevant literature about academic literacy and its development across various disciplines in the HEIs, and the implications this literature has for the current study. The chapter describes academic literacy as a complex construct that lacks a universally accepted definition. Hence, defining it is subjective, and this subjectivity impacts on how each institution of learning approaches its development. The chapter also briefly reviews the literature on decoloniality in higher education and how this discussion has come to raise questions about which literacy practices dominate.

Given the focus of this study, which was to investigate academic literacy lecturers' understandings and their pedagogical choices, Bernstein's Pedagogical theory (1990), Genre theory (1996) and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1978) were used as the theoretical lenses and analytical framework and these are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Bernstein's pedagogical discourse theory (1990) was used to help in understanding the theoretical choices made in the three universities in the design, teaching, and assessment of academic literacy programmes. This theory provides useful insights related to the process and content of what occurs within formal education institutions of all types and at all levels. Genre theory was used in order to understand and unpack language pedagogy in general and the genres of academic literacy in particular. Finally, Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory is briefly discussed as a lens for making sense of language use. As the name suggests, SFL focuses on the centrality of the functions of language within context.

Having spelled out the theoretical lenses brought to bear in this study in Chapter Three, Chapter Four provides details of the methodology and outlines my research choices. This research is situated within an interpretivist approach and it is qualitative in nature. The research design for

this study was a case study. According to Yin (2014, p. 17), a case study involves "investigating a case within a real-life, authentic context or setting". Employing a case study design enabled me to work closely with the academic literacy lecturers at each of the three HEIs, to share their understandings, experiences, and pedagogical practices of academic literacy in their respective courses.

The participants in this study consisted of six academic literacy lecturers from three major HEIs in Namibia (two from each HEI). The participants were purposively sampled and selected based on their availability, willingness to participate in the study, as well as experience about the phenomenon of interest in the study. Interviews were conducted individually with the participants in an attempt to generate data that would help me gain access to their constructions of academic literacy and how these constructions influenced their classroom practices.

Guided by Merriam's (2001) assertion that observations are one of the major means of collecting data in qualitative research because they offer a first-hand account of the situation under study, 24 classroom observations were conducted for this study across the three sites. When observations are combined with interviews and document analysis, they allow for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated. A total of 33 documents were also reviewed for this study. These comprised course guides, a sample of assignments, tests, and final examinations for each subject as well as rubrics used in marking these assignments. The decision to use documentary evidence as part of data generation methods in this study stems from the observation that often participants may make generalisations that need corroboration with documents relevant to their claims (Bowen, 2009).

Data were analysed using thematic analysis through the lenses provided by the theoretical framework. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis that provides the opportunity to code and categorise data into themes related to the research questions (Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2008). Ethical processes in this study included obtaining ethical clearance from Rhodes University (Appendix A: Proposal and Ethical Clearance: Rhodes University), written requests for permission to conduct research at the three HEIs (Appendix E: Permission Request letters) obtaining permission for the study, information letters explaining the aim and duration of the research to all the participants, and informed consent forms (Appendix F: Informed Consent and Information Sheet). Besides the required ethical processes, the ethical

considerations in terms of my positionality, my interaction with the participants, and my representation of the data are all discussed in this chapter too.

The discussion of the findings is divided into three chapters, Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. Chapter Five principally focuses on the analysis that relates to the participants' broad conceptualisations of academic literacy. Chapters Six shifts the focus to the data that drills down into the contents of the courses under study at the three HEIs. Chapter Seven continues that focus by looking at the assessment methods used in the courses, participants' identities, and on how students are conceptualised by the participants.

Chapter Eight summarises the findings of the study. It discusses the implications of the findings in relation to the global debate about academic literacy. The chapter also presents potential research and pedagogical implications of the study. Furthermore, this chapter ends with recommendations and concluding remarks. I now turn to Chapter Two in which I deliberate how the study's key concepts are discussed in the literature.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PHENOMENON UNDER INVESTIGATION

2.1 Introduction

Exploring lecturers' understandings of academic literacy at the three institutional types in Namibia, as this study did, requires a detailed deliberation of the nature of academic literacy. As such, this chapter begins by exploring the concept of 'academic literacy' and offering multiple definitions. Because epistemological access is the target of all learning, that is, to acquire access to the powerful knowledge of specific fields of study in the academy, the chapter will unpack the concept of epistemological access and tie it to the concept of academic literacies. The chapter concludes by reviewing some of the current approaches to developing academic literacy such as the McWilliams and Allan's (2014) Best Practice Model and Rose's (2005) Scaffolding Academic Cycle and Reading to Learn (RtL), as well as concerns associated with these models, especially with regards to the specifics of literacy practices within students' specific chosen disciplines.

2.2 New Literacy Studies and a Broader Concept of Literacy

The term 'literacy' is commonly used to mean being functionally able to read and write, that is, to encode and decode meaning in symbols on a page. Those working in a field known as "New Literacy Studies" however, indicate that while this set of technical skills is common to a great many forms of literacy, it is a very limited view of the many ways in which literacy needs to be understood. For those in New Literacy Studies, both reading and writing are understood to be socially embedded practices which emerge out of sets of beliefs and values about what is appropriate. Literacy practices are thus social actions and always imbued with ideology – they emerge in the forms they do from their particular cultural, social, historical, and political past.

Street (1984) offers two understandings of literacy in his discussion of how we understand the nature of texts: the autonomous model and the ideological model. The autonomous model is based on a view of reading and writing as a set of skills focusing on encoding and decoding of printed texts (Boughey & McKenna, 2017). This model holds that literacy is detached from,

and neutral towards the cultural and ideological world. Moreover, Street (2003) defines this model as being a-social because it conceptualises literacy as a set of unitary skills that can easily be acquired in a universal way. Street indicates that the autonomous model is dominant, such that most people typically understand reading and writing as a set of skills which students either have or have not acquired. In the autonomous model, language is separate from meaning. Students are thus seen to have challenges with their reading and writing because they have not been able to encode and decode meaning into the language conduit sufficiently well. Street, and others in the field of New Literacy Studies, argue that this autonomous model where meaning is separate from language is highly problematic and limited (Street & Besnier, 1994).

In the autonomous model, school-based concepts of literacy are held as a standard definition of literate competence across contexts (Larson, 1996). From this perspective, a student is expected to learn the language of teaching and learning (reading and writing) and gain fluency of the required mechanics of that language in order to be able to produce grammatically accurate sentences. Boughey and McKenna (2016, p. 3) argue that "the need to 'transmit' thought in a language other than one's home language adds complexity to the model, and often leads to the assumptions that the problem is with students' proficiency with the 'vehicle' of transmission, that is the forms of the additional language". There is thus often a 'misdiagnosis' that the error is one of encoding and decoding, rather than one of epistemological access to the knowledge and concomitant literacy practices of the discipline.

The ideological model, on the other hand, is when literacy is conceptualised as a set of practices (as opposed to skills) that are grounded in specific contexts and "inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society" (Street, 2001, p. 433). For Street, reading and writing are best understood as social practices which emerge from beliefs common to communities (Street & Besnier, 1994). Cognitive processes of reading and writing, are "encapsulated within cultural wholes and within structures of power" (Larson, 1996, p. 161).

Similarly, Halliday (1978) argues that language choices serve particular functions within social contexts, rather than being neutral and technical decisions. In this context, language is seen as a tool for *making* meanings as opposed to merely *transmitting* meanings. From the ideological model point of view, literacy is therefore a socio-cultural construct which cannot be studied independently of the social, political, and historical forces within which the literacy practices have emerged.

Therefore, literacy should not be viewed as "a monolithic phenomenon, but as a multi-faceted one, whose meaning and consequences depend crucially on the social practices surrounding it and on the ideological systems in which it is embedded" (Street & Besnier, 1994, p. 533).

2.3 Literacies in the University Context

Although the concept of 'academic literacy' is not a new one in higher education, defining it remains problematic. The literature has located academic literacy both as a field of inquiry and a field of practice, with a specific epistemological and ideological stance towards academic communication (Boughey, 2002). Butler (2013, p. 75) argues that "the most problematic aspect in how academic literacy is defined in literature is that it is by no means a unitary concept - there is no universal accepted definition of academic literacy". Similarly, Papashane and Hlalele (2014, p. 661) claim that "defining academic literacy is complex and to an extent subjective".

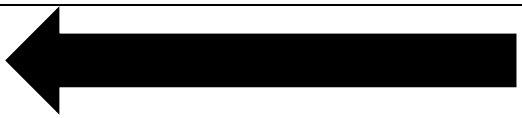
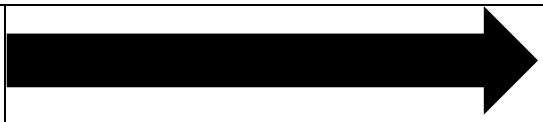
The word 'academic' in academic literacy emphasises the context in which these literacy practices exist (Papashane & Hlalele, 2014). As such, the primary contexts for academic literacy, according to Boughey (2002), are the institutions of higher learning and the secondary context where students may adapt and use the academic literacy practices they learned from universities and colleges, are the workplaces for which they were trained. Moreover, the term academic literacy also contains the word 'literacy', which involves more than reading and writing. While it is possible to find some scholars defining academic literacy as simply the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, these skills are generally understood to comprise the most basic foundational aspects of academic literacy (Gee, 2003). A focus on the technical underpinning aspects, according to Kumaravadivelu (2003), leads to an overemphasis on skills, sometimes losing their inherent interrelatedness regarding the typical tasks that university education requires of students.

Boughey (2000) defines academic literacy as a specialised form of literacy that takes place in an academic social context where certain implicit and explicit ideologies are held with regards to the purposes of social practices such as reading and writing. Academic literacy can broadly be defined as the various practices expected of students for success in higher education (e.g. Bangeni & Kapp, 2017; Clarence & McKenna, 2017). These may include writing argumentative essays in Political Science or filling in a laboratory logbook in Biology. But the practices go beyond specific forms of writing. Academic literacy includes coming to

understand what counts as a valid research topic in the field, how to build an argument, who can make a claim and on what basis, and much more. These practices are everywhere and are fundamental to the success within higher education, but they are very rarely made explicit (Boughey, 2000).

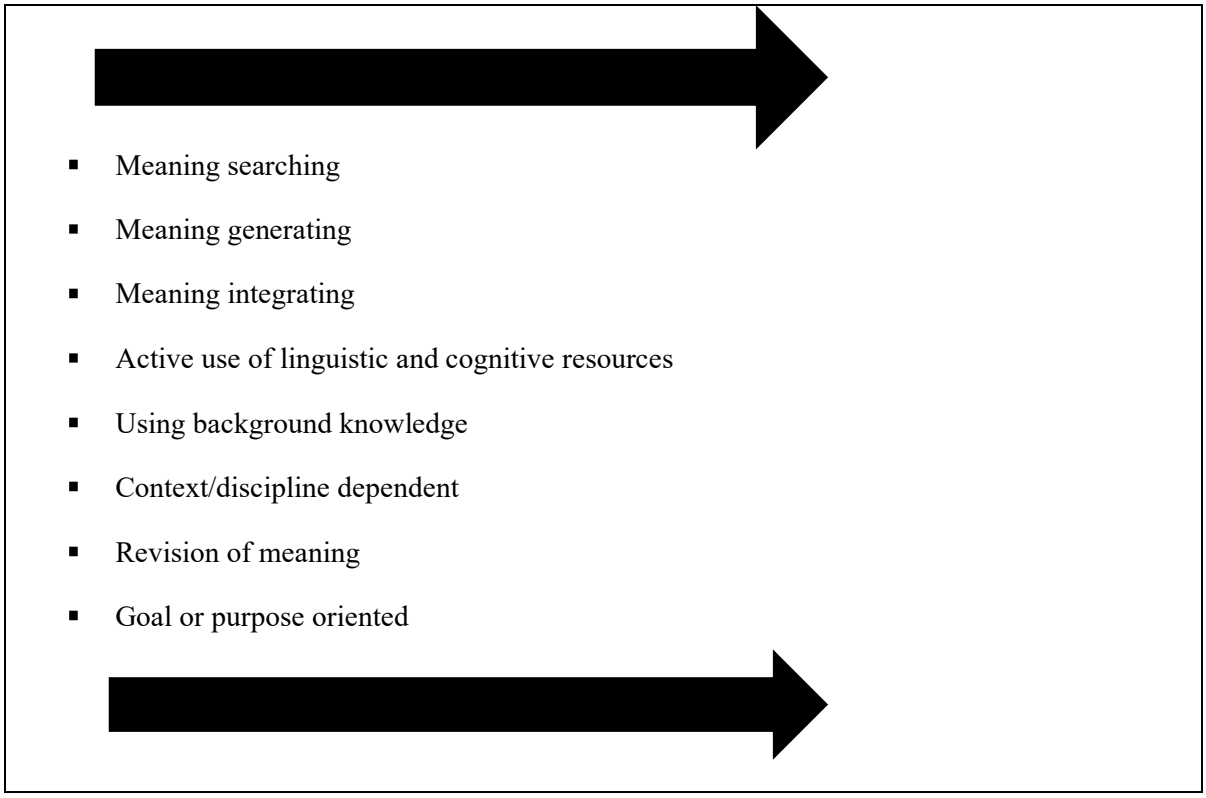
It is often argued that academic reading and writing are inextricably linked and that reading and writing are two sides of the same coin, which is the coin of academic literacy (Bower, 2011). Unfortunately, there is a general perception, within the more technical, autonomous conceptions of academic literacy, that academic reading and writing entail opposite processes (Barrs & Cork, 2001 as cited in Bower, 2011, p. 4). The perception of academic reading and writing as opposite processes is presented in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Academic reading and writing as opposite processes (adapted from Kucer, 2005, p. 191)

	
▪ Decoding ▪ Passive interaction with the text ▪ Less use of cognitive resources ▪ Meaning abstracting ▪ Building background knowledge ▪ Context independent	▪ Encoding ▪ Active interaction with text ▪ More use of cognitive resources ▪ Meaning generating ▪ Expressing background knowledge ▪ Context dependent

Kucer (2005) argues that the relationship between academic reading and writing in a university context is that of a parallel or complementary process. In both writing and reading, students have to make meaning, and they have to do so within the norms and values of the context. Table 2.2 depicts how Kucer (2005, p. 191) presents the relationship between reading and writing in an academic context.

Table 2.2: Academic reading and writing as parallel processes (adapted from Kucer, 2005, p. 191)



Each process has the potential of impacting and spurring growth in the other. That is, students' encounters with and learning from academic reading advances their academic writing competences, and their encounter with and learning from academic writing advances their academic writing competences. As such, students need to be competent in both academic reading and writing to gain command and confidence in their disciplinary language.

> The corollary is that students who find themselves lacking skills or confidence do not always receive the targeted literacy support which they need, and as a result, steadily lose motivation; in some cases, they are inclined to opt out of academia without completing their course. (McWilliams & Allan, 2014, p. 1)

Rose et al. (2008) assert that university courses, regardless of the field of study, consist of large quantities of academic texts which students are required to read before actual lectures. The main function of the actual lectures is therefore, according to Rose et al. (2008), to build on and synthesise the information presented in these course readings, where students are required to demonstrate what they have learnt from the reading and lectures in the form of written assignments. Rose et al. (2008) thus argue that a traditional academic cycle which is adopted

by many universities assumes that students have already acquired high level skills by independently reading and writing academic texts before they arrive at university. On the contrary, the majority of first year students do not read or cannot understand course readings set before lectures, and so cannot adequately comprehend lectures (Rose, 2005). As such, tutorials then become remedial sessions to enable students to gain basic comprehension of course content. This cycle of teaching, according to Rose et al. (2008, p. 168), "excludes the needs of a great many students who have not acquired these skills to the requisite level, leading to increasing problems of academic standards and attrition". Figure 2.1 illustrates this traditional cycle of teaching academic literacy at university level.

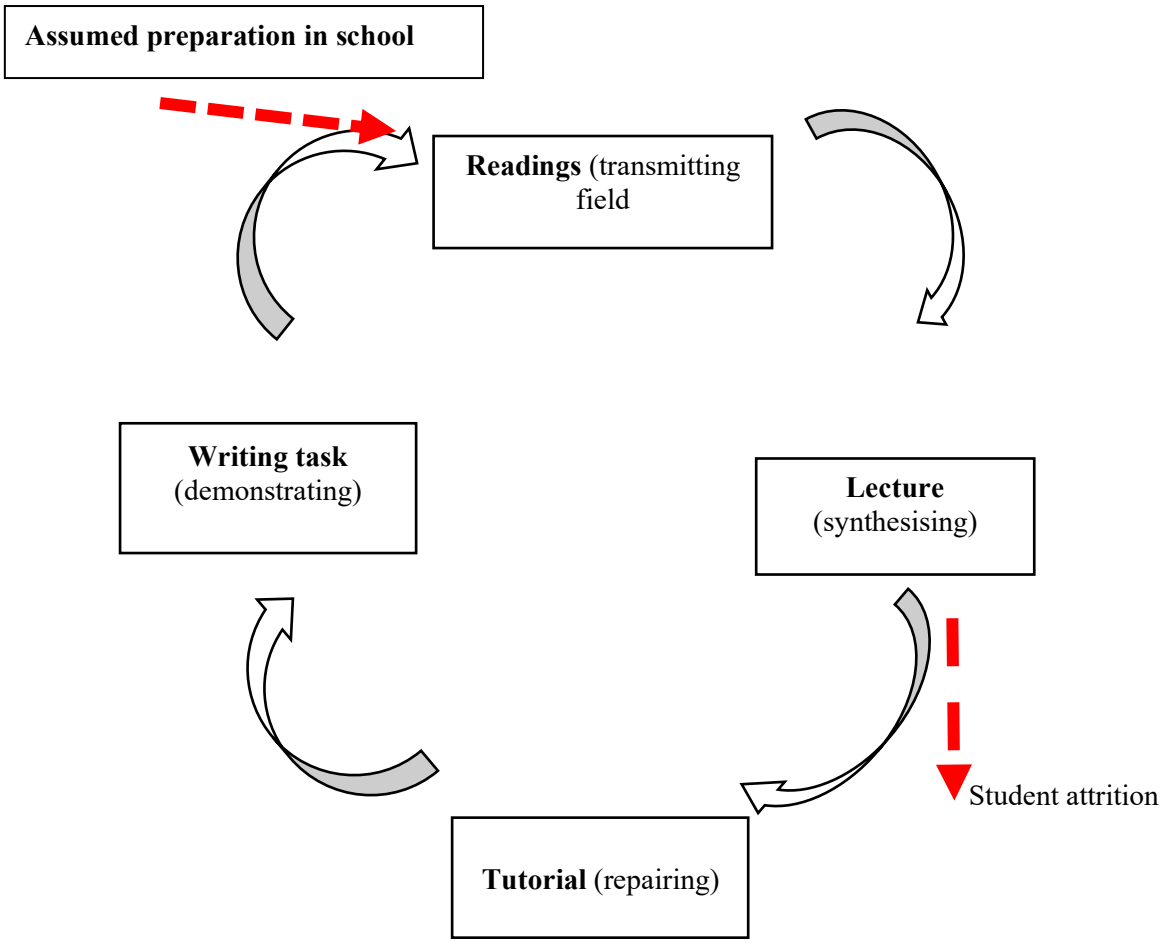


Figure 2.1: Traditional academic curriculum cycle at university level (adapted from Rose et al., 2008, p. 169)

Teaching students how to learn from their readings is not generally explicitly undertaken in course outlines nor in teacher training, and teachers are not generally trained to teach reading beyond junior primary years of schooling. As such, tutorial sessions fail to remedy an already systemic problem in relation to under-performing students (Millin, 2016). Rose (2005, p. 3) argues that reading is the primary pedagogic mode at tertiary institution, as it:

> requires a high level of skills in independently learning from reading, including the abilities to recognise, interpret and reproduce both the information content of course readings, and the patterns of academic language in which it is expressed. These skills are not taught at the tertiary level, except where academic writing is taught in remedial support classes, but are tacitly acquired by successful students during secondary schooling.

This tacit acquisition entails, in Jackson's (2005, p. 60) words, much more than the "mastery of a fairly discrete set of decoding and encoding skills". Rose (2005, p. 5) argues that "a premier focus on 'how to learn', as opposed to 'what to learn', is what is missing in formal education from primary to tertiary level".

While reading and writing are seen to be intertwined in a literacies understanding, these are seen to be part of a much larger set of practices students need to take on to succeed in the academy. Building on Gee's (2003) notion that literacy practices are more than just reading and writing, but include all aspects of identity and ways of being, we can see that academic literacy practices would include the unspoken rules of who gets to speak in a lecture, what language is used, whether you have to raise your hand or not, whether you address your lecturer by their first name or title, and so much more. Taking on a literacy is thus about taking on a whole identity.

The literacy practices of the academy can be seen to be deeply ideological, political, historical, and cultural in nature. The literacy practices of a university in Namibia, for example, might differ significantly from a university in Norway or Nepal. And they also differ significantly from discipline to discipline. The literacy practices that lead to success in a literature course are quite different to those required for success in a linguistics class, even though these subjects might seem fairly similar to the outsider. And the literacy practices needed for success in literature and in linguistics are probably significantly different to those of law. It is probably more accurate to speak or write of academic literacies, and indeed much of the literature does this.

Henderson and Hirst (2007, p. 27) underscore that the singular term 'academic literacy' "tends to hide any of the diversity that exist, thus restricting us to a singular view of literacy and a particular set of practice". These authors argue that when academic literacy is considered in the plural, as academic literacies, these literacies are viewed as a set of practices, thus, the focus is on the techniques in which students learn to participate and make meaning in an academic context.

Considering academic literacy in a plural form, McWilliams and Allan (2014, p. 1) posit that academic literacies "include critical thinking, database searching, familiarity with academic conventions such as referencing, use of formal register and the ability to manipulate a range of academic genres, which by definition restrict how meanings can be constructed and conveyed". Similarly, Baynham (1995) argues that the idea of multiple literacies which follows the ideological model should define academic literacy as ways of engaging literacy in an academy or a specific institution or field.

These definitions imply that students make use of language to make meaning of the contexts they find themselves in, and that each field and discipline differs in its language use because of distinctions in underpinning norms and values. To understand the multiplicities of academic literacy is also to understand that "the way in which linguistic, socio-historical and ideological practices, (among others) impact on the teaching and learning context within disciplines" (Bengesai, 2012, p. 5). From this perspective, Boughey and McKenna (2016) argue that many of the challenges experienced by students regarding language can be seen to originate from the new and unfamiliar higher education context and discipline-specific literacies they find themselves in.

Bengesai (2012) advises that academics need to understand that as students develop in the discipline, they further approximate the conventions of the discipline. She further argues that academic literacy can only be effectively acquired through interaction within the context, rather than learnt as a detached subject. This then suggests that students need ample opportunities to interact with the discourse for them to master the conventions of their disciplines. Thus, in Bengasai's (2012, p. 62) words, "academic literacy development should be inherent in every course in the curriculum throughout the degree programme, rather than something offered at the beginning as a quick fix".

In the context of this study, academic literacy is defined as a way of being within disciplines. This study conceptualises academic literacy as learning discipline-specific ways of thinking, speaking, writing, and behaving. It also includes evaluating information, as well as presenting oneself as part of the discourse, synthesising information and creating knowledge, both in speaking and writing. These capabilities require knowledge of the community's epistemology, of the genres through which the community interact, and of the conventions that regulate these interactions (Wingate, 2015).

The concept of academic literacy practices is closely related to the idea that discourses have effects on the world. The words we use to describe and make sense of the world can enable and constrain particular actions and identities. I therefore take a quick detour from the discussion of the concept of academic literacy to discuss the term 'discourses'.

2.4 Defining 'Discourse' and 'discourse'

Gee (1996, p. 131) refers to Discourse (with a capital D) as a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artefacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network". Similarly, Friman (2012) adds that Discourse is a specific way of perceiving, talking about and understanding the world (or part of it) based on certain assumptions governed and reproduced by exclusion and inclusion (power). As such, Gee (1996) maintains that Discourses provide ideologies extant in a given Discourse community and so determine what is acceptable or not within such a community. Thus, there are innumerable Discourses at HEIs, for example, Engineering, Science, Commerce, Education, Year One, the Cricket Club and many others.

In the context of this study 'Discourses' customary in HEIs have certain ways of doing-saying-being-valuing and believing which determine successful access to valued community spaces and events: the 'discourse' of an individual user shows their integration (or not) with the dominant 'Discourse' community. In trying to simplify the meaning of Discourse, Gee (1999) advises that it should be thought of as sub-cultures within a larger culture or society. In this sense, according to Gee (1999), a person can belong to many sub-cultures (Discourses) at the same time. Within each Discourse that a person belongs to there are common identities, beliefs, and ways of thinking, feeling, and being that are recognisable as both appropriate and defining of membership to other members of the Discourse. Gee holds that one cannot engage in a

Discourse without taking on the related identity. Furthermore, if one does not display an identity associated with a Discourse, then one can be deemed by the Discourse community not to have that identity.

Therefore, the quest for students to acquire academic literacy practices requires them to become 'apprentices' in specific disciplinary Discourse communities (Butler, 2013). Taking on the literacy practices of a discipline entails "socialisation into a distinct community with its set of discourse practices" (Bangeni & Greenbaum, 2019). While Kapp and Bangeni (2020) acknowledge that taking on academic Discourses can have significant affective implications for students, they critique the representation of this process as being one whereby students are simply 'colonised' by the academic Discourse. Students have agency in the process of taking on (or resisting) the ways of being in the academy. Taking on the norms and values of a discipline, alongside the literacy practices that emerge from them, can be experienced as a challenge to students' prior identities (Bangeni & Greenbaum, 2019; Gee, 1996). Bangeni's research shows that students sometimes feel torn between past and present ways of being (Bangeni, 2009; see also De Kadt & Mathonsi, 2003). This has a number of implications for pedagogy, including the need to truly understand and value the practices our students bring with them into the academy.

The term 'discourse' with small 'd' on the other hand entails the ability to read, write, think critically and speak in a contextually well-informed manner (Leibowitz, 2010). Gee (1990, 1996) uses the term 'discourse' (with a small "d") to denote any stretch of language in use (spoken, written, signed or painted or in any other way represented) which hangs together and allows members belonging to a community to understand one another. In other words, a specific discourse is made up of all the language bits and uses that are associated with a particular Discourse. According to Mackay (2003), these very specific language patterns are developed as conventions which are eventually observed as prescriptions. Failure to heed the discursive rules that make up university Discourses, which prescribe the type of discourse that is acceptable, may alienate a speaker from the community and limit the kind of success they can expect within the institution. This suggests that knowing a specific discourse means knowing how to use its specific features in a manner that is acceptable within that Discourse (Mackay, 2003).

In the context of this study, for example, knowing a disciplinary academic literacy practice ought to mean knowing all the language bits and uses that are associated with a specific discipline in a manner that is recognisable to the members of that discipline. As such academic literacy communities may be considered a type of Discourse (form of language use and awareness of how to behave and interact) in which knowledge is presented for learning purposes. "It has been developed within school and university contexts and has become quite rigidly conventionalised as the preferred form of 'Discourse' for the schooling purposes" (Millin & Millin, 2014, p. 28).

With the increased understanding that universities, disciplines and learning are not neutral, and that the practices expected of students are deeply ideological in nature, came a call for the explicit teaching of the relevant literacy practices. The concept of "teaching for epistemological access" has thus gained a lot of attention within the field of literacy studies.

2.5 Teaching for Epistemological Access

The meaning of the concept *access to education* is not as clear-cut as it would seem. Morrow (1993) provides an interesting distinction between two forms of access – formal access and epistemological access. According to Morrow (1993), formal access concerns registration at the institution, where the emphasis is on entry qualifications, student fees and access to financial resources and the physical location of the institution. In the university context, access may also include human computer interface issues like log on requirements, bandwidth issues, and ease and extent of internet connectivity which can be limited, especially in African developing countries such as Namibia. The integration of technology in our students' academic literacy is, now more than ever, commendable, especially with the rapid changes in the global higher education landscape responsive to the Fourth Industrial Revolution[1] and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, all graduates inevitably face a world transformed by technology, in which the internet, cloud computing, and social media create different opportunities and challenges for formal education systems (Xu, David, & Kim, 2018). The very notion of physical access is thus also shifting.

[1] The Fourth Industrial Revolution, a term coined by Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, describes a world where individuals move between digital domains and offline reality with the use of connected technology to enable and manage their lives (Xu, David, & Kim, 2018, p.1).

For Morrow (1993), epistemological access, which in many ways constitutes the focus of this study, relates to students' acquisition of the discursive, linguistic and textual practices of the discipline that afford them the capacity and ability to effectively function and to successfully perform in their specific disciplines. In other words, epistemological access is the process of being introduced to the discourses and practices of the disciplines.

Morrow (2007) argues that, upon securing access to HEIs, students need to engage with the knowledge of the academic programmes for which they have registered through effective teaching. As such, effective teaching ought to embrace the induction of students into specialist discourses which constitute broadening epistemological access (Mgqwashu, 2007). Extending on this, Morrow and King (1998) emphasise that the challenge of epistemological access is the task of enabling students to become participants in and users of a shared disciplinary practice initially beyond their reach. This includes apprenticing and inducting students into the modes of conceptualisation of the discipline.

Epistemological access entails making explicit for students what constitutes knowing, that is, knowing in relation to the requirements of a specific discipline (Luckett, 2016). The issue of epistemological access to disciplinary literacy practices is about more than better retention and throughput, it is also a social justice issue (Bangeni & Greenbaum, 2019). In other words, epistemological access is about what students should know and in which ways they should interact with others in a specific field. In coming to understand the struggles many students may have in taking on the literacy practices of the academy (particularly where these are normalised and not made explicit), we must be very wary of pathologising students as victims who have epistemological access transmitted to them. Instead, attaining epistemological access entails active agency on the part of the student in conjunction with teaching that is directed towards epistemological access.

Teaching for epistemological access is about making the literacy practices explicit **and** opening them up to critique. Many critiques of the academy position it as entirely a suppressive colonial projects and students, particularly black, working-class students, as victims of the dominant ways of doing things. The reality is far more complex. "Such deterministic depictions present students' social identities as uniform, static, and singular and fail to represent the complexity and diversity of the lived experiences and identity transitions of black students" (Kapp & Bangeni, 2020, p. 12).

Du Plooy and Zilindile (2014) argue that although Morrow eloquently describes the meaning of epistemological access, it is not clear how it could be realised or measured to judge whether or not epistemological access was obtained. Morrow, however, suggests the need for curriculum responsiveness to the difficulties experienced by underprepared students if epistemological access is to be met (Morrow, 2007). Curriculum responsiveness entails teaching and assessing students in ways that make explicit the 'rules' of each discipline in terms of what constitutes knowledge, how it can be known, and what are the sanctioned procedures to generate such knowledge. In Boughey's (2008, p. 6) words, "values and attitudes and the practices that a language user needs to draw on all relate to what can count as knowledge and the ways in which we make that knowledge". As such, epistemological access, by making the practices explicit, allows for consideration of how particular literacy practices are deemed appropriate and which are not.

In the previous section, I indicated that taking on the literacy practices of a field can be considered as becoming a member of a Discourse community with implications for students' identities. In this section, I have shown that taking on the literacy practices of a field also entails understanding the nature of the knowledge, such that students enjoy epistemological access. This suggests that literacy practices may vary according to institutional type as different kinds of universities may focus on producing broadly different kinds of knowledge. This study includes all three institutional types and so I now turn to look at the possible link between literacy practices and the nature of the university.

2.6. Literacies and Institutional Types

Understanding academic literacies as multiple and emerging from the relevant discipline or field's norms and values entails understanding that the type of institution may also have a bearing. Traditional universities are typically structured according to disciplines. These disciplines are each taught by different departments and the academics within them will generally not only teach but would also contribute to knowledge building through research. Different disciplines have their own interests in writing based on their specific understandings of how writing works, what function it serves, and which methods can be applied to its investigation (Mgqwashu, 2009). Reid (2005 as cited in Papashane and Hlalele (2014 p. 629) offers an interesting description for academic literacy in terms of inherent academic reading and writing skills that students need in a traditional university context:

> writing in clear sentences, spelling correctly and using punctuations correctly (*operational skills*); incorporating ideas from others into their work, structuring an essay, writing introductions and conclusions in an appropriate style and acknowledging ideas of others by referencing (*cultural literacy*); and analysing assignment questions, reading academic text and reflecting critically on ideas and experiences (*critical literacy*).

Reid (2005, as cited in Papashane and Hlalele (2014 p. 630) explains that "each discipline is like a culture, therefore, the culture for the Bachelor of Education, for example, differs from that of Bachelor of Economics". In addition to Reid's (2005) operational skills and cultural and critical literacy practices, Papashane and Hlalele (2014, p. 633) propose a broad extension of these to include "technical literacy, economic literacy, scientific literacy and academic vocabulary" to cater for many, if not all, disciplines.

While the traditional university is usually structured by discipline, each with its own set of literacy practices for students to acquire, the University of Science and Technology often includes cross-disciplinary studies, with a focus on the workplace. Universities of Science and Technology generally specialise in vocational curricula which are heavily content based, often with little consideration as to how students process that content (Van Heerden, 2000). As such, researchers (e.g. Perelman, 1999; Winsor, 1996) point out that academics and students from these types of institutions often underestimate the role of academic reading and writing in their teaching and learning. The teaching of subject content without consideration of the literacy practices can be especially acute where the focus is entirely on application. This neglect can make the students face challenges which are often labelled as 'language problems' given the expectation that everything being expected of students is common sense (Boughey, 2000; 2002).

Sebolai and Dzansi (2015, p. 249) offer a description of academic literacy in a University of Science and Technology context. According to these scholars, academic literacy in this context involves students' ability to:

- "Understand a range of academic vocabulary in context;
- Interpret and use metaphor and idioms, and perceive connotation, word play and ambiguity;

- Understand relations between different parts of a text, be aware of the logical development of (an academic) text, via introductions to conclusions, and know how to use language that serves to make the different parts of a text hang together;
- Interpret different kinds of text type (genre), and show sensitivity for the meaning that they convey, and the audience that they are aimed at;
- Interpret, use and produce information presented in graphic or visual format;
- Make distinctions between essential and non-essential information, fact and opinion, propositions and arguments; distinguish between cause and effect, classify, categorise and handle data that make comparisons;
- See sequence and order, do simple numerical estimations and computations that are relevant to academic information, that allow comparisons to be made, and can be applied for an argument;
- Know what counts as evidence for an argument, extrapolate from information by making inferences, and apply the information or its implications to other cases than the one at hand;
- Understand the communicative function of various ways of expression in academic language (such as defining, providing examples, arguing) and
- Make meaning (for example, of an academic text) beyond the level of sentence".

This list fails to distinguish in any meaningful way between the practices of traditional universities and those focused on applied forms of knowledge. There is indeed a dearth of research into the literacy practices of such institutions in ways that distinguish them from other kinds of universities. Writing about Universities of Technology in South Africa, Garraway and Windberg (2019) claim that these institutions' programmes generally exhibit a knowledge base characterised by principles of practice, rather than theoretical principles more typical of a traditional university. There is a need to consider the nature of knowledge more explicitly in vocationally focused education in order to make sense of the literacy practices required for success (Winberg, 2005).

Comprehensive universities face the challenge of being expected to develop students' literacy practices within both formative and vocational type qualifications. Gibbons (2004, p. 5), looking at the comprehensive university in the South African context, offers a useful summary of the characteristics of such institutions:

- "Diversity – through the offering of a diverse range of academic programmes.
- Accessibility – through the opportunities created by a variety of entry and exit points.
- Student mobility – through developing strong vertical and horizontal articulation pathways.
- Responsiveness – through the development of a suite of educational programmes and research foci appropriate to local, regional and national needs.
- Flexibility – through the strengthening of relationships with community, civic, government, business, and industry partners for local and regional development. Flexibility should characterise the institutions' ability to meet the human resource needs of the local (and wider) context through its training programmes, and to contribute to the development of the communities it serves through the application and extension of its knowledge and expertise".

This set of characteristics are aspirational and difficult to enact. The particular challenge such institutions have is that academics are expected to focus on the needs of the students in the interests of broadening access, but there is insufficient understanding of what particular literacy practices are required, and how they can be developed.

2.7 Academic Literacy Courses

Interventions aimed at developing an awareness of the 'mysteries' of academic literacy vary considerably from institution to institution, and even from department to department. These include staff development processes to support more explicit teaching of content in ways that make the literacy practices overt, writer respondent and writing intensive courses whereby students are given more opportunities to practice writing and get feedback on such writing, augmented courses, and, most commonly, the development of courses focused on academic literacy development. Such academic literacy development courses themselves take very different forms and arguably are underpinned by very different understandings.

Butler (2014, p. 83) maintains that "the main challenge for academic literacy lecturers who want to improve their own practice is that there seems to be an oversupply of studies that are largely descriptions of and theoretical justifications for interventions" and "there are too few studies that report on the real successes or failures of such interventions".

A great many such courses are generic and do not focus on specific forms of literacy that students are expected to demonstrate in different courses. Research shows that in general, the current models for developing academic literacy do not sufficiently empower students with discipline-specific literacies that would help them navigate their way through their chosen discipline (Boughey, 2016; Mgqwashu, 2009; Mukoroli, 2016; Street, 1984). McGowan (2018, p. 1) argues that "research into pedagogies aimed at supporting students' academic literacy development has pointed to the inadequacy of generic approaches delivered as remedial support services, and has called instead for the integration of the teaching and learning of academic literacy into discipline content courses". It is thus not only the generic nature of the approach that is problematic, but the remedial nature thereof, in that such courses suggest that it is students who need to be 'fixed', and that the mainstream curriculum can continue without change. Remedial models have not only been found to be inadequate (as they have not always reached all those students who need support), "but a 'skills' focus has also been identified as 'trivialising' the complex processes of academic language and literacy development" (Wingate 2006, p. 447). Literacies research has generally called for discipline-embedded and curriculum-integrated approaches on the principle that genuine inclusivity would require the learning needs of all students to be addressed in discipline course curricula, as learners find their way into the epistemologies – the ways of thinking and knowing – of their disciplines (Wingate, 2006). Becoming adept members of a disciplinary community can be seen to have implications for students' identities. In many ways they are being asked to take on dominant ways of thinking, speaking, writing and acting (Kapp & Bangeni, 2009) and their own agency in deciding what they value and what they dismiss needs to also be considered.

Butler (2013) argues that the crucial issue that academic literacy lecturers often ponder about in the development of academic literacy is that of "situatedness", that is, to decide on the theoretical home for academic literacy. In other words, to which discipline should the theoretical grounding for academic literacy be aligned to design adequate and relevant solutions to problematic issues of academic literacy in HEIs?

Although there are many studies that embarked on theorising models for academic literacy development around the world (Barnes & Mercer, 2004; Moss & Case, 1999; Thies, Wallis, Turner, & Wishart, 2014; Sebolai & Dzansi, 2015), to the best of my knowledge, there is no literature on academic literacy development in the Namibian context. This study undertakes such a focus across the three institutional types.

There is continued reliance, especially in developing countries including Namibia, on mandatory short core courses focusing on generic core skills considered to be transferable to all subjects at tertiary level (McWilliams & Allan, 2014). Proponents of generic academic literacy development believe that repeated application and additional focus of teaching generic skills for transfer to different contexts promotes effective learning (Gunn, Hearne, & Sibthorpe, 2011). The advocates of this teaching approach claim that "transfer is what allows students to acquire skills in one context and then select them, as appropriate for application in another" (Gunn et al., 2011, p. 1).

Contrary to this, studies conducted over the past 30 years argue that transfer is largely a myth based on the notion of decontextualised knowledge and language use. Swartz (1987), for example, argues that the assumption that transfer occurs as a natural result of proficiency in generic skills is unreliable as students are unable to build conceptual bridges between different study contexts without assistance of discipline-specific models and explicit instructions. Pope (2009) suggests that the ideal way to produce fully capable graduates is to make academic practices explicit in the entry level curriculum, then continue their reinforcement and further development throughout the degree programme. Challenges, however, arise when discipline-specific lecturers assume that students will come fully equipped with the relevant practices, and if they do not, it is their own problem, or rather someone else's [generic academic literacy lecturers] responsibility to fix (Gunn et al., 2011).

In addition, a few studies undertaken to measure generic academic literacy course impact have been unable to establish a definite difference made by these courses on students' academic literacy growth to date. In New Zealand, for example, although generic courses are favoured for reasons such as the argument of generalisability of the core skills, the importance of getting the basics right first, and cost effective nature of generic approaches to teaching academic literacy, researchers believe that students are likely to benefit more from receiving a carefully paced programme of instruction, where the academic literacy practices within a discipline-specific course are made more explicit (McWilliams & Allan, 2014). Similarly, O'Hanlon and Diaz (2010) posit that well designed activities embedded within a discipline are an effective way to promote acquisition of academic literacy.

In some institutions in the United Kingdom, students who are deemed 'at risk' in academic writing are sent to do generic study skills courses in dedicated units where they are often taught

academic writing in a 'decontextualised manner' (Wingate & Dreiss, 2009). These extra-curricular approaches to teaching academic writing have been criticised because "when writing is taught outside the discipline, students have little opportunity to understand what their discipline requires and what their lecturers expect" (Wingate & Dreiss, 2009, p. 5). It is argued that such courses "neglect the integral relationship between writing and knowledge construction in the discipline" (Somerville & Creme, 2005, p. 18).

In Ghana, Afful (2007) proposed a change in the curriculum design and teaching of *English for academic purposes* (EAP) at an English-medium university, to consider moving from the generic approach to teaching academic literacy to a discipline-specific approach. These scholars claim that many academic literacy programmes at universities in countries like the UK, Australia and United States of America (USA) have been revised as a result of, among other things, globalisation, increasing number of international students, non-responsiveness to students' needs, and dominance of English as an academic language. In contrast, they argue, little change or innovation has been experienced with academic development programmes in sub-Saharan Africa in general.

There has been a strong move from different researchers (McKenna, 2003; Parkinson, 2000) towards theorising academic literacy as a phenomenon that needs to be understood within and through the mainstream disciplines from which such practices have emerged, and in which such practices are demanded of students. Johnson, Veitch, and Dewinyanti (2015) maintain that there is growing consensus that the development of what they term 'communications skills courses' encompassing academic literacy and English language proficiency occur most effectively in the context of disciplinary study, and that communication skills need to be embedded in the curriculum. Parkinson (2000, p. 383), for example, suggests an approach that is integrated within the disciplines in the sciences to "familiarize students with a wide range of literacies in science, focusing on particular genres which are important in science".

Despite this literature, many universities in developing countries such as Namibia have begun to put in place courses to teach academic literacy with a generic approach. Mgqwashu (2008 p. 316) argues that such modules are a

> manifestation of an inherently common-sense idea that the difficulties experienced by students as they engage with tertiary study are attributable to issues related to 'language', and not to their failure to master a secondary (academic) discourse.

An essential question, however, is: If academic literacy practices are key to student success in each and every course in a university, why are they not explicitly taught by academics in those courses? Expecting academic literacy to be developed in a course taught in isolation suggests the embracing of the autonomous model. The dominance of the autonomous model also means that academics are unlikely to be aware of the social nature of the literacy practices they are expecting of students. They are likely to ascribe students' difficulties to the encoding and decoding of text, rather than to the gradual acquisition of a set of complex, discipline-specific literacy practices. In other words, the academics themselves may not 'see' academic literacy practices as peculiar or subject specific. They may be so focused on the content they are trying to teach that they ignore the extent to which being able to make meaning of that content requires students to take on a particular set of literacy practices.

Goodier and Parkinson (2005, p. 66) argue that "irrelevant content not grounded in the discipline is demotivating to students and generic skills are not transferred to the disciplines where the skills are necessary". Jacobs' (2010) work has mainly centred on collaborative teaching between content and language academics. For Jacobs (2010), if relevant support regarding academic literacy is to be given to undergraduate students, there should be a strong collaboration between disciplinary specialists and academic literacy courses designers/lecturers. Kapp and Bangeni (2009) suggest that the process of taking on the literacy practices of a discipline is not a linear one. Academic literacy experts can work with mainstream academics to help them to 'see' the literacy practices they are calling for and thereby make the implicit explicit. They can help the academic to teach in ways which make these norms and values explicit, thus enhancing the chances for students to take them on.

The rapid rise of academic literacy courses has emerged in response to the widening of access and concerns about throughput and retention rates. They have, as I have indicated, largely taken the form of generic courses, despite criticism in this regard.

Challenges are also being brought to bear as to whether academic literacy courses serve to acculturate students into the dominant Discourse. But Kapp and Bangeni (2009) suggest that the issue is not a simple binary between acculturation or resistance. They show that students can both absorb and resist the new discourses to which they are being exposed and can inhabit multiple positions as they reconcile the literacy practices of their home, their schools, and those to which they are now exposed in the university.

2.8 Impact of Coloniality on Higher Educational Institutions in Africa

A relatively new criticism about literacy practices emerges from the field of decoloniality studies, where questions are being raised as to whose knowledge is legitimated and whose is side-lined, and which literacy practices are deemed appropriate and which are considered unacceptable. I now turn to a brief consideration of this concern by looking at the history of how coloniality has impacted on every aspect of higher education from content, to teaching approaches, to assessment and more (Mbembe, 2015; Mgqwashu, 2019; Mignolo, 2003; Mpofu, 2013; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Decolonial scholars particularly interrogate the domination of the Western and Eurocentric (also referred to as the Global North) knowledge and scientific theories and the marginalisation of cultural identities, linguistic and discursive practices as well as the philosophy of knowledge of Africa and the rest of the Global South. At this point, before reviewing literature on the impact of coloniality on higher education in Africa in general and Namibia in particular, it is important to consider the meaning of the term 'coloniality'. In clarifying the concept of coloniality, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) cautions that coloniality must not be confused with colonialism. Colonialism represents a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Whereas coloniality, denotes long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). According to this author:

> Coloniality survived the end of direct colonialism. In post colonies it continues to affect the lives of people, long after direct colonialism and administrative apartheid have been dethroned. What, therefore needs to be understood is not just the 'not yet uhuru' postcolonial experience but the invisible vampirism of technologies of imperialism and colonial matrices of power that continue to exist in the minds, lives, languages, dreams, imaginations, and epistemologies of modern subjects in Africa and the entire global South (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, p. 11)

Similarly, Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243) emphasises that coloniality,

> is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day.

The sentiments above depict colonialism as a temporary period of oppression that has come and gone, and coloniality as the underlying logic that places peoples and knowledge into a classification system that valorises all that is European.

Before the colonial era in Africa, the primary purpose of education for African children was to transmit social and cultural values, human dignity and humanistic orientation within kinship-based groups, villages or districts (Batibo, 1995). This was done within the philosophical paradigm of Ubuntu which is "viewed as the basis for a morality of cooperation, compassion, community spiritedness, and concern for the interests of the collective" (Ayittey, 2006, p. 43). When applied towards implementing educational practices, Ubuntu was used by the African community members to teach each other about the ways of survival, for example, by sharing different methods of blacksmithing, goldsmithing, medicinal healing, pottery, basketry and trading of commodities (Ayittey, 2006). These epistemological values were transmitted orally through multiple modes such as, storytelling, mental arithmetic, community songs and dances. The knowledge was both local, such as learning about local animals and vegetation, weather patterns and farming, and global, such as learning about human connection (Ayittey, 2006). As Mgqwashu (2019, p. 69) argues, "although formal education in the context of schooling and higher education cannot focus exclusively on these topics, we should not undermine or discard Indigenous knowledge, knowledge-generation practices, and teaching and learning that draw from African oral traditions and local contexts".

