
THE COMPREHENSION OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE
IN ENGLISH LITERARY TEXTS
BY STUDENTS FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS NOT A MOTHER TONGUE

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study applies Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory to the comprehension of figurative language in poetry. Students' understanding of metaphor as a linguistic category and comprehension of metaphorical texts are analysed in terms of the principle of relevance. Patterns of comprehension in English first language (L1) and English second language (ESL) students' analyses of metaphorical texts are discussed and through an analysis of similarities and differences in these patterns of comprehension an attempt is made to develop a pedagogy around relevance theory.

Relevance theory's particular emphasis on the role played by "context" in cognition is seen to have significance for the teaching of literature in South African universities. Relevance theory's account of cognition generates a range of educational principles which could be specifically applied to the teaching of metaphor.

An appraisal of the strengths and difficulties students experience in expressing their understanding of metaphor in an academic context is included. This was done to further develop relevance theory into a pedagogical approach which takes into account the academic context in which writing occurs. The investigation of the particular difficulties that English metaphor poses for ESL students entailed acquiring a working knowledge of the ways in which metaphor is taught and assessed in DET schools.

The interpretations of students of different linguistic, social and educational backgrounds reveal unifying elements that could be incorporated into a pedagogy based on relevance theory. Such a pedagogy would be appropriate to the multilingual/multicultural/multiracial nature of classes in South African universities and would be a more empowering approach to the teaching of English metaphor.

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1 INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO METAPHOR AND COGNITION

1.1 Background

This study¹ arose out of a concern to address the needs of English Second Language (ESL)² students attending the first year English course at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The high failure rate and large numbers of withdrawals from the course were the cause of this concern.

While levels of English proficiency and writing skills play an obvious role in determining students' performance in an English Department, I have chosen to focus on students' reading and comprehension of texts, although students' writing is also taken into account. The larger question I have attempted to answer is: "why do many ESL students seem to find English poetry so difficult to understand?"³ In seeking to address this question I hoped to find ways of making English literature more accessible to ESL students.

According to Widdowson there are two main reasons for teaching literature to ESL students, the first is an essentially "cultural"⁴ one:

to acquaint students with ways of looking
at the world which characterise the
cultures of the English-speaking
peoples...(1975: 77)

The second reason for teaching English literature is:

to acquaint students with the manner in
which literary works in English use the

language to convey special meanings (1975: 78).

Widdowson rejects the teaching of English literature on a cultural basis (as this might be better taught by using "material other than literature" (1975: 80)) and supports the teaching of English literature as "an enquiry into the way a language is used to express a reality other than that expressed by conventional means". Brumfit has, similarly, argued that works of literature show "language in action" (1986: 236) and adds that this:

will be best achieved by a consideration of works close to the environment of students, both in content and language; the less background information required, the better (1986: 238).

These sentiments are echoed by many ESL theorists - Kachru (1981), Sridhar (1983) and Zughouli (1985) in particular. Hirvela points out that "literature imitates life and its discourses" and is therefore often more successful than more formal and abstract methods of teaching language competence (1990: 239).

The study of literature, then, is an important part of advanced language acquisition. As literary studies, or literary texts are too vast a field to deal with, I narrowed the area of my focus to figurative language in poetry. Metaphor⁵ is obviously a significant part of literature and, in my experience, ESL students tend to have specific difficulties in analysing or explaining figurative language. Metaphor, therefore, seemed an appropriate starting point for the investigation.

1.2 Linguistic Approaches to Metaphor

According to Eco (1984: 88) theories of metaphor are derived from two fundamentally different conceptions of language. The first - *pace* Leech (1969) and Black (1962) on the ability of language to contain and convey meaning - is that language is a rule-governed, convention-based system in which metaphor is explained in terms of a break-down, deviance or creative flaunting of the rules. The second - *pace* Saussure (1916/1966) and Derrida (1976) on language as a "self-referring system" - is that language, by nature and by origin, is metaphorical. Jakobson contends that metonymy and metaphor are the two poles of language (1956/1971). Metonymy and metaphor, he argues, are the two essential ways of structuring discourse. To say that metaphor is anomalous to the rules and conventions of language, Jakobson contends, is an *a posteriori* attempt at imposing a system (1956/1971: 95).

Metonymy has to do with "replacement", or the use of symbols to convey meaning. We speak, for example, of the "sceptre" or the "head" of state. Metaphor refers to the way that many meanings can be conveyed in one image. Metaphor has to do with the "apprehension of resemblances" and, according to Ricoeur, is the more complex figure because its effect is simultaneously to conceal and reveal meaning (1977: 27).

Lee explains the metaphorical complexity of language in terms of the complexity of experience. Metaphorical complexity, he argues, is related to "the infinitely varied nature of our experience of the world":

In order for a finite system [ie language]
to be able to cope with this complexity,
we need to establish categories of
experience through processes of

association and transformation. Some of these are universal to all human cultures, some are culture-specific (1992: 76).

("Culture-specific" aspects of metaphor are obviously important in terms of this study and in part 1.3: "Recent Perspectives on Metaphor" they are examined in more detail.)

1.2.1 Metaphor as deviant

Theorists who subscribe to the notion that figurative usage is an anomaly in a rule-governed system of language characterise metaphor in the following ways:

- 1) Metaphor is able to convey truth. Even metaphors which are blatantly false, such as: "Folly is an endless maze" have a relationship to truth. In this regard, Searle points out that in all cases the "truth" contained in metaphor has to be interpreted figuratively, that is non-literally (1979: 122). Consistent with this view is the idea that meaning, truth and wisdom may be extracted from metaphors.
- 2) Metaphor is a creative use of language, depending upon "conceptual confusion" and "counterlogical" devices for its effect (Leech 1974: 46). For example, in a sentence like: "Time galloped by", the reader is faced with an apparent clash of features: "time" is abstract and inanimate and "galloped by" is literal and animate. The reader has to find a way out of this semantic dilemma through a transfer of meaning. The reader makes sense of this by interpreting "galloped by" figuratively instead of literally, roughly: "Time passed by as quickly as horses do when they are galloping by". Metaphor is therefore an implied comparison and the function of metaphor is hereby seen as descriptive, for by drawing

attention to itself through its unusual features, the descriptive nature of words is heightened.

- 3) Metaphor is an anomalous use of language. In metaphorical usage the expected or "normal" words are replaced by metaphorical substitutes. Brooke-Rose emphasises the syntactic logic of metaphor in her "Simple replacement" theory (1958: 50). Basically, in order to resolve the problem which metaphor creates (logical syntax, but illogical semantics) the anomalous metaphor noun must be replaced with a "normal" noun, the metaphorical verb with an ordinary one, and so on. The "Simple replacement" theory of metaphor takes for granted a concept of metaphor as comparison. In addition, as Brooke-Rose's main examples of metaphor are taken from Shakespeare's Anthony and Cleopatra, John Donne and the Romantic poets, she tends to emphasise the emotive nature of metaphor.
- 4) Metaphor is a synchronic phenomenon (Davidson 1984: 245), by which it is suggested that the meaning of metaphor is time-bound and has a specific historical and cultural context. Davidson illustrates this point by means of an example from Milton's sonnet, On His Blindness:

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless...

The complex "Talent" metaphor depends for its success on the reader's knowledge of Milton's blindness, his "talent" or poetic reputation, the Biblical parable of the talents, and the archaic meaning of "talent", a golden coin.

The above ideas - that metaphor is able to convey truth, that meaning is transferred from one domain to another,

that metaphor implies a comparison and that metaphors are specific to a particular time - are implications of the theory that language is in essence referential and literal.

1.2.2 Metaphor as intrinsic to language

Theories of metaphor which derive from concepts of the essential metaphorical nature of language, the "arbitrariness of the sign" and the "self-referring" quality of language result in rather more complex ideas about metaphor:

- 1) The context of metaphor is language, which implies that "each metaphor can be traced back to a subjacent chain of metonymic connections which constitute the framework of the code and upon which is based the constitution of any semantic field" (Eco 1976: 68). Eco here implies that the meanings of all words is metaphorical in origin. Lee enlarges on this idea by suggesting that if words did not possess this "semantic flexibility" which operates "on the basis of perceptions of similarity across the data of our phenomenal experience", language would be "impossibly unwieldy" (1992: 88).
- 2) Poetic metaphors are distinguished from other "communicative" metaphors by their aesthetic function. A metaphor becomes aesthetic, "beautiful", when it has "the tension, the ambiguity and difficulty which are characteristic of the aesthetic message" (Eco 1984: 82). Lakoff and Turner argue that the "creative" metaphors we associate with poetry are not different in kind from conventional metaphors but are "elaborated exploitations of the potential in conventional metaphor for reshaping conceptualisations" (1989: 51).

- 3) Metaphor is diachronic. Every metaphor has its own history, which can be retrieved by translating it into another metaphor. The metaphor from T S Eliot's Preludes:

His soul stretched tight across the skies...

presents a human soul as something concrete, pliable and large, terms we immediately discount as "untrue". The way to resolve this dilemma, according to Traugott and Pratt, is not only to understand the "semiotic incompatibility" through "the projection of semantic characteristics between lexical items" (1980: 208), but also to understand that beyond the metaphor is another metaphor. This other metaphor is dependent on an older metaphor according to which people's "nerves" are strings which can be stretched or loosened. Thus we use words like "tense", "uptight", "hang loose" or "strung out" when referring to people's nervous condition (1980: 209).

In contrast to earlier theories which stress both the unusualness or deviance of metaphor and text-based, time-specific methods of interpreting metaphor, more recent theories of figurative language emphasise the pervasiveness of metaphor in all functions of language and the diachronic strata of metaphorical language.

1.3 Recent Perspectives on Metaphor

Recent work on metaphor, following on from post-structural approaches to language, suggests that meaning resides not only in the text itself, but in the kinds of knowledge that exist beyond the text. This contextual knowledge needs to be accessed in order for the text to be understood. In this regard context, culture and ideology are important aspects of metaphorical constructions.

1.3.1 Context

Sperber and Wilson emphasise the role played by the context in which the metaphor is uttered:

A good creative metaphor is precisely one in which a variety of contextual effects can be retained and understood as weakly implicated by the speaker. In the richest and most successful cases, the hearer or reader can go beyond just exploring the immediate context and the entries for concepts involved in it, accessing a wide area of knowledge, adding metaphors of his own as interpretations of possible developments he is not ready to go into, and getting more and more very weak implicatures with suggestions for still further processing (1986: 236).

Sperber and Wilson explain the operation of metaphor in terms of a context of existing assumptions. An utterance is made within a context which affects its meaning. The utterance thus "implies" a context. The context is significant both in terms of generating and of comprehending utterances. The context in which an utterance occurs is often implicit, and may require either tacit understanding or active decoding.

"Implicatures" are the implicitly communicated assumptions in which most statements and utterances are embedded (Grice 1981, Sperber and Wilson 1987).

The implicatures generated by metaphors may be weak or strong, complex or straightforward. Sperber and Wilson cite the following example:

Their friendship blossomed.

This metaphor has several implicatures: their friendship grew from small beginnings, was nurtured into something beautiful and was destined to fade, and so on (1987: 21). Most metaphors, they contend, have a "substantial element of indeterminacy" in their interpretation. Some implicatures are relevant and others are not.

Sperber and Wilson devote considerable effort to explaining how the sifting of relevant and irrelevant information occurs. This is a particularly useful account of the comprehension of metaphor, and more detail on this aspect of the theory appears in 1.4.2.

1.3.2 Culture and Ideology

The many-layered nature of metaphorical language can be conceived as a "metonymic chain" of language that links back in time with other metaphors. Thus metaphors, argue Lakoff and Johnson, necessarily express and convey cultural knowledge and values. They claim that figurative language embodies the cultural knowledge of the "Unknown Coiner" (1980: 53).

Metaphors structure our experience, argue Lakoff and Johnson. If, in terms of Western culture, argument is conceptualised in terms of battle, with winners and losers and victories and defeats we would expect to find that many of the conventional metaphors used in talking about argument are derived from war. This, they point out, is in fact the case: claims are "indefensible", ideas are "shot down in flames", criticisms are "right on target", and so on. There are, they suggest, certain "structural metaphors" from which numerous other metaphors derive. An example of a structural metaphor is "ARGUMENT is WAR". The reason why we talk of argument as "WAR" rather than as a "COOPERATIVE WORK OF ART" is a cultural one (1980: 63). If cultural values are embedded

in the language, then many English speakers clearly value intellectual competition and aggression.

There are many structural metaphors in which abstract concepts are treated in terms of the concrete: the mind is a machine ("My mind is a bit rusty today"), the personality is a brittle object ("He's going to pieces"), the visual field is a container ("It's coming into sight now"), love has substance ("She had a lot of love to give"), and so on (Lee 1992: 72).

Lee explains the pervasiveness of the substitution of concrete for abstract in metaphors in terms of general cognitive development, which originates in our interaction with the physical world (1992: 73). It is thus easier for us to construct meaning in terms of the concrete than the abstract.

Lakoff and Johnson conclude that:

...metaphor pervades our normal conceptual system. Because so many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (the emotions, ideas, time, etc) we need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts that we understand in clearer terms (spatial orientation, objects, etc). This need leads to metaphorical definition in our conceptual system (1980: 115).

An important implication of Lakoff and Johnson's views is that it is difficult to use metaphorical language in English without implying certain cultural values and norms. Simile, metaphor, analogy, etc are based on cognitive processes which interpret new situations in

terms of previously encountered and understood situations
- and this often implies cultural knowledge or ideology.

1.3.3 Construction of Meaning

Lee's theory of "competing discourses" develops from Lakoff and Johnson on the cultural value of metaphor. Lee points out that the "process of metaphor" has important implications, not only in terms of conveying cultural knowledge and ideology, but also in terms of constructing these discourses (1992: 90).

According to Lee, metaphorical discourses are important in constructing the ways in which we perceive reality. He cites as an example "nukespeak", a system of naming in which the destructive potential of nuclear weapons is mediated by language to promote their acceptance and to legitimate them as part of our cultural heritage (1992: 84). Names like "Titan" and "Zeus", for example, construct nuclear weapons as instruments of divine power.

The underlying concept of the nature and role of language in this analysis is political. Language is viewed not as a neutrally expressive medium, but one which both shapes and is shaped by social change. For Weedon:

Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity is contested (1987: 21).

People, or subjects, then are constituted in and by language which is directly implicated in relations of power and dominance.

By articulating the various ways subjects can situate themselves in relation to texts or discourses we are able to critique interpretative norms, prescriptive agendas for reading and a unitary notion of the text. To be a subject means to activate the network of discourse from a particular ideological or political position.

1.4 The Comprehension of Metaphor

The comprehension of metaphor can be seen as a complex process of "decoding" the many layers of information conveyed in the texts and contexts of figurative language usage. Two related theories of comprehension, Schema Theory and Relevance Theory, are particularly suited to explaining how this comprehension occurs.

1.4.1 Schema Theory

Schema theory accounts for the interactive nature of reading; that is, that readers' background knowledge is important for the comprehension of new material in the reading process. Schema Theory does, however, have a wider significance for comprehension. Of specific concern to ESL students, schema theory explains aspects of the comprehension of metaphor, which is related to the work done by Lakoff and Johnson on the cognitive significance of metaphor.

For students whose cultural knowledge does not have a Western orientation, English metaphors can be confusing. Such students would obviously benefit from an awareness of the cultural significance of metaphor. Brown points out that "cultural knowledge" is too vast a field to teach in the context of English literature. She stresses the particular importance of reading strategies for ESL students and notes that ESL students need to be taught "explicit strategies for making inferences from language

in order for cultural background to be constructed" (1990: 11-17).

Murray (1985: 7) notes that unless such strategies are taught, students will interpret texts according to their own background knowledge. (See also Jacob: 1987 203 - 218). Murray's recommendations are based on the body of research into reading comprehension known as "schema theory" (Adams and Collins 1979). Schemata entail a range of implications for reading comprehension. A "schema" can be defined as an "abstract knowledge structure" in memory (Adams and Collins 1979: 58) and functions in the interpreting, storing and retrieving of new information. According to this theory, texts do not of their own accord carry meaning. Texts provide "directions" to readers who construct meaning on the basis of previously acquired knowledge. That is, comprehension results when the reader can fit the incoming information (the textual "directions") into a framework established by his or her previous experience of language and of the world.

During efficient reading, incoming textual data is processed (bottom-up) and activates appropriate higher level schemata (top-down) against which the reader tries to give the text a coherent interpretation. The reader makes predictions on the basis of these top-down processes and then searches the text for confirmation or rejection of these partially satisfied higher order schemata. Thus what the reader brings to the text is just as important as what he or she finds there. In this view, reading is regarded "not as a reaction to a text, but as interaction between the writer and the reader mediated through the text" (Widdowson 1979: 174).

Although schema-theoretic views of reading have provided very valuable insights into the reading process, they can be criticised for underestimating the role of "bottom-up"

processes in effective comprehension. In response to research which suggested that superior reading ability was due to a combination of both top-down and bottom-up processing, Stanovich (1980) developed his interactive compensatory model of reading fluency.

This model is "interactive" in that it assumes that meaning arises from information provided simultaneously from several knowledge sources" (1980: 63). In other words, if a reader's linguistic knowledge is weak at any one point, he or she will compensate by drawing on background knowledge, and vice versa. Top-down and bottom-up processes may be seen to be equally important.

With reference to this study, what students bring to their reading of a piece of literature is as important as what they read there. In addition, their ability to comprehend the text is the result of being able to decode the meaning of the texts. In the case of metaphorical language, "decoding" becomes that much more complex as it depends on the reader accessing a range of meanings and associations which are often culturally embedded.

1.4.2 Relevance Theory

Relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986) is another way in which theorists have attempted to explain the processes that take place in the interpretation of language in general and metaphor in particular.

According to Sperber and Wilson, the "code model" of communication, that is, that interpretation occurs when "coded" messages are "decoded", is an inadequate one as it fails to take into account the context in which the utterance is made. In the metaphorical utterance: "He was a plant destroyed by morning frost" we can see roughly what the statement conveys, but we would all arrive at

slightly different interpretations, most of which would be acceptable to the speaker. This would not be possible if the interpretation of utterances was ruled by a code (Blass 1990: 35). The implicit import of an utterance, argue Sperber and Wilson, "is highly context dependent" (1987: 5). They regard Grice's "inferential" model of communication (Grice 1968) as a more successful one, but point out that it is problematic in that issues of context, culture and background information are not clearly defined (Sperber and Wilson 1987: 8).

"Inferential communication", they suggest, is a basic part of comprehension. In making inferences, we pay attention to the most relevant phenomena available; we construct the most relevant interpretations of these phenomena; and we process them in a context that maximises their relevance. Relevance, and the maximisation of relevance, they argue, is the key to human cognition (1987: 9).

Their central argument is that cognition and information processing are most effective when the message is perceived by the "processor" (or receiver of the message) as "relevant", that is, useful or meaningful in some way. "Relevance" depends on a number of factors, including context, assumptions, inferences made and background knowledge. As receivers of messages, we are more likely to attend to and process that information which seems contextually appropriate.

The context in which an utterance occurs will have a significant effect on how it is interpreted. Background knowledge may also be seen as an aspect of context that is important for interpretation. Sperber and Wilson point out that the utterance "The football team gathered around their coach" depends on a knowledge of the context in order to be correctly interpreted.

Without this context we do not know whether the football team gathered about their trainer or their bus.

Interpretation of this utterance also depends on background knowledge - that certain types of touring buses are also called "coaches" and that the Americanism "coach" refers to a trainer.

Information which adds the most knowledge to our store at the lowest processing cost, they contend, is also likely to be perceived as "relevant". "Processing cost" is the amount of mental effort needed to process information. Sperber and Wilson argue that extra processing effort detracts from "relevance". If the interpretation of "coach" as "trainer" suggests itself to us, we are likely to accept this, rather than struggle to find other possible interpretations.

Sperber and Wilson point out that the perception of relevance is closely related to the saliency of implicatures (see above 1.3.1). The word "coach" can also mean a stately carriage, used to convey royalty. In the context of football players, however, this is a "weak implicature" and we would tend to dismiss this association.

Sperber and Wilson explain "relevance" in the following terms:

- a) Other things being equal, the greater the contextual effects, the greater the relevance.
- b) Other things being equal, the smaller the processing effort, the greater the relevance (1987: 12).

During processing, new information may interact with what

we already know in various ways. Firstly, it may interact with its context to produce contextual implications; secondly, it may strengthen assumptions we already hold; and thirdly it may contradict and eliminate those assumptions "to inferentially yield new assumptions" (Sinclair and Winckler 1991: 17-18).

Sperber and Wilson claim that in interpreting metaphorical language the reader undergoes the same process as in interpreting literal language. A figurative interpretation, they argue, is no more "difficult" than a literal interpretation. This is because a reader will only accept an utterance as literal if this is consistent with the principle of relevance. If there is an easily accessible non-literal interpretation, there will be no need for the listener to consider the literal interpretation at all (1987: 21).

Theories of comprehension have obvious significance for our understanding of the processes students use when interpreting metaphor. Sperber and Wilson argue that the form of an utterance rarely reflects the form of the thought it expresses. In this regard they note that metaphorical language may be found on a continuum of more or less literal uses of language. When interpreting metaphor, we search for a meaning which is relevant to the context and, in order to reduce the processing load as much as possible, the first meaning which appears relevant is accepted. In metaphorical uses of language, however, the situation may be complicated by the fact that poetic metaphors often carry several implicatures which all contribute to the meaning of the utterance.

1.5 Aims and Methodologies of this study

1.5.1 Aims

The main aim of this study is to develop a pedagogy around relevance theory. Relevance theory's emphasis on the role played by "context" in cognition seemed to me to have particular significance for the teaching of literature in South African universities. Relevance theory's account of cognition generates a range of educational principles which could be specifically applied to the teaching of metaphor.

Subsidiary aims included an analysis of students' understanding of metaphor as a linguistic category, students' comprehension of metaphorical texts, and an exploration of the relationship between these. By finding patterns of comprehension in English first language (L1) and ESL students' analyses of metaphorical texts and through an analysis of similarities and differences in these patterns of comprehension I hoped to find ways of applying relevance pedagogy to the teaching of poetry.

In my analysis of the interpretations of students of different linguistic, social and educational backgrounds I hoped to find unifying elements that could be incorporated into a pedagogy based on relevance theory. Such a pedagogy would be appropriate to the multilingual/multicultural/multiracial nature of classes in South African universities and would be a more empowering approach to the teaching of English literature.

An appraisal of the strengths and difficulties students experience in expressing their understanding of metaphor in an academic context was also included. This was done to further develop relevance theory into a pedagogical approach which takes into account the writing/speaking

context. The investigation of the particular difficulties English metaphor poses for ESL students entailed acquiring a working knowledge of the ways in which metaphor is taught and assessed in DET schools.

1.5.2 Methodologies

Data for this research comprises students' test results collected from the Entrance exam to the English Department at UCT as well as a specially created test on metaphor, which was written by first year students at UCT and at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The students in this study are: 1) UCT first year students, studying English literature 2) UCT students doing a pre-first year "Introduction to English" course in the English Department, 3) UCT students doing a pre-first year English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course, and 4) UWC first year students, studying an English language course. Roughly half the students in this study speak English as a first language and half speak other languages.

I saw the collection of data as a "hypothesis generating" activity. Vulliamy, in his report on educational research in developing countries, recommends that in place of testing preconceived notions, data collection and data analysis should occur simultaneously in order to generate, rather than prove, hypotheses (1990: 11). Stenhouse warns researchers about the danger of perpetuating dominant social or political trends when establishing research paradigms. He writes:

In the familiar tradition the uses of knowledge are reserved for an elite, while the burdens of knowledge are imposed upon the generality by an imperious pedagogy... There are gross inequalities in the

distribution and the means of thinking,
and hence the power thinking confers, and
consequently the creation of a proletariat
of the intellect (1979: 123).

It was not my intention to look for differences between the answers of ESL students and those of English L1 students, but rather, through the analysis of the data to offer, in Westwood's term, a "speaking position" to the researched (1992: 195). Interviews with a class of UWC students were thus an important additional source of data.

Greater detail on the students' home languages and educational backgrounds is provided below (see 3.2 and 4.3.1)

1.6 Conclusion

Texts or utterances do not "convey" meaning from the speaker to listener; rather there is an interaction between the text and the reader's conceptual structures which produces meaning. Many metaphors, Lee suggests, are comprehensible to a listener only if that person has a particular way of understanding the world. In many cases information that is crucial to the interpretation of an utterance does not reside in the utterance itself, but in the knowledge base that the hearer brings to the utterance (1992: 81). The pervasiveness of metaphor and its significance in "discourse" and "ideology" has several teaching implications.

As teachers we often use metaphors to verbalise our experiences:

Theories of learning are dependent on metaphors, because they are centrally concerned either with mental acts and

conscious processes or with operations of mental mechanisms below the level of consciousness, all of which are describable only by metaphorical means (Elliott 1984: 38).

Schön has argued that, through the discovery of new metaphors, new perceptions, explanations and inventions are generated (1979: 259). In this regard we, as teachers, need to be aware of the metaphors we teach by and the discourses we construct with them. This is particularly significant in the context of academic development in South Africa where the discourse of "disadvantage" not only locates problems of comprehension in the student, but implies that there is an accepted, normal, advantaged standard outside of which is a marginalised, disadvantaged people (Ndebele 1993). In this regard Ndebele's concern with the task of the creative writer is equally appropriate to the teacher of literature; he asserts the need to:

search for ways of thinking, ways of perception, that will help to break down the closed epistemological structures of South African oppression (1989: 48).

Many teachers, Doubell argues, are unaware of the "ideologically determined" nature of their teaching (1990: 97) and the effect that this might have on learners who do not have the sort of background knowledge that would enable them to challenge these positions.

While many educationalists have generally agreed that literary studies need to be relevant to the student, there are others, like McKay, who feel that students can profitably learn from the literature of different cultures. Though referring to Japanese students learning

English through American literature, she makes a point which is equally relevant to South African students and teachers:

Clearly in selecting a text, reading teachers need to assess the cultural assumptions in the text and to evaluate how the assumptions conflict with the student's own cultural assumptions (1989: 15).

In a student centred approach to teaching metaphor students' cultures would be included in English literature classes. To do so would "provide a cultural balance, provide the opportunity to make cross-cultural comparisons and lessen the risk of damaging students' self esteem" (Barron 1991: 174).

African-American literary criticism has radically critiqued notions of literary phenomena as "universal", "canonical" or in the "mainstream" by problematizing these terms and the boundaries they inevitably construct (Spurlin 1990: 732). Looking specifically at metaphor in an ESL context, Lindströmberg talks of certain metaphors as a "lexical bar" or barrier, restricting the access of the "unprivileged to such education and employment opportunities as depend on a broad command of higher order topics" (1989: 214).

Chapman, in arguing the need to adapt English courses to South African students, recommends the recovery of "relevance and dynamism in an expanded cultural field" (1990: 22). ESL students need to be accommodated in English Departments not only in terms of course content, but, as Palazzo suggests, by making explicit the strategies for literary analysis that are often taken for

granted. She recommends:

- a) emphasising literary skills or tools, in other words the processes which the discipline involves
- b) allowing students the use of these skills from their own cultural or ideological standpoint
- c) allowing all the students to participate on an equal footing (1990: 147).

Implicit in these suggestions is a shift to a methodology which expands the notion of what competence in the context of English literary studies might entail as well as an acknowledgement that current practices in English departments have denied students opportunities to operate as powerfully within the university as they could (see Norton-Pierce 1989).

While one would not expect first year students to be aware of sophisticated theories of metaphor, a student centred approach would entail an understanding of some of the issues involved. We can, for example, assume that students are familiar with metaphorical uses of language in their L1 and that their present competence in the second language (L2) will include metaphorical usages, but that certain metaphors, particularly poetic metaphors, may not carry common connotations or ideological perspectives (Bowers 1992: 34).

In this regard Prodromou's differentiation between "cultural background" and "cultural foreground" is a useful one (1992: 41). Prodromou argues for a multi-cultural approach, particularly one that involves

comparisons between students' culture and the culture of the target language. "Foregrounding" is an attempt to make explicit cultural assumptions or aspects of texts which depend on background knowledge (1992: 46 -7).

In order to be able to identify metaphor in literary texts, students need to be able to categorise figurative language in relation to other forms of language. Prototype theory (see Leech 1974) argues that categories are organised around a central instance, with certain other instances being more or less peripheral. The more richly defined a category is, and the more clearly it is held, the more easily members of that category can be identified.

Abstracting from the discussion above, a prototypical metaphor is an indirect representation of a thought which generates a range of contextual implicatures. In order to analyse metaphorical language students need to have a concept of a prototypical metaphor. The more richly this concept is defined, the easier it will be to identify metaphorical language. Thus knowing something about the different types of metaphor and the effects on meaning is obviously useful for purposes of identifying figures of speech in a text.

Having introduced students to these "literary tools" we should allow students to engage with metaphorical texts in ways which are meaningful in terms of their own experience (Wright 1992: 27). Fox points out that our roles as ESL teachers include the interpretation of students' responses; we must seek to understand the cultural forces that shape our students and find ways to accommodate these forces in our practices (1990: 81). A multi-cultural approach, particularly one which includes a meeting ground between the students' culture and the teachers' culture is an important area to develop.

Metaphorical language is often more difficult for ESL students to interpret than literal language and schema theory and relevance theory go some way towards providing a possible explanation for this: if we tend to interpret what we read or hear in terms of what is already familiar and/or interesting to us, and if we also tend to accept our first interpretation of an utterance, then ESL students will tend to draw on their background knowledge and experience when interpreting English metaphors. Although this will not always lead to miscomprehension, there are those instances where the cultures and their assumptions may differ markedly. It is this area of "miscomprehension" that is of particular interest to me in this research. It should be noted that I do not regard such "miscomprehensions" as "wrong" for differences in interpretation are inevitable among all students and particularly so among students who are reading the products of a different culture in a second (or even third) language.

NOTES

- 1 In 1992 Zannie Bock (a lecturer in the Department of English of the University of Cape Town) and I received a Kellogg Foundation research award to investigate the needs of ESL students in the English Department at the University of Cape Town. This thesis grew out of the Kellogg research project and I would like to acknowledge Zannie Bock's support of and contribution to my work.
- 2 The appellation "ESL" probably needs some justification. Most English L1 students in this study have studied English L1 at school, while most ESL students studied English L2. Obviously, socio-economic groupings and the specificities of race and class in the South African educational context play a significant role in students' responses to texts. It is not my intention to underestimate the importance of these elements, nor is it my intention to silence issues of the educational oppression of many black students with the label "ESL". ESL students in this study come from a variety of educational backgrounds. The only factor that they all have in common is that they all speak one or more African languages at home and have studied English L2 at school.

- 3 The difficulties that ESL students experience with poetry relative to other literary genres was the subject of several papers at the 1993 South African Association for Academic Development (SAAAD) Conference: in particular Chaskalson et al 1993, Ogram 1993.
- 4 The word "culture" appears frequently and is usually used to mean "whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to members of the society" (Lancy 1983: 101)
- 5 "Metaphor" is used throughout as an "umbrella term" for most types of figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification, animation, synecdoche, metonymy and so on).

2 ESL LITERATURE AT SCHOOL

2.1 Introduction

In order to devise a testing instrument to find out how ESL students interpret metaphorical language, I felt that I needed to look at the way in which literature, and in particular poetry, is taught in DET schools.¹ There is a body of literature which documents general teaching practices, including literature, in black high schools. I felt that it was important to survey this literature and to look at the principles and rationale of the matric literature syllabus and examination. I wanted to see if there was consistency in carrying forward the principles outlined in the syllabus to the final examination. I also wanted to interview as many teachers as possible in order to find out how they approached the teaching of poetry. This data would, I hoped, provide me with some background information on the teaching of literature and therefore on students' abilities and difficulties.

2.2 Literature survey: English Literature in Black High Schools

At the heart of the South African education system are practices resulting from the ideologies of Apartheid - in particular the deliberate attempt to control levels of communication and directions of thought (Kallaway 1986: 3). Language learning in black South African schools, and the learning of English in particular, is often oppressive in a number of ways.

The teaching of a language, like any other teaching, can perpetuate the ideologies of segregation and oppression; and a perusal of the texts historically chosen for English language and literature in black schools will demonstrate this (Walsh 1990: 184). In addition, audio-

lingual "drill" methods, rote learning and content-based syllabuses fail to develop students' ability to move from perceptual to conceptual realms of thought (Luria 1952/1982). Vygotsky (1962), referring to the relationship between consciousness and the organisation of knowledge, argues that intellectual development is determined by the mastery of linguistic tools of thought and the socio-cultural experience of the individual.

Ellis points out that whether the educational goal is seen as the creation of autonomous, creative thinkers, or of a clear and thorough grasp of subject principles and content, there is a need for communicative teaching (1987: 85). There is an extensive body of literature which argues that learning will be more effective if the student is engaged in an active exploration of the material to be learned (see for example Barnes 1976, Brumfit and Johnson 1979, Ellis 1987 and Widdowson 1987).

The study of literature is clearly an important area for communicative language teaching. Through the development of reading strategies (Walters and England 1988: 40 - 43), discussions with peers and teachers, students could be encouraged to negotiate the meanings of literary texts. The tendency in black high schools, however, is to over-emphasise the content and vocabulary of literary texts - methodologies which fail to promote a critical approach to learning. Because the study of literature often involves experiential and moral knowledge, it is a study which could facilitate the acquisition of these intellectual skills and abilities (Walters and England 1990: 211).