The colonial era in Africa included both direct and indirect socio-economic and political control, and dominance and exploitation of resource-rich parts of the world by the European powers in the form of settler or extractive colonies (Mamdani, 1996, p. 17). Apart from exploitation, one of the objectives of the colonialists was to reinforce the belief in Africans that the colonists were superior human beings and that they were on a mission to save and 'civilise' the 'uncivilised' peoples in the colonies (Mudimbe, 1985). As Kelley (2000, p. 27) puts it, "colonial domination required a whole way of thinking, a discourse in which everything that is advanced, good and civilised is defined and measured in European terms". In this process, colonial education played an instrumental role – that of promoting and imposing Eurocentric 'ways' and worldviews while subjugating everything else (Heleta, 2016).

Education for African communities was developed primarily to reinforce socio-economic relations between Africa and its colonisers, which advanced the imperial project. Angu,

Boakye, and Eybers (2019, p 3.) claim that "curriculum contents and the methods applied by colonial and missionary agents were directed toward developing communicative aptitude and skills to enhance Europe's clutch on the continent's natural resources". Such content was taught through European languages. According to Kumalo (2018, p. 12), a key purpose of imposing European languages on Africans through curriculum structures was the "denial of indigenous epistemic frameworks".

Terms such as 'language' which were intimately tied up with concepts such as 'nation', 'culture' and 'power' were reserved for the colonial languages. The indigenous languages, "linked to tribes, 'uncultured' naturalness and lack of military power, were referred to by negative terms such as 'dialect', 'vernacular' and 'patois' implying their inferior status" (Leglise & Migge, 2007, p. 6). Accordingly, terms such as 'broken/bad language' were particularly used in reference to languages which had emerged out of the contact between European and non-European language. Consequently, the learning of the colonial language was portrayed as an asset in that it presumably "opens up a person's mind to the modern world" and made them civilized, modern human beings (Leglise & Migge, 2007, p. 19). Inability or opposition to learning these languages was, therefore, considered irrational and a sign of ignorance and resistance to civilisation. Important evidence to portray the inferior status of people who were not attached to colonial languages was evidenced by their supposed lack of a writing system and a literary body of work.

The introduction chapter provided a brief account of the colonial period in Namibia. It particularly focused on the period from 1805-1915 when formal education was introduced in Namibia (then known as German South West Africa) by the missionaries of London and Wesleyan Society, and 1915 to 1990 when the country was under the South African apartheid colonial regime. Missionaries used conversion to Christianity to colonise the consciousness and the mind of the indigenous people to accept Eurocentric hierarchisation of power. In their teaching about Christianity and civilisation, they emphasised the notion that white people were superior to indigenous people. They also created educational institutions which facilitated the Western models of academic organisation, and which largely excluded locals. The apartheid regime continued this legacy. It is therefore safe to argue that higher education systems in Africa are largely a product of European colonial frameworks (Heleta, 2016).

2.8.1 Language issues in post-colonial Africa

Today, decades after African countries have gained their political independence, curricula at many African universities are still largely Eurocentric, rooted in the colonial in terms of structure, content and pedagogy. At the same time, many curricula continue to provide stereotypical, prejudicial and patronising views about Africa and its people (Heleta, 2016). This resonates with Mgqwashu's (2006, p. 315) articulation that "African talent and potential lie dormant in most rural areas because brilliant ideas that could lead to social and economic upliftment of most local communities cannot be taken seriously if not they are communicated in the language of the colonizer". Most independent African states selected the language of their former coloniser either as the only official language or the key language for commerce (Leglise & Migge, 2007). Languages of instruction in African schools often include English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Afrikaans, while indigenous languages play minimal roles. Reasons attributed to these choices, include among others, economic benefits of fluency in an international language; fear that risking investment in mother-tongue learning will have negative political and educational fallouts; and the perception that African languages have little relevance to today's world. In fact, language polices in many African states have opted to only use mother-tongues as a medium of instruction (MOI) during the initial stages of primary education, if at all, and adopt a European language, in most cases the language of their former colonisers, as the sole MOI in HEIs.

Although compiled more than two decades ago, Bamgbose's (2000) typology of the use of African language (Table 2.3) as medium of instruction at different levels of education still provides useful insights related to marginalisation of African languages by Africans themselves. As a matter of fact, the status quo remains in these countries.

Table 2.3: Mother-tongue use as a medium of instruction in some African countries (adapted from Bamgbose, 2000)

Use/level	Countries
No use of African language at all	Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Cape Verde
Use African language as MOI in primary education only	Namibia, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Botswana, Rwanda
Use of African language as MOI in secondary education	Somalia and Ethiopia
Use of African language as MOI at tertiary level	No country, except in the case of metalanguage for teaching the indigenous language itself, e.g. Swahili in Tanzania, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba in Nigeria, Akan in Ghana, Shona in Zimbabwe, and Oshiwambo, Otjieherero, Damara-Nama in Namibia

The choice of the medium of instruction has long-term effects on the performance of learners throughout the school system. As Mukama (2007) argues, languages of instruction, if not well handled, have the potential to discriminate against potential students and even create social classes among students – those who can learn with foreign languages and those who cannot; those who have good teachers of foreign languages and those who do not; those who have regular exposure to such languages and those who do not. There are about 36 languages spoken in Namibia, 14 of which are considered national languages, with English as the sole official language of the country. Although the Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) mandates the use of English as the primary LoLT in most schools in Namibia, the language is hardly heard, let alone spoken in rural communities. Unlike in urban schools where learners get more exposure to English, most rural primary school learners encounter English only in the classroom and their English language proficiency is perceived to be far weaker than that of learners in urban schools (Van De Walt, 2015). This state of affairs prevents learners from understanding not only English as a subject, but also other subjects that are taught and written in English, especially if they succeed in accessing education at university level.

According to Leglise and Migge (2007), the teaching of African languages is hampered by various factors. Firstly, teachers of these languages are rarely well trained and have not

obtained the minimum required qualifications in the language. Secondly, teaching materials are generally not readily available or as innovative as those for European languages. Most scientific books used in African schools were written by Europeans and Americans in their particular contexts and in their specific languages. The meanings assigned to this literature through examples, stories, analogies, metaphors, application, theorisation, and even the style of writing are primarily embedded in external social realities (Mukama, 2007). In addition, teachers usually do not have the same teaching incentives as their counterparts teaching European languages or other subjects. By contrast, African language teachers tend to be held in low esteem (Leglise & Migge, 2007). While European languages tend to be mandatory at all levels and in final examinations, this is generally not the case with African languages. Even if they are offered as obligatory subjects as in Tanzania (Swahili), Zimbabwe (Shona), Namibia, (Oshindong, Otjiherero, Damara-Nama, Rukwangari, etc.) the examination grade is irrelevant for students' academic advancement to the university level. In Namibia, for example, students cannot be admitted into the undergraduate degree programme at the three major HEIs if they have obtained an ungraded (U) symbol in English from Grade 12. This does not matter even if they have passed all the other subjects with flying colours. This is, however, not the case if the same grade is obtained in a mother tongue subject.

The social situation or the culture within which the child is educated is the foundation of meaning. Halliday (1978, p. 8) teaches us that "the context plays a part in determining what we say; and what we say plays a part in determining the context". Mukama (2007) argues that when students learn a language, they also appropriate the social context within which the meaning is created. By learning English, for example, students also acquire cultural aspects. By so doing, students then try to integrate their social contexts so that they can understand what is said and why. This partly explains why the academic competence of many students in some African universities is poor. It is partly because many African students do not see their lives reflected in these curriculums. In other words, their languages, their culture, their history, and their indigenous knowledge get minimal space in their university education. African students, "are still expected to continue imagining Europe as the center of gravity and to promote Western epistemic hegemony" (Angu et al., 2019, p. 4).

This literature on the impact of coloniality on HEIs in Africa is relevant to this study in Namibia. Since independence until 2007, for example, the country through its then Ministry of Education adopted the Cambridge Examination System and has been issuing Grade 12

matriculants with the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and or the Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGCSE) from the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). The reasons provided for using the Cambridge Examination System since independence was "to ensure that graduates from the country's education system are internationally competitive" (Mvula, 2000, p. 1). Cambridge qualifications were favoured because they are recognised and accepted for entry by European, American, and many other universities around the world (Mvula, 2007). In an attempt to localise their examinations, the country replaced the IGCSE/H with Namibia National Secondary Certificate (Ordinary and Higher level) (NSSCO/H). The new examination system is however, modelled on the Cambridge Examination System. As such, the NSSC and HNSSC are currently issued with the endorsement of the Cambridge system. Given that the majority of Namibian academics at the three HEIs went through this schooling system, there is a heritage which is interesting to consider as far as the conceptualisation of academic literacy is concerned.

2.9 Decolonising the Higher Education Curriculum

Decolonisation means different things to different people in different contexts, as well as having different dimensions such as the political, economic, cultural, material, and epistemic (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). Decolonising higher education is defined by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, p. 4) as confronting "the problem of overrepresentation of European (and Global North) thought in knowledge, social theory and education or to de-Europeanize the world". In other words, decolonising higher education is a clarion call for the transformation of universities' curriculum and pedagogies and for the promotion of the epistemologies of Africa and the Global South. These promotion of epistemologies of the South should not be seen as a "philistine rejection of Western-derived knowledge and argumentation" (Prah, 2017, p. 226). On the contrary, they are a deliberate attempt to rectify centuries of cognitive injustice that has allowed Europe to distort and misrepresent the social experiences of the people of the Global South (Angu et al., 2019).

Calls for decolonising African higher education are not new in Africa. They began in the 1960s and 70s where post independent African nations began to engage in the process of seeking to redress colonial injustices and undertake effective means to achieve socio-economic development (Zembylas, 2018). In Kenya, for example, Ngugi (1986, p. 16) writes that, after

gaining its independence in 1963, there have been quests for transformation to look at the higher education curriculum in terms of "relevance of our situations, and contribution towards understanding ourselves". Similar decolonising processes have been taking place in many African countries after independence, where universities, students, and some academics went through vigorous efforts to decolonise university curriculums. The most recent impactful call for decolonising higher education took place in South Africa in 2015 and 2016, where "South African students and a small number of progressive academics began a campaign to decolonise the curriculum at universities by ending the domination of Western epistemological traditions, histories and figures" (Molefe 2016, p. 32). In particular, the students called for the end of domination by white, male, Western, capitalist, heterosexual, and European worldviews in higher education and for the incorporation of other South African, African, and global 'perspectives, experiences [*and*] epistemologies as the central tenets of the curriculum, teaching, learning, and research in the country (Shay, 2016). While the proponents of a decolonised curriculum in South African universities, for example, argue that Africans have their own ways of being, knowing, and doing that emerge from African cultural repertoires, histories, and social experiences (Angu et al., 2019), there is not much literature that indicates that academics are aware of how to open spaces for African students to express these unique ways of being and doing or, importantly for this study, to consider how the literacy practices expected of students may emerge from some of the values under critique.

According to Angu et al. (2019), not much is done in those modules designed to scaffold students' acquisition of academic literacy to allow for other languages, knowledges, and ways of knowing. Instead academic literacy modules arguably augment the hegemony of English in teaching and learning and use language proficiency as a barometer to test the cognitive ability of African students (Heleta, 2016). Proponents of decolonisation of the higher education curriculum advocate for translanguaging and code-switching as a pedagogical approach in the scaffolding of academic literacy acquisition, using the academic literacies approach that welcomes diversity and opens literacy practice to both wide access and critique (Angu et al., 2019; Li, 2018; Makalela, 2014).

Translanguaging is similar to code-switching in that they both refer to multilingual speakers shuttling between languages in a natural manner (Makalela, 2014). But code-switching entails "going from one language code to another" and "assumes that the two languages of bilinguals are two separate monolingual codes that could be used without reference to each other" (Garcia,

2011, p. 1), while "translanguaging seeks to assist multilingual speakers in making meaning, shaping experiences, and gaining deeper understandings and knowledge of the languages in use and even of the content that is being taught" (Park, 2014, p. 50).

Although research has shown that translanguaging might be beneficial in multilingual classrooms, it can be a challenge to implement in typical lecture halls which are not homogenous in terms of language orientation, such as is the case in Namibia. It is possible for example, for a class to comprise students who speak more than 10 different languages as their respective first languages. With 'translanguaging', different languages are systematically used for teaching and learning within the same lesson (Mwinda & Van der Walt, 2015). Furthermore, Namibia's language policy is silent on issues such as code-switching and translanguaging.

The monolingual approach and the colonial legacy can combine to "reinforce within students the false notion that they do not belong in higher education" and that their "sociocultural experiences have no place in their academic journeys" (Montenegro & Jankosky, 2017, p. 5). This requires providing student support that is transformative and should prepare students to address their societal problems and not "focus on discrete knowledge and skills that are easy and cost efficient to test" (Marope, Griffin, & Gallagher 2017, p. 23).

Although decoloniality is not the main focus of this study, this literature provides useful insights for this study which aims to capture academic literacy lecturers' perspectives of academic literacy at the three HEIs. Even though both academic literacy acquisition and decoloniality discourses have received attention in many South African universities, Namibian universities have not engaged with such concerns in much detail. Nonetheless, Namibia's close alignment with South Africa both historically and currently suggest that some of these debates may well be pertinent.

This chapter has thus far presented a view of academic literacy practices as multiple and context-specific. It has suggested that taking on the literacy practices of a target field of study has implications for students' identities and needs to be done in ways that make the practices explicit for epistemological access while opening such practices to critique, especially given the colonial nature of many processes in the academy.

I now end this chapter with a look at the literature on the development of academic literacy in ways that are neither decontextualised nor generic.

2.10 Other Perspectives on Developing Academic Literacy

It is a complex and challenging task for universities to ensure that curricula are designed and delivered in a pedagogical manner that caters for diverse students from different educational, social, and cultural backgrounds (Wingate, 2018). In helping students to adapt to the new epistemic culture and master (and even critique) appropriate academic literacies, Ogude, Nel, and Oosthuizen (2005, p. 14) advise curriculum developers and academic literacy lecturers alike to weigh up:

- "Teaching prescribed knowledge and skills against helping students develop really useful dispositions and ways of learning.
- Accountability to the requirements of a discipline or profession against developing independent thinking and student autonomy in establishing learning goals and needs.
- Safety and rigour against creativity and originality.
- Reproduction against transformation.
- Fixed content-based curriculum against student-centred curriculum".

Curriculum responsiveness to learning therefore challenges academics to critically determine and weigh not only *what* is taught in their courses, but *how* and *why* it is taught. The call for HEIs' curricula to be responsive to learning has been documented. In South Africa for example, Ogude et al. (2005) argue that universities are confronted with a variety of challenges in enhancing curriculum responsiveness, and that they need to address these challenges if they are to survive and ensure that they thrive as vibrant contributors of knowledge development. This resonates with Lock and Friesen's (2015, p. i) call for academics to be "informed, creative and able to respond to the learning that meets all students' academic needs". This, according to these scholars, requires:

- Development of strong authentic discipline-based inquiry;
- Scaffolding of student work and assessment practices that assist each student in improving, growing and thriving;
- Use of networked digital technologies to create knowledge-building classrooms;

- Strong relationships with students, other teachers and experts in the field for the purpose of learning together and
- Work with peers to critically reflect on practice for the purpose of improving practice.

There have been numerous approaches to developing academic literacy which continue to lead to several paradigm shifts (Moll, 2004). The general argument for this study is that reading and writing are equally important components of academic literacy. However, in teaching academic literacy in HEIs, the emphasis is typically on academic writing. There are three common approaches to teaching writing in the field of English: The *product-based approach* (which is mainly concerned with knowledge about the structure of language, and views writing development as mainly the result of the imitation of input in the form of texts provided by the teacher); the *text-based approach/genre approach* (which involves listening to, reading, viewing, and understanding different types of texts) and the *process approach* (in which teachers encourage their students to brainstorm, plan, draft, revise, and edit their work before they produce their final texts) (Julius, 2014). While this study acknowledges that reading and writing are the backbone of academic literacy, the study maintains that academic literacy involves more than reading and writing, and that academics should devise and explore approaches that induct students into their disciplinary literacies.

However, none of these approaches are without shortcomings. Millin (2016) argues that genre-based pedagogies may result in the development of "mechanical" writers who are less confident to deviate from genre model guidelines given in class, thereby failing to produce autonomous students who can apply and adapt the genre guidelines to different writing tasks.

The process approach, on the other hand, can also be viewed as unrealistic because it puts too much emphasis on multiple drafts in class, which may cause students to fail the academic examination where they are only restricted to a single draft (Onozwa, 2010). Another criticism against the process approach is that it favours educational contexts with students that come from backgrounds and families with an established reading culture (Mgqwashu, 2008).

Lea and Street (1998) maintain that developing students' academic literacies can be approached in three ways. Firstly, the study skills approach which focuses on correcting students' deficient writing and using different methods to teach essay writing as a kind of formula (for example, the structure should comprise of: introduction, three to five paragraphs of main text,

conclusion, references). Competence in this approach is measured textually, by looking at fluency in oral and written texts. This approach to writing is fundamentally prescriptive in nature, given that successful students are perceived as those who should or are able to write with linguistic accuracy. Literacy experts such as Lea and Street (2000) argue that a skills-based approach to literacy reflects the understanding that academic skills can be easily learnt and transferred to other literacy contexts since they consist of aspects like spelling and grammar. As such, the study skills approach justifies the teaching of generic essay writing to all students, irrespective of the communicative and discursive practices of their disciplines. Bengesai (2012) contends that such a view is reductionist because it reduces a complex phenomenon like academic literacy to a set of atomised skills. According to Clarence and McKenna (2017), the study skills approach has dominated the approach to academic literacy development in higher education.

The second approach, which builds on the first, is termed 'academic socialisation'. In this approach, students are shown the rules of the game they are expected to play by and are not assumed to be deficient if they cannot yet play by them. The sources of this perspective lie in social psychology, anthropology, constructivism, and situated learning (Bury & Sheese, 2016). Academic socialisation can be equated to genre pedagogy. Academics working from this perspective therefore favour genre knowledge. This approach aims to acculturate students into conventions of disciplinary discourses and genres, focusing on the (reading and writing) text as the means of expressing meaning (Jacobs, 2010). As such, the underlying belief in this approach is that texts vary linguistically, according to their purposes and context. Hence, key to this approach is the notion of appropriacy. Good writing is defined as that which is linguistically appropriate to the purposes to which it is put (Ivanic, 2004). In other words, for this approach, students' levels of socialisation in the Discourse are assumed to be evident in their writing which then implies that the academic socialisation approach views academic literacy as completely textual. Considering this, genre pedagogy, originating from the Sydney school (systemic functional view) and Halliday's linguistics (to be discussed more in detail in Chapter Three), are the associated approaches borne out of an academic socialisation orientation.

The academic socialisation approach has been criticised on a number of grounds. This approach, for example, tends to treat writing as a transparent medium of representation and so fails to address the deep language, literacy, and discourse issues involved in the institutional

production and representation of meaning (Lea & Street, 1998). With regard to its emphasis on appropriacy, which is used when judging writing, critics have asked questions such as 'appropriacy according to whom?' (Ivanic, 2004). Other critics have labelled it a prescriptive approach because it assumes that there is only one way of learning a discourse and that "text-types are unitary, static and amenable to specifications" (Ivanic, 2004, p. 234). Lastly, in its attempt to make disciplinary practices more explicit, the academic socialisation approach focuses more on acculturating or changing students into becoming acceptable members of the discipline community with little consideration on the ways in which disciplinary practices could be a hindrance in and of themselves (Bengesai, 2012).

In response to the above criticisms, Jacobs (2005) contends that social learning is central in academic literacy development through the socialisation approach. As such, knowing in this approach is seen as a matter of displaying competences defined in social communities. Competence in a community, according to Jacobs (2005, p. 477), requires "understanding the enterprise well enough to be able to contribute to it … being able to engage with the community and be trusted as a partner … to have access to [a shared] repertoire and be able to use it appropriately". Thus, by imitating the behaviour of those who are seen as entrenched in the community, "by modelling themselves on insiders" (Jacobs 2005, p. 477) students can progress over time to become fully-fledged participants. Such modelling can be seen as learning to 'read' the culture, learning to come to terms with its distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behaviour of their specific disciplines. In addition, genre approaches are based on sound educational principles and a solid body of linguistic theory, and explicitness is actually one of their strengths (Gee, 2003). Finally, Gee (2003) contends that genre approaches are more than "prescriptive how-to-do procedure[s]" and emphasises the genre movement's overt focus on the relation of the social purpose of text to language structure which should be seen as a patterning and signaling that assists writers in structuring according to the demands of the context.

The third approach is termed 'academic literacies' which subsumes the two prior approaches. Here, academic literacies is presented as an ideal to work towards, where literacies in the disciplines are viewed as multiple, contested, and socially constructed according to different, often tacit, agendas (Lea & Street, 1998). This approach sees literacies as social practices and views student writing and learning as issues at the level of epistemology and identities, rather than skill or socialisation. This approach sees the literacy demands of the curriculum as

involving a variety of communicative practices, including genres, fields, and disciplines. As opposed to the more straightforward study skills and academic socialisation approaches, the academic literacies approach comes from the social and ideological orientation of the New Literacy Studies. Halliday's systemic functional linguistics is also relevant here as it sees students' writing as being concerned with the processes of meaning-making and contestation around meaning, rather than as skills or deficits. As such, literature based on this approach suggests that the major explanation for problems in students' writing is the gaps between academic staff expectations and student interpretations of what is involved in student writing (Bury & Sheese, 2016). This is because what counts as knowledge is viewed differently in different contexts, making it a challenge for the student to switch practices between one context and another and handle the social meanings and identity that each of the contexts presents (Lea & Street, 2006).

In an attempt to contribute to knowledge related to academic literacy development, this study argues that there is a need for academic literacy approaches to move the focus away from how academic literacy lecturers can help (teach) students develop literacy, to how students, academics, and teachers of courses on academic literacy understand and participate in institutional and disciplinary literacy practices. Academic literacy development support is offered in a variety of configurations, ranging from one-on-one consultations through to large class-scale lectures, which can be generic or embedded within discipline-specific courses. I now turn to some of these configurations.

2.10.1 Best practice model

As an alternative to the above-mentioned approaches, McWilliams and Allan (2014) developed what they term the Best Practice Model to teaching embedded academic literacy (Figure 2.2).

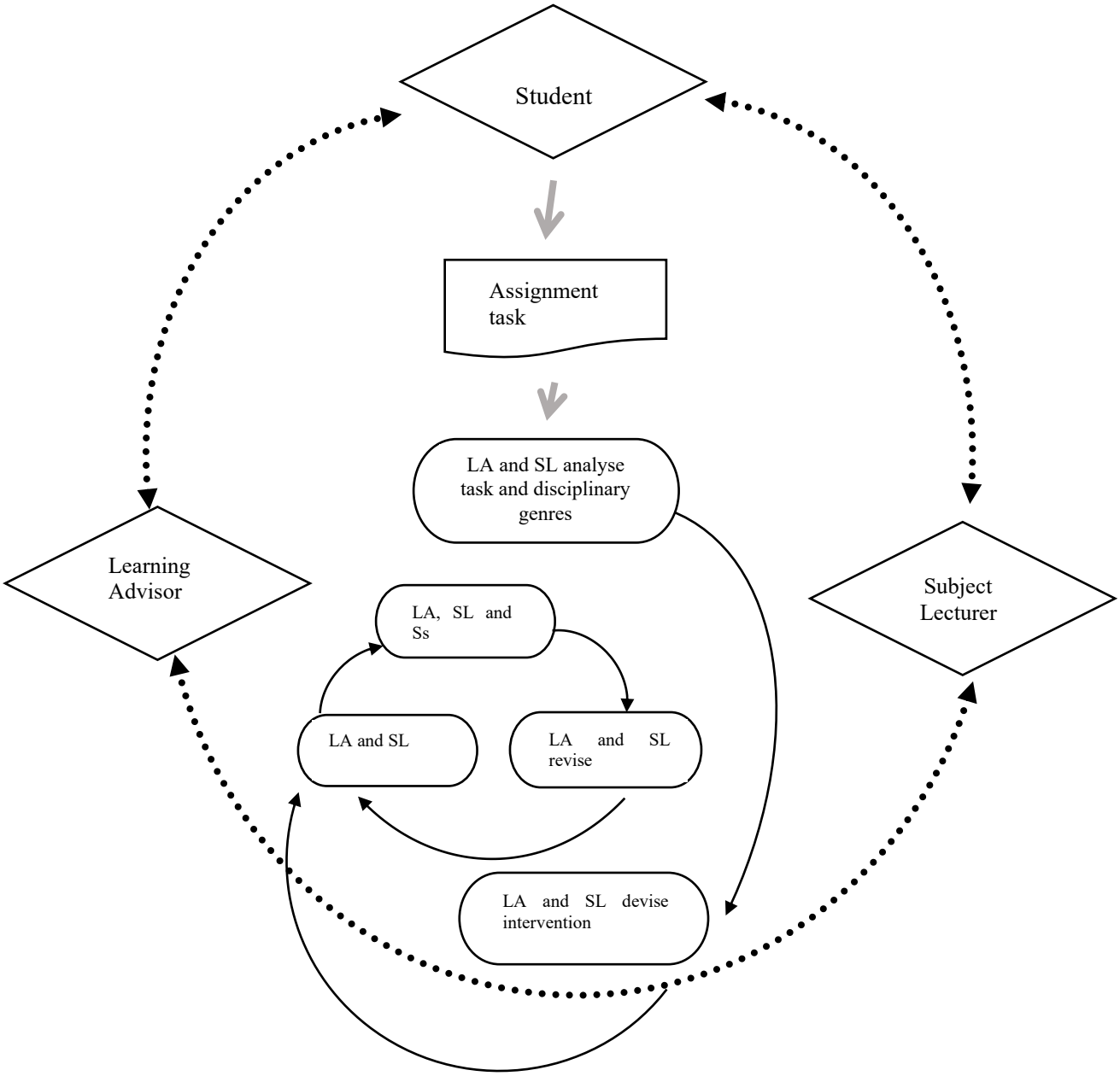


Figure 2.2: Best-Practice Model (Adapted from McWilliams & Allan, 2014, p. 9)

In this model:

- The point of departure is the assignment task, around which the literacy intervention is developed. There are two typical scenarios: either learning advisors identify courses with success and retention issues and reactively approach the subject lecturer(s) with

an offer to develop an intervention or, the subject lecturers proactively request assistance from learning advisors.

- LA and SL analyse the assignment task, together with published learning outcomes and associated marking criteria. This phase includes a survey of disciplinary genres and discourse practices.
- LA and SL assess learner needs and devise an appropriate intervention. In practice, the intervention can range from a one-off hour-long classroom session to a weekly workshop over a 12-week semester.
- LA and SL team teach. In practice, the LA typically leads the session and solicits commentary, input and feedback from the SL. In an ideal situation, time would be allocated for a student needs analysis and the compilation of a comprehensive graduate attribute profile.
- LA, SL and students debrief. In practice, this can involve a range of dynamics; however, ideally, all teaching staff are present with a representative sample of students.
- LA and SL revise the assessment and/or the intervention.

This model sees the academic literacy lecturers working alongside the academic to help scaffold the acquisition of the discipline-specific literacy practices. This is commendable because, although the academic literacy lecturer might not be an expert in the field, if they have a strong grasp of New Literacy Studies theory it would allow them to assist the discipline academic in making the implicit literacy norms explicit. Although McWilliams and Allan's model provides a practical intervention on how academic literacy lecturers and academics can collaborate to ensure the acquisition of discipline-specific literacies for all students, it is not without its shortcomings. It could, for example, be argued that this continues to reinforce the idea that literacy practices can be 'taught' by academic literacy experts outside of the discipline. However, one would hope that this collaboration might assist the academic to become increasingly aware of the practices they may have seen as commonsense. A considerable issue with this model is that it is extremely time-consuming and requires a high degree of cooperation among the lecturers, which may not always be guaranteed. Furthermore, the model assumes the capacity to have two experts in the lecture – the academic who has the disciplinary knowledge but little awareness of how literacy practices are acquired and the academic literacy lecturer who can assist in making the expected literacy practices explicit for the students (and for the lecturer).

2.10.2 Scaffolding academic literacy pedagogy approach

Another pedagogical model for academic literacy development is offered by Rose et al. (2004) and called Scaffolding Academic Literacy pedagogy. This alternative approach to teaching academic literacy was used for entry level undergraduate students at the University of Sydney. According to Rose et al. (2004, p. 2), this pedagogy "offered a promising alternative to existing approaches to academic literacy and standard academic teaching, by incorporating the teaching of literacy skills into the teaching of the academic curriculum". As stated in the preceding sections, engaging with academic texts involves reading and writing the language patterns in which they are expressed; this approach integrates these as dimensions of a single pedagogic process. Rose et al. (2004, p. 2) outline the approach thus:

> Pedagogy entails *academic literacy lecturers* guiding students through a detailed reading of texts in the curriculum, drawing attention to the organisation of texts and their language patterns, as well as the concepts, classifications, arguments and technical terminology used in the field, and then using what students have learnt from reading, to write successful academic texts.

The approach thus enables students to develop a more thorough understanding of the academic fields in which they are studying, at the same time that they learn to read and write about them. The following steps outline the process.

- **Step 1: Pre-testing to evaluate students' academic skills in their writing**. The test requires students to read short academic texts and then write a short summary about the key information in the text. This, according to Rose at al. (2004), provided qualitative feedback about students' level of academic and language skills, as well as numerical scores to indicate quantitative measures of learning gains.
- **Step 2: Implementing pedagogy based on the feedback from pre-testing**. In this step, academic literacy lecturers identified what students lacked in terms of course exit learning outcomes as supported by the pre-testing and implemented the pedagogy that was responsive to the academic literacy skills that students lacked. This, according to Rose et al. (2004), was done in collaboration with discipline-specific lecturers and scaffolding experts in a number of classes for two semesters, whereby two units were covered per semester. This was done to give ample time for students to learn and adapt to the new learning environment.

- **Step 3: Written assessment tasks at the end of semester one and two**. After a careful scaffolded teaching, students were given written assessment tasks. The samples of students' writing which included the pre-test results given at the beginning of the semester and after the scaffolding pedagogy were collected and analysed.
- **Step 4: Comparative analysis of all writing samples using assessment criteria**. In this step a comparative analysis of students' writing samples (pre-test and assessment tasks) were analysed using the assessment criteria set by the department. This enabled the precise measurement of academic literacy improvement for each student (Rose et al., 2004).

Despite some challenges, such as poor interest and participation from lecturers, the outcomes of Rose et al's (2004) Scaffolding Academic Literacy pedagogy indicated an overall improvement in academic literacy practices over the two semesters. Moreover, this improvement was directly proportional to the time spent with students applying the scaffolding academic strategies, that is, face to face year courses resulted in more improvements than semester courses. In other words, Rose et al. (2004) are calling for students to be given ample opportunities within the curriculum to become aware of how the literacy practices work in their discipline and scaffolded opportunities to take on these practices themselves. A practical means of implementing this pedagogy is the Reading to Learn (RtL) approach which I discuss in the next section.

2.10.3 Reading to learn approach

Having briefly outlined the Best Practice Model and the Scaffolding Academic Literacy pedagogy approach, both of which see the development of literacy practices as fundamental to learning in each discipline or field, I now move on to discuss the approach known as Reading to Learn (RtL). This too engages with literacy development as a fundamental aspect of learning in higher education, rather than as a remedial task to be acquired outside of the curriculum.

Instead of adopting one viewpoint of academic literacy pedagogies, the RtL approach to academic literacy development incorporates multiple aspects of pedagogies, resulting in an intervention that is supposedly able to fast-track development of literacy practices within any phase of the curriculum and across all subject specialisations (Acevedo, 2010; Rose, 2006).

Reading to Learn (RtL) pedagogy is a teaching and learning model for literacy development. The model was originally developed in Australia as an intervention to address the academic literacy needs of local students who had literacy issues and challenges gaining access to learning content due to serious underpreparedness and lag in their literacy development at each stage of educational sequence from early grades to university (Rose, 2005). This approach, model or intervention, as referred to in this study, is based on three fundamental premises.

The first premise is derived from the assumption that reading is the basic element of literacy acquisition, thus, key to learning. As such, the Reading to Learn approach emphasises explicit teaching of reading across all subjects. In other words, at university level, all lecturers teach reading concurrently with their curriculum contents, which makes them all teachers of literacy regardless of disciplines or subjects (Rose & Acevedo, 2006).

The second premise warrants that all students in the same classroom are taught at the same level of reading and writing. According to Rose (2005), this is done in an attempt to ensure that a common ability gap brought to classrooms and lecture halls by students and traditionally maintained by differentiated learning ceases to be maintained or exacerbated. This premise is contrary to the practice where schoolteachers, for example, pre-determine class activities based on learners' abilities, and this ability gap is maintained until higher education.

The third premise is based on the findings of renowned theorists such as Vygotsky (1978), Bernstein (1975), and Krashen (1985) among others, that learning takes place when students are given support beyond their current abilities, in that way, ensuring that students reach higher levels of learning through purposeful scaffolding (Rose & Acevedo, 2006). With these fundamental premises, RtL is thus, in Millin's (2016, p. 109) words, "able to facilitate learning across the curriculum, and improve the chances of academic success of traditionally marginalised students, whilst simultaneously adding value to the learning and progress of those students already deemed to be strong students".

Although this model was developed for Australian students, it has been used in a number of different contexts and can be adapted to any context of diverse learners (Iipinge & Julius, 2016; Mukoroli, 2016).

The theoretical framework underpinning this model is borne out of the seminal work of three key educational theorists and the major themes of their work, namely: education as a pedagogic

discourse which maintains inequality (Bernstein, 1975; 1990; 1996); language as a text needs to be located within a specific social context (Halliday, 1975; 1978; 1994); and genre theory which emphasises explicit teaching of organisational patterns and structures found within differing types of genres developed to meet differing social purposes (Collerson, 1988). These theories also underpin this study and are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Lusweti (2014) conducted a study to establish how an RtL intervention in lower primary schools in Nigeria and found great improvement in literacy acquisition (Lusweti, 2014). In South Africa, Millin (2016) undertook an RtL intervention at the higher education level and found that students' academic literacy practices improved especially in the more advanced schematic structuring of academic essay genres of students across the curriculum. Millin and Millin (2014) undertook an RtL intervention to accelerate the development of academic literacy practices of ill-prepared students transitioning from high school to university. Besides notable findings concerning students' weak academic literacy skills, these students made great improvements throughout the RtL intervention. Rose (2005) maintains that RtL is not confined to English language teaching, and that techniques employed by the RtL pedagogy can be applied at any level, from primary to tertiary, in any curriculum and in any language.

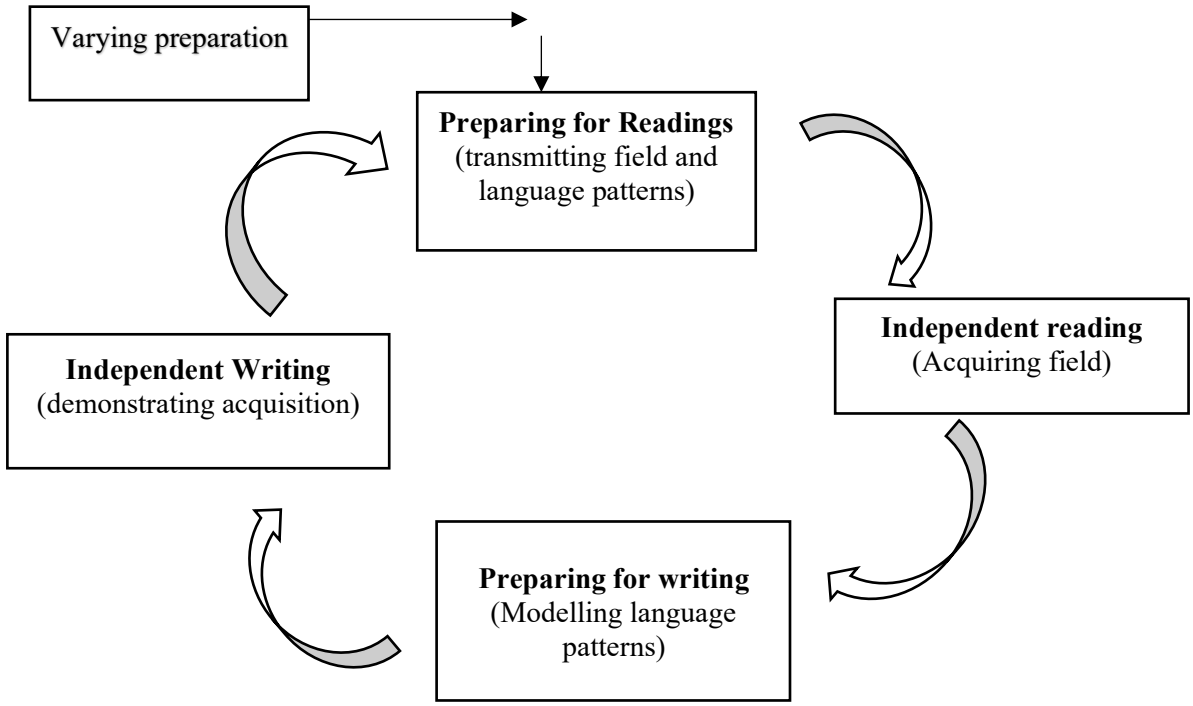


Figure 2.3: Scaffolding Academic Cycle (adapted from Rose et al., 2008, p. 169)

The first step in the Scaffolded Academic Literacy pedagogy is to address the inequitable assumptions of the traditional academic curriculum cycle. “Rather than demanding that students independently read difficult academic texts before classes, which they may not be able to read or adequately understand, class time is used to prepare all students to read difficult texts with critical understanding” (Rose et al., 2008). In addition, instead of ranking students on their success or failure in writing assignments without preparation, class time is used to prepare all students to succeed in writing tasks.

This approach is founded on the principle that learning occurs in the ‘zone’ between what learners can do independently, and what they can do in interaction with a teacher, a process known as scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Rose et al. (2003) define the term ‘scaffolding’ in this context as the support that a lecturer can give students so that they can work at a much higher level than is possible on their own. Although the term scaffolding is mostly associated with Vygotsky, Ninio and Bruner (1978) first used the term to describe how learning takes place in families, following the social learning model of Vygotsky (1978). This is discussed in detail in Chapter Three, the Theoretical Framework.

According to Rose et al. (2006, p. 42):

> In academic reading and writing language patterns are highly specialised, and often involve dense abstract concepts and technical terms that are part of academic fields. They are very different from the language patterns that most of us use in everyday spoken discourse and are often impenetrable for adults with limited or no experience of tertiary study.

The starting point for the Scaffolded Academic Cycle (or process) is with reading, and what students learn about the patterns of written language through reading is then applied in their writing. The process of scaffolding involves two steps: first, students are prepared for reading academic texts, beginning at the level of the text itself, and second, within specific sentences and paragraphs. Detailed reading of a text is followed by note taking, and then writing a new text from notes (Millin & Millin, 2014; Rose et al., 2006).

The Scaffolded Academic Cycle comprises the six-stage RtL cycle (as shown in Figure 2.4), which can be used in literacy support classrooms to improve students’ literacy skills.

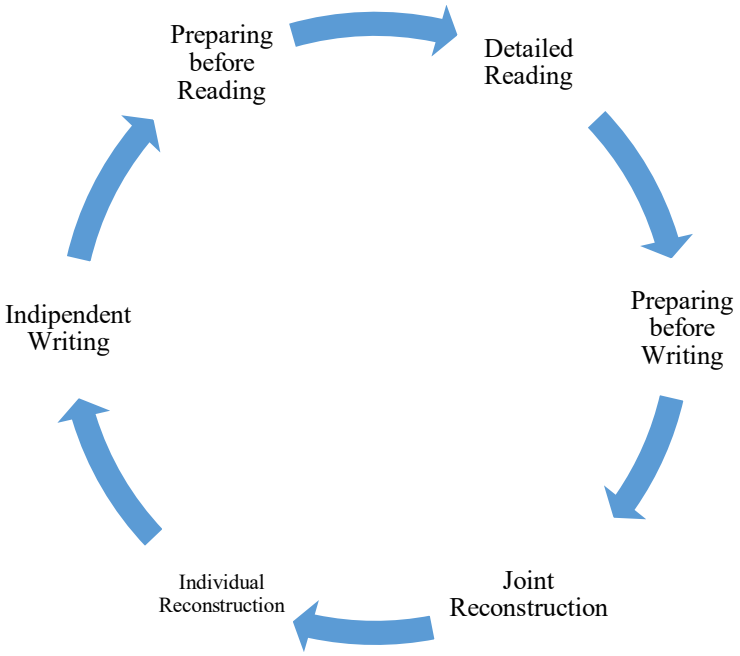


Figure 2.4: Six stage pedagogical cycle of RtL (adapted from Acevedo & Rose, 2007, p. 3)

In summary, the following activities take place within each stage of the RtL cycle (Acevedo & Rose, 2007; Millin & Millin, 2014; Rose et al., 2006; 2008):

1) Preparing before reading

Academic texts at university level present challenges for inexperienced readers in two ways. First, the subject matter, including terms used both in core academic literacy courses and specialised discipline courses, is likely to be very unfamiliar, therefore, even if students can read a text fluently they might not necessarily begin to understand, let alone interpret or critique the ideas expressed in it. Second, since the patterns of language in academic writing differ from the patterns of language in everyday speaking or writing, reading academic texts can be such a struggle that understanding becomes difficult, if not impossible. This means that preparing for reading must work on two levels: the first is to orient students to the field of the text before reading, and the second is to interpret the information expressed in the wording of each sentence. At this stage, students are oriented to the genre and field of the text by beginning with a presentation or discussion on the topic, for instance. This gives students background information concerning what the text is about, making the reading process easier.

2) Detailed reading

At this stage, students are given intensive support by drawing attention to genre patterns, academic terminology, as well as language devices used to create meaning such as lexical and grammatical cohesive devices. The lecturer guides students to begin to work through reading the text in detail, identifying the key elements of meaning within each sentence which they highlight and later use for note taking. Doing this enables students to use three of the cognitive processes involved in reading – interpreting wordings in the context of the whole sentence and what has gone before, attending to the sequence of meanings in a sentence, and then recognising what each wording means. With these three cues, all students can find, read and understand the selected wording for themselves, no matter how abstract or technical it is.

3) Preparing before writing

Students are provided with time to brainstorm synonyms for words highlighted during the detailed reading stage. This could be in a group activity format or a whole class format, with students taking turns to transcribe the class discussion on the board. This is particularly helpful for weaker readers – more experienced students will tend to name the words first, but even the weakest readers will be able to read and understand them once they are identified and underlined on the board. The collated views are then used as a guide for the joint reconstruction stage.

4) Joint reconstruction

At this stage, the teacher may provide a model for writing a new text using the words and notes taken during the *preparation before writing stage*. Students then rewrite the text offered as a model by using the synonyms and ideas discussed during the *preparing before writing stage*. Students can take turns to write the new text on the board, with the class deciding how to use their notes in new patterns of academic language. Students may use similar words as used in the original text, but the structure of sentences and their ordering may be different. However, they need to be encouraged to use their own words as much as possible, as well as to construct new arguments.

5) Individual reconstruction

At this stage, the lecturer carefully re-negotiates with students the construction of new texts and provides them with the necessary skills to develop academic autonomy. After practicing with writing new texts from their notes in groups, students are guided to develop skills in organising and writing academic essays, using information from other sources without the risk of plagiarising. Other features of academic language can also be practiced in context of writing the new text, for example, quoting and referencing. Other academic mechanics can as well be incorporated during the individual reconstruction stage, for example, the basic grammatical items of language such as sentence structure, tenses, punctuation, reporting verbs, full forms of words, objectivity, tentativeness, accuracy, the use of the passive voice, and formal or academic register that makes a text academic. Students are given intensive feedback at this stage to guide them to rewrite individually.

6) Independent writing

During this final stage, the teacher may combine appropriate writing approaches such as the process-based approach to academic writing as well as the genre-based approach in guiding students to brainstorm, draft, and re-draft new versions of the text studied. Again, intensive feedback is offered to students which they use to independently construct their own text, which can then be used for formal assessment purposes.

It is clear that implementing RtL in a classroom requires high support for pedagogy, and explicit functional talk about language across the curriculum. Indeed, this may seem cumbersome to some lecturers, especially those who teach subjects other than languages or academic literacy courses. It may trigger questions about how the already overloaded lecturers may make time to guide students through reading and writing which is not part of their subject curriculum, as well as providing intensive feedback to larger groups of students. Various iterations of the approach have thus been implemented within different contexts to attend to such constraints.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter offered various perspectives on the concept of academic literacy and in the process, provided an overview of various intervention possibilities for addressing the current

concerns in HEIs. Chapter Two further revealed the extent to which reading is an integral part of epistemological access in HE, and that the urgent need to revise pedagogies for literacy development cannot be overemphasised. The next chapter provides a discussion of the theoretical basis applicable to this study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMING OF THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two problematised various perspectives on the concept of academic literacy. It revealed the complexities involved in attempts to understand the concept and the accompanying competing ideologies implicit in the approaches designed to develop its acquisition. This chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the generation, analysis and interpretation of data in this study. It begins by discussing Bernstein's Pedagogical Discourse (1990). Bernstein's work assisted in engaging with and thinking about data that relate to the intersection between education and other social contexts. Secondly, Genre Theory is discussed to understand and unpack some aspects of the genres students encounter in the academy. Unpacking Genre Theory makes it clear that students are expected to demonstrate their discipline-specific literacy practices within particular text genres, and these differ from field to field. Finally, the chapter outlines pertinent aspects of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1978), which address ways in which language construes the world. The chapter concludes by discussing the relevance of these theories to the research questions and outlines the ways in which they were used in the data analysis.

3.2 Bernstein's Pedagogical Discourse

While a number of scholars attribute students' literacy challenges to issues such as poor levels of early childhood linguistic stimulation and to some extent cultural associations (Millin, 2016), Bernstein (1996) argues that students' academic performance is to a large extent a result of unequal opportunities for a particular kind of learning from home backgrounds, schools, and a lack of early socialisation into the dominant Discourse of formal education within family contexts. Bernstein's work emphasises the fact that some students' home discourses are validated by formal schooling, while others are marginalised. This, he argues, raises issues of social justice within the academy. For the majority of students from working class backgrounds, the home socialisation they bring is not legitimated in the academy. What they find is often entirely new to them and they may thus experience a degree of alienation within formal schooling. This resonates with Grenfell and James' (1998, p. 21) argument:

> we do not enter fields with equal amounts, or identical configurations, of capital. Some have inherited wealth, cultural distinctions from up-bringing and family connections. Some individuals, therefore, already possess quantities of relevant capital … which makes them better players than others in certain field games. Conversely, some are disadvantaged.