2.3 The DET Literature Syllabus: Theory

Any syllabus will express certain assumptions about language, approaches to teaching and learning and the

pedagogic and social processes within the classroom (Breen 1987).

The new DET syllabus for English Second Language Higher Grade, introduced in 1987, is "concerned with English as a means of communication in our multilingual society" (1). It gives a detailed breakdown of the skills which ESL students should have acquired by the end of Std 10, with particular emphasis on the communicative function of English. The final examinations are intended "to assess how far the stated objectives of the course have been attained" (7).

The large number of literary texts which need to be studied for the matric examination is not however conducive to a communicative approach to language learning (Flower and Hayes 1980: 22). There is no time allocated for the discussion and negotiation of meaning in the syllabus. There is still an emphasis on the "product", rather than the "process" (Britton et al: 1975) in the recommendations of the Syllabus handbook. There is also no specific allocation of time for writing, pre-writing or revision activities. There is an insistence on discrete "skills" in the syllabus document, which is not consistent with an "integrated approach" to language learning (Nightingale 1988: 264).

2.4 The DET Literature Syllabus: Practice

The skills outlined below are some of the "minimum objectives" laid down by the syllabus.

In reading, students should be able "to respond to and appreciate the texts in the reading programme" (5). They should understand the use of non-textual cues such as layout, punctuation, titles and paragraph subheadings. Rhetorical devices in the text, such as emphasis,

exemplification, clarification, illustration, contradiction and conclusion all need to be within students' range, as do stylistic features such as literal and figurative language. Students are required to respond to texts on a literal level as well as infer meanings not explicit in the text, and to distinguish fact from opinion.

The productive skills required of the students in their writing are equally sophisticated. Thus exemplary ESL students can "express themselves comfortably" in informal writing or "in a more formally ordered way in sustained discursive writing" through "choice of words and idioms" (6), varied sentence construction and rhetorical techniques. In addition students should know how to apply these different conventions for various writing purposes - which sounds more "product" than "process" oriented.

English Literature is regarded as part of the general reading programme mentioned above. The syllabus states that "in addition to the encouragement of private reading by pupils, teachers should actively support this process by providing many opportunities for discussions of books read by pupils in a teacher-assisted private reading programme" (5). The syllabus goes on to say that "the following prescribed reading programme must also be implemented each year of the course" and lists drama, poetry, novels and an "open" section (including short stories or relevant prose) as necessary components of the reading programme. Literature, according to the syllabus, counts for 100/350 marks (for full time pupils) or approximately 1/3 of the total English mark, but despite the relatively large weighting given to the literature component, there is little guidance offered to teachers regarding its teaching. The handbook "Subject Policy for English" recommends the development of "an educated appreciation of English Literature" (2), but there is

little in the handbook which explains what is meant by "appreciation", or how to teach it. There are several practical suggestions concerning teaching Shakespeare, poetry, novels, etc (7-9), the drawing up of work programmes, suggestions for teaching, for example: by theme (10); but the principles of literary criticism or appreciation, and how these might be related to a communicative approach are not explained. That there is some confusion regarding informing principles is reflected in the rather fragmentary nature of the 1991 Literature exam, model answers and examiner's report.

2.5 Assessment of the 1991 DET Literature Examination

(See the Appendix A for the examination paper, model answers and examiner's report)

The questions in the Literature exam were on *Romeo and Juliet*, "The Journey of the Magi", "Ozymandias" (the two poems were treated as one question), *Close to the Sun* (a collection of short stories) and *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* (a novel). Students were required to answer two out of the four questions. According to the examiner's report (by Mr P Southey), 85% of all students answered on the Shakespeare, 40% on the short story, "about a third" on the novel and only 25% on the poetry. This gives one the rather unsatisfactory total of 183%. If all students answered both questions the total should be 200 %. Perhaps 17 % of the students did not manage to answer two questions.

2.5.1 *Romeo and Juliet*

Most of the exam questions are concerned with content or with vocabulary, and not with deeper levels of understanding. The "Subject Policy for English" handbook recommends working from a "broad plot outline to specific

events and scenes that illuminate character" (p 8) - by which it is presumed that theme and ideas, should precede detailed analysis. None of the questions on the first extract are aimed at an understanding of "broad outlines" or of deeper levels of comprehension. The questions tend to be fragmentary and superficial, relying heavily on the pupil's knowledge of content and his or her vocabulary, rather than on a more general understanding of the play and its characters.

A problematical issue is the examiner's implication that there is only one correct answer to a question. Another problem in the setting of questions is the examiner's assumption of cultural knowledge or bias. The phrasing of the questions is often confusing and it seems that no care was taken to avoid ambiguity or misunderstanding in the wording of the questions.

I do not wish to suggest that there is no place in an examination for questions related to content and vocabulary. On the contrary, they are important ones; but they need to be more carefully formulated and more carefully structured in order to ensure integration than fragmentation. Integration is clearly intended, as introduced in section 5.1.11 "Integrated approach" of the "Subject Policy for English" handbook:

this approach is a move away from the fragmented approach of English teaching whereby the teacher attempts to import written and oral skills, using a method in which each aspect of language teaching is treated separately and independently. By using the integrated approach however, the teacher relates lessons thematically; the teacher integrates various facets of

English teaching. For example, a comprehension passage based on *Romeo and Juliet* could be followed by a discussion on family feuds (10).

An integrated approach is in principle meant to underlie the syllabus and is related to communicative teaching in linking meaning and the linguistic forms which support that meaning (Halliday 1975). I wondered why, with regard to the second extract, there was no attempt to engage the candidate critically with the text. There were no questions requiring the pupil to respond to the issues raised by the extract. Questions like: "Do you think Juliet is right to challenge her father?", or: "Why does her father react in this way..." are absent. In fact the words "why" or "in your opinion" are noticeably lacking from all questions. The final question, No 16, requires a paraphrase of the scene: "Imagine you are Juliet. Report briefly what happened here in your meeting with your parents and the Nurse". This question seems to me to follow more closely a communicative approach. In terms of the recommendation to progress from broad outlines to specific events and scenes, it might have been more logical to have begun with Question 16, the broad overview and deep level understanding, and then moved on to issues of content and vocabulary.

2.5.2 "Journey of the Magi"

I have much the same comments to make on the questions set on this text: they tend to be fragmentary rather than integrated (none of the questions ask the candidate to explain the general ideas expressed in the poem), draw on a superficial level of comprehension (Questions 12, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12), rely too heavily on the students' general knowledge (Questions 1, 2, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 14) and vocabulary (Question 6, 7, 12) and many have an obvious

cultural bias (see Questions 1, 2, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 15, 16, 17). While the point behind these questions seems to be to test general knowledge and vocabulary, there are several questions which seem to me to be pointless and abstruse (Questions 3, 4, 13). Other questions seem too ambitious: does the examiner really expect words like "refractory" to be part of the average L2 student's vocabulary?

The comments made in the examiner's report indicate the difficulties students had with these words: "The number of marks lost on 'synonyms' was surprising".

I found the lack of clarity in the phrasing of the questions to be a real problem.

2.5.3 "Ozymandias"

The two questions set on this sonnet highlight my concern with the literature paper as a whole. No interpretation or criticism of the poem is required. Question 18 tests only the candidate's vocabulary and Question 19 (possibly the most poorly phrased question of the entire paper) is so confusing that two literary experts who attempted the question were baffled. The grammatical error in 19.2 adds to the overall confusion: "What is it that do the surviving?"

The examiner's difficulties show that tracing Shelley's long and rambling sentences is an extremely complex business. It might have made more sense in this poem, to ask students to examine some of the features of the complicated sentence (try to find its subject, main verb, etc).

2.5.4 Sections C and D: "The Consequences" (from *Close to the Sun*) and *I heard the Owl call my Name*

I did not examine these sections in detail, being unfamiliar with the texts. My brief glance at the setting of the questions again indicates an over-preponderance of questions on vocabulary, basic comprehension and content.

2.5.5 Conclusion: Literature Exam

The Literature exam does not encourage a critical and holistic understanding of the texts. Rather, there is a focus on elements within the passages and a promotion of the idea that there is one right answer which pupils should "find".

It is unfortunate that there is so little South African material in the Exam. There is surely a case to be made for the desirability of accessible or more familiar literary texts in a communicative-based course.

2.6 Assessment of the Language Exam

I noted a similar approach in the language exam. The English Subject Advisor told me that most teachers were using *Advance with English* as a language textbook. I noted that older editions of *Advance with English* (Std 6: 1979) have a strong emphasis on formal grammar. These grammatical exercises are presented in a situational or contextual way. The more recent Std 9 (1988 - 15th impression 1991) and Std 10 (1986 - 15th impression 1990) editions, while still covering a formal syllabus, show a definite swing towards a functional or communicative approach to language teaching. Language is presented not as a set of rules to be learned, but as having a meaningful communicative purpose. This shift in approach would seem to parallel the introduction of the revised

syllabus for English Second Language Higher Grade for Stds 9 and 10 in 1985. However, my perusal of the 1991 language paper indicates that this shift has not been reflected in the exam, which still demands a discrete, rule-based knowledge of the language in which one answer is "right".

2.7 Teachers' views

I was invited to participate in a workshop at the I D Mkize Comprehensive School in Gugulethu (a township near Cape Town) on 8 February 1992 from 14h00 to 16h00. It was offered to Std 10 teachers from a variety of schools in Khayalitsha and Gugulethu. About 20 teachers and the English Subject Advisor, attended.

After the presentation of findings on the literature examination (summaries of 2.5 above) the topic was open for discussion.

Most teachers felt that the syllabus requirements were unrealistic. In practice they felt it was impossible to teach all the skills required. Teachers also felt that there was a lack of consistency between the communicative principles of the syllabus and the factual knowledge required by the examination. Young and Fulwiler point out that a "process" approach to writing necessitates curriculum revision (1982: 281). There is, according to the teachers, no space in the curriculum for a "process" approach to writing, despite the theoretical changes in the DET syllabus. In order to prepare pupils adequately for the final examinations teachers felt they needed to drill students on content.

Teachers were also concerned about the use of model answers and marking memoranda for the purposes of assessing pupils in the literature paper as this approach

does not allow much room for individual interpretation. Teaching thus becomes fairly prescriptive. This approach, which was generally acknowledged as undesirable but necessary, goes some way to explain my experience of ESL students' lack of confidence in offering their own interpretations of texts.

One teacher made the point that taking a communicative approach to literature (for example asking students what they would have done in Juliet's place, etc) is extremely time-consuming. Such exercises take much longer than merely handing out a list of things for students to learn about the play. As the syllabus is so vast, this teacher felt that there was not enough time to teach in this way. He suggested that if the DET was serious about a communicative approach they should reduce the number of texts taught.

Several of the teachers were ESL speakers themselves. They felt that they had not been given adequate guidelines for teaching the Shakespeare and poetry sections. While they were familiar with standard English, they found the cultural contexts of the play and many of the poems difficult to decipher. They were being asked to teach language that had been used in situations with which they were not familiar.

2.7.1 Teachers' views on teaching metaphor

In the course of the workshop I asked the teachers about how they taught poetry, and in particular, how they explained metaphorical usage to their students. Several teachers asked me for clarification of the term "metaphor", which I had been using as a sort of umbrella term for all types of figurative language. The teachers informed me that they and their pupils were more familiar with the term "figures of speech". It was part of the

matric syllabus requirement that pupils learned definitions for "simile" (a comparison in which the words "like" or "as" are used) and "metaphor" (a comparison without the use of "like" or "as"), personification, alliteration, etc. One teacher confused "metaphor" with "idiom". I think the confusion arose because many "idioms" are metaphorical.

All teachers said that they taught figures of speech through the presentation of examples to explain the concept, such as "He is a lion". None of the teachers had asked their pupils to isolate and explain metaphorical language in the poems that they had studied. Walters and England point out that the "ability to understand information conveyed through figurative language" is an important "sub-skill" in the comprehension of literary texts (1988: 41). Clearly, if students are not alerted to the presence of metaphorical language their understanding of the text will be affected.

Most of the teachers said that they began teaching a poem by reading it aloud several times. Some teachers asked pupils to read the poem, or practised more formal recitation as a class exercise, with, for example, certain students reading certain lines. None of the teachers required pupils to learn the poems by heart. Some teachers wrote out explanations of difficult words, while others asked pupils to discuss their difficulties with vocabulary and to look up difficult words. Many of the poems for the matric syllabus have a complex vocabulary and, as an understanding of this is essential in terms of the final exam, most of the teachers spent a large portion of the poetry discussion time working on vocabulary. Most teachers then went on to offer a line-by-line exegesis of the poem to their class. The pupils were expected to learn this explanation. One teacher made summary sheets of her interpretation of the

poems and handed them out for students to learn for the exam. Only one teacher said that she required her pupils to decide on their own interpretations.

2.4 Conclusion

The DET syllabus aims at improving pupils communicative competence, and the final examinations are meant to be a test of that competence. Yet there is not sufficient space in the syllabus for communicative language learning. Both classroom practice and the examination papers fail in various ways to fulfil the communicative aims of the syllabus.

Firstly, there is an inclination towards a "transmission" model of teaching (Ellis 1987a: 85) which encourages rote learning and discourages critical approaches to the study of literary texts.

Secondly, the types of exam questions asked only occasionally require pupils to engage the reading and writing skills they may have learned within a communicative approach to literary appreciation. Many of the questions test discrete items of linguistic knowledge; or, at the other extreme, test cultural knowledge rather than language-based knowledge (although the two are obviously related).

Thirdly, there is a trend in both classroom and examination assessment of the pupils to focus on accuracy rather than fluency - which is contrary to the spirit of communicative teaching, inhibits language production and can lead to stilted language use (Ellis 1987a: 287). The Literature Paper may be said to compromise its own communicative value, both by being ambiguous or unclear in places and by excluding the more accessible South African texts.

Finally, by encouraging the notion that there is only one correct answer to any question, the Literature Examination discourages an independent critical response, which is crucial to any reading activity.

While the aims of the reading programme seem sound (if ambitious), it is clear that lack of space for interaction and negotiation, the methods of assessment and the effect this has on the way in which teachers organise their approach falls short of these aims.

NOTE

- 1 Pumla Satyo (the English Subject Adviser to the DET, Western Cape) has been a very supportive and helpful contact and I am most grateful to her for the interest she had shown in this research. Not only did she supply me with copies of syllabuses, exam papers, examiners' reports and memoranda, but also invited me to participate in a workshop on the Literature Exam at the I D Mkize Secondary School in Gugulethu, where I was able to interview the teachers who attended.

3 THE PILOT TEST

3.1 Introduction

The initial data was obtained from the 1992 Entrance Test (E-test) to the department of English at the University of Cape Town. The test was written before the start of term by prospective English I students. (Appendix B contains a copy of the test and students' answers). All students, bar those who have obtained an A, B or C aggregate for English L1 Higher Grade for their matriculation symbol, are required to write the E-test if they wish to enrol for English I.

The E-test required students to respond to a poem ("Pain" by Elizabeth Jennings), an extract from a short story ("Uncle" by Njabulo Ndebele) and two general questions. Among the questions on the poem, I inserted the two questions on metaphor.

3.2 The students

Ninety students wrote the test. Of these, 28 were English L1 speakers and nine were bilingual, having both English and Afrikaans as home languages. Among the ESL students there were seven Afrikaans speakers, 19 Xhosa speakers, six North Sotho speakers, six South Sotho speakers, six Tswana speakers, six Zulu speakers, there was one Shona speaker, one French, one German, and one Italian speaker - making a total of 54 ESL students.

3.3 Research Questions

I saw this initial collection of data as a "hypothesis generating" activity (Vulliamy 1990: 11). I was interested in hearing students' opinions on the following:

- a their definitions of metaphor as a category in language
- b how (and whether) they applied this knowledge to a poem

3.4 The Poem

I did not choose the poem set for this test but I considered it to be reasonably suited to my purposes because its vocabulary is fairly accessible and its theme is universal (although it is a rather depressing poem for students in the stressful situation of writing an entrance test to the English Department).

Below is the poem and the questions I inserted on metaphor:

Pain

At my wit's end
And all resources gone, I lie here,
All of my body tense to the touch of fear,
And my mind,

- 5 Muffled now as if the nerves
Refused any longer to let thoughts form,
Is no longer a safe retreat, a tidy home,
No longer serves

- 10 My body's demands or shields
With fine words, as it once would daily,
My storehouse of dread. Now, slowly,
My heart, hand, whole body yield

- 15 To fear. Bed, ward, window begin
To lose their solidity. Faces no longer
Look kind or needed; yet I still fight the stronger
Terror - oblivion - the needle thrusts in.

Glossary

Muffled: dulled
Oblivion: total unconsciousness
thrusts: pushes

Questions

- a) What is metaphor?
- b) Quote one example of metaphor from the poem and explain how it works in the poem. (10)

The two questions were worth ten marks. Question (a) would, I hoped, reveal students' understanding of metaphor as a linguistic category and (b) would indicate how students applied that knowledge. (I assumed that the successful performance of (b) presupposed a knowledge of (a)).

3.4.1 Marking the test

I was required, along with seven other markers, to assess students' performance on the test. Students who passed the test with marks of 50 % and higher gained unconditional entry into the English Department; students who passed the test with marks of between 45 % to 49 % were given entry into the department, on condition that they did the "Foundation English" tutorials during their first year, and students who failed the test were not allowed to register for English I, but were invited to enrol for the second semester "Introduction to English" course.

We marked the test according to the guide lines set out by the English Department: "Expression", "Organisation", "Material Examined", "Connections", "Argument and Evidence" and "Insight" (Handbook for Students 1992: 14 - 15). Two markers assessed each student.

Once the tests had been marked, I collected all the test booklets and looked more carefully at the marks awarded and the responses to questions (a) and (b) above.

Out of the 90 students who wrote the test, 33 students passed the questions on metaphor. The markers identified "storehouse of dread" and "a tidy home" as the two salient metaphors of the poem. Thirty-nine students chose to discuss one of the two salient metaphors, 22 students selected other metaphors and 29 students either chose

something that was not a metaphor or left the question out.

I also looked at students' definitions of metaphor and compared these to their analysis of a specific metaphor. It seemed as if about 68 students had been consistent in transferring their theoretical knowledge of metaphor to their analysis.

Below is a summary of the numbers of students (in %) who passed question (a), the choices made in the second part of the question (b) and the number of answers which appeared to have a clear link between (a) and (b), in other words, those answers in which students' definitions of metaphor were applied to the poem:

QUESTION a and b	pass	choice of metaphor			apply theory to poem
		salient	other	X	
% STUDENTS	36,66	43,33	24,44	32,22	75,55

Table 3.1

pass = % of students who passed the question on metaphor
 salient = % of students who selected either "store house of dread" or "tidy home" as a metaphor
 other = % of students who selected another metaphor
 X = % of students who selected a non-metaphor or who did not answer the question
 apply = % of students who were able to apply a theoretical concept of metaphor to the poem.

In comparing L1 students with ESL students, I noticed that ESL students fared considerably worse with regard to marks awarded. They also choose more broadly across the range of metaphors in the poem and selected examples which the markers did not consider to be metaphors. A

clear majority of students in both groups applied their understanding of metaphor as a theoretical concept to the poem. Below is a summary of the results (in %) of the comparison:

QUESTION a and b	pass	choice of metaphor			apply theory to poem
		salient	other	X	
L1 GROUP	91,89	56,75	21,62	21,63	81,08
ESL GROUP	16,66	33,33	25,92	40,75	70,37

Table 3.2

3.5 Analysis of students' answers

This analysis was intended as an initial investigation to help me in constructing a second test and to give me some idea of the sort of data such a test might generate.

3.5.1 Definitions

I looked at these answers in two ways. Firstly, I distinguished between those answers that were "adequate" in that they defined the concept of metaphor with varying degrees of complexity and those that were "inadequate" because they failed to define the concept of "metaphor" either in terms of standard definitions or in terms of its effect.

Secondly, I looked at the terms used by students to describe the concept of metaphor and tried to establish whether there were fundamental differences between standard definitions and what the students had written.

Out of a sample of 90 students, 35 (38,88 %) produced adequate definitions, while 55 (61,11 %) gave definitions that were "wrong" (or judged to be so by the markers). Among this group are those who did not attempt to answer the question. Among the adequate answers, students described the concept in terms of a "comparison" (both "direct" and "indirect") or a "simile without the use of 'like' or 'as'". Many students made reference to an emotive or emphatic effect in the use of metaphor. A few pointed out that metaphor was a "non-literal" use of language.

Out of the 54 ESL students 10 (18,51 %) produced "adequate" answers and 44 students (81,49 %) produced inadequate or wrong definitions, or left the question out. By comparison 67,56 % of the L1 group produced adequate definitions.

Among the English L1 group there were a surprising amount of standard or mechanical answers along the lines of "A metaphor is a comparison without 'like' or 'as'" (E5)¹ or "A metaphor is an indirect comparison between two or more things" (E6). Due to the frequency of their occurrence I assumed that these were probably the definitions students were given to learn at school.

There were fewer mechanical or standard definitions produced by the ESL group, suggesting perhaps that they had not learned these definitions at school.

Part of the drop in the number of adequate definitions can be attributed to increased language expression difficulties among some ESL students. For example, the following students seem to be groping towards a definition of metaphor: "A metaphor is when you put the one element straight into another, with an explanation, eg he is a fox - meaning he is sly, smart or clever"

(A47); or "A metaphor is when the actions or aspects of a human being is compared with a dead or lifeless thing" (A48). Both students quoted received 2/10 for their answers.

3.5.2 Choice of metaphor

Thirty-nine students (43,33 %) chose either the metaphor "storehouse of dread" or "tidy home". I was surprised that relatively few students chose these two salient metaphors. Perhaps this has to do with the fact that they are not very obvious in the text. The "tidy home" metaphor, for example, stretches over four lines.

Twenty-two students (24,44 %) chose other metaphors. Their choices included: "Bed, ward, window begin/To lose their solidity", "wit's end" and "touch of fear".

The latter two were not selected by L1 speakers, perhaps this is because they are, to native speakers, very much dead metaphors. Several students also selected "the needle thrusts in", and explained how it operates as a metaphor for the triumph of fear and unconsciousness.

Thirty students (33,33 %) chose "incorrectly" (in the markers' opinions) or did not answer the question.

3.5.3 Application of definition to poem

Sixty-eight students applied their understanding of metaphor to the poem. In transferring the concept of metaphor to their analysis of a particular metaphor students often used a key term, like "comparison" in both sections. The following is an example:

- a) A metaphor is a comparison between two objects, ideas or persons. It is not

introduced by "like" or "as" and usually has a hidden meaning.

- b) "My storehouse of dread". The speaker is referring to her mind and we can see that it is impossible for it to be a physical 'storehouse', but we determine through the connotation of the words that a comparison is being made. The speaker's emotion of dread is stored or withheld in her mind (E16).

The ability to transfer a definition of metaphor to a specific example applies to both adequate and inadequate definitions of metaphor. For example, one student writes in answer to (a) that "metaphor is using words that rhyme" and in (b) suggests "longer and stronger" as examples of metaphor (NS25). Another student writes that metaphor includes "the words or sentence that have the same meaning" and goes on to say that "fear and terror are metaphors" (T34).

Among the remaining 22 students there did not seem to be any obvious connection between the two parts of the question. Among this group were students who left out one or both sections of the question on metaphor.

3.6 Discussion and Interpretation

3.6.1 Definitions

The data seems to suggest that a coherent definition of metaphor is an important basis from which to construct a reading of the poem's figurative language. In this regard it was a matter of concern to me that only 10 ESL students demonstrated an adequate understanding of metaphor.

Perhaps part of the reason for the high percentage of ESL students who were unable to define "metaphor" is that the term was unfamiliar to many students as an umbrella term, although they may have encountered the concept under different names. The DET teachers with whom I spoke (unfortunately only after the above questions were inserted into the E-test) favoured the term "figures of speech". With this in mind I decided to use this term, rather than "metaphor" in constructing a new test.

The large number of students who transferred their theoretical understanding to the specific metaphors of the poem support Palazzo's recommendation regarding the teaching of "literary skills or tools" and the "processes which the discipline involves" (1990: 147).

3.6.2 Selection of metaphors

Neither group overwhelmingly selected the two most salient metaphors. ESL students were able to identify some of the less well marked instances of metaphorical language, like "touch of fear", although they tended not to be rewarded by markers for these choices. It seemed to me that ESL speakers were more sensitive to non-literal uses of language, perhaps as a consequence of having learned English as a second language. L1 speakers often become "desensitised" to non-literal expressions which have become familiar in everyday usage. This could be seen as a strength of ESL students and something that could be taken into account in the teaching of literature, where "dead" metaphors are often "resuscitated" (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 51).

3.6.2 Students' Interpretation of metaphors

Most students had no difficulty in recognising that metaphors are not literal and therefore need to be

interpreted. There were a few literal readings amongst ESL students. Windows, one student writes, are meant "to keep light in the house, but now they broke" (X11). One student interpreted the "touch of fear" as the literal touch of a nurse: "The speaker is probably being touched by a hand of a nurse" (T36). Another student assumed that the speaker was talking about a real "tidy home" and writes:

"Now because she is longer at home she
find it not save for her, but while she
staying in it, it was safe and tidy"
(NS24)

The lack of "sophistication" in many of the ESL group's answers may be result of different schooling, differing amounts of exposure to literature and concepts in literary analysis as well as difficulties with the language. This group often seemed to struggle to find the words to express themselves and this clearly affected the assessment of their answers. There were many cases in which ESL students seemed to be groping towards a definition, for example: "A metaphor is an expression with a hidden meaning" (X5), "Metaphor is a word or phrase that are used to give sense or meaning while they don't have anything to do with the meaning. They could easily be the opposite of the actual meaning" (Z41) and "Metaphor is a figure of speech where a person solidifies herself or himself to express strength or firmness" (NS20). Students were not sympathetically marked for these answers; the students above received 1/10, 0/10 and 2,5/10 respectively.

In terms of Sperber and Wilson's theory, the metaphors generated similar implicatures (1986: 236) for most students. The "tidy home" metaphor, for example, was regarded as having associations of "security", "safety",

"order", "relaxation" and "happiness". Most students who chose this metaphor analysed it as a representation of the speaker's mind.

Many students appeared implicitly to understand Lakoff and Johnson's point that it is difficult to use metaphorical language without implying a system of values or norms (1980: 155). In accordance with this, some students went on to interpret the same metaphor as the speaker's self-criticism of her failing mental powers. These students suggested that she should "resist" (242) such "untidiness" or "disorder" in her thoughts.

Nine ESL students chose the "tidy home" metaphor and their marks ranged from 2/10 to 6/10². L1 students who answered this question had a mark spread of 4,5/10 to 7/10. Generally, it seemed to me that students in both groups were saying essentially the same things. Student X3, for example, writes:

"Is no longer a safe retreat, a tidy house". Here the poet used the metaphor "...a tidy house" for "my mind". She regarded her mind as a tidy home. We might know that a house whose person lives and finds shelter throughout his or her life. A tidy house provides better shelter for one to stay in. Now, the poet would find shelter from her mind. This she did by thinking reasonably during times of doubt and fear. Because of the fact that her mind always provides a solution for her every problem or shelter as it may be, she regarded it as a "tidy" home. However, the poet feels very confused, panic stricken and so helpless that she loses trusts in her mind and says it "is no longer a safe

retreat" (X3).

Apart from being a little long-winded and apart from the odd non-sequitur (to be expected under exam conditions), the above answer seems to me to be perfectly reasonable. Yet it received only 3,5/10. Student E22, who is equally long-winded and says more or less the same thing received 7/10 for this answer:

The words "a tidy home" is being compared to the mind. This is found in line four of the first stanza and line three of the second stanza. Her mind as she remembers it, is like a tidy home. The key word is tidy, because it means orderly. In a tidy home, all objects are neatly packed and placed on a specific spot. Likewise, she remembers that her thoughts too were orderly and well constructed, as a tidy home is. Her thoughts now however are very displaced and "untidy" (E22).

Markers were clearly responding to something more than students' interpretations of the metaphors, namely to the ways in which students were constructing meaning. Could E22 higher marks be attributed to her use of a more "literary" terminology: the use of "stanza" and "key word" and "displaced", for example?

3.6.4 Construction of meaning

In investigating the relationship between students' marks and the language with which students described the effect of metaphors I discovered some interesting trends. Within students' responses I identified four types of "discourse". I have found Bakhtin's concept of discourse a useful one:

Within the arena of almost any utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one's own and another's word is being waged, a process in which they oppose and dialogically interanimate each other. The utterance so conceived is a considerably more complex and dynamic organism than it appears when constructed simply as a thing that articulates the intention of the person uttering it, which is to see the utterance as a direct, single-voiced vehicle for expression (1981: 354 - 5).

In Bakhtinian terms, students have to find a way of functioning within various languages that have already been configured. In examining their answers, it seemed as if students had relative degrees of access to four different types of discourse.

a **Personal or experiential discourse**

The first type of discourse is one that all students have easy access to: the discourse of personal experience. Within this discourse students are more concerned to describe the woman's feelings than the metaphors of the text. Within this discourse students position themselves close to the woman in the poem and enter into an imaginative or emotional identification with her. One student writes: "we are led to imagine fear touching the poet's body" (SS27). Students try to reconstruct her physical and mental condition in experiential language, describing, for example, her "fearful experiences" (NS20) and "state of helplessness" (NS23).

Within this discourse students try to understand the precise nature of the woman's suffering: "the speaker's

body is very tense and painfull [sic]" (T35); or "the speaker was in a hopeless situation he was overcome by fear" (S44). Students expressed their understanding of the speaker's plight: "The pain seems to have let everything to come to a stand point, where nothing is working in her body" (Z39). One student even pictured the speaker "on her death bed...thinking and come up only these unwanted thoughts" (A48). Several students offered explanations for her condition: "She didn't talk about her problems and sufferings and at last it got too heavy for her" (A48).

In terms of achieving marks, this is not an empowering discourse for students to use. The students quoted above achieved between 1/10 and 3,5/10 for their responses. Students who used a purely personal or experiential discourse tended to receive very low marks. Those who combined a more "powerful" discourse with the personal fared better.

b The discourse of literary criticism

The most powerful discourse, in terms of marks, was that of "literary criticism". This discourse is characterised by the writer distancing him- or herself from the text and treating the text as text, rather than as the writing of a person in real pain (Taylor et al 1986: 24). Words like "speaker", "metaphor", "comparison", "describes", "depicts", "connotation", "conveys", "considers" - as well as logical markers like "therefore", "in addition to", "as opposed to", characterise this discourse. The following is an example:

The speaker's mind or brain is being compared to a storehouse of dread. The comparison comes in the fact that just as the storehouse stores bundles and bundles

of "dread", so too has the speaker's mind become something which she can no longer depend on and which she has come to dread. As the speaker loses more and more control over her normal functions she has less and less use for her mind and in the end considers it a burden (E6).

Student E6 was awarded 7/10 for the above answer. The student was marked on his or her mastery of the discourse rather than the quality of the response. The terminology of literary criticism has been used, as is clear from words like "the speaker" and "the comparison". Distancing devices are also evident: the term "the speaker's mind or brain" is preferred to a direct engagement with her feelings or sufferings. The logical devices are in place: "just as... so too...", but the connection made is nonsensical. What kind of storehouse stores "bundles and bundles of dread? The student's conclusion about the speaker's loss of control over "normal functions" and her consideration of her mind as "a burden" are equally problematic.

The fact that many ESL students seemed to be unfamiliar with the conventions of the discourse of literary criticism often resulted in original and fresh responses. However, unfamiliarity with the discourse is clearly not empowering to students in terms of the English Department's marking practices.

Most ESL students seemed familiar with some of the conventions of literary discourse - words like "the speaker", "compares", "symbolises", "illustrates" do appear in students' responses, but often the outward trappings of the discourse are not integrated with the content. Answers like: "metaphor is a form of mood where things are used negatively" (NS21), or "it makes readers

to be more interested in reading the poem" (SS30), or "it create either the terrible feeling or good feelings about the poem" (T34) are dismissed as "waffle".

c **The discourse of popular medicine**

The third discourse that I identified in students' essays was an equally powerful one and could be termed the discourse of "popular psychology" or "popular medicine" (Recchio 1991: 450). Within this discourse, students were very distanced from the speaker of the poem and described her feelings and mental attitude in medical terms.

Students who were able to combine the medical discourse with the personal, as in the example below, tended to do considerably better than those who only used a personal discourse style:

A tidy home is a metaphor because it has been used to show the trouble free body before it has been invaded by the foreign pain. Her body has been clean without pain, but now it is no longer a safe retreat because there is an occupant which is pain (X9).

This student achieved 5,5/10 for his or her response. The ability to combine the two most powerful discourses, that of literary criticism and that of popular medicine, resulted in very high marks:

An example of this would be the passages where the mind and the thoughts expressed can no longer be seen as a haven or retreat which enables it to comply with the body's demands. The mind is compared to a protective shield, which under any

other circumstances would act in the best interest of the body, as opposed to allowing it to be hurt or its sense of security threatened. The use of the mind as a protective shield would therefore be metaphorical (E7).

This student was rewarded with 9/10 for the ability to distance him- or herself from the subject, to focus on the language of the comparison and to describe the speaker's pain in clinical terms.

However, students who did not demonstrate sufficient control over this discourse were not rewarded, as in the following:

Body's demands compared to shields. The body's demands are all the processes and mechanisms together with the parts instrumental in these mechanisms and processes which guard against the annihilation of the self. In the poem we are told that the shields yield (SS26).

The above student received 4/10 for this answer. This seems rather unfair to me. I would be happier accepting student SS26's reading. He or she understood "shields" as a noun and took the "or" to signal that "demands" was being compared to "shields". The drawn out syntax of the poem: "my mind...no longer serves/My body's demands or shield with fine words..." results in several possible readings. With reference to relevance theory, Sperber and Wilson claim that if the first interpretation of a "message" seems relevant, the reader is unlikely to search for other, less obvious explanations (1986: 158). Thus having discovered relevance in the interpretation of "shields" as a metaphor for "demands", the student does

not look for further possibilities.

The syntax of the above statement, ambiguous as it is, does not seem to support student E7's assumption that the speaker's mind is being compared to a shield.

d **The discourse of moral prescription**

Students whose educational backgrounds have not prepared them to master the powerful discourses of literary criticism or popular medicine, nevertheless seem to realise that a sense or area of authority needs to be established within which the writer can position him or herself. Students who did not have access to the medical discourse tended to use a moral one in which ideas of the poem or the actions and attitudes of the speaker were approved or disapproved on moral grounds.

The comparison, "a tidy house" was, for example, regarded by many students as an indication of the speaker's slovenliness. Within this discourse prescriptive value judgements are often made, such as: "a neglected home...is useless" (X1) "a tidy house provides *better* shelter" (X3 my emphasis), "there are 'non-living' things which we as humans have to resist" (X4), "her being...is *supposed* to have everything stored in it" (Z43 my emphasis), "Things should be exact, as in a tidy home" (A46).

Students received between 2/10 and 4/10 for answers that were morally prescriptive. The reason for this is that while this discourse can accommodate the "weak" personal discourse, moral discourse and the powerful medical discourse tend to be mutually exclusive.

e **Frequency of discourse types in students' responses**

The table below indicates that L1 speakers tend to have greater access to the more powerful literary and medical discourses. While similar numbers of L1 and ESL students used the personal discourse, this discourse was used in conjunction with more powerful discourses in the case of the L1 students. Although almost 65 % of ESL students used literary terms in their response, there were many instances in which the discourse was insufficiently understood - and this reduces the number of students having access to this discourse.

	LITERARY	PERSONAL	MEDICAL	MORAL
L1 STUDENTS	83,78	40,54	40,54	2,70
ESL STUDENTS	64,81	40,74	11,11	12,96

Table 3.3

NOTE: The above percentages do not add up to 100 % as there were usually more than one discourse style in each response.

All students who achieved 6/10 and higher for their answers made use of a literary or medical discourse.

3.7 Conclusion

In discussing examples of metaphor in the text students tended to draw on their theoretical understanding of the term. This is clearly of importance in teaching poetry as students often transferred inadequate definitions of metaphor to their analysis of specific metaphors.

ESL students tended to select more "dead" metaphors in their interpretation of the poem than L1 students. Obviously an apparently dead metaphor like "at my wit's

end" has a renewed significance in a poem about the loss of mental abilities. As many of these metaphors were marked "wrong", it would appear that teachers need an expanded definition of metaphor that would accommodate students' responses (Fox 1990: 81).

Students' understanding of the figurative language of the poem was, in my opinion, fairly consistent. Practically all students assumed that the speaker was ill or in hospital and that she was describing the effect of pain and suffering on her mental state. Despite these similarities, ESL students received consistently lower marks for their interpretations. As ESL students described the poem's figurative language in a more personal, experiential way than English L1 students, who tended to use various distancing devices in explaining the text, it would appear that mastery of a distancing discourse is more important than interpretation of the text in obtaining marks in the English Department.

If this is the case, then such distancing devices need to be taught to students. Or, if interpretation is deemed to be more important than the discourse of literary criticism, then students need to be rewarded for the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of their analyses.

3.8 The new test

There were a number of issues that emerged from the above data that played a role in the design of the new test.

Firstly, I wanted to re-assess students' understanding of the theoretical concept of "metaphor", using the more familiar term "figures of speech".

Secondly, I wanted to include a question that did not need a verbal response. Did students know what metaphors

were even if they couldn't express this knowledge clearly?

Thirdly, I wanted to see if ESL students were more sensitive to "dead" metaphors.

Fourthly, I was interested to see what sorts of responses English L1 and ESL students might have to a poem that was more embedded in the South African context.

And finally, I was interested to see what sorts of discourse students would use in describing a South African poem.

NOTE

1 The symbols refer to the students' answers in Appendix B. The symbols "E5", etc are a code which I have used to identify students. The initial identifies the student's home language (E = English, X = Xhosa, etc). The numbers are insignificant.

2 Questions (a) and (b) on metaphor comprised a total of 10 marks. The markers did not mark the two sections individually, but awarded a global mark for the whole question. Marks discussed here therefore refer to both parts of the question; although, during moderators' meetings it was decided that the higher proportion of the marks should go to (b) as students were confused by the umbrella term "metaphor" in part (a).

4 THE "REAPERS" TEST

4.1 Aim

The aim of the test set for students on Oswald Mtshali's "Reapers in a Mieliefeld" (see Appendix C for a copy of the test and students' answers) was to assess students' understanding of metaphor as a category, to assess their practical ability to identify metaphor in a poem and to analyse students' interpretations of the metaphorical language of a particular poem in relation to the kinds of interpretation expected by the English Department.

4.2 Research questions

The analysis of the results of the pilot test (Chapter 3), enabled me to formulate the following research questions:

- 1 what are the main features of students' understanding of metaphor as a category in language?
- 2 are students able to identify "prototypicality effects" of metaphors in a poem?
- 3 how do the individual contexts in which utterances are generally interpreted relate to the specialist processing required in an academic context?
- 4 how are interpretations affected by different contexts of interpretation and collective experiences?

I have assumed that the fact that students may be drawing on knowledge and experiences which may be different from those of lecturers in the English department in interpreting English metaphors will not necessarily lead

to miscomprehension. However, there are instances where frames of reference and assumptions differ markedly and it is this area of "miscomprehension" that interests me in this research. It should be noted that I have not considered such "miscomprehensions" as "wrong", but that I have used the sort of interpretation a lecturer in the English Department might make as a yardstick, because it is against such an interpretation that students are assessed.

4.3 Research design

4.3.1 The students

Ninety-eight students wrote the test during the period 1992 - 1993. Some of the students were English I (ELL104W) students or "Introduction to English" (ENG103S) at UCT, others were "English Special" (ENG105) students at UWC. Sixty-two of these students had either Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, North or South Sotho as a L1 and 36 students were English L1 or bilingual (predominantly English/Afrikaans) students. The UCT English I students wrote the test 2 - 3 weeks into the first term of 1992 and the "Introduction to English Students" wrote the test in the first week of their course (which is a second semester course, following on from "English for Academic Purposes" (EAP) which is offered by UCT's Academic Support Programme). UWC students wrote the test in the first term of 1993. It could therefore be assumed that background knowledge and prior experience of literary criticism played an important role in their interpretations.

Most L1 students had studied English L1 at school, while most ESL students had studied English L2. These factors obviously had an influence on students' abilities to write about metaphor, as well as the individual's

familiarity with texts or a "book culture". Other factors such as socio-economic groupings, and the specificities of race and class in the South African educational context undoubtedly played a significant role in students' interpretations. I was primarily interested in students' ability to decode the cultural or ideological content of English metaphors in English and clearly background knowledge plays as large a role in this as language proficiency. The information I was able to find on the students' educational and language backgrounds was obtained from student records and was limited to details of school subjects, students' home language and the matriculation examination authority.

4.3.2 The "Reapers" test

Data was obtained from the test included in Appendix C. I chose "Reapers in a Mieliefeld" by Oswald Mtshali for a number of reasons. It is a particularly accessible poem for South African students because of the familiarity of its context, content, vocabulary and ideas. The poem describes workers in a mielie field and focuses on physical descriptions of the reapers, but also implies a relationship between the workers and their employer or manager. I was interested to see how students placed themselves in relation to the issues raised by the poem.

The poem also seemed to be suitable from a technical point of view as it is rich in metaphorical language and contains a number of different sorts of figures of speech. For example:

"like a desert tanker..." - simile

"The sun lashes the workers..." - personification

"Faces furrowed" - dead metaphor

Question 1 was inserted to test students' understanding

of the concept of "figures of speech". Question 2, which asks students to underline the figures of speech in the poem, tests students' ability to apply their understanding to a poem without testing writing skills. By allowing students to choose their own example of a figure of speech and explain it in question 3, I hoped to analyse the range of students' choices. In question 4 students were given a particular metaphor and asked to explain it. By eliminating choice in this question, I hoped to be able to focus in detail on differences in interpretation, explanation and expression.

There are obviously different ways of testing students' knowledge and different responses might have been generated if students had been asked to discuss the poem more generally, instead of focusing on its figurative language through specific questions. The student interviews (discussed in the following chapter), for example, deepened my understanding of their responses.

I regret the phrasing of questions 3 and 4, which implies that the poem only has one possible meaning.

4.3.3 The markers and marking criteria

The test was purely voluntary and did not count towards any official marks. Students' responses were marked by two markers (myself and a colleague)¹. We assessed the answers according to our experience as teachers in the English Departments of UCT and UWC, following departmental practice, as we understood it.

We marked Questions 3 and 4 according to the guidelines set out in the U C T English Department's "Handbook for Students" (1992: 14 - 15), considering predominantly "Argument and Evidence" and "Insight" as criteria for assessment. We chose to use the English Department's

criteria because it is against these that students are assessed. The expectations and assumptions that these criteria reflect are characteristic of a particular academic discipline and the cultural context of that discipline.

"Argument and Evidence" implies a text centred approach. Students are asked to focus on the words of the text and to offer an interpretation, or argument, based on evidence found in the text. Students are encouraged to be as objective as possible, to treat the text as aesthetic rather than referential, while at the same time, to be aware of its political and historical contexts.

The process of acquiring "insight" is, in my experience, a difficult and cumulative one for both English L1 and ESL students. "Insight" is the ability to make perceptive observations about texts, which depends on being able to make a connection between the text and background knowledge. "Insight" can be explained in Sperber and Wilson's model in terms of drawing creative contextual implicatures. As has been pointed out, their description of "a good creative metaphor" is precisely one in which a variety of contextual effects can be generated (1986: 236). In moving beyond an exploration of the immediate context and accessing a wide area of knowledge, adding metaphors of his or her own as additional interpretations or implicatures, the reader is demonstrating "insight".

4.4 Research findings: Questions 1 and 2

4.4.1 Question 1: "What are figures of speech?"

In answering this question, students were expected to categorise the term "figures of speech", that is, to describe or define it in terms of its various characteristics. Answers that we (the markers) regarded

as "good" contained two of the following points:

- a the language is non-literal and needs to be interpreted
- b there is an implied or overt comparison in figures of speech
- c there is an emotive or emphatic aspect to figures of speech

The above points are not intended as a comprehensive definition of "figures of speech". They are derived from the language and ideas expressed in students' responses. In the introductory chapter, I attempted to explain my understanding of figurative language in terms of the representational indirectness of language in general. Many students stated that there was a need to "interpret" (or in Sperber and Wilson's terminology expend "processing effort") in order to decode figurative utterances. The word "comparison" - which appears often in students' answers - suggests many aspects of representational indirectness, in particular: "inferential communication", "logical and contextual implications" and "the exploitation of linguistic resemblances" (Sperber and Wilson 1987). What students referred to as "emotive" elements (by which I think they meant the connotative nature of figures of speech) approximates to what Sperber and Wilson refer to as contextual implicatures (1987: 16).

Answers that the markers considered to be "OK" mentioned one of the above points. "Mechanical" answers tended to consist of standard definitions of figures of speech, for example "a metaphor is a simile without the use of 'as' or 'like'"; or lists of examples of figures of speech (metaphor, simile, personification and so on) without explaining how the language is used. In their definitions of figures of speech, several students included

"phonetic" figures (that is alliteration and assonance), which are not necessarily metaphorical. These answers were included with the "mechanical" definitions. Answers that we considered "inadequate" were a "mixed bag": they either did not seem to make sense, were very confused or, in some cases, blank.

The following table indicates the spread of marks:

	GOOD	OK	MECHANICAL	INADEQUATE
% STUDENTS	10,52	32,99	35,61	20,88

Table 4.1

The table indicates a mark spread which has its main cluster of marks in the "OK" and "Mechanical" sections. There is a higher than average group of "inadequate" responses.

When the students were separated into English L1 and ESL groups the following trends were noted:

STUDENTS	GOOD	OK	MECHANICAL	INADEQUATE
% L1	17,36	27,87	41,57	13,20
% ESL	3,68	38,10	29,65	28,57

Table 4.2

Among L1 students there was an increase in the number of both "good" and "mechanical" answers and a decrease in the number of "inadequate" responses. Among ESL students, there is a clear rise in the number of "inadequate" answers and a drop in the number of "good" answers, but a

significate rise in the number of "OK" answers and a drop in the number of "mechanical" responses. What is interesting, is the large number of "mechanical" answers supplied by the L1 group, while in the ESL group the number of "OK" answers predominate over the "mechanical" ones.

The trend in the pilot test indicated that a clear grasp of the concept of figurative language is essential if it is to be applied in a discussion of figures of speech in a poem. This trend is repeated in this test. Students from the ESL group whose answers were "inadequate" were usually unable to analyse, or in some cases, to identify, figures from the poem. The ESL students whose answers were "good" or "OK" were able to identify and analyse figures of speech from the text.

4.4.2 Question 2: "Underline all the examples of figures of speech in this poem

We noted 14 figures of speech in the poem, including alliteration and assonance. Table 4.3 below indicates the number of figures of speech underlined by students:

METAPHOR CHOSEN	No. OF RESPONDENTS IN %		
	ALL STUDENTS	L1	ESL
Faces furrowed	43	36	50
wasp waists	60	74	45
sheaths	7	8	5
desert tanker	84	93	75
harvested grain	82	84	80
thick-limbed	14	22	5
baked brown	39	42	35

METAPHOR CHOSEN	No. OF RESPONDENTS IN %		
	ALL STUDENTS	L1	ESL
sun lashes	78	80	75
brine-bathed	51	62	40
battered cans	10	5	15
slaked	11	11	10
cushions	74	82	65
mares	82	79	85
kraals	14	18	10
Incorrect choice	19	8	29

Table 4.3

Some of these figures are "phonetic" while others are metaphorical. Among the metaphorical figures are obscure or "dead" metaphors, while others are salient or "prototypical" metaphors. In terms of relevance theory, a "prototypical" figure of speech is one which is both the indirect representation of a thought and one which generates a range of contextual implications (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 105). The five "prototypical" figures of the poem were most often selected by all groups, that is: "women become prancing wild mares", "like a desert tanker, a dust-raising tanker...", "as yellow as the harvested grain", "men jerk bags like feather cushions" and "the sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod".

The frequency of salient figure choice was, however, different for the L1 and the ESL groups. The order of the groups' choice is as follows:

ESL group:

- 1 mares (85 %)
- 2 grain (80 %)

L1 group:

- desert tanker (93 %)
- grain (84 %)

3	desert tanker (75 %)	cushions (82 %)
4	sun lashes (75 %)	sun lashes (80 %)
5	cushions (65 %)	mares (79 %)

The five salient metaphors in the poem were predominantly chosen by both L1 and ESL students. The ESL students' most frequently chosen metaphor was revealed as a metaphor in question 4, which might have affected their choice. Both Table 4.3 and the graph (Table 4.4) indicate that the ESL students chose more broadly across the range of metaphors in the poem:

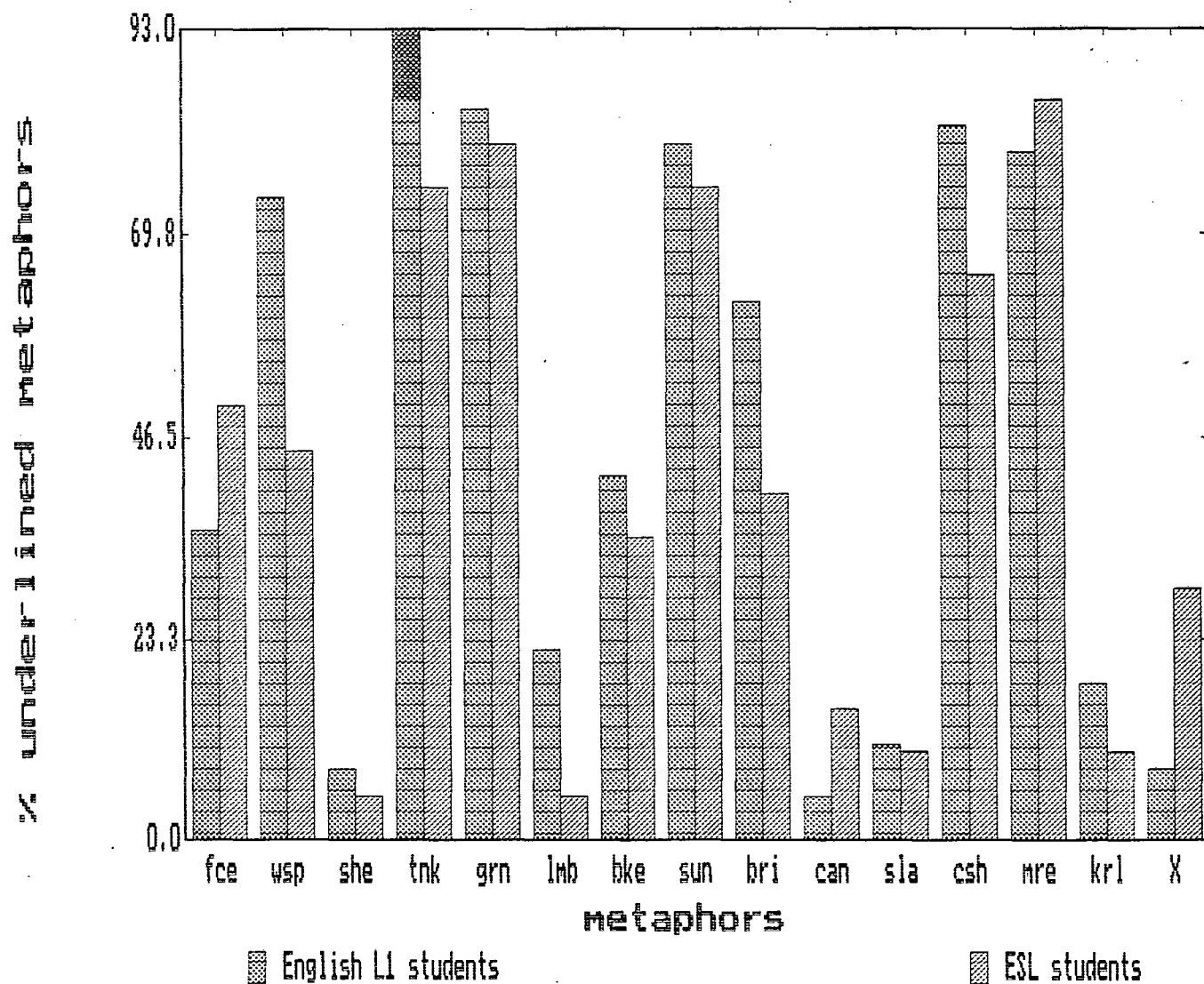


Table 4.4

I think that there were two reasons for this trend: firstly the ESL students both in the underlining question and in their choice of metaphor for discussion chose significantly more "dead" metaphors than English L1 students chose; and secondly, ESL students seemed to underline more indiscriminately (that is both metaphors and non-metaphors) and as a result their choice included both salient and "dead" figurative language.

4.4.3 Correlation between Questions

There appears to be a correlation between students' ability to provide coherent and complex definitions of figurative language and their ability to identify a figure of speech in an actual poem.

Students whose answers to question 1 were "good" or "OK" identified more than 8 of the 14 possible figures of speech and students whose answers were "mechanical" identified more than 5 figures. None of these students underlined incorrectly.

Most students whose answers were "inadequate" underlined less than five figures. Some students whose definitions of figures of speech were "inadequate" managed to underline more than 10 examples, but also made several incorrect choices, which made the markers suspect that these students had underlined indiscriminately. Only students whose answers were "inadequate" underlined incorrectly.

Students who failed to identify one or more of the five salient figures in question 2, had written "inadequate" or "mechanical" definitions of figurative language.

The table of correlation co-efficients below indicates some of the main points of the findings above:

	Def	Under-L	Writing	Exam
Def	1,000	0,3256	0,5933	0,3762
Under-l	0,3256	1,000	0,4589	0,2809
Writing	0,5933	0,4589	1,000	0,8271
Exam	0,3762	0,2809	0,8271	1,000

Table 4.5

"Def" refers to question 1 ("What do you understand by the term 'figures of speech'?") "Good" answers were awarded 75 %, "OK" answers 60 %, "Mechanical" answers 50 % and "inadequate" answers were given 40 %.

"Under-l" refers to question 2, which asked students to underline the figures of speech in the poem. Marks were awarded out of 14 and converted into percentages.

"Writing" refers to questions 3 and 4. We marked these answers according to the marking criteria outlined above and awarded students a joint mark for both answers.

"Exam" refers to the results achieved by the UCT English I students in the June 1992 exam. (We did not correlate the results of the UCT "Introduction to English" and the UWC "English Special" students with any exam.)

The highest correlation occurs between the marks given to the "writing" component of the test and the June exam results. It is important to note that in both instances the students' writing was measured against "university" criteria. This would suggest that there is a relationship between students' ability to analyse and write about figurative language and a more general ability in literary criticism. This finding supports Walters and England's recommendation concerning the importance of an understanding of metaphorical language in literary studies (1986: 126).

There is a correlation between students' understanding of metaphor and the ability to identify and discuss figurative language. There is also a relationship between students' understanding of figurative language and a more general literary ability, although the correlation between these areas is much weaker than the correlation between writing and a more general ability in literary criticism.

4.5 Analysis of questions 3 and 4

4.5.1 Student responses in relation to departmental criteria

Several students chose alliteration, assonance, and so on in their answers to question 3, which referred generally to figures of speech. In my analysis of students' responses, I have limited myself to a discussion on metaphor, simile and personification.

In analysing students' responses I noted similar discourse styles to those detailed in Chapter 3. Students used a personal discourse, a discourse of literary criticism and a discourse of moral approval/disapproval. What was different in the answers to the "Reapers" tests was that their responses contained both a liberal and a radical style of political discourse, while the discourse of popular medicine was absent because it is obviously not suited to the content of the poem. While the various discourse styles, if they are combined with the discourse of literary criticism, are appropriate for an analysis of the poem's metaphorical language, I noticed two variations of the personal, moral and political discourse styles that did not accord with the requirements of "argument and evidence" and "insight" described above: these are what I have termed "over-personalised readings" and "associative readings".

a **Over-personalised readings**

Many students interpreted the poem in terms of their own experience of farming or of the workers' struggle. Several students "projected" their own feelings, beliefs, moral values and political ideas onto the poem. Sometimes these interpretations were anachronistic or ignored the context of the poem. I have called this sort of reading an "over-personalised reading". In "over-personalised readings" the characters in the poem were often treated as real people and their actions in the poem were judged accordingly. Students also "projected" beyond the scope of the poem into what was likely to happen after the text came to an end.

These readings were characterised by the students' use of an exclusively personal or experiential discourse style. This was in marked contrast to the readings which accorded with the principles of "argument and evidence", where personal discourse was combined with the generalised and abstract discourse that characterises literary criticism. I have previously pointed out that the discourse of literary criticism is characterised by a greater distance between the writer and the text, the use of a structured argument, a more detailed explanation of the interpretation and the use of a specific vocabulary.

In discussing the contextual base of communicative intent, Sperber and Wilson point out that communication is successful when "the audience interprets the evidence on the intended lines" (1987: 6). Thus it is likely that students who are unfamiliar with an academic context, will process and present information in terms of a familiar (probably personal) context. Communication would not be successful if the reader expects students' responses to be formulated within an academic, rather than personal, context.

b Associative readings

Students' answers included a wide range of associations in response to the themes, mood and language of the poem. Part of the process of reading figurative language entails the free flow of associations (Eco 1976: 69), but at the same time, it is necessary to select from this "flow" those associations which are appropriate to the context. However, not all of the associations made by the students accorded with formal academic expectations of what was relevant to the context of the poem. I have called these readings "associative".

Sperber and Wilson write:

A speaker who wants to achieve a certain range of contextual effects must make sure that they are as easy as possible for the hearer to recover: that is, he must make sure that his utterance puts the hearer to no unnecessary processing effort. This is in the speaker's interest as well as the hearer's, since any increase in processing effort detracts from overall relevance, and a speaker who puts the hearer to unnecessary processing effort runs the risk of failing to achieve an acceptable level of relevance overall (1987: 13).

It is precisely the recovery of meaning that can become problematic if the associations inspired by the context of the poem are not controlled by the notion of the academic audience.

4.5.2 Question 3: Quote one example of a figure of speech from the poem and explain how it contributes to the meaning.

Most students were able to select an appropriate metaphor from the poem for discussion. The majority of L1 speakers chose the salient metaphor: "the sun lashes the workers with/a red hot rod"; while ESL students tended to choose more broadly across the 14 metaphors identified in the poem, as in Table 4.6 below:

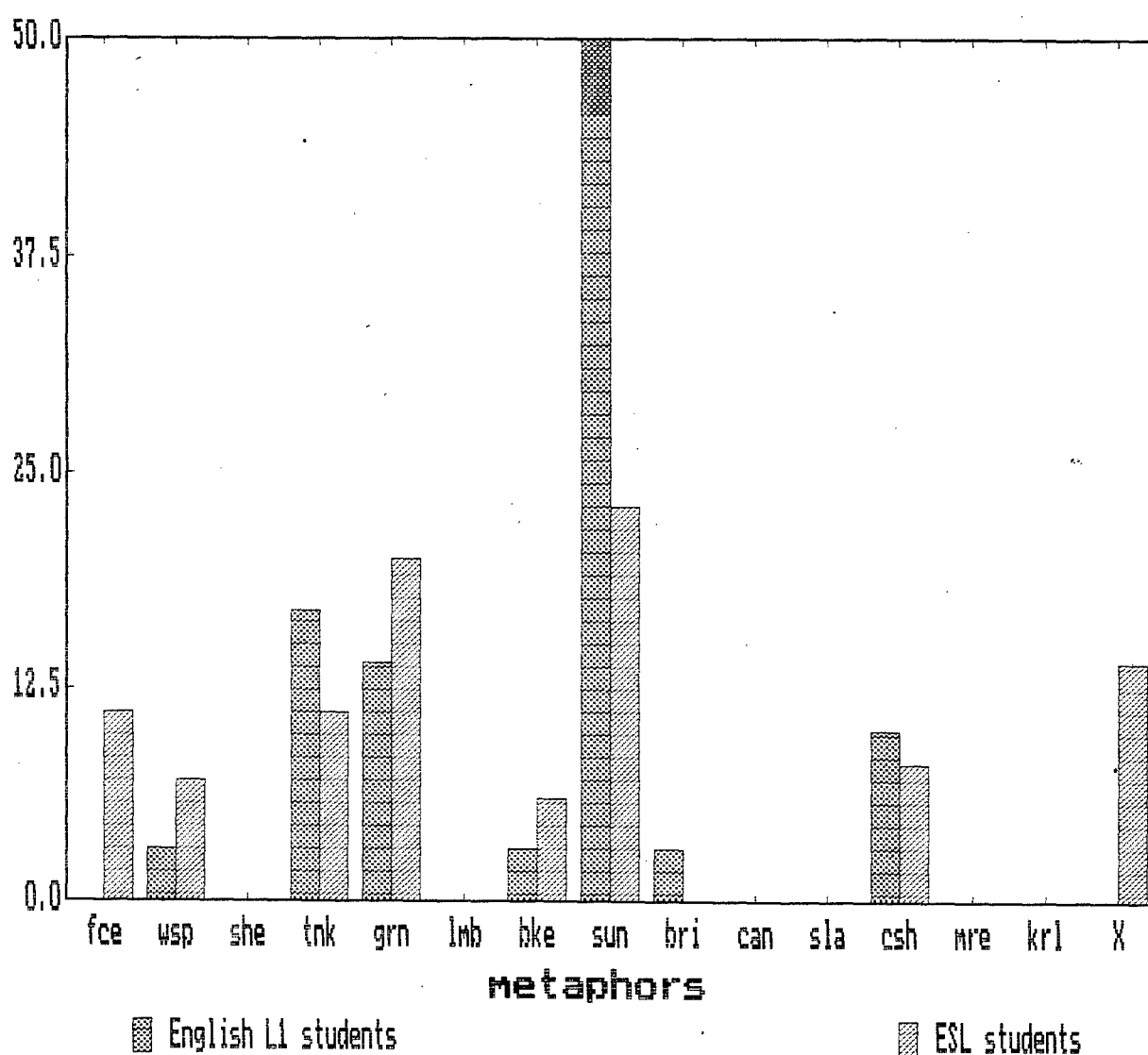


Table 4.6

L1 students avoided "dead" metaphors like "faces furrowed" while some ESL students selected these for discussion. This may be because L1 speakers become desensitised to the presence of "dead" metaphors in their own language, while L2 speakers are able to bring fresh responses to them. An apparently dead metaphor like "faces furrowed" is, of course, particularly relevant to the context of the poem.

Although the sample is relatively small, it points towards tendencies which have been described by other researchers (Walters and England 1988, Durant et al 1992).

a "Faces furrowed"

No L1 students chose to discuss this metaphor. One of the ESL students who discussed it made the point that this metaphor contributes to the meaning of the poem by "highlight[ing] the hard work done by farm labourers" (A7). Although his written answer is muddled, he was able to explain in an interview the appropriateness of the metaphor in the context of the poem (see chapter 5).

b "Wasp waists"

Very few students chose to discuss this metaphor. The answers provided by L1 and ESL students are similar, but the ESL students' responses indicate their difficulties in mastering the discourse of critical analysis. Both L1 and ESL students regard the "wasp waist" metaphor as a description of the workers' appearance. An English speaker contrasts the "wasp waist" with the "thick limbs" mentioned later in the poem, claiming "This all emphasises the manual labour that they engage in day after day and through this their bodies have changed to suit their work" (E5). One of the ESL students claims

that the metaphor shows that "they are lean which could be caused by hard work or hunger"; and goes on to say that "after the women had drunk *maheu* they began to prance like wild mares" (Z58). Student E3 has limited his or her response to the parameters of the poem, while student Z58 projects his or her own ideas onto the poem and makes assumptions concerning the workers' conditions.

c "Like a desert tanker..."

All L1 speakers who chose this simile wrote that the tractor was being compared to a tanker and that this comparison suggested something about the physical conditions of work. Words like "harsh", "extreme heat", "arid", "dusty" appeared in these responses. Only two students went on to describe the tractor as a symbol of power. One of these students, for example, wrote about the "frailty" of the workers and their "subordination to the power" of the farmer (E6). The implicatures which the simile suggested to L1 students were those connected with master/servant relationships.

The ESL students who chose this simile tended to make a link between the tanker and "the kinds of activity the reapers are involved in" as well as the physical conditions of work. Rather than presenting the tanker as being in opposition to the workers, there was a bias in these answers towards claiming that the metaphor indicated how hard the workers were working, for example, a student writes that through this figure of speech "the poet emphasises the seriousness of reaping, the efforts put into it and the hardship it takes - just like in the war..." (X48). Some answers also pointed to the usefulness of the tractor, for example, one student writes: "the tractor therefore serves as an important instrument to expedite the whole harvesting period" (X26). The implicatures emerging most strongly from these

answers were that of the actual business of harvesting.

d "Teeth/as yellow as the harvested grain"

The L1 answers simply commented on the colour and reaping associations without referring to the identity of the man on the tractor. The ESL answers made links between the grain and reaping and tended to view the man on the tractor as a worker. One student writes that "smoking would enable him to forget about the heavy work that he is busy with" (X44). One student offered an explanation for the yellowed teeth, an example of a personalised reading: "it is implied that the person working in the fields does not even have a chance to brush their teeth" (X22). These answers indicate ESL students' tendency to respond to the poem in a more personal way.

e "Vests baked brown with dust"

A few students selected this metaphor, interpreting it as emphasising the hot, dirty work of harvesting.

f "The sun lashes the workers with a red hot rod"

A relatively large number of L1 students chose this metaphor. The focus of most of their answers was on the implied comparison between the sun and a "cruel harsh slave-driver" who was whipping the workers who were "prisoners or slaves". While a number of the students commented on what the metaphor reveals about the physical conditions of work, there was a strong tendency to explore the image of oppression using words such as "suffering", "punishment", "torture" and "injustice".

ESL students referred to the sun as an oppressive overseer, but the focus of the answers was once again on the physical conditions of work, from the workers'

perspective, using the discourse of personal experience. One student writes:

They are working very hard in a very hot sun
and one can understand how hard it is to reap
in a mieliefeld (X25).

Rather than viewing the workers in a negative role as victims, ESL students saw them as heroic, using words like "determination" and "percevearance" [sic] to describe them.

L1 students also focused on the physical conditions of work, but tended to see the workers as passive victims of an oppressive relationship. This is in marked contrast to the ESL students who linked the harsh physical conditions of work to a positive view of the workers as actively engaged in a struggle. The ESL students' tendency to interpret the poem from the point of view of the worker is persistent and this could be because it confirms their experience and/or emotional identification.

g "Brine-bathed brow"

One of the students who chose this example of alliteration, remarked that the figure "contributes to creating the picture of the workers in the hot sun, sweating because of the heat and hard labour" (E1).

h "Men jerk bags like feather cushions"

Most students who chose this simile agreed that there is a comparison between the bags of mielies and feather cushions - and therefore an implied comment on the strength of the workers. English L1 students seemed to find the comparison a positive one, while ESL students tended to regard it negatively. For example, one student

writes that "human beings are associated with animals because of their non-human animalistic way of working". ESL students also "projected" their own experience or thoughts onto the description. Student X32 wonders "if the *maheu* gives them strength" and student T17 remarks that "they don't have to go to jymns to workout like others do".