Bernstein's theory was influenced by, among others, Emile Durkheim's (1911) work and, by Pierre Bourdieu's (1973) theory of cultural and social reproduction. In the Pedagogical Discourse Theory, Bernstein draws on Durkheim's analysis of complex and simple forms of social organisations when describing the organisation of schools and the influence this has on individual students and their identities. Durkheim (1911) argues, for example, that "it is the culture of the dominant group(s) that controls the economic, social and political resources which is embodied in the schools, and that it is this 'embodiment' that works as a reproduction strategy for the dominant group". In this way, Durkheim shows how the ways of being that are valued in the schooling system (and the higher education system thereafter) are similar to those with which some students with a particular kind of cultural capital will be familiar, while the capital that students outside of the dominant group bring with them will barely be acknowledged, let alone legitimated. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, p. 52) acknowledge that "academic language is no-one's mother tongue". The implication of this observation is that all students will have challenges in taking on the new and strange ways of knowledge creation and dissemination within the academy but Bourdieu's work on cultural capital makes it clear that these challenges will be far greater for some students than for others.

Bernstein's concept of the Pedagogical Discourse (1996) is not only a model for analysing the processes by which disciplines or dominant Discourses are converted or pedagogised to constitute school knowledge (classroom curricula, teacher, student talk, online learning), but this theoretical model is also increasingly becoming important to educational researchers in our contemporary knowledge based society – a society characterised not only by the increasing importance of knowledge to the economy, but also an increase in social inequalities.

This notion articulates well with this study in that it acknowledges that when students enter university to specialise in various disciplines of their choice, they join and become members of the university discourse. As explained in the previous chapter, Gee (1990, p. 103) defines a discourse as "any stretch of language (both written and spoken) which hangs together and allows members belonging together to understand one another". Discourse (capital D)

comprises multiple related discourses that collectively form a particular community with a specific identity. Leibowitz (2010) expands on the definition of a discourse in the academy as the ability to read, write, think critically using the language in context. In this way, the academic literacy practices of different fields and disciplines can be understood to be collections of discourses within specific Discourse communities.

In order to access a specific Discourse community, students have to take on a range of literacy practices associated with that discipline or field. Pedagogic discourse explains how it is that the discourses of a field of knowledge production are adapted and changed into the pedagogy of the classroom. The structural constraints on students accessing the literacy practices of the academy work in intersectional ways. The race, gender, social class and so on of the student all intersect with the white, middle-class norms of the academy (Kapp & Bangeni 2020). But such constraints do not determine students' responses, they merely condition them; students assert their agency in multiple ways as they make sense of the higher education space (Case, Marshall, McKenna, & Mogashana, 2018).

I discussed in Chapter One that curriculum and teachers in schools presuppose that all learners arrive at school with the necessary pre-orientations in terms of literacy to the dominant discourse of formal education. Similarly, they assume that all students entering the university are already successfully assimilated into the Discourse of university education, and they assume that this Discourse is generic across the institution. They thus fail to explicitly help students make the transition, especially with the reading and writing practices in their disciplinary fields. Bernstein (1996) argues that this is not due to innate biology on the student's part, but because of unequal opportunities to become adept at the Discourse of formal education. Knowledge systems necessary for successful assimilation into the school Discourse are rendered invisible to the students struggling to assimilate into the Discourse of the school (Bernstein, 1996). Bernstein (1996) argues that the school curriculum perpetuates the class system, that is, it is socially constructed to maintain the hierarchical order of a class society, and that there are alternative ways of conceptualising knowledge and pedagogy that would not have this effect.

Bernstein (1999) categorised discourse as either *horizontal* or *vertical*. For Bernstein (1999, p. 159) *horizontal discourses* are "common sense knowledge which everyone has access to and is likely to be oral, local, context dependent and specific, tacit, multi-layered and contradictory

across but not within contexts". Martin, Maton and Matruglio (2010 p. 436) simplify this definition by asserting that horizontal discourse represents "everyday practical discourses that students bring to education". They then need to navigate between the horizontal discourses to which they have access and the vertical discourses to which they seek access.

Bernstein (1999, p. 159) defines vertical discourses as a "coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure which takes the forms of a series of specialised languages with a series of specialised modes of interrogation". As such, vertical discourses are acquired through schooling. The extent to which students are assumed to acquire such vertical discourses without explicit engagement in how they are structured and function was touched upon in Chapter Two. There is, as indicated previously, often an assumption that all students arrive at the university with the necessary pre-orientations to the dominant vertical discourses of the academy. Bernstein then further distinguishes within vertical discourses between horizontal and hierarchical knowledge structures. These are not two discrete types of knowledge but rather exist along a continuum. Hierarchical knowledge structures are built through more and more specialized knowledge drawing on foundational concepts below them. Subjects such as Physics and Mathematics, for example, are strongly hierarchical in that a student cannot get access to higher level knowledge without mastering the fundamentals of more foundational knowledge. Horizontal knowledge structures are typically built by new ideas, concepts and theories being introduced to the field. These different schools of thought then get added alongside existing horizontal knowledge, and often jostle for power with some schools of thought being dismissed by newer approaches. In developing this continuum of knowledge structures for vertical discourses of formal education, Bernstein is indicating that not all knowledge in the academy is the same. The very nature of the structure of knowledge differs. In terms of this study, what is important to note is that as academic literacy practices emerge from the structure of knowledge, the distinctions within such structures explain the emergence of very different academic literacy practices.

Pedagogical Discourse Theory describes specialised forms of communication in an educational setting. Underlying Bernstein's Pedagogical Theory is his claim that schooling acts as a social classifier through what he terms the three "common message systems" that all educational institutions have in common:

> Formal education knowledge can be considered to be realized through three message systems: *curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation*. Curriculum defines what counts as a valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as a valid realization of this knowledge. (Bernstein, 1975, p. 85)

By Curriculum, Bernstein (1996) means what is defined as knowledge. In discussing the curriculum for formal schooling, for example, one needs to emphasise the importance of reading. As discussed in the previous chapter, reading is a key aspect of success in the formal schooling and higher education system and the literature indicates its importance in planning a curriculum. The extent to which reading proficiency within the specific context of the subject is foregrounded or ignored in the curriculum is a matter of social justice.

Bernstein (1990, p. 100) outlines two useful concepts for understanding the processes in curriculation, pedagogy and evaluation: classification and framing:

> Whereas classification is concerned with the organisation of knowledge into curriculum, framing is related to the transmission of knowledge through pedagogic practices. Framing refers to the location of control over the rules of communication and 'if classification regulates the voice of a category then framing regulates the form of its legitimate message'. Furthermore, frame refers to the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organisation, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship. Therefore, strong framing refers to a limited degree of options between teacher and students; weak framing implies more freedom.

The extent of classification pertains to the extent to which there are borders between disciplines or fields and how the knowledge is structured within such hard or porous borders. Framing then pertains to how this knowledge is engaged with in the classroom pedagogy. Classification is central to what is taught and framing is key to how that teaching occurs. A simple distinction between classification and framing is that while classification is associated with *power*, framing is associated with *control*. There is a crucial relation between classification and framing. Put differently, it is difficult to see classification and framing separately, for they are dialectically linked (Dooley, 2001). As such, classification cannot maintain itself without framing. "Classification is in a hierarchical relation to framing, it is prior, but it is empty without the mechanisms to achieve the boundary – that is, framing. Hence, the dialectic" (Hoadly, 2006, p. 5). Bernstein (1996, p. 19) argues that "power and control are analytically

distinguished and operate at different levels of analysis. Empirically, we shall find that they are embedded in each other". Classification and framing can therefore be used to illuminate the effect that different structures of messages, that is, within curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, have on students' learning (Case, 2010).

Given the scope of this study, classification speaks to what knowledge is included within any discipline or practice and what literacy practices are associated with that knowledge. Framing in this study, on the other hand, relates to how such knowledge and associated practices are made accessible to the students in the classroom, the course materials and the assessment.

Framing is about who controls the activities of the classroom. Bernstein (2000, p. 70) puts it:

> framing may refer to the relationship between the teacher and the student and the degree of autonomy each person has in that relationship in regard to what the learner has access to, when content is taught, how that content is prioritized and the physiological and environmental factors in which the learning takes place.

There are many calls for students to have more control over what is included in the curriculum, how it is taught and so on. While student-centredness is an admirable goal, there can be negative effects if it is not fully understood. The concept of framing helps us to understand why this is. According to Bernstein (1996), strong framing may lead students to acquire the recognition and realisation rules of the school context. That is, if the curriculum is explicitly ordered and paced, then students might have more opportunity to come to understand the 'rules of the game'. This, according to Bernstein, needs time. Student engagement in learning is undoubtedly essential and the pedagogy needs to be designed to encourage such engagement, but if there are no clear signals to students as to what is most important or what is foundational, then this can further disadvantage students. However, this is not to call for tight control of all aspects of pedagogy. Bernstein (1996) argues that successful learning depends on the weak framing of pacing, that is, to have conditions where students have some control over the time of their acquisition of knowledge.

Analysing the strength of framing helps to illuminate the power that agencies have over *what*, *when* and *how* knowledge is learnt (Cause, 2010). Classification and Framing provide a language which describes relationships, interactions and pedagogic practices (Cause, 2010). As such, they are useful to this study, as they allowed me to look at how the curriculum for

selected academic literacy development courses at the three HEIs become legitimised, controlled and formed.

Table 3.1: An evaluation of whether classification and framing of the courses/programmes offered is weak or strong (Bernstein, 1999)

Classification	How strong are the boundaries between the taught content of the discipline subject and the academic literacy courses?	If the boundaries between subjects were strong then classification of the academic literacy courses was strong.
Framing	How much do students get to determine the content, focus and processes of the academic literacy courses?	If the boundaries as to what gets taught and how it is taught were strong then framing was strong.

Alongside Bernstein's pedagogical discourses, I also drew on Halliday in the theoretical framing of this study.

3.3 Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistic

Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) focusses on the centrality of context in the syntactic structure of language and the functions it serves. Systemic Linguistics grew out of the work of J.R. Firth in London (first chair of general linguistics in the UK), who in turn took ideas from Malinowski (the famous anthropologist) (Donnell, 2010). Both Firth and Malinowski believed one could only look at language in relation to the context in which it occurred. This study draws on SFL to investigate theoretical underpinnings informing the current design, teaching and assessment of selected academic literacy courses.

For Halliday, the pioneer of SFL, language use takes place in social contexts and this determines the structure of the language at a systemic level. As such, language is not good or bad; it is appropriate or inappropriate to the context of use. In terms of functions, the theory attempts to answer the question of how language is used, whilst in terms of system, the theory intends to disclose the choices that the language makes available for the users (Halliday, 1978).

According to Halliday (1978, p. 4),

> language is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve in people's lives. To understand linguistic structures [in functional terms], we have to proceed from the outside inwards, interpreting language by reference to its place in the social process.

In SFL, language can be understood as "a system of probable meaning, supplemented by forms through which meaning is then realised" (Clarence-Fincham, 2001, p. 25). This then means that interpretations of a text are not restricted to one viewpoint and may differ according to the cultural context of either the producer of the text (spoken, written, and visual) or the recipient. Therefore, SFL offers a social viewpoint of language. As such, language function (what it is used for) is often more important than language structure (how it is composed). As Fontaine (2013) puts it, if one tries to communicate with someone in an unfamiliar language or with a two–year-old, one will realise that being grammatically correct is almost irrelevant. This is not to deny that one needs to understand how language is structured to effectively produce and analyse its function, but rather to emphasise that knowing language structure is insufficient to produce meaningful language within a specific context. In terms of SFL theory, a text (spoken or written) can be analysed at four levels, or strata: Context, Semantics, Lexico-grammar, and Phonology, as represented visually in Figure 3.1 below.

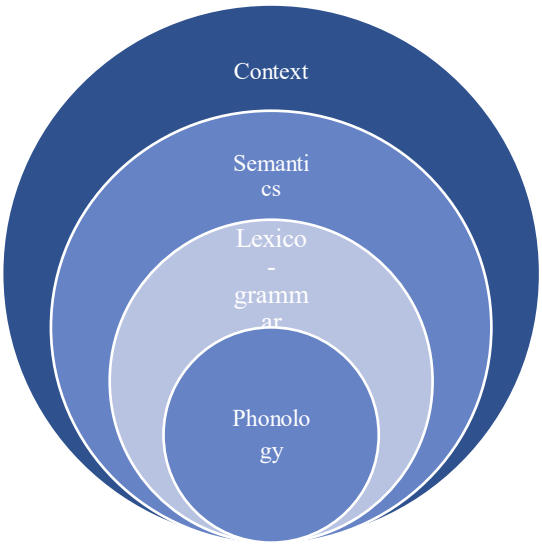


Figure 3.1: Stratification (adapted from Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 25)

According to Matthiessen and Halliday (1997), context is classified as the central concern in SFL because it is integral to the overall process of making meaning. As such, an understanding that language always occurs in a context, means understanding that context matters. Context

can be further distinguished as: Context of Culture (*genres*) and Context of Situation (referred to as *register*) (see Figure 3.1) (Matthiessen & Halliday, 1997).

In analysing a text, one should begin with its context and type (*register* and *genre*). These aspects relate closely to three contextual variables, namely: *field* (the topic being talked about), *tenor* (the relationship of participants) and *mode* (the channel of communication). According Halliday (1978), SFL offers a way of describing how language choices are partial to a set of three factors: the field; tenor, and mode. In other words, the one receiving a message, whether spoken or written can speculate as to the meaning of the message from the text's outer framework, called the 'context of culture', to a very specific 'context of situation' through extra linguistic features found within the text through the field, tenor and mode.

For Halliday (1996), this is mainly due to the organisation of language and its social contexts, as a hierarchy of levels or strata (stratification) (see Figure 3.2).

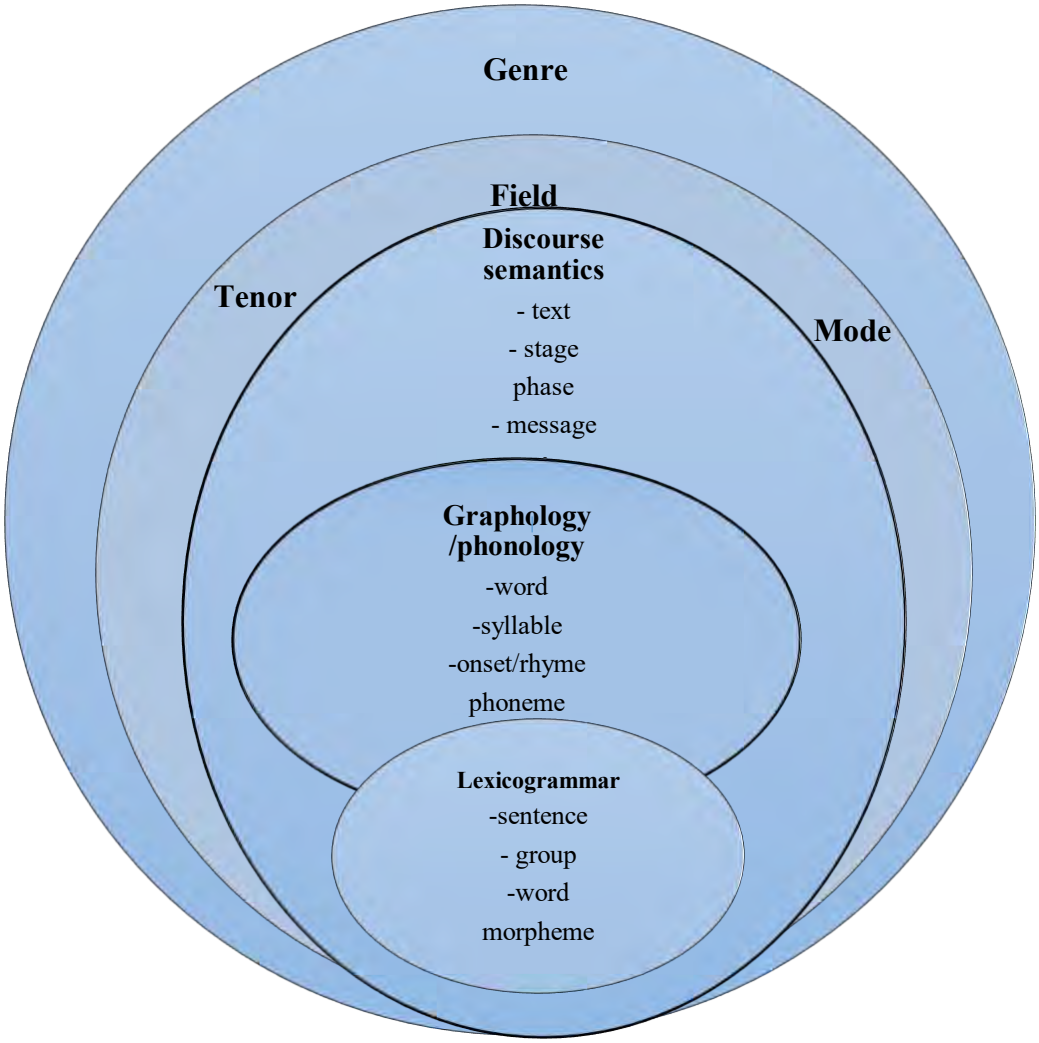


Figure 3.2: Halliday's stratified model of language (adapted from Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 2)

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), SFL is the broad term which covers various types of analyses, including the analysis of expression (phonetics and phonology), the analysis of content (lexicogrammar and semantics) and the analysis of context. Context is paramount in SFL theory because it contributes to the process of meaning making. The relation between strata is modelled in SFL as realisation (Martin & Rose, 2008). Halliday asserts that the patterns of meaning in texts (or discourse semantics) are realised (manifested/ symbolised/ expressed) by functions of words in clauses (lexicogrammar), which are realised by patterns of sounds or letters (phonology or graphology).

In the context of academic literacy, for instance, students' ability to comprehend the complexity of academic reading and writing involves the ability to recognise and replicate patterns of language on three different levels, namely, the 'discourse semantics',

'lexicogrammar', and 'graphology level' (Martin & Rose, 2012). As Martin and Rose (2008, p. 1) put it, one of the reasons students struggle with academic reading and writing is "possibly because the capacity to grasp the complexities of reading and writing, and subsequently access meaning within a text, or convey meaning in writing", entails an aptitude for identifying patterns found embedded in language on three separate levels (*semantic discourse, lexico grammar* and *graphology*). This suggests that teaching of academic reading and writing is considered complex and thus requires language to be broken down into smaller, more manageable components that may help students to be able to grasp the abstract components of academic language. Taking an SFL approach to inducting students into academic disciplines is not only about "alerting students to the form and function of the discipline's genres but to how grammar functions as a meaning-making tool which takes into account one's situatedness and audience" (Bangeni & Greenbaum, 2019, p. 82).

Halliday further outlines the intrinsic relation between the three metafunctions of language and three dimensions of social contexts namely, field: what is being talked about, tenor: the people involved in the communication and the relationships between them and mode: what part the language is playing in the interaction (is it accompanying action or ALL of the action), what form does it take (spoken or written) (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). The three are collectively referred to as register. Halliday and Hasan (1989, pp. 38-39) define a register as

> a configuration of meanings that are typically associated with a particular situational configuration of field, mode, and tenor. But since it is a configuration of meanings, a register must also, of course, include the expressions, the lexico-grammatical and phonological features, that typically accompany or REALISE these meanings.

For SFL, language in the context of field can be associated with a specific field or subject by looking at the specialised vocabulary used (Donnell, 2010). Some specialised vocabulary may be used in different fields with different meaning. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five, the presentation of data. Table 3.2 summarises how language functions in the context of field as was analysed in this dissertation.

Table 3.1: Language in context: Field

Field	**Specific subjects**	**Specialised or non-specialised?**

Academic Literacy Development Courses	English for Academic Purposes (UNAM)	Is the vocabulary specific to the field, or does it use vocabulary common to other fields? – Specialised vocabulary may be used in other fields but have different meanings in the current field
	English for Academic Purposes (NUST)	
	Professional Communication (IUM)	

Tenor in the context of language has to do with the power relationship between the participants or users of the language or text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). In the context of the three HEIs, the participants are lecturers (and students although this was not the focus of this study). According to Donnell (2010), power relations in language can either be *equal* or *unequal* and *formal* or *informal.* Finally, *mode* describes the part that language is playing in the interaction between participants of the text (Donnell, 2010; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

SFL is not spared from criticisms. Luke (1996) posits that SFL pedagogy can lead to the static reproduction of text types rather than a critical analysis of disciplinary discourse. In addition, Luke (1996) argues that genre instruction as informed by SFL inhibits writers' self-expression and straightjackets creativity. In countering these critiques, Gebhard (2010) argues that there is nothing inherently prescriptive, uncritical, or prosaic about an SFL-based theory of academic literacy development. What is increasingly becoming prescriptive, uncritical, and prosaic, according to Gebhard (2010, p. 801) are

> package approaches to teachers' professional development that do not support teachers in developing a knowledge of the language practices that construct their discipline and an ability to apprentice students to using these language practices critically as they transition from home to school and eventually to a rapidly changing and linguistically and culturally diverse labor market.

This echoes issues discussed in the previous chapter where I argued that academics need to be supported to fully identify the literacy practices of their disciplines, which may have become normalised and common sense to them. Providing academics with the concepts to make sense of their expectations of students, such as SFL and New Literacies Studies, needs to be carefully

navigated (Jacobs, 2010). If academics come to see these explanations not as insight but rather as formulaic prescriptions, they will not assist in supporting academics to enhance epistemological access nor in taking on the kinds of critiques called for by decolonial scholars.

Gebhard (2010) suggests that SFL can act as a comprehensive theory of language, learning, and context to analyse how language is used in assisting students to take on the various literacy practices of the academy. The academic literacy theory discussed in Chapter Two indicates that every single subject taught has academic literacy practices. These are inherent within the subject and emerge from the norms and values of the disciplines. They are there whether academics know about them or not. The problem is that most of the academics teach as if all they are doing is teaching content and they fail to acknowledge that this knowledge has to be communicated (read, written, listened to, spoken about) in context-specific ways. And they fail to make explicit what these context specific ways are – they just expect students to learn them automatically. In this study, Halliday's SFL theory was helpful in terms of analysing interviews and documents related to the teaching academic literacy[2] in three different courses.

While Bernstein's theory helped to illuminate in this study how the discourses of the everyday vary from the discourses of the academy, and the structure of knowledge varies within the academy, Halliday's SFL allowed me to consider the extent to which context was brought to bear on what was taught in the academic literacy courses and how these courses were taught, and it allowed me to look at language practices from a stratified position.

One of the concepts that Halliday draws on is that of genre, or type of text. This concept has been further developed in ways that are useful to this study.

3.4 Genre Theory

The word 'genre' comes from the French (originally Latin) word for "kind or class" (Chandler, 2000, p. 70). Collerson (1988, p. 12) defines genre as "a kind of writing or type of text". Hammond and Derewianka (2001) maintain that genre refers not only to the type of text, but also to the predictable and recurring patterns of everyday, academic and literary texts occurring within a culture. The concept of genre has gained great interest in several areas and disciplines,

[2] It is 'teaching academic literacy' because those courses were set up to teach academic literacy – even though the literature reviewed in the previous chapter demonstrates that academic literacy cannot be separated from context.

such as applied linguistics, literature, arts and media, in both first language and second language contexts (Alyousef & Alyahaya, 2018).

Genre or text-type, either spoken or written, is often identified or grouped according to its primary social purpose; that is, genres which share the same purpose belong to the same text-types (Swales, 1990). In the academy, different disciplines draw on different text genres. For example, in Law, students may be expected to read Case Law, a genre which follows very specific rules about structure and what can be referenced and how it can be referenced and what counts' and so on. In a Business School, a common genre may be a case study. The genre of a business case study also has its own structure and purpose. Students may then need to write evaluations of such case studies and these evaluations may form a different kind of genre. Case studies are also a common genre in the teaching of Social Work, but these take a different form and function from the case studies in the Business School. As discussed in the previous chapter, a very common genre across the Humanities is the argumentative essay, but this genre follows subtly different rules in different disciplines.

Genre is a key aspect of SFL, which, as discussed in the previous section, is concerned with the association between language and its functions in specific social settings. SFL "stresses the purposeful, interactive, and sequential character of different genres and the ways language is systematically linked to context through patterns of lexico-grammatical and rhetorical features" (Hyland, 2003, p. 21). For SFL, the forms and structures of academic genres are not fixed but situated. That is, they cannot be memorised but must be decided upon consideration of three variables: context, purpose, and audience.

Context refers to where the genres are used (for example, in History or Philosophy or Politics). According to De Oliveira and Lan (2014), genres in context can be classified as either academic or everyday. This echoes Bernstein's earlier distinction between vertical and horizontal discourses. Most genre theorists would however argue that the multiplicity of genre form within the academy makes the distinction between inside or beyond the academy very much the first stage of genre analysis. Academic genres require both extensive practice and explicit instruction since they contain, in Fang and Schleppegrell's (2010, p. 588) words, "language patterns which are often unfamiliar to students and present significant comprehension challenge" for they "are abstract, technical, and metaphorical, increasingly infiltrated by valorized scientific and bureaucratic discourses" (Rose, 1999 as cited in Hyland, 2002, p. 125).

Many academic genres for example use the declarative mood more than the interrogative and imperative moods.

Purpose speaks to the function of genres. Someone writing an argumentative essay, for example, may be doing so for a first-year assignment, for a postgraduate research report, or for publication in an academic journal. Each of these purposes would have effects on the form of the argumentative essay. The purpose of a genre also includes the intentions of the author. These can be, for example, to relate a set of facts (reports), to explain and interpret a phenomenon (explanations), or to argue why a thesis has been proposed (expositions) (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop*,* 2000). The purpose of the genre influences the linguistic input of the text. That is, their linguistic conventions often in the form of schematic structure and linguistic features are impacted by the function of the particular genre (Hammond & Derewianka, 2001). Schematic structures refer to internal structures or text organisation of the text-type for example, in the form of introduction, body and conclusion, while language features consist of linguistic aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, connectors the writer has to use in order to translate information/ideas into a readable text (Hammond & Derewianka, 2001). Depending on these purposes, they deploy configurations of lexical grammatical and textual features.

Audience is concerned with the community to which texts are directed. The student writing an argumentative essay for an assignment, for example, may be writing for her lecturer. The postgraduate whose argumentative essay forms part of a master's thesis may be writing for an external examiner. The academic writing an argumentative essay for publication is writing for the readership of the chosen journal, Benesch (2001) argues that genre includes ways of how discourse communities are guided by shared rhetorical purposes when they speak and write. It is concerned with answering the question: "Why are specific discourse-genres written and used by the specialist communities the way they are?" and aims to explain "why a particular type of conventional codification of meaning is considered appropriate to a particular institutionalised sociocultural setting" (Benesch, 2001, p. 11). Rose (2015, p. 7) presents what he terms a "topological perspective on genre families and functions" which highlights that any text may be positioned along axes like these, depending on its particular settings, field, mode and tenor as shown in Figure 3.3.

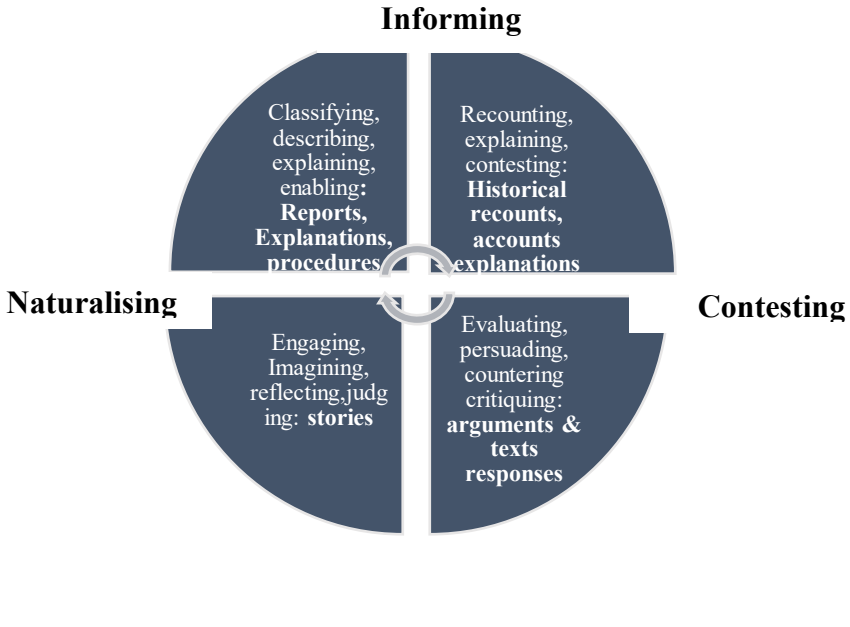


Figure 3.3: Topological perspective on genre families and functions (adapted from Rose, 2015, p. 7)

According to Paltridge (2001, p. 85), "language use in 'genre theory' is important and may differ according to the content of the 'genre', purpose of the 'genre' and the relationship between the author of the text and the readership/or interlocutor, or intended audience". Paltridge (2001) further argues that the use of language within different 'genres' is also dependent upon whether the text is considered spoken or written, as well as the cultural context. This then suggest that for students to successfully make sense of, and eventually produce a specific type of genre, they need to be exposed to the conventions and norms of that genre which is also referred to as 'register'. If for example, no sufficient induction is given to students on the types of 'genre discourses' to be encountered in their studies, there is a higher possibility that students will find it difficult to successfully demonstrate, through very specific forms of language use and text structure, what they have learnt through course material. A lack of proper induction to the genre prescribed at university in general or specific disciplinary courses in particular then becomes the barrier to success as students are assessed on subject knowledge through very specific genre conventions. Through observations and documentary evidence this theory was useful in investigating what type of genres students are exposed to in the selected courses. Students are normally required to show that they have learned from reading through written- academic essays and tests or oral presentations. Drawing on Genre Theory is useful for this study because this theory has been used to assist in the development of academic literacy (writing and spoking) skills essential for attainment in an educational context where

students' academic future depends on their ability to demonstrate knowledge acquired through formal written examinations and oral presentations (Rose, 1999). As such, mastering the discourse and having access to the genre of a specific text type of the disciplines students have chosen is crucial. For students to become effective writers, for example, they need to be taught to understand the roles that audience and purpose play in shaping different types of text or genre writing (Bean & Turbill, 2006; Mgqwashu, 2009).

The idea that academic knowledge communication can be described along lines of specific genre has led to the idea that students should be given explicit access to the forms and functions of these discipline-specific genres. If enough time is not allocated to teaching and learning the notion of genres, the argument goes, students will very rarely develop levels of autonomy which allow them to take on and master the genre norms and even start manipulating the rules and regulations in ways that challenge and subvert them.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented some of the theoretical propositions underpinning this study. The chapter began with a discussion of Bernstein's Pedagogical Discourse (1990), followed by Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistic (SFL) (1975) and finally, Genre theory, which builds on SFL.

Bernstein and Halliday come from different theoretical homes, which led to them to use different terminologies, but there is an overlap in their concerns and the concepts they consider. For example, Bernstein's notion of pedagogical discourse can be compared to Halliday's concept of register and field. All three theories used in the study have in common that they allow us to see pedagogical practices and texts in the academy not as generic or neutral but rather as emerging from the norms and values of specific disciplines and histories. Language is not seen to be a neutral conduit for meaning where it is the structure of the sentence that matters, but rather as entwined with meaning making and can only be fully understood in context. I undertook the study with these theoretical frames in mind and the chapter that follows details the steps I followed in data selection, collection and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three offered a discussion of the theoretical tools underpinning the study, and which informed, in particular, the analysis and interpretation of data in this study. What stands out is that all the theoretical propositions discussed in the previous chapter drive a particular understanding of academic literacy practices which aligns with the deliberations of that concept in the literature discussed in Chapter Two. This chapter explains the methodological choices I made throughout the study. It outlines both ontological and epistemological positions which enabled me to make sense of the data. Ethical consideration in the process of data collection including techniques employed in ensuring validity and reliability of the study are also discussed. Finally, the chapter concludes by presenting some of the study's limitations.

4.2 Aims of the Study and Research Questions

This study emerged as a result of my concerns about the academic literacy challenges faced by undergraduate first year students in Namibia's three major Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). There is a dearth of literature related to this concern, especially in the Namibian context. Thus, this study sought to achieve the following objectives:

a) to explore the academic literacy lecturers' understandings of academic literacy at the three universities under study.
b) to investigate how the academic literacy lecturers' understandings of academic literacy promote epistemological access to students' chosen fields of study
c) to investigate how academic literacy lecturers' understandings of academic literacy inform the design, assessment and teaching of the current academic literacy courses in the three universities under study.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the selected academic literacy lecturers' conceptualisations of academic literacy?
2) How do the academics' conceptualisations of academic literacy inform the current design, teaching and assessment of the selected academic literacy development courses at the three universities?

It is important to note that I am a lecturer at one of the participating HEIs in this study. This makes me an insider researcher at the HEI where I am working and an outsider researcher at the other two. In many cases, the outsider perspective is considered optimal for its "objective" and "accurate" account of the field, while insiders, who possessed deeper insights into the people, places, and events, are believed to hold a biased position that may complicate their ability to observe and interpret (Chavez, 2008). As such, one of the challenges faced by insider researchers is to ensure the research design was rigorous so as to minimise any likely criticism about being biased (Chavez, 2008). This view is challenged by Smyth and Holian (2008) who argue that there is no such thing as objective observation of practice in the context of any organisation regardless of whether the research is conducted by an 'outsider' or 'insider'. Instead, researchers are co-participants as they position themselves in relation to participants, and participants position themselves in relation to how a researcher is perceived or behaves. Although not directly involved with the academic literacy courses under study, as an insider, I was both an academic and a (PhD student) researcher. As such, we (the participants and the researcher) are all academics sharing the same concerns about students' poor academic literacy practices. According to Caruana (2015, p. 62), research carried out in an academic institution where the research is employed is referred to as an "endogenous research". The advantages of this type of research is that the researcher as an insider is able to have easier access to both naturalistic data and respondents. According to Brew (2010), research conducted by academics whose primary focus is teaching and learning in higher education can help academics to see the value of research insights by making everyday practice the focus of their investigations. Brew (2010, p. 120) further suggests that research by academics themselves should be promoted for the following reasons:

- It enhances the credibility of academics as "agents for change";
- It enables academics to produce research that is useful in their developmental work and
- It helps them to become conscious of "the ways in which good teaching can inform the research process".

As an academic, I realised that it was not possible for me to separate myself from the subject being studied. I therefore positioned myself as practitioner-researcher in this study. Hilton and Hilton (2017) describe a practitioner-researcher as a researcher who also works in a professional field in which they conduct research (usually with the aim of improvement) as opposed to being a full-time academic researcher. Practitioner research has been described as a powerful means of investigating educational practices in order to reconceptualise and transform such practices (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2010). A range of purposes of practitioner research are thus to serve professional practice; to contribute to improved practice; and to bring about meaningful change (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2010). I hope that positioning myself as such would enable me to give substance to the broader aims of this study, and subsequently contribute to the field of academic literacy within the higher education sector in the Namibian context as well as in the other parts of the world.

4.3 Research Paradigm

The concept of a scholarly research paradigm was coined by Thomas Kuhn in 1962. In his book titled *The structure of scientific revolutions*, Kuhn suggested that scientific inquiry cannot take place without some set of 'received beliefs'. Kuhn (1962, p. 46) thus defines a research paradigm as "a research culture with a set of beliefs, values and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common, regarding the nature and conduct of research". Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. vii) further extended this definition by asserting that a research paradigm serves as "an overarching philosophical or ideological stance, a system of beliefs about the nature of the world and ultimately, when applied in the research setting, the assumptive base from which we go about producing knowledge". A paradigm relates to both ontological and epistemological issues of the study.

According to Jennings (2015, p. 4), ontology investigates the nature and structure of reality, and how existence is determined. This study is located in the social sciences and investigated how academic literacy lecturers' understandings and their pedagogical choices in the academic literacy development courses promote epistemological access. As such, it generated different interpretations of the phenomenon under study from individuals' experiences with the phenomenon. I believe that these participants do not create individual meaning; they rather co-construct reality as they collectively engage in a meaning-making interventions within their social contexts (Creswell, 2013). This means that the participants in the study were viewed as

social beings who have different experiences and who also hold different views on the acquisition and teaching of academic literacy. This study is based on a social science research perspective, the notion that there is no single truth, that reality is not static, and that knowledge is constructed by individuals in their social interactions. In conducting this study, I was reassured by Schwandt's (2000, p. 197) argument that:

> human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as we construct or make it. We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience. Furthermore, there is an inevitable historical and sociocultural dimension to this construction. We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language and so forth.

The arguments above signify the human ability to act and produce knowledge from their own natural and sociocultural contexts. The participants in this study were viewed as people who would use their history, language and practices to make their interpretation of academic literacy development at their respective HEIs.

Epistemology deals with what constitutes and justifies knowledge (the nature, sources and limits of knowledge) (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). It asks questions such as "how do we know what we know? … and therefore, deals with the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known" (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 201). This study adopted the use of an interpretive paradigm which is sometimes referred to as naturalistic or constructivist (Robson, 2002; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). This research paradigm adopts a more transactional epistemology where "the investigator and the investigated are assumed to be interactively linked, with the values of the investigator … inevitably influencing the inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). As such, the interpretive paradigm is found on the premises that meaning and process are crucial in understanding human actions; that knowledge is developed when people talk about their meanings; that knowledge is structured within personal biases and values; and that knowledge can hardly be removed from the context in which it is studied (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Rallis & Rossman, 2003).

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000, p. 22) then articulate that in an interpretive paradigm "the imposition of external form and structure is resisted, since this reflects the viewpoint of the observer as opposed to that of the actor directly involved". The interpretivist/constructivist endeavours to "investigate, describe and interpret the intersubjective meanings constituted in

cultures, language, symbols and so on" (Fazlıoğulları (2012, p. 50). Observation and direct experience with the phenomenon are essential in investigating individual encounter with the phenomenon. This is important for studies such as this one, which sees the sociocultural context in which the academic literacy lecturers work as a central factor in designing, teaching and assessing academic literacy at their respective HEIs.

According to Sarantankos (2013), an interpretive paradigm allows researchers to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants. In seeking answers to this study's research questions, I felt that the interpretive paradigm fitted this study in that it allowed me to use the participants' experiences to construct and interpret how academic literacy is conceptualised at their respective institutions and how these interpretations shape the participants' teaching practices. These choices go hand in hand with the theoretical framework of this study.

A significant shortcoming of the interpretivist paradigm is that it is susceptible to the "double hermeneutic" (Cohen et al., 2000). The interpretivist paradigm, as explained above, is interested in how participants interpret their world (and the particular phenomenon under study) and how such interpretations affect how they engage in the world (that is how they design, teach and assess academic literacy development courses, in the case of this study). Interpretivism is thus concerned with hermeneutics, that is personal meaning making. But the researcher brings their own experiences, perceptions, biases and values to the data and thus; when they assert that the participant has a particular interpretation which has a particular effect, they do so through their own perceptions. There is thus the double hermeneutic – the meaning making of the participant, and then the meaning making of the researcher as they analyse the data (Barbour, 2014). If this concern is not sufficiently addressed, it is possible for the reader to be left in an entirely relativist position where everything they read is simply the interpretations of the researcher of the interpretations of the participants. Addressing this concern can be undertaken in various ways. Firstly through the collection of multiple data sources to ensure as a full a picture as possible is collected. Secondly, the researcher needs to undertake reflection on how their position affects the data collected (as discussed in Section 4.2 above) and reflect on their own understandings of the phenomenon. This is typically done through conversations with critical readers who can challenge the researcher's initial interpretations, such as my supervisors. Thirdly, and most importantly, the explicit use of particular theoretical lenses allows the reader to follow the basis of the interpretations made by

the researcher and thereby make judgements as to the usefulness thereof (Barbour, 2014). Chapters Two and Three presented the lenses being used to make sense of the study data.

4.3.1 Qualitative research methodology

One of the main characteristics of the interpretive paradigm is the utilisation of a qualitative research methodology (Thanh & Thanh 2015). Researchers who research within an interpretivist paradigm drawing on qualitative methods often seek experiences, understandings and perceptions of individuals for their data to uncover various realities rather than relying on numbers or statistics. This study is primarily concerned with discursive design and pedagogical practices of academic literacy at the three HEIs. As such, this study did not have a specific preconceived list of hypotheses to test or any list of outcomes that were expected to be found with regard to how academic literacy was understood or taught. Instead, the study attempted to generate data that spoke to the research questions. The study did not aim to evaluate the participants' competence, but rather attempted to help develop "a conscious and deliberate rethinking and re-theorization" (Clark & Creswell 2015, p. 296) of the three universities' academic literacy courses. Although there are some minor quantitative aspects such as the performance statistics presented in Chapter One, this study is primarily qualitative in nature, that is, it relied on the meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency.

The inherent strength of qualitative research is its ability to get closer to lived experiences in context. In Losifides (2011, p. 12) words,

> being closer to reality means employing methods for gathering information and insights about real people, real situations and real relations. It means gathering information and learning by talking with people about their perspectives, meanings, actions, practices, experiences, situations, social situations and contexts.

Qualitative research may be viewed as a powerful means for the study of social objects, along with their constraining and enabling effects. In this way, "the how and why questions can be combined and answered in a non-contradictory manner, as understanding a specific social process means the simultaneous explaining of certain outcomes linked with it" (Losifides, 2011, p. 13). Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 7) outline useful characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

- "It is predominantly interpretive.
- It is naturalistic and not experimental.
- It seeks to study things within their natural settings.
- It is context specific.
- It places the observer within the world being observed.
- It seeks to understand and describe rather than to explain, and such understanding and descriptions emerge from the data, as opposed to working towards a particular hypothesis.
- It typically uses a range of different methods
- It produces, for the most part, data that are verbal and which provide in-depth ('thick'), rich descriptions of the situations, places, people or events being investigated".

This study relied on interviews, observations and documentary evidence to generate data. Clark and Creswell (2015, p. 297) argue that these research instruments allow the study to offer "an explanation that is developed about a process, action or interaction through the collection and analysis of qualitative data so that explanation is built from (or 'grounded' in) the experiences and perspectives of participants". These instruments, according to Clark and Creswell (2015, p. 297), have commonly been used in research design especially for studies that want to explore and describe "how a process, action or interaction unfolds".

4.3.2 Case study design

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the main objective of this study was to investigate how selected academic literacy lecturers' understandings of academic literacy enabled them to facilitate epistemological access to students' chosen fields of study. The study chose a case study design which, according to Denscombe (1998, p. 31), is used "to investigate a single unit involving the examination of multiple variables and using variety of methods". In qualitative research, a case study focuses on aspects that the participants have in common. This, among others, includes the participants' experiences and understandings of academic literacy in contexts of their institutional types.

Denscombe (1998) further states that case studies normally investigate a single unit but do so intensively by taking an in-depth look at the many different variables that could have an influence on the case. The 'instance' that is investigated is called the case. Stake (2005, p. 447)

posits that the qualitative researcher who is working with a case study would ideally gather data on:

- "The case itself, how it operates;
- The history of the case;
- The site, thus where the case is physically located;
- Related or similar cases which give recognition to the specific case; and
- Informants who can provide detail on the case".

In this study, the case is academic literacy development courses in Namibia. Data were collected from three such courses at the three institutional types, namely, a Traditional University (UNAM), a University of Technology (NUST) and a Comprehensive University (IUM). Empirical data were obtained from six lecturers, two from each institutional type who are involved in the design, teaching and assessment of academic literacy development courses. Data were collected by engaging with the participants in a number of different ways such as oral interviews, classroom observations and analysis of course related documents (data collection tools are discussed later in detail in Section 4.6 of this chapter). The use of multiple methods is crucial for an interpretive qualitative case study as it provides opportunities to "take multiple perspectives into account" (Babbie & Mouton 2001, p. 282).

Ragin (2000, p. 90) identifies the advantage of in-depth case study as being that it provides a researcher with:

> intensive knowledge of the case and its history and thus a more in-depth view of causation. Case study researchers are able to triangulate different kinds of evidence from a variety of different sources in their attempts to construct full and compelling representations of causation in the cases they study. In short, case studies maximize validity in the investigation of causal process.

Like any other research design, a case study design also has limitations. The most apparent limitation relates to the question of generalisability of the findings that emerge from case study research which are naturally derived from a small population (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Addressing this shortcoming, Hoadley (2010, p. 12) posits that "there are a number of aspects to the generation of knowledge that can emerge from smaller scale studies [such as this one] which would merit further investigation at a larger scale and using alternative methodologies". Case studies are very good methods for pedagogical research as they fill in the gaps left by

powerful generalised studies and illuminate by example (Shulman, 1986). The interpretive paradigm adopted in this study allows for engagement with varied realities presented in case study. Similarly, Yin (2014, p. 17) asserts that a case study acknowledges "multiple realities having multiple meanings", with findings that illuminate the topic of the study in detail. This assertion is compatible with the aims of this case study in interpreting the participants' understandings and pedagogical practices of academic literacy in different contexts (institutional types).

In doing this, I was cognisant of Babbie and Mouton's (2001, p. 283) advice that case study researchers need "to take care when making comparisons with other similar cases and to acknowledge that the generalisability of case study findings is rather shown by demonstrating the links between findings and previous knowledge", thus providing significant opportunity for developing new knowledge. Generalisability refers to the capacity of a study to extrapolate the relevance of its findings beyond the boundaries of the sample (Sarantakos, 2013). In other words, generalisability is the ability of the sample and the findings to be generalised to other settings and also to the whole population. In qualitative research, generalisations are found to be impossible because each case is unique on its own (Shenton, 2004). There are two types of generalisations which are important in social science research: scientific (inductive) and naturalistic generalisations (Sarantakos, 2013). The former involves "extrapolation of the validity of the findings of a study of representative cases to the whole population, normally using statistical methods or techniques to estimate the level of generalisation" (Sarantakos 2013, p. 113). The latter, which was adopted in this study, considers a more diverse approach which is applied through the provision of sufficient contextual information about the case being studied, the site and the participants, to enable the reader to make inferences.

An interpretive case study entails engagement with multiple experiences and understandings within the particular case and interpreting these using theory. These interpretations will be strongly influenced by the perceptions and positionality of the researcher, as discussed in Chapter Four section 4.2 above, and by the theoretical lenses used, as discussed in Chapter Three. Furthermore, they will be greatly affected by the participants selected. If other participants were selected, they may have different conceptions of academic literacy to offer. If different courses in different universities in a different country were selected, there might be very different interpretations of academic literacy and its development to be offered. There is thus no categorical set of findings to be provided to the reader as the 'truth' about how academic

literacy is conceptualised, about how it is currently taught, or about how it should be developed. Instead, by explicitly demonstrating in the findings chapters how particular issues emerged in the data and by showing how the theoretical lenses being brought to bear allow me to reach certain conclusions, I endeavour to add to the conversation. The reader will then need to consider the basis on which I make my claims within the specific study context and theoretical framing and determine the extent to which this can illuminate what takes place in their own context.

4.4 Research Site

A research site

> implies the real world of programs, organizations, neighborhoods, street corners and getting close enough to the people and circumstances thereby to capture what is happening … getting closer to the research setting is essential because action can be best understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs. (Patton, 2002, p. 48)

This study took place at Namibia's three major Higher Education Intuitions (HEIs) namely, the University of Namibia (UNAM) – a traditional university; the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) – university of technology, and the International University of Management (IUM) – a comprehensive university.

In choosing the research sites, I had to consider issues of access and the need for a rich mix of participants related to the phenomenon of study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). For pragmatic reasons, I chose the campuses which are based in the capital city, Windhoek, because I work and live in Windhoek. This was suitable because Windhoek is not a homogeneous city. While other campuses which are based in the other parts of the country serve students from their immediate environs, the Windhoek campuses of each of the three HEIs cater for both local students and those from across the country's 14 regions. They also include international students. These campuses serve a diversity of students in terms of economic class, race and ethnicity, as well English language orientation, all of which ensured a variety of data in terms of students' academic literacy needs.

4.5 Research Methods

Research methods are concerned with the instruments and tools used in selecting and collecting data, and then interpreting that data. These may include but are not limited to the sampling methods or techniques, data collection tools, data gathering strategies, and data analysis as well the methods used to interpret the collected data. In the following subsection, I explain several methodological choices in the study.

4.5.1 Sampling

The population for this study were the academic literacy lecturers at the three HEIs in Namibia. It was, however, not feasible to collect data from all the academic literacy lecturers at the three HEIs. Maxwell (2005, p. 26) defines sampling as "decisions about where to conduct the research and whom to involve in the research process". In this study, purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants. Purposive sampling is a strategy whereby participants are selected on the basis of their knowledge of the phenomenon being studied and according to practical criteria such as accessibility, geographical position, availability and willingness to participate (Dörnyei, 2007). Cohen et al. (2007, p. 114) posit that purposive sampling "involves choosing the nearest willing individuals to serve as respondents as the researchers simply choose the sample from those whom they have easy access".

Sample sizes in qualitative case studies are characteristically small since the goal is credibility, rather than representativity or ability to generalise (Thomson, 2008). Stones (1987, p. 150) provides useful criteria for selecting participants in a qualitative interpretive case study: participants should (1) "have had experiences relating to the phenomenon being researched, (2) be verbally fluent and able to communicate their feelings, thoughts and perceptions, (3) demonstrate some sense of interest and commitment to the research". Against Stones' criteria, it is safe to say all the criteria were met.

As mentioned earlier, this study consisted of six participants, two from each participating university. An inclusion criterion was that they had at least five years of university teaching experience.

Before I requested access to these participants, I approached the main offices whose gatekeeper permissions were needed in order to carry out the study: the offices of the Director of Centre

for Research and Publication at UNAM, the Registrar at NUST, and the Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic & Research at IUM. The permission from relevant gatekeepers can only be granted if they are provided with full details of the proposed study, including the intentions and planned processes (Cohen et al., 2007). In February 2018, I sent a written request (Appendix E) along with my approved proposal and the ethical clearance letter from the University at which I am studying (Rhodes University) (Appendix A). The written requests explained the aims and the procedures of the study. All three institutions granted me permission to conduct the research (Appendix, B, C and D).

With the permission from the three HEIs' gatekeepers, I consulted the Heads of Department (HODs) of the selected academic literacy courses at the three HEIs, which are:

- The Department of Communication and study skills in English at the Language Centre of UNAM which hosts LEA,
- The Department of Languages and Communication at NUST where EAP is offered,
- And the Department of Education and Languages at IUM where PC is taught.

After having orally explained the scope and aim of my study, as well as the criteria of participants to the HODs, I asked them to furnish me with the names and contact details of the lecturers who met the requirements of participating in my study. I then approached these lecturers in person and explained to them the scope and aims of the research and invited them to participate in the study. Participants who were easily accessible and willing are as summarised in Table 4.1 below. At this stage, I provided the participants with the following information:

- I provided research information and consent forms explaining the purpose of the research and the procedures to be used for data collection.
- I assured participants that the purpose of the research was not to judge their teaching practices or the performance of their students but to work together towards understanding academic literacy development practices and to reflect on how pedagogies can be responsive to students' academic literacy concerns.
- I offered to answer any questions concerning the procedures of data collection.
- I indicated that participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

- I assured participants that anonymity of the data and anonymity of the research participants' identities will be guaranteed.
- All participants were satisfied with this information and agreed orally to participate.

Once I was certain that genuine informed consent had been given, the relevant participants and I signed the consent forms.

Table 4.1: Participants' biographical Information

Pseudonym	**Gender**	**Subject taught**	**University**	**Highest academic qualification**	**Years of academic literacy development experience**
1. Ann	F	English for Academic Purposes (LEA)	UNAM	PhD: Literature	7
2. Andrew	M	English for Academic Purposes (LEA)	UNAM	MEd: English Language Education	5
3. Joe	F	English for Academic Purposes (EAP)	NUST	MEd: English Education	9
4. Jane	M	English for Academic Purposes (EAP	NUST	MEd: English Education	6
4. May	F	Professional Communication (PC)	IUM	MEd: English Teaching	5
6. Matti	M	Professional Communication (PC	IUM	MEd: English Education	7

Table 4.1 summarises the biographical information of the selected lecturers. The main reason for choosing these lecturers is that they form part of the academics that oversee the academic

literacy programmes' design, teaching and assessment. I felt that more experienced lecturers would have more experience to draw from and clearer views about the teaching of academic literacy and may thus provide useful insights into the way they teach academic literacy than lecturers that had just begun their careers.

4.5.2 Data generation tools

Three data generation methods were used in this study: interviews, classroom observations and documentary evidence. I will now outline each.

4.5.2.1 Interviews

O'Leary (2004) defines an interview as "a one-on-one interaction which allows the researcher to have control over the process and the interviewee to have freedom to express his or her thoughts" (p. 27). The interpretivist paradigm which underpins this study meant that my interest was in how my participants interpreted the phenomena (academic literacy and academic literacy development). Interviews were an ideal method by which to probe their experiences and conceptions as they were able to express their understandings from their own point of view and in their own words.

I chose to use a semi-structured interview approach, whereby I had a few pre-set questions as a framework for the interaction derived from the research questions, yet tried to exercise minimal direction over what should be said by the participants allowing them freedom to express their subjective feelings as fully and as spontaneously as they were able (Cohen et al., 2007). Semi-structured interviews, according to Patton (2002), allow the researcher to probe responses and to pursue unexpected topics that emerge from the interview while still operating within the parameters of the study.

Before conducting the actual interviews with the participants in this study, the guiding interview questions were piloted with two lecturers at two of the participating HEIs who were not involved in the actual study. This was done to test the "clarity of questions in the interviews to eliminate or minimise ambiguity and difficulties in wording, and to gain feedback on the type of questions" (McLean, 1994 as cited in Phala, 2013, p. 50). The questions were further refined as a result of this piloting process and I was able to reflect on my interviewing techniques before collecting the study data. Finally, I presented the refined interview questions

to my supervisor who suggested further rephrasing to ensure that the content and language used would be readily comprehensible to the participants while being valid for the purpose of my study.

After I had developed some rapport with the participants through the initial discussion about the study, I made an appointment with them for a date and time that best suited them to have an interview. I asked each interviewee for permission to record the interviews before I started recording. The interviews took place in the participants' respective offices. Table 4.2 provides contextual background about the dates and the length of the interviews. As shown in the table, the month of October 2017 was dedicated to conducting interviews. The shortest interview lasted for 29 minutes and the longest 40 minutes. There were also, throughout the data collection process, informal conversations with the participants, as explained in the section on observations below, which pertained to establishing deeper understandings and clarifications as to the events being observed. While such conversations enriched my capturing of the observations in the observation schedule, they were not transcribed in detail beyond my own notes and so did not constitute additional interviews as such.

Table 4.2: Interview dates and duration

Pseudonym	Institution	Date of Interview	Duration
1. Ann	UNAM	10 October 2018	40 Min
2. Andrew	UNAM	10 October 2017	35 Min
3. Joe	NUST	16 October 2017	39 Min
4. Jane	NUST	16 October 2017	33 Min
5. May	IUM	24 October 2017	30 Min
6. Matti	IUM	2 November 2017	29 Min

The interviews with academics enabled me to access their constructions of academic literacy and their conceptions of how such literacy practices could be developed which might have influenced their classroom practices. According to Sarantakos (2013), answers to semi-structured questions are extremely useful for obtaining a deep understanding of the

respondents' views and behaviour, but they are difficult to capture precisely. The respondents may give brief answers that are not fully useful in data analysis or too long responses which might be time consuming to analyse. This was not an issue in this study as the interviews remained fairly focused and the participants were encouraged to be as elaborate as possible. Although the guiding questions were the same across interviews, respondents answered in their own words, expressing their own views about academic literacy in general and the courses they teach in particular, which led to a variety of follow-up probing questions.

Sarantankos (2013, p. 289) defines probes as "questions or neutral statements that encourage the respondents to extend or amplify a partial, irrelevant or inaccurate response, and or to stimulate and assist them to answer a question without affecting the direction of their thinking and without causing bias or distortion". My probing strategies involved asking participants to add more detail on the issues raised in the interviews which I felt needed more elaboration. The following example illustrates how I used probing with Ann, a lecturer for LEA at UNAM, during the interviews.

> ***Ann**: Personally, I find English for Academic Purposes helpful to our students. It is the students themselves who are not serious.*
>
> *Can you tell me more, what do you mean when you say students 'are not serious'?*
>
> ***Ann**: My dear, even if students are taught how to write an academic essay and how to reference, you should see their written essay assignments. They seem to have no idea about the structure of an academic essay, referencing and other conventions of academic texts. If you give them an assignment all they do is copy from the internet and submit.*

In order to minimise my influence on what they had to say, I made use of statements or expressions that they had already used. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim by myself. Subsequent to the interviews with the six participants, I also observed their lessons.

4.5.2.2 Classroom observations

An observation is more than just watching: it entails a purposeful and systematic way of looking at an interaction or event (Kumar, 2005). It is a means of obtaining access to live data within a naturally occurring situation pertinent to the study (Cohen et al., 2007). This choice was guided by Merriam's (2001) assertion that observations are one of the major means of

collecting data in qualitative research, because they offer a first-hand account of the situation under study and when combined with interviews and document analysis, they allow for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated**.**

Twenty-four classroom observations were conducted comprising four lessons with each of the six participants. The classroom observations were planned in such a way that the first visit took place at the beginning of the semester when students were introduced to the courses under study, that is, when they were busy with the first unit of study. Two visits were conducted in the middle of the semester and the final ones towards the end of the semester when students were being prepared for assessment. The observations took place between February and October 2018.

During the observations, my role was as a "non-participant" observer. As per Robson (2002, p. 319), this is "someone who takes no part in the activity, but his status as a researcher is known to the participants". My aim was to observe the events of the academic literacy lessons as they unfolded in their naturalistic settings (the classrooms) and to analyse how they speak to the conceptualisation of academic literacy at the three institutions. I had a list of observable data (Appendix H) that would be available to me (the topic of the day, extent of student participation, activities done in class, student-lecturer and/ or student-student interaction and assessment activities) as summarised in the observation schedule in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Classroom observation schedule

Focus	**Notes**
Topic	
Academic literacy practice/s addressed	
How academic reading, writing, listening and speaking are addressed	
Assessment activity	
Lecturer-student/student-student interaction	
Teaching materials used	

It should be clear that I am not claiming that my presence had no impact on classroom events, but I did my best to minimise this. As a non-participant observer, I avoided any contact with the students or lecturer during the actual observation. I neither talked to them, nor reacted to whatever was happening or whatever they were doing in the classroom. After each observed lesson, I held brief informal discussions with the academics. These discussions were mainly for clarification about certain teaching episodes or activities observed and were conducted in the form of informal conversations.

4.5.2.3 Documentary evidence

Bowen (2009) advises that in order to seek convergence and corroboration, it is advisable for qualitative researchers to use more than one data generation method. In addition, corroboration findings from different sources reduces the impact of bias. This multiple data-generation method is referred to as triangulation. According to Bowen (2009), the purpose of triangulating is to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility. According to Seale (1999, p. 61) if triangulation is used with due caution, it can "enhance the credibility of a research account by providing an additional way of generating evidence in support of key claims". Given the interpretivist paradigm underpinning this study, this confluence of evidence should not be seen to suggest that an ultimate 'truth' could be established. Interpretivism understands that participants will have differing perceptions and experiences and thus present varied and even possibly contradictory data. Triangulation is thus an attempt to ensure the fullest, richest collection of data rather than a means of establishing what is 'true' or what is 'false'.

Documents reveal what people do or did and what they value, and my role as a researcher was that of reviewing and analysing these relevant documents, in the light of the data collected from the interviews and observations. The documents included course outlines and samples of assessment tools used in the selected courses at the three universities. This was done to understand the relationship between participants' understandings of academic literacy and their design, teaching and assessment of the academic literacy development courses at the three HEIs in Namibia.

Since I was interested in what informed the participants' teaching and assessment practices in their respective courses, I asked the participants to furnish me with samples of their assessment tools (not necessarily students' scripts) and criteria for providing feedback (which in all cases took the form of a marking grid, also known as an assessment rubric). Access to samples of

assessment activities was crucial as it is assessment that most clearly indicates what it is that is valued in a curriculum. The claims made about the courses' purposes and values, as indicated in the interviews, could then be further interrogated through consideration of what knowledge and practices were legitimated in the assessment (Mgqwashu, 2008). In an attempt to fully establish how academic literacy was assessed and what informs the assessment practices at the three universities, a sample of set assignments, tests and final examinations for each subject as well as rubrics used in marking these assignments were collected and analysed (Appendix I). All the participating academic participants made use of three assessment tools: an essay, a test and an oral presentation. Table 4.4 summarises the types and number of documents reviewed in this study.

Table 4.4: Sample of documents reviewed

Sample document from each HEI	Number of sample documents review/analysed
Course outline	3 (1 from each HEI)
Study guide	3 (1 from each) HEI
Tests (2016 -2018)	9 (3 from each HEI)
Examination question paper (2016-2018)	9 (3 from each HEI)
Academic writing/ Essay assignment instructions	3 (1 from each HEI)
Academic writing (Essay) assignment marking grid	3 (1 from each HEI)
Academic oral presentation rubrics	3 (1 from each HEI)

As Table 4.4 shows, a total of 33 documents were reviewed for this study. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the use of these documents, I designed a document analysis worksheet which was derived from the broader purposes of the study (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Document analysis worksheet

1	Name of the institution:……. Type of Document: {Assignment/Study guide/formal activity}
2	Programme: …….
3	For which audience is the document written? {Student}
4	For what purpose was this document written? Quote from the document (if possible). What evidence in the document helps the reader to understand: The design of academic literacy programme Teaching of the academic literacy programme Assessment of the academic literacy programme Conceptualisation of academic literacy

The next section focuses on the analysis of the data.

4.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis "involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data, in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situations, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 461). Similarly, Merriam (2001, p. 145) describes data analysis as a "complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation". In interpreting and simplifying this complex process, Patton (2002) suggests the need for a coding scheme as the first step of data analysis. Making sense of the data depends partly on the method or tool that is used to categorise data, but also to a large extent on the researcher's conceptual thinking, rigour, clarity and creativity (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

I used a thematic analysis method to make sense of the data in ways that would allow me to respond to the research questions. Namey et al. (2008, p. 138) describe thematic analysis as follows:

> Thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas. Codes developed for ideas or themes are then applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis, which may include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code cooccurrence, or graphically displaying code relationships.

Themes are used in qualitative research to provide detailed descriptions of the activity or task, which are then narrowed from general to specific ideas that are interconnected across all the data collection techniques used. According to Saldana (2009, p. 13), "coding describes the segment of the data which is explicit, whereas a theme expresses data in a phrase, or a sentence that describes more a subtle and tacit data process". Data from different data collection tools used in this study were analysed, grouped into colour codes that identified their likeness and similarities and later expanded to its allocated themes and categories.

Since qualitative research is such an iterative process whereby the researcher moves forwards and backwards through the processes of data collection and analysis, it was not easy to compile and analyse data from different tools. As McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p. 367) claim, "it is almost impossible to interpret data unless one is also organising them". In this, it was essential that I take cognisance of my own positionality and biases, as discussed in Section 4.2 earlier, such that I attempt to reduce the double hermeneutic (Chavez, 2008). The analysis needed to move beyond my own 'common sense' identification of the themes and understandings of their significance to a solidly theorised analysis that made explicit use of the framework outlined in the previous chapter.

I began by repeatedly reading through the transcripts to make sense of what the participants had said. As Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 158) indicate, "reading, reading, and rereading through the data once more forces the researcher to become intimately familiar with those data". My initial attempt in coding the data resulted in a large number of codes which were difficult to work with. In order for these codes to be grouped under broader categories, I went through all the respondents' responses again to group the codes that seemed to share common characteristics together under a more general category. Having my research questions in mind, I looked for responses which were speaking to the particular conceptions of academic literacy, the design of the course, the teaching and assessment of the course as well as responses related to some alternative models of teaching academic literacy. I then needed to consider these in

light of the theoretical lenses provided by the framework of Bernstein's pedagogic discourse, Halliday's SFL and Genre Theory. I also brought to bear the concepts offered by literacies theory and Gee's notion of D/discourse.

Ultimately, conclusions about conceptualisations and pedagogical practices were drawn in terms of patterns and how they compared and contrasted with the existing literature and theories adopted for this study. Participants' understandings and expectations of what is involved in designing and assessing academic literacy modules were analysed, from the interviews, transcripts and documentary evidence by making use of theory.

4.7 Research Ethics

Apart from protecting the identity of, and retaining a good relationship with the research participants, taking an ethical approach entailed respecting the rights, privacy, dignity and sensitivities of all the research participants as well as the integrity of the institutions within which the research took place (Alexander, 2003). I have indicated my insider positionality in this chapter. Caruana (2015) cautions that being an insider researcher, there is a higher probability of having an impact, especially if the research questions address implications of policy. Trowler (2011) similarly argues that knowing the participants may cause the respondents to reply or behave in relation to the researcher's alignment and preferences – the researched may change responses or behaviour to help the researcher (bias). As mentioned in section 4.2, the participants and I (the researcher) are all academics sharing the same concerns about students' poor academic performance. In order to avoid bias and to find regularities in the data, I considered the solicited versus unsolicited character of data. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), solicited data are obtained as a result of a specific request for information or as the result of an action undertaken by the researcher. In the context of this study, solicited data were, for example, made up of information obtained through interviews with participants where I had to try my best to assess factors likely to exert influence on the participants and gain their confidence for the sake of data reliability. This was done, for example, by explaining to the participants their rights to choose whether or not to participate in the study, to conduct interviews when they were willing and ready, and to encourage them to genuinely express themselves about the phenomenon. Patterns and themes identified from these data were considered in the light of unsolicited data generated from other tools such as classroom observations and documentary evidence. This enabled me to check and compare the

constancy of patterns. Caruana (2015) also advises that insider researchers should not be their own gate keepers, that is, it is plausible that the appropriate processes for acquiring permission to conduct research and informed consent be followed prior to any research process being initiated. Permission to conduct research was sought from relevant authorities at the three HEIs as discussed in section 4.6.

As indicated earlier, I designed a Participants' Information Sheet (Appendix F) which has an informed consent form at the end and gave it to each of the participants to read and sign as an agreement and willingness to participate in the research. Participants were informed before they participated who would have access to the data. Information provided by the participants was anonymised and pseudonyms were used. This anonymity was not only in relation to the participants' names but also to any identifying characteristics related to them (such as Head of Department).

According to Patton (2001), validity and reliability are two factors which any researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study. Robertson (2013, p. 54) offers a lucid distinction between the two terms. She posits that validity "is related to the extent to which a researcher's interpretation of data can be judged as logically derived and credible" while reliability "is roughly equated to the degree to which different researchers might make similar findings given the same research framework". However, various others have argued that such quality judgements are not as applicable for qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2007). While validity can be fostered through the explicit use of theory in accounting for the interpretations offered in the study, thereby reducing the problems of the double hermeneutic, the claim to reliability is problematic for qualitative case study research. Research undertaken in the closed environment of a laboratory where variables can be managed and measured is very different from research taking place in the messy reality of the social world. While a different researcher might be able to "make similar findings given the same research framework" (Robertson, 2013, p 54), this is not assured. Even if the interviews were conducted with the same participants, they may provide different data because of when and how the interview is conducted and, significantly, because of who the interviewee is. Extending on the definition of validity in qualitative research, MacMillan and Schumacher (1997) hold that it refers to the degree to which the explanations of a phenomenon match the realities of the world. Cohen et al. (2007, p. 133) assert that "threats to validity and reliability can never be erased completely; rather the effect of these threats can be attenuated by attention

to validity and reliability throughout a piece of research". In other words, qualitative research can be credible as long as certain techniques, methods, and strategies are used during the research process. Quality in qualitative research might be better framed as trustworthiness and authenticity.

Trustworthiness has to do with addressing how qualitative researchers establish that the research study's findings are credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable. In ensuring trustworthiness, the role of triangulation needs to be emphasised, in this context, to reduce the effect of researcher bias. Data in this study was collected using multiple tools: Interviews, observation and documentary evidence. "Using different data collection methods rather than relying solely on one is beneficial because the strength of one method compensates for the weakness of another method" (Airasian, Gay, & Mills, 2009, p. 377). Moreover, to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity the study made use of thick description emerging from the data to enable the reader to gain a deeper understanding of how the results unfolded from each of the participants and their contexts. Thick description also allows the reader to compare the instances described in the research findings with those encountered in their situations. According to Stake (2010, p. 49), "a description is thick if it provides abundant, interconnected details". Providing thick descriptions does not only help to give a real sense that the reader is a part of the research, but it also provides a comprehensive and compact analysis of the findings that even the reader will feel that they have witnessed the events as they unfolded (Stake, 2010). Making use of verbatim comments and quotations in this study was intended to provide the reader with a deeper understanding that showed the strengths of the findings.

Another technique employed in this research to establish credibility was member checking. Member checking is "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Member checking occurs when collected data is presented back to the informant to check for perceived accuracy and reactions. After I transcribed the interviews, I gave the participants the written transcripts to read through to see if there were incongruities with what they had said. Although Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 315) caution that sometimes informants "may be able to agree that reconstructions are fair even if they are not in total agreement with them", this did not appear to be the case with the participants in this study, because three of the participants, for example, suggested that I should exclude some content that they were not comfortable with, and some clarified what they meant in an interview after they read the interview transcript that I had with them. It should be clear that from the interpretivist stance

of the study, the purpose of member checking was not to ask the participants to comment on my interpretations to get agreement. Instead, the purpose was for the participants to comment on my interpretations of what they had said and make sure that what I have abstracted through my analysis was faithful to what they believed as far as academic literacy development was concerned.

4.8 Limitations of the Study

Any study has a number of limitations. I have already discussed limits pertaining to generalisability and the need to manage the double hermeneutic. Critical reflection allows me to identify further limitations but there may be many of which I am unaware.

One limitation of this study regards the size of the study sample. Six participants, two from each participating HEI, participated. The views expressed by six participants cannot be generalised to apply to all the academic literacy lecturers at UNAM, NUST and IUM. I hope that the inclusion of observations and documents allowed for a richer analysis of the phenomenon, thereby mitigating against the small size. And, as Hoadley (2010) posits, "there are a number of aspects to pedagogical change that can emerge from smaller scale studies [such as this one] which would merit further investigation at a larger scale and using alternative methodologies" (p. 12). Further, it is my hope that the findings of this research demonstrate its central aim, to inform classroom teaching practices within the field of academic literacy development for all students, regardless of socioeconomic status or educational context of each student.

Another limitation was that my initial observation schedule and document analysis worksheet did not enable me to move sufficiently beyond description of the data to an in-depth theoretical analysis thereof. This required fairly significant revisiting of the data and analysis through the theoretical lenses to strengthen the initial analysis process.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented an account of the methodological choices made in this study. The chapter began with the presentation the study's research design and the rationale for choosing this, the process of data collection, the procedures involved in the data collection and analysis,

and the strategies used to ensure the quality of this study. The chapter concluded by presenting the ethical considerations of the study.

Having outlined in the thesis thus far why the study was undertaken, where and how it was undertaken and what concepts and theories were used in analysing the data, I now move to Chapter Five in which I begin to discuss the findings that emerged.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY AND LANGUAGE

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Four detailed the methodological choices that underpinned data collection and analysis in this study. The current chapter is the first chapter in which such data were presented focusing on the participants' broad conceptualisations of academic literacy. As mentioned in the Chapter Four, this study did not have a specific preconceived list of hypotheses to test or outcomes that were expected to be found with regards to how academic literacy is conceptualised. As such, the data in this study was presented as they unfolded in relation to the research questions. This approach to data analysis and interpretation yields variegated understandings and perspectives on the phenomenon under study, contributing to the field.

While the theories discussed in Chapter Three are well brought to bear on the data, Halliday's (1978) concept of multifunctionality of language was especially used in analysing and interpreting data in this chapter. The main findings discussed in this chapter relate to (a) academic literacy being conceptualised as generic, (b) academic literacy being conceptualised as a set of skills, (c) academic literacy being conceptualised as surface level language, and finally, (d) data that reveal that some of the practices being developed in the courses under study were not academic literacy at all but rather comprised (generic) business literacy practices.

5.2 Academic Literacy Conceptualised as Generic

A dominant finding that emerged from the analysis of the data collected at the three HEIs suggests an understanding of academic literacy practices as being generic, that is, as unrelated to the context in which such practices are used. This understanding seems to have informed the generic approach to developing academic literacy at the three HEIs. In other words, academic literacy at the three HEIs was taught outside of students' specific disciplines in a 'one size fits all' fashion because there was no clear distinction between the academic literacy practices of different academic disciplines.

As indicated in earlier chapters, both LEA at UNAM and EAP at NUST are structured as a semester course taught to undergraduate first year degree students. The courses are taught in both semester 1 and 2, such that students have a choice to enrol for the courses either in the first or second semester. For full time students, the courses are offered face to face for four hours per week, that is, one hour per lesson. The two academic literacy development courses which draw on the *English for academic purposes* (EAP) tradition are normally considered to be one of the two branches of ESP, the other one being *English for occupational purposes* (EOP). The difference between the two is that EAP is designed to help students with their studies, and EOP is directed towards professional preparation (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). While EAP courses may broadly be classified in terms of specific disciplines: English for Economics, English for Law, and so on, this was not the case at UNAM and NUST.

LEA, an academic literacy development course, is taught by UNAM's Language Centre to students from all of UNAM's eight faculties which comprise students from a diverse range of degree specialisations. Similarly, academic literacy is taught in a generic approach at NUST through the EAP course offered by the Department of Education and Languages. As such, all first year undergraduate degree students from NUST's six faculties are taught together with the assumption that they would apply the skills they acquire to their different fields of specialisations.

Responding to the question about how they incorporated students' discipline-specific literacies, Jane, for example, claimed that it was:

> *difficult to do so because students are not grouped according to subject disciplines in EAP classes. The least we do is to teach them generic skills, academic skills, which they then apply in their respective fields. (Interviews: Jane)*

Andrew raised a similar perspective:

> *this course is run from a generic approach; we don't necessarily conform to the specific field but we try by all means to teach generic skills that students may apply in their respective field of study. (Interviews: Andrew)*

Given that these courses are taught to first year students who are registered for different fields of specialisation, one might expect the Language Centre and Department of Education and Languages to group students according to their specialisation or at least by their faculty of

registration, in order to have classes grouped by cognate disciplines which may increase possibilities of integrating the literacy practices from students' specific disciplines into the curriculum. As Orr (1995) advises, if students are taught academic literacy through a generic course with an assumption that they will apply the skills they learned from that course to their disciplines, they should at least be grouped according to their specialisations and provided with texts that reflect the literacy practices of each discipline. The concept of grouping students allows for exposure to different forms of texts emerges from Genre Theory. Collerson (1988, p. 12) defines genre as "a kind of writing or type of text". Hammond and Derewianka (2001) maintain that genre refers not only to the type of text, but also to the predictable and recurring patterns of everyday, academic and literary texts occurring within a culture. Genre or text-type, either spoken or written, is often identified or grouped according to its primary social purpose; that is, genres which share the same purpose can be said to belong to the same text-types (Swales, 1990). According to Rose (1999), the traditional approaches of teaching academic reading and writing concentrate more on the teaching of conventions and regulations of grammar at the expense of the accuracy of an idea.

Genre is a key aspect of SFL, which, as discussed in Chapter Three, is concerned with the association between language and its functions in social settings. SFL "stresses the purposeful, interactive, and sequential character of different genres and the ways language is systematically linked to context through patterns of lexico-grammatical and rhetorical features" (Hyland, 2003, p. 21). For SFL, the forms and structures of academic genres are not fixed but situated. That is, they cannot be memorised but must be decided upon consideration of three variables: context, purpose, and audience. Macken-Horarik, (2002) recommends that "learners need explicit induction into the genres of power if they are to participate in the mainstream textual and social within and beyond the school" (p. 17).

Without scaffolded access to the target disciplinary literacy practices, "the application of skills learned from the generic course will vary from discipline to discipline, depending on the demands of each course" (Orr, 1999, p. 192). Allocations of students were random such that students from Law, Science, Agriculture, Commerce, and other disciplines were put together. The participants reflected on their selection of texts used to teach academic reading.

> *You see, LEA is a service course that is taught to all the students from the university's various faculties and schools. So, in teaching reading and writing, for example, I find reading articles that are generic but also comprehensive enough to be understood by*

> *students doing Law, Science and so on. These can be texts about HIV/ AIDS, and other generic academic texts. (Interviews: Ann)*

> *We just use readings that are common to all students. We avoid too technical readings that might for example just be understood by engineering students only. (Interviews: Joe)*

Participants thus indicated that they chose articles that are generic enough in topic to be interesting and meaningful across student groups. The example of articles given, such as those on HIV/AIDS are selected specifically because they are devoid of technical language, thereby suggesting that the texts used in the courses are not academic at all but rather they are popular texts. As per the Genre Theory, different disciplines draw on different text genres in the academy (Macken-Harark, 2002). Given SFL's key principle that language in meaning based and meaning is determined by context (Halliday & Hasan, 1985), selecting generic articles is a disservice to the students because the main purpose of the course is to enable access to academic discourse of the various courses. For Bernstein (1999, p. 159) horizontal discourses are "common sense knowledge which everyone has access to and is likely to be oral, local, context dependent and specific, tacit, multi-layered and contradictory across but not within contexts". Therefore, in choosing generic articles with less relevance to the particular disciplinary contexts, the students may not be empowered to access the vertical discourses of their respective courses. Bernstein (1999, p. 159) defines vertical discourses as a "coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure which takes the forms of a series of specialised languages with a series of specialised modes of interrogation". Both the form and the function of academic texts can vary greatly but this was not evidenced in the data.

> *We do not incorporate their discipline per se, but we just use readings that are common to all students. We avoid too technical readings that might for example just be understood by engineering students only. (Interviews: Joe)*

As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, for example that in Law students may be expected to read Case Law, this genre follows very specific rules about structure and what can be referenced and how it can be referenced and what 'counts' and so on. The academic practices ought then to acculturate students into conventions of disciplinary discourses and genres, with a focus on reading and writing texts as a means of expressing meaning (Jacobs, 2013). There was no understanding in the data that genres emerge "as a linguistic, situated relational process" (Chen, 2008, p. 197).

It seems likely that if the literacy practices being modelled in the courses are selected from the well-meaning attempt to use articles that are comprehensible to all students then they are unlikely to be academic in nature. This is because meanings are made differently from one discipline to another (Boughey & McKenna, 2016). Students are not expected at university to become academically literate in some generic way; rather they are expected to learn the knowledge of particular fields of study and the relevant literacy practices whereby such knowledge is communicated.

The conception of academic literacy as generic was also manifested in the academic literacy participants' accounts of what the term 'academic literacy' means.

> *Academic literacy entails working according to the set conventions within the academy. That is why we teach them different conventions of an academic text. (Interviews: Joe)*

While Joe refers to different conventions, he indicates that this can be done generically. Jane at the same university shared similar sentiments regarding academic literacy.

> *For me academic literacy involves the demands of studying at university, such as how students deal with a variety of written texts, how they interpret and produce such texts, and the conventions they should conform to. (Interviews: Jane)*

Jane's comment suggests an understanding that while students are inducted into different texts when they come to the university these are not seen to vary considerably. There is no acknowledgement that no academic is a master of the entire repertoire of academic texts. Moreover, her failure to indicate which of these many different texts students would be supported to access through the course suggests that students are expected to gain access to all these many different academic texts in a single course. The data repeatedly indicated that becoming academically literate was understood as having a broad sense of the academy, rather than inducting students into the norms and values, and the emergent knowledge making and literacy practices of specific fields.

The theoretical frame on which this study rests demonstrates that induction into the target knowledge practices entails having multiple opportunities to practise the relevant manifestations of literacy practices (Morrow, 2009). Depending on the literacy practices valued in the discipline, this could entail frequent chances for students to give presentations, design

models, or paint artworks, but by far the most common would be regular opportunities to produce the form of writing expected in their specific disciplines. However, the data suggested that this was not the case in the courses under study given their generic nature.

These assumptions about academic literacy practices as being generic across the academy were also embodied in the course outlines. Table 5.1 shows an extract from the LEA course specification:

Table 5.1: LEA course specification (adapted from LEA course outline, 2018, p. 1)

PART A:	*COURSE SPECIFICATION*
Course Title:	*ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES*
Course Code:	*ULEA 3519*
NQF Level	*5*
NQF Credit	*32*
Contact Hours	*56*
Notional Hours	*160*
Pre-requisite	*ULEG 2419, ULCE 3419; or Gr 12 Ordinary level A & B, or Gr 12 High level 1,2,3; or Gr 12 1st language 1-4*
Compulsory/Elective	*Compulsory*
Semester Offered	*1st and 2nd semester*
COURSE DESCRIPTION:	

This module attempts to assist students to improve academic language proficiency through listening to academic lectures, giving oral academic presentations, reading academic literature, writing short, theoretical research papers and avoiding plagiarism by paraphrasing, quoting and summarising other writers' work. Students are expected to give oral academic presentations, produce researched essays, and write tests based on academic study skills.
Exit learning outcomes *Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:* *1. Demonstrate the ability to interpret graphical information* *2. Produce academically researched essays* *3. Give academic oral presentations* *4. Critically read different academic genres* *5. Avoid different types of plagiarism* *6. Listen and take notes from academic lectures* *7. Apply critical thinking*

The course description in Table 5.1 suggests an understanding that there is something called 'academic language proficiency' and 'academic literature'. This generic conceptualisation of academic literacy practices was similar to those in the EAP course guide. As per the course outline (EAP course outline, 2018, p. 1), EAP has 10 learning outcomes, as shown in Table 5.2 on the following page:

Table 5.2: EAP course specification (adapted from EAP course outline, 2018, p. 1)

Learning outcomes: *At the end of the English for Academic Purposes course, students should be able to:*

- *Apply word formation methods to formulate new words;*
- *Find information using the library and the internet sources effectively*
- *Note and reference sources accurately;*
- *Apply the correct academic reading strategy for specific purpose;*
- *Expand text comprehension through a range of course-related academic text;*
- *Use various patterns of text organisation in writing;*
- *Apply the stage of the writing process to produce written work aligned to academic writing conventions;*
- *Engage with emerging technologies to improve on-line discussion and writing;*
- *Write a generic report with all specified elements and sections;*
- *Demonstrate an understanding of what research writing entails;*
- *Demonstrate the ability to interpret graphical information.*

The exit learning outcomes outlined in Table 5.2 above point to the generic nature of the conceptualisation of the LEA course. The learning outcomes are general and do not refer to discipline-specific instances with respect to the degree requirements of the students who are registered variously in the Faculty of Education, Humanities, Science and so on. For example, one of the exit level outcomes is "Demonstrate the ability to interpret graphical information". Presumably, the nature of graphical information that Humanities students need to engage with varies significantly from those of Science students. Even if we were to understand 'graphical information' as only related to 'graphs', a Humanities student, for example, may need to be able to 'read' a table or pie chart but a Science student would need to go much further and identify trends and so on. These students would also presumably enter the university with different abilities to interpret graphical information given that Maths is a requirement for Science but not for Humanities. According to Bernstein (1996), the education system is

characterised by inequalities. It as a result of such that Acevedo and Rose (2006, p. 1) affirm that "learning takes place when teachers support learners to do learning tasks that are beyond their independent assessed abilities, thereby allowing for learning activities to be designed to support all learners to succeed at the same level". This approach to teaching levels the playing field despite the assumptions that one may have as they enter into the classroom to teach. This process moves the students from horizontal discourse to the vertical discourses where they are conversant with the language of their fields of study.

Table 5.2 demonstrates how the course content focused on generic practices but there was no explanation in the data as to how such generic practices could relate to what the students are expected to do in their various discipline courses. The content to be covered under this course is decontextualised from where students will engage with these practices and this arguably constrains its potential to enable epistemological access. Derewianka (2003) posits that learning informed by genre theory is the pathway into the new culture of the varied fields of academy which may be foreign to students. SFL and New Literacy Studies claim that students' mastery of discourse specific terms can only be accelerated if the learning process is situational. As discussed in Chapter Two, accessing the epistemology of a field entails coming to understand the specific literacy practices whereby the field communicates its knowledge (Morrow, 2009).

Although the learning outcomes in the courses predominantly spoke to printed texts, probably because academic literacy is perceived as something that has to do with writing, the nature of the discipline-specific practices was not made explicit and students were not presented with opportunities for engaging with such conventions. The learning outcome in Table 5.2., for example, aims to prepare students to "Apply the stages of the writing process to produce written work aligned to academic writing conventions". But there are no such things as universal 'academic writing conventions'; rather there is the academic literacy of Philosophy, the academic literacy of Paediatric Medicine, the academic literacy of Political Studies, and so on (Gee, 2003). Each field has its own writing conventions. The participants were not aware that academic literacy practices, including the related writing convention to which students seek access, emerge from the specific values and structure of disciplines. Understanding academic literacy as being generic led to the teaching of these courses in a generic approach as shall be shown in Chapter Six. This raises a question of relevance – whether or not the course which

seeks to familiarise students with a wide range of literacies, focusing on particular genres – can enable students to make sense of the expectations placed on them by their chosen studies.

5.3 Academic Literacy as Skills

The notion that academic literacy is generic across the university, regardless of the kind of knowledge the student is trying to access, led very clearly to the second key finding, which is that academic literacy was conceptualised as set of skills at all three HEIs. Academic literacy development takes on a particular frame when literary practices are considered entirely as study skills. Skills are generally presumed to be neutral and able to be acquired completely; one either has them or one does not (Ashwin, 2020). By contrast, the term 'practices' is used in the literacies research to show that these 'ways of doing things' are not neutral (Boughey, 2013) but rather emerge from specific social contexts and one can be a novice or an expert in the practice or anything in between. Social practices are understood to be context specific (i.e. not generic) and are acquired over time (i.e. not skills). Understanding academic literacy practices as social practices recognises that they emerge from particular social contexts and are thus political, in the sense that they may serve some more than others.

The idea that literacy practices are skills emerged strongly in the data with implications for how the courses were implemented.

> *ability to own information they [students] read and being able to present it using a variety of academic writing skills. It also includes skills and abilities for example, finding information, writing academic assignments, avoiding plagiarism, and soft skills such as ability to take notes that students need to acquire in order to succeed in their tertiary academic endeavours. (Interviews: Ann).*

Data revealed that all three courses focused on what can be described as atomistic and decontextualised skills that are arguably unlikely to address the specific needs of students in terms of meaning making abilities in their disciplines. This was evident in the interviews, course curricula and the classroom observations. In opposing decontextualised teaching of academic literacy, Hammond and Gibbons (2005) reiterate that,

> learners' successful achievement in school relies upon the opportunities they encounter to use the language in context and 'meaning-making' and the support or scaffolding that they are given to do so successfully in English. (p. 5)

It is against this understanding that we can see that decontextualised skills are likely not to yield the expected competencies.

In particular, there was a strong sense in the data that academic reading and writing comprised a set of skills that students needed to acquire and that they could do so outside of their mainstream courses:

> *centred around enhancing students' reading and writing skills during their studies. This is because when students come to the university they do not show ability to synthesise information in their writing. Seemingly there is an over reliance on texts they read that they end up lifting information and submitting them as their own. (Interviews: Jane)*

The university's solution to the problem that students lacked the necessary generic skills centred on teaching them skills of reading and writing in these compulsory courses taught by language specialists. It is argued that teaching academic reading requires familiarity with target domain specific technical terms supported by definitions and explanations needed to enable comprehensive understanding of subject specific discourses (Boughey & McKenna, 2017).

The study guide titled *English for academic purposes* (ULEA 3519) provides some notes and a series of worksheets from which classroom activities were to be drawn. This document was designed primarily as a guide for students, although lecturers are also expected to use it for planning their lectures. The study guide consists of 12 units and each unit has specific objectives that are referred to throughout the unit and are aligned with the overall conceptualisation of academic literacy underpinning the course. The activities and notes in the study guide highlight the study skills needed by university students when they are studying from their respective specific discipline courses' textbooks, such as adjusting reading speeds according to the type of material being read, using the dictionary, guessing word meanings from context, interpreting graphs, diagrams, and symbols, note-taking and summarising.

Like LEA, EAP was also found to be designed from a study skills approach which aimed to teach first year students techniques and strategies for reading and writing at the university. The EAP syllabus is made up of seven units as outlined in Table 5.3 which seem to be derived from the learning objectives presented in Section 5.1.

Table 5.3: EAP course syllabus (adapted from EAP course outline, 2018, p. 1)

Language Usage Review *:* *Word formation* *Word order (adverbs & adjectives*	***Library and Information Skills*** *Finding books in the library Electronic information resources APA Referencing* *Academic*
Academic Reading *Reading process reading skills and strategies. Note-making and note-taking skills for study purposes.*	***Academic Writing*** *The writing process. Characteristics/style of academic writing. Proof-reading and editing. Quoting, paraphrasing, summarising, synthesising. In text citation and reference list.*
Text Structure *Patterns of text organisation.* *Types of text organisation patterns. Structure. Signal words.*	***Introduction to Research*** *Research process.* *Topic & title formulation.* *Research proposal.*
Report Writing *Types of reports.* *Structure of a report.* *Information and recommendation report.*	

Table 5.3 displays a list of skills taught in EAP. Since these skills are taught in a generic manner, it is safe to argue that even students who excel in this course may be unable to apply these skills to the tasks they have to complete in mainstream courses because the connections are not made visible. In relation to the "Introduction to research" unit, for example, it needs to be considered that what constitutes a suitable research problem and a suitable research method differs across faculties (Jacobs, 2013). Although broad areas of study, such as the Humanities and Social Sciences, share similarities around methods of inquiry, use of terminology, and even text-based genre forms, such as "Introduction to research", there are differences that stem from how each discipline imagines and construes itself, how it has developed, and how specialists within it continue its growth and development (Clarence & McKenna, 2017). This is to say, even though they broadly fit under the umbrella of the Humanities, and Social Sciences, these

are different disciplines and as such they play by different rules. These disciplines also therefore use different genres (Swales, 1990). One of the main concerns of Genre Theory is to make explicit to academics and students, knowledge about how the type of text (or genre) varies from discipline to discipline (Hyland, 2018). It can be argued that these first-year students need be helped to be able to read and make sense of research *in their field* rather than having to actually do research in a generic manner.

The teaching methodology used in both LEA and EAP is informed by the belief that academic literacy is a set of neutral skills for reading, writing and reasoning that first-year undergraduate students should be taught (outside of their specific disciplines) in order to be socialised into the academic discourse. In the LEA course, for example, the first unit was "Academic listening skills, comprehension and note taking", which introduced students to academic listening comprehension; identified the difficulties students experience in listening comprehension in academic lectures and described strategies to take effective notes in academic lectures. In this unit, students are thus taught how to conduct themselves in an academic lecture at university level in such a way that they are able to listen to lectures and take notes at the same time. According to Ann, it is in this unit that they:

> *explain to the students at university level they should not just depend on the notes written on the board or in the slides; they should also be able to make notes on their own by listening to the lecturers. In listening and note taking students are advised not to pay attention to language and spelling. In fact, they are encouraged to make use of abbreviations or personal short-hand. They are taught different abbreviations used in note taking some of which are featured in many dictionaries. (Interviews: Ann)*

It is commendable that there is no assumption that new students should be familiar with the "way of being" (Gee, 2003, p.46) expected in the university classroom. This has the potential to expose students to their "epistemic assumptions which may be inappropriate for dealing with specific, textually embedded university task demands" (Hardman, 2000, p. 3). Such epistemic assumptions emerge from students' prior social contexts, especially school. The relationship between the teacher, the text and the school pupil may be very different from that expected between the lecturer, the text and the university student. At university, students are expected to work far more independently (Butler, 2013) and to increasingly construct their own meanings from the multiple sources to which they are exposed. In many courses students are

expected to engage with opposing views and to take a personal position. Such practices may not have been developed in schools.

It is, therefore, sensible to include the listening and note taking unit as the introductory unit for LEA which aims to induct students who just came from secondary schools into the university. Rose (2006) argues that constructive learning can only take place when learners are able to read to learn and calls for this to be made possible through the continuous scaffolding interaction cycle exercised in the RtL approach. Note taking is only possible if learners are oriented in the language of the genre where they are able to summarise, using their own mastered vocabulary which is subject specific. The unit makes it possible to highlight, at the earliest stage, how the ways in which their past schooling experiences are different, and sometimes contradictory, to experiences they are likely to encounter at university level. A significant shortcoming however is that it is done outside students' disciplinary fields and thus does not provide students with opportunities to access disciplinary discourses. As Mgqwashu (2008, p. 152) argues, for academic literacy lecturers to provide students with opportunities to access disciplinary constructedness, they should consider "teaching students the discourses of their disciplines within the confines of their 'departmental walls', and not leaving this responsibility to experts in the field of English Studies, a field concerned with the way language constructs the world and societal identities through texts".

It is important to note that by constructing note taking as a 'skill', the course can cover the tips needed to do this effectively without necessarily engaging with the underpinning norms and values of the university classroom. It can be argued that it is only through engaging with such practices in the specific contexts in which they will be used that students can start to take them on in a meaningful way (Jacobs, 2013). Some might argue that note taking varies from field to field, with Mathematics students needing to copy formulas from the board verbatim whereas Marketing students needing to elicit the key points and record only those.

However, even if note-taking is understood to be a generic skill that does not differ across fields, there is evidence in the literature that students will not take seriously their induction into this skill in a class that seems unrelated to the studies for which they have registered (Luckett, 2016). A key issue that emerges when academic literacy practices are understood to comprise generic skills, and therefore taught through a separate course, is that students may not be particularly motivated to engage in the course in depth and may be unable to translate the

learning to their other courses (Ashwin, 2020). This study did not collect data from students and I therefore cannot draw any conclusions in this regard; however, it is worth noting that the literature posits that a consequence of attempts at developing 'generic skills' outside of the curriculum is that students fail to take the course seriously or transfer their learning to other courses (Steyn, 2012).

Alongside the finding that academic literacy practices were understood to be generic, rather than discipline-specific, and to comprise skills, rather than social practices, was the finding that academic literacy was closely associated with language correctness, a finding to which I now turn.

5.4 Academic Literacy as Surface Level Language Competence

Data revealed a common understanding which elides academic literacy with language proficiency. There was a view across the data that students at the three HEIs needed language support. Jacobs (2010) has observed that conflating academic literacy with mastery of the English language is not uncommon and has given rise to dominant institutional practices such as academic literacy teaching through add-on autonomous courses. Once academic literacy is confused with language deficiency, universities base their instructional provision and academic support on what Turner (2011, p. 3) terms a "technicist and remedial model" through the provision of learning development courses, often called 'Study Skills', which cover topics such as language use, time management, exam preparation and academic writing". This was manifested by the language and study skill courses offered at the three contexts under study and concerns about students' language proficiency repeatedly emerged in the data.