4.5.3 **Question 4: Explain in your own words what the phrase: "women become prancing wild mares" contributes to the meaning of the poem.**

The entire sample of 98 students was required to respond to this question and patterns similar to those described above are evident in this larger group.

The description implied in the metaphor "women become prancing wild mares" is not a neutral one: it is both culturally and politically encoded. The cultural encoding has to do with different views concerning women's roles in work and society, and also with different cultural impressions and associations of "wild mares". The political encoding is provided by the context of farm workers in South Africa.

For the markers, as for the majority of L1 students, "wild mares" have associations of natural freedom. These associations have come to us second hand through countless American and European films. "Wild mares", for English L1 speakers, is thus a romantic symbol of freedom and energy and has little to do with real horses - either wild or domesticated. This led several L1 students to over-read the description, claiming that the women "are in fact human beings not just machines" (E5), indicating a tendency among English L1 speakers to view the wild mare not as an animal, but as a symbol.

Several L1 students produced answers in which they contrasted the "wildness" of the mares with the "servility" of the women's working conditions. Our overall impression of the L1 answers was that, despite variations in quality and thoroughness, most students understood the metaphor in the same terms that we did. For example, students described the women as "excited", "exhilarated", "bolting for freedom", "renew[ing] their power" and reverting to "a natural wild free state". Most ESL students' responses were less "romanticised" than those of the L1 students. While most L1 speakers romanticised the associations of "wild mares" (note use of "freedom", "free" and "graceful" listed below), most ESL students assumed that the "wild mares" were working horses and that the point of the metaphor was to compare the hard work of the women with that of horses (note choice of the adjectives "tired" and "strong"). ESL students tended to interpret the word "wild" as "crazy", "frantic", "energetic" or "violent", rather than as "free" or "untamed".

While the words below reflect differences in ranges of vocabulary, we assume that both groups would have had access to words like "free", "tired" and "strong". Table 4.7 below lists the most frequently occurring words in the answers of each group:

L1	ESL
"freedom"	"strong"
"free"	"tired"
"uncontrollable"	"frantic pace"
"graceful"	"healthy"
"nature"	"gawking"
"energy"	"enthusiasm"
"lively"	"harmless"
"untamed"	"speed"
"vigour"	"energetic"
"full of zest"	"violence"

Table 4.7

Many ESL students associated the strength of the "wild mares" with that of work horses, claiming that "people here are being loaded with too much hard work like horses..." One student similarly claimed that due to their exposure to harsh conditions "they have become very wild and strong". Another student claimed that the comparison suggests the dehumanisation of the women who "are not once referred to as human but only as hard toilers", eventually ending the day in their kraal "like horses would rest in their stables".

Some ESL students approved or disapproved of the women's work in overtly political terms, as one student does when she claims that "this type of behaviour can also be observed in people who see their freedom coming..." In analysing the metaphor, many ESL students projected outside of the poem to find possible reasons for the women's behaviour or in trying to provide the women with a life outside the bounds of the text. They could be performing a "traditional dance" one student suggested.

There was a tendency for ESL students to view the comparison of women with mares as a reference to the type of work which they are expected to perform, while the L1 students tended to view the description as a romantic image of freedom from work. Once again, the trend in ESL students' answers is to interpret the poem from the perspective of the worker.

4.5.4 Conclusion: questions 3 and 4

In the poem chosen there were a number of assumptions made by both L1 and ESL speakers. Some of the assumptions were common to both groups, while others reflected differences in students' background knowledge.

Both groups assumed that the workers were black and that

the theme of the poem was the exploitation of labour, rather than a neutral "description" of labourers. L1 students recognised and identified the context of oppression in largely abstract terms, while ESL speakers' tended to identify strongly with the workers' point of view in the poem and to see their actions as part of a struggle for freedom.

All L1 speakers assumed there were both men and women working in the field, while some ESL speakers assumed that there were only women labourers (despite the line "men jerk bags like feather cushions").

The tendency to produce "personalised" readings was more pronounced in the case of ESL students. It is important to distinguish between mode of processing (that is, the use of a personal discourse style vs an abstract academic one) and the actual content of students' background knowledge, although there are clearly links between them. It seemed to me that students who were not familiar with the discourse of literary criticism tended to interpret the text in terms of their own experience, using a personal discourse style. Students who were aware of the conventions of literary criticism placed the poem in a more abstract context and used an academic discourse style.

The discourse of personal experience and the principle of "argument and evidence" tend to be mutually exclusive because within a personalised discourse the writer does not achieve the distancing effects and logical connections required for "argument and evidence". It is important to note that within these two discourse styles students often said similar things, but the specific requirement of "argument and evidence" means that students who mastered the literary criticism discourse were rewarded with higher marks than those that used a

predominantly personal style. The fact that we (the markers) did not adequately reward students for their interpretations was a matter of concern to us.

ESL students also tended to produce more "associative" readings of the poem. It seemed that students who did not share the background knowledge assumed by the author or the markers of their responses, experienced difficulties in limiting the range of implicatures generated by the text to the demands of the academic task.

In some "associative" readings students made what could be considered as academically "inappropriate" links between their knowledge or experience and the text, but which caused the markers to ponder the question: against whose "insight" were students to be judged? After marking the responses we were left with the disquieting realisation that we, as markers, had expected Western cultural "insights" into an African poem.

Although "personalised" and "associative" readings are referred to as "inappropriate" in terms of English Department requirements, it is often a question of a degree of appropriateness. In many cases ESL students were bringing to the poem background knowledge that was different from that of the markers and it was extremely difficult for us to decide which of the projections and associations were relevant and which were not. Our decisions were based on our experience as teachers in the English Department of UCT, although in analysing students' answers our own interpretations of the poem changed and our notions of "relevancy" and "appropriateness" were challenged.

7 Implications for teaching

Specific recommendations would be inappropriate, due to

the fact that the sample is a relatively small one and the test a far from perfect instrument for investigating students' responses.

It does, however, seem quite obvious, both from the results of the "Reapers" and the pilot test, that students need to develop a clear understanding of what metaphorical language is in order to be able to recognise metaphors in a text and apply their understanding, say in terms of metaphorical comparison, to a text.

In the introduction it was pointed out that recent studies (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lee 1992) point to the cultural and ideological values embedded in metaphor. Students for whom English is not a first language need to be made aware of the fact that metaphors are culturally encoded. They also need to know that the full range of the associations which metaphors may generate, may not always be appropriate to a conventional academic reading of a poem. In the introduction it was noted that unless such strategies are taught, students will interpret texts according to their own background knowledge (Murray 1985: 7).

There are a number of implications resulting from ESL students' tendency to use a personalised discourse style and the limitations that this places on their ability to achieve the degree of abstraction required by the discipline of literary criticism. The students who used an academic discourse style demonstrated a greater ability to manipulate abstract ideas. Vygotsky believes that the acquisition of academic discourse is conscious and learned, rather than innate or unconscious (1962: 150). Providing students access to the discourse styles of the university is clearly an important aspect of academic literacy. Weedon points out that subjects are constituted in and by language which is directly

implicated in relations of power and dominance (1987: 21). The critical implication of this is that movement beyond the immediate context has to be facilitated in order that the ability critically to appropriate forms of knowledge outside the immediate experience be developed (Vygotsky 1962: 81).

The context in which students' responses occur will have a significant effect on how it is interpreted. The requirements of academic discourse could be seen as a context that has an influence on interpretation. During processing, information concerning the new context can interact with what is already known in various ways. Firstly, it may interact with known contexts to produce additional contextual implications; secondly, it may strengthen assumptions students already hold; and thirdly it may contradict and eliminate those assumptions "to inferentially yield new assumptions" (Sinclair and Winckler 1991: 17-18).

In the following chapter on discussion with students, the effect of new information concerning both the context of the metaphorical utterances and the context of the university are seen to affect students' interpretations, which are revised in the light of the new information.

There are, I think, two significant questions that emerge from the analysis of the data above and that might be useful for teachers in English Departments to consider.

Firstly: how should interpretation, on the one hand, and mastery of the discourse of literary criticism, on the other, affect the way in which students are assessed? If mastery of the discourse is necessary then a literature curriculum which moves from the use of concrete, particular experience to a wider more "universal" analysis needs to be formulated. Such a curriculum would

have at its core the development of systematic, independent and creative thought, while simultaneously promoting the acquisition and conscious mastery of the linguistic forms demanded by this.

Secondly: against whose "insights" should students' interpretations be measured? Durant suggests that the initiation of students into the discourse of literary departments should enable students to access and order their own thoughts, rather than replace them with those of their lecturers (Durant et al 1992: 150).

In the final chapter I attempt to address these questions by proposing a pedagogically applied model of relevance theory which would enable students to bring their own sense of "relevance" to the poem, but which would also sensitise students to the contextual implications involved in analysing and describing figurative language.

NOTE

- 1 I would like to express my thanks to Zannie Bock, who was involved in the planning and carrying out of this research. We have written a joint paper entitled "Literary Criticism and Background Knowledge: Readings of Oswald Mtshali's 'Reapers in a Mieliefeld'" on aspects of this research. The paper was presented at the 1993 South African Association of Applied Linguistics Conference and is published in S Angélil-Carter (ed) (1993) *Language in Academic Development at UCT*.

5 DISCUSSIONS WITH STUDENTS

5.1 Introduction

It was not possible for me to interview the UCT students who originally wrote the "Reapers" test at the beginning of 1992. In mid-August 1993 I gave the test to a group of 28 University of the Western Cape (UWC) students, registered for English 105 (a pilot foundation English course which I taught and researched). I have included the UWC students' responses with those of the UCT students in Appendix C. The UWC students were well known to me, as I had been their lecturer and tutor for two double periods and one single period a week since the beginning of the year. The students had done work on academic writing, research and approaches to theoretical texts, but we had not studied literature or discussed metaphor.

Students completed the "Reapers" test (see Appendix C) during their double period class on Tuesday 17 August. On Thursday 19 August (another double period class), I returned the marked scripts and discussed the test and the poem with the class. This discussion was tape recorded and the transcription is included in Appendix D.

The students experienced no problems in generating a series of implicatures on the metaphors they had chosen. Difficulties arose in selecting those implicatures which were relevant, not only to the immediate context, but to the larger context of the poem and to the parameters of the written academic task.

5.2 Question 1: "What are figures of speech?"

5.2.1 Defining metaphor

In their written responses to questions 3 and 4 most students seemed to understand that figures of speech are non-literal and require interpretation. Students implicitly understood that metaphorical language often involves comparison, but only one student stated this or was able to explain it in response to question 1. She writes:

Figure of speech are phrases that tries to give a clear picture of what is being said by means of comparing them to other things (X36 Weziwe).¹

Several students' written definitions were confused, but they were able to clarify what they meant in discussion, as in the transcript below:

CW: Would you read out your definition of figures of speech?

Sindiswa: [Reading] "A figure of speech is a phrase which is to give a meaning by using either metaphor or using human for natural meaning".

CW: I think I know what you mean, but that sentence is a bit muddled. What do you mean "using human for natural meaning"?

Sindiswa: When I say natural meaning, I mean the first meaning that appears.

CW: The ordinary, everyday sort of meaning?

Sindiswa: Yes.

CW: And what do you mean by "human meaning"?

Sindiswa: That is the second meaning. It can mean something else.

CW: Can you give me an example?

Sindiswa: Like Mzwamadoda said "He is a lion" - but that can mean many things. Maybe the first meaning is he is strong and then the second meaning is that he is very violent (20 - 39).²

Sindiswa's point has to do with the range of implicatures generated by metaphorical comparison. Several other students, in discussion, stated that, in their understanding, figures of speech imply a series of meanings.

After the discussion on definitions of metaphor, several students stated that they would have changed the way in which they answered question 3 ("Quote one example of a figure of speech from the poem and explain how it contributes to the meaning of the poem") had they been more clear about their definitions of metaphor.

5.3 Question 2: "Underline all examples of figures of speech in this poem".

It seemed to me that students had underlined fairly indiscriminately on their copies of the poem. There was a mixed response from the class when I asked them about this. I assumed that students had not paid too much attention to this question and we did not discuss it.

5.4 Question 3 "Quote one example of a figure of speech from the poem and explain how it contributes to the meaning of the poem".

5.4.1 Expressing metaphor as comparison

Mzwamadoda, McDonald and Linda selected the metaphor "faces furrowed". Below are their test answers:

"Faces furrow" - meaning that the reapers

were showing their seriousness in their work (X32 Mzwamadoda)

"faces furrowed and wet with sweat" The contribution made by this quoted speech in the poem brings or highlights the hard work done by the farm labourers - They being working from early in the morning - which is this working ours of them - And the seriousness of finishing the work as soon as possible. Even when they are working they are trying to feel up the long deep line made by the farmer. And as planters they are not just throwing the mielies and leave the space open - but have to close it with the ground or even put fertilize in it (A7 McDonald)

Furrowed. It contributes because furrow here is used as a line in the skin of someone's face. But it is also a long line in the earth made by a farmer (X39 Linda).

Mzwamadoda and McDonald understood that the metaphor was in some way connected with the work being done, but they did not state explicitly that "faces" were being compared with "furrows"; they seemed able to understand intuitively the significance of the comparison. (Linda's interpretation is taken more or less verbatim from the glossary that was supplied).

Mzwamadoda, for example, wrote that this metaphor shows "the seriousness of their work". But he did not explain how he came to this realisation. In his oral explanation, however, Mzwamadoda begins to explore his own line of reasoning:

CW: Why does this "face furrowed" description show seriousness?

M/madoda: It means you got lines on your forehead.

CW: So this means that you are frowning and concentrating hard. Can you explain why you think the poet chose this figure of speech?

M/madoda: I think he means...the workers they were working hard at this work.

CW: So why did he choose to use the word "furrowed".

M/madoda: Because...the word is used of the reapers (135 - 149)

Mzwamadoda has the background knowledge to understand the comparison and his "processing" or decoding of the metaphor involves relating furrows in the earth to the lines of concentration on the workers' faces. This resulted in a logical and acceptable interpretation. In the discussion it became clear that Mzwamadoda did not understand the "rules" of an academic discourse, which often involves stating the obvious, providing substantiation for this and an explanation for the connections one has made or the line of reasoning one has taken (Taylor et al 1986: 56).

For McDonald the description "faces furrowed" generated a range of implicatures around farm work: mielies, planting, fertilizing, working the earth, and so on. Some of these were appropriate to the context of reaping and others less so. I suggested that he had seen a relationship between the metaphor and the earth that the reapers were working:

CW: McDonald - you said something similar, didn't you.

McDonald: Yes. I agree with Mzwamadoda. These reapers are working so hard so that their faces are lined.

CW: But you went further - you said "And as planters they are not just throwing mielies and leaving the

space open - but have to close it with the ground or even put fertilizer in it". I think you mean that the description, "faces furrowed" links, or associates the workers with the earth that they are working on because the word "furrows" can be used of both faces and fields. Is that right?

McDonald: Yes. Can you write that on the board?

CW: Why?

McDonald: Because you said it better than me. What you said has got more meaning in it.

CW: Do you think so?! Okay. [writes sentence on board]
[To class] What is the difference between what I said and what McDonald said?

Elise: Your sentence is better because...I don't know...
there is too much details in MacDonald's.

CW: You mean because he talks about the mielies and the ground and fertilizer?

Elise: Yes. Also McDonald is talking about the planting activities not only the reaping ones.

CW: Good point. You've wandered off the point a bit, McDonald... Any other differences between McDonald's description and mine?

McDonald: You use bigger words than me.

CW: But am I saying the same thing with bigger words?

McDonald: No, you are saying something at a deeper and wider level.

CW: You mean my sentence is more general?

McDonald: Yes. It's like that...general.

CW: McDonald and Mzwamadoda, I think you both have very interesting ideas. But you should explain these ideas by stating why you think the poet used the description "faces furrowed". Substantiate your ideas by saying how the word "furrowed" can be used
(150 - 187)

The sentence that I wrote on the board was: "The description associates the workers with the earth that

they are working on because the word 'furrows' can be used of both faces and fields". When I questioned the class on the differences between my sentence and McDonald's, Elise suggested that McDonald's sentence was too "detailed" and that it had more to do with "planting" than "reaping". McDonald described my sentence as "deeper and wider" than his.

McDonald seems to have realised that grammatical forms are realisations of meaning not only at the semantic level but also at the rhetorical level (Halliday 1975). The communicative intent, which in this case is to explicate the text, is directly related to the language chosen. McDonald's tangential discussion was not appropriate to the task. His answer is inappropriate in terms of the parameters of the task (explaining the metaphor's contribution to the meaning of the poem) and the context of literary criticism. The details supplied by McDonald are peripheral to the poem's thematic concerns, in contrast to the discourse of literary criticism which requires a focus on textuality and the actual words of the poem.

Several of McDonald's processing efforts were also misdirected because he misread "Reapers in a Mieliefeld" for "Planters or farm workers in general in a mielifield..."

Linda, who also chose this metaphor, explained that she had difficulty with expression (188 - 194). She had in fact relied extensively on the glossary in her written interpretation. In discussion with Linda she was able to make use of her new understanding of figurative language as comparison in order to explain the connection between the workers and the field they are reaping.

Similar issues around both the nature of figurative

language and the "rules" of literary criticism emerged in the discussion on the simile "teeth as yellow as the harvested grain":

CW: Lawrence, you had a really nice response. Would you read it, please?

Lawrence: "'teeth as yellow as the harvested grain'. This is a simile, it contributes to the meaning of the poem in the way that these people are reaping grain and the teeth of the tractor's driver are yellow as the grain which they are harvesting".

CW: [pointing to the board] I think the point you are making is same one as the "faces furrowed" metaphor. The fact that the tractor driver's teeth are "as yellow as the harvested grain" associates him with the harvesting of the mielies.

Lawrence: Yes.

CW: Benjamin, you said that the driver was working so hard that he didn't have time to brush his teeth, is that right?

Benjamin: That's what I said.

[Laughter]

CW: People are laughing because they don't think "teeth" are a very poetic subject. Do you think that, if you want to, you should be able to talk freely about teeth when you are discussing a poem?

[Laughter]

Benjamin: I think that all things, even teeth, can be spoken about.

[Laughter]

CW: Benjamin has always got an answer for everything! But does brushing your teeth contribute to the meaning of the poem?...Brian C, you said that the driver's teeth were yellow because he smoked a lot, is that right?

Brian C: Yes.

CW: And then you deduced that he must have a lot of

worries, right?

Brian C: Yes.

CW: You actually call the tractor driver a labourer, don't you?

Brian C: Yes. I think he's a black worker.

CW: And he's got all these worries because he's a worker?

Brian C: Yes.

CW: He's not a farm owner?

Brian C: No.

CW: Now this is very interesting to me, because when I first read the poem, I thought that the tractor driver was the boss - the farm owner.

Class: No!

CW: I thought those flashing yellow teeth were quite sinister - you know - sort of gobbling up the workers and their produce and everything...(368 - 421)

Lawrence's explanation focused more clearly on the actual description, while Benjamin and Brian C tended to embark on tangential discussions that were not entirely appropriate to the task.

Brian's point, however, provoked an interesting discussion which raised many issues that were relevant to interpretation, in particular the socio-economic and historical contexts.

In the discussion on whether the tractor driver in the poem was black or white (423 - 599), John pointed out that we need to know the date of the poem as this would affect how we read the context. Weziwe suggested that more information was required about the poet and the context of his writings. She claims that

When you read this poem: you are expecting

the black man to be working and the white man to be boss - if the poet is talking from his or her own experience. So now we've got to take that experience and understand what it was.

The key point Weziwe makes is that activating learners' existing knowledge and personal experience should serve as a foundation on which to build further areas of research and knowledge, rather than encouraging students to remain in the personal and experiential.

5.4.2 The role of context

The discussion on the personification "the sun lashes the workers with a red hot rod" took the form of a comparison between Elise's answer and the answer of one of the University of Cape Town (UCT) English L1 students. The two written answers are as follows:

"The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". The real meaning behind this sentence is that the day is hot and the sun is burning. The red-hot rod demonstrates the heat emitted by the sun. We all know that a rod is a metal and when this rod is red-hot one can imagine how hot it is. The red-hot rod contributes to show how the sun was affecting the workers and to show the conditions the workers are working in. It also enables us to understand why the workers have to stop for a drink (O62 Elise)

"The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod" - the poet is using figurative speech here to express how hot the sun is, it

lashes at them like a whip, we can imagine the sun punishing them and we have a strong impression of slave labour of someone ruling over them with a "red-hot rod" (E14 UCT student)

Elise had read the context - farm work - more literally than the UCT student, who had interpreted the context more widely as the exploitation of farm labourers in apartheid South Africa. According to Elise, the metaphor describes the heat and enables us to understand "why the workers have to stop for a drink". She did not situate the utterance within a more abstract context of political struggle or resistance, as the UCT student does when he or she writes "...we have a strong impression of slave labour or someone ruling over them with a whip".

The discussion on the differences between the two answers revealed that taking into account a broader context, understanding the connotations of words and understanding the nature of the discourse of literary criticism have an effect on interpretation:

CW: Do you understand what [the UCT student] is saying?

Elise: This student is saying that the workers are slaves.

CW: Yes. He (let's assume it's a male student) says firstly, the same as you are saying, that it is very hot. But he goes on to see the sun as a symbol of oppression. He says the sun is a "slave driver".

Elise: I never gave any thought to oppression and slavery. Should I have said that the sun is the oppressor?

CW: Not necessarily. I think your interpretation is valid. You have written what you found in the sun metaphor. That's fine. If you were suffering from liberal white guilt, maybe you would have seen the sun as a symbol for the oppressive farm owner who is

exploiting his workers.

[Laughter]

Elise: But now that you said this, that the sun is a symbol for the farmer, I think that interpretation could be right.

...

First of all let me say about interpretation. It's like what you are always saying.

CW: What am I always saying?

Elise: That you must substantiate. It should not be an interpretation of like...It's like giving an opinion and then as long as you can substantiate - you can give reasons for your opinion I don't think you can ever go wrong. Only if you happen to give an opinion that you can not give substantial evidence about then you are like arguing without evidence. But if you are giving - like interpreting something you understand, you should say 'this is what I think' and the reason why I think so are because of this and that. And as long as it is understandable that you could express yourself like that, then it's not wrong; but I don't think that interpretation should be based on just your own ideas.

CW: Right. Interpretation is a very personal thing, but you must be able to back up that interpretation from the text and say why you think that way. Different readers are going to bring different things to the poem. I'm sure we all have different interpretations of the poem - all interpretations are valid - but maybe there are some interpretations that go into more detail and are therefore more complex than other interpretations...

Elise: So if this is the case, this UCT student is not telling us how he substantiate his thinking about how the sun is an oppressor.

CW: Well, he refers to the words "lashes" and "rod".
"Lashes" is used of whipping, of punishment. The word "rod" has another meaning, it is the thing you sometimes see kings and queens carrying - a sceptre - which is a symbol of authority. These words have strong emotive connotations. He has used these connotations to substantiate his claims.

Elise: But this would never be accepted in a court of law!

CW: But you're in the Arts faculty now. We're allowed to refer to the connotations of words, too!

Elise: But you did not write this in your dictionary.

CW: I know, that's because I didn't think of the other meaning of rod until after I read some of the students' interpretations, I'm afraid (243 - 358).

Elise understood that the poem was sited within the context of apartheid, but did not know how to make or express the connection between the immediate context (reaping) and the more abstract context (apartheid). To make these connections she would clearly need to be provided with an input that would guide her towards these connections, or the facilitation of her lecturers.

Vygotsky claims that in order to move beyond the limitations of the immediate context, the learner needs to be guided towards the development of forms of knowledge outside of the immediate experience (1962).

Elise understood that one of the "rules" of academic discourse has to do with "substantiation" and wanted to know what support the UCT student had for his or her opinion. Elise did not realise that, in literary criticism, the writer can use as "evidence" the emotive connotations of words. Elise (a B A (Law) student) points out: "this would never be accepted in a court of Law!" Elise's concluding question indicates the need to make explicit this aspect of literary criticism: "so you must

say what is the poem's meaning in the big picture, which is apartheid and find evidence for this opinion by the 'lashes' and 'rod'?"

Elise points out that in order to be "fair" to ESL students, connotations or symbolic uses of words need to be glossed. "Rod" was glossed as a "thin metal bar", but its use as a symbol of rule was not indicated. Sperber and Wilson point out that "processing effort" is affected by the relative frequency of words (1987: 24). ESL (and probably many L1 students too) need to have the more obscure meanings of words explained.

A similar point is made in the discussion with Sbhongile, who did not consider the wider contextual implications of the comparison between the "tanker" and the "tractor". She focused on dust, as an "implicature" of "desert tanker", not on its potential destructiveness:

Behind them, like a desert tanker. This figure of speech contributes to the meaning of the poem because it explain the dust raising by the tractor in the mieliefield so the writer compare this mieliefield dust with desert tanker. We know a desert is so dry and it will be worse if the tanker moves there because it will raised all the dust of the desert as it moving so in this poem is used to explain the dust of the mieliefield (254 Sbhongile)

For Sbhongile, the driver on the tractor was a black worker, and this influenced the "implicatures" that the simile generated for her. Had she imagined the tractor driver to be a white employer, the simile might have yielded other meanings:

CW: Tell me, what is a "tanker"?

Sbongile: A tanker is a...a...

Brian F: It's a...

CW: Sbongile - I'm asking Sbongile.

Sbongile: A tanker... The tanker that I know is the one that looks like the...the army, you know.

CW: Mmmm.

Sbongile: It's got long wheels - and...

CW: It's a military vehicle.

Sbongile: Yes.

CW: Does everyone agree?

Class: Yes.

CW: No one thought it was a water tanker?

Class: No.

CW: Sbongile, when you wrote about the comparison, did you think about the military aspect - I mean the fact that the tanker is a weapon of war - a destructive thing?

Sbongile: No I only thought of the dust. The clouds of dust in a desert.

CW: Let me read to you a description from a UCT student. This student writes: "'Like a desert tanker a dust-raising tractor pulls a trailer'. This analogy in which a tractor is compared to a desert tanker enhances the image of the intense heat and dust in which the reapers are working - like that of a desert. The use of 'tanker' describes the tractor as large and powerful, as if it could drive over everything in its path, including the reapers". What do you think of that interpretation?

Sbongile: I think it's better than mine.

CW: Why?

Sbongile: Well this person, he or she first says what I say. But there is the statement that it can drive over... destroy the workers, too.

CW: But are tractors destructive things?

Sbongile: No. Not really.

CW: Why are they not destructive?

Sbongile: Well...they are good, useful vehicles.

CW: Right. But is there a situation in which they can be destructive.

Sbongile: Maybe they can kill people...

CW: Or be used to exploit people?

Sbongile: I'm not sure what you mean.

CW: If I think that the tractor is being described - not in terms of it being as dusty as a tanker - but as destructive as a tanker - then I must say why. I would say that normally the tractor is used creatively, that is for harvesting or planting - but it could be seen as destructive if I see it as a symbol of oppression - the white farmer's tractor. So we're back at the farmer again - who is he?

Sbongile: I see...(600 - 673).

The interpretation of the simile which compares the tractor to a desert tanker is clearly context dependent. Sbongile interpreted the poem as a fairly "neutral" description of reaping and in this regard the connection between "tractor" and "desert tanker" was the dust that each produced. As Sbongile did not site the poem within the wider context of oppression, the comparison did not generate implicatures based on the relationship between the destructive potential of the tanker and exploitative labour practices.

5.5 Question 4: Explain in your own words what the phrase: "women become prancing wild mares" (l 26), contributes to the meaning of the poem.

5.5.1 Decoding "wild mares"

Discussion on the metaphor "women become prancing wild mares" started with students finding synonyms for "wild":

CW: Okay, now we're going to go round the class and everyone must give me a synonym - you know what a synonym is?...

Class: Yes.

CW: Look at what you wrote in your answers and give me a synonym for "wild":

Sindiswa: Angry.

Patience: Cross.

Suzan: Quick.

Linda: Rushing.

Elise: Untamed.

Benjamin: All these things!

M/madoda: Very busy.

Fezikile: Moving very fast.

Pearl: Lack of control.

Lliony: Busy.

Vincent: Irritated.

Zimasa: Fast.

Nathemba: Exaggerate.

Brian C: Uncontrollable.

Adam: Fast.

John: I was absent for the test.

McDonald: Working hard.

Colleen: Strong.

Brian F: Strong and fast.

Lawrence: In a hurry.

Kagiso: Energy.

Shireen: Fast.

Althea: Anxious.

Lindele: Fast.

Weziwe: High tempered.

Sbongile: Fast.

CW: That's very interesting. Not one of you said "Free".

Elise: Wild means free?

CW: No. "wild" means all the things you have mentioned. But it can also mean free. You all said that the women were working really hard, and rushing wildly

to get their work done - right?
Class: Yes (282 - 714).

Students' interpretations of "wild" related very clearly to the immediate context of the poem. Interpretations thus focused on work-related descriptions: "working hard", "busy", "fast", "energy" and so on. No-one chose "free" as a synonym for "wild" (Elise's "untamed" is not, in terms of her answer, a synonym for "free").

The subsequent discussion revealed that students were not consciously aware of the fact that there are horses in a "wild" (that is, "free") state. They were also unaware of the symbolic effect that the description held for me and other English L1 readers.

I read the class the UCT student's answer:

Here is a change from the slow oppressed
labour that they have been doing. The
comparison shows that they instead of just
being objects of labour - performing a
mechanical task, they are in fact free
human beings not just machines (E4).

I provided the students with a description of how wild horses are corralled and attempted to explain the emotive significance of the description "wild mares". Despite my long explanation, Lawrence demonstrated his independence, confidence and understanding of the importance of "substantiation" in academic discourse by responding critically to the UCT student's answer. He decided not to alter his interpretations of "wild" as "in a hurry":³

Lawrence: This interpretation of the word "wild" will be influenced by the way in which you see the whole poem.

CW: Explain.

Lawrence: I think you must tell this UCT student that there is a contradiction in what he or she is writing.

CW: What do you mean?

Lawrence: So this student said that the poem is associated with oppression. So why now does this student say that this worker is "free"?

CW: That's a very good point? Did you all hear that?

Class: No.

CW: Lawrence says I must tell this UCT student that there is a contradiction in his or her argument. If that is a white farmer on the tractor oppressing his workers - then why are the women suddenly so free... happy and unoppressed at the end of the poem? That's a good point. I think that this interpretation assumes that the working day is at an end and the workers are free to go home.

Weziwe: It says in the poem that "soon the day's work will be done and the reapers will rest in their kraals".

CW: You mean the working day is not over yet..."soon"... but not yet.

Weziwe: That is right.

CW: Good point. You're all very sharp today. I'm impressed! (767 - 799)

Lawrence's critique of the UCT student's response is, I think, a valid one. Lawrence points out that there is a contradiction in interpreting "wild" as "free" within the larger context of oppression. Lawrence's point implies an "over-reading" on the part of the UCT student, who claims that the metaphor suggests that the women "are in fact free human beings and not just machines". Lawrence also emphasises the wider context of the poem and implies that a decontextualised reading of "wild" is inappropriate. In her adjunct to Lawrence's point Weziwe demonstrates the

importance of close reading.

5.5.2 Discussion and discovery

Lawrence arrived at his interpretation after almost one and a half hours of class discussion, during which a variety of aspects concerning the poem, the context and the nature of literary criticism had been explored. Lawrence's original written answer does not demonstrate his later understanding which was expressed during class discussion. In his answer to the "Reapers" test he wrote:

This phrase emphasise that there is a lot of work, as we hear that women are in a hurry. This hurry for this hard working is expressed by the association of women and mares. We know that mares are horses, so we should understand that hurry can be associated with horses as they are always moving fast. This hurry is the indicator of hard working (X 41 Lawrence).

His later interpretation entails the understanding of the poem's context, an understanding of the various meanings of the word "wild" - and a rationale for why the "Western" meaning is rejected in favour of a meaning that relates more closely to his experience and the wider context of the poem. Lawrence commented that, if given the opportunity, he would like to re-write his answer.

5.6 Conclusions

The discussions with students made clear many of the underlying assumptions behind their written interpretations of the poem's metaphors. These discussions also made clear that many of the problems they were experiencing in interpretation have to do with

the implicit nature of the "rules" of the discourse of literary analysis.

The discussion on definitions of metaphor suggests that there is a need for tasks in literary analysis to be more "transparent", for lecturers to incorporate a "meta-curriculum" which demystifies the concepts that many lecturers take for granted in the analysis of figures of speech.

Recent studies on "academic literacy" and "writing-across-the-curriculum: (Taylor et al 1986, Nightingale 1988, Young and Fulwiler 1982) indicate that language and educational development are inextricably linked to the discourse of specific disciplines. In this regard, they argue that "all teachers are teachers of language". The acquisition of academic language is developmental. Considered in this way, the production of language, the "shaping at the point of utterance" (Britton et al 1975: 20) is part of a process. Bock points out that "writing well at university is the achievement of standing in a discipline. It is a goal not a starting point" (1986: 39).

The notion of writing as a process has several implications for students of literature. While metaphor itself may be fundamental to human cognition (Lakoff and Johnson 1980); the ability to describe the concept of metaphor and the processes of interpretation approximates to what Vygotsky calls a "scientific concept" (1962). Such concepts are not innate, but are learned. Luria points out that if these "scientific concepts", or forms of theoretical reasoning are made accessible by the initial use of concrete means, the transfer to external abstract reasoning will be possible (1952/1982). Students who understand metaphor as a comparison, for example, will apply this understanding in their interpretation of

metaphorical language in a poem.