Data reveal that it was in an attempt to 'remedy' students' poor language competencies that the three universities developed language and study skills courses that are done by students depending on their performance in English language examination written at the end of Grade 12. At UNAM, the two language and study skills courses offered are *English for general communication* (referred to as ULEG 2410) and *English communication and study skills* (referred to as ULCE 3410). The *English for general communication* course is a compulsory one-year language course designed for students who have qualified to do a degree course but

have a D[3] grade in English at Namibia Secondary School Certificate Ordinary Level (NSSCO). The course places emphasis on grammar rules and the four language skills, namely listening, reading, speaking and writing. According to its study guide, the *English for general communication* course focuses on "skills which students will need throughout their career and beyond and serves as an introduction to university, where styles of teaching and learning differ from those of secondary schools" (ULEG Study Guide, 2014, p. 3). Upon completion of this course, students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of different types of texts, apply effective writing skills and use effective speaking skills in different contexts.

Unlike the *English for general communication* course which is offered throughout the year, *English communication and study skills* is a semester course. Its prerequisite is a C symbol in English at NSSC Ordinary Level or a Grade 4 at Higher Level and it is compulsory. The *English communication and study skills* course focuses on grammar, vocabulary and skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening which the students will need throughout their academic career, but these are all taught in a manner decontextualised from students' tertiary education. Students are expected to demonstrate comprehension of different genres, effective skills to use a dictionary for spelling and pronunciation and apply effective and written communication skills in different contexts upon completion of the course (ULCE Study Guide, 2015).

Andrew explains the prerequisites for doing these courses:

> *The two courses are English communication and study skills, a semester course done by students with a C in English, while English for General Communication is a year course done by students qualified to enrol for a degree but they have a D in English from Grade 12 to improve their basic English skills. Only students with a minimum of B symbol in English Second Language from Grade 12 ordinary level, or Grade 3 on higher level or a pass in either English language modules do the LEA course. (Interviews: Andrew)*

At NUST, the language course offered to students who have not achieved the required symbols in English is *Principles of the English language*. This course is designed to equip students who

[3] The minimum requirement for any undergraduate degree at UNAM is 25 points in five subjects from NSSCO/H grade 12 with a minimum of C or better symbol in English on Ordinary Level or Grade 3 or better on Higher Level; or 27 points in five subject with a D in English.

got a C symbol and below in English, with the necessary grammar competencies, integrating the four English language skills (listening, writing, speaking and reading). *Principles of the English language* is a new course at NUST as explained by Joe:

> *First language speakers who got Grade 1-4 on higher level and second language speaker who got A-B or Grades 1 to 3 do EAP straight away. They do not have to do the other course, formerly known as English in Practice 1 and 2, now known as Principles of the English Language before they proceed to EAP. This course focuses entirely on grammar, and it aims to fill the gap of what leaners should have learned in high school. (Interview: Joe)*

Joe's comments present a strong understanding of language use in the university as autonomous of context. His response suggests that the requirements for language and study skill courses at UNAM and NUST are the same. The language courses offered both at UNAM and NUST seem to be designed with the view that students who achieved lower than a B grade are struggling with the use of language (as opposed to the acquisition of academic literacy practices) and, hence, are required to enrol for English language courses with the hope of improving their fluency of the required mechanics of the language in order to be able to produce grammatically correct sentences.

When asked to compare the competency of the students who have gone through and passed these language courses with those that enrolled straight from school for the Academic literacy courses, that is, LEA and EAP, the participants had various views. Andrew, for example, posited that:

> *Well, if I have to give you answers to that question, I would be lying. I have not really done a comparison. That would actually make a good research paper. I have not made an effort to see who did which course before doing LEA and who is doing LEA straight from secondary school. All I can say is the majority of the students I teach are really struggling with basic academic writing and reading skills. (Interviews: Andrew)*

Andrew's comments suggest that there seem to be no noticeable difference between students who have done one of the language courses before they enrolled for the LEA and those who did the course straight from school. The comments further suggest that the language and grammar tuition offered in *English communication and study skills* and *English for general communication* is not having the desired effect of ensuring that students improve their expression and competence in English because despite having done these courses they still

struggle. Andrew's suggestion that despite the language course, students still struggle with *"basic academic writing and reading skills"* also indicates the conflation between technical language competency and taking on academic literacy practices.

Ann, from the same university as Andrew, UNAM, claimed that there are disparities between the students in terms of language use who do the language course prior to LEA and those who do not. She maintained that students should not be exempt from the language and study skills courses based on their Grade 12 results:

> *I think for me these exemptions are too ambitious. In fact, they are not necessary. Because if you look, for instance, at the exemption given to students who have good grades from the English Higher Level in the National examination, the teaching in Higher level focuses more on literature, analysing novels, poems and other literary elements to be specific. We do not at all deal with literature in LEA; here they are required write academic essays and do referencing, using correct academic conventions. So, if one compares the competencies of students who did either of the other two prerequisite English courses with those who come straight from school and do LEA, there is a difference. The latter seem to be disadvantaged. They are not supposed to be exempted because what they did in Grade 12 is something else totally different from what they are introduced to at the university. (Interviews: Ann)*

Ann's responses are not only giving an impression that a good performance in a language achievement at secondary school is not a reliable indicator of tertiary education competence, but also suggests that all first-year students should enrol for the language courses in order to acquire the necessary language skills for success at university level . This appears to agree with Moll's (2004) claim that many African students are 'disadvantaged' when they enter HEIs, not only because they need to adapt to new institutional and epistemic contexts, but also because the majority of these students are not native speakers of English which is the dominant language of learning and teaching (LoLT) and thus often need extra time. There is general agreement that a basic competence in the medium of instruction is a prerequisite to learning in that language. However, the participants consistently referred to language competence in ways related to the particular uses for which language is used in the academy rather than to whether or not students have the fundamental ability to use English.

Archer (2010, p. 496) claims that "developing the language of academia is a very specialised discourse which presents a problem for all students, whether they are first or second language speakers of English". This is because learning in higher education involves adapting to new

ways of knowing: new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge (Lea & Street, 1998), which are unrelated to technical linguistic proficiency. This distinction was not evident in any of the study data.

At NUST, Joe claimed that students that registered for EAP straight from secondary school because they had B symbols or grades 1 to 3 from higher level were 'doing terrible' compared to the ones that first did *English in practice*. Joe suggested that there is a need for realignment and restructuring of the two courses, such that students, regardless of the symbols they got in English from grade 12, should do the preparatory courses such as the *English in practice,* now known as the *Principles of the English language*. Joe claimed that there is a:

> *huge difference [between students who have done language courses and those who were exempted], because, when students come straight from high school they are, if I can put it… raw. They have never done any university English course. And by the way, some courses have EAP as an English exit course. Meaning that once the student passes EAP, they will not do any other English any longer until they finish their degree. (Interviews: Joe)*

In indicating that "students will not do any other English" once they have completed their EAP course again separates technical language competency from the contexts in which students will use the language. These students are all learning in English and will thus continue to 'do English' throughout their studies. Joe continues:

> *So ordinarily they would have to do the first two English courses that focus on Language and then, EAP; then then they are done with English at NUST. So, that start at the bottom, by the time they get to EAP, they would have a good grasp of English and would have experience of how we do things at the University. These students would not have problems with deadline for assignments, for example, because they have been with us in the first semester. The fact that the core course concentrates on grammar, their written language is more coherent than those who just came from secondary schools. (Interviews: Joe)*

Joe thus suggests that the *Principles of the English language* course has a positive impact on students' use of the language. Jane, from the same university, uttered a similar claim that students who did not do the language and study skill course offered at NUST found it difficult to cope with EAP:

> *It is so funny because the majority of students who were exempted from these language courses because they have good symbols are the ones that are struggling in EAP. In think it is just fair, because school and university are two different contexts. I still feel students need to do the basic language courses so that they are socialized in the discourse of the university. So we do not really do a lot when it comes to their language issues; the majority of them end up repeating the courses. (Interviews: Jane)*

The inconsistencies in this understanding are apparent because Jane is stating that university is a different context but then calling for a generic language course which fails to take context into account. This is not surprising given that these participants are simply indicating the dominant misunderstanding that technical language competence is the biggest stumbling block for students, rather than coming to acquire the literacy practices of their disciplines (Jacobs, 2013; Leki, 2017; Wingate, 2018).

Claims related to the language courses by Jane and her counterparts from UNAM suggest that socialisation into the university's expectations is to be equated with 'basic language' competence. Moreover, the suggestion that students who have strong language skills as indicated in their school results, can end up performing poorly in their academic literacy development courses is a clear indication that the relationship between language competence and disciplinary discourses' constructedness is more complex than simply having an appropriate language proficiency (Leki, 2017).

While only first year students who have scored less than a B on ordinary level or Grade 3 on Higher level in English enrol for the language courses at UNAM and NUST, at IUM, all first-year students regardless of their symbols in English, enrol for Applied English before they do *Professional communication*:

> *the minimum requirement for this course is a pass in Applied English where they are taught grammar and basic English skills. Applied English is done by all the students, just to make sure they are assisted with the language. Most of them come in with really poor English … the lack the basic competencies even to construct a basic sentence. So, Applied English deepens students' applied knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary in order to hone their reading and listening comprehension abilities, to improve their writing skills and to prepare students for the analysis and production of academic texts. (Interviews: Mati)*

Again, this excerpt suggests that 'analysis and production of academic texts' is understood to relate to basic language competence. Moreover, while the students' linguistic incompetence is

made visible and is problematised, the language of the disciplines and the pedagogic practices in which these are embedded usually remain invisible. The dominance of this autonomous understanding of how language works is not peculiar to these universities or this study's participants. The autonomous model, as discussed in Chapter Two, sees literacy a set of neutral skills that people should acquire regardless of the context (Lea & Street, 2006; Street, 2005). It is imperative to observe that the autonomous model is not neutral as it favours students who have had exposure and access to similar literacy practices from an early age (Townsend, 2010). These are previous literacy experiences being raised (for example, in a family that critique the newspaper at the breakfast table) that some students bring from home and schools, which Bourdieu and Passerson (1977, p. 32) call "cultural capital". These practices which on the surface look open and easily available to all, may actually have become arcane practices restricted to just a few (Townsend, 2010). Within the Namibian context, this has potential colonial implications because the autonomous model assumes that all students have a fair chance of success because higher education is a "meritocracy" (Sobuwa & McKenna, 2019, p.3). But students whose cultural capital do not match those of the university are severely disadvantaged.

While a basic level of competence in the language of instruction is absolutely key to success in HE, it is not clear whether the reason for all first-year students having to attend an English language module is indeed that the students do not have this requisite basic competence or if it is the dominance of the autonomous model. Using students' performance in English as the basis for teaching them academic literacy suggests that academic literacy is conceptualised in such an autonomous model, whereby language competence and the acquisition of literacy practices are seen to be one and the same thing (Street, 2005).

The language and study skills courses that are offered as prerequisites for the academic literacy courses at these universities are taught to students from a range of disciplines within the three HEIS and focus on linguistic features of grammar and vocabulary. Papashane and Hlalele (2014, p.6) refer to a "common core" of grammatical and lexical features but this is understood to be at the most basic functional level, most of the uses of language in the academy relate to the very specific norms and values of each field. There was no acknowledgement in the data that the students' apparent success in such remedial language courses had little effect on the language problems that students continue to grapple with back in their mainstream classes. Although most students are likely to acquire some basic language and study skills from these

language courses, academic literacy experts claim that the process would be more appropriate if explicit support were given within the specific disciplines of the students (Wingate & Tribble, 2012).

The LEA course is designed with an impression that students who have obtained higher symbols in English from secondary school or passed ULCE 3410 or ULEG 2410 have the necessary grammatical and language skills or have acquired them through the English courses.

> *[S]tudents were supposed to be able to read fluently, and be able to understand what they are reading, speak English to an extent that they are able to convey a message like someone who has gone to school and be able to listen and follow oral instructions because at university they will be doing all these things at an advanced level. Students should not expect to be taught how to read or speak basic communication English. Aspects such as grammar and basic language rules should have been developed already. They should not come to the university and expect us to teach them what are verbs, pronouns and other parts of speech. (Interviews: Andrew)*

Andrew again suggests that being able to take on the academic literacy practices of the field is related to generic language proficiency. However, many scholars (for example, Boughey, 2009; Gee, 2003; McKenna, 2010) have been cautious in accepting this view. NLS theorists such as Street (1984) make it clear that one does not need to be able to refer to parts of speech to use language appropriately in context, rather one needs to understand that context sufficiently to be aware of the language choices available and to select appropriately between them. Halliday's SFL holds this as its central tenet: the appropriate use of language is based on choices related to context. Of course, one needs basic language competence to study in that language as the medium of instruction but one does not need to have explicit grammatical awareness, indeed many English mother tongue speakers do not know parts of speech and are unlikely to be able to articulate the grammatical features that they draw on in their communication (Wingate & Trible, 2012).

As in LEA at UNAM, PC (*Professional communication*) also does not particularly concern itself with the teaching of grammar on the assumption that this is addressed through the prerequisite which is the successful completion of *Applied English*. The name *Applied English* suggests a focus on application, though it should be noted that all language is applied. It is applied, for example, when it is written in a poem and it is applied when it is written in a report. As long as the intention is to communicate, it is applied. However, the Literacies and Genre

lenses used in this research show that it is that the specific nature of the application that determines its form and function. Herein lies the challenge confronting the study participants. The lecturers of the course do not know the context of language application that students will be engaging in as they do not belong to the disciplinary communities in which the students will need to apply language. Language in the *Applied English* course is taught with a focus on generic grammatical skills, and is not actually focused on applied language use at all, as can be seen from the course outline below (Table 5.4)

Table 5.4: Applied English Course outline

TOPIC	COURSE CONTENTS	ACTIVITY/TASK
1 Parts of speech	1.1 Nouns 1.2 Pronouns 1.3 Articles 1.4 Adjectives 1.5 Verbs 1.6 Adverbs 1.7 Prepositions 1.8 Conjunctions 1.9 Interjections	➢ Identification of different Parts of Speech ➢ Student presentations
2 Tenses	2.1 present tenses: construction and use 2.2 past tenses: construction and use 2.3 future tenses: construction and use 2.4 tenses in use: differences between simple, continuous and perfect tenses	➢ Listening comprehension ➢ Reading comprehensions ➢ Speaking tasks ➢ Writing tasks
3 Sentence construction	3.1 statements and basic sentence construction 3.2 questions 3.3 imperatives 3.4 compound sentences	➢ Reading comprehension ➢ Listening comprehensions ➢ Speaking tasks

	3.5 complex sentences	➢ Writing tasks
4 Direct and Indirect (Reported) Speech	4.1 Differentiation between direct and indirect speech 4.2 transferring direct into indirect speech	4.1 reading comprehension 4.2 writing task
5 Active and Passive Voice	5.1 purpose and use of the passive voice 5.2 differentiation and application: active or passive voice? 5.3 transferring an active to a passive sentence	5.1 reading comprehension 5.2 text analysis 5.3 writing task
6 Essay writing	6.1 basic structure of an essay 6.2 types of essays	6.1.1 reading comprehension 6.1.2 text analysis 6.2.1 text examples 6.2.2 writing task
7 Speaking on topics	7.1 making conversation 7.2 making a short speech	➢ listening comprehension ➢ speaking task

The course outline above demonstrates that, like the courses at UNAM and NUST, *Applied English* is focused on generic English language competency with some explicit learning about language features. There is an acknowledgement in much of the data that this does not seem to have resulted in students having what is perceived to be acceptable levels of language competence. Mati, for example, indicated that:

> *They are still struggling with grammar, even after having done the Applied English. In most of the cases they may have produced a correct format but the language is difficult to understand. There is no way we should teach language or reading which they have already done in Applied English otherwise it will become repetition. And time will not allow that. (Interviews: Mati)*

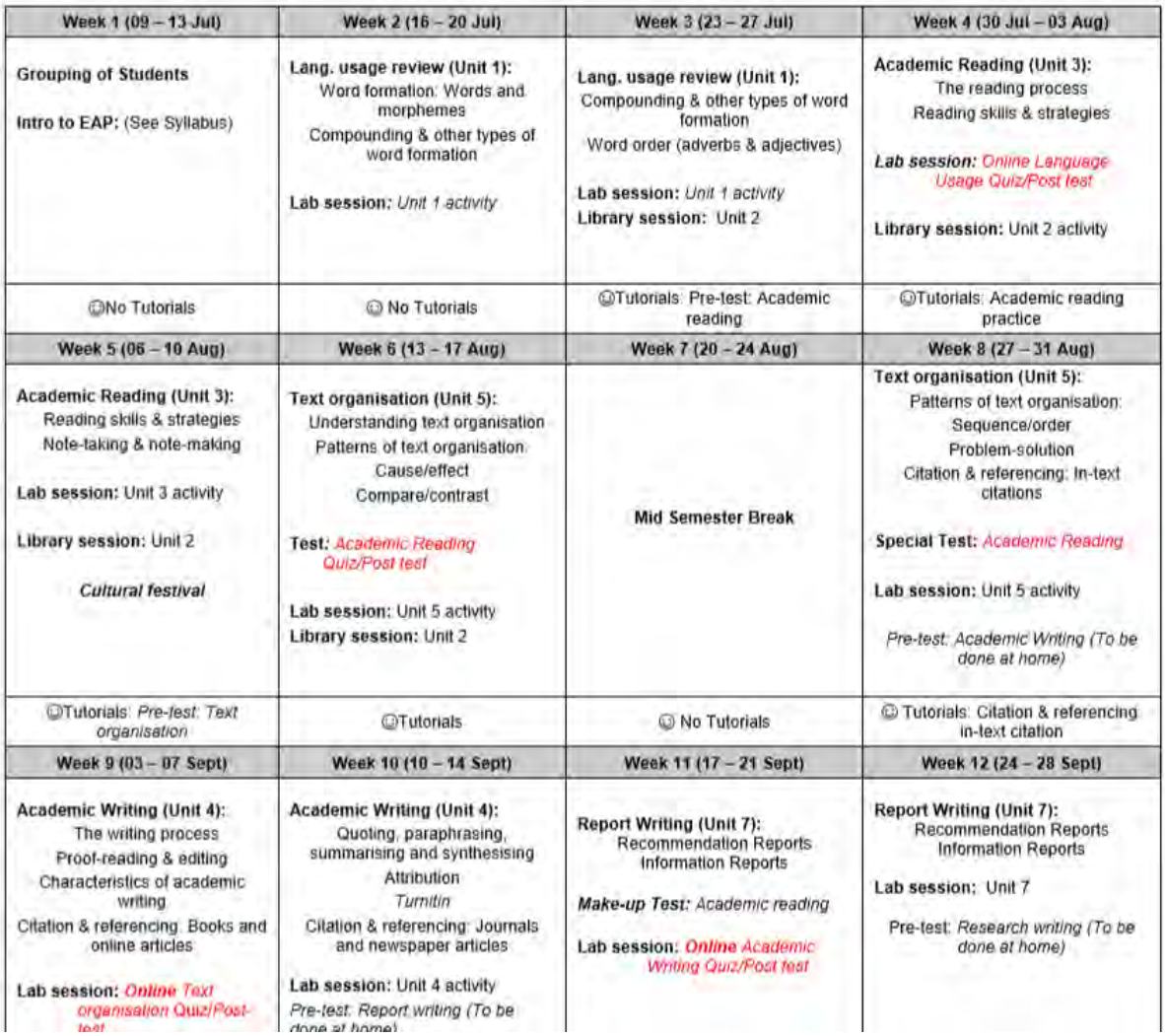
By maintaining that "*there is no way they would teach language*", Mati is referring to the teaching of surface features such as grammar, spelling and syntax in the PC course, because

this is seen to have been covered by the content of *Applied English*. May on the other hand expressed the need to address students' grammatical competencies in teaching them various forms of professional communication:

> *I think as lecturers we need to speak about students' language if we want to make a change in the industry. Most of the lecturers do not look at students' language, as long as the structure of documents to be assessed has all the components. But in actual sense, we need employees and business leaders who are able to express themselves cohesively in the industry. For example, if we all decide we are not going to accept a certain standard of work from students and be strict with them then students will pull up their socks. (Interviews: May)*

It is clear from the participants' accounts that, even if they are teaching the same course at the same HEI, they did not have a uniform understanding about the kinds of academic literacy into which they supposed to be inducting their students. There is ample evidence across the data of an understanding of academic literacy as an English language problem. The dominance of the words 'language' and related terms such as 'grammar' in the interview excerpts illustrates such understanding.

Unlike LEA and PC which are not much concerned with the teaching of grammar, there is a unit on "Language usage review" in the EAP study guide. According to the EAP study guide (2017, p. 2), the aim of the unit "is to review word formation – morphemes and word order – position of adverbs and adjectives in academic composition". The units are thus organised such that grammar-focused or the restrictive view of language (formal grammar instruction) and vocabulary are revised first before students are introduced to more advanced academic language as shown in the academic literacy lecturers' scheme of work (Figure 5.1).



Week 1 (09 – 13 Jul)	Week 2 (16 – 20 Jul)	Week 3 (23 – 27 Jul)	Week 4 (30 Jul – 03 Aug)
Grouping of Students **Intro to EAP:** (See Syllabus)	**Lang. usage review (Unit 1):** Word formation: Words and morphemes Compounding & other types of word formation **Lab session:** *Unit 1 activity*	**Lang. usage review (Unit 1):** Compounding & other types of word formation Word order (adverbs & adjectives) **Lab session:** *Unit 1 activity* **Library session:** Unit 2	**Academic Reading (Unit 3):** The reading process Reading skills & strategies ***Lab session:*** *Online Language Usage Quiz/Post test* **Library session:** Unit 2 activity
☺No Tutorials	☺ No Tutorials	☺Tutorials: Pre-test: Academic reading	☺Tutorials: Academic reading practice
Week 5 (06 – 10 Aug)	**Week 6 (13 – 17 Aug)**	**Week 7 (20 – 24 Aug)**	**Week 8 (27 – 31 Aug)**
Academic Reading (Unit 3): Reading skills & strategies Note-taking & note-making **Lab session:** Unit 3 activity **Library session:** Unit 2 ***Cultural festival***	**Text organisation (Unit 5):** Understanding text organisation Patterns of text organisation: Cause/effect Compare/contrast **Test:** *Academic Reading Quiz/Post test* **Lab session:** Unit 5 activity **Library session:** Unit 2	**Mid Semester Break**	**Text organisation (Unit 5):** Patterns of text organisation: Sequence/order Problem-solution Citation & referencing: In-text citations **Special Test:** *Academic Reading* **Lab session:** Unit 5 activity *Pre-test: Academic Writing (To be done at home)*
☺Tutorials: *Pre-test: Text organisation*	☺Tutorials	☺ No Tutorials	☺ Tutorials: Citation & referencing in-text citation
Week 9 (03 – 07 Sept)	**Week 10 (10 – 14 Sept)**	**Week 11 (17 – 21 Sept)**	**Week 12 (24 – 28 Sept)**
Academic Writing (Unit 4): The writing process Proof-reading & editing Characteristics of academic writing Citation & referencing: Books and online articles **Lab session:** ***Online*** *Text organisation Quiz/Post-test*	**Academic Writing (Unit 4):** Quoting, paraphrasing, summarising and synthesising Attribution *Turnitin* Citation & referencing: Journals and newspaper articles **Lab session:** Unit 4 activity *Pre-test: Report writing (To be done at home)*	**Report Writing (Unit 7):** Recommendation Reports Information Reports ***Make-up Test:*** *Academic reading* **Lab session:** ***Online*** *Academic Writing Quiz/Post test*	**Report Writing (Unit 7):** Recommendation Reports Information Reports **Lab session:** Unit 7 Pre-test: *Research writing (To be done at home)*

Figure 5.1: EAP semester teaching plan used by academic literacy lecturers at NUST

The academic literacy lecturers' scheme of work in Figure 5.1 above illuminates a focus on language as an instrument of communication in the first few weeks of the course, with a shift to a focus on generic academic skills in the later weeks. The first classroom observations I undertook at NUST were when Jane and Joe were still busy with "Unit 1: Language usage review". According to the EAP study guide (2017, p. 2), upon the completion of Unit 1, students should be able to:

- "Identify the difference between words and morphemes
- Discuss and describe root, derivational, inflectional morphemes, compounding and other sources of words (blending, coining, abbreviation etc.)
- Explain and apply word order - position of adverbs and adjectives in sentences".

The envisaged learning outcomes above as well as the activities under the "Language usage review" unit suggest that, like their counterparts at UNAM, the academic literacy lecturers at NUST seem to have framed the teaching of grammar in a traditional manner rather than in terms of the functions to which the grammar is used (Endarto, 2017). The orientation of traditional grammar follows the learning of structures and rules of grammatical categories such as morphemes, noun, verb, pronoun, adjective, adverb, conjunction and preposition – with the occasional nod towards meaning ("a noun is a person, place or thing") and grammatical function ("the subject of the verb") (Derewianka & Jone, 2010). The extract from the EAP study guide (2017, p. 13) shows the types of grammar focused activities designed for EAP students:

"Make adjectives out of the underlined words.

We can drink this water.

→ This water is ……..

Michael has great beauty.

→ Michael is ……..

Rebecca is playing with a doll made of wood.

→ Rebecca is playing with a ……doll.

I don't have a home.

→ I am ……?

His eyes are a green like colour.

→ His eyes are a ……colour".

As the extract shows, teaching of grammar in EAP is done such that the emphasis is on one grammatical item (for example, adjectives) at a time and students should demonstrate their mastery of this item before moving on to the next. As Nunan (2004) argues, this linear approach to teaching language informs the language modules in many places in the world. Halliday's SFL (1974; Halliday & Makan, 1976) cautions that such a framing is simplistic because language is not used in a decontextualised manner; rather language varies to suit the purpose of the users. Since EAP is taught in a generic approach, there were no attempts to engage with

extended texts in order to understand ways in which choice of rhetorical features arise as a result of the purpose of the text (Gebhard, 2010). The focus in the EAP course was more on teaching students to identify grammatical structures, taught in a linear fashion in the course.

Both participants were observed but on different dates when they were teaching "Words and morphemes". Both lecturers used a question and answer method to engage with their students. Students were, for example, asked to tell what they know about terms such as: suffixes; prefixes; simple words, complex words, root words; and parts of speech. A few students participated and gave correct answers, but the majority were quiet, despite the lecturers urging them to participate. The lecturers then explained some of these terms reading from the EAP study guide. Although the lecturers tried to make the class interactive, it was apparent that the students were not eager to participate, and thus the lecturers did most of the reading and talking in the class.

This section has looked at the ways in which academic literacy has been conflated with language skills. Across all the data, an explicit knowledge of language structure was seen to be necessary for language competence and this was taught in pre-requisite courses or assumed to be in place on the basis of school results, or, in the case of the EAP course, was included as part of the course focused on academic language use. The valuing of an explicit knowledge of language structure led to various activities and assessments aimed at ensuring students were able to identity parts of speech and other grammatical structures. In all cases, language was addressed in isolation of the context in which the students were going to use it in the academy. Basic language competence was not distinguished from academic literacy practices and the assumption was that if students had the former, they would be able to take on the latter.

Thus far this chapter has presented the findings related to how academic literacy was conceptualised by the study participants and in the study materials and classroom observations. Academic literacy was understood to be generic across the university rather than emerging from specific fields of study; it was understood to comprise a set of skills that students could be taught outside of their mainstream classes, and it was conflated with language competence.

I now turn to look in more detail at the PC (*Professional communication*) course which focused not on academic literacy per se but rather on 'business literacy'.

5.5 Not Academic Literacy at All but Business Literacy

Another finding worth unpacking is that some of the literacy practices foregrounded in one of the academic literacy courses under study were, in fact, not academic literacies as such, but related to workplace skills and business communication.

Responding to the question about the rationale for designing the course, Andrew claimed that the LEA course was designed: *"to address students' linguistic and/ or academic literacy needs which they will use throughout their student career".* Similarly, Joe at NUST claimed that teaching *Report Writing* to students at the University of Science and Technology "*prepares students to be able to give feedback to those who are assigned a job or gave them resources to implement a particular project".* The data thus suggest that the academic literacy development courses at these universities are expected to prepare students for both academic practices and the vocational practices of different professions.

Given the fact that the majority of students enrolled at NUST are aspiring to work in the corporate world as managers and business owners, "Report Writing" is deemed as an essential literacy practice in the EAP. While it might be true that students studying vocational and business-related courses need basic skills in writing different reports, one wonders if teaching students these skills in their first year and expecting them to use the skills three years later after graduating is appropriate. It is likely that students would forget what they have learned in first year by the time they reach their fourth or final year of studies particularly if there are no opportunities for engaging with this practice between year 1 and their graduation.

While the PC course at IUM was, as with UNAM and NUST, generic in its focus, a clear distinction was that the IUM course was not focused only on supporting students' acquisition of generic academic literacy practices but it was also strongly focused on supporting generic workplace literacy practices.

> *As you know IUM is more of Management Science University. We train and prepare students to become managers. Therefore, this course helps students develop the advanced skills necessary for concise and effective business correspondence. (Interviews: Mati)*

Mati's claim indicates that this course is positioned as preparing students for business communication in line with the institution's focus on management. There is a suggestion in the

literature that courses focused on business communication are sometimes introduced because they are attractive to students by "giving the impression of being specially focused and career oriented which students believe will ease their way into employment opportunities" (Sarinjeivi, 2002, p. 4). Mgqwashu (2008) goes so far as to indicate that practices of this sort have the potential to transform institutions of higher learning into glorified high schools, or schools of industry, thereby leading to the proliferation of modules characterised by remedial training or even worse, by a skills emphasis.

However, although the course focused on introducing students to some generic communication genres they would be expected to be adept at once they enter into the workplace, there was also a belief expressed in the course guide and in the interviews that this course is also intended to support students' success in their mainstream courses.

> *Academic literacy includes knowing the types of reading and writing in their field in a particular academy. For example, students who are doing this course should be able to compose the professional communication documents taught using the professional language so that they apply this when they go into their respective industries. (Interviews: May)*

> *Academic literacy is broad. It ranges from knowing what type of reading and writing done in your field, the type of language used in speaking and writing as well as how to conduct yourself in your discipline. For example, I told you earlier here that the literacy we focus on in this course is merely around business communication, but the education students are taught academic writing which focuses on formulating academic essays. (Interviews: Mati)*

The quotations above indicate that it is not academic literacy for the purposes of enhancing epistemological access to the students' mainstream courses that is being focused on, but rather it is literacy practices for industry that are being taught. The conflation of generic academic literacy practices and generic business literacy practices added an additional layer of genericism to the course.

The two academic literacy lecturers' conceptions of academic literacy seem to be aligned with the purpose of the course. PC is offered by the Language and Communication Department at IUM. The course is taught for four hours a week. It is a mandatory semester course taught to all first-year students from all the university's faculties, except students from the departments of education and that of nursing who instead attend a generic course named *Academic writing.*

As per the course outline, PC has three main learning objectives as shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: PC course outline 2018

Outcomes of learning   ***Upon completing this course, students should be able to:***   ▪ *Describe, explain and discuss oral and written communication skills with regard to meetings, editing, interviews, developing arguments, problem solving and case studies*   ▪ *Differentiate and produce various forms of business communication documents*   ▪ *Outline and produce professional presentations*

Unlike the courses at UNAM and NUST which are generic in terms of academic practices, the content of PC seems to be quite specific by combining the focus on employability skills with an ESP approach to achieve the purpose of the practical use of English for commercial purposes. The design of the PC course is common practice within the field of English for specific purposes which concerns itself with the teaching of English for defined purposes.

> *Professional Communication is designed mainly for students aspiring to penetrate into the business world. These are students doing degrees in Human Resources, Business Administration, Accounting and Finances and so on. We introduce these students to the various communication aspects which they are inevitably going to use in their careers. (Interviews: Mati).*

Indeed, learning about the genres of the business world is a worthwhile endeavour. The business genres covered in the PC course are, however, very broad and general. Furthermore, it is unlikely that students will engage with such genres in other courses at the university in the time between doing the PC course and entering the workplace. The concern is, thus, whether it is best placed in the first year if students will only apply these practices quite a few years down the line.

As with the LEA and EAP courses, students in the PC course were not grouped by field of study. So those who were doing a wide range of degrees were in the same classroom. It was possible to find students who were doing Financial Management, Business Administration, Accounting and Finance, HIV Management and so on in one class group. It must be

acknowledged though, that the cognate nature of these fields allows at least for more overlap than found in the LEA and EAP student groupings.

The data also revealed that although the content of the PC course seem to be quite specific with their focus on business communication, the attempt to teach academic literacy through this course was subordinated to the focus on employability skills in the form of business correspondences. When asked how the PC course incorporates the development of academic literacies for students' specific discipline, Mati explained that:

> *We train and prepare students to become managers. Therefore, this course helps students develop the advanced language and writing skills necessary for concise and effective business correspondence. They will need these skills to organize meetings, write reports, present their proposals, interview employees just to mention but a few. These skills will, of course, be featured in their specific discipline such as marketing, business and so on. (Interviews: Mati)*

The PC course has no prescribed book and the course content was on slides which were used by both PC course lecturers. As per the participants' scheme of work, the units were arranged as follows:

Unit 1: Course Introduction and Overview

Unit 2: Presentations

Unit 3: Meeting Procedures and documentations

Unit 4: Business communication documents

Unit 5: Interviewing skills

Unit 6: Arguments

Unit 7: Fallacies

Unit 8: Problem solving

Unit 9: Interpersonal skills

Unit 10: Editing

Unit 11: Revising

According to the participants, they introduce students to business language that is deemed necessary for students to acquire in order to understand the discourse used in business communication. As such, students were required to have technical skills, but also knowledge

of the structure of this correspondence, knowledge of vocabulary in various communication contexts, and be able to derive meanings of words from the context in which they were used.

Two of the observed lessons were conducted when both academic participants were teaching "Unit 4: Business communication documents". In this Unit, students were taught "methods of written communication in business" which focused on *form letter, memorandum, press release and emails*. In teaching these, the academics used PowerPoint presentation slides that had guidelines on how each of the genre is composed. The guidelines focused on the definition and schematic structure of these communication documents.

Table 5.6: Summarised features of a formal letter, memorandum and press release (Adapted from the PC PowerPoint presentations slides, 2018)

Formal letter	**A memorandum**	**Press release**
A letter is a form of business correspondence used internally and externally. *-Make sure you put into consideration the following:* *-Does the letter stand out?* *-Is it correctly addressed?* *-Are names and places spelt correctly?* *-Appropriate greeting (Salutation)* *-Opening paragraph= puts the message into context* *-Middle paragraph(s)= develop(s) the detailed message* *-Closing paragraph= States action needed* *-Appropriate ending* *But note:*	*A Memorandum is a reminder or concise message to an individual or small group.* *-Usually short allowing for the barest details only.* *-Sent only within an organisation by internal mail.* *-Paragraphs may be numbered for emphasis.* *-A memorandum of information should address one subject only.* ***The structure**:* *Main heading* *To and From headings* *Date* *Subject heading* *First paragraph* *Further paragraph*	*Press releases are statements to the media or announcements which companies distribute to the press about new products or services to ensure as much favourable publicity in a news item on radio or television or in the national press.* *Press Release is a fundamental tool for Public Relations.* *NB: Your Press Release should be newsworthy* ***How to write a press release*** *Headline – Should be brief, clear, eye catching and straight to the point.* *Body – The press release should be written as you want it to appear in a news story.* *What you write in your press release will be what the*

"Dear Sir/Madam" ends "Yours faithfully" *"Dear Mr. Mike" ends "Yours sincerely"*	*Initials or signature of the sender*	*journalists use in their write up of your big event.* *Start with the date and City* *The lead or first sentence should grab the reader's attention and say concisely what is happening.*

Table 5.6 illustrates that attempts to develop students' proficiency in producing business communication texts (letters, memoranda and press releases) focused more on surface characteristics than on the social practices underpinning the production of these documents. It is also notable that the generic focus on surface characteristics seems not to have taken changes in the workplace into account given that businesses now use emails, rather than memoranda, for internal communications. Genre pedagogy introduced in Chapter Three indicates that empowering students to become independent writers through pedagogy is directly proportional to the time spent modelling genre conventions. That is to say, one of the limitations of genre pedagogy is that one needs to be aware of the rules and regulations of numerous genres to become fully competent in the use of genre theory to impact students' writing. Students need to be introduced not just to the technical structure of each genre but to the social practices underpinning it – such as the reader's expectations and the purpose the genre serves (Millin, 2016). In other words, for students to understand the types of linguistic knowledge required of them to construct coherent letters, memoranda, press releases and other genres of business communication, the application of such knowledge should be contextualised to the specific workplace and norms and values of the business. A focus only on surface characteristics suggests an autonomous understanding of texts whereby if students can attain the technical rules of the genre, there is an expectation that they will have mastered it.

As Butler (2006) argues, a critical awareness of the literacy problems of students will influence the amount of support and assistance for developmental initiatives. Following the participants' claims, for instance, that students lack grammatical competence to construct coherent writings, teaching these surface characteristics would have also been a good platform for the inclusion of explicit teaching of Systematic Functional Grammar (Halliday, 1985; Halliday, 1994). Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) offers linguistic insights into the social nature

and function of specific linguistic systems and is a useful tool for detailed textual analysis of written work such various business correspondence texts. SFG shows how an interpretation of a text requires engagement with its context of use.

According to Applebee (1982), producing a successful piece of written work, such as the business correspondence taught in the PC course involves competence in three areas: knowledge of the topic, knowledge of the audience, particularly the extent to which the writer relies on the reader sharing knowledge, and finally, knowledge of language conventions. The unit on argumentation may have provided students some knowledge of the topic but it did not engage with the other two areas of knowledge at all. Furthermore, the knowledge of different types of argument will not necessarily provide knowledge of how to argue.

The data were replete with common sense understandings that rested on the belief that simply with the right set of neutral, generic and transferable skills, students should succeed in their studies, despite consistent evidence in the literature that such commonsense interventions do not address students' need for epistemological access (e.g. Clarence & McKenna, 2017; Wingate 2006). Literacy practices were regarded in decontextualised ways across all three courses in that they were seen to be generic across the academy, and in the case of the PC course, as generic across the workplace.

5.6 Contradictions and Tensions

Despite the strength of the dominant understanding of academic literacy as a set of generic skills, data also revealed an acknowledgement by the participants of the discipline-specific nature of literacies. At times in the data, links were made to mainstream disciplines and calls were made for such links to be made more explicit. All six participants at the three HEIs were asked a question around who has the responsibility of supporting students to take on academic literacy practices. The participants at UNAM maintained that the Language Centre was and should be the custodian of the academic literacy courses and thus teach academic literacy. However, they also expressed that it should also be reinforced by academics within the students' specific disciplines. Andrew, from UNAM, claimed that:

> *It should be the Language Centre and the disciplinary lecturers. The problem that I assume now, not basing it on any empirical evidence is that, when we introduce these basic generic academic literacy skills at the Language Centre, they are not enforced at the faculties where these students come from. I don't know if they feel it's not their*

> *responsibility or it is the skills they do not have. But my understanding is that whatever we teach, when students go to their faculties it should be applied and reinforced. I can give you an example of a student who came to me with a marked assignment from one faculty whose name shall not be mentioned. Out of curiosity I asked to check the student's assignment; she got 80%. I was wondering what the lecturer was assessing, the sentence structure of the paragraphs were all over the place; for references the student only provided a list of websites, and there was no red pen or whatever to indicate that this was not right. So you can sense that the marker only marked the content, but cohesive devices and style of referencing was not a concern. If the way that assignment was marked is uniform across the faculty then it should be a concern. This student would go on thinking she is an A student. (Interviews: Andrews)*

Although Andrew's comments above indicate a reliance on common sense understandings and very little by way of theorising academic literacy practices, he is concerned about academic literacy development and mainstream lecturers working independently of each other. Similarly, Ann indicated that:

> *We also need to collaborate with the other faculties to that they tell us what skills we should emphasise. Remember these people are also dealing with these students, and whenever they are marking or teaching, they can see that these students lack these types of skills. (Interviews: Ann)*

Like Andrew, Ann expressed the need for better communication between academic literacy development and mainstream lecturers, which would echo some of the models of academic literacy development discussed in Chapter Two. The participants seemed to suggest that disciplinary lecturers distance themselves from reinforcing the academic literacy skills and conventions in their students' writing. Furthermore, by giving an example of a student who got higher marks than he believed was deserved, Andrew seemed to doubt the specific subject lecturers' feedback which he felt was misinforming the student about his competence as far as academic writing conventions were concerned. Moreover, Andrew's claim that the mainstream academic "only marked content" shows an understanding that meaning and language are autonomous of one another as discussed in Section 5.1. but it also raises the question about what it is that is needed for success in the discipline; perhaps what is being valued there is at odds with what is being taught in LEA.

At NUST, participants also expressed an understanding that genuine literacy development would need to occur in collaboration with mainstream academics. They felt that the teaching

of academic literacy should not only be the responsibility of the Department of Education and Languages but of the whole university. Responding to a question about who should be responsible for teaching academic literacy at NUST, Jane indicated that,

> *It should be spearheaded by the Department of Education and Languages ... and other disciplines should reinforce these skills. Academic literacy is not supposed to be an event that only takes place in the first year and that's all. As students' progress with their studies, discipline lecturers should reinforce academic literacy. (Interviews: Jane)*

While this study has not established if the disciplinary academics at NUST "*reinforce the skills taught in EAP"* in their specific disciplines, Jane comments that academic literacy "*is not supposed to be an event that only takes in the first year"* indicating that it is unrealistic to assume that students have acquired academic literacy after the completion of a first year development course taught over a semester. Moreover, Jane called for the academics in the specific disciplines to also take the teaching of academic literacy as their responsibility not only during the students' first year but throughout their studies. In agreement with his colleague, Joe maintained that:

> *academic literacy is not anything that is developed by one course alone. It is a combined effort of all the academics. Students are supposed to act academically not only in EAP but also in their own specific courses. And by the way we have referencing being taught in the library by the librarians, which further highlights why I am saying academic literacy cannot be developed in one course. It is a combined effort of all the faculties and schools of the university, the library included. (Interviews: Joe)*

Joe's comments above indicate that referencing which is part of academic writing conventions is not taught by academic literacy development courses lecturers but by the librarians which suggests that he believes that the teaching of academic literacy is a shared responsibility. His reasoning is however, influenced by the understanding that academic literacy is something generic. He sees referencing, for example as a generic skill that can be taught externally to the curriculum (in this case by librarians rather than AL lecturers but still separate from mainstream lecturers). As will be discussed in Chapter Six, section 6.3, referencing looks very different in different fields and we reference for different reasons in different fields so referencing too is a social *practice* and not a *skill*.

Participants at IUM had the following to say regarding the responsibility for the teaching of academic literacy:

> *Like I said academic literacy entails what the university demands of them in order to succeed in their studies. Each lecturer should teach what they think is a demand in their subjects for the students to succeed. That means it should be our responsibility as lecturers to guide students how the writing, speaking and reading at tertiary institution works which is very different from the way they used to do it in schools. (Interviews: May).*

May's comments demonstrate the contradiction in the data between the dominance of the generic model and the simultaneous call for disciplinary practices. The second sentence clearly shows acknowledgement of the disciplinary norms of each field but the first sentence suggests that there are some generic university demands. As Young and Muller (2010) advise, all academics should understand that knowledge is structured in part independently of how it is acquired, and knowledge fields differ in their internal coherence, their principles of cohesion, and their procedures for producing new knowledge. This then means that despite their differences, all university courses (should) have at least one thing in common, that is to enable epistemological access, that is, by teaching in ways that enhance access to disciplinary practices.

The data revealed that despite the generic skills conceptualisation of academic literacy across all three institutions, there were some tensions as the participants simultaneously called for a shared responsibility in the university for academic literacy development. Jacobs (2005) advises that it is through sustained communication and collaboration between academic literacy lecturers and discipline lecturers that academics can be supported to make their tacit knowledge of the literacy practices and discourse patterns of their disciplines explicit to students. Jacobs (2005) further advises that academic literacy lecturers and disciplinary lecturers need to take co-responsibility for making the rhetorical dimension of disciplinary knowledge explicit to students and redefine their respective roles within the process of making this invisible process explicit for students at tertiary level.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the data on the conceptualisation of academic literacy at the three HEIs. Data as presented in this chapter revealed a common (mis)conception of the nature of academic

literacy, the resultant inadequate learning support offered to students in the selected academic literacy development courses, and a clear divorcing of academic literacy interventions from the students' home or mainstream disciplines at the three HEIs. Such (mis)conceptions are considered to be a misappropriation of what academic literacy entails. It should be noted again, however, that this appropriation of the academic literacy theory to offer generic skills courses focused on surface language issues is not peculiar to these three universities; the dominance of the autonomous model makes this problem fairly widespread, as will be discussed again in the concluding chapter.

Now I turn to the next chapter which presents data related how these conceptualisations of academic literacy are manifested in the content of the courses.

CHAPTER SIX

PRACTICES IN THE ACADEMIC LITERACY COURSES

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the data related to the conceptualisation of the notion of 'academic literacy' at the three HEIs. This chapter shifts the focus to the data that drills down into the content of the courses under study at the three HEIs. The findings presented in this chapter begin with (a) teaching reading as a neutral skill, (b) academic essays as generic genre, and finally, (c) referencing as a generic skill. Throughout this chapter, and following on the trend established in Chapter Five, I have included interview quotes, figures, and tables in which the data is shared in visual format to support the descriptive text.

6.2 Reading as a Neutral Skill

It was indicated in Chapter Three of this study that reading provides a central mode of learning in the university. After the listening and note taking skills unit in LEA, two subsequent units, "Unit 2: Basic academic study skills" and "Unit 3: Academic Reading skills" focus on developing students' academic reading. As with all practices, reading was constructed across the data as a skill, that is, as a technical competence that could be acquired rather than as a social practice that would change by context. The learning objectives for the two units on reading indicated a number of competencies that should have been developed upon completion of the course, as shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Learning objectives for Unit 2: Academic reading (LEA study guide, pp. 12 & 25)

Learning objectives for Unit 2: Basic Academic Study Skills	***Learning objectives for Unit 3: Academic Reading***
• Examine or analyse a text or a manual; • Examine or analyse a chapter or article using the first and the last paragraph; • Use the strategy of skimming a text to get its gist or its general impression; • Use the strategy of scanning to locate specifically required information; • Apply various reading strategies to read through a text quickly.	• Explain what academic reading entails; • Describe the processes involved in reading; • Predict the contents of an academic text; • Distinguish between main ideas and supporting ideas in academic texts; • Demonstrate the ability to take notes while reading; • Analyse academic texts to infer meaning; • Prepare written summaries of academic texts read • Analyse academic texts critically; • Distinguish between fact and opinion in academic texts

The learning objectives outlined in Table 6.1 above suggest that reading is given significant attention in LEA and students are introduced to a wide variety of academic reading strategies. These learning objectives reflect an assumption that students have what Street (1984) calls "technical abilities" to read autonomously, in that they are literate in the traditional sense of the word. But the assumption is that on top of these technical abilities, what is needed are generic skills that can relate to any form of academic reading regardless of discipline or genre.

Reading is undertaken in many different ways in the academy (Rose, 2005) and for many different purposes but this understanding was not evident in the data. According to Rose (2005), RtL offers "a promising alternative to existing approaches to academic literacy and standard academic teaching, by incorporating the teaching of literacy skills into the teaching of the academic curriculum". The fact that the course outline and the study guide are silent on 'HOW' reading will be taught in the two units to achieve their objectives, the actual teaching of these reading techniques in the observed LEA lessons focused more on 'WHAT' (reading techniques) than 'HOW' such techniques are applied. It is in this regard that Rose (2005) argues that RtL is a solution towards improving literacy abilities among students through following the six-step continuous scaffolding cycle.

> Key elements of the R2L pedagogy include 1) carefully designed teacher-class interactions that enable all students, to 2) engage in curriculum texts that may be well beyond their independent reading capacities, 3) interrogate passages of text with detailed comprehension, 4) recognize the language choices that authors have made, 5) appropriate these language resources into their own writing, and 6) construct texts with effective organisation and language choices to achieve their purposes. (Rose, 2019, p. 1)

Approaches such as RtL challenge the rote approach, such as the practice witnessed in the classroom observations where students were taught definitions of 'skimming, scanning, intensive, extensive learning and text mapping' but without time to practice these skills. Taking on literacy practices takes time and requires multiple opportunities to practice the relevant manifestations including reading and writing for different purposes within specific contexts and using different genres of how information is presented (Boughey & McKenna, 2020).

According to the EAP Study Guide (2017, p. 40), after the completion of the 'Academic Reading' unit, students should be able to:

- "Demonstrate an understanding of the reading process and apply stages in the reading process to textbook reading.
- Demonstrate an understanding of and apply a range of reading skills and strategies to academic reading texts.
- Differentiate between note-taking and note-making and use a variety of note-making techniques for study purposes".

The learning outcomes outlined above indicate that the teaching of reading focused on seemingly neutral reading techniques and study skills, rather than on the contextualised patterns of disciplinary meaning. Two of the classroom observations were conducted when both EAP lecturers were busy with "Unit 2: Academic reading". Guided by the learning outcomes, the participants introduced students to stages of reading namely: *pre-reading, while reading, and post reading*, and the activities that should apparently take place under each stage. This assumes a generic approach to reading that is separate from the nature of the text being read or the purposes for which it is being read.

The skills of scanning, skimming, intensive reading and extensive reading were first explained to students and there were short activities which students were told to practice in their study

guides. The need to get through the syllabus, to do so within the time available, and the academics' own lack of expertise in the ranges of academic texts that students may need to engage with in their studies, all worked against the possibility of extended engagement with tasks. The failure to explicitly focus in the courses on students making the transition from reading in school and other social contexts to reading texts in their disciplinary fields, did not mean that the participants were unaware of the importance of reading. The data included ample accounts of the lecturers' concerns about students' reading abilities and desires to improve those. Though they were drawing on theoretical generic accounts of reading, they were committed to supporting the students:

> *Academic reading is very important. Remember reading and writing are interrelated, if students know how to read academic texts, they would be able to write academic texts with ease. Our duty, as academics, is to make students realise that academic reading is very different from the everyday reading that we do. As academics, we need to teach our students' academic reading strategies, like, if one has an assignment, how do they go about get the relevant reading materials, and once they get the materials how do they use it, how do they acknowledge the source of information. (Interviews: Ann)*

Ann presented an informed understanding regarding the connection between reading and writing, and her comments give an impression that she gives teaching of reading the emphasis that it deserves. She was also explicit in her awareness that "everyday reading" is different to "academic reading". However, there was no engagement in the data with the extent to which Management texts differ from Maritime Studies texts or Medical texts, for example, or how within any field, the genre of the textbook differs from a journal article or a laboratory report or a set of lecture notes. Jane, indicated that:

> *Reading is very important, it introduces students to different information, enhances their vocabulary and make them good writers. In this course, students are also required to write a report and academic essays on different topics of their choice. For them to get more information to write, they need to read and as a lecturer I always encourage them to read more and more. (Interviews: Jane)*

Joe also indicated that:

> *Teaching reading has never been as important as it is now, because the current crop of students do not read much. I have seen it with my own relatives at home, I have seen it with students. So it becomes a challenge because university education is all about reading. If you cannot read you cannot pass the courses in which you are examined. I think it also has to do with the culture of reading and the types of reading done at the university. We do not read for pleasure, we read texts that we must read not necessarily because we have a choice. So students are not really motivated to read. (Interviews: Joe)*

Participants' comments that students do not really engage with readings in their courses seems to indicate either a lack of reading skills or a lack of motivation to read, or both. But it could be that the texts being presented to them are too far removed from students' other subjects for them to make the necessary connections on their own. As a result, students' motivation may be low to engage in any serious way with such courses because they are unable to see the relevance of what they do in the generic EAP course to the rest of their studies.

Moreover, the two participants' comments also suggested that although they are aware that reading is key to learning, they are not able to scaffold students' independent reading of academic texts (Rose, 2005). According to Rose and Acevedo (2006), the scaffolding process encompasses three levels simultaneously: first, the lecturer should help students to recognise, comprehend, and use meanings; second, help them to interpret meanings in terms of the academic field they are studying plus their own reflective experience; and thirdly, to critically analyse how authors construct meanings and choose how to construct such meanings themselves. The participants in this study recognised the centrality of reading but seem to be hamstrung in how to develop it. They relied on generic approaches decontextualised from the disciplinary readings that students need to engage with in their mainstream courses.

> *I do not teach reading per se. Students should already know how to read when they come to university. All we do here is guide them on how to reading abstract academic texts. (Interviews: Jane)*

Jane might be correct in claiming that students should already know how to read upon enrolling in the university, and presumably every one of them can, at a technical level (Street, 2001). However, it is also possible that none of these students are used to reading the specific texts of the academy with the peculiar structures and literacy practices they bring.

While LEA and EAP courses had a generic skills approach to reading, the PC course did not include a direct focus on reading:

> *Teaching reading is not the main focus of this course. It is true, to some extent we look at reading as a way to obtain basic information before one writes a certain type of writing. For example, if a student needs to write a memorandum they need to read what it entails and how it is constructed. But we don't have a unit that speaks to teaching of reading in this course. (Interviews: May)*

Although Mati expressed an informed understanding about the importance of reading, he also maintained that teaching reading is not part of the PC course.

> *Reading is essential in academia. The more you read the more you also become well informed and be able to write succinctly. It also helps you to be confident in whatever you say or write. However, we do not focus on teaching reading in this course at all. We do little reading, maybe on case studies and then asked to write as a memorandum or report in response to the scenario presented in the case study. Teaching of reading in done in the English courses. They also read passages and respond to comprehension questions. (Interviews: Mati)*

Mati and May's comments acknowledged that although there is a need to develop reading, it is not seen to be relevant to the 'focus of the course'. There is thus a sense that reading is a generic skill to be developed in the *Applied English* course and not within the PC course.

Although the LEA study guide included six generic academic reading texts that could have been used to practice academic reading in class in an attempt to enhance students' ability to learn from complex academic texts, this was not done. Students were rather taken through the descriptions of reading techniques and given the academic texts to read and answer comprehension questions based on these texts as homework. This was done with an assumption that students would apply strategies such as skimming and scanning in answering the comprehension questions even if they had not been modelled and scaffolded in class. Students in Ann's class, for example, were given as homework a five-page reading titled "Developing Intercultural Competence as Part of Professional Qualifications: A Training Experiment", extracted from Kaisu Korhonen's PhD thesis (November 2003), from the Department of Linguistics, Göteborg University, Sweden (LEA Study Guide, 2012, p. 46). Students were tasked with reading this extract and then answering the following questions for homework:

1) What is the topic of the text?
2) State the main idea in your own words.
3) List three or four major details that support or explain the main idea.
4) Make notes of the main ideas in the text.
5) Write a summary of the text using your notes.

All the questions above were meant to assess students' understanding of what they had read. Questions can be asked about the pertinence of the PhD thesis genre to these students or the extent to which a text in the field of education related to their studies. Furthermore, according to Halliday (1996), the ability to grapple with the complexities of reading and writing involves the ability to recognise and replicate patterns of language on three different levels, namely the levels of *discourse semantics*, *lexicogrammar,* and *graphology*. For Halliday (1996), if students understand what the text is about (*discourse semantics*) this will assist in understanding how clauses within the text are arranged (*lexicogrammar*) to provide crucial information, and in turn, students will be better equipped to recognise the meaning of individual words (*graphology*). This was not done in the lessons which focused instead on generic skills. Andrew attributed the rushed teaching of reading skills, with no opportunity to practice or provide feedback, to the limited time available:

> *LEA is taught for a semester which is basically four months – there is not enough time to make them read and critique reading materials. We start with classes in mid-February and write examination in June. We basically only have three months to cover the 12 units. (Interviews: Andrew)*

Andrew's comments demonstrate an understandable concern with finishing the course syllabus. Concerns about the decontextualised, skills approach to the course content can also encompass concerns about the full syllabus and short time-frame. The lecturer's assertion demonstrates that there is a mismatch between time in terms of duration allocated for the course and its content. The academic literacy lecturer claimed that because of limited time, practical activities such as reading and reading comprehensions are given to students as homework.

The respondents indicated that the reason why students generally do not do the reading activities is not because students are incapable of making sense of the task, rather because they are uninterested in the texts provided for reading:

> *The main challenge is motivation from the side of the students. I have accepted myself that academic readings are not enjoyable at all. There is nothing to enjoy at all, so it is something that you have to do, it's not like taking an exciting novel because you want to enjoy. So, one of the challenges is finding ways to make students interested in academic reading. And one of the ways that we use which is also not fun or enjoyable is to give them a task based on the passage that they need to read. That is the only way they would attempt to read that text. But if you are just saying read the text and let us talk about what it is all about, you will find that the majority of students will not read that article. Otherwise their personal interest in reading and learning something new is really limited. (Interviews: Andrew)*

Andrew's statement that academic texts are not for enjoyment echoed a statement made by Joe that academic reading is a requirement and is "not for pleasure". Reading in the academy was seen by the participants to require a set of technical skills and to be tedious or challenging. There was no conception in the data of reading to engage with knowledge making or to become adept within a discipline. Rose (2005) advises that due to the complexities of university academic texts, inducting students into reading texts needs to be "simplified", complex patterns need to be broken down to assist students to grasp the main idea of text. By breaking down a text in the class, reading tasks become less stressful and students are able to make sense of the text in question even when working on their own as homework. This seems unlikely to occur in a context where the academics themselves see texts as generic and reading as an unenjoyable practice.

Another classroom observation was conducted when the lecturers were busy with "Unit 6: Arguments". This unit focused on defining the word argument, and exploring different types of arguments, specifically *deductive* and *inductive* arguments. Students were shown through simple general examples of how they could construct each argument, as shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Difference between deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning as presented in PC (Adapted from the PC PowerPoint presentations)

Deductive reasoning	***Inductive reasoning***
Deductive thinking is reasoning from abstract, general principles to a specific hypothesis that follows from these principles. - *The arguments resulting from such thinking are called deductive arguments.* - *For instance:* *Sylvia owns only white shirts and blue shirts.* *Sylvia is wearing a shirt today.* *So Sylvia is wearing either a white shirt or a blue shirt today.* - *In deductive arguments, the supportive evidence guarantees a sure, truthful conclusion.*	*Inductive thinking involves a complementary process of observing a number of specific events or instances and interfering with an abstract, general principle to explain those instances.* - *The arguments resulting from such thinking are called inductive arguments.* - *For instance:* *The first cat is white.* *The second cat is white.* *The third cat is white.* *The fourth cat is white.* *So, all cats are white.* - *An inductive argument is based on more of the observation of the supportive evidence. The inference or the conclusion derived in an inductive argument is only a probable truth*.

From the generic definitions of types of arguments, students were expected to gain access to skills of argumentation. It would seem likely, though, that while they might learn the terms, they would be unlikely to learn how to develop strong arguments on their own as a result of completing this unit. The focus is again on generic technical issues (such as the descriptive terms for different forms of argument) and not on the contexts within which the students would be required to develop and present arguments, either in the academy or the workplace.

The PC course focused on business communication in a generic way and largely disregarded the literacy practices of the academy. But even in the workplace, SFL theorists would argue that argument takes many forms for many purposes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The students would thus be unlikely to effectively take on argument practices for either business or the academy on the basis of this unit.

6.3 Academic Essays and Reports as Generic Genres

Essay writing was included in the curricula of all three courses under study. Classroom observations showed that students were offered guidance on essay writing and teaching focused on adherence to what were seen to be the conventions and formal features of academic writing. This was done with the belief that academic writing is one of several study skills that students need for successful higher education.

At UNAM, after Unit 3, the remaining units in LEA focused more on developing students' academic writing. Similarly, apart from the first unit which focused on reviewing language usage, all six subsequent units in EAP were dominated by practices which focus on writing as a generic skill. As per the EAP Study Guide and course outline, after the language review and reading units were: "Unit 3: Text structure"; "Unit 4: Report writing"; "Unit 5: Library and information skills"; "Unit 6: Academic writing"; "Unit 7: Introduction to research". All these units speak to the emphasis placed on the development of reading and writing in EAP, which are taught as separate skills, with writing being the most prevalent of the two. The predominant focus on writing as a generic skill could be attributed to the conceptions of academic literacy as textual.

In terms of writing, LEA students are taught paragraph writing, cohesion and the use of cohesive devices, paraphrasing, summarising, essay planning, how to write different types of essays (for example, presentations of arguments for and against), writing effective introductions, conclusions, and writing summaries. Units were not taught in the chronological order appearing in the LEA Study Guide. Unit 7 titled "Functional situations in academic writing" for example, was taught just after Unit 3. In this unit, students were taught to write three types of essays, namely, *descriptive, compare and contrast,* and *argumentative essays* which could be written either from a *balanced* or *persuasive* point of view. The two lecturers taught this on the separate dates, thus it was possible to observe each of them introducing Unit 7. They both made presentations using PowerPoint and used a question and answer approach in engaging their students. They also made use of the study guide and read some notes related to academic writing to students such as the following sections: audience (which entails relationship with the audience), register (type of language which can be formal; informal; technical; academic), purpose of writing (to interact; to inform; to find out; to influence; to regulate; to entertain) as well as the content (determine the language and style used; describing;

reporting and narrating; defining; classifying; comparing and contrasting; generalizing; writing arguments; expressing reasons and explanations; writing critically to be covered) (LEA Study Guide, pp. 109-117). The lecturers then outlined three types of essays to students as shown in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Three types of essays taught in LEA (LEA study guide, 2012, p. 115)

Descriptive essays	**Argumentative essays**	**Compare and contrast essays**
Describing an object or place Describing a sequence of events Describing a process Describing and explaining **Instructions would begin like:** *Describe or narrate …* *Give an account of …* *Describe the procedures by which …* *Analyse the causes …*	The balanced view The persuasive essay The "to what extent essay" **Instructional words begin like:** *Give the arguments for and against …* *Give your views on …* *How far do you agree or how true …*	The contrast essay The compare essay The compare and contrast essay **Instructional words begin like**: *Distinguish between …* *What are the similarities between …*

The focus was then on the description of different essay forms above, more than inducting students into the practice. The types of essays suggest an introduction to genres of academic writing, albeit in a very general way. Ideally, they would require both extensive practice and explicit instruction since they contain, in Fang and Schleppegrell's (2010, p. 588) words, "language patterns which are often unfamiliar to students and present significant comprehension challenge" for they "are abstract, technical, and metaphorical, increasingly infiltrated by valorized scientific and bureaucratic discourses". In this context, the academic literacy lecturers did not explicitly provide students with ground rules for academic essay and report writing in their subject areas, but rather worked from the basis that all academic essays

follow one of these three genre sub-types and that within each sub-type each follows particular intentions and structures. Van Schalkwyk (2010, p. 205) summarises the issue quite clearly:

> Academic communities often find it difficult to make explicit that which to them may be self-evident, and are often unaware of the need to do so. There is an implicit expectation that students should pick up what is expected of them as they go along. However, many students, notably the weaker students, often find it difficult to discern the different discipline-specific codes or conventions, especially if they have not been exposed to the implicit rules of mainstream, powerful cultures such as may be found in academe.

Making the implicit expectations of academic writing explicit is thus essential if students are to achieve epistemological access. However, in this case, what is made explicit is a set of three basic essay types which may or may not align to those the students would be required to produce in their studies. The students were not explicitly shown, for example, how the three different essays are manifested in different disciplines. In particular, while these three types may be somewhat recognisable to students being expected to write academic essays in Humanities and Social Sciences, they would be almost entirely unrelated to the texts that students would be expected to produce in subjects in the Natural Sciences.

The academic literacy lecturers simply described these types of essays and began preparing students for an academic essay assignment. Students were instructed to come up with essay titles on topics of their choice which relate to their field of studies. The essay titles had to first be approved by their LEA lecturers before the students did the assignment. The instructions given to students to "identify their own essay title and write an appropriate academic essay based on a real issue/matter that will require research-based writing" suggests a laissez-faire approach to teaching writing. According to Dudley-Marling and Paugh (2009), laissez-faire is not an appropriate approach for teaching struggling writers who are still in the process of mastering the academic writing conventions, thus unable to correct themselves without being helped. Moreover, this assessment genre which focuses on writing is rooted in a Eurocentric conception of literacy even though literacy practices vary from society to society and from discipline to discipline (Angu, 2018). Proponents of decolonised HEIs curricula assert that academic literacy development should offer students choices that are disciplinary, socially and culturally relevant to the diversity of students because the ways in which people address

reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being (Molefe, 2016; Mpofu, 2013).

Before students started with the actual writing of their essays, their lecturers took them through the stages of writing, by generally describing how to write an introduction, body, and conclusion, but Bangeni and Greenbaum (2019) point out that providing access to genres is about far more than structure. Students need to understand what it is that the genre *does* within the discipline. Novices in the field need to understand the purpose of the genre and how that purpose permeates the genre structure.

Students were given a generic rubric detailing what should be done under each part of the essay. In teaching the features of a persuasive essay, for example, the academic literacy lecturers made use of an outline adapted from Kotler and Anderson (2003, p. 29), as shown in Table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4: An outline of a persuasive essay (LEA study guide, p. 117)

Introduce the topic briefly in general terms, and then state your own opinion. Explain what you plan to prove in the essay.
Reasons against the argument. Dispose briefly of the main objections to your case.
Reasons for your argument. The arguments to support your own view, with evidence and examples.
Conclusion - Do not repeat your opinion again. End your essay with something memorable e.g. a quotation or a direct question.

Table 6.4. above manifests assumptions that all students will need to write academic essays and that academic essays are an implementation of these rigid structures. The complexity of academic essays such as voice, readership, and discipline-specific forms of argumentation were not addressed.

> Students are handicapped by an inadequate understanding of how to organise their written assignments to meet our expectations. They are simply unable to master the structural conventions of the various text types they have to produce. We ask learners to submit essays and reward those we recognise as being appropriately

> structured, but we are often unable to explicitly state the criteria we use to judge this. (Hyland, 1992, p. 11)

Genre theory indicates that an academic essay takes many different forms depending on the purpose and audience (Hyland, 1992). Before the students were given the essay assignment they were given handouts with guidelines for writing an academic essay. Table 6.5 shows the instructions given to students for the academic essay assignment.

Table 6.5: Academic essay assignment instructions given in LEA, semester 1, 2018

Academic Essay Date: 12 March 2018 Due: 2 April 2018
Marks: 30
1. *You will identify your own topic of interest and formulate an appropriate academic essay title. Your title should be based on a real issue/matter that will require research-based writing and your essay will leave the reader with a lesson.*
2. *After your essay has been approved by your lecturer, write an academic essay of 1200-1500 words long.*
Specifications of the essay
***Length of essay**: 1200-1500 words (excluding cover page, and reference list)*
Presentation:
***Cover page**: - student number, surname, initials, title, lecturer's name, group (slot).*
(Table of Contents.)
All pages numbered (Excluding the Cover page).
Type on one side of A4 paper only - Arial 12, 1.5 Line Spacing.
Paragraphs clearly spaced or indented.
***Introductory** (General statements and thesis sentence), Body/Main (Topic Sentence and Supporting Sentences), and Concluding paragraphs*
Linking words.
List of References on a separate page (APA)
A minimum of 5 sources; A maximum of 10 sources
The majority of sources should be academic.
In-text citation and reference list (APA)
Academic conventions adhered to (academic and formal)
Thoroughly edited. Remember:

Students are required to "formulate an appropriate academic essay title" and write "essays that will leave the reader with a lesson". Yet, developing an academic text to convey a lesson would not be typical of most academic texts and would be considered especially strange in most fields in the Natural Sciences. Asking students to include a table of contents for a 1500-word essay would also be considered inappropriate in most fields where it is only used for much longer documents and very rarely for an essay.

In other words, students were not made aware of how disciplines use writing to construct, for example, argumentative essays, descriptive essays, and compare and contrast essays. In fact, not all essays in universities 'fit' within these three types. As Rex and McEachen (1999, p. 71) argue, when teaching academic reading and writing, students have to know "how to engage with and construct texts strategically and procedurally within particular interactional contexts" – because literacies represent socially developed and culturally embedded ways of using text to serve particular cultural or social purposes, these texts vary significantly.

The writing conventions emerging from the norms and values of a discipline and the ways of accessing these conventions were generally left invisible in the course pedagogy. It should be acknowledged that attempting to explicitly teach writing conventions as they do in this course is commendable, except they are being taught outside of the discipline and they are too generic to be meaningful and transferable.

Grounding students in surface features does little to develop their secondary Discourse, the academic literacy practices of their target fields, which also involves non-structural and language features such as voice, identity, and other genre-based features. After the types of essays were described, for example, students were given a mandatory assignment which contributed 50% to the continuous assessment mark. The lecturer encouraged students to write drafts first, revise them themselves or give them to their peers to review before they submitted their final essays. This suggests a process approach to teaching writing which emphasises the importance of a recursive procedure of pre-writing, drafting, evaluating, and revising (Rose, 2005). It was, however, done in a rushed and unrealistic way. In other words, academic essays in LEA are described more than actually taught.

Alongside the emphasis in this essay assignment on the generic structure, the lecturer encouraged students to use an academic register in writing up their academic essays. The term 'academic register' was used interchangeably with the term 'formal writing'. Table 6.6 shows

the table extracted from the study guide which the lecturers used to explain the difference between formal and informal writing.

Table 6.6: Characteristics of academic writing (LEA Study Guide, 2012, p. 120)

Formal Writing	**Informal Writing**
OBJECTIVE The academic writer tries not to let his personality intrude too much into the writing, in order to allow the facts and the evidence to speak for themselves.	SUBJECTIVE The non-academic writer usually writes from a very personal point of view.
Personal pronouns, especially 'I' feelings are generally avoided. Pronouns like 'it' 'one' and 'they' are used instead.	Personal pronouns are often used and personal views expressed.
TENTATIVENESS	ASSERTIVENESS
The academic writer is cautious about making very definite or categorical statements, or arriving at conclusions too hastily. 1. Verbs such as 'seems to', appears to', 'is likely to' tends to', may or might', could', would', indicate tentativeness.	The non-academic writer, speaking from a personal viewpoint, is often very sure of himself/herself, and may make wild generalisations or draw conclusions from insufficient evidence.
ACCURATE	OFTEN IMPRECISE
Precise evidence is given for facts which are presented. Facts are carefully distinguished from opinions.	A personal viewpoint is presented which is not necessarily accurate.
Sources are carefully used and acknowledged. A generally accepted system of quoting and referencing is used.	Sources may be carelessly used, plagiarism may occur. This is totally unacceptable in academic writing.
FORMAL	INFORMAL
A formal style is used in academic writing. Full forms are preferred to short forms. More formal, abstract words are often preferred, e.g. conduct, discover, investigate etc.	A less formal style is used. 1. Short forms and contractions are often used, e.g. I'd, won't 2. Shorter, less formal, more concrete words are often used. These include phrasal verbs and compound words, e.g carry out, find out, look into. Non-academic writing often constrains idioms, images, slang and colloquialisms.

The description of objectivity and accuracy in academic writing serves to raise students' awareness that academic writing is not an expression of personal feelings but rather that it builds on the reading and understanding of recent research findings by others who conducted studies around the same subject. But the generic presentation of such norms again assumes uniformity across disciplines and genres which simply does not exist. On the contrary, authentic language teaching is situational, focused and not static (Halliday, 1985; Rose, 2006).

The notion that subjectivity is not allowed in academic writing, for example, is problematic (Butler, 2013). On the contrary, in many fields, researchers are expected to indicate their own subjectivity and use reflexivity to consider how their positionality affects their claims. In some fields, the role of researchers in building the field and having to manage their subjectivity is hinted at through the regular and explicit inclusion of the names of those who have produced the research in the past (Boughey & McKenna, 2020). The subjectivity of knowledge produced in such fields is often made even more explicit through the use of the first person, through sentences such as 'I conducted two classroom observations'. In contrast to this, the objectivity valued in other fields may be symbolically indicated through the use of passive voice, 'Two classroom observations were conducted', or, where an active voice is used, through the anonymising of the researcher's identity, 'The researcher transcribed the surveys'. In this way, the claims are made in an objective manner seemingly untainted by human foibles of gender, class, nationality and so on (Boughey & McKenna, 2020). There are of course numerous other ways in which the different knowledge structures are manifested through different literacy practices, but what is presented in the example about subjectivity and objectivity is that disciplinary literacy practices are structured in very particular ways in line with the nature of truth and being and the means of producing knowledge and the relationship between knowledge production and the researcher (Boughey & McKenna, 2020; Lea & Street, 2000).

Rhetorical choices differ enormously across disciplines because they express very different epistemological and social practices. Chemistry students for example, do not need to be tentative in presenting their results from scientific experiments, whereas Social Anthropology students may be expected to draw conclusions with significant hedging of their position. Because these features may differ across disciplines, it should be of importance to create an awareness in students of the flexibility of these features, and for students to have a repertoire of available strategies and language knowledge at their disposal in order to adapt or adjust to the requirements of such specific contexts (Butler, 2006). By presenting students with the idea

that forms of academic writing are either right or wrong, the course may leave students confused when confronted by texts in their courses which do not conform to these structures.

Having discussed the approach to essay writing used in the LEA course, I now turn to the EAP course. In terms of writing, students in the EAP course were taught report writing. According to the EAP Study Guide (2018, p. 116), in teaching report writing, students are expected to be able to "explain academic report writing; construct effective introductions, discussions, draw conclusions and make suitable recommendations; present an information and recommendation report; discuss the difference between information and recommendation report; collect information, organise the information and present data effectively".

Table 6.7: The structure of a report (EAP, 2018, p. 129)

Title page: Title of report should include the keyword "Report on" and give a precise indication of the subject matter, student number, Module number and title, Module lecturer, date
Contents page: List of chapters/section headings with corresponding page numbers; list of illustrations (tables and figures); list of Appendices
Summary - Also known as an Abstract: An overview of the whole report, so that the reader can get a good idea of what the report contains without having to read it in detail, stand-alone Not numbered section.
1.0 Introduction What the report will be about.
2.0 Main body Includes as appropriate, any methodology, results and discussions. Includes numbered sub-sections.
3.0 Conclusion May be followed by recommendations in case of a recommendation report
References Precise details of the work of others (Refer to APA referencing Guide to Not numbered Referencing) but arranged in alphabetical order
Appendices Lengthy and detailed material that informed the report but does not necessarily need to be read. Can be used to check for accuracy. Includes statistics, questionnaires, interviews, etc. Each appendix is numbered but the section itself is not.

Before students are presented with the structure of a report, the following observation is made in the EAP study guide (2018, p. 129): "Reports are written for different audiences and consequently their exact layout may vary. Specific industries or institutions will have their own 'house style'; however, as a general rule the following common elements should be present".

This observation indicates that the course designers are aware that reports vary from industry to industry. However, the guidelines for composing a report are general and do not emphasise that business-specific instantiations (for example an engineering inspection report, report to funders and so on) or discipline-specific instantiations (for example a laboratory report, an experiment report, a research report) would require different formats. Table 6.7 above highlights a teaching focused on exhortation of students to be aware of general principles governing the report writing. From a genre perspective, however, people do not just write, they write to accomplish different purposes in different contexts and this involves variation in the ways they use language, not universal rules. As Hyland (2018, p. 391) puts it:

> The idea of professional communities, each with its own particular practices, genres, and communicative conventions, leads us towards a more specific role for English for academic purposes at the same time as a growing body of literature into how knowledge is socially constructed through disciplinary discourses, strengthens its theoretical underpinnings.

While providing students with a generic structure of the report can perhaps expose *how* some writers in some fields write, it does not reveal *why* they make certain linguistic and rhetorical choices. Students therefore find themselves in an invisible curriculum, denied access to the sources of understanding they need to succeed (Hyland, 2003). As a result, students are generally confused about the nature of the academic literacy conventions they are required to write and make meaning within. Coffin et al. (2003) maintain that because writing differs across disciplines in the tertiary academic context, the majority of students find it difficult to meet the writing requirements in several different areas because these are rarely made explicit in context. Various studies show that students often battle to take on the literacy practices of the academy as these seem so alien from those that they have successfully used at school. Bangeni and Greenbaum (2019), for example, indicate that first year Law students typically defer to authority (and see texts as beyond critique), and focus on concrete rather than abstract concepts. This suggests that what is needed is far more than access to grammar or structures of genre.

In an attempt to assist students who were struggling writing their assignments, NUST has what is referred to as a "Writing unit" hosted by the Department of Education and Languages, which is also where the EAP course is offered. According to Joe:

> *The Writing Unit serves as a support for students' language issues with regard to writing, it can be grammar, or writing assignments formats, paragraph construction or developing thesis statements etc. We make use of the senior students who work as student assistants. These students should have passed EAP with good grades. (Interviews: Joe)*

Joe's description of the Writing Unit is framed within the conception of academic literacy as a neutral set of skills divorced from any specific discipline. As Clarence (2011, p. 3) puts it "the chief role of a Writing Unit, working within this [problematic] discourse of autonomous literacy, is to facilitate students' mastery of these 'skills' so that they can produce more appropriate writing". Clarence (2011) is disparaging of such approaches and argues that it is only when those in the writing unit understand their role as critical readers working in conjunction with disciplinary experts that such experts can impact positively on students' academic literacy acquisition.

The fact that the support offered in the Writing Unit at NUST is by senior undergraduate students, whose qualifications to become assistants is to have passed EAP, makes it is likely that the unit may not yield much by way of desired results. It is risky to assume that senior undergraduate students will be familiar with the writing conventions of their juniors' disciplines as a result of their passing EAP. Supporting their juniors to take on the writing practices would be very difficult without an adequate competence in these practices themselves (Clarence & Dyson, 2017). Thus far in this chapter I have looked at the teaching of academic essays and reports as generic genres. I now move to look in more detail at a related issue which was covered in some depth, which is the use of referencing.

6.4 Referencing as a Generic Skill

Listed under the skills that students should have learned upon completion of the LEA course at UNAM is the following: "Citation of different sources; different in-text citations and APA referencing system". Similarly, at NUST, the American Psychological Association (APA) referencing system is listed as one of the skills that students should have learned upon completion of the "Library and Information Skills" Unit of the EAP course. These APA citation skills are then reinforced in "Unit 4: Academic writing". Upon completion of this unit, students were expected to be able to:

- "Explain what academic writing is.
- Produce written work aligned to academic writing conventions.
- Follow the stages of the writing process when writing.
- Use Turnitin to identify plagiarism in academic written work.
- Edit their own work.
- Integrate the work of other scholars in into their own work". (EAP Study Guide, 2017, p. 70)

APA was the only referencing system referred to in these courses despite the fact that the various courses which students take use different referencing styles. For example, the Law Faculty at UNAM does not expect students to use the APA referencing style but rather to use the Legal footnote citation system. Answering the question as to why they chose to teach their students the APA referencing system only when the course caters for students from various disciplines which do not use APA referencing, Ann claimed that:

> *I am aware of that issues about some faculties not using APA. To be specific I know of the Faculty of Law which uses Namibian Law Journal (NLJ) referencing style. So far, I didn't encounter students from those faculties. But personally, I feel in that case we need to look at it as a centre, because there is no point in teaching students things that they will not use in their studies. We need to know if, for example, Faculty of Law is using NLJ, then the person teaching this group should not teach them APA, but the referencing style used in their faculty. Like in my class, I have students from Economics, Education, and Science and so on. So I suggest we move towards the English for specific purposes and then we will have English for law, English for nurses, English for teachers etc. (Interviews: Ann)*

Andrew from the same university also expressed knowledge that various departments require their students to use other referencing styles than APA:

> *The challenge, some faculties use other styles of referencing. I have advised the colleagues to incorporate other referencing styles used by other faculties and allow students to reference their essay assignments using these are referencing styles. (Interviews: Andrew)*

While referencing systems are often selected on the basis of individual preference, the preferred referencing systems of different disciplines are often selected for reasons related to the nature of knowledge, and the relationship between the author and the reader varies considerably by

discipline (Blum, 2016). Moreover, the teaching of the APA system was instrumental – the focus was on the technical specifications of the system rather than engagement with how and why we reference in the academy – such as to map the debates in the literature and to provide substantiation for our claims (Bretag, 2018) The academic practice of including references to published literature was not understood as relating to disciplinary differences in the ways in which prior knowledge is used in the building of new knowledge and the ways in which authorial voice is established. Hendricks and Quinn (2000) argue that it is essentially through integrating the ideas from sources with their own ideas that students construct knowledge in the discipline about which they are writing. Ann's case of referencing in Law is a good example which shows how referencing is much more than technical expertise about different referencing styles and emerges from the norms and values of the discipline. The three main categories of referencing are parental citation (where the references are included within the text, often in brackets), note citation (where references are included as footnotes or endnotes), and numeric citations (where sources are numbered in the order in which they appear in the text). Within each of these three categories are a number of different styles. Students, and indeed published academics, do not need to know the intricacies of different styles but do need to understand why and where referencing is used in their discipline (Pandey, Pandey, Dwivedi, Baja, & Kunder, 2020).

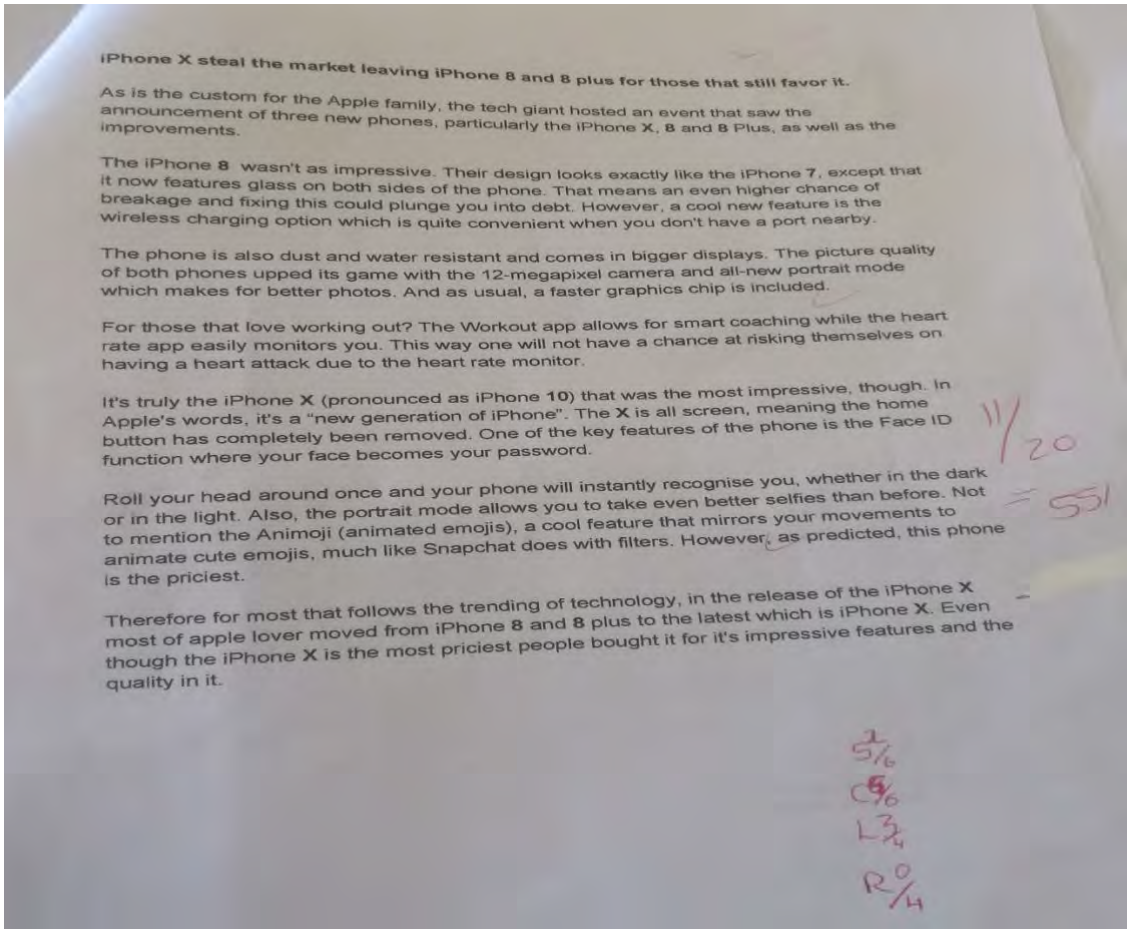
At IUM, referencing is not explicitly taught in PC. When asked about the expectations around referencing in students' PC assignments, Mati asserted that:

> *We did not teach them specific referencing styles in this course because different departments here use different referencing styles. We just teach students that it is an obligation for every writer to acknowledge the source of information used in his/her written work by referencing. (Interviews: Mati)*

This manifests a 'common sense' understanding of referencing which fails to induct students into appropriate discipline-specific academic citations and academic norms (Mphahlele & McKenna, 2019). As such, students are left to figure out on their own when and why to reference in their work. Mati demonstrates an understanding that was prevalent across the data – that referencing is a technical skill and that the main purpose is to avoid plagiarism. This ignores the specific ways in which knowledge is built through the use of references to substantiate claims.

The focus on plagiarism is problematic for a number of reasons. Angelil-Carter (2000, p. 157) posits that what is often seen as plagiarism is "part of the process of development for beginning writers trying to find their feet (or own voice) in the academic world". Many novice writers, according to Angelil-Carter (2000), do not intentionally set out to deceive, but because they are not properly taught how academic writing is used to build knowledge claims, they try to imitate how others have done it to get the assignment done. Angelil-Carter (2000) further argues that while imitation is a crucial part of the learning process, an unbending perception of plagiarism as always intentional 'criminalises' imitation. Plagiarism has also been attributed to students' second language (L2) ability. Pecorari and Petric (2014) for example, claim that second language learner status has frequently been identified as a causal or contributing factor in plagiarism, and the most frequently offered explanations for this are difficulties associated with L2 academic writing. According to these authors "limited linguistic repertoires and reading skills lead some writers to produce what they consider to be paraphrases or summaries, by virtue of small, local changes to the source" (Pecorari & Petric 2014, p. 276). Other readers (such as teachers) may regard the limited changes as inadequate and therefore deem the texts to be plagiarism. This situation has led researchers to call for extensive pedagogical support for L2 writers rather than punishment.

Although it was not the aim of this study to investigate or analyse students' activities, with consent from students and promises of anonymity, I looked at a sample of some of the students' assignment scripts (see Figure 6.1)



iPhone X steal the market leaving iPhone 8 and 8 plus for those that still favor it.

As is the custom for the Apple family, the tech giant hosted an event that saw the announcement of three new phones, particularly the iPhone X, 8 and 8 Plus, as well as the improvements.

The iPhone 8 wasn't as impressive. Their design looks exactly like the iPhone 7, except that it now features glass on both sides of the phone. That means an even higher chance of breakage and fixing this could plunge you into debt. However, a cool new feature is the wireless charging option which is quite convenient when you don't have a port nearby.

The phone is also dust and water resistant and comes in bigger displays. The picture quality of both phones upped its game with the 12-megapixel camera and all-new portrait mode which makes for better photos. And as usual, a faster graphics chip is included.

For those that love working out? The Workout app allows for smart coaching while the heart rate app easily monitors you. This way one will not have a chance at risking themselves on having a heart attack due to the heart rate monitor.

It's truly the iPhone X (pronounced as iPhone 10) that was the most impressive, though. In Apple's words, it's a "new generation of iPhone". The X is all screen, meaning the home button has completely been removed. One of the key features of the phone is the Face ID function where your face becomes your password.

Roll your head around once and your phone will instantly recognise you, whether in the dark or in the light. Also, the portrait mode allows you to take even better selfies than before. Not to mention the Animoji (animated emojis), a cool feature that mirrors your movements to animate cute emojis, much like Snapchat does with filters. However, as predicted, this phone is the priciest.

Therefore for most that follows the trending of technology, in the release of the iPhone X most of apple lover moved from iPhone 8 and 8 plus to the latest which is iPhone X. Even though the iPhone X is the most priciest people bought it for it's impressive features and the quality in it.

11/20 = 55%

Figure 6.1: Sample of student's marked 'Press release' assignment script

Figure 6.1 shows that students failed to provide any references in what they had written, either in the text or by including a list of references and they thus obtained a zero out of the four marks allocated for referencing. Given that this assignment required students to write a press release which would not in reality include references, the authenticity of the task needs to be questioned.

The teaching of referencing in both the LEA and EAP courses focused on teaching students the importance of referencing in academic writing to avoid plagiarism, and the main focus of the referencing activities which were given to them were on conventions of in-text referencing and APA reference list entries with particular attention to correct punctuation. There was thus no engagement with the multiple purposes of referencing in the academic context and its relationship to knowledge making.

The extract below was taken from the APA referencing activity given to LEA students:

Table 6.8: The APA referencing activitiy given to LEA students

APA referencing activity ***1.Say whether the following statements are True or False*** *a. When citing one or two authors in-text, never use et al; instead, always provide the author(s)' names.* *b. When providing two or more authors' names in a parenthetical citation, use "and" to join the names, not the ampersand symbol. For example, (Lastname, Lastname, and Lastname, year, p. X).* *c. Et al. should be used after the first author's last name every time a source with three to five authors is introduced in the text. For example: "Lastname et al. (year) argued that..."* *c. When mentioning a source with six or more authors in a sentence, in either a parenthetical citation or in the sentence text, only the first author's name and et al. should be provided: "Lastname et al. (year) argued that...".* ***2. Write the correct APA reference list entry for the following article (use appropriate punctuation)*** *Article Title: Truly, Madly, Depp-ly* *Author: Frank DeCaro* *Publication: Advocate* *Volume number: 906* *Publication Date: January 20, 2004* *Pages: 76-77* *Date of access: October 31, 2008* *hyperlink: <http://bgsu.edu/login.direct=true (6)*

As the activity shows, the focus is on teaching students to adhere to APA citation technicalities which they should also apply in their writing, particularly in their academic essay assignments. Of course, there are various other practices to learn when acknowledging others' work, other than simply adhering to citation rules of a specific referencing system. As Bailey (2013) argues, novice academic writers are often challenged to find and use authoritative sources. They also often do not know how to be explicit as to which ideas are their own and which originate in the

texts they read. Until students are in a position to understand the ways in which prior texts are used in their disciplines, for example, from mapping their field, to positioning their contribution, to substantiating their writing and so on, they will be unlikely to successfully implement the technical requirements of a referencing style (Mphahlele & McKenna, 2019, p. 36).

Students' poor language proficiency and extensive plagiarism were cited as constraints to effective assessment of the academic essays. According to Jane:

> *…majority of these students' language need to be polished. Most the time when they get a writing task their written scripts are all over the place with no cohesion. Sometimes they also just copy from different sources without really knowing what they are supposed to do. It does not matter how much you warn them about the danger of plagiarism. We have also given them the manuals of APA which they supposed to use for their assignments. (Interviews: Jane)*

Jane presents a common but technicist understanding of plagiarism. The emphasis on surface level correctness and the understanding of referencing as a technical skill assumes that language is simply a conduit for meaning, rather than that language practices are central to the meaning-making process (Mphahlele, 2019). Jane's claims that "*students just copy from different sources without knowing what they are supposed to do"* suggest that perhaps students are being asked to write on topics beyond their understanding. For students to develop as good writers in the academy they need scaffolding as to how topics could be tackled and how to read the literature and draw from it in constructing their own texts. Understanding how texts are used in their target disciplines is central to academic success but Butler (2006, p. 70) argues, "it is doubtful whether students who have difficulty in finding relevant information and who struggle to judge the contextual usefulness of information, will attempt to keep up to date with developments in their disciplines when they enter the world of work after completion of their studies". The gradual ability to make sense of texts and to use texts to substantiate one's own claims, can thus only be of use to students after graduation if they have been supported in becoming adept in these practices while at university.

As discussed in the introduction chapter, the majority of students who arrive at Namibia's three main HEIs have most probably been exposed to school learning situations in which they either wrote from personal experience, or they wrote assignments from a single source, usually their subject textbook. This means that these students had very little previous experience in having

to draw from multiple sources. If not inducted in such literacy practices, they would inevitably copy from different sources without following the academic conventions of drawing on sources and referencing to provide substantiation for their claims.

At NUST, the academic literacy lecturers use Turnitin as policing software to detect plagiarism in students written work. Students were instructed to submit their assignment both in printed hard copy to the lecturer and online through Turnitin. When asked why students had to submit two copies of the same assignment, Jane explained that:

> *Since we are a university of Science and Technology, we want to embrace technology, we are in the process of moving from printed submissions to online submission. Some of the lecturers still mark the printed submission and grade the essays according to the report from Turnitin until we get to the stage where everyone is fully confident to mark electronically. (Interviews: Jane)*

NUST subscribed to Turnitin in 2010 and academic staff members have since been receiving training on the software. Turnitin is a text-matching software used to identify similarities between original and copied work. It should be noted, however, that Turnitin and other similar software packages cannot detect plagiarism as such, but rather, they identify and highlight chunks of text that match that of other sources (Mphahlele, 2019). According to Mphahlele and McKenna (2019) these software programmes frequently flag sentences and phrases that are not plagiarised but are commonly used expressions, which presents a particular problem in fields such as Law and Physics that are replete with expected shared phrasing. Where institutions place significant emphasis on the Overall Similarity Index without due interrogation of that score, students can actually be penalised for their success in acquiring the discursive phrasing of the discipline (Mphahlele & McKenna, 2019). The continuous misuse of Turnitin and similar software packages suggest that the emphasis in learning referencing norms is on avoiding plagiarism, rather than helping students to acquire the academic practices of drawing from and building on the ideas of others.

6.5 Conclusion

Academic literacy practices, as understood in the literature presented in this thesis, comprises various ‘families’ of practices within the university which differ markedly from field to field. These differences include as large an issue as what counts as truth, to as precise a practice as where and how references are inserted in a text. These practices emerge from the norms and

values of each field or discipline and students will battle to attain epistemological access to these social practices if they are not made explicit. Chapter Five presented the conceptualisations of academic literacy as evidenced in the data. In contradiction to an understanding of academic literacy practices as contextualised, this study found that the participants understood academic literacy from an autonomous position as a set of generic skills which could be taught outside of mainstream classes. In this chapter, I have looked at how the conceptualisation of academic literacy discussed in Chapter Five, led to the specific kinds of activities and tasks expected of students. I homed in on the teaching of reading, academic essays and reports, and referencing. In the next chapter, Chapter Seven, I offer the last of the findings chapters.

CHAPTER SEVEN

COURSE ASSESSMENT, ACADEMICS' IDENTITY AND DISCOURSES OF STUDENT DEFICIT

7.1 Introduction

Chapter Six presented the data that drills down into the content of the courses under study at the three HEIs. What was demonstrated throughout Chapter Six was that the interpretation of academic literacy at the three HEIs as a generic skill presented in Chapter Five was borne out in the curriculation of the courses. This chapter continues that focus by looking at the assessment methods used in the courses. It then goes on to look at the identity of the participants themselves. Finally, it looks at data related to the participants' concerns about underpreparedness of first year students on exiting the secondary schooling system and transitioning into university, which was viewed from a position of deficiency.