Students demonstrated that they were able to understand the metaphorical utterances of the poem, and were able to draw on their own experiences and understanding; but they did not have the metalingual skills which would have enabled them to explain the mental processes involved in interpretation.

The "rules" of literary criticism (the need to remain within the parameters of a set task, to explain one's line of reasoning, to substantiate claims with reference to the connotations of words, to focus on the text, and so on) need to be made explicit. Students' understanding of a generic academic discourse, or a subject specific discourse, as learned in the faculty of law or in the department of anthropology, for example, is not always appropriate to the discourse required by an English Department (Taylor et al 1986: 64).

In expressing their understanding of figures of speech students need access to the forms of language that are part of the discourse of literary criticism. This is a specialised language which is not "acquired" by native speakers as part of the natural process, but aspects of the language that are taught to native speakers or learned by them in the course of their formal education. Bloor points out that uses of language and literacy appropriate to the needs of the learner have to be taught (1984). Nightingale expresses the relationship between language and knowledge as:

interlocking spirals up which a learner
moves unevenly; at points where the
language and cognition intersect the
learner is capable of articulation of the
knowledge. Sometimes learners have the

vocabulary but lack understanding of the concepts; but sometimes the concept is grasped intuitively while the vocabulary is inadequate to express it (1986: 81).

Students clearly need some guidance in delimiting and defining the context of the poem. This refers both to the immediate context of the poem, the historical, cultural and socio-economic contexts of the poem and the academic context of the interpretation. An input which enables students to extend a purely personal understanding of the poem is necessary in order to develop a sense of history and wider context (Durant & Fabb 1990).

Fowler distinguishes three contexts relevant to literary studies "context of utterance, context of culture and context of reference" (1986: 86). Without forcing an interpretation of the poem, it should be possible to guide students to connections between the immediate and the wider contexts. This would involve an input which facilitates development from the personal and experiential to the general and abstract.

Abstract thought is often described as "decontextualised thought", as opposed to "context-embedded" thought. This is a problematic opposition in terms of Relevance theory. Sperber and Wilson point out that "context" is vital to comprehension. A possible extension of Relevance theory would be to reconsider "decontextualised" thought in terms of thought involving "deep" contextual implications that go beyond the immediate context of interpretation. "Context-embedded" thought, on the other hand, is comprehension in terms of the immediate and probably "shallower" context.

With reference to the poem discussed, "apartheid" and the context of oppression could be seen as the deep, abstract

context (but clearly a context nevertheless); while "farm work" is the immediate, specific context. The ability to make connections between the specific and abstract contexts entails the expansion and rearrangement of thought through the use of abstract concepts in place of a reliance on the concrete, experiential and particular (Fiore and Elsasser 1987).

Language is necessarily a part of the process of acquiring these forms of knowledge. Language involves both the content of thought and the process by which people think. It is language, Vygotsky argues, that enables this transition from perceptual to conceptual thought (1962). Berger writes:

Language imposes order upon experience. It creates conceptual order by imposing differentiation and structure on experience...(1970).

The test that students wrote did not count towards any final marks, but was an attempt to find out how students interpret metaphorical language. The specific issues that emerged in the written language of the test and the expression it demanded indicate that writing is not an adequate means of finding out about students' thoughts, as their responses tend to be measured against the rules of literary criticism. The difference between students' answers in the test situation and the discussion indicate that the freer context of oral response might be a more suitable way of understanding students' thoughts.

The discovery and revision or reconsideration of ideas that occurred during the small group discussion indicates that interaction with peers and teacher is an important part of the learning process. Such interactions increase students' awareness of the different contexts in which

utterances are sited and information is exchanged. As part of this exchange, students' experience and knowledge can be accommodated within a model of academic discourse.

NOTES

- 1 These numbers refer to the students' answers in Appendix C. The UWC students are distinguished from the UCT students in the Appendix.
- 2 These numbers are line references to the transcription in Appendix D.
- 3 Zannie Bock and I discussed this metaphor with Abner Nyamande (Lecturer, Department of African Languages, UCT) and in a letter he writes: "I must confess I would myself have interpreted the 'prancing wild mares' like the ESL students..."

6 RELEVANCE THEORY AND PEDAGOGY

6.1 Introduction

Relevance, and the maximisation of relevance, Sperber and Wilson have argued, is the key to human cognition (1987: 9). In the introductory chapter, it was pointed out that their central argument is that comprehension and information processing are most effective when the message is perceived by the "processor" (or receiver of the message) as "relevant", that is, useful or meaningful in some way. "Relevance" depends on a number of factors, including context, assumptions, inferences made and background knowledge. As receivers of messages, we process that information which seems contextually appropriate.

Theories of comprehension have obvious significance for our understanding of the processes students use when interpreting metaphor. Sperber and Wilson point out that the form of an utterance rarely reflects the form of the thought it expresses. In this regard they note that metaphorical language may be found on a continuum of more or less literal uses of language. When interpreting metaphor, we search for a meaning which is relevant to the context and, in order to reduce the processing load as much as possible, the first meaning which appears relevant is accepted.

Sperber and Wilson claim that in interpreting metaphorical language the reader undergoes the same process as in interpreting literal language. A figurative interpretation, they argue, is no more "difficult" than a literal interpretation. This is because a reader will only accept an utterance as literal if this is consistent with the principle of relevance. If there is an easily accessible non-literal interpretation, there will be no

need for the listener to consider the literal interpretation at all (1987: 21). In metaphorical uses of language, however, the situation may be complicated by the fact that poetic metaphors often carry several implicatures which all contribute to the meaning of the utterance.

Sperber and Wilson explain the operation of metaphor in terms of a context of existing assumptions. An utterance is made within a context which affects its meaning. The utterance thus "implies" a context. The context is significant both in terms of generating and of comprehending utterances. The context in which an utterance occurs is often implicit, and may require either tacit understanding or active decoding.

6.2 Relevance and Pedagogy

The significance of Sperber and Wilson's Relevance theory in developing a pedagogy for the teaching of metaphor involves a shift of emphasis from content to the various contexts in which that content is placed. It is the context, they argue, which gives meaning to content. While "content" might be conceived of as something relatively stable or fixed, contexts are constantly changing. Within Sperber and Wilson's theoretical framework the concept of context can be expanded to include a variety of factors that are extrinsic to texts, including not only the historical background and linguistic features of the text, but also the relationship between teachers and students and the academic environment in which the text is processed.

The answers to the two tests and the discussion with students suggests that "content" and immediate contextual aspects of the poems presented less problems to students than deeper levels of "context", although it must be

remembered that the texts chosen were relatively accessible. Most students who wrote both the pilot and the "Reapers" tests had no difficulties in reading and understanding the gist of the poems or decoding the sense of their metaphors. Where students did experience difficulties was in understanding the poems in wider contexts, for example: historical contexts or contexts in which socio-economic or political ideas played a role. They understood the poem in specific, immediate and usually personal contexts. Students also experienced difficulties in decoding what Lakoff and Johnson call the "cultural histories" of particular words or expressions (1980: 167). Many students were able to develop deeper levels of understanding during discussion and were able to express their understanding orally, but communication and expression in the written academic context presented difficulties.

The challenge that relevance theory poses to curriculum development in literary studies is the formulation of a course which would enable students to bring their own experience and knowledge to the analysis of texts, that is, to process them in terms of relevance, while simultaneously promoting a wider contextual understanding of the course content. Such a curriculum would include the context of the university, in terms of advanced language acquisition within the discourse of literary criticism. By providing opportunities for students to bring their own knowledge to the course, students would be encouraged to be critical in their appropriation of forms of knowledge outside their immediate experience. The aim of such a curriculum therefore would be to develop systematic, independent and creative thought, while, at the same time, to promote the acquisition and mastery of the linguistic forms demanded by these tasks.

6.3 The context of content

"Content" in a literary syllabus, usually means "choice of texts". I would like to extend the meaning of "content" to refer to the historical background of the chosen texts, the language content of these texts and the different ways in which the content of texts may be perceived or understood. The relationship between the content and the context of a literary syllabus therefore includes the context in which the texts are selected, the context in which the texts were written, the linguistic context of the text and the context in which the text is perceived or understood.

By emphasising the role of a variety of contexts in the interpretation of utterances, relevance theory challenges notions concerning the certainty and absoluteness of knowledge and questions ways of knowing that present themselves as disinterested and objective.

The significance of this for teaching practice is that emphasis is shifted from the content of knowledge to the context in which that knowledge has been constructed. This would imply a move away from a content-based (that is reproduction of content), transmission model of teaching to one which includes alternative forms of knowledge, culturally diverse ways of learning and promotes active interaction between students, teachers and texts. In such a model, the emphasis is on the interchange of ideas between teachers and students; teachers are seen as guides, rather than transmitters of knowledge.

6.3.1 Choice of texts in context

The principle of relevance states that relevant information is that which adds the most knowledge to our

store at the lowest processing cost. This has obvious implications for the selection of texts in a literary syllabus.

The notion of a literary "canon" at first year or entrance level is problematic in terms of relevance theory for it places emphasis on "content" without taking cognisance of the context of change in South Africa and the changing nature of the student body in South African universities. The selection of texts for study needs to be flexible in order to meet the criteria for comprehension suggested by relevance theory.

In a foundation or first year course, in which many students will be ESL users, theories of second language acquisition could also inform the choice of texts. Mattson suggests that the second-language classroom should be used as a basis for theorising an approach to literary studies that accommodates linguistic and cultural differences (1993). Krashen, for example, points out that:

we acquire by going for meaning, by focusing on what is said rather than how it is said. We are aided in this process by extra-linguistic context, and our knowledge of the world (1981: 38).

With reference to the study of literature, Krashen's monitor hypothesis argues for the provision of a comprehensible literary input, that is, texts which are accessible and which encourage students to "go for meaning" in the first place through identification or interest.

Texts chosen need not necessarily be South African or contemporary texts, but using the principle of relevance, it would make sense to establish links between students'

understanding and experience and the content of whatever texts are chosen. As Chaskalson et al point out, such links could occur across broad historical periods and across genres (1993).

If we accept the operation of the principle of relevance in the comprehension of texts, then it is likely that students who do not have knowledge of the historical content of the texts studied may interpret the text anachronistically. It is in order to avoid anachronistic interpretations or misreadings of the language of a text, due to a lack of familiarity with its cultural import or due to reliance on dictionary definitions, that the historical and linguistic contexts need to be explored.

6.3.2 Historical context

Teachers may have information about the historical background of texts and the author's personal, socio-political and literary circumstances that is important for a comprehensive understanding of a literary text. Students who do not have this information will be limited in their understanding and appreciation of the text.

In discussion with students (Chapter 5) it became clear that students require information on the historical background of texts in interpretation. Students pointed out that their interpretation of the Mtshali poem would have been different, had they known that the poem was written in the 1960s, when job reservation and grand apartheid was in force. Sperber and Wilson point out that we search for a meaning which is relevant to the context and, in order to reduce the processing load as much as possible, the first meaning which appears relevant - usually within the immediate or known context - is accepted (1987). Students clearly need to make informed decisions when interpreting a text and need to be

provided with additional historical content, if the immediate or known contexts are insufficient for the processing of information.

Although conventional lectures tend to encourage passivity and dependence in students and more learner-centred methods may be desirable, there may well be a place for the lecture mode (accompanied by clear visual or auditory scaffolds to support the information being conveyed) in presenting historical information to students.

Expository texts also contain information on the historical background of the texts studied, but many of these texts are written by literary experts for other literary experts and may not make much sense to first year students. If such readings are introduced, they would need to be annotated in a variety of ways: with, for example, questions (possibly in the form of footnotes) which could be included to lead students to an understanding of the content and ideas that expressed. Difficult or unusual words would need to be glossed and linguistic structures which support and advance arguments should be pointed out.

The notion of historical context could be expanded to include aspects of wider socio-political contexts. Freire talks about the socio-political context as a "generative theme". A "generative theme" is one which will "generate" a range of conditions, enabling students to explore the impact of society on their own lives (Freire 1970). By including such a theme, students would be able to bring their own knowledge to the classroom and would be guided towards the discovery of connections between their own experiences and the larger South African socio-political context. The notion of a "generative theme" can also be framed within Vygotsky's general theory of the social

basis of learning (1978).

The criteria for a "generative theme" are: that it should be meaningful to students in terms of their own experience; that it should "empower" students by enabling them to become aware of the connections between their own experience and wider, abstract issues; and (as an additional criterion with reference to the multilingual/multicultural/multiracial nature of South African universities) that it should seek to unify students through an emphasis on communality, rather than difference.

6.3.3 Language of texts

Following the principle of relevance, it is desirable to select texts written in language that is accessible for ESL students - while accepting that poetic language, by its nature is dense and complex. It is, of course, precisely the cultural or emotive connotations of words, rather than their straightforward dictionary definitions, that are important in literary analysis. The language of the texts will need to be taken into consideration, if discussion and participation by ESL students is to be encouraged.

In interpreting poems, students rely extensively on their own understanding of the words used or on straightforward, common usage dictionary definitions.¹ ESL students can develop their understanding of the connotations of English words through discussion and exchange of knowledge with English L1 peers or teachers or through the provision of glossaries which decode the emotive/cultural connotations or historically changing meanings of words. (An introduction to comprehensive, etymological and other specialist dictionaries might be more appropriate to students' second year of study).

Students pointed out, in discussing the Mtshali poem, that the connotations of words need to be explained. The historical usage of the word "rod" as a synonym for "sceptre", or as a symbol of rulership and authority, for example, is not likely to be part of most ESL students' vocabulary. This was clearly an important word in the poem's context of rule and oppression.

The decision on whether or not to gloss words and how much information to provide is a difficult one and would depend on the aim of the task set. Glossing "wild mares" in the Mtshali poem, for example, would be difficult without implying an interpretation, or alternative interpretations, of the poem.

Texts set in the South African context and which draw on languages other than English and the strengths of ESL speakers would promote the exchange of linguistic knowledge between ESL and English L1 speakers. In discussions on the Mtshali poem, ESL students were able to explain to me the word *maheu* in the context of farm labour. In addition, ESL students alerted me to the many "dead" or "frozen" metaphors in the poems set for both the pilot and "Reapers" tests. Several of these dead metaphors were significant to an understanding of the poems.

The language of the poem thus is an important area for the exchange of linguistic knowledge between ESL and English L1 speakers as well as providing opportunities for ESL students to demonstrate their abilities as skilled, instructive informants rather than as "disadvantaged" recipients of information.

6.3.4 Perceptions and interpretations of text content

Sperber and Wilson's emphasis on the role of context in

the interpretation of content has an analogy with post-structuralist and post-colonial literary theorists, who have pointed out that texts change their meaning when they are read in different times and by different readers (see for example Barthes 1988, Bhabha 1989).

Perception and interpretation continually shift and alter as we change our points of view or add to our store of knowledge. Students' interpretation of the Mtshali poem was, to a certain extent, dependent on their point of view: English L1 students tended to see the poem from a liberal, "outsider" position, while ESL students' perspective was that of the workers.

Sperber and Wilson point out that the same message will be interpreted differently by addressees in different contexts. Similarly, Eagleton's reading of a Shakespeare play, is quite different from Coleridge's reading of the same play - largely due to the vastly different contexts in which those readings occurred. Despite these differences, however, both critics would share a core understanding of the play's content.

All the English L1 and ESL students who wrote the test on the poem "Reapers in a Mieliefeld" as well as the markers of the test shared a common understanding of central features of the poem. None of us disputed that the poem was about labourers in a mielie field, that it was a hot day, that a tractor and driver appeared on the scene or that the workers had a drink of "malty *maheu*" and then resumed work. What was under dispute were the details of perception and the values ascribed to our different perceptions. These differences were clearly dependent on context: were the workers being exploited? was the tractor driver black or white? was he smiling with pleasure or with menace? were the women happy or angry? and so on.

While reading and attempting to understand students' written answers and later in discussion, my perception of the poem started to shift. Listening to students defending their interpretations made me rethink my interpretation. Similarly, I was able to present my views on the poem to students, who in turn shifted and changed their positions. The interpretation of text content is thus subject to continuous revision. No single reading is definitive or absolute.

6.4 Students' knowledge as context

Students' knowledge and experience is an important context that needs to be taken into account in the study of literary texts. Clearly not all South African students, or even ESL students specifically, share entirely similar backgrounds or experiences. Part of a pedagogical approach which validates students' knowledge will include the finding of common ground and the sharing of knowledge(s) and experiences.

Information which adds the most knowledge to our store at the lowest processing cost, as Sperber and Wilson point out, is also likely to be perceived as "relevant".

"Processing cost" is the amount of mental effort needed to process information. Sperber and Wilson argue that extra processing effort detracts from "relevance". The pedagogical implications of this concerns the inclusion of texts which are relevant to students' knowledge and experience as well as the use of student knowledge as base on which other forms of knowledge can be built.

6.4.1 Using students' knowledge

Collaborative learning is a way in which students could be encouraged to become active, independent learners. In such learning situations, small groups of students

working on similar tasks, receive input and interaction from the lecturer and their peers.

Students cannot be expected to invent or construct meaning from texts that they have had little or no prior access to. Texts that contain themes that have connections with the kinds of knowledge and experience that first year students will find interesting or relevant are clearly desirable.

Most students respond favourably to the idea of collaborative learning (Chaskalson et al 1993). According to English 105 UWC students "working in groups was a good idea because we can be able to share views basing on our own knowledge and experience".² Another student writes that collaborative learning "promoted friendship and support among us. Because when we are stuck we get help from our mates which is good". Getting "help from our mates" is precisely what the "zone of proximal development", involves - that is, that the "distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving" can be bridged "in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky 1978: 86).

6.4.2 Expanding students' knowledge

Student knowledge needs to be positioned in a wider context. Students doing the English 105 course at the University of the Western Cape, for example, spent some weeks working on a project in which they attempted to understand the education they had received in terms of wider contexts. All the students felt that they had received a poor education, had not had access to sufficient educational or sporting facilities, were subjected to authoritarian teaching methods, and so on;

but they did not, at that stage understand their experience in terms of the wider context of South African education. Students discussed their understanding with peers and developed further insights into the nature of education in South Africa. Students also read a chapter from *The Right to Learn* called "The Hidden Curriculum" (Christie 1985/1988). This further enlarged their understanding of the South African educational system. Then students conducted interviews with lecturers in an attempt to establish the requirements of university study within specific disciplines. Finally, they composed essays on "The Academic Implications of UWC's 'open admissions' policy with regard to the study of [English/Afrikaans/Xhosa, etc]". Students' knowledge was thus used as a base on which new knowledge could be built.

6.5 Academic context

As teachers, we need to problematise both our own and students' assumptions in order to avoid the danger of overprivileging any single position (Giroux 1991). The acquisition of academic literacy is therefore necessarily recursive.

While it is clearly desirable to valorise the knowledge and understanding that students bring with them to university, teachers also need make students aware of the academic context and its conventions in order that students are able to meet the criteria of the dominant literacy practices. These practices, of course, need to be problematised as:

...most of us do not teach in universities simply to reproduce society's divisions of labour, its class and patriarchal structures, and its ethnocentric values.

Yet we were all trained and socialised to a profession in which these structures and biases were deeply rooted, and even the most oppositionally minded teachers will almost certainly, at times, reproduce what they would oppose (Henricksen 1990: 28).

The aim in introducing students to academic study is not to promote an uncritical reproduction of standard academic practices, but to introduce students to what Wright calls "the democratic subversiveness of books and the philosophical subversiveness of critical theory" (1992: 27). In order to criticise academic practices students, of course, need to understand the nature and rules of these practices.

Communication within the academic context is defined by the rules of various subject specific discourses. Teaching communication within the discipline of literary criticism would entail a language-across-the-curriculum approach which would make evident aspects of the discourse which are usually implicit.

Language needs therefore to be introduced explicitly in the course in the form of a discourse of literary criticism, consisting of suggested linguistic structures and formations which are closely linked to the task that students are engaged in. The intention here is twofold: to provide the linguistic structures to support students' conceptual development and to establish a "dialogic" relationship (Bakhtin 1981) between students' language and academic discourse.

The development of critical approaches to information includes students' development of a meta-cognitive awareness of themselves as learners. This connects with the point made by Bernstein, that is, that the "relations

of power" in the hidden curriculum need to be disclosed. It is these hidden relationships between the individual and society (or in this case the university) that, in Freire's pedagogy, need to be made explicit in order to empower students both in society and in terms of their independence as learners.

6.6 Literary context

The text itself, its form and literary genre is a context which influences interpretation. Morphet points out that students who are unfamiliar with the notion of the "speaker" will tend to interpret poetic utterances as that of the poet (1993: 86). As students develop their understanding of the poetic utterance and who the speaker represents, so their interpretation changes. The same is true of concepts like the "implied reader", the boundedness of texts, the function of the poetic image, and so on. The reading and comprehension of literary texts is thus a recursive process; comprehension will be influenced by the way in which one understands concepts and communication within the discourse of literary criticism. Culler points out that:

To read a text as literature is not to make one's mind a *tabula rasa* and approach it without preconceptions; one must bring to it an implicit understanding of the operations of literary discourse which tells one what to look for (1975: 114).

Relevance theory, or a pedagogical model based on this theory, is particularly useful in analysing the concealed structures of poetry. To focus on context rather than content is to defamiliarise what is taken to be "natural", to see it as a cultural construct and to identify not only its formal features but the relations

of domination and subordination implicit in the context. Spivak suggests that:

Literature buys your consent in an almost clandestine way and therefore it is an excellent instrument for a slow transformation. For good or ill. As medicine, as poison, perhaps always a bit of both. The teacher must negotiate and make visible what is merely clandestine (Spivak 1988: 278)

Understanding the ways in which literary discourses operate helps us to read these texts and deepens our understanding of the ways in which such discourses construct us as "implied readers", as subjects.

6.7 Conclusion

Relevance theory provides a rationale for the design of a literary curriculum which includes contexts and well as texts. Meaning, as Sperber and Wilson point out, is context dependent and therefore a range of contextual implications needs to be explored in the analysis of texts.

Students' knowledge and the interaction between student and text is the starting point of such an exploration, which expands to include historical, cultural and academic aspects of the text and textual analysis.

The process of interpretation is "dialogic" (Bahktin 1981) and recursive. Students can add to their store of knowledge by finding information on unfamiliar contexts, but can also use their insights and experiences to critique the new information. As one of the students pointed out: "But it is still a poem and it is telling me

about something so I am able to understand it myself".

There are larger implications in using Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory as the basis for pedagogical practice. The attempt to valorise students' experience within the academic context combined with the attempt to bring the current contextual concerns of the changing South Africa into the curriculum has far reaching implications. The issue is not the creation of "space" within a mainstream curriculum for the valorisation of "minority" languages and cultures "in marginal and supplemental ways" (Muller 1993: 50); but has implications for the transformation of the university. Tertiary education, Geyer³ argues, has until the 1980s been dominated by monoculturalism. The creation of institutional spaces for the articulation of the needs of a multilingual/multicultural student body has far reaching implications "for the break-up of a white middle class constituency as the mainstay of college education" (Geyer 1993: 501).

NOTES

- 1 Oxford University Press (Cape Town) have informed me that 20 000 copies of the *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*, which is intended for ESL users, are sold annually.
- 2 Students enrolled in the English 105 course kept "learning logs" in which they reflected on a variety of issues, including teaching methodology.
- 3 Geyer's discussion concerns American universities, but there are obvious connections with the South African situation.

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APPENDIX A

The 1991 DET Literature Examination

Model Answers

Examiner's Report

REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA
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DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
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ADMINISTRATION: HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

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N0015(iii)/1991
NOVEMBER 1991
NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE
ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE HG
THIRD PAPER

NASIONALE EKSAMENS
NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

TIME: 1½ HOURS

MARKS: 100

Questions are set on four books. Answer on two only. Candidates who answer on more than two will have only the first two marked.

All answers must be written in the answer booklet.

For multiple choice questions write only the letter of the alternative chosen.

For all other questions follow instructions precisely.

SECTION A: ROMEO AND JULIET - William Shakespeare

Answer all questions.

Read the following extract and then answer questions 1 to 7.

MERCUTIO

I am hurt.

A plague a'both houses! I am sped.

Is he gone and hath nothing?

BENVOLIO

What, art thou hurt?

MERCUTIO

Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch. Marry, 'tis enough.

5

Where is my page? Go, villain, fetch a surgeon.

(Exit Page)

ROMEO

Courage, man, the hurt cannot be much.

MERCUTIO

No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide

as a church door. But 'tis enough. 'Twill serve.

Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave

10

man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world. A

plague o'both your houses. Zounds, a dog, a rat,

a mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to death! A braggart,

a rogue, a villain, that fights by the book of

arithmetic! Why the devil came you between us? I

was hurt under your arm.

15

ROMEO

I thought all for the best.

MERCUTIO

Help me into some house, Benvolio,

Or I shall faint. A plague a'both your houses!

They have made worms' meat of me.

2/....

- I have it, and soundly too. Your houses! (20)
(Exit Mercutio with Benvolio)
1. What are the houses of line 2? (2)
 2. By 'sped' in line 2 Mercutio means
 - a) left behind
 - b) very quick
 - c) going to die
 - d) saved (2)
 3. Quote the two words that suggest that Mercutio did not wound his opponent in their fight. (2)
 4. At some point during the first six lines someone on stage is likely to move towards Mercutio. Quote the first word spoken after this movement. (2)
 5. Mercutio speaks humorously even at the point of death.
 - 5.1 Quote the sentence in which he exaggerates sarcastically. (2)
 - 5.2 Quote the pun he uses (a pun is a word used with two different meanings at once) (2)
 6. What seems to bother Mercutio the most is that his killer is
 - a) a lesser person than himself
 - b) conceited
 - c) a cheat
 - d) a trained swordsman (2)
 7. Mercutio utters his curse against 'your houses' four times during this extract. Name four more people who die before the feud ends. (4)

Now read the next extract and answer the remaining questions.

CAPULET

God's bread! It makes me mad.
Day, night; hour, tide, time; work, play;
Alone, in company; still my care hath been
To have her matched. And having now provided
A gentleman of noble parentage, (5)
Of fair demesnes, youthful, and nobly trained.
Stuffed, as they say, with honourable parts,
Proportioned as one's thought would wish a man -
And then to have a wretched puling fool,
A whining mammet, in her fortune's tender, (10)
To answer 'I'll not wed, I cannot love;
I am too young, I pray you pardon me'!
But an you will not wed, I'll pardon you!
Graze where you will, you shall not house with me.

3/...

Look to't, think on't. I do not use to jest. 15
 Thursday is near. Lay hand on heart. Advise.
 An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend.
 An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
 For, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee,
 Nor what is mine shall never do thee good. 20

Trust to't. Bethink you. I'll not be forsworn.
 (Exit Capulet)

JULIET
 Is there no pity sitting in the clouds
 That sees into the bottom of my grief?
 O sweet my mother, cast me not away!
 Delay this marriage for a month, a week. 25
 Or if you do not, make the bridal bed
 In that dim monument where Tybalt lies.

LADY CAPULET
 Talk not to me, for I'll not speak a word.
 Do as thou wilt, for I have done with thee.
 (Exit Lady Capulet)

JULIET
 O God! - O Nurse, how shall this be prevented? 30
 ... Comfort me, counsel me.
 What sayest thou? Hast thou not a word of joy?
 Some comfort, Nurse.

NURSE
 Faith, here it is. 35
 Romeo is banished, and all the world to nothing
 That he dares ne'er come back to challenge you.
 Then, since the case so stands as now it doth,
 I think it best you married with the County.

8. Below are four quotations taken from Capulet's lines
 earlier in the play.

- a) My child is yet a stranger in the world.
 Let two more summers wither in their pride
 Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.
 - b) But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart.
 My will to her consent is but a part. ...
 - c) Things have fallen out, sir, so unluckily
 That we have had no time to move our daughter.
 - d) I think she will be ruled in all respects by me.
- 8.1 Which of them does Capulet seem to contradict during
 the first four lines in the extract above? (2)
- 8.2 Which does he seem to contradict in line 12 of his
 first speech in the extract above? (2)
- 8.3 Which does he seem to contradict in the last 5 lines
 of his first speech in the extract above? (2)

4.

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9. In the light of your answers to 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 above, which of the following descriptions is least applicable to Capulet?
- a) inconsistent
 - b) reasonable
 - c) prone to exaggeration
 - d) ill-tempered
- (2)
10. Quote the word which indicates the tone of voice Capulet is likely to use when he imitates Juliet in lines 11 and 12.
- (2)
11. Quote the line which explains what Capulet actually means when he says in line 13 'I'll pardon you'.
- (2)
12. Which of the following does Capulet not use in expressing his anger towards Juliet in lines 9-21?
- a) insults
 - b) commands
 - c) blasphemy (disrespect for religion)
 - d) threats
- (2)
13. Find words in the first 21 lines which are synonyms for the following:
- a) lands/property
 - b) if
 - c) eat
 - d) make jokes
- (4)
14. Who finally provides Juliet with a kind of solution for the problem she faces in this extract?
- (2)
15. With dramatic irony a speaker's words become true in a way the speaker does not mean at the time. Quote an example of dramatic irony that Juliet utters in this extract.
- (2)
16. Imagine you are Juliet. Report briefly what happened here in your meeting with your parents and the Nurse.
- (10)

[50]

SECTION B: THE WIND AT DAWN - Smyth and Swacina

Answer all the questions.

Read the JOURNEY OF THE MAGI by T.S. Eliot and then answer questions 1 to 17.

'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.' 5
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet. 10
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices: 15

A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly. 20

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation,
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow. 25
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.

But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory. 30

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly, 35
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our palaces, these Kingdoms, 40
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation.
I should be glad of another death.

1. What word in the first sentence (lines 1-5) links the journey of the Magi to the Birth of Christ? (2)

6/...

6.

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2. Considering the purpose of this journey and that it took place in the dead of winter in the northern hemisphere, during what month of the year did they probably make it? (2)
3. Which of the following was not one of their hardships on the journey? (2)
- a) the cold weather
 - b) the behaviour of the camels
 - c) the slopes and terraces
 - d) the behaviour of the camel drivers
4. In terms of which of the following were they at a disadvantage after they decided to travel at night? (2)
- a) night-fires
 - b) shelters
 - c) people
 - d) sleep
5. The phrase 'this was all folly' in line 20 refers to (2)
- a) their decision to travel at night
 - b) the hardships they were enduring
 - c) their belief that the Messiah was about to be born
 - d) all of the above
6. Find synonyms in the first stanza for the following words or phrases. (4)
- a) rebelled
 - b) stubborn/difficult
 - c) longed for/missed
 - d) antagonistic
7. Find three words from different parts of lines 21 and 22 that do most to introduce the idea of birth and life after the frozen journey in the first stanza. (3)
8. Line 36 links Birth and Death. Think of this in relation to Christ and then answer these questions:
- 8.1 The Magi see 'three trees on the low sky' (line 24) before the Birth. What are we likely to think of instead of trees at the Death? (2)
- 8.2 Similarly, the pieces of silver in line 27 are likely to make us think of (2)
- a) Peter
 - b) Thomas
 - c) Judas
 - d) Paul

7/....

- 8.3 The men in the tavern are referred to only by their hands and feet (lines 26-28). Which of the following does this make us think of at the Death?
- a) pieces of silver
 - b) drunkenness
 - c) nails
 - d) arms and legs (2)
9. Quote the phrase that tells us that most people were unaware that Christ was about to be born. (2)
10. Quote the phrase that tells us that the Magi reached the stable in Bethlehem only very shortly before Christ was born. (2)
11. Instead of saying simply 'It was satisfactory' in line 31 the speaker inserts 'you may say'. The effect of this is to suggest that the speaker
- a) is very enthusiastic about the journey
 - b) disagrees - it was not satisfactory
 - c) feels there was more to it than its apparent success
 - d) has just been interrupted by his audience (2)
12. Quote a phrase from the third stanza that confirms that the Magi considered their journey to have been basically worthwhile. (2)
13. In lines 33-35, which two of the following are superimposed (added) because of the way the poem is set out?
- a) but set down This
 - b) set down This
 - c) This set down
 - d) This (2)
14. From our knowledge of the Bible we know that the Magi were led (line 35) by
- a) the camel drivers
 - b) King Herod
 - c) the archangel Gabriel
 - d) a star (2)
15. For the Magi, the Birth of Christ means
- a) the end of their previous beliefs
 - b) their own death
 - c) the Death of Christ
 - d) death to all alien people (2)
16. From the first stanza quote an example of things they enjoyed in the old dispensation, before the Birth. (2)
17. Quote the phrase which explains what 'another death' (line 43) would release them from. (2)

Now read the first stanza from OZYMANDIAS by Percy Bysshe Shelley and then answer questions 18 and 19.

OZYMANDIAS

I met a traveller from an antique land
 Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
 Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
 Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
 And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
 The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.

5

18. Find synonyms in the stanza for each of the following:

- a) very old;
- b) huge;
- c) without a body;
- d) face
- e) outlive

(5)

19. The answers to the following four questions are given in random/jumbled order below the questions. Write only the appropriate letter in the space provided. You may need to use the same letter more than once.

19.1 To what does its in line 6 refer?

(1)

19.2 What is it that do the surviving (line 7)?

(1)

19.3 What do these things (question 19.2) survive?

(1)

19.4 What are 'stamped on these lifeless things'?

(1)

[50]

- a) sculptor
- b) visage
- c) the hand ... and the heart ... (line 8)
- d) these lifeless things
- e) passions

9/....

MODEL ANSWERS

ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE (HG)

THIRD PAPER

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1. Capulet and Montague (2)
2. c (2)
3. hath nothing (2)
4. Go (2)
- 5.1 'tis not so deep as a well nor so wide as a church door (2)
- 5.2 grave (2)
6. a (2)
7. Tybalt Paris
Romeo Juliet (4)
- 8.1 c (2)
- 8.2 a (2)
- 8.3 b (2)
9. b (2)
10. whining (2)
11. Graze where you will, you shall not house with me (2)
12. blasphemy (2)
13. a) demesnes b) an
c) graze d) jest (4)
14. Friar Lawrence (2)
15. make the bridal bed in that dim monument where Tybalt lies (2)
16. My father in rage gave me an ultimatum: marry Paris or he would turn me out to the house. Then he left. I turned to my mother and begged her to postpone the marriage. But she refused to speak to me and left too. I turned finally to the Nurse and asked her for advice and comfort. All she could say was that I should marry Paris and forget about Romeo. (10)
(50)

SECTION B: THE WIND AT DAWN - Smyth and Swacina

1. coming (2)
2. December (2)
3. c (2)
4. d (2)
5. c (2)
6. a) galled b) refractory
c) regretted d) hostile (4)
7. dawn. temperate and vegetation (3)
- 8.1 crosses (2)
- 8.2 c (2)
- 8.3 c (2)
9. but there was no information (2)
10. not a moment too soon finding the place (2)
11. c (2)
12. And I would do it again (2)
13. c and d (2)
14. d (2)
15. a (2)
16. silken girls bringing sherbert (2)
17. an alien people clutching their gods (2)
18. a) antique b) vast
c) trunkless d) visage
e) survive (5)
- 19.1 b (1)
- 19.2 e (1)
- 19.3 c (1)
- 19.4 e (1)

- 1.1 d (2)
- 1.2 a and b (2)
- 1.3 e (2)
- 2.1 hope (2)
- 2.2 Dakada was not convinced (2)
3. On calmer reflection (2)
4. he had resorted to violence to prevent violence (2)
5. a attacked d (2)
c attacked b (2)
h attacked i (2)
6. lazy (2)
7. c (2)
8. c (2)
9. A little boy called André came in to see me today.
He was very upset about a swallow that was caught by its toe on the
powerline on his farm. I tried to explain the implications of cutting
off the power to free it. I liked the little chap - when I said
"that's life" he said 'life?' to remind me that it meant death for
his swallow.
Anyway I took down his details and I've arranged for a shut-down
at midnight. (10)
10. b (2)
11. c (2)
12. d (2)
13. c (2)
14. a) frantic b) detained
c) stomach d) dazed (4)
15. b [50]

SECTION D: I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME - Margaret Craven

1. Mark could feel the wind biting through his parka (2)
2. b (2)
3. a (2)
4. c (2)
5. c (2)
6. It was a long time before he spoke (2)
7. c (2)
8. before it was light the white man left (2)
9. b (2)
10. c (2)
11. *movement of the*
fish (2)
12. If he comes back to stay (2)
13. This is something he must decide (2)
14. outside (2)
15. Neither mentioned it. nor forgot it (2)
16. c (2)
17. a) mentioned b) appeal
c) gale d) still (4)
18. three (2)
19. But that is not why I have come (2)
20. The clan held a dinner for me two nights ago.
I.P. appealed to me in Kwakwaka to remain in the village and not to
go to the outside. I asked for time to consider my decision.
The whole village knows by now that I have decided to go.
Tonight I went to Mark to ask him to take me to catch the plane at
Alert Bay in the morning. (10)

[50]

DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN OPLEIDING • DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

EKSAMINATORSVERSLAG—LETTERKUNDE

EXAMINER'S REPORT—LITERATURE

EKSAMEN/EXAMINATION..... *November* JAAR/YEAR..... *1991*
 VAK/SUBJECT..... *English 2nd Language HG* (LETTERKUNDE/LITERATURE)
 EKSAMINATOR/EXAMINER..... *P.G. Southey*

VOORSKRIFTE/INSTRUCTIONS

1. Algemeen/General

- (i) Die eksaminatorsverslag oor die werk van die kandidate moet onmiddellik na die nasienwerk afgehandel is, ingedien word.
The examiner's report on the work of the candidates must be submitted immediately after the marking has been completed.
- (ii) Een kopie van die eksaminatorsverslag moet aan die moderator gestuur word vir kommentaar.
One copy of the examiner's report must be forwarded to the moderator for his comments
- (iii) Eksaminatorsverslae moet saam met die eise om vergoeding ingedien word.
Examiners' reports must be submitted together with the claims for remuneration.
- (iv) Eksaminatore se verslae moet op afsonderlike vorms in Afrikaans en Engels voltooi word.
Examiners' reports must be submitted in Afrikaans and English on separate forms. Reports on the subjects English and Afrikaans need not be translated. Reports on Black Languages must be submitted in English.

2. Verslag oor die werk van die kandidate/Report on work of candidates

Eksaminatore moet afsonderlik verslag doen oor elke voorgeskrewe werk. Verslae moet kort en saaklik wees.

Examiners must report separately on each prescribed book. Reports must be brief and concise.

- (i) Naam van voorgeskrewe werk/Name of prescribed book:

..... *Romeo and Juliet*

- (a) Algemene opmerkings/General remarks

Inhoud van antwoorde/Contents of answers:

..... *The majority of candidates were well acquainted with the text. Impressive.*

Lengte van antwoorde/Length of answers:

..... *N/A — the answer booklet determines the length of answers.*

Metode van beantwoording van vrae/Method of answering questions:

(Almost?) *hitherto exception multiple choice questions were correctly answered. Paragraph answers were greatly improved.*

Vertolking van vrae/Interpretation of questions:

Varied greatly from centre to centre. The best centres were outstanding.

Benutting van keusevrae/Utilization of optional questions:

Romeo & Juliet was chosen by about 85% of all schools.

(b) Taalfoute/Language errors

Algemene foute/General errors:

N/A — the paper gives very little scope for errors.

Ernstige foute wat by 'n sentrum/sommige sentrums voorkom/Serious errors which occur at a centre/certain centres:

The number of marks lost on "synonyms" questions was surprising. Teaching would cure this.

(ii) Naam van voorgeskrewe werk/Name of prescribed book:

The blind at Dawn

(a) Algemene opmerkings/General remarks

Inhoud van antwoorde/Contents of answers:

Candidates found the two set poems difficult — teaching should examine the details of a poem with greater care.

Lengte van antwoorde/Length of answers:

N/A.

Metode van beantwoording van vrae/Method of answering questions:

Fine.

Vertolking van vrae/Interpretation of questions:

It varied greatly from school to school. The best schools understood the poems & the questions with great clarity, but many were lost.

Benutting van keusevrae/Utilization of optional questions:

Poetry was marginally the least popular choice — ± 25%.

(b) Taalfoute/Language errors

Algemene foute/General errors:

N/A.

Ernstige foute wat by 'n sentrum/sommige sentrums voorkom/Serious errors which occur at a centre/certain centres:

Vagueness about the meaning of the poems - at all levels. There should be more 'why did the poet use this word/phrase/image'.

(iii) Naam van voorgeskrewe werk/Name of prescribed book.

Close to the Sun

(a) Algemene opmerkings/General remarks

Inhoud van antwoorde/Contents of answers:

Good - the majority of candidates who chose this option seemed sure of themselves.

Lengte van antwoorde/Length of answers:

N/A

Metode van beantwoording van vrae/Method of answering questions:

Fine, but the paragraph question needs to be approached like a 5-point summary of a particular aspect, told from a particular point of view in the last 100.

Vertolking van vrae/Interpretation of questions:

Interpretation differed from school to school but was generally good.

Benutting van keuse/vrae/Utilization of optional questions:

The most popular choice after Shakespeare - +40%

(b) Taalfoute/Language errors

Algemene foute/General errors:

N/A.

Ernstige foute wat by 'n sentrum/sommige sentrums voorkom/Serious errors which occur at a centre/certain centres:

Teaching should focus on synonyms and on the paragraph question.

(iv) Naam van voorgeskrewe werk/Name of prescribed book:

I Heard the Owl call my Name

(a) Algemene opmerkings/General remarks

Inhoud van antwoorde/Contents of answers:

Disappointing, little time seemed to have been spent on the text in class - in many schools, not all

Lengte van antwoorde/Length of answers:

N/A

Metode van beantwoording van vrae/Method of answering questions:

Fine

Vertolking van vrae/Interpretation of questions:

It varied from school to school

Benutting van keusevrae/Utilization of optional questions:

About a third of all schools answered on the Owl

(b) Taalfoute/Language errors

Algemene foute/General errors:

—

Ernstige foute wat by 'n sentrum/sommige sentrums voorkom/Serious errors which occur at a centre/certain centres:

As in the others, marks are lost in the synonyms and the paragraph questions which a few focussed lessons could save

J. S. S. S.
Eksaminator/Examiner

10 December 1991
Datum/Date

APPENDIX B

**The 1992 Entrance Test to the English Department
of the University of Cape Town**

Students' answers to questions 4 (a) and (b)

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

"E" ENTRANCE TEST

ENGLISH I: FEBRUARY 1992

Time: 2 hours

- This is a test of your ability to read, think about, and write about literature.
- Read each text carefully several times before answering any questions.
- Write as clearly, carefully and well as you can.
- Answer ALL 10 QUESTIONS, as each carries 10 marks.

Place this question paper inside your answer book when you have finished.

Text A: "Pain" by Elizabeth Jennings

Pain

At my wits' end
And all resources gone, I lie here,
All of my body tense to the touch of fear,
And my mind,

Muffled now as if the nerves
Refused any longer to let thoughts form,
Is no longer a safe retreat, a tidy home,
No longer serves

My body's demands or shields
With fine words, as it once would daily,
My storehouse of dread. Now, slowly,
My heart, hand, whole body yield

To fear. Bed, ward, window begin
To lose their solidity. Faces no longer
Look kind or needed; yet I still fight the stronger
Terror - oblivion - the needle thrusts in.

Vocabulary:

muffled: dulled

oblivion: total unconsciousness

thrusts: pushes

- 1) What do you gather about the speaker's situation and her attitude to it? (10)
- 2) Comment on the title of this poem. Why do you think the poet has given this poem the title, "Pain", and not, for example, "Fear"? (10)
- 3) How does the poem convey or express a sense of the fragmentation or breakdown of the speaker's familiar world? (Look at the form of the poem, sentence structures and choice of words.) (10)
- 4) a) What is "metaphor"?
b) Quote one example of metaphor from the poem and explain how it works in the poem. (10)

Text B: This is the ending of the short story "Uncle" in Fools and Other Stories by N.S. Ndebele, pp.122-123.

Uncle waits until they have started the song. He lets the song go for a while. He is listening. Concentrating. Then he puts his trumpet to his lips and blows. He puts the record on. Uncle flags me down. But the record is on. I let it go. And soon there is the gramophone, the trumpet, the concertina, the guitar and the mouth organ. If only I could play the piano, I could have had it wheeled out of the house. And everybody is dancing. The crowd is big now. The whole township is here. Mother reappears carrying a tray with a huge jar full of cool drink. She must have made it from the many bottles of *Exa* in the house. There are many cups and glasses on the tray. She places the tray close to the gramophone and then pours the drink into the cups and the glasses. She is passing the drink around now. People pass the glasses along when they have finished and Mother moves around refilling glasses and cups.

Then there is the sound of cars hooting. They are coming round to pass close to my home. It is a wedding procession. The bride and the groom are in the front car and they are waving. They are wearing white

gloves. There's waving in the other cars too. It is a long procession. And the paper ribbons decorating the cars are fluttering in the air. But the people dancing in the street do not move away. The cars are hooting. More than twelve of them. But the people do not move. The cars hoot. And there is the gramophone, the trumpet, the concertina, the guitar, the mouth organ, and the hooting cars. The cars have stopped now, for the people are dancing and will not make way for them.

Then the bride and groom are out of their car. And the bridesmaids and their escorts are out of their cars. They bring their heads together. When the heads part, a wedding song has started. And there is the gramophone, the trumpet, the concertina, the guitar, the mouth organ, the hooting cars, and the wedding song. And the *setapo* dance is raising dust into the air. And Mother is passing cool drink.

The sun is going down

Oh, Uncle, everybody is here.

- 5) State in no more than two sentences the situation described in the passage. (10)
- 6) The "I" or narrator in this story is a child. Quote two examples (words, phrases, sentences) from the passage which show a child's perspective and explain how they convey this. (10)
- 7) The phrase, "the gramophone, the trumpet, the concertina, the guitar and the mouth organ" is repeated three times in the passage (lines 5-7, 28-30, 36-38). What is the effect of this repetition? (10)
- 8) What attitude is the writer (Ndebele) conveying towards township life and people? (10)

- 9) Which of the texts, A or B, do you prefer? Give detailed reasons for your choice. (Write not less than ten lines.) (10)
- 10) "A good novel does more than just tell a story." Explain whether you agree with this statement, or not, using examples of books you have read to support your views. (Write not less than 10 lines.) (10)

ENTRANCE TEST ANSWERS

ESL STUDENTS

- X1 L1=Xhosa DET 1982matric Khanya (4)*
a A metaphor is a word or phrase used to express feelings.
b "A tidy home No longer serves". Her body is like a neglected home which is useless.
- * This line indicates the student's first language, the matriculation examining authority, the year in which matric was written, additional tertiary education and, in parenthesis, the mark achieved /10 for the question on metaphor
- X2 L1=Xhosa DET 1991matric (0)
a -
b -
- X3 L1=Xhosa DET 1991matric (3,5)
a Metaphor is a figure of speech whereby the name of one thing is directly given to the other in order to stress what is being implicated about the thing or person that receives that [?].
b "Is no longer a safe retreat, a tidy house" Here the poet used the metaphor "...a tidy house" for "my mind". She regarded her mind as a tidy home. We might know that a house whose person lives and finds shelter throughout his or her life. A tidy house provides better shelter for one to stay in. Now, the poet would find shelter from her mind. This she did by thinking reasonably during times of doubt and fear. Because of the fact that her mind always provides a solution for her every problem or shelter as it may be, she regarded it as a "tidy" home. However the poet feels very confused, panic stricken and so helpless that even her mind cannot help any longer. As a result she loses trust in her mind and says it "is no longer a safe retreat".
- X4 MT=Xhosa Transkei 1991matric (4)
a A metaphor is when we give animal features or qualities to non-living things.
b "...still fight the stronger Terror - oblivion - the needle thrusts in". The poet is fighting the total unconsciousness pushed through by the needle as if it was a living thing. In this poem it shows us that there are "non living" things which we as human have to resist or can try to fight eg the injection that makes one unconscious.
- X5 L1=Xhosa DET 1991matric (1)
a A metaphor is an expression with a hidden meaning.
b Muffled now as if the nerves/Refused any longer to let thoughts form. This metaphor expresses the fact that the mind of the speaker does not work properly the way it worked before. With this metaphor the speaker sees this

problem with a view of that, it is caused by a breakdown in his nervous system that is why her mind cannot collect some thoughts.

- X6 L1=Xhosa DET 1990matric (1,5)
 a A metaphor is to explain a noun or verb by using like or as.
 b Muffled now as if the nerves refused any longer to let thought form. Muffled is explained further and more clearly by the usage of as if the nerves refused any longer to let thought form. We get to understand what muffled means.
- X7 L1=Xhosa Transkei 1991matric (4)
 a A metaphor is a figure of speech which often exaggerates what is happening.
 b "At my wit's end/And all my resources gone, I lie here". This shows the speaker loses her ability to think, and also how she loses energy and resistance.
- X8 L1=Xhosa DET 1989matric Khanya (4)
 a A "metaphor" is a word used in the poem which directly relates one thing with another to explain something. Unlike a simile which used "like" or "as" to explain or relate. A metaphor makes something that which it is not.
 b I take the metaphor of the very last stanza. "Bed, ward, window begin to lose their solidity". This metaphor is used to explain hopelessness of patience in the ward of the hospital. It shows that the
- X9 L1=Xhosa DET 1980matric (5,5)
 a A metaphor is a figure of speech which is used to show the similarity of things without expressing them literally.
 b A tidy home is a metaphor because it has been used to show the trouble free body before it has been invaded by the foreign pain. Her body has been clean without pain but now it is no longer a safe retreat because there is an occupant which is pain.
- X10 L1=Xhosa DET 1990matric Khanya (5)
 a A metaphor is a phrase which describes something but in a totally different statement which have the same meaning of the phrase. The metaphor does not use words like, as like, etc. eg Zola is a snake. That means Zola is a traitor but it's referred to him as a snake.
 b My storehouse of dread. This explains the speaker's body which is his everything, which is like machine of her past and her future.
- X11 L1=Xhosa DET 1990matric (4)
 a It's when someone is given characteristics of something, or when someone behaves like something else, which is totally different from him.
 b My storehouse of dread. Now slowly My heart hand whole body yield. His state of fear had resulted to the point

that the Bed, ward and window begin to natural work, like windows are made to keep light in the house, but now they broke.

- X12 L1=Xhosa DET 1988matric Unisa (0)
 a -
 b -
- X13 L1=Xhosa DET 1991matric (0)
 a -
 b -
- X14 L1=Xhosa DET 1990matric Khanya, EAP + 3
 credits (4)
 a It is an indirect meaning of word
 b "My storehouse of dread. Now slowly". A storehouse is associated with the way the speaker thinks and here it suggest that because of this sudden fear he no longer let thoughts form.
- X15 L1=Xhosa DET 1991matric (1)
 a A metaphor is a word which contradicts another.
 b "demands, shields". Her mind no longer serves her demands and nor can it shield her from the impending fear.
- X16 L1=Xhosa Transkei 1991matric (4)
 a A metaphor is a word or words with a different meaning but used to illustrate or express another point or meaning.
 b The poet says her mind is no longer a tidy home. The poet feels or compares the sense of fulfillment, calm, and security that she had before to a tidy home. Her mind is filled with thoughts of instability and fear which, if it were like a tidy home, wouldn't be bothered by. While she could retreat to her mind before, when it was a tidy home, she feels she can't do that now because the tidy home just isn't there or has ceased to be tidy. That is case because she is in the grips of a merciless foe, fear.
- X17 L1=Xhosa JMB 1990matric (2)
 a A metaphor is a figure of speech used in a poem to emphasise a certain point. It is usually used to giving things characteristics not usually considered to be theirs.
 b "window begins to lose their solidity": This serves to emphasise the poet's entrance to oblivion as the window can never its solidity unless otherwise mechanically and chemically.
- X18 L1=Xhosa Transkei 1990matric (6)
 a A metaphor is a word or phrase that conveys more than a literal meaning.
 b Bed, ward, windows begin to lose their solidity - in a true sense of speaking, those things can never, ever

change their solidity but due to overcoming circumstances it may seem to the person that they indeed actually do that. The writer tries to emphasise the difficulty and desperation in the hospital that she appears to more affective form of describing it, ie using this figure of speech known as a metaphor.

X19 L1=Xhosa Transkei 1990matric

(0)

- a -
- b -

NS20 L1=N Sotho DET 1990matric

(2,5)

- a Metaphor is a figure of speech where a person solidifies herself or himself to express strength or firmness.
- b "My storehouse of dread" this sentence express the fear of the speaker. Her heart which is presented as a storehouse in the poem has no confinement but it is full of fearful experiences.

NS21 L1=N Sotho DET 1990matric

(2)

- a Metaphor is a mood of speech.
- b A tidy home = used instead of untidy home. Metaphor is a form of mood where thing are used negatively.

NS22 L1=N Sotho DET 1991matric

(1,5)

- a A metaphor is a figure of speech whereby something is use as a symbol for something
- b eg The needle thrusts in. The needle symbolises death.

NS23 L1=N Sotho DET 1984matric

(1)

- a Words indicating a state of affairs without directly stating so.
- b "At my wit's end": It serves to portray a state of helplessness, of the writer after having exhausted every conceivable means of trying to ward of the pain the writer finally admits defeat. This is further qualified by the writer's statement that he/she has no resources left and therefore lies down defeatedly.

NS24 L1=N Sotho DET 1991matric

(1,5)

- a A metaphor is a figure of speech showing a sentence with words contradicting each other in a sentence.
- b It no longer a safe retreat, a tidy home. The place is still a save one. Now because she is longer at home she find it not save for her, but while she was staying in it, it was safe and tidy.

NS25 L1=N Sotho DET 1988matric

(0)

- a Metaphor is using words words that rhyme.
- b Eg: longer and stronger.

SS26 L1=S Sotho DET 1991matric

(4)

- a A comparison of an animate entity to an inanimate entity expressing a certain specific quality or idea in the process.

- b Body's demands compared to shields. The body's demands are all the processes and mechanisms together with the parts instrumental in these mechanisms and processes which guard against the annihilation of the self. In the poem we are told that the shields yield.
- SS27 L1=S Sotho DET 1991matric (3,5)
- a Metaphor is that part of speech which names a person after a certain animal or anything that isn't human. For example some people refer to people who eat too much as pigs. That doesn't mean those people are in essence pigs. it just serves to emphasise those people's peculiar behaviour.
- b All my body tense to the touch of fear. Here is an example of something that is not even tangible being given human qualities. Here is a situation wherein we are led to imagine fear touching the poet's body.
- SS28 L1=S Sotho DET 1987matric (0)
- a The metaphor is the following up of words that have an ambiguous meaning with the same saying.
- b Eg lines 11 to 15.
- SS29 L1=S Sotho DET 1991matric (2)
- a Metaphor - it is the word which explain something which is living to be compared as the same as non-living or animals. For example, Peter is like the dog. So this shows that Peter's behaviour is just the same as that of the dog.
- b "Bed, ward, window begin to lose their solidity". This shows that windows are being seen as loosing their solidity, so the cauthor compares non-living things with the human's behaviour.
- SS30 L1=S Sotho DET 1991matric (1,5)
- a A metaphor is when the ending words in the same paragraph of the poem has the same sound but not the same meaning.
- b "My body demands or shields" "My heart, hand, whole body yield". A metaphor makes the poem very enjoyable to the ears of its readers. It makes the readers to be more interested in reading the poem. It makes a good sound towards the reader's ears.
- SS31 L1=S Sotho DET 1990matric (1)
- a A metaphor is formed by two clashing words or ideas in a poem like "shields and yield.
- b Shields in paragraph 3 line 1 and yield in line 4 are metaphors which shows changing of times because at first the body demanded shields later it yielded.
- T32 L1=Twsana DET 1990matric (0)
- a -
- b -
- T33 L1=Tswana DET 1991matric (1,5)

- a Metaphor is a word comparing two things using words like "as".
- b Muffled now as if the nerves. This metaphor works as a comparison of the speaker's mind and his nerves. Because the speaker thinks that because the mind is dulled so are the nerves for refusing to let the thoughts form any longer.
- T34 L1=Tswana DET 1991matric (2)
- a The words or sentence that have the same meaning.
- b Fear and terror are metaphor. They help the poem to have a different meaning if somebody read the poem. It create either the terrible feeling or good feelings about the poem.
- T35 L1=Tswana DET 1990matric (2,5)
- a A metaphor is something that happens and affects the other. Like in this poem pain develops fear.
- b "All of my body tense to the touch of fear" - in this way there is pain the speaker's body is tense and very painfull and in this way it causes her to fear.
- T36 L1=Tswana DET 1991matric (5)
- a Metaphor is a figure of speech which is mostly used in poetry as a means of emphasis on a particular subject or point. It is a direct comparison of two different things to reflect common characteristics. A metaphor will say that an object or thing is something else to emphasise the former. eg "all my body tense to the touch of fear". Fear cannot touch so obviously the speaker was being touched by either a hand or a needle point. Fear of pain was so much that the hand or needle is compared to fear of pain.
- b "All my body tense to the touch of fear". The speaker is probably being touched by a hand of a nurse and everything including people is associated with pain/fear of pain. Fear is compared to the needle in the nurses hand.
- T37 L1=Tswana JMB 1989matric (4,5)
- a A metaphor is when using objects and personifying it as human beings or subjects.
- b "My storehouse of dread". In the poem the word storehouse is being used to illustrate the body as a storage of fear.
- Z38 L1=Zulu DET 1991matric (0)
- a A metaphor is a word which is used to describe a certain object in a sentence.
- b -
- Z39 L1=Zulu DET 1989matric (3,5)
- a A metaphor is a statement which consist of the words "as if" to show that, that particular thing is not like that but it seems as if it is.
- b "And my mind, Muffled now as if the nerves refused any

longer to let thoughts form". This quotation of the poem works as an indication to show how much pain the speaker is experiencing. The pain seems to have let everything to come to a stand point, where nothing is working in her body.

- Z40 L1=Zulu DET 1988matric (3,5)
 a A metaphor is a phrase that is usually used to describe the situation or a thing in another way or using other thing.
 b touch of fear - it explains the sense of fear the speaker feels.

- Z41 L1=Zulu DET 1989matric (0)
 a Metaphor is a word or phrase that are used to give sense or meaning while they don't have anything to do with the meaning. They could easily be the opposite of the actual meaning.
 b "All my body tense to the touch of fear". This gives the poem a sense of fear which seems to be the title of the poem. Fear has been used to replace pain. This also serves to give the attitude of the writer toward pain, which is fear.

- Z42 L1=Zulu DET 1990matric (4)
 a To speak of about things that cannot breath doing things that can be done by living things eg man.
 b "Now slowly my heart, hand, whole body yields to fear". Actually her body cannot yield to fear. She is invisible and non living but one can recognise it. It is something which evolves in the body. The poet means that she can no longer resists fear, it is beyond her capability to resist it now.

- Z43 L1=Zulu JMB 1979matric (3,5)
 a Metaphor is to use something something that people know in order to explain something else.
 b My storehouse of dread. Here the poet refers to her being, which is supposed to have everything stored in it. She calls it the storehouse of dread because it does not function any more thus that is where her dread comes from. This is because her brains does not respond to hr body messages.

- S44 L1=Shona Zim:A-levels 1989matric (1)
 a A metaphor is a word which replaces something but in a hidden manner.
 b "all resources gone" is an example of a metaphor - it helps to explain that the speaker was in a hopeless situation. He could not think of anything which was going to save him right. His body tense with the touch of fear this goes on to explain that as the speaker was in a hopeless situation he was overcomed by fear. Bed, ward window - is a metaphor in illustrating the hospital - it helps to explain that this person was in hospital at that point in time.

- A45 L1=Afr DEC 1991matric (2)
 a A metaphor is where a poet compare two with each other directly.
 b -
- A46 L1=Afr DEC 1991matric (4)
 a It's a comparison without using "like" or "as".
 b "A tidy home". Instead of using "nervous system", the poet is using "a tidy home". Her nerves are all muffled and unlike functioning as it should. Things should be exact as in a tidy home.
- A47 L1=Afr DEC 1991matric (3)
 a A metaphor is when you put the one element straight into another. with an explanation. eg he is a fox - meaning he is sly, smart or clever.
 b "My storehouse of dread" (line 11) The poet thinks of her mind as something where she stored her dread. Maybe it can be something or a lot of things that she did not wanted to talk about. She tend to make her mind into a "storehouse" to cover up and store all things that made her life miserable. Now, on her death bed she tries thinking and comes up with only these unwanted thoughts.
- A48 L1=Afr DEC 1991matric (2)
 a A metaphor is when the actions or aspects of a human being is compared with a dead or lifeless thing.
 b "My storehouse of dread". The speaker felt like a storehouse, because she store every problem inside her body. This works in the poem because now we could see why the speaker felt all this pain and suffering. The cause of this pain was caused by herself because she was the one who stored all her problems and grievances. She didn't talk about her problems and sufferings and at last it got to heavy for her. But the thing is that she still fights it, and then afterwards took her exit by using the needle.
- A49 L1=Afr DEC 1990matric (6)
 a It is a comparison.
 b "a tidy home". She is comparing her mind with a tidy home. She actually thinks rational but now her tidy home is in disorder and she can't get her thoughts in order.
- A50 L1=Afr Cape 1983matric (5)
 a An example used to convey a message that does not necessarily have anything to do with the example. That is describing something by means of illustration.
 b "My storehouse of dread". All the pain and subsequent fear of the speaker has become so much that it feels to her that the body is nothing but a storehouse for this manifestation of her mind called "dread". Being so scared of death and absolutely dreading the thought of this stronger terror namely oblivion, she simply feels stacked up like a warehouse or storehouse with just one product: dread.

- A51 L1=Afr DEC 1991matric (3,5)
 a If a sentence are spread over two lines without any punctuation. (My body's demands or shields with)
 b "Muffled now as if the nerves refused any longer to thoughts form". Metaphors are often used to form a unity.
- F52 L1=French JMB 1990matric (5,5)
 a A "metaphor" is an expression in which there is an image which can explain what the poet wants to say.
 b One example of metaphor is "Is no longer a safe retreat, a tidy home". The poet is comparing her body (when she can control it) to a safe retreat, a tidy home. When she was able to control her body she was feeling happy, at ease as if she was in her home. Now that her nerves no longer serves, she is home-sick, insecure.
- G53 L1=German Germany 1991matric (0)
 a A metaphor is a form of rhyme.
 b -
- I54 L1=Italian NSC 1991matric (6)
 a A metaphor is an indirect comparison of words in a sentence.
 b "My storehouse of dread" line 3 stanza 3. The speaker's body is being compared with and described as a storehouse of dread. The speaker feels that his body is very sick and that it simply brings him pain and suffering.

ENGLISH L1 and ENG/AFR BILINGUAL STUDENTS

- E1 L1=Eng Cape 1991matric (2)
a "Metaphor" - It is a part of speech when inanimate objects are related and/or used with living things or emotions to give a certain impression.
b "My storehouse of dread" - This metaphor tells the reader a lot of the speaker's emotional state. It rounds up her feelings and makes the reader understand that she is frustrated and in a dilemma. It also describes her body as a storage place for all these feelings, frustrated and pain - an impression is made.
- E2 L1=Eng Cape 1990matric (5)
a A metaphor is an indirect comparison of something to something else.
b "The needle thrusts in" - The needle is being compared to death. Death is pushing its way into her life. She feels as if she is being stabbed by a needle because of her pain. "The needle thrusts in" is being compared to death and pain overcoming her. "Thrust" is quite a forceful word so she can actually feel death taking her.
- E3 L1=Eng Cape 1989matric (6)
a A metaphor is using an object to explain a similar situation or feeling.
b An example is "a tidy home". In the poem the poet is comparing her mind to a tidy home. Her mind is no longer in order, secure or safe. Her mind is confused and very much a jumble just like an untidy house would be, her thoughts no longer forming and her nerves dulled and almost senseless. Everything is out of place and not in perfect order as it should be.
- E4 L1=Eng DEC 1990matric (5,5)
a It is the usage of words when one thing is compared to another and given the latter's qualities.
b "And my mind.../Is no longer a safe retreat, a tidy home". It explains that the narrator's mind is not working as it usually does. She cannot form thoughts which make her feel safe. It describes and makes you understand the state which she is in and that is a state of fear.
- E5 L1=Eng NSC 89matric (5,5)
a A metaphor is comparison without using "like" or "as".
b "It is no longer a safe retreat, a tidy home". Here the speaker is comparing her mind to a tidy home where she can go and relax even if there is something wrong at work or where ever. Here the speaker feels that she can't even do that because of the intense fear of "pain".
- E6 L1=Eng DEC 1991matric (7)
a A metaphor is an indirect comparison between two or more things.
b The speaker's mind or brain is being compared to a

storehouse of dread. The comparison comes in the fact that just as the storehouse stores bundles and bundles of "dread", so to has the speaker's mind become something which she can no longer depend on on and which she has come to dread. As the speaker loses more and more control over her normal functions she has less and less use for her mind and in the end considers it a burden.

- E7 L1=Eng DEC 1987matric Khanya (9)
 a A metaphor is the use of an image or expression which serves to illustrate comparatively, that which the writer or speaker is attempting to convey to an a reader or an audience.
 b An example of this would be the passages where the mind and the thoughts expressed can no longer be seen as a haven or retreat which enables it to comply with the body's demands. The mind is compared to that of a protective shield, which under any other circumstances would act in the best interest of the body, as opposed to allowing it to be hurt or its sense of security threatened. The use of the mind as a protective shield would therefore be metaphorical.
- E8 L1=Eng DEC 1991matric (5)
 a It is a degree whereby things or people are likened to each other.
 b "My storehouse of dread" - It emphasises that her body holds an element of apprehension and dread for her. She cannot reconcile herself with the pain that it causes her. It also describes that her whole body is filled with this pain, the word "storehouse" brings this across.
- E9 L1=Eng TED 1991matric (4)
 a A metaphor is a type of simile, a mere complexed similie which compares things which are usually totally unrelated or arbitrary.
 b Eg: "And my mind, muffled now as if the nerves refused any longer to let thoughts form". This metaphor works in the poem as it shows how dulled and thoughtless her mind is.
- E10 L1=Eng Cape 1991matric (5)
 a A metaphor is an indirect comparison between different things.
 b "My storehouse of dread". This metaphor could either refer to the mind of the speaker, in which case it suggests that the speaker is thinking all sorts of things, or it could refer to her body which carries her illness.
- E11 L1=Eng Cape 1990matric (2)
 a Metaphor is the term for a sentence in which an inanimate object has been given life.
 b "...the nerves refused any longer to let thoughts form..." This sentence tells us that she no longer has

control of her body. Here, her nerves have taken over, they will not let thoughts form, not she. She now cannot calm herself by thinking of other things, and therefore terror is allowed to take hold and destroy reality. Pain is no longer animate either, it is coming to claim her; she cannot realise that all this is otherwise, her mind and imagination has taken over.