7.2 Assessment

Assessment is often known as "the tail that wags the curriculum dog" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007, p.12.), because students will often focus only on doing what 'counts' for marks. Academics can also be seen to "teach to the test". For this reason, it is important in this study to reflect on the course assessment. "Assessment defines for students what is important, what counts, how they will spend their time and how they will see themselves as learners. If you want to change student learning, then change the methods of assessment" (Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury, 1997, p. 6). In their highly cited 2010 chapter, Luckett and Sutherland argue that assessment can either be focused on driving and guiding learning or it can be focused on measuring learning. They argue that it is important to have assessment for both.

7.2.1 No formative assessment

The course outline indicates that students doing LEA are assessed using what are referred to as formative and summative assessment methods. For "formative assessment", students are assessed using three assessment tools namely, a mandatory semester test, an academic essay and an oral presentation. These activities, also called continuous assessments marks (or CA) in

the documentation, contribute 60% to the course's final mark. The examination written at the end of the semester is known as "summative assessment" and contributes 40% to the final mark. When asked about how they assess students in LEA, Andrew maintained that:

> *There are different methods that we assess students: they write an academic essay of 1200 to 1500 words, compulsory for every student. This is meant to test students' academic writing skills, such as paragraphing, referencing and arguing. We also have a semester test which focuses on their reading skills, it comes with an academic text with they have to read and comprehension answer questions based on the text. It is also the same test which they are asked to summarise. The last formal assessment is the oral academic presentation whereby they present the content of their academic essay. (Andrew: Interviews)*

According to Rose (2005), formative assessment includes formal and informal activities used to provide ongoing feedback that can be employed by teachers to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. Summative assessment, on the other hand, includes activities used to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark or set of outcomes (Rose, 2005). So, formative assessment is a space for students to practice particular activities and to have an opportunity to engage with feedback (Kaur, Noman, & Nordin, 2017*)*. The theories introduced in Chapter Three all indicate the importance of formative assessment for students to understand and take on the required practices (e.g. Bernstein, 1996; Halliday, 1994; Hart, 2009). Eining (2013) maintains that the use of frequent formative assessment along with immediate feedback keeps students focused on course material and ensures deep engagement. However, the data revealed that what was termed "formative assessment" is in fact, simply summative assessment undertaken during the course as there were no opportunities for practice and using the feedback for resubmission. Across all three courses there was in fact no formative assessment in the sense of the term used in the literature on assessment.

Like at UNAM, students' assessment in the EAP course comprised Continuous Assessment (CA) marks and a final examination. While these were referred to in the data as formative and summative assessment, there were no opportunities for students to engage with feedback and re-submit any assessment tasks. Students were given three tasks for CA marks: a mandatory test which covered the content taught and some reading comprehension, four quizzes which students did online and which were automatically marked by the computer and a report writing assignment. The CA contributed 60% of the final marks and the final examination contributed

40%. Assignment tasks set in the course were based on the principle of aligning assessment tasks and learning outcomes in the course. Given that the learning outcomes in EAP are built from a skills approach to academic literacy, it is inevitable that assessment was also based on these skills.

In terms of assessment, PC students are assessed through four assessment tools namely, a test, an assignment, and oral presentations which collectively make up students' CA marks and the end of the final examination. PC is assessed on a 50/50 basis, such that the CA marks and examination each contribute 50% to the final marks. Here too then students complete assignments in order for a judgement to be made as to their competence against the listed course outcomes and assessment was not used as a learning activity as such.

Induction into the target knowledge practices requires the provision of multiple opportunities to practice the relevant manifestations (Carless, 2015). Students not only need multiple scaffolded opportunities to take on the discipline-specific academic practices but they need to be given the kind of formative feedback that would make them adept with their disciplinary practices (Einig, 2013). This was a challenge in the context of large classes and heavy teaching loads. The participants all indicated that the assessment processes, such as the use of group work and the use of rubrics, were all intended to streamline the assessment process.

Even though all the courses included a variety of assessment tasks – tests, academic essays, report writing, examinations and presentations – the assessments were focused on measuring generic skills rather than providing opportunities to model the target genres and give feedback in ways that might promote epistemological access. Bangeni and Greenbaum (2019) stress the importance of conveying to students the conventions of the discipline as manifested in specific genres, and this requires regular and effective feedback.

Asked what inhibited effective assessment of and feedback for their students, Joe indicated that:

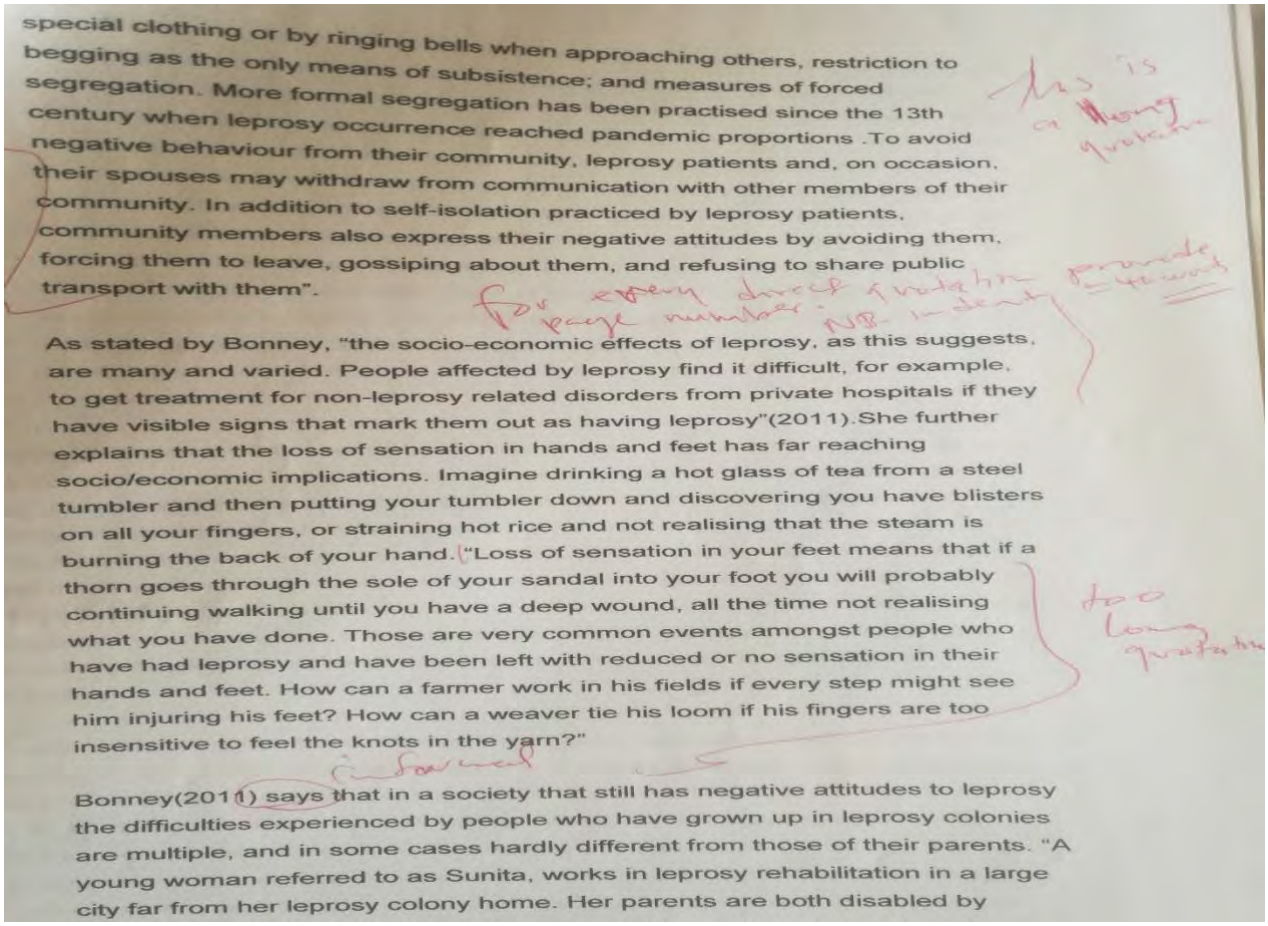
> *Number one challenge is the number of students. It is difficult to give multiple feedback to students because they are many, and we have limited time to complete the course. (Interviews: Joe)*

Similarly, Jane maintained that:

> *The number of students makes it difficult to really look at every student's work, especially for informal work in class. Like I said earlier majority of these students' language need to be polished. Most the time when they get a writing task their written scripts are all over the place with no cohesion. Time won't allow you to attend to every student, otherwise you will lag behind. (Interviews: Jane)*

In an attempt to manage class sizes, the common practice at the three HEIs was group work. Apart from tests and examinations, all the assessment activities were done in groups and only one final draft was assessed.

Figure 7.1 demonstrates the type of feedback provided by the LEA academic literacy lecturer on students' academic essay.


special clothing or by ringing bells when approaching others, restriction to begging as the only means of subsistence; and measures of forced segregation. More formal segregation has been practised since the 13th century when leprosy occurrence reached pandemic proportions .To avoid negative behaviour from their community, leprosy patients and, on occasion, their spouses may withdraw from communication with other members of their community. In addition to self-isolation practiced by leprosy patients, community members also express their negative attitudes by avoiding them, forcing them to leave, gossiping about them, and refusing to share public transport with them".

As stated by Bonney, "the socio-economic effects of leprosy, as this suggests, are many and varied. People affected by leprosy find it difficult, for example, to get treatment for non-leprosy related disorders from private hospitals if they have visible signs that mark them out as having leprosy"(2011).She further explains that the loss of sensation in hands and feet has far reaching socio/economic implications. Imagine drinking a hot glass of tea from a steel tumbler and then putting your tumbler down and discovering you have blisters on all your fingers, or straining hot rice and not realising that the steam is burning the back of your hand. "Loss of sensation in your feet means that if a thorn goes through the sole of your sandal into your foot you will probably continuing walking until you have a deep wound, all the time not realising what you have done. Those are very common events amongst people who have had leprosy and have been left with reduced or no sensation in their hands and feet. How can a farmer work in his fields if every step might see him injuring his feet? How can a weaver tie his loom if his fingers are too insensitive to feel the knots in the yarn?"

Bonney(2011) says that in a society that still has negative attitudes to leprosy the difficulties experienced by people who have grown up in leprosy colonies are multiple, and in some cases hardly different from those of their parents. "A young woman referred to as Sunita, works in leprosy rehabilitation in a large city far from her leprosy colony home. Her parents are both disabled by

Figure 7.1: Feedback on a group academic essay assignment

The analysis of the sample assignments shows that much of the feedback on students' work was correction of or highlighting linguistic errors in students' texts. This was done by restructuring students' sentences, crossing out, inserting, circling or underlining words or phrases, in most cases without any explanation regarding the amendment. One problem with only pointing out surface errors and grammatical issues is that students can be under the impression that if these types of mistakes are corrected then their essays are perfect, when in fact, very important aspects have not been attended to.

Moreover, almost all other comments in the students' work were signalling missing references or citation errors. The participants made use of what Lea and Street (1998) call categorical modalities in their feedback, which included imperatives such as "source missing!", "never use first person!", "page number?", "too long" as well as orthographic signs such as (? ! ^ x) (see Figure 7.3). These comments were meant to acknowledge errors in students' work but provided little justification or clarification (Lea & Street, 1998). Superficial feedback can make it less likely that students have an opportunity to learn because it is ambiguous (Boud & Falchikov, 2007). Besides which, because all assessments were summative, students were unable to use the feedback to improve on that particular task.

7.2.2 Use of rubrics

Data revealed that rubrics were consistently used in assessing the academic skills taught in the three academic development courses at the three HEIs. Pierce (1998) advises that students should be given clear instructions for any assessment activity to influence learning and rubrics can serve to make transparent what is being expected in the assessment. A rubric can be defined as a set of scoring guidelines that are disclosed to students (Dawson, 2017). Lombardi (2008) labels a good rubric to be one that identifies how and which work is to be judged, and the difference between excellent and weaker works. Time should be devoted to familiarising students with the main objectives of each task, and also how the objectives are linked to the main course objectives. In some cases, the rubric can even be developed in collaboration with the students. Derakhashan, Razaei, and Alemi (2011) argue that it is essential for both learners and teachers to be involved in and have control over the assessment methods, procedures and outcomes, as well as their underlying rationale if assessments are going to be *for* learning and not just *of* learning.

I now look at the assessment in the LEA course with a particular focus on the use of rubrics.

Table 7.1 shows the rubric used for marking students' academic essays.

Table 7.1: Rubric used to mark academic essays in LEA

Criteria	Max Marks	Description
Title	4	Instruction/comment (1), topic (1), focus (1) and Viewpoint (1)
INTRODUCTION	2	General statement (1) and Thesis Statement (1)
BODY		
ACADEMIC REGISTER	5	Paragraphs: Topic, supporting, concluding sentences (2) Formality (1) Tentativeness (1) and Objectivity (1)
CONTENT	5	Logical arguments (1) Own Insight (1) and Reasoned Conclusions (1) Relevance (1) Task Fulfilment (1)
COHERENCE	2	Linking words (2) (used effectively throughout)
LANGUAGE and VOCABULARY	5	Grammar,(1) Punctuation (1), Spelling(1) Sentence Structure (1) Planning Style/Neatness (1)
CONCLUSION	1	Conclusion (1) restate the thesis/ sum up main ideas/ strong finishing statement (recommendations/implications)
REFERENCING	6	NO referencing or citation: NO MARKS! 4 marks: correct in-text citations 2 marks: correct APA Reference List
TOTAL	30	

The rubric included above showed that the content that was being assessed corresponded specifically to the learning outcomes of Units 6 and 7 which focus on academic writing. While rubrics can give clear signals as to what is expected and ensure consistency in assessment, they do not enhance the likelihood that students produce coherent writing (Garraway & Bozalek, 2019).

In addition to the essay in the LEA course, students were also tasked with summarising an academic text. Explaining the rationale behind making summarising part of the formal assessment, Andrew maintained that:

> *Students need to show that they have understood what they have read. One cannot summarise what he or she does not understand. Students are taught how to summarise. The study guide also has a clear rubric that explicitly indicates how to go about writing a summary. They are expected to summarise in that manner. Showing that they have understood the text and can rewrite it in their own words while maintaining the original meaning. (Interviews: Andrew)*

Similarly, Ann explained that, *"If students follow these steps [referring to the rubric], they will be able to read selectively to identify the main ideas from the text then sift through them to rearrange them, put them together to briefly express the author's argument in their own words".*

The rubric used to mark all summary activities in LEA is presented in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2: Rubric for marking summarising activities in LEA (adapted from LEA, 2012, p. 79)

Rubric for marking students' summary
1. ***Introduction (4)***
Name the source, e.g., article, book, etc
Title of article, book, etc
Name of author
The Year of Publication
The purpose
2. ***References (1)***

At least two sources from the original text should cited.

3. ***Structure (2)***

One continuous paragraph but different sections should be clearly identifiable, i.e., the introduction, body and conclusion.

*4****. Coherence (1)***

It refers to the unity created between the ideas, sentences, paragraphs and sections of the summary.

5. Language/Vocabulary (2)

Appropriate academic conventions and vocabulary, and number of words

6. ***Content (10)***

TOTAL [20]

The criteria in the rubric which requires students to cite "at least two sources from the original source" illustrates how skills-based teaching often emphasises technical requirements that are not always a good reflection of what happens in 'real life'. It was not made explicit to students what the summary is for or who the reader of the summary is. Like any academic text, the answer to those questions determines what should be included and how it should be structured. Genre Theory and SFL both emphasise this and raise concerns about such technicist rules (Mgqwashu, 2008).

The LEA course guide specified that assessment of the oral presentations would be against the following outcomes:

Table 7.3: Assessment outcomes

By the end of this unit students should be able to:
• Ask questions in class during any lecture; • Demonstrate the ability to participate fully in seminars and group discussions both in and outside the classroom; • Plan your presentation, construct an outline, select and arrange information, prepare visual aids and rehearse; • Demonstrate the ability to verbalise data, speak from graphs and maps and give instructions; • Use and Integrate the four skills in language learning and acquisition i.e. Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking; • Demonstrate the ability to correctly cite sources.

Although the learning outcomes comprise different contexts for speaking, the assessment was on the oral presentation of the students' academic essays. This was also reflected in the introduction of the unit:

> As part of the English for Academic Purposes course (ULEA 3519), you will be required to give an Oral Presentation. It will entail the planning and preparation of a presentation based on a written project. By the time you make your presentation, most of the research would already have been completed. Just as research is an important part of a successful presentation, so is the effective use of visual aids. Both aspects will be dealt with in this unit (LEA study guide, 2012, p. 159).

As the extract above shows, students in LEA are required to speak about their academic essays which they completed under writing units 6 and 7. Ann explained that because the LEA class groups are big and they only had two weeks for presentations, students had to do oral presentations in groups of three to four to accommodate all of them in the given short period of time. According to Ann, since all students had to go through the process of writing an academic essay individually for the oral presentation, students would choose one of their four essays and present it in class as a group. Andrew explained that although students presented on one topic in a group they got individual marks depending on how they satisfied the criteria in the rubric for speaking (see Table 7.4 below).

Table 7.4: Speaking grading grid in LEA

The content of the presentation Relevance of the topic to the audience Maintaining interest in the audience The depth of knowledge and understanding of the topic The organisation and presentation	___/5
The actual presentation Fluency of expression Speaking style, use of correct tenses, pronunciation, vocabulary, word order and omission of words Eye contact, other use of body language and posture The use of notes and memory aids Voice projection Referencing	___/10
Use of visual aids Clarity and neatness of visual aids Relevance to the topic Effectiveness for using visual aids	___/3
Time management	___/2
TOTAL MARK	____/20

Making students speak about their academic essay suggests an attempt to give students opportunities to integrate activities of speaking with the process of writing. Speaking activities can help academic lecturers to ascertain whether students are functionally capable of engaging with academic texts (in both receptive and productive modes) (Einig, 2013). However, as Table 7.4 shows, the assessment of speaking was decontextualised. Students were awarded marks

according to the knowledge of the generic essay topic that they or one of their peers had selected, fluency of expression in English, and conforming to the taught conventions of academic register. Andrew claimed that the process of getting students to write on a topic and then do presentations is:

> *parallel with what is happening in the academy where people write papers and present them at conferences ... so, I feel this is kind of a good preparation for students when they become fully fledged scholars. (Interviews: Andrew)*

The content and structure of the end-of-term LEA examination seemed to be a longer version (three hours) of the semester test. The reading texts in the examination papers were longer (between six to eight pages). Students had to read the text and subsequently answer comprehension type questions on the content of the text. According to the participants, the length of the reading texts was calculated to ensure it was in sync with the duration of the examination. Other sections in the examination assessed students on their understating of a range of academic vocabulary used in the reading text, identifying the kinds of text type (genre), as well as the audience the article is aimed at referencing, and summary writing.

Having looked at the assessment processes in LEA, with a particular focus on the use of rubrics, I now turn the same gaze to the EAP course. The structure of the analysed samples of test question papers in the EAP course appeared to all follow a similar pattern; beginning with two to three pages of a reading passage, followed by comprehension questions, then short questions based on the content taught in EAP, for example, grammar, identifying cohesive devices, or differentiating between academic and non-academic texts. The academic reading passages used in the analysed test papers were relatively shorter (between two to three pages) compared to those used for examinations which covered between six to seven pages. This could be attributed to the duration allocated for the two assessment tools, one hour thirty minutes for the test, and three hours for the examination. According to the participants, they look for generic and reader friendly "academic-type articles" and adapt them for assessment purposes in EAP. A mandatory written test in the first semester of the academic year 2017 used an article entitled "History of drought in Namibia" adapted from a local academic journal. Below is an extract of some of the questions asked:

Paragraph extract:

Frequent droughts over the past years in Namibia have led to economic decline, widespread food shortages, environmental degradation and considerable hardship among the poor. Droughts, ***however****, are a regular feature of Namibia and it is unusual for drought not to affect some part of Namibia in any given year. The climate of Namibia can generally be described as arid and* ***this*** *may lead to confusion with areas of low average rainfall being identified as drought areas.* ***Therefore****, an aspect of drought that needs to be clarified is to distinguish between aridity and drought as both are characterized by a lack of water.* ***Aridity*** *is more or less a permanent condition,* ***whereas drought*** *is a temporary condition, in the sense that it is only experienced when rainfall deviates below normal… Gibbs and Maher (1967) developed a drought watch system based on a simple index of rainfall deficiency as a primary indicator of water shortage……* ***They*** *found that by using deciles, the results compared well as a drought indicator with other more complex methods that may be used.*

Questions:

1. *What is the function of the cohesive devices in Column A. Complete the table below by inserting the following words in Column B correctly:* ***Contrast, Result****. (5)*

Column A	*Column B*
However	
Therefore	
Whereas	

2. *To what do the following pronouns refer? (2)*

They – paragraph (in bold)

_____

This – paragraph (in bold)

_____

3. *Use each of the following words from Paragraph B in a sentence to demonstrate your understanding of what they mean. (3)*

   (a) Aridity - paragraph (in bold)

_____

   (b) Drought - paragraph (in bold)

Figure 6.2: An extract of from the 2017 EAP test

As the extract shows, questions in the EAP assessments sought to assess students' grammatical competence, knowledge of vocabulary used in the text, appropriate use of language, and register.

Writing in EAP is tested in part through the report writing assignment which is done by students individually. Students are given a topic on which all of them should base their reports. The report is marked out of 50 marks (See Table 7.6). During the second semester of 2018, the instructions for the report writing assignment, for example, read as follows:

Table 7.5: Instructions for report writing assignment

Identify an environmental threat/problem in Namibia and write a recommendation report in which you discuss at least three possible solutions to the problem and suggest ways to implement the best solution.

Examples of environmental problems include:

1. depletion and degradation of water and aquatic resources,

2. desertification and land degradation,

3. loss of biodiversity and biotic resources and

4. decline of marine fisheries

Further Instructions

1. This is an individual assignment. It covers Unit 7 in your Study Guide. Please read Unit 7 thoroughly before completing the assignment.

2. Design a cover page for the assignment. Your full name and student number, the class group and lecturer's name should appear on the cover page.

3. Give the assignment an appropriate title. The title should appear above the introduction.

4. The report must be typed. Use Times New Roman 12-point font size and 1, 5 line spacing.

5. The assignment length should be between 2 and 2½ pages, excluding the cover page and references.

6. Acknowledge your sources appropriately using APA referencing style. Include at least four references.

7. Attach a similarity report printed from Turnitin

The assignment is due in week 13 (01- 05 October 2018) during the first EAP class of the week. Submit a hard copy directly to your lecturer during class.

Unlike at UNAM where students were instructed to look for their own essay titles, students at NUST were given some scaffolding in terms of the theme: “environmental problems”. Students were given 13 weeks to write their report assignment based on the guidelines outlined in the assignment as summarised in Table 7.5. The duration given for the assignment was meant to provide students with sufficient time to go through the process of writing and getting feedback from the Writing Unit before they submitted their work, though here too this was not structured into the curriculum but rather left for students to negotiate.

Table 7.6: Rubric for marking report writing assignment in EAP

COMPONENT	**MARKS ALLOCATED**
Title	2
INTRODUCTION Background information [2] Purpose statement [2] Report overview [1]	5
BODY SECTIONS The body of the report must consist of two main sections. In the first section, provide a detailed description of the problem/issue, including what led to its existence [6]. In the second section, discuss three possible solutions (3*3=9). Each solution must be derived from and/or supported by at least two academically appropriate sources of information. You must use a minimum of four sources. Information in the body section of the report should be organised under headings and/or subheadings. Each paragraph under headings and/or subheadings should consist of a topic sentence, supporting details and a closing/transition sentence.	15

CONCLUSION Restatement of purpose Summary of the discussion Judgement of issues/strategies discussed [3] RECOMMENDATIONS [5 marks] Outline steps to be taken to implement the best solution to the environmental problem/issue. Provide at least 3 recommendations. Signature & date [2 marks]	10
ADDITIONAL MARKS SHOULD BE AWARDED FOR THE FOLLOWING: (a) Acknowledgement of sources (4 correct in-text citations & references) [8 Marks] (b) Language use [5 Marks] (c) Presentation [5 Marks]	18
Total marks	50

This rubric provided students with the general progression of a report from introduction to conclusion. The rubric also notes the need for attention to language and conventions such as referencing. But Lea and Street (1998) maintain that even if students are supplied with general guidelines on writing techniques, it is likely that they will apply these at the level of writing a particular text in a specific disciplinary context. The marks are all allocated by compliance with the structure of the text and do not serve to make the genre explicit for students.

The EAP final examination is a longer version of the semester test, such that the reading passage is extended to five pages and the comprehension and content questions total to 100 marks. While the writing component might be minimal in the examination, the reading and question analysis required specific skills such as scanning and skimming for specific information and the main idea of the passage, understanding meanings of cohesive devises as

used in context, analysing sentence construction, and identifying features of academic texts used in the passage.

As with the LEA and EAP courses, the PC assessments were also accompanied with marking rubrics. Table 7.7 below is an example of an assignment in the PC course requiring students to write a press release based on different scenarios.

Table 7.7: PC assignment given to students in semester 2 of 2018

***ASSIGNMENT**: Professional Communication*

RULES:

The assignment should be done in groups.

Each group should consist of 6 people.

Each group should choose a topic of their choice.

The assignment should be typed and it should be 1 ½ page to 2 pages long.

Font size 12, Arial.

The due date: 14 August 2018. No late submissions will be accepted.

PRESS RELEASE TOPICS

- *Your company has recently appointed a new board of directors. As a public relations officer, write a Press Release informing the public about the new board member of your company.*
- *IPhone X and IPhone 8 were just recently released, as a Communication officer at Apple Store; write a press release on the launch of these new products.*
- *Your company A & Z is planning on opening a new branch in Ongwediva. Write a press release to the media about this event.*
- *Your company is celebrating 50 years in business. Write a press release to the media about this event.*
- *Your company is offering an internship program with local schools. Write a press release informing the public.*
- *Your company is partnering with another business or organization. Write a press release.*
- *Your company is handing out new certifications and credentials achieved by your staff. Write a press release.*
- *Your company is discontinuing a product or service. Write a press release.*

- *Your company is providing free consultation or a free sample on something. Write a press release.*
- *Your company is celebrating an important milestone. Write a press release about this event.*

MARKING GRID

MARKS WILL BE ALLOCATED FOR THE FOLLOWING:

LANGUAGE 6, CONTENT 5, STRUCTURE 5, REFERENCE 4

Mati indicated that for the language aspect, he looked at whether students had written in a coherent manner and whether or not they had produced grammatically correct sentences. While the structure and the content might have been addressed in the class, language and referencing were not part of the course. Interestingly, even if the two academic literacy lecturers claimed that reading was not the focus of the course, the samples of question papers analysed in this study showed that the PC tests and examination consisted of articles where students had to answer comprehension questions and define business terms used in context. The 2018 examination paper, for example, had a question that required students to "identify and correct language mistakes" in a given paragraph as shown in the extract below.

Table 7.8: Extract

(b) Read the passage below. Then identify and correct the seven language mistakes. You do not have to rewrite the passage, but you have to rewrite the sentence or phrase (just a section of the sentence) in your answer book and underline the correction you have made. Please number it accordingly from 1.1.- 1.7 . (14 Marks)

My sister-in- law Darlene is running for office in our county. She wants a seat on the County Board of supervisors. There will be two seats open, and I think she has a good chance of being elected. The board regulates salary of county employees, makes some zoning decisions and cooperates with other local governments. It is consider a part-time job, but the supervisors is always busy wanted the job, so I asked her. "Darlene, I said, "Why do you want this job? It a lot of work!" "I want to make a positive contribution to our county," she replied.

(taken from Professional Communication Question paper, November, 2018)

This extract reveals that although, theoretically, PC was designed to "enhance students' abilities to interact effectively in professional situations", practically the focus was on grammatical correctness despite participants' claims that the PC course is not focused on grammar.

Due to the large number of students in the PC classes, students were required to do both written assignments and oral presentations in groups:

> *Because they are usually many in the class, they are given assignments in groups of 4 to 6 student. The assignments are usually based on business scenarios and they have to produce different communication documents. Oral presentations are also done in groups usually based on their assignments or sometimes on a given topic or asked to dramatise an interview session. (Interview: May)*

In allocating marks to the students, the participants used a generic rubric (Table 7.9) that according to May, was developed by the academic literacy lecturers in the Language and Communication Department and thus adopted to be used by all the PC lecturers.

Table 7.9: Marking grid for oral presentation activities in PC

Presentation Marking Grid
Student name …… Student number ……
PRESENCE 5 4 3 2 1 0
-body language & eye contact
-contact with the public
-poise
-physical organization
LANGUAGE SKILLS 5 4 3 2 1 0
-correct usage
-appropriate vocabulary and grammar
-understandable (rhythm, intonation, accent)
-spoken loud enough to hear easily
ORGANISATION 5 4 3 2 1 0

-clear objectives

-logical structure

-signposting

MASTERY OF THE SUBJECT 5 4 3 2 1 0

-pertinence

-depth of commentary

-spoken, not read

-able to answer questions

VISUAL AIDS 5 4 3 2 1 0

-transparencies, slides

-handouts

-audio, video, etc.

OVERALL IMPRESSION 5 4 3 2 1 0

-very interesting / very boring

-pleasant / unpleasant to listen to

-very good / poor communication

TOTAL SCORE _____ / 30

According to May, speaking was used as one assessment method to evaluate if students have learned and understood methods of professional communication taught in the course. The use of the rubric was seen by participants to help maintain consistency in the assessment process. Students presented to other students, which was seen as exposing them to public speaking and to strengthen their confidence to speak in public. Moreover, making students worked in groups which was seen to provide them with the opportunity to not only learn from each other and develop interpersonal skills but also be encouraged to think and develop effective strategies to negotiate meaning.

Literature suggests that rubrics can be a key way to make the expectations of any assessment explicit to students (Dawson 2017), but that there are also concerns that listing items and allocating marks for each can result in a highly technicist skills approach to assessment

(Bennett, 2016). Bennett goes so far as to state that rubrics "limit the independent responses of students and the professional judgement of markers, encourage compliance jeopardising student commitment and creativity, and promote a false sense of objectivity in the marking and grading of student work" (2016, p. 50). Similary, Cockett and Jackon (2018) undertook a systematic review of the literature on the use of assessment rubrics and indicated that their benefits in making expectations explicit was dependent on students' participation in the creation and deliberation with the rubric. They also found that rubrics were at times experienced as being restrictive and as reducing creativity (Cockett & Jackson, 2018). Therefore, various processes can be used to validate or test their reliability. These may include: consulting existing rubrics; comparing to authentic criteria used to judge similar tasks; consulting pedagogical experts; and iterative development and feedback from stakeholders who were also content experts (Timmerman, Strickland, Johnson, & Payne, 2010). The data revealed that no formal quality processes were applied to refine the rubrics under study based on student feedback for the past two years. The academic literacy lecturers for LEA, for example, have been using the same rubrics to assess presentations and essays for at least the years included in this study (2016 – 2018).

7.2.3 Call for different approach to assessment and marking

The academic literacy lecturers at UNAM argued that the course needed to do away with end of semester examinations for they felt that it was not a true reflection that learning had taken place.

> *I do not think the examination results give a true reflection that learning has taken place. In fact, it gives pressure to both the lecturer and the students. To the lecturer in sense that they should rush to cover the content in order to test student and thus end up only focusing on aspects that will be part of the exams and leaving out other important skills. And on the students that they only focus on doing whatever it takes to pass the course not necessarily to learn. For me, an examination does not give me feedback that, yes, this student's academic reading has improved, because by asking students to name … or to give the function of semantic relation does not mean the student knows how to use them. (Interviews: Andrews)*

Andrew presents a perception that students may be seen as being able to meet requirements of the course but still not know whether the 'skills' being taught are transferred to other subjects.

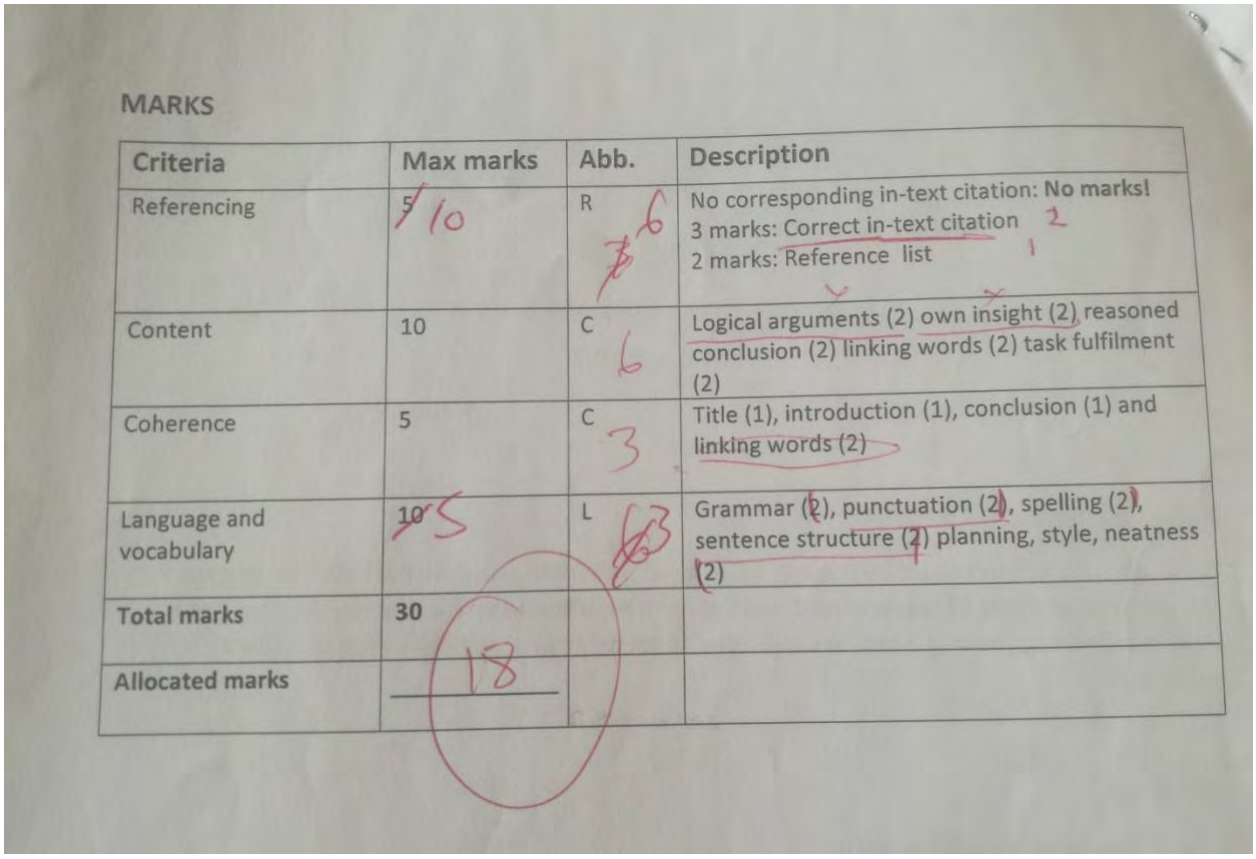
Ann shared similar sentiments regarding the abolishment of examinations in the academic literacy course.

> *For me, the course is fine and the way it is taught is okay. We just need to make it more practical. For example, we can even decide to abolish the examination and just focus on helping students to learn necessary academic skills. The examination and academic essay which are done within a period of time do not give a true reflection about the academic and linguistic competencies of these students. (Interviews: Ann)*

Calls for change assessing students in African HEIs has been documented, with some calling for assessment to be decolonised and designed in a manner that takes into consideration the various needs of student populations (Brock-Utne, 2016). As Montenegro and Jankowski (2017, p. 5) argue, assessments should be designed to promote fairness, diversity, equity, and social justice and not to "reinforce within students the false notion that they do not belong in higher education" and that their sociocultural experiences have no place in their academic journeys. But these did not seem to be the deliberations underpinning the participants' calls for change.

7.2.4 No opportunities to model and give feedback for epistemological access

As shown in Figure 7.3 below, the academic literacy lecturers made notations and rubrics and provided a grade with no real guidance as to how this could be improved. The underpinning assumption seems to be, that what Lea and Street (1998) call technical skills can be transferred to other literacy contexts.



MARKS

Criteria	Max marks	Abb.	Description
Referencing	5/10	R 6	No corresponding in-text citation: No marks! 3 marks: Correct in-text citation 2 2 marks: Reference list 1
Content	10	C 6	Logical arguments (2) own insight (2) reasoned conclusion (2) linking words (2) task fulfilment (2)
Coherence	5	C 3	Title (1), introduction (1), conclusion (1) and linking words (2)
Language and vocabulary	10 5	L 3	Grammar (2), punctuation (2), spelling (2), sentence structure (2) planning, style, neatness (2)
Total marks	30		
Allocated marks	18		

Figure 7.3: Feedback provided on the academic essay assignment

Clarence (2010) argues that both academic staff and students need "to become explicitly aware of their discipline's 'epistemological core,' of the kind of knowledge valued by the discipline, of what kinds of knowledge are excluded from it and of which linguistic constructions are best used to represent those values" (p. 19). This means, for example, knowing answers to questions such as, does the discipline value knowledge that is built around precise measurement, accurate observation, and beliefs about the possibility of objective observation or does it build its knowledge system on the basis of multiple truths, sliding meaning, and a belief that objective observations are impossible? And how are these beliefs expressed in language? Such varied ontological positions have enormous consequences for the writing practices of the field and it is through feedback on their writing that students are often given access to such positions (Clarence, 2019).

Having discussed in Chapter Five, Six and to this point in Chapter Seven, the various ways in which academic literacy was conceptualised and curriculated across the three institutions, I now move to two additional findings that emerged from the data which are pertinent to the

research questions. They both relate to issues of identity. I begin by noting aspects of the participants' own identities and I then look at the ways in which they constructed the identities of the students they teach.

7.3 Academics' Identities

The departmental homes of those teaching the courses under study are the Language Centre at UNAM, the Department of Education and Languages at NUST and the Department of Languages and Communication at IUM. Henkel (2005) argues that academics' identities emerge primarily from their disciplinary backgrounds and only secondly from their institutional and departmental affiliations. Given that SFL makes clear that our language choices are contextualised and that they relate to issues of norms, values, and identities, it is significant to consider the disciplinary homes of the academics teaching the courses under study. None of them have backgrounds in teaching and learning in higher education or in literacy studies. Table 7.10 summarises the highest qualifications of the academic literacy lecturers in this study.

Table 7.10: Academic literacy lecturers' academic qualification

Pseudonym	Subject taught	University	Highest academic qualification
1. Ann	English for Academic Purposes (LEA)	UNAM	PhD: Literature
2. Andrew	English for Academic Purposes (LEA)	UNAM	MEd: English Language Education
3. Joe	English for Academic Purposes (EAP)	NUST	Masters: English Education
4. Jane	English for Academic Purposes (EAP	NUST	MEd: English Education
5. May	Professional Communication (PC)	IUM	MEd: English Teaching
6. Matti	Professional Communication (PC	IUM	MEd: English Education

Table 7.10 above shows that the academic literacy lecturers at the three HEIs are English language specialists. The emphasis on specialising in English at a master's level as a minimum requirement to teach these courses presents an understanding which conflates academic literacy with mastery of the English language. None of the academics had disciplinary expertise related to the students' target disciplines. This then means that although the academic literacy lecturer's mandate is to teach students the communicative language applicable in their fields (HR, Business, Accounting and so on), they are generally much less informed about the content of what they are expected to teach than even the students themselves, who spend time being taught the contents of their subjects in their respective disciplines. This plays into why students may see such courses as not worth their time and feel demotivated to engage with them to any significant extent (Mgqwashu, 2008).

It has been continuously argued in this study that discipline-specific literacies are best taught within the context of particular academic disciplines by "insiders" who have mastered the Discourses of those particular academic communities and who understand how knowledge is made in their disciplines (Jacobs, 2015). The data revealed that academic literacy lecturers and mainstream lecturers in this study were working out of sync with each other. There was no communication, let alone collaboration between them. All the participants argued that they were academic literacy lecturers and had nothing to do with students' disciplines. They repeatedly explained that they teach generic skills with an assumption that these were applicable to the students' disciplines and would be reinforced (by the discipline lecturers). The opportunities for the academic literacy courses to enable epistemological access through collaboration between the language and disciplinary experts (Gee, 2004; Jacobs, 2005) was thus very limited if it happened at all. As Jacobs explains (2006, p. iv):

> In a shift from the 'study skills' view of academic literacy which supports an autonomous model of literacy… disciplinary specialists need to be working within their disciplinary discourse communities, while simultaneously having a critical overview of this 'insider' role, from outside of it. It is through engaging with language lecturers who are 'outsiders' to their disciplinary discourse that disciplinary specialists find themselves at the margins of their own fields, and are able to view themselves as insiders from the outside.

The participants' identities as language experts rather than as mediators of students' access to disciplinary practices constrained the potential for collaborations.

7.4 Remedial Positioning of Students

This study did not include interviews with students and was not focused on the identities that students forge and claim for themselves. But the data did provide a clear positioning of the students by the academics. The data showed that the students were largely positioned as "lacking key skills" and as needing remedial assistance. They were largely spoken of as being decontextualised from their own contexts. When Boughey and McKenna (2020, p.12) argue that understanding students' contexts is key to enhancing epistemological access, they also bemoan the dominance of what they call the "discourse of the decontextualised learner". Within this discourse, they argue that students' successes and failures are understood to emerge entirely from attributes inherent within them – such as motivation, intelligence, or language skills – and as unrelated from the rich experiences, norms, and values which students bring with them as a set of social practices.

The data revealed that there was a perception that the majority of first year undergraduate students entering the three HEIs are not adequately prepared for university studies and are therefore set up for failure. In other words, the majority of first year students at these universities were seen as "underprepared" and having "deficits" which needed remediation. Commenting on the purpose of LEA, Andrew claimed that:

> *The course is based on the idea that when students leave high school, there is a gap between the literacy they are taught in school and the literacy they need to succeed at university. The language used to write in high school, for example, is very different from the language they are required to use at the university. So basically, the aim of this course to fill this gap and introduce students to basic academic skills. (Interviews: Andrew)*

In particular, Andrew's comments focused on the language of learning in school curriculum (specifically English) and students' insufficient competence with the abstract cognitive academic language skills required for thinking and learning at university level. However, also emphasising the students' language deficit, Jane from NUST claimed that students who had enough exposure to reading and writing in secondary schools do not struggle with EAP suggesting that she did not draw a distinction between the kinds of literacy practices needed for success at school and at a university. In his Pedagogical Discourse Theory, Bernstein (1996; see Section 3.2) indicated that students' backgrounds influence, for example, the ways in which they take on academic language, with social class and history playing a significant role in the

extent to which there is overlap between students' prior literacy practices and the strange new disciplinary practices expected of them as they enter university.

As newcomers to tertiary education, students bring with them an existing body of knowledge and related set of social practices, and such knowledge ought to be useful in creating new meaning and thus facilitating learning (Leibowitz, 2010). As indicated in Chapter Two, however, such links are rarely made explicit and so social divides are often reinforced rather than reduced through higher education (Ashwin, 2020). Kapp and Bangeni (2009) indicate that the university has a responsibility to provide support for students but also to recognise students' varied identities and literacy practices and the affective identity implications as students transition into higher education. Given the colonial heritage of education, discussed in Chapter Two, it is perhaps unsurprising that race and social class intersect in various ways. None of the participants alluded to any such prior knowledge or any "ways of doing" that students may bring with them as they navigate their first-year of university studies. This reiterates Angu et al.'s claim (2019, p. 4.) that African students' languages, their culture, their history, and their indigenous knowledge get minimal space in their university education, for they "are still expected to continue imagining Europe as the center of gravity and to promote Western epistemic hegemony".

The participants noted on numerous occasions how they had to dispense with what they thought students knew and could do well, as this was in conflict with what they do at the university.

> *In schools, students are taught to write about their opinions, composition and any imaginary topics, whereas at university, they are asked to write about realistic issues and they should provide evidence of their claims in the form of references. (Interviews: Andrew)*

Andrew seemed to perceive academic writing at the university to be "eminently practical, constituted solely of facts and devoid of any imagination and creativity" (Perelman, 1999, p. 65). Similarly, Ann indicated that:

> *Since the university realised that the English proficiency acquired by students at secondary school is inadequate for tertiary learning and academic writing purposes, they have come up with academic literacy courses which will assist students achieve appropriate English academic proficiency. (Interviews: Ann)*

The participants consistently demonstrated a basic understanding that what students are lacking is "English", with little awareness that the literacy practices are peculiar to the academy and then very specific within it (Boughey & McKenna, 2016). Within the context of higher education, it is generally expected of students to function effectively within its wider discourse community, but also within its discipline-specific discourse communities (Lea & Street, 2000). Therefore, one cannot, in all fairness, expect of students new to the university environment to already know about the discourses and specific disciplines' literacy practices without having had any exposure to university education. As Hardman (2000, p. 3) argues, when students come to the university, they:

> … rely too heavily on inappropriate epistemologies, leading to misunderstand university tasks. There is then a disjuncture between what learners bring to university tasks and what these tasks demand. Clearly, these learners not only need to learn new ways of understanding but also to unlearn, or relinquish their inappropriate 'ways of knowing' in order to learn new ways of approaching university ways of knowing.

What one can expect, though, as suggested by Hardman's (2000) argument above, is that students should have the basic language competence that would enable them to become "apprentices" in the different disciplinary discourses of their studies, which could then be scaffolded in ways that make epistemological access more likely and which simultaneously opens spaces for decolonial critique. The academic literacy lecturers in this study, however, linked the students' underpreparedness to the use of English.

> *Students speak better than they read and write. When you engage them in class orally, you would think you have the best English class. But make them read or write. … In fact, the order is: speaking is on top, reading is not so good and not so bad and writing is at the bottom. (Interviews: Joe)*

What Joe seems not to be aware of is that there are reasons why verbal communication may be stronger, as we typically do not expect the same academic literacy practices in speech as we expect in writing. A plausible explanation for this reason is offered by Cummins (2000) in his distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). He posits that there are lexical, grammatical, and discourse differences between spoken and written forms of discourse. BICS refers to "the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts" and CALP to "the

manipulation of language in decontextualized academic situations" (Cummins, 1979, p. 137). This then means that BICS is more context-embedded in the sense that it advocates that meaning is established through spoken (interactional) contexts whereas, on the other hand, CALP involves the usage of a more context-reduced discourse associated with written language.

Ann lamented that students' writing is "*very poor*":

> *They do not for example, know how to formulate a simple paragraph. They are taught that a paragraph expresses one idea, and it contains a topic sentence, supporting sentences and sometimes a closing sentence. But students write paragraphs without cohesions. When given assignments they just go online copy from difference sources, stitching paragraphs that have related ideas. Students are not able to link their ideas well. (Interviews: Ann)*

Similarly, Joe claimed that:

> *Most our students find it difficult to even construct basic sentences. These are some of the skills a university student must poses. Otherwise, they will struggle to succeed in their studies. (Interviews: Joe)*

In much of the data about students, it seemed participants blamed students for their inability to write as per the expectations of the course without considering that academic writing is a demanding practice especially for those who are unfamiliar with it. Furthermore, such comments suggested that students' success in their university studies depended solely on the students themselves.