E12 L1=Eng UK:A-levels 1991matric (0)

a -

b -

E13 L1=Eng DEC 1990matric (6,5)

a A "metaphor" is the conflation of two ideas without the use of "like" or "as". It is similar to a simile where for example people are given earthly qualities.

b "My storehouse of dread". Dread is a human quality. The storehouse cannot feel. She is, however comparing herself to a storehouse. Her pain or fear a dread is locked up inside her. She has stored this feeling inside herself.

E14 L1=Eng DEC 1991matric (6)

a A metaphor is an implied comparison.

b "And my mind,...is no longer...a tidy home". This metaphor serves to depict the human mind as a last or alternative refuge for the human soul. The speaker says that her mind is no longer a tidy home, thereby creating a picture of mixed uncertainties lingering in the mind. It depicts the speaker as being in a drugged state, her thoughts having no coherence or meaning. The sense of impending harm is now so great that her imagination and conscience is disintergrated and apparantly lacking all sensibility. The metaphor depicts the woman as a representative of mankind - tormented and assailed by forces ummeasureably make the woman is character stand out strong and sharp. The metaphor hightens the human dependence on the human brain.

E15 L1=Eng TED 1991matric (4)

a A metaphor is a term used in the English language to give a person or object a name that it really is not. Example, in a simile the person will refer and and object or other person to being similar to something else eg You look like an animal. Whereas in a metaphor the person or object is reffered to name or phrase that does not fit eg you are an animal where as the person is not actually and animal but a human. A metaphor may harshly describe the way a person behaves or looks.

b The needle thrusts in - this is an example of a metaphor, it is in this case used to describe the level of pain that the speaker is feeling. To the speaker the pain is like a thrusting needle, whereas there is no needle. The metaphor here describes without reffering ie "like". But directly describes the pain and its degree as a needle thrusting into them it eventually shows the speakers entire loss of hope to having faded and as the needle thrusts so does their life.

- E16 L1=Eng Cape 1991matric (6,5)
 a A metaphor is a comparison between two objects, ideas or persons. It is not introduced by "like" or "as" and usually has a hidden meaning.
 b "My storehouse of dread". The speaker is referring to her mind and we can see that it is impossible for it to be a physical "storehouse", but we determine through the connotation of the words that a comparison is being made. The speaker's emotion of dread is stored or withheld in her mind.
- E17 L1=Eng JMB 1987matric (1,5)
 a It is a word which adds more expression or emphasis. A metaphor accentuates a work by adding the sense of sound eg "and my mind, Muffled". The word describes a specific way in which the person feels anaethetised and the mind becomes more clouded and hazy.
 b "shields". The speaker is trying to resist or fight the surrendering to fear and the physical pain. "Shields" are used in a battle and prevent spears from piercing the larger section of a body. "Shields" is used to provide the meaning of protecting, or to prevent more pain. As shields are used as a defense weapon, so the body applied its defense. The mind has also lost its control and strengths and therefore its shields or mental defences are slipping.
- E18 L1=Eng Cape 1991matric (5)
 a A metaphor is an indirect comparison of something. It does not used the words "like" or "as" but rather suggests a comparison.
 b "My storehouse of dread". The poet compares the speakers body to a storehouse of dread. This particular example is a very good metaphor as it describes in a nutshell exactly what the speaker is feeling.
- E19 L1=Eng DEC 1991matric (6)
 a This is a direct comparison. It is a figure of speech used to emphasise a comparison so that the reader may be given a broader description of whatever is being compared. Metaphors are used extensively in poetry where the reader has to experience this himself while reading them.
 b "It is no longer a safe retreat, a tidy home". This metaphor deals with the safeness and security of the speaker feels with his mind. She loses consciousness and thus feels insecure and vulnerable.
- E20 L1=Eng DEC 1991matric (4,5)
 a A metaphor is a comparison, without useing words such as like, etc.
 b "Muffled now...a tidy home". Before she was in such incredible pain she could think clearly but now all her thoughts were mixed up.
- E21 L1=Eng TED 1990matric (4)

- a A metaphor is a phrase which explains another word in context.
- b "Muffled now as if the nerves/Refused any longer to let thoughts form". This metaphor emphasises the pain which the girl is being subjected to, and her interpretation of what this dreaded pain is making her body feel like. She feels as if the pain is so powerful that she is unable to create any structured sentence or have a single ounce of sane thought. This metaphor works tremendously well in the poem as it heightens the readers emotions towards the suffering of the speaker, and stresses to the reader the intensity of the speakers pain.
- E22 L1=Eng Cape 1990matric (7)
- a A metaphor is a comparison between two things, without the use of the words "like" and "as".
- b The words "a tidy home" is being compared to the mind. This is found in line four of the first stanza and line three of the the second stanza. Her mind as she remembers it, is like a tidy home. The key word is tidy, because it means orderly. In a tidy home, all objects are neatly packed and placed on a specific spot. Likewise, she remembers that her thoughts too were orderly and well constructed, as a tidy house is. Her thoughts now however are very displaced and "untidy".
- E23 L1=Eng Cape 1990matric (2)
- a A sentence used to describe a feeling/thought/emotion without using words "like" or "as". A situation that can't be felt physically but rather in the emotional state.
- b "All of my body tense to the touch of fear". It brings an understanding of how sensitive the patient is to her situation, it's almost as if you can feel the fear for her. For me it's almost electric as if the body is almost rigid from the fear she feels.
- E24 L1=Eng Cape 1991matric (2,5)
- a A metaphor can be an extended metaphor when the metaphor is "extended" throughout the poem. It is when a feeling or thing is described as doing an action.
- b "...No longer serves my body's demands or shields with fine words" is an example of a metaphor.
- E25 L1=Eng Cape 1991matric (4)
- a A metaphor is a figure of speech. It is used in languages like English and Afrikaans to compare and describe things.
- b "Faces no longer look kind" is a metaphor. The "faces" are being described here. In this case they look unkind, unfriendly and generally give a feeling of negativity.
- E26 L1=Eng DEC 1991matric (6)
- a It is when two things are directly compared.
- b "And my mind,...a tidy home". The speaker's mind is compared to a tidy home. She claims that could always

turn to her mind for pleasant thoughts which would provide security. It is compared to a tidy home because like her mind, it provides security. She does however claim that is used to like a tidy home and hence her feeling of insecurity.

- E27 L1=Eng NSC 1991matric (4,5)
 a A metaphor is stating that something is associated with the other eg he is a dog. We are not saying that he is like the dog, but he is a dog. It could be the manner he speaks, sits or anything associated with the dog.
 b "My storehouse of dread". The poet is dreading the injection she is about to receive. Her storehouse is her body. She is actually saying that her body is dreading it.
- E28 L1=Eng DEC 1991matric (5,5)
 a It is an indirect comparison of things.
 b "My storehouse of dread". She compares her body to a storehouse of dread. Her mind always used to to pacify her body so that she will not dread anything. Now her mind cannot persuade her body not to dread hence she is filled with fear. She is now even helpless against positive mental conditioning. This also helps the reader to get to grips with the speaker's ordeal.
- B29 L1=Eng/Afr DEC 1991matric (4)
 a A metaphor is a direct comparison between two different objects or subjects in which one takes the form of the other.
 b "All my body tense to the touch of fear". This line gives us deeper inclinations to the feelings of the speaker. It also shows a clear negative attitude towards the situation. It guides us into the rest of the poem and prepares us for the rest of the poem.
- B30 L1=Eng/Afr DEC 1991matric (5,5)
 a A metaphor is an indirect comparison between two things.
 b "Muffled now as if the nerves refused any longer to let thoughts form", The metaphor strengthens the image the writer wants to project to us, the readers, It makes us even more aware of the body's (mind's) fragmentation. Meaning how it now refuses to respond to even the simplest command, whereas before it performed the command without a moment's hesitation. The metaphor is used to give the reader more insight into the state of the body as it is now.
- B31 L1=Eng/Afr Cape 1990matric (6)
 a "Metaphor" is when we are required to regard one thing as being the other.
 b "My storehouse of dread". Here the speaker's storehouse is her body, but even more; it is her mind. The speaker actually states that her mind is to blame for her body's disadvantaged state.

- B32 L1=Eng/Afr DEC 1991matric (3)
 a It is when a dead object is given human or life like characteristics.
 b "the needle thrusts in". This is the climax of the poem. She is either given a drug to relieve her pain or she dies soon afterwards. She fights her fear of losing all consciousness, but in the end the needle gives her a release from all this.
- B33 L1=Eng/Afr Cape 1990matric (7)
 a It is a compound simile, or a simile without the "like".
 b "And my mind,...my storehouse of dread". Thus, her mind was a "safe retreat" a "tidy home", but it has now become so muffled that it no longer thinks positively or dreams. Her mind is now "my storehouse of dread" contradictory to the "tidy home" it was once. All her fear and hate she stores in her mind and this serves as poison; now she doesn't only have the physical pain to deal with but also her mental illness.
- B34 L1=Eng/Afr Cape 1991matric (6)
 a A metaphor is a simile without the word "like or "as". A shortened simile.
 b "And my mind...is no longer a safe retreat..." It describes the way the speaker used to see her mind ie as "a safe retreat" which is no longer the case.
- B35 L1=Eng/Afr TED 1989matric (6,5)
 a A metaphor is a direct comparison.
 b "My storehouse of dread". Here the speaker's body is compared to a storehouse. It feels as though every part of her is packed with fear like a storehouse is packed with goods. It is used well in conjunction with the title "Pain" for it describes the physical aspect of the speaker's reaction to the fear as well as the mental (the head) (the [?] the fear brings). It adds to the atmosphere of the speaker's whole being in danger as is conveyed throughout the poem.
- B36 MT=Eng/Afr Cape 1991matric (5)
 a A metaphor occurs when one object is directly compared with another.
 b The speaker compares her mind to "a safe retreat, a tidy home". This provides an insight into the way her mind used to be. Her once sound and logical state of mind makes way for the pain and a combined sense of inability to reason. The pain she experiences deprives her mind of it's capability of serving her.
- B37 MT=Eng/Afr TED 1990matric (7)
 a It is used in language to creatively compare and describe something to another without using the words "like" "such as" etc.
 b "...and my mind...no longer a safe retreat, a tidy home..." When one is healthy and active and mentally sane, one can rely on one's mind to give reassurance, to

keep the world around you intact, real and keeping oneself upright and real. Usually after a hard day, a person spends time alone with him or herself, relying on the mind to instill a sense of peace and calm and to keep fear at bay. It works well in the poem because later on she says "...my storehouse of dread..." Her tidy home with "fine words" doesn't shield any more.

APPENDIX C

The "Reapers" Test
Students' answers to the test

REAPERS IN A MIELIEFIELD

Faces furrowed and wet with sweat,
Bags tied to their wasp waists,
women reapers bend mielie stalks,
break cobs in rustling sheaths,
5 toss them in the bags
and move through row upon row of maize.

Behind them, like a desert tanker,
a dust-raising tractor
pulls a trailer,
10 driven by a pipe-puffing man
flashing tobacco-stained teeth
as yellow as the harvested grain.

He stops to pick up bags
loaded by thick-limbed labourers
15 in vests baked
brown with dust.

The sun lashes
the workers with
a red-hot rod;
20 they stop for a while
to wipe a brine-bathed brow
and drink from battered cans
bubbling with malty "maheu".

Thirst is slaked in seconds,
25 Men jerk bags like feather cushions
and women become prancing wild mares;
soon the day's work will be done
and the reapers will rest in their kraals.

- by Oswald Mtshali

Glossary

Reapers (title):	people who cut and gather crops like mielies
furrow (l 1):	a long line in the earth made by a farmer in order to plant seeds, or a deep line in the skin of someone's face
wasp (l 2):	an insect which can sting, like a bee
cobs (l 4):	mielies
sheaths (l 4):	close fitting covers of leaves
rod (l 19):	a long, thin metal or wood bar
brine (l 21):	salty water
slaked (l 24):	satisfied
prancing (l 26):	leaping, walking with exaggerated movements
mares (l 26):	adult, female horses

Now answer the following questions:

- 1 What are "figures of speech"?
- 2 Underline all examples of figures of speech in this poem
- 3 Quote one example of a figure of speech from the poem and explain how it contributes to the meaning of the poem.
- 4 Explain in your own words what the phrase: "women become prancing wild mares" (l 26), contributes to the meaning of the poem.

"REAPERS IN A MIELIE FIELD" TEST

ESL STUDENTS

	<u>Home lang</u>	<u>Current course</u>	<u>Scool Board</u>	<u>Matric Year</u>	<u>Previous Tertiary Education</u>
A1	MT=Afrikaans	ELL103S	DEC	1990	
1	It is a method poets use to explain or to give an image of something or an idea or to give a clearer understanding of the message he's trying to convey. Eg: simile - a comparison between two ideas, metaphor - one thing "becomes" the other, Personification - inanimate objects are given human qualities, alliteration - repetitions of consonants, assonance - repetition of vowel sounds.				
3	"Wasp waists" - the repetition of the w emphasises the "thin" waists of the women reapers. It therefore portrays an image of poverty ie the women have thin waists because of a lack of food.				
4	The women, after a hard day's work in the mieliefeld, have to return home to cook dinner, The women thus become "prancing" mares and will not return to the kraal to rest as the men would.				
A2	MT=Afrikaans	ENG105	DEC	1992	
	(Colleen)				
1	It is expression such as metaphores, comparisons and also things (eg stars) which is used with functions of a human being, eg stars winked at me. It is called personification.				
3	"...tobacco stained teeth as yellow as the harvested grain". The poet indicates that although the reaper/worker is tired he still can smile and have new hope. (flashing teeth indicates that he is smiling).				
4	Horses are strong animals and in the poem the poet wants to express the courage that the women get after they drank the water.				
A3	MT=Afrikaans	ENG105	DEC	1992	
	(Adam)				
1	It is when one thing is place in the place of something else or where something is compared with a other.				
3	"as yellow as the harvested grain". The word "yellow" is mentioned almost throughout the whole poem, not as a word but by the other colours we find in the passage eg "tobacco strained teeth". Also does the word yellow agree with the title of the poem "Reapers in a mielieland because yellow refers to the colour of a mielie. The fact that the poet uses this colour could also mean that the workers ("reapers") are experienced in their jobs. They come a long way with this kind of job - in fact we could say that they had become experts, because a mielie is first white, than after its fully grown it becomes				

yellow.

- 4 The women know how to do their jobs. Their years of practising started to pay off good. The poem is also like this. It follows up step by step until the end where the reapers go back to their kraals.

A4 MT=Afrikaans ENG105 DEC 1992
(Vincent)

- 1 When two things are literally brought together and explained in terms of one and another.
3 "flashing tobacco-stained teeth as yellow as the harvested grain". This shows that the reapers are really working hard. Their teeth has got the same colour as the grain that has been harvested. It can give us a picture of how the grain looks like, after it has been harvested.
4 The women are very tired from a hard days work. A "wild mare" is not something that you play with. Maybe the poet wants to show us the emotions of reapers after a working day. The women do not want to be messed with. It can also mean that the women are eager to get home. They do not want to work anymore. They are getting tired and irritated, that is why they become wild like horse mares.

A5 MT=Afrikaans ENG105 DEC 1992
(Lliony)

- 1 It is when you are putting something in the place of something else, or when you compare things.
3 "Women reapers bend mielies stalks". Women are very hard workers, they can work just as hard as men. They cut and gather such a lot of crops and see how it stalks up.
4 When women are busy they become involved with their work, they become like horses. Their movements are continuous and they are always in a hurry.

A6 MT=Afrikaans ENG105 DEC 1991
(Shireen)

- 1 One thing is compared with another to describe how big or small the thing is.
2 "Men jerk bags like feather cushions" The reapers knows their job and after they have satisfy their thirst they worked even faster. The heavy bags became lighter and therefore the poet refer to it as feather cushions. The reason why they worked so fast and jerked the bags is, because they want to get done and it is already the end of the day. The reapers are also driven by the tractor (earlier in the poem) which keep on gathering bags of mielies. It is like the water gave them more power to see their work done.
3 "Women become prancing wild mares" The women workes like crazy because it is already the end of the day. They want to end the days hard labour because they had been working in the mieliefeld all day long. The hot sun made them feel tired. Just like wild mares, it seems that the women do they work wildly but quick and correct. In the first stanza we can already see that the hard work women have to do. They had to bend the mielie stalks, break cobs in

rustling sheaths, and put them into bags. The whole process of reaping rest upon the women that is why they just want to finish the day's hard labour. Their movements are automatically faster and are also exaggerated.

A7 MT=Afrikaans ENG105 DEC 1992
(McDonald)

- 1 Its when unleaving things are given peoples action in other words unleaving things such as tables are compared with human actions, feelings, etc
- 3 "faces furrowed and wet with sweat" The contribution made by this quoted speech in the poem brings or highlights the hard work done by the farm labourers - They being working from early in the morning - which is this working ours of them - And the seriousness of finishing the work as soon as possible. Even when they are working they are trying to feel up the long deep line made by the farmer. And as plantes they are not just throwing the mielies and leave the space open - but have to close it with the ground or even put fertilize in it.
- 4 The contribution is that the women are working with bent backs and at the same time have to count and concentrate on the footsteps made by them in order to space the mielies plants for growing purposes - so that when the mielies grows it would not be gather in one small place - but to be far when growing from each other so that much more of the expanding and out growth of the mielies can be provided on the land.

A8 MT=Afrikaans ENG105 DEC 1992
(Brian C)

- 1 Figures of speech is when you say something but you mean something else. It is like an expression which has a certain meaning.
- 3 "As yellow as the harvested grain" The whole poem is about the life of a mielie-reaper. How they work hard and how they suffer. When the speaker says the driver's teeth are like the grains, he wants to make us see how yellow the driver's teeth really are. The driver is therefore connected with the whole poem. People usually smoke a lot when they are nervous and when they worries a lot. If this driver's teeth is "tobacco-stained" it means that he smokes a lot. I think that the poet wants us to see through this driver, how the labours worry and how they suffer.
- 4 When someone says a woman is a mare, he usually means they are wild or that they cannot be controlled or that they are not so soft and fine like ordinary women. Therefore I think the poet wants to tell us that women become hard. He (the poet) also says they are wild and prancing mare. Through this he (the poet) wants to tell us that women are not treated as women anymore, they become like men and they have to work as hard as men. This contributes to the poem's meaning, because the poem's meaning is the suffering of labourers on farms and

especially on mielie farms. When they poets means the women work like men, it connects with the whole meaning of suffering.

A9 MT=Afrikaans ENG105 DEC 1992
(Althea)

- 1 Personification, metaphor, euphemism, comparisons, etc are all examples of speech figure of speech describe things, things are given human qualities and is being compared.
- 3 "Men jerk bags like feather cushions" This is an example of a comparison. The word "like" shoes it is a comparison. The way men jerk bags is being compared to the way feather cushions is being jerk. The comparison wants to five a more descriptive way how these things happen. It helps to understand the poem better.
- 4 The women are becoming leaping horses. They work with a more eager mind. The day is almost over and they are so tied they work fast to get there work done so they can go rest when the day is over. When it comes near to the end of the day they become anxious to work. To the poem it gives an important meaning and that is when the time comes nearer for the day to end for working people the seem to become more anxious to get the work done.

NS11 MT=North Sotho ENG1 DET 1990 Afr I

- 1 -
- 3 -
- 4 This explains how the women relate to their work. This shows how proud they feel of the work done. Within the poem this brings to the front the land question. Africans are denied land on the grounds of its utilisation. One see people who are eager to work and proud of their work but then they are separated from their work, what happen at the end of the day.

S12 MT=South Sotho ENG1 DET 1991

- 1 Words or phrases used to stress the meaning of a sentence. For example, metaphors and personification.
- 3 "Sun lashes" The women are working in the field under the sun and they just cannot stand the heat, but they cannot stop working because they have to work.
- 4 "Women become prancing wild mares". This line gives a picture of the women in the field.

S13 MT=South Sotho ELL103S DET 1991 EAP

- 1 Figures are words used to express something familiar or unfamiliar. They are words which are not directed used to define something familiar to mankind, so they are indirectly used to define something hidden.
- 3 An example of one the figure of speech found in this poem is "Driven by a pipe-puffing man flashing tobacco-stained teeth as yellow as the harvest grain". This actually meant an tractor which cuts the mealies during the harvest. The tractor is being personified as a pipe-puffing man. This emphasis the fact that the poet

- did not call a spade a spade.
- 4 This can mean that the role women played during this hard labour. This might also mean that they were having equal strength just like men and only become happy when they have a chance to rest.
- T14 MT=Tswana ENG105 DET 1992
(Kagiso)
- 1 "figures of speech" are words used to make the language more enjoyable, like idioms. Only figures of speech have exactly the same meaning as the original words.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with red-hot rod" This sentence means that the workers work very hard and under the heat of the sun.
- 4 The phrase "women become prancing wild mares" means that the women are suddenly pumped-up with energy and start working faster in order to finish the work and rest.
- T15 MT=Tswana ENG105 DET 1992
(Suzan)
- 1 Figures of speech are words or sentences that are used in poem in order to spice out or to put more emphasis on the poem. They make the poem to have meaning by adding these figure of speech.
- 3 "Vest baked brown with dust" this phrases indicate a figure of speech = metaphor. It shows how dirty was the vests of the workers, dust has covered them make them dirty as if they are baked in an oven to show brownish colour.
- 4 Women were walking with a slow movement as if they are tired. They show tiredness in them.
- T16 MT=Tswana ENG105 DET 1992
(Brian F)
- 1 sentences or words used to resemble the conditions or characteristics of a person. Indirect use of words to tell about something or its true meaning.
- 3 (l 15, 16) In the mielie field there is a lot of dust, which is caused by the tractor. And this dust makes workes vests to be dirty, also to look brown as the soil
- 4 The women will be strong to carry out their duties. They will be fast like ever before.
- T17 MT=Tswana ENG1/FE DET 1991
- 1 I think figures of speech refer to things like metaphor, simile, etc
- 3 "Men jerk bags like feather cushions". This figure of speech shows how strong the men are, they can jerk bags full of mielies like feather cushions. This labouring has made them throng, they don't have to go to jymns to workout like others do.
- 4 To me, this phrases shows the power of these women who are reaping. I would expect a prancing wild horse to be fit and healthy, and because these women are depicted as prancing wild horses they should be healthy. The type of work that they do should have made them strong. By

reaping they bring food and this life to others. The type of work they do can be seen as almost enslaving but by doing it they set others free from hunger.

- T18 MT=Tswana ENG1/FE DET 1990 Kagisanong
 1 "Figures of speech" are metaphors and a way of using language in one way to present a different image. These include personifying things and also comparing things to human being or animals.
 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". This figure of speech is personification. It makes the reader more aware of the conditions under which the reapers work. It is a hot dry summer's day; and to explain how the workers feel the poet personifies the sun as a man/woman beating the workers. The instrument to beat the workers is not a stick as usual but an iron rod which is very hot (red-hot).

4 -

- T19 MT=Tswana ENG1 DET 1990 ELL103S
 1 These are terms or words used in poetry to give the poem literal and figurative meaning. The poet also uses figures of speech when he/she wants to say more than he is literally saying.
 3 In line 7 the poet says the tractor is like a desert tanker. This is a simile where the poet uses indirect comparison of the tractor and a desert tanker. This intensifies the loneliness and the seemingly monotonous job the tractor driver had. The maize field is like a desert. This is maybe also to say that these workers are working for very little and emphasis on the arid existence.
 4 Firstly, I think that the poet somehow compares these field workers to horses. The field workers are not once referred to as human but only as hard toilers, almost an angry tone of exposing exploitation. The bags are tied onto these women like a horse would be saddled. The reference to the brine water symbolises the hard work that is put in by these workers, working for their, and their families' stomachs. Reference to thick limbs. The sun lashes the workers with a rod like a horse would be lashed with a stick. After a hard day of work the women prance like mares would after a long day of grazing. And reapers rest in their kraals like horse would rest in their stables.

- X20 MT=Xhosa ENG1/FE DET 1991
 1 They are words used figuratively to describe or explain a literal or real world.
 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". This figure of speech clearly indicates the hard work the people are experiencing. It shows their determination their work though it is quite hot. This explains the workers' perseverance of hard labour because they know that at the end of the day they'll get their rest. Its contribution the meaning of the poem is therefore the

determination of the workers though the work is hard, tiring and difficult.

- 4 This phrase tells us that the women are so eager to finish their work. It also says that these women were strong because they are referred to as mares. They are used to this hard labour to an extent that they walk very fast so that they finish it quickly. This phrase contributes to the fact that people here are being loaded with too much hard work like horses and that they've accepted this and are just eager to get it over and done with.

- X21 MT=Xhosa ENG1/FE DET 1990 Khanya
1 Metaphors, similes, irony, alliteration, versification, diction, etc. All the techniques and words and even levels of meaning used by the writer in order to bring about content and form of his poem.
3 "Behind them like a desert tanker". It contributes in the sense that it shows how work was done by the reapers with this tractor moving fast behind them and women movement showing how fast they were when working.
4 it shows that there was no time when to stand and relax as the work was going on. The faster they were working the quicker and best work was done for a day.

- X22 MT=Xhosa ENG1/FE DET 1990 ENG103S
1 What is implied is expressed figuratively then one has to make inferences. Figures of speech are terms and concepts used in language in order to clarify the view point. Also tenses and grammar would be taken as figures of speech.
3 "As yellow as the harvested grain" - The teeth of this man are likened with grain. The grain that he is working on, on the fields. It is implied that the person working in the fields does not even have a chance to brush their teeth. They work from sunset to sunrise and the only thing they while the time away with it is their long pipes, with puffs of smoke.
4 This phrases does not contribute to the meaning of the poem as the reapers have no time to waste. They have to be very quick and diligent walking after a span of oxen that is pulling the plough. Whenever the plough shifts from the furrows she has to slot it in. Women are in African cultures always found in the fields more especially in a patriarchal system where they have to produce for their own subsistence. Should they drag their feet the day will end without achieving anything, so during the time of reaping everyone is looking forward to bringing something home.

- X23 MT=Xhosa ENG1/FE DET 1990 ELL103S
1 Figures of speech are the words or phrases used by the writers to give some sense of what is writing about, they are used to exaggerate things or similize them, they sometimes tell or rate a person with animal because of his/ her behaviour eg Metaphor - Lilly is a snake.
3 "Red-hot rod". The writer used this phrase to define the

atmosphere in the mielie field. He exaggerate because even if the sun is very hot it cannot lash the people. The word "red" itself can make someone to determine how hot the sun is. The fact that the rod is a metal means or actual shows the reader how hot it is in the mieliefield. And this can determine or tells us that the riping is done in some.

- 4 The fact that the work is over makes the women to become happy. They are happy because they are going home to wash their sweated bodies.

X24 MT=Xhosa ENG1/FE DET 1991

- 1 These are the terms or phrases that are used by an individual in order to make the statements clear eg nouns, verbs, pronouns, adverbs, locatives
- 3 Like a desert tanker. These women we are told of in this poem are busy and we are told that no one is taking to each other. Anyone is working for her own. The way they are employed to the job, it seems like that they are just desserted by their employer.
- 4 Mares are regarded as the most harmless animals at home. But now when we talk of wild mares, I think this refers to the way these women are having this kind of job. They are fast. To them it seems like a tough job, so in other words they are not familiar with this job. Even the warmth of the sun has caused another problem to them."The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". This has exerted too much pressure on them.

X25 MT=Xhosa ENG1/FE DET 1988 Training College

- 1 Figures of speech are words and phrases which explain or give images to a reader. They are refered to as "figures of speech" because they do not normally have literal meanings but help the language to be rich and more pleasant to read.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". This figure of speech gives a reader the image of the pain that is felt by the workers. They are working hard in a very hot sun and one can understand how hard it is to reap in a mealiefield. Secondly, it also gives one the impression that the reapers are black workers who are oppressed and are exploited by the white man on the tractor, who had always been in control of resources.

4 -

X26 MT=Xhosa ENG1 DET 1990 Unisa Prac Eng

- 1 They are expressions or phrases used to enrich a language. They have a hidden meaning to describe situations, persons and scenarios. They sometimes tell more about the subject matter eg "faces furrowed" immediately gives on a picture of a person who is working hard or doing a strainous job.
- 3 "Like a desert tanker" relates to the kind of activity the reapers are involved in. Reaping is not an an easy thing because it involves also the time factor or

restraints for the farmer. The tractor therefore serves as an important instrument to expedite the whole harvesting period. The person driving it is part of those who are actually doing the harvesting. The expression is giving a picture of the people who are in desert where conditions are very hard.

- 4 The above phrase marks or is a signal that everybody is excited by the fact the day is about to be over, ie after a hard day's work. It also shows that however hard they work may be, it has inherent in it element of joy or satisfaction because people are able to taste during their resting period the fruits of what they worked for. It also shows the relief that is felt by the workers after a tough day's work.

X27 MT=Xhosa ENG1/FE DET 1990 Khanya

- 1 It is a word used to explain a phrase or to relate to things. This might be through using a word that symbolises an action or indirect or directly relating two things.

- 3 "Women become prancing wild mares". The poet is using the words or the animal "wild mare" relating it with the conditions of women. He do this to show how dedicated, committed and hard this women were doing their job. The poet tries to show that the women had actually or find no problem in their job. The are will to carry it out as long as their bodies are filled with energy.

- 4 This phrase actually reflect the conditions of work. Work which is the central theme of the poem. It shows how the workers responded to the work. They applied their energies. That's the reason why in metaphor the poet relates women condition with wild mares, energetic animals.

X28 MT=Xhosa ENG1/FE DET 1990 ELL103S

- 1 Are often referred to as language devises such as metaphorical expressions, similes, onomatopia, euphemism, alliteration and hyperboles or exaggerations, and personification.

- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". This personification of the sun, expresses the feeling that is enclosed within the meaning of the poem, which focuses on the condition of field workers and their experiences. It endorsed a contemplative attitude within a reader, to really feel how the women suffered under that hot rising sun. Thus reminding one of the period of slavery in which slaves were forced to work in huge plantations for long hours baked by the sun.

- 4 In regard to the condition they have experience, the phrase expresses a deep emotional feeling that these women have been accustomed to such conditions, they have become very wild and strong.

X29 MT=Xhosa ENG1 DET 1990 ELL103S

- 1 A figure of speech is a form or style used in the language to give it its meaning. eg Simile,

- personification, alliteration, etc.
- 3 "Sweat" An imagery from the first line of the first paragraph or stanza. It brings forward the image of hard work. The reapers are sweating or their work is hard.
- 4 This implied simile contributes to the meaning of the poem for the women work behind the tractor and are very anxious to finish their day's work. When wild mares prance they give us an image of violence, here the image we get is of women attacking their work.
- X30 MT=Xhosa ENG1/FE DET 1990 ELL103S
- 1 Exaggerations - Faces Furrowed. Images - image of sun as nature. Metaphors (similes) yellow as the harvested grain.
- 3 A simile in line 12 as yellow as the harvest grain. Simile in line 1 "Faces Furrowed and with sweat". This shows hard working when reaping and the hotness of the sun because usuall mielies is harvested during hot season of the year. Furrow on the face could be caused by sweat running down of faces with dust.
- 4 It contributes in showing how faster is the work performed. And the job of harvest is usually done by women and man help in gathering and packing this phrase could also could also be showing hard working at the reapers with committment to their job. The phrase mean that women were working faster or running to finish the job quickly.
- X31 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1972
- (Sindiswa)
- 1 A figure of speech is a phrase which is to give a meaning by using either metaphor or using human for natural meaning.
- 3 Red-hot rod this phrase tells us that it was very hot in the field.
- 4 Prancing
- X32 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1992
- (Mzwamadoda)
- 1 -
- 3 "Faces furrow" - meaning that the reapers were showing their seriousness in their work
- 4 "Women become prancing wild mares" - meaning that women were busy harvesting in order their children to eat.
- X33 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1987
- (Benjamin)
- 1 Figures of speech are words or phrases which tells us more about the noun or words which gives more impression about what or how the noun does something. These are like simile, irony, exaggeration.
- 3 stained teeth as yellow as the harvested grain. This simile gives us or tells us that during the harvest time there's less time to care about the cleanliness of your body. The man doesn't have time to brush his teeth as a

- result they are yellow strained because of the tobacco which is part of this meal during their lunch.
- 4 This tells us how the women handled the work rushing to finish. This tells us that the reason why they are doing this they think of their children back home. The mares do everything quick because they think of their young ones, hence the writer say they will rest in their kraals. Kraals is where the young ones are, in this case houses are symbolised as kraals.

X34 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1992
(Fezikile)

- 1 "figures of speech" are words used in English for example, "like a desert tanker" which is a synonym, there are others like an irony, exaggeration, metaphor, etc.
- 3 "The sun slashes the workers with a red-hot rod" - this is an exaggeration meaning that the sun was very hot that its rays were like a long, thin metal or wood bar (rod)
- 4 "women become prancing wild mares" this phrase means that the women were moving very fast and that they were like wild mares (female horses) which run very fast.

X35 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1992
(Pearl)

- 1 They are the words which the poet use to decorate his poem which have two meanings the natural meaning and the meaning it has towards the poem to make us understand the poem.
- 3 "sun lashes" in dayly life reapers always reaps in summer when the sun is very hot and the mielifield is exposed to the sun, where this people are suppose to reap their mielie-mielie.
- 4 "Women become prancing wild mares" This women had been to the mielie field for a long time from sun rise. This time they were still fresh they bend mielie stalks brak mielies in close fitting covers of leaves. As the sun was very hot this women get tired and can no longer control their movements and because of the heavy bags which they have tied their waists. They move like adult female horses after the race.