Sobuwa and McKenna (2019) criticise this conceptualisation of higher education as a meritocracy. A meritocratic explanation of student success suggests that the university and curriculum are neutral with little or no bearing on a student's chances of success and that everyone has a fair and equal chance of success. The meritocracy explanation can legitimise social inequality by apportioning the cause of student failure solely on the student (Sobuwa & McKenna, 2019). In such explanations, students are seen to either have enough of the required attributes in some pre-determined way or to lack what is required (Boughey & McKenna, 2020). Such a view can be contrasted with the tenets of the NLS which point out that while academic language is no one's mother tongue, not even that of children who have enjoyed middle-class upbringings and privileged schooling, there is no magic formula for someone to

become academically literate and the taking on of academic literacy practices should not be expected to be a students' business alone (Gee, 2014; Jacobs, 2005).

The opening chapter of this thesis revealed that results from a number of regional and international assessment tests (SAQMEQ; MLA; NSAT) indicated that the majority of students in the Namibian schooling system are performing below minimum international benchmarks. This is why it becomes increasingly clear why academic literacy support needs to be made available to undergraduate students. However, the academic literacy interventions made by developing courses such as the ones under study do not seem to provide sufficient support to students. Regardless of the types of support offered, the construction of students as deficient and underprepared will impact on the type of teaching and learning related events which emerge in the university and on the experiences of both students and staff as they engage with those events (Garraway & Bozalek, 2019).

The participants' maxim that students, who are mainly second language speakers of English, "cannot write" has direct implications for the teaching of academic literacy in English-based universities. The sole use of English has given rise to the hegemony of English in teaching and learning and its use as a barometer to test the cognitive ability of African students (Pineteh, 2014) has been repeatedly troubled. As Angu (2018, p. 12) argues, by not creating opportunities "for African students to also read and write in their home languages, we are marginalizing African students' linguistic right to study in the language of their culture as their European counterparts have done for centuries". Proponents of curriculum decolonisation are thus urging academic literacy lecturers and HEIs alike to provide more opportunities for African students to use their home languages to construct knowledge. This study has indicated, however, that the medium of instruction is but one part of the larger issue of taking on the literacy practices of each field of study.

Language understood as grammar and vocabulary in the medium of instruction is a very small part of the acquisition of language as integral to academic practice (Rose, 2005). As Sobuwa and McKenna (2019) caution, it would be a mistake to conflate proficiency with language as the medium of instruction with access to the literacy practices of the discipline. This is because research (see Boughey & McKenna, 2020; Shay, 2016) has shown how middle-class students with strong schooling backgrounds enjoy far greater levels of higher education success even when they have very low levels of proficiency in the medium of instruction.

Academic literacy interventions forming part of a "deficit" or "restricted" view of language are not new practices in HEIs, nor are they unique or limited to Namibia. McKenna (2003), for instance, indicates that "language inadequacies" were considered to be at the heart of underperformance of students across the higher education sector in South Africa. She further claims that language proficiency interventions were developed and delivered with a focus on the grammatical aspects of English (often as part of the academic development initiatives of student support services) and not as forming part of the mainstream curricula of universities, having very little impact on scaffolding students' epistemological access. As Lea and Street (1998) argue, academic literacy lecturers are often unable to pinpoint the underlying literacy problems in students and confuse these with language deficit. As such, they attribute weak academic performance in discipline-specific subjects to surface written language features such as structure, grammar, or spelling. This confusion between language and academic literacy, and the related lack of understanding of students' learning needs, as presented by the participants in the current study, seem to have led to misconceptions about development of academic literacy practices at the three HEIs.

The data revealed that academic literacy lecturers attributed challenges experienced by students to students' demographic and socio-economic backgrounds. According to May, students' competence in English "*depends a lot from which kind of school and part of the country they [students] come from. For example, students from Windhoek schools seem to be more fluent in English, both in writing and spoken, than those who came from rural schools in the north*" (Interviews: May).

Windhoek is the capital city of Namibia which consists of mainly middle- and upper-income households, whereas the northern side of the country is predominantly rural with low-SES households and impoverished schools. Schools, particularly those in rural areas, are described as lacking facilities such as libraries and computer laboratories which present students with a legacy of disadvantage (McCabe, 2012). In other words, students coming from schools in the northern part of the country are seen as "rural students". According to McCabe (2012, p. 48), a "rural student":

> is viewed to be a student who has attended a school outside an urban area, often in a remote area far from shops, clinics and libraries and irregular or no access to electricity (and thus no access to computers or photocopiers) or running water; has

> been taught mainly by means of code alternating or code switching (Mother tongue and English) and is academically underprepared for the university.

McCabe (2012) presents a deficit and problematic construction of students from rural contexts which sees students as underprepared, linguistically and culturally inferior, disadvantaged, and in need of remedial education. This reiterates Fricker's (2007) conceptualisation of testimonial injustice, where some students' knowledge is dismissed as irrelevant because they come from a particular social group located within a specific social context which is prejudiced against. These students may end up believing that all of their norms and literacy practices are of little value and may accept that they are required to adopt the university's "way of doing" uncontested, at a cost to personal identity (De Kadt & Mathonsi, 2003). As Leese (2010) argues, in order to accommodate the needs of increasingly diverse groups of new students into higher education, HEIs should fundamentally shift away from viewing the "problem" of transition as a deficit located in individual students.

Gee's (1990; 2014) work is central in understanding that academic literacy is a way of being, which then makes students social beings, thus bringing the concept of identity into play. Part of academic identity is that when students enter our universities, both from urban and rural schools, they are not simply required to learn new things. Rather, they become different people, shifting from being school learners to being university students, therefore developing an entire new identity (Boughey & McKenna, 2020). Therefore, as academics, we should expect the ease with which the literacy practices at the university are acquired to vary depending on the similarities of the practices expected in the university context, to those practices that students bring with them from their homes, schools, and other social spaces. And there should be space for students to push back and contest some of the expected practices. Because there are identity implications related to coming into a transformational relationship with the specialised knowledge of the academy (Ashwin 2020), we need to engage with students with a great deal of care, explicit scaffolding, and a willingness to critique the disciplinary literacy practices we may have assumed to be above question. As Jansen (2017) argues, contemporary learning experiences in higher education should allow students to access diverse, specialist ideas, within the context of recognising the practices which they and their peers bring to the classroom.

Jane from NUST, a University of Science and Technology, for example observed that:

> *Students come with reading and writing skills which are a bit shaky and not up to standard. We have a variety of students, some who just go through the course smoothly, and those who are really struggling with the language. I think exposure and the environment where students come from also plays a role as far as literacy is concerned. For example, students from best performing schools in the country which are usually well equipped with all the learning materials express themselves better in English, both in writing and spoken, than those who came from deep poor rural schools. (Interviews: Jane).*

This study is not in any way underestimating the problems with the schooling sector in Namibia. On the contrary, the impact of poor schooling is recognised as a major part of the complex issues faced in Namibian HEIs. Literature reviewed in Chapter Two also shows that the reading and writing competency of many learners from low-SES is generally poor compared to those of their peers from middle- and upper-income households. The former is therefore privileged when they come to the university because of the circumstances of their birth and upbringing and not because of any inherent talent of their own. The problem is however when such differences are ascribed to individuals or entirely to schooling as if higher education itself has no role to play in literacy development. As long as our higher education system continues to privilege certain ways of being over others and does not make such ways of being explicit and readily accessible to all students, then social class will remain a major determinant of success for university (Boughey & McKenna, 2016). The practices expected of students in higher education, which differ significantly across disciplines, are easier for some to take on than for others – this is especially the case when they are not explicitly articulated and are experienced as a set of covert assumptions and expectations (Sobuwa & McKenna, 2019). Bernstein's concept of the Pedagogical Discourse (1996) established that working-class students are often less successful not because they are less intelligent than middle-class students, but because the curriculums are often biased in favour of literacy practices more familiar to some than to others. As such, students who find themselves within the structural and cultural system of the university may reflect on their position and feel constrained by the norms, values, expectations, and practices that surround them. These students may find these norms, values, expectations, and practices overwhelming and alienating, especially as many of them are not made explicit (Sobuwa & McKenna, 2019).

While acknowledging that some schools better prepare students for academic study than others as per Jane's comment above, it would be problematic to assume that schooling on its own accounts for literacy practices needed for university. Therefore, the idea and the extent to which schooling systems are a causal factor for students' access and success to the university practices needs to be problematised. This is because schools are very different social contexts to universities and demand significantly different practices (Gumbi & McKenna, 2020). The practices that may be assumed within the university are multiple and complex and not all can be reduced to issues of school preparedness. That is why when students come to university, they may find that the very practices which led to their success in school are less useful in a university setting (Case et al., 2018). For example, students may find that the study skills and learning strategies that they acquired in response to the teaching styles and assessment methods at school are inappropriate in the university education.

As Darvas, Gao, Shen, and Bawany (2017) argue, schools perform multiple functions and they are not designed specifically to prepare students for higher education. This is especially when one considers that only a small proportion of school leavers ever attend university in the case of countries such as Namibia. This then suggests the need for HEIs to do away with the notion that it is schooling's responsibility to prepare students for tertiary study. On the contrary, HEIs need to make it their responsibility to identify and then make overt their own practices. The focus on "disadvantaged schools" and language deficit might therefore at times be indicative of unwillingness, on the part of the university, to reflect on what it means to teach and learn for epistemological access in higher education (Boughey & McKenna, 2017). According to Angelil-Carter (1998, p. 1), "there is recognition that racial or linguistic categorisation are no longer adequate indicators of need, but the system as a whole has to adjust to deal with students who are heterogeneous in a growing number of ways".

7.5 Conclusion

This was the last of three chapters discussing the findings that emerged from the study data. The chapter began with a reflection on assessment as a key issue from which to understand what is valued in a curriculum. In all cases, the assessment was in the form of summative tasks without opportunity for detailed formative feedback. The large classes and short time available for the courses restricted opportunities for more detailed feedback. Rubrics were widely used with mixed implications: on the one hand rubrics can make clear to students what is expected

of them but on the other hand, they can reduce complex tasks to technical compliance. The chapter then looked at the data on identity related to the participants and then on how the participants conceptualised the students. The academics saw themselves as language experts with related formal qualifications, rather than education experts with experience in academic literacy research or development. They conceptualised the students in many ways but a dominant understanding was that students came to the university with a deficit which was inherent within the individual and needed to be addressed through their remedial interventions.

Having discussed the key findings, I now move to the final chapter in which I reflect on the implications of these findings within Namibian higher education and more broadly.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

The broader aim of this study was to investigate the academic literacy lecturers' understandings of academic literacy. The focus was to critically explore the extent to which these academics' understandings and pedagogical practices promote academic literacies required to facilitate epistemological access into students' chosen fields of study and institutional types in the three different higher education institutional types in Namibia: a Traditional University, University of Technology and Comprehensive University. This chapter aims to present a synthesis of the main findings, and drawing on their implications, to recommend a model that might be appropriate for teaching academic literacy in contexts such as the HEIs under study.

8.2 Revisiting the Research Questions

As Thomas (2009) claims, most research questions are born out of curiosity and some arise from personal experience and a genuine need for clarification and not necessarily the need to prove a point. The origin of this study was triggered by personal experience of teaching academic English both at school and university level, and research evidence pointing towards poor academic performance of students at university level (Boughey, 2013; Boughey & McKenna, 2016; McKenna, 2010; Mgqwashu, 2009; Mukoroli, 2016;). In light of this, the need to investigate the current practice in teaching academic literacy in the Namibian context became important to me, not only to understand the phenomenon but also to explore how else academic literacy could be conceptualised in Namibia to ensure that more students succeed in their studies.

In order to do this the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the selected academic literacy lecturers' conceptualisations of academic literacy?

2. How do the academic literacy lecturers' conceptualisations of academic literacy inform the design, teaching and assessment of the selected academic literacy development courses at the three universities?

The data speaking to these research questions were generated through semi-structured interviews conducted with the lecturers who were involved in the teaching, assessment and administration of the selected academic literacy courses at each of the three HEIs. This was triangulated with documentary evidence such as the course outlines and study guides, sample tests, examination question papers and assignment rubrics, as well as actual classroom observations. Interviews enabled me to access the participants' conceptions of academic literacy and the related practices in academic literacy acquisition. Guided by the research questions, the conceptual and theoretical frameworks adopted for this study, classroom observations enabled me to gain insight into the nature of pedagogical and assessment practices that take place in the academic literacy lessons at each HEIs. An analysis of different documents related to the design and the pedagogical practices of the three academic literacy courses under study was done. These documents included course outlines, study guides, and sample assessment tools such as tests, assignments (both written and oral) as well as the examinations papers. The analysis of this kind of documents provided information that related to the understandings underpinning the design of assessment practices of the courses under study. Key findings related to the two research questions formed the basis for the discussion and interpretation of the data patterns in this study as presented from Chapter Five to Chapter Seven. The key findings are summarised in the next section.

8.3 Summary of the Key Findings

8.3.1 Academic literacy as generic skills and student deficit

A dominant finding that emerged from the analysis of the data collected at the three HEIs suggests an understanding of academic literacy practices as being generic and decontextualised from students' disciplines. This understanding informed the generic approach to developing academic literacy at the three HEIs. As such, academic literacy at the three HEIs was taught outside of students' specific disciplines in a 'one size fits all' fashion, with no distinction between the academic literacy practices of different academic disciplines. This was done with an assumption that students would transfer these skills to their disciplines unproblematically.

While this study acknowledges that certain skills are generally acceptable across all disciplines, it is overly simplistic to argue that students can transfer the same practices operative in one disciplinary community to another. One major reason why generic skills taught in the academic literacy courses under study may not be transferable is because of the different nature of the disciplines for which students registered. The NLS and a number of academic literacy researchers maintain that the most productive way to facilitate the development of academic literacy is to do it within the students' disciplines (Boughey & McKenna, 2020; Mgqwashu, 2008; Street, 2006). Moreover, helping university students to become academically literate is achievable through collaborative relationships between academic literacy lecturers and discipline-specific lecturers (Ranawake, Gunawardena, & Wilson, 2017). But the data revealed that there was a lack of communication and no collaboration between academic literacy lecturers and discipline lecturers at all three HEIs.

Another key finding related to the participants' conceptualisation of academic literacy at the three HEIs is the one which suggests an understanding that considers academic literacy practices entirely as study skills. The participants viewed academic literacy as a set of reading, speaking and writing skills that students need to learn once they come to the university in order to succeed in their studies. In other words, academic literacy at the three HEIs was deemed as something students possess and those who do not possess it have a problem that needs remedial assistance through an add-on course. This conceptualisation of academic literacy practices is reductionist in nature and reflects the notion that literacy is the acquisition of a decontextualised set of rules (Bengesai, 2012).

Many studies (see Clarence & McKenna, 2017; Jacobs 2010; Mgqwashu, 2008) have indicated the problematic nature of the add-on skills approach and so this key finding is not new as such, however, it is the first which has investigated this in the Namibian context. The emergence of the add-on generic courses have occurred all around the world. In the 1950s to 1980s massification of education in the United Kingdom, coupled with more immigrant children joining higher education (McWilliams & Allan, 2014) led to the introduction of such courses there. In South Africa, these add-on courses were introduced in the late 1980s (McKenna, 2014; Pineteh, 2014). Although, to some extent this model still exists in some South African universities, many have moved away from it. This study thus demonstrates that Namibia has come late to the party, because the massification of education occurred a bit later than South

Africa. It is safe to argue therefore that these findings demonstrate that Namibia is reproducing the problematic responses of other countries to widening access to higher education.

It is thus important for academics to have contextualised understandings of how these processes manifest. There have been calls for post-colonial African higher education to ensure that teaching and learning, and assessment be more responsive to the epistemic injustices of our heritage (Angu, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Studies such as this, are thus important for looking at whether higher education is indeed being offered in ways which make student success a possibility for all, or whether it continues to privilege some students over others. Studies such as this raise social justice questions not only of how epistemological access is scaffolded for all but also about the dominance of particular epistemological positions over others. While this study did not engage with questions raised by decolonial scholars in much depth, it did provide the basis from which further explorations in this regard could be undertaken.

The analysis of the data revealed the participants' understanding of academic literacy which elides academic literacy with English language proficiency. As such, attempts to teach and assess academic literacy at the three HEIs appeared to be in a state of a deficit model where lecturers were involved in solving students' language problems rather than 'socializing them into the way of being' at the university. In other words, students who are taught language (small letter discourse) instead of Discourse (in this case disciplinary language and ways of being in their respective disciplines) are robbed of the opportunity to participate in the Discourse of their discipline.

In an attempt to 'fix' student's language difficulties, the participants seemed to have mistakenly limited it to sheer grammatical competence, and taught writing in isolation through generic add-on courses, emphasising the structure of the academic essays, memoranda and summary writing. The implications of a pedagogic approach that separates the two (language teaching and writing) is that students are unlikely to learn to choose grammatical structures according to the purpose for which they construct texts, both in speaking and in writing (Mgqwashu, 2008). I have discussed in Chapter Three, how the understanding of Halliday's (1978) SFL theory may be useful in informing the pedagogic practice that raises students' awareness of both the language patterns, as well as the discourse of a discipline, both of which are crucial in

university education. SFL grammar is different from traditional grammar in that it focuses on language as a meaning-making resource rather than as a set of rules (Schleppegrell, 2004).

Furthermore, the continued dominance of 'common sense' understandings of students needing remediation through the teaching of generic academic skills illustrates the need for ongoing studies that consider how this phenomenon manifests in different contexts (Moyo, 2000; Pineteh, 2014) Niven (2005) indicates that the problematic understanding that academic success emerges from a set of skills which students either have or do not have remain resilient because theorised explanations of students' processes of epistemological access have not gained traction. She goes on to argue that researchers need to keep undertaking such investigations and to make their findings widely known if they are to temper the calls for initiatives focused on 'fixing' the students outside of the curriculum (Niven, 2005). This study has attempted to make just such a contribution.

8.3.2 Lack of explicit theoretical underpinning to curriculum

In terms of the theoretical persuasions informing the design of the three courses under study, none of the participants could explicitly discuss any theories that informed the design of their courses. In an attempt to answer the question regarding the theoretical positions informing their courses, all the participants described the content of their course outlines.

This echoes the critique in much of the literature about the a-theoretical nature of teaching and learning in HE in general and in foundational type courses in particular. Foundation programmes are regular degree or diploma programmes which are extended with additional support for learning generally aimed at widening access and success in Higher Education. Garraway and Bozalek (2019), for instance, maintain that teaching and learning initiatives in foundation provision have the potential to, more generally, improve teaching practices across the university. The innovative practices are, however, not always underpinned by deeper theoretical understandings about how knowledge is structured, how pedagogies are enacted and how students learn new ideas (Garraway & Bozalek, 2019). This position is also stressed by McKenna (2014, p. 51) that:

> Foundation provision is frequently reduced to remedial attempts to teach generic skills rather than calling on the kinds of teaching and learning approaches which make the university's way of constructing knowledge accessible to all students … The chapter ends with a plea for foundation work to be undertaken with the explicit

agenda of providing access to the discipline-specific ways of knowing found in the university.

8.3.3 Different institutional types - not so different literacy practices

Data revealed that there was not much difference in academic literacy practices, especially between UNAM and NUST. I have indicated in Chapter Three that university practices are, by and large, different from practices in everyday life. This particular difference is highlighted in Bernstein's (1999) analysis of more formal knowledge discourses typical of traditional university fields. Given that NUST is a University of Science and Technology as opposed to UNAM, a Traditional University, it is plausible to expect a slightly different, institutional- type aligned rendition of academic literacy. According to its website, NUST focuses on career-oriented training that matches the standard of various industries in Namibia, community involvement, and applied research through its six faculties, namely: Management Sciences; Human Sciences, Engineering; Health and Applied Sciences; Computing and Informatics; Natural Resources and Spatial Sciences. These disciplines are all practical and professionally oriented. It appeared, however, that the academic practices in the add-on academic literacy courses at these two institutions were very similar. The courses' learning and teaching practices and curriculum development were found to be largely under-theorised, with academic literacy lecturers relying on common sense approaches rather than those based on research. The academic literacy practices at these institutions were all influenced by the skills model, in which becoming academically literate is largely a technical task to be learnt independently of students' discipline or even the nature of the university. The practices included general reading and writing skills such as referencing, identifying main points, summarising and extended writing (referred to as academic essay at UNAM and report writing at NUST).

Academic practices at IUM seemed to focus on the specific outcome of the university. The findings suggested that academic literacy courses valued not only the ability to use language to make meaning in the academy, but included students' ability to use language as a professional in the field of work.

The next section presents the key principles that emerged out of these findings as well as an example of an academic literacy development model which would need to be contextualised to a specific institutional context.

8.4 The Proposed Example of a Model for Academic Literacy Development

There is growing recognition that collaboration between academic literacy lecturers, discipline-specific lecturers and other stakeholders (for example librarians) can considerably improve students' academic literacy development (Boughey & McKenna, 2020; Jacobs, 2010; McKenna, 2003; Parkinson, 2000). As such, the first step would be an intervention in the form of some sort of staff familiarisation training which would help academic literacy lecturers, discipline-specific lecturers, curriculum designers and other stakeholders to understand the complexity of academic literacy and their role in supporting students to acquire it.

The core principle of this model is collaboration. A significant part of this familiarisation training would be to assure each of the academics involved that taking a collaborative approach to academic literacy does not mean substantial extra work, but that student support can be integrated into their regular teaching and assessment activities. The proposed model also embraces views presented in McWilliams and Allan's (2014) Best Practice Model to teaching embedded academic literacy presented in Chapter Two.

The theoretical underpinnings informing the proposed model draw from the Genre approaches of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Swales, 1990) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1972; Martin & Rose, 2008). The SFL Theory and Genre theory asks questions about the epistemological orientations that HEIs facilitate students into. For students to become successful in their university education, they need to learn how to use the required academic language. SFL will therefore help with revealing the choices that the language makes available for students in their disciplines (Halliday, 1978). From the SFL perspective, the proposed model views academic literacy as a way of being in a discourse community (the university) whose members communicate in a style that is highly focused, analytical and critical (Halliday & Hasan, 1989).

The genre-based language teaching raises students' awareness of linguistic features and patterns closely associated with their specific academic genres which enhance their effective communication skills in their discipline (Hyland, 2008). This views first year students as inductees into the knowledge community who gradually learn the 'code' of their disciplines by gradually developing the essential practices necessary for success. As such, academics using this model would need to understand the ideological model that grammar works within context and mediates meaning contextually (Rose, 2005).

It seems unlikely that there would be the appetite or political will to move directly to writing intensive courses of similar initiatives such as integrated RtL programmes, nor would there necessarily be the capacity to do so. Thus, as in the current model, the proposed academic literacy development courses would still be an additional module for students, however, the content and instructions in the proposed model would be discipline-specific. This then means that there will be an academic literacy lecturer attached to the faculties who would work closely with discipline-specific lecturers. In other words, nobody would be regarded as 'the others' in the process of teaching academic literacy. The discipline lecturers would teach the content while collaborating with the academic literacy to make explicit disciplinary conventions and features of the target academic discourse. It is envisaged that the collaboration would facilitate increased sophistication in teaching academic literacy and eventually enhance students' success in their studies.

The main purpose of making disciplinary norms and values explicit is to enhance epistemological access. The process of teaching for epistemological access through making literacy practices explicit takes time. Furthermore, "acquiring fluency need not entail uncritical reproduction and the discourse need not be over-determining" (Kapp & Bangeni, 2009, p. 83). There is a need for such teaching and scaffolding to make literacy practices explicit for both better acquisition *and* critical engagement with who is being served by such practices. Making them explicit can thus not only allow students to see them more clearly in order to take them on, it also allows both students and academics to challenge practices which may have been normalised but which actually serve gatekeeping functions.

Teaching for epistemological access ensures that there are no hidden curricula where students have to 'crack the code', in ways that serve to reinforce social stratifications. Social justice entails making explicit what is legitimated in the specific disciplines. It cannot be assumed that students will take on these "ways of being" – they need to be inducted into them with multiple opportunities to see them being modeled, with opportunities to try them out and with opportunities to get feedback on novice attempts (Bangeni & Greenbaum, 2019; Kapp & Bangeni, 2009).

Making norms and values of the students' disciplines explicit is not only about social justice in higher education in terms of access and success, it is also about asking questions, such as whose knowledge is considered legitimate in the higher education system and whose ways of

being are excluded. Although this study did not look at the decolonial issues in a lot of depth, it did emerge as a key premise from the findings that any endeavour to make higher education more just in terms of questions around colonial legacy and whose knowledge is legitimate and whose knowledge marginalised, would require that practices be made explicit. One cannot challenge something one cannot name. "The norms, values, ways of constructing knowledge and ways of being and interacting in multiple spaces are often difficult for students to name and access when they first enter the university" (Kapp & Bangeni 2020, p. 85). There is therefore a need to help academics understand the norms and values of their disciplines in order to help them teach in a more explicit way.

Despite observations from a number of scholars (Rose, 2005; Rose & Acevedo, 2006; Rose & Martin, 2012) that reading is the primary pedagogic mode at tertiary institution and that the majority of students in Africa in general, and Namibia in particular, enter institutions of higher learning without competence to learn from reading, the findings have revealed that the current models of teaching academic literacy at the three HEIs do not give reading the attention and significance it deserves. The proposed model therefore draws from Rose's (2005) conceptualisation of Reading to Learn (RtL) approach to teaching reading which emphasises explicit teaching of reading.

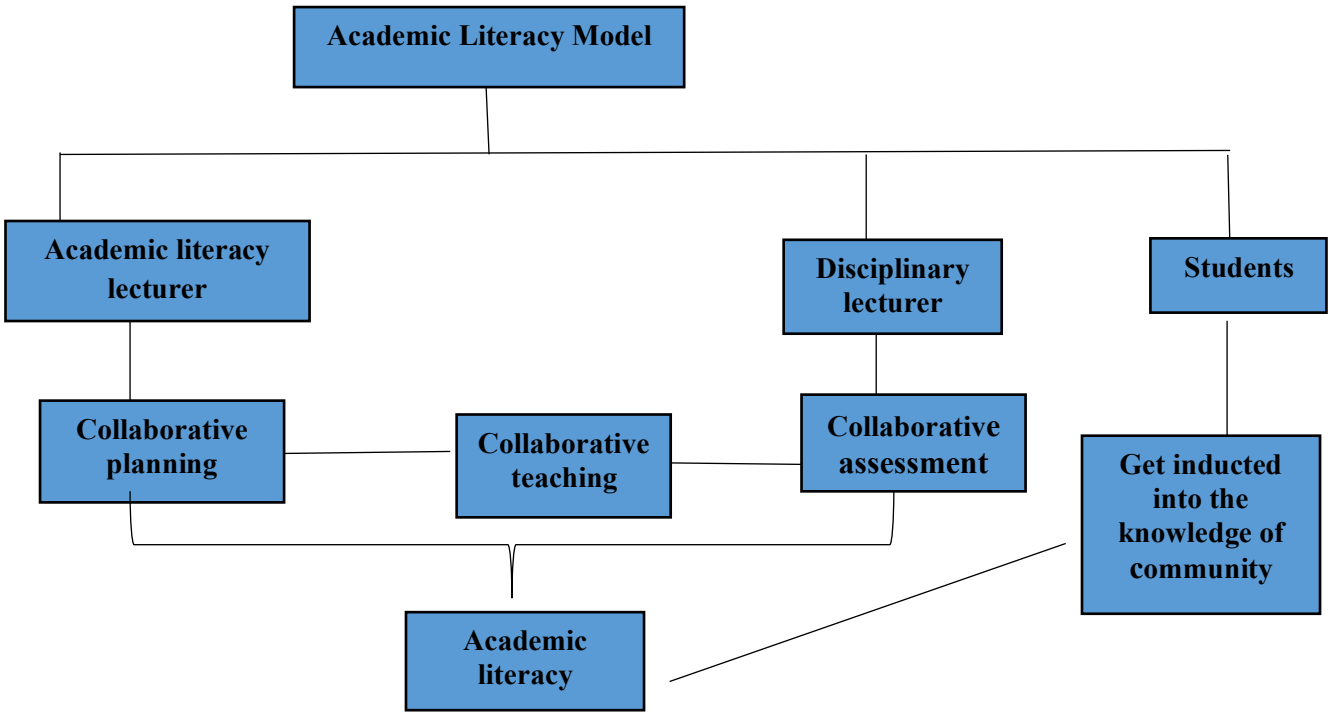


Figure 8.1: The proposed example of a model for teaching academic literacy to undergraduate students at the three HEIs in Namibia

In this model, at the planning level:

- All lecturers are provided with opportunities to engage with the literature on literacies development in higher education and are supported to make sense of the related theoretical positions.
- Discipline lecturer: Develop disciplinary content and materials in collaboration with the academic literacy lecturer.
- Academic literacy lecturer: Identify the language choices that are typically made in the student's discipline (from the SFL perspective that posits language as integral to knowledge building).
- Positioning of students: Based on perception that academic literacy is a way of being, students are viewed as inductees into the knowledge community (the university).
- Plans: The academics thus collaboratively plan for a range of initiatives that students may need upon registering as first year students in the university.
- The academics collaborate to make sure that teaching activities and learning experiences are developed progressively at different levels across courses until the student completes their university studies.

At collaborative teaching level:

- The disciplinary lecturer has the responsibility of identify learning gaps and seeks the collaboration of the academic literacy lecturers on how these can be addressed.
- The academic literacy lecturer helps students to learn the internal structure, or 'stages' of a particular genre, and, in the context of their disciplines. For reading and writing pedagogy, the lecturers can incorporate the three 'genre parts' comprising, deconstruction, joint construction and individual construction of a text to reinforce discipline course content (Rose & Martin, 2012). This guided introduction into the reading of academic texts would help students to learn discipline content and the language for writing assignments simultaneously, and could therefore help students to overcome the barrier of a perceived language-content dichotomy (Johnson et al., 2015).
- With continuous support from both academics, students gradually adopt "ways of being", developing the essential practices necessary for success in their chosen fields.

At assessment level:

- Discipline lecturer and the academic literacy lecturers collaborate to map out learning outcomes, assessments, and teaching activities, ensuring greater progression language and content development as well as scaffolding.
- The two academics collaborate to develop customised rubrics and marking guides, diagnosis assessments (not tests) that incorporate disciplinary discourses and genres.
- Collaboratively provide feedback and explain to students where typical possible errors are made by students in the assignments – what would be considered weak, strong or an improvement both from a language and discipline perspective.
- Students have opportunities to use the feedback to revise and resubmit their assessment tasks.

Like any other model, the proposed model does not come without challenges. One of the foreseeable challenges that is likely to draw criticisms is that, although the instruction in the proposed model will be discipline-specific, it will still be additional, rather than being embedded into students' specific discipline curriculum. The attempts to adopt the embedded model has been documented.

Gunawardena (2017), for example, claims that there were numerous challenges in effectively embedding literacy into disciplinary courses such as that academic literacy lecturers' involvement totally depended on the discipline subject lecturers' willingness to collaborate. Another challenge was limited time for collaborative work, particularly to provide time for literacy teaching. As such the academic literacy lecturers felt marginalised and demoted to being assistants of the discipline-specific lecturers. The current model, takes a different route, and does not require the two academics to jointly teach in one lecture hall. On the contrary, each of the academics will teach their modules in collaboration with the others for a common cause. As such, they will need to share feedback on the effectiveness of their work in their disciplines. With the proposed model, there will be no summative assessment, that is, no end of semester or year examination for the academic literacy modules. Students will get scaffolded assignments and receive constant formative feedback. The final marks for each module will be assigned based on students' ability to reflect on the feedback and the level of improvement they had made throughout the academic year as far as academic literacy is concerned.

8.5 Conclusion

This study's focus was on the academic literacy lecturers' conceptualisation of academic literacy and how their practices in the add-on courses facilitate epistemological access. The study recommends that further study is needed to investigate not only how the critical issue of academic literacy is perceived and approached by lecturers teaching in the students' specific disciplines in Namibian HEIs, but also how disciplines themselves do their part in working together with the academics entrusted to teach academic literacy to students from their disciplines.

Moreover, this study made it explicit that epistemological access opens the door for serious decolonial conversations and reviews. While this was not the intention or the major focus of this study, it emerged as something that would need further deliberation.

Finally, it is important to note that the three courses investigated in this study have been heavily criticised in this analysis for drawing on understandings of literacy acquisition that fail to draw on the research in this regard. This should not be seen as a criticism of the participants who so generously shared their time and who are clearly deeply concerned for their students and committed to their success. Neither can the findings be dismissed as an indication of quality problems in the three institutions. Indeed, the frequent reference to similar concerns across the world indicates that the problems identified here are widely experienced and require ongoing theorised reflections to address. The power of dominant understandings of teaching and learning make the process of developing a socially just response to scaffolding students' access to the knowledge and related literacy practices of the academy a significant challenge.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Proposal and Ethical Clearance: Rhodes University

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

EDUCATION FACULTY • PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140
Tel: (046) 603 8385 / (046) 603 8393 • Fax: (046) 622 8028 • e-mail: d.wilmot@ru.ac.za

PROPOSAL AND ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL

Ethical clearance number 2018.02.15.05

The minute of the EHDC meeting of 01 February 2018 reflect the following:

2018.02.15 ***CLASS A RESTRICTED MATTERS***
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY RESEARCH PROPOSALS

To consider the following research proposal for the degree of PhD (Education) in the Faculty of Education:

Mr Lukas Julius Homateni (11J0005)

Topic: An Investigation of the model for developing academic literacy at three different higher education institutional types: A Critical Participatory study of three HEIs in Namibia

Supervisor: Professor E Mgqwashu

Decision: *Approved*

This letter confirms the approval of the above proposal at a meeting of the Faculty of Education Higher Degrees' Committee on the 01 February 2018.

The proposal demonstrates an awareness of ethical responsibilities and a commitment to ethical research processes. The approval of the proposal by the committee thus constitutes ethical clearance.

Sincerely

Ms Zisanda Sanda
Secretariat of the EHDC, Rhodes University
15th February 2018

Appendix B: Ethical clearance: UNAM

UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: EXT/417/2018 **Date: 26 September, 2018**

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Title of Project: An Investigation of the model for developing academic literacy at three different higher education institutional types: A Critical Participatory study of three HEIs in Namibia

Researcher: Lukas Julius

Supervisor: Prof. Emmanuel Mgqwashu

Campus : Rhodes University
Take note of the following:

(a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
(b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
(c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
(d) The UREC retains the right to:
(i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
(ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

UREC wishes you the best in your research.

Dr. J.E. de Villiers : UREC Chairperson

Ms. P. Claassen: UREC Secretary

Appendix C: Ethical clearance: NUST

NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (F-REC)

DECISION: ETHICS APPROVAL

Ref: S008/2018
Student no.: 611J0005 (Rhodes University)

Date: 17 August 2018

RESEARCH TOPIC

An investigation of the model for teaching academic literacy at three different higher education institutional types: A critical participatory study of three HEIs in Namibia

Researcher: Mr Julius H Lukas (Principal Investigator)
Tel: +264 81 217 6291
E-mail: ljulius@unam.na

Dear Mr Lukas,

The Faculty of Human Sciences Ethics Screening Committee (F-REC) of the Namibia University of Science and Technology reviewed your application for the above-mentioned research. The research as set out in the application has been approved.

We would like to point out that you, as principal investigator, are obliged to:

- maintain the ethical integrity of your research,
- adhere to the Research policy and ethical guidelines of NUST, and
- remain within the scope of your research proposal and supporting evidence as submitted to the F-REC.

Should any aspect of your research change from the information as presented to the F-REC, which could have an effect on the possibility of harm to any research subject, you are under the obligation to report it immediately to your supervisor or F-REC as applicable in writing. Should there be any uncertainty in this regard, you have to consult with the F-REC.

We wish you success with your research, and trust that it will make a positive contribution to the quest for knowledge at NUST.

Sincerely,

Prof Sarala Krishnamurthy
Acting Chairperson: F-REC
Tel: +264 61 207-2988/7
E-mail: skrishnamurthy@nust.na

Prof Alinah K Segobye
Dean: FoHS
Tel: +264 61 207-2418
E-mail: asegobye@nust.na

Appendix D: Ethical clearance: IUM

IUM

GLOBAL HUB FOR MANAGEMENT SCIENCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

PROPOSAL AND ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL

Ethical clearance number: 3-2018

The minute of the ethical meeting of **21 August 2018** reflect the following.

To consider the following research for the degree of:

Ph.D.: In the education department at Rhodes University

Master:

Name: Lukas H Julius **student no:** 11J0005

Topic: An investigation of the model for developing academic literacy at three different high education institutional types: A critical participatory study of three HEI; in Namibia

Supervisor: Professor E Mgqwashu

Decision: Approved

This letter confirms the approval of the above proposal at a meeting of the Research Committee on the **21 August 2018**.

The proposal demonstrates an awareness of ethical responsibilities and a commitment to ethical research processes. The approval of the proposal by the committee thus constitutes ethical clearance. However, because of our own interest in research we expect you to come and share your findings with us upon completion of your research.

Sincerely

.....

Chairperson

Ethical Research Committee

The International University of Management

THE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT
Dorado Campus
Private Bag 14005 Bachbrecht
Windhoek
Tel: +264-61-4336000
Fax: +264-61-4336152
E-Mail: ium@ium.edu.na

School of Nursing

Appendix E: Permission Request letter

Letter to the university management(s)

L.H. Julius

P.o.Box 27617

Windhoek

26 September 2017

Pro-Vice Chancellor: Academic Affairs / Director of Research Unit

[Institution]

[Address]

Dear [name of Pro-Vice chancellor/Director of Research Unit)

Request for permission to conduct research

My name is Lukas Homateni Julius, a lecturer at the University of Namibia's Language Centre. I am a Ph.D. student in the Education Department at Rhodes University, South Africa. I intend to carry out a research "**An investigation of the academic practitioners' conceptualisation and pedagogical practices of academic literacy at three education institutional types in Namibia".** Your university is one of the three universities I would like to work with in this study. The research in your university's Language Centre will form the substance for my Ph.D. thesis.

Apart from contributing to the limited literature on academic literacy teaching in Namibia, the study will also provide insights regarding the design, teaching and assessment of academic literacy courses at university level to lecturers, HoD and course coordinators. It is imperative to note that literacy challenges and under preparedness illustrated by many undergraduates and new graduates from higher educational intuitions are topical discussion points in Namibia. One of the critical phenomenon of students' under preparedness is their levels of academic literacy in the Language of learning and teaching (LoLT), English. It therefore necessary that academic literacy courses are investigated in attempt to establish on how best they can be tailor-made to be responsive to students' academic literacy needs.

Academic literacy courses at your university are offered at the [department/ Centre]. I therefore request permission to collect data at this particular Centre. Data will be collected through interviews with lecturers (academic practitioners) teaching the academic literacy development courses at your institution, documentary evidence and observation of some of these lecturers' academic literacy lessons. During the writing up my Ph.D. thesis I shall, of course, preserve the anonymity of the lecturers, HoD and course coordinator concerned through the use of pseudonyms. Should you and/or participants be interested in reading the final product of this research I'll very gladly provide a copy of my Ph.D. thesis.

Should you require further details, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor Prof. E.M Mgqwashu, email: e.mgqwashu@ru.ac.za or hod.education@ru.ac.za

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours Faithfully,

……..

Lukas Homateni Julius

Ph.D. Student

Declaration

I…… (Full name/s) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I give consent to Mr. Julius in using academic practitioners in the…….[name of department] as participants in his study. I understand that they are at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should they desire to do so___

_____ _____

SIGNATURE OF PRO-VICE CHANCELLOR: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS / DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH UNIT DATE

Letter to the participants

[Participant's name]

University of Namibia

Windhoek

Dear [Participant's name]

17 May 2018

Dear Lecturer

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Lukas Homateni Julius, a lecturer at the University of Namibia's Language Centre. I am a Ph.D. student in the Education Department at Rhodes University, South Africa. I intend to carry out a research " *An investigation of the role of academic literacy courses in facilitating epistemological access: a phenomenological study of academic literacy courses in 3 universities in Namibia*". Your university is one of the participants and I would like permission to involve you in my research. I will be interviewing you and sitting in and observing some of your…… [name of the program] lectures. I will, moreover, be analyzing samples of some of the assessment activities you design for yours students for example, tests, class activities, tests, assignments and examination.

I attach herewith a copy of the letter which I have given to your Pro Vice Chancellor-Academic affairs in this regard.

After the interviews are transcribed you will be provided with the written transcripts to read through and see if there are incongruities with what you had said. During the writing up my Ph.D. thesis I shall, of course, preserve your anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. Should you be interested in reading the final product of this research I'll very gladly provide a copy of my Ph.D. thesis. If there is anything which you are unhappy or uncertain about regarding the way I am going about the research, please do tell me, and we can work around it. Please know also that if at any stage you wish to withdraw from the project that is entirely your prerogative.

Should you require further details, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor Prof. E.M Mgqwashu, email: e.mgqwashu@ru.ac.za or hod.education@ru.ac.za

Yours Faithfully

…….

Julius Homateni Luka

Thank you

Declaration

"Knowledge structures and pedagogic practices"

I…… (Full name/s) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I give consent to Mr. Julius to use me as a participant in his research.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw myself from the project at any time, should I desire to do so.

SIGNATURE OF LECTURER /HOD/COORDINATOR DATE

Appendix F: Informed Consent and Information sheet

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

• Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)

• Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

Name of Principle Investigator: Mr Lukas Homateni Julius

Name of Organization: Rhodes University

Name of Sponsor: Self-funded studies

Name of Project and Version: PhD Studies

Name the group of individuals for whom this consent is written.

This informed consent form is for Academic practitioners who are involved in the designing, teaching and assessment of ……..Name of the course)…….taught to in the department of ……. I am inviting to these academic practitioners to participate in the research "An investigation of the role of academic literacy courses in facilitating epistemological access: a phenomenological study of academic literacy courses in 3 universities in Namibia".

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

My name is Lukas Homateni Julius, a lecturer at the University of Namibia's Language Centre. I am a Ph.D. student in the Education Department at Rhodes University, South Africa. I intend to carry out a research "*An investigation of the role of academic literacy courses in facilitating epistemological access: a phenomenological study of academic literacy courses in 3 universities in Namibia". Your* university in general and department in particular is one of the participants and I would like permission to involve you in my research.

Purpose of the research

Apart from contributing to the limited literature on academic literacy teaching in Namibia, the study aims to provide insights regarding the design, teaching and assessment of academic literacy practitioners as well as discipline specific lecturers. It is imperative to note that literacy challenges and under preparedness illustrated by many undergraduates and new graduates from

higher educational intuitions are topical discussion points in Namibia. One of the critical phenomenon of students' under preparedness is their levels of academic literacy in the Language of learning and teaching (LoLT), English. It therefore necessary that the current model of academic literacy courses as well the employed pedagogical choices are investigated in attempt to establish on how best they can be tailor-made to be responsive to students' academic literacy needs.

Type of Research Intervention

I will first conduct oral interviews with the practitioners to gain access to their understanding of academic literacy. I also be analyzing samples of some of the assessment activities designed for students for example, tests, class activities, tests, assignments and examination and find out the extent to which these courses promote epistemological access to students in their chosen fields. I will also conduct classroom observations of some of the lessons in the courses understand, with the participants. All these will be done at the time of your conveniences such that the whole process does not temper with your official duties/ classes Data generated through these tools are hope to guide this study on the alternative way of teaching academic literacy

Participant Selection

.You are being invited to take part in this research because I feel that your experience as academics in general and lecturers of academic literacy courses in particular can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge of academic literacy, and theorise if needed a new model of teaching academic literacy.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If there is anything which you are unhappy or uncertain about regarding the way I am going about the research, please do tell me, and we can work around it. Please know also that if at any stage you wish to withdraw from the project that is entirely your prerogative.

Procedure

Interviews will take place at your convenient time and place. I do not have preconceived ideas or hypothesis that I want to test about you as participant or the way you teach. I simply want to listen to you talking about your understanding of academic literacy and observe how this

manifests in your teaching. S such I do not have specific lessons that I want to observe, but I will be satisfied if we generate data speaking to the holistically to the teaching of an academic literacy course.

Duration

The research takes place over two semester's intervals, ideally before classes have ended. Since research is such an iterative process, I might be coming back and forth for further clarification of data.

Risks

The discussion is on the participants' understanding of and about the teaching of academic literacy to entrance level/ first year degree students at your institutional type and no personal information is sought. There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, we do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion/interview/survey if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable. Only I and my supervisor will have access to your information.

Benefits

There might be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help me establish on how best teaching of academic literacy can be tailor-made to be responsive to students' academic needs and eventually theorise a more responsive model of teaching academic literacy in Namibia's HEIs.

Reimbursements

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and it will not cost you money in any manner. As such, you will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

Confidentiality

I will not be sharing information about you to anyone outside of the research team. The information that I collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will simply be marked practitioner 1,2, 3 etc or given pseudonyms, it instead of your real

name. Only I will know what your number is and I will lock that information up with a lock and key. It will not be shared with or given to anyone except my supervisor.

Sharing the Results

Nothing that you tell us today will be shared with anybody outside this research, and nothing will be attributed to you by name. After the interviews are transcribed you will be provided with the written transcripts to read through and see if there are incongruities with what you had said. During the writing up my Ph.D. thesis I shall, of course, preserve your anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. Should you be interested in reading the final product of this research, I will very gladly provide a copy of the findings before putting them into the Ph.D. thesis.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and choosing to participate will not affect your job or job-related evaluations in any way. You may stop participating in the discussion/interviews at any time that you wish without your job being affected. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interviews to review your remarks, and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact me: Lukas Julius, University of Namibia/081 217 6291/ljulius017@gmail.com

This study's proposal has been reviewed and approved Research Ethics Committee of your university, which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the REC, contact ……..conduct details for the research ethics committee at the respective HEI……It has also been reviewed and approved by the Higher Degrees Committee at Rhodes University where I am s registered student. The ethical clearance issued by Rhodes University is also attached.

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in the research: "An investigation of the role of academic literacy courses in facilitating epistemological access: a phenomenological study of academic literacy courses in 3 universities in Namibia"

(This section is mandatory)

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____ **Day/month/year**

Appendix G: Observation Schedule

Course: …….

Topic:……

Observed lesson number:……..

Seating arrangement:_____

Lecture hall:_____

_____

Communication between lecturers and students:_____

_____

_____

Which academic conventions covered in the lesson?_____

_____

_____

How individual lecturers' understandings of Academic conventions reflected in the lecturers' explanation of concepts, evaluation of students' understanding and lesson delivery:_____

_____

_____

How the lecturer engages with different students: _____

_____

_____

Any other comments on the observed pedagogical practices:_____

_____

_____

Appendix H: Document Analysis Schedule

1	Type of Document: *{Assignment/Study guide/formal activity}*
2	Program: …….
3	Name the Author of Document: …….
5	For which Audience is the Document Written? *{Student}*
6	a. For what purpose was this document written? Quote from the document (if possible). b. What evidence in the document helps understanding the theoretical underpinnings informing: i) the design academic literacy programme ii) teaching of the academic literacy programme iii) assessment of the academic literacy programme