X36 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1990
(Weziwe)

- 1 Figure of speech are phrases that trys to five a clear picture of what is being said by means of comparing them to other things.
- 3 The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod. This is somehow an exaggerating figure of speech. We know that the sun is not like a red hot rod. In this poem it is trying to indicate the hard working conditions experienced by workers. Again it can mean the that it was extremely hot.
- 4 Mares are female horses - females were very active now or gradually becoming old and wild in the sense that they were physically fit and strong and high tempered. A wild mare likes making sounds as women like gossip and moving

up and down.

- X37 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1989
(Lindele)
- 1 The figures of speech are the key or most contributing people or words in the scene, ef "man, woman and dust-raising tractor and prancing wild mares".
- 3 "Toss them in the bags and move through row upon row of maize". This quotation to the poem contributes in that it shows the working of the women in the fields of mielies and the way they were in hurry to gather their harvest.
- 4 The phrases "women become prancing wild mares" means that the women were moving in a higher movement to finish their harvest. To the poem show that they were followed by a tractor which gathers the harvest.
- X38 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1992
(Nathemba)
- 1 Figures of speech are words that are found in the poem - they are usually metaphors, personification and simile. A metaphor is the way in which the poet expresses himself.
- 3 "...driven by a pipe-puffing man/flashng tobacco stained teeth/as yellow as the harvested grain". Here the poet uses a simile to tell us or explain the way the teeth of the man looked like.
- 4 Here the poet exaggerates the walk of the women or their appearance. After the day's work they are happy because after a hard day they will rest awhile.
- X39 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1991 Secretarial
(Linda)
- 1 Are words that are phrases, like use word that is not animate and use it for to refer to the person.
- 3 Furrowed. It contributes because furrow here is used as a line in the skin of someone's face. But it is also a long line in the earth made by a farmer.
- 4 This contributes to the meaning of the poem because of the work that was done were people were moving in high speed because they were rushing to rest as they were tied.
- X40 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1992
(Zimasa)
- 1 Figures of speech are words which end with the same sound.
- 3 As yellow as the harvest grain it contributes is simile with human being.
- 4 Women become prancing wild mares. This contribute to the poem that women were walking fast.
- X41 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1992
(Lawrence)
- 1 Figure of speech are words or phrases which are sued by the author to express his/her views to a particular thing. These can be simile, metaphor and exaggeration.
- 3 "as yellow as the harvested grain". This is a simile, it

- contributes to the meaning of the poem in the way that these people are reaping grain and the teeth of tractor's driver are yellow as the grain which they are harvesting.
- 4 This phrase emphasise that there is a lot of work, as we hear that women are in a hurry. This hurry for this hard working is expressed by the association of women and mares. We know that mares are horses, so we should understand that hurry can be associated with horses as they are always moving fast. This hurry is the indicator of hard working.

X42 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1989
(Patience)

- 1 A figure of speech is a deviation from the ordinary use of an expression for the purpose of making the words more effective.
- 3 Men jerk bags like feather cushions. This line means that men are carrying empty bags like feather cushions.
- 4 "Women become prancing wild mares" means women are reaping mielies.

X43 MT=Xhosa ENG105 DET 1992
(Mthunywa)

- 1 figures of speech are praises usually in a poem that tend to tell us more about the object or the subject of a sentence they give the description in a figurative manner that cannot be understood exactly.
- 3 "furrowed and wet with sweat" - this means that these people are very busy as we all know during the harvest time people become wet and also because of working hard they have little time to rest and of more difficult to those who are working in farms where there is a men behind the works so there you easily become "wet with sweat".
- 4 I suggest that this phrase means that women work very hard and are fast in persuing their duty as compared to men.

X44 MT=Xhosa ELL103S DET 1988 EAP

- 1 Figures of speech are the words with hidden meanings in a piece of writing or in the person's speech. The words or sentences are used to emphasise and elucidate a particular point. Examples of figures of speech are personification, idioms, the choice of words, metaphor, etc.
- 3 One example of the figures of speech is "tobacco-stained teeth as yellow as the harvested grain". In this sentence the poet compare the teeth of the man with the harvested grain. This help to give us the visual picture of the teeth of the man. This sentence reveal to us that the man doesn't wash his teeth and this has caused them to be easily dyed by the tobacco. One point that is revealed is that the man was always smoking when he is working. Smoking would enable him to forget about the heavy work that he is busy with.
- 4 The sentence show the way the women work when they

regained their energy through the drinking of "maheu". This means that women worked harder when they had enough food or energy.

- X45 MT=Xhosa ELL103S DET 1990
- 1 Figures of speech are words or phrases used in poetry to describe certain situations and people, these words or phrases tend to be misleading at face value and needs to be looked at critically to get their true meaning.
 - 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". This helps to emphasise the fact that these workers, are out in the fields and they are exposed to great heat on this warm day reaping the mielies.
 - 4 This phrase helps to highlight the point that women are enjoying their work and their morale is very high as they are galloping around the field collecting mielies.
- X46 MT=Xhosa ELL103S DET 1989 EAP
- 1 Figures of speech are words used which are indirect and possess a hidden meaning (at times) to express the poet's view point by emphasising on something.
 - 3 "Bags tied to their wasp waists". This is a metaphor: which suggests how the women carried the heavy bags filled with mielies behind their backs. The words "wasp waists" give us an image of a wasp which is full up or is "pregnant" (filled with eggs) - and that is just on the brink of "labouring". Now it is walking slowly. This is what is happening with women at this day. The man's teeth are "as yellow as the harvested grain". SIMILE used to reflect to us what is harvested at this particular day - which is quite relevant to the title of the poem.
 - 4 This phrase indicates a very busy and tiring day for women - This shows how quick and gallant their moves are, but they are also very exhausted.
- X47 MT=Xhosa ELL103S DET 1991 EAP
- 1 Figures of speech are words in a sentence which may not have the exact meaning of something but intended to express the meaning of that particular thing.
 - 3 Faces furrowed: The name of the poem refers to the people working in a mielifield (reaping). This figure of speech helps in giving the reader an image of a person working in a mielifield.
 - 4 It contributes in showing how hard the reapers work, It associates women with wild mares meaning that they work very hard.
- X48 MT=Xhosa ELL103S DET 1991 EAP
- 1 Figures of speech are those words used to emphasise the importance of the images created in a poem. They can also give more weight and thus a fuller understanding of the poem. These may be in the form of images, comparisons or even the repetition certain sounds, etc.
 - 3 "Behind them, like a desert tanker". The above figure of speech is a simile as the tractor is compared to "the

- desert tanker" - through the use of a comparison "like". This also forms an image of war as we know the tanker is used in war. This figure of speech would be called military imagery, the poet emphasises the seriousness of reaping, the efforts put into it and the the hardship it takes - just like in the war...
- 4 The phrase "Women become prancing wild mares" is actually metaphorical in giving women the quality of an animal, which in this instance is a horse. In comparing women to "wild mares" the writer shows the efforts women put in their work and the way they accept it as their duty as horses were actually used for this kind of work. The word "prancing" adds to the pride women take in this work just like a mare prances to show its pride.
- X49 MT=Xhosa ELL103S DET 1984 EAP
- 1 Figures of speech in a speech which does not give you a clear meaning of the sentences.
- 3 "With a red-hot rod" - it means that workers were burnt by sun and the sun take as red. If the rod is burnt it will burn you and this figure of speech is telling more about the difficulties which were faced by workers.
- 4 This phrase show how women were rushing to finish up their work under harsh conditions of harvesting mielies. Mtshali takes them as wild mares which is not tamed and we all know how vulnerable is the untamed horse. His is just illustrating the way they were in a hurry as they were mielies reapers.
- X50 MT=Xhosa ELL103S DET 1990 EAP
- 1 The figures of speech all the words that we use to form a sentence in order to communicate or convey a message. These words are verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc.
- 3 "Women reapers". This figure of speech tells us what kind of reapers the poet is taking or writing about. The reapers is the main theme of the poem.
- 4 This phrase implies that women had been longing for the closing time of work and now they are free like horses. Furthermore this shows that this kind of job is too hard, for these people but because of poverty they are forced to do it so, that is why they rejoice when time to go home has come.
- X51 MT=Xhosa ELL103S Transkei 1989 EAP
- 1 Figures of speech are words used in any language to convey ones thoughts and to impress the reader or the listener so that he/she could understand what is said or written.
- 3 "Bags like feather cushions" - simile.
- 4 Women started moving vigourously because of the "maaheu" that they drank.
- X52 MT=Xhosa ELL103S DET 1990 EAP
- 1 Figures of speech are subjects in the poem that can speak.
- 3 "Faces Furrowed and wet with sweat". It indicates how

hard this people work to reap the mealies. It can also mean that they are working in the sun, where it is very hot. In this case the sweat from their faces is compared with furrow of water.

4

-

X53 MT=Xhosa ELL103S DET 1991 EAP

1

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3

The metaphor use in "their wasp waists" shows that they are very thin. This may have the result of working hard under harsh conditions as a farm labourer. Therefore this metaphor serve to emphasise the physical character of the women working in a mieliefeld.

4

Horses are use by people to carry heavy loads and many other types of work which involve working hard and using strength. Therefore this serve to emphasise the extent to which women work.

Z54 MT=Zulu ENG105 DET 1992
(Sbongile)

1

figures of speech are words which used in comparing some with another thing or we used it to explain something in an exaggerated manner.

2

Behind them, like a desert tanker. This figure of speech contributes to the meaning of the poem because it explain the dust raising by the tractor in the mieliefeld so the writer compare this mieliefeld dust with desert tanker. We know a desert is so dry and it will be worse if the tanker moves there because it will raised all the dust of the desert as it moving so in this poem is used to explain the dust of the mieliefeld.

4

It contributes in teh sense that a wild mares as far as I know it very fast horse. So they were working fast as they could in order to finish work and as they working fast they were also moving fast too.

Z55 MT=Zulu ENG1/FE DET 1990 ELL103S

1

Figure of speech is a way which exaggerates things to stress their meaning. Also to make a small thing very big.

3

"As yellow as the harvested grain". This means that the man's teeth are linked to the harvested grain to show the ryme of the poem. And to stress the importance of what these people are actually doing which is harvesting.

4

This phrase shows the way these women are tired and it shows that they are doing a tiredous job which can or should be done by man only. They are dragging themselves to their houses after a long days work. The exaggerated movements shows their tiredness. And also the edge to get to their kraals for a rest.

Z56 MT=Zulu ENG1/FE DET 1991

1

1 like a desert tanker - simile, 2 teeth as yellow as the harvested grain - simile, 3 The sun lashes the workers with a red hot rod - personification, 4 men jerk bags like feather cushions - simile, 5 women become prancing

- wild mares - metaphor
- 3 like a desert tanker a dust-raising tractor pulls a trailer. The tractor is similerised to the tanker in the sense that it raises dust as if it's in the desert as the tanker does. And the use of desert implies that it is raising this dust as if there are no human beings around. As a result, these reapers have their cloths full of dust. Desert is not a good place to be especially is you are travelling on it. And this suggests hardship these reapers are faced with while the person on the tractor is in better situation because he is not travelling and is not caught by this dust. And these reapers are using much strength than he who is just driving whilst they are reaping with their hands.
- 4 It is clear that these people work very hard and under bad situation. The women as they cannot carry the miellie bags they are gawcking at these powerful men.

Z57 MT=Zulu ENG1/FE DET 1990 ELL103S

- 1 The words or phrases used to describe certain things and events eg metaphor - where you exaggerate something, irony where a person uses words or phrases which are directly opposite to what he/she means.
- 3 Women become prancing wild mares - metaphore - exaggerates women's actions in the poem. The meaning suddenly becomes more that what women actually do in the poem. It makes more of the reality of women doing the harvest.
- 4 It shows the courage that women gives during the harvest which makes harvest a little bit faster that we see after this metaphore, he says that the days work will be done. It also make the meaning at the poem more meaningful. Women work like crazy mares, they work so hard that after their contribution the harvest ends. The pace used by women during harvest contributes a great deal to harvest.

Z58 MT=Zulu ENG1/FE DET 1990 ELL103S

- 1 Figures of speech are those words or phrases which describe the people which are in the poem.
- 3 Wasp waist. The women are portrayed as wasp waisted in the poem. This means that they are lean which could be caused by the hard work and hunger. At the end of the the poem, the speaker tells us that after the women had drunk "maheu" they began to prance like wild mares.
- 4 As already said above the women began or started to prance after they had drank "maheu". This means that they were tired and hungry before this. and it is clear that this "maheu" is served at a certain time. Besides being thirst and hunger quenched they signal that they day is about to end. After having drank it they must have told themselves the day is about to end.

Z59 MT=Zulu ENG1 DET 1990 ELL103S

- 1 -
- 3 -
- 4 When the tractor arrives in the field, to collect the

mieliebags, the women become happy in way they might jump around or perform a traditional dance. As farm did and still do, sing whilst they work: the wildness might be the enthusiasm. One wouldn't expect them to work the whole day and then dance or rave like wild.

- Z60 MT=Zulu ELL103S DET 1991 EAP
- 1 Figures of speech are words or phrases used by the poet to emphasise something about the poem. Sometimes that phrase the deeper meaning than what the speaker is saying in the poem.
 - 3 "baked brown with dust". This shows that these reapers work all day under the unmerciful sun. They work very hard even the son is not kind to them. Their brownness it is not normal but out of their suffering. This all shows how these reapers suffer.
 - 4 Women work very hard, they even loose their dignity because they are discribed like prancing wild mares. When women are working they become very busy like mad and they go on with out caring. Like a wild mare when it is ridden goes on with out stopping. Women loose their patience because of being tired.
- Z61 MT=Zulu ELL103S DET 1991 EAP
- 1 Figures of speech are the specific ways in which the poet uses things like: alliteration, metaphor, repition and so on.
 - 3 "Brine-bathed brow". This is actually salt water (brine). The poet is trying to explain how much hard work did these people do during the reaping. The sun was hot and they were sweating and also thirst. This brine is the sweat of these people.
 - 4 The poet mean that the women became energetic and fully of spirit again so that the work will soon be finished. They had been sweating and then relaxed to drink anew. They regained the energy to continue work. The image of prancing wild mares is used to illustrate their spirit or energy to finish task.
- O62 MT=Ovambo ENG105 Namibia 1992
(Elise)
- 1 figure of speech is a form of speech which is not literal, meanings are hidden behind the real word outspoken. Irony, sarcasm, paradox are all example of figure of speech. What is said is not what is meant and the meaning is emphasised by what is said.
 - 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". The real meaning behind this sentence is that the day is hot and the sun is burning. The red-hot rod demonstrates the heat emitted by the sun. We all know that a rod is a metal and when this rod is red-hot one can imaging how hot it is. The red-hot rod contributes to show how the sun was affecting the workers and to show the conditions the workers are working in. It also enables us to understand why the workers have to stop for a drink.
 - 4 "Women become prancing wild mares". This description says

that the women are agitated, like mares when they get angry. They are in a hurry to finish their work and to get home as the working day is coming to an end.

ENGLISH L1 STUDENTS

(All the following students were registered for English I at the University of Cape Town in 1992)

- E1 MT=English DEC
- 1 Writing techniques a writer uses to give a piece of poetry or prose character and colour.
- 3 "brine-bathed brow" The poem concerns the workers in a mieliefield, where the work is long and hard. This figure of speech contributes to creating the picture of the workers in the hot sun, sweating because of the heat and hard labour.
- 4 At this stage of the poem, the workers are refreshed by the drink and are anticipating the end of the day when work is done. The women are too revived because the day is almost over and so they become more energetic in what they are doing, they become "...prancing wild mares..."
- E2 MT=English/German NSC
- 1 "figures of speech are metaphorical phrases used to describe (or clarify) things mentioned in the poem. They do not directly relate to the subject but are accepted as relevant for description.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod" - this not only expresses the intense heat but also the suffering involved. "Red-hot rod" implies searing heat directed at each individual. "Lashes" portrays an image of painful suffering as a kind of punishment (especially as this is usually used in the context of whipping).
- 8 This implies a kind of vigour after the slaking of thirst the women return with eagerness (at the prospect of finishing soon). However it also implies an unwillingness to do the work in the first place (wild mares are generally seen as uncontrollable).
- E3 MT=English TED
- 1 "Figures of speech", when incorporated into a basic text, help bring the text to life. They relate the actual to the imagined and conjure up images in a reader which the author would like to convey.
- 3 "Yellow as the harvested grain" - This figure of speech as metaphor, helps the reader to clarify the colour and arrangement of his teeth. It makes using clear to the reader the intensity of yellow as the colour of yellow and the grainy corn shaped teeth.
- 4 "Women become prancing wild mares" - This figure of speech describes the women after they have drunk water, and the the wonderful transformation which has taken place in the women. They have been transformed from hot, over-worked labourers to free, lively, prancing mares. ie The life has been put back into the workers.

E4 MT=English NSC

1 These are phrases or clauses which have a particular meaning to them. There are many figures of speech, which come in various forms, eg onomatopoeia, metaphor, simile, alliteration. It is used in the language to increase the standard or level of it or enabling the reader to read between the lines.

3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". This is personification. The extreme heat is being emphasised in this line. The sun is so hot that it enables the metal rod to become "red-hot", which takes quite a while to do so, and lashes the workers. There is a hint of being tortured - A red-hot rod is normally used to burn marks on animals to show who they belong to. I think the same effect is given here. I think it puts a great emphasis on the poem because it has already been said that it is a dry, hot area. "like a desert". The heat is unbearable for them, but they continue to do it.

4 The women's thirst has been quenched and a long, hard day's work has almost being completed. They are happy and relieved that they will be leaving the scorching hot sun. The women are probably talking to one another for the first time during the day. It may be due to the weather or the large amount of work that had to be completed that day. The women are so overwhelmed by leaving.

E5 MT=English Cape Eng Special UPE

1 Figures of speech are techniques used in language to enhance meanings in literature. Examples are similes, metaphors, alliteration, assonance, etc. They allow comparisons to be made directly and indirectly and contribute to the greater effect of the literature.

3 "Wasp waists" - This is a metaphor. The person is described as having the waist of a wasp - not a waist like a wasp, which would be a simile. The labourers are described as having wasp waists which indicates that they could have thin waists as opposed to thick limbs. This all emphasises the manual labour that they engage in day after day and through this their bodies have changed to suit their work.

4 The women are looking forward to the end of the day and there is a burst of activity amongst the males and females. This is a sudden detraction from the slow oppressed labour they have been doing. It shows that instead of just being objects of labour - performing a mechanical task, they are in fact human beings not just machines.

E6 MT=English Cape

1 Expressive language or phrases which are subjective eg metaphor, assonance, simile...

3 The tractor being compared to a "desert tanker" emphasises the power that the machine holds, ploughing fields, etc. This invincible quality of something mechanical contrasts with the frailty and exertions of the workers in the fields, their subordination to the

- power that the farmer has because he owns a tractor.
- 4 The women became excited at the end of a day's work was near. Sense of abandonment and freedom, that despite the arduous day and the monotony of toiling in the fields there is still hope that something better lies around the corner.

E7 MT=English TED

- 1 They are comparisons and descriptions and images which enhance the meaning or symbolism of things the poem, eg personification, which gives inanimate objects human characteristics.
- 3 "The sun lashes...with a red-hot rod". The sun, one of the most important sources of life for us, is personified as a cruel, harsh slavedriver. This ties in with the impression of hard work and discomfort experienced by the workers. They are prisoners or slaves of the sun. This serves to enhance the underlying tone of injustice I get from the poem.
- 4 Bolting for freedom from their lives found to the earth and hard work, the women seem like horse that are restless. This image suggests that they don't really belong in captivity, as is seen throughout the poem.

E8 MT=English/Afrikaans Cape FE

- 1 They are distinct groups of words which are conveyed as images. They add interest and extend meanings of sentences and phrases.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot iron". This is an example of personification. The sun is "lashing" the workers and we can clearly see this image that the poet is trying to bring across. It is as though the sun is the slave-driver leading the slaves (the workers) with red-hot rod. The sun is instead "torturing" the workers with its excessive heat ("red hot rod") causing them to sweat ("Brine bathed brow") and become thirsty.
- 4 It is a metaphor comparing the women with wild mares (female horses). The women are excited and uncontrollable because another day's work is nearly done.

E9 MT=English Cambridge

- 1 Figures of speech are the use of imagery (metaphors, similies, euphamisms, descriptions, etc) used to compare or contrast and describe either someone or something. Figures of speech are used to give or portray a picture that an author is trying to paint his/her way of communicating or letting other know of his point or topic.
- 3 "The sun lashes..." Personification in the sun lashing, quite a vivid description of the intensity of the sun's heat - as a contribution to the poem the word lashes creates a poem of punishment, or rather hard work. The discomfort of working in the fields physically tires a labourer who has no choice but to continue, the intense heat makes their situation even more uncomfortable and unpleasant. This image also portrays the strength and

endurance of such labourers in that they are able to withstand such a situation.

- 4 This phrase contributes to the sense of labour and slavery in the poem, the fact that the women are compared to "wild mares" portrays this sense of excited emotion, longing and happiness that it is near time to return to their homes, or evokes the feeling that the women are about to gain their freedom from some prison, some forced labour where they made to work hard and endure. The word "prancing" conveys their instinctive and exhilarated feeling towards an end of torturing work and is a contrast to the fact that they must be physically exhausted, although perhaps they have become used to the work.

E10 MT=English Cape

- 1 Figures of speech are the tools a poet uses to build an image. They consist of simile, metaphor, alliteration and other such language devices that can be used to strengthen an image in order to make it more effective.
- 3 "Flashing tobacco stained teeth as yellow as the harvested grain". - This simile is used to reinforce the colour of the man's stained teeth. The fact that we are dealing with a mielie field makes the colours that you find there (brown, yellow, green) ever more present in our minds - so by the poet conferring the colour of the teeth to the field he manages to convey that sickly colour with force and does not distract (but actually helps provoke) the reader's attention from the scene.
- 4 The poet is trying to show a revival of the workers' energy - once they had something to drink. He compares them to "prancing mares"; or very excitable female horses which are very graceful but powerful animals and it is this sense of the renewal of power combined with grace that he is trying to convey.

E11 MT=English Cape

- 1 Figures of speech are ways in which certain things are described. These include similes and metaphors. Personification is also a figure of speech.
- 3 "like a desert tanker" This is a simile. The word "desert" contributes to the idea of harvesting fields. The fields once plentiful with crop, have been harvested and the desert of dust is left. The fields become empty. The tractor is described as tank moving through a desert.
- 8 At the beginning of the poem the women are described to wasps, now are described to "prancing wild mares", all the descriptions relate to nature.

E12 MT=English DEC FE

- 1 They are images used to compare or describe something. The image is figurative although the element composed or described could be literal. Figures of speech are used to evoke an emotion in reader.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". The sun is given a human quality of a slave master lashing a whip

- at his slaves. An emotion of sympathy is immediately evoked in the reader as we tend to sympathise with the hard working labourers. The word "lash" in the quotation is harsh and there is a feeling of oppression, poverty and especially helplessness among the workers.
- 4 There is a feeling of joyousness and a sense of freedom among the women. There is a sense that the work may be over soon and there is a sense that the hard burden is alleviated.
- E13 MT=Eng/Afrikaans Other FE
- 1 Figures of speech are terms such as metaphors, similes, alliteration, assonance, etc used in order to give the reader other levels of understanding of the poem, instead of only the literal meaning.
- 3 A red-hot rod - The sun's rays are likened to a hot rod which is very similar to the ones which were used by the overseers at the time when slavery was entrenched in America. The workers work so hard like slaves, with very little time for rest, just enough time to slake their thirst.
- 4 The women, once they have slaked their thirst, had enough energy to start working again. They became reactivated. The horse is normally an animal associated with hard work on farms, ploughing and pulling heavy loads and in this way, the women are said to be like horses. The use of alliteration emphasises this wildness and energy, which pervade the poem.
- E14 MT=English/Afrikaans DEC
- 1 Figures of speech are techniques used by poets/authors to convey an image or sound to the reader more effectively.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod" - An example of personification. The sun is compared to a hard taskmaster who punishes the workers with its intense heat. The heat is just one of the sufferings the workers have to endure while completing their task. This is indicative of how hard the workers work, and how much they have to endure.
- 4 The phrase "women become prancing wild mares" is a very different image from the start of the poem, which reads, "Faces furrowed and wet with sweat". The latter indicates how hard they work and how exhausted they are. However, as the end of the day nears, they are so overjoyed at the thought of a rest, that they are suddenly filled with energy and their spirits lift. Again, this indicates their hardship and exhaustion.
- E15 MT=English Cape
- 1 Different words of the combination of part so of speech to add colour to literature/poetry or prose. Figures of speech aid in the creation of imagery and descriptive narrative. Examples are personification, simile, metaphors, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, synecdoche, euphemism, climax and bathos or anti-climax.
- 3 Personification: "The sun lashes the workers with a red

hot rod". The poem is trying to portray the hardship the workers are being subjected to by a harsh master. The personification which describes the sun as a sort of master who keeps them working by lashing them with a hot rod - heat. This image thus enhances the idea of the criticism of the master/servant role playing. In effect a criticism of the subservient level the workers are being subjected to. They are in fact in the context of the poem not the real leasers of their labour as this is thought to be morally wrong.

- 4 This image enhances the idea of the workers being trapped hopelessly in a cycle of abuse and hardship.. The women still though exhibit some life ie become "prancing wild mares". This image thus contributes to the idea of capturing or enslavement, which is central to the meaning of the poem.

E16 MT=English NED

- 1 "Figures of speech" implicitly describe something in terms of a comparison, or a parallel drawn with something else, for example, "the women become prancing wild mares" is descriptive but not factual. The women could not turn themselves into horses. Figures of speech so refer to such things as metaphors and similes.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". This description enforces the impression of servitude or slavery. the sun appearing as a slave driver, whipping or the workers. "Red-hot" emphasises the barren desert-like impression created by the references to "dust", "desert" and "thirst" and so on. However, this desolate atmosphere created refers more to the state of mind of the workers, than to the actual landscape - ie that of oppression.
- 4 "Prancing wild mares" suggests a reversion to a natural, wild, free state, an energy that contrasts against the references earlier in the poem to structured labour. This suggests the approach of the end of the day.

E17 MT=English Cape

- 1 "Figures of speech" are words, phrases, or sentences in the form of alliteration, metaphors, similes, personification, etc which represent the imagery and comparisons of actions in a poem.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". The sun is personified in its comparison with someone "lashing" something with a "red-hot rod". "Heart" is synonymous to the two actions compared and that is part of the setting which the poet attempts to create.
- 4 It is almost a climax that is reached in the poem when the men and women quench their thirst and the relief is demonstrated through their sudden spurt of energy, where they are referred to as "prancing wild mares". The implications of this are possibly the devastation of poverty and the need to relieve it or combat it.

E18 MT=English NSC

- 1 The different types (uses) of words which give the poem

its style and meaning, for example alliteration, simile, metaphor and so on.

- 3 "In vests baked brown with dust". A metaphor is used in the example. Their (the reapers') vests, which are probably very sweaty from their hard labour, are caked in dust and dirt and hardened by the sun. This metaphor is descriptive of the hard, dirty labour which the reapers experience in a hot and exhausting environment.

- 4 The phrase describes the actions of the women labourers after they have had a rest and drunk some "malty maheu". This "malty maheu" could be a type of home-brewed beer which cause the drinker to feel good. The prospect of the day's work being done could also serve to lift the spirits of the women labourers. Their actions described in the above phrase could be as a result of a combination of their joy of finishing work and the headiness caused by the brew.

E19 MT=English Cape

- 1 Phrases and words which enable the author to be more descriptive, using comparisons to bring a clear image to the reader's mind.

- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod..." By comparing the heat of the sun to an iron rod, the author is describing exactly how harsh the sun is and how the workers feel. The reader is able to feel exactly how the sun feels. It is also a symbol of oppression, the workers are forced to be there - wielding a rod represents the farmer's (owner's) brutality.

- 4 Women are likened to animals, first pack-horse and then "prancing wild mares". Anticipation of the end of the work day. Shows how the women who are forced to work in the fields all day grow happy at the end of the day, they accept their lot in life and make the most of a bad situation. They know there is more to life. The author compares all the reapers to animals who work all day and are put in "the kraal" at night. No personal freedom - treated like animals by farmer or landowner.

E20 MT=English Cape

- 1 A figure of speech is a special grouping of words that emphasises through sound or imagery a concept the poet wants to emphasise. For example, assonance and simile.

- 3 The poem focuses on the hardship the reapers endure during the working day. This is best reflected in the metaphor on l 17. The heat of the sun causes the workers great suffering...it is compared to the whip a slave driver would use to spur them on with. The intense heat from the sun is reflected in the words "red hot". This metaphor is effective because it emphasises the toil of the reapers.

- 4 During the working day the women are shown to be consciously hardworking, their labour seems endless. This is shown by the use of "move through row upon row of maize". After they have been refreshed a transformation seems to take place, this is shown in the use of the

above metaphor. The women are shown to be lively and wild. I think "wild" has been used in the sense meaning "free". Hope seems to emerge when they see the end of the day drawing near and they can return to their own, traditional way of life, in a sense become free again. Therefore metaphor implies the captivity of the reapers in a system that is not traditional to them (the white farm).

E21 MT=English TED

- 1 Devices used by a poet to stimulate association, eg similes, metaphors.
- 3 "Yellow as the harvested grain" -simile, uses the word as to compare the teeth to harvested grain. It emphasises the yellowness of the teeth. Harvested grain was probably used as, it the theme of the poem is agriculture.
- 4 It compares the women to wild horses and conjures up the image of the women full of energy, eager to break away and be free. It allows us to see that the women are eager to finish work so that they can be free as wild mares should be.

E22 MT=English Cape

- 1 Figures of speech are techniques of a writer or poet to convey an image or to emphasise an image, a line or a word. These include metaphors, similes and so on.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". This is a metaphor. It emphasises the intense heat of the sun in which the workers are working. It could be an allusion to the heat rays of the sun beating against the skin of the workers. As the sun's rays radiate from it, so does the heat rays from a hot rod.
- 4 The image of the women as prancing wild mares is a very vivid one. This phrase gives rise to an image of the women walking with exaggerated movements. This phrase adds to the atmosphere in the poem in that it lightens the mood and feeling of the last stanza. It also emphasises the zeal and energy with which the women perform their tasks, especially since the word "wild" is used. The women are happier and more energetic since they are almost finished their day's work. They are glad to be free of the burden of their work.

E23 MT=Eng/Afrikaans DEC

- 1 The author's way of describing things and people by using language. It is mostly ambiguous. It is mostly metaphors that can be used as figures of speech.
- 3 "Pipe puffing man with flashing tobacco-stained teeth" - He is the man that collect the days crops and he signals the end of the day. The is in a happy mood and he is probably laughing.
- 4 The women can be very tired and walk like that. Or they can walk like that from the stuff they drank. The pobably had wine to drink because on most farms they still the "dop" system, (where workers were paid with wine). It can be they way the wine or whatever they drank affects them.

They could be very tired of the days work and can barely stand on their feet.

E24 MT=English Cape

- 1 They are expressions in English which describe or compare human characteristics with inanimate objects. They often describe movements of people or characteristics with the intention of making the language more emotive or "action-like".
- 3 "...like a desert tanker, a dust-raising tractor..." - The comparison of the tractor to the desert tanker implies that the tractor is in desert-like conditions with extreme heat and dust. - This provides a clear scene of the conditions in the mielie fields in which the women are facing. Extreme heat and harsh conditions.
- 4 In comparison to the rest of the poem, the women are seen as lively and exhibit a spark after quenching their thirst. The rest of the poem is underlined with sullen, lazy emotions and this gives a "bright" comparison to the rest of the poem.

E25 MT=English DEC

- 1 It is an image created by words which makes the poem easier to understand because a certain picture can then be visualised. It can also be used to emphasised a line of the poem.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". This figure of speech is called personification because the sun takes on a human characteristic. It contributes to the meaning of the poem because it emphasises how hot the sun is and how the people in the field are suffering. It makes it seem as if the people are being punished. The image of the rod suggests this.
- 4 Women take on animal characteristics. They are anxious for the days work to be done and want to get home so that they can rest.

E26 MT=English NSC

- 1 Figures of speech are forms of phrasing that enhance meaning and imagery with a written text.
- 3 "Men jerk bags like feather cushions" is a simile and effectively shows the sudden burst of energy experienced by the workers when they come closer to finishing and freedom. It also shows the strength of the loaders in relation to the weight of the bags.
- 4 "And women become prancing wild mares" is a metaphor and sharpens the imagery of the workers being closer to their natural, wild form as they draw closer to ending work.

E27 MT=English DEC

- 1 Figures of speech aer used when we wish to describe something or someone to something or someone else. The characteristic word mostly used is "like" or "as".
- 3 "like a desert tanker..." This figure of speech portrays an image of a tanker riding along in a hot, seemingly arid land. Just as the tanker is in the desert, so to is

- the image of the tractor portrayed in the hot blazen land. Thus portraying a more captivating imagery.
- 4 The women are likened to wild mares untamed and wild, filled with life and vigour. Just as the horses are seen as wild, lively and full of vigour, so to are the women portrayed towards the end of the poem. This phrase is almost in total contrast to the beginning of the poem, because, in the beginning, the scene is almost melancholic, but towards the end, life and energy is refilled and expressed in their work.

E28 MT=English Cape

- 1 "They" are the pieces used to construct a sentence, passage. Its a way of saying often part of jargon. Examples of figures of speech are similaes, etc.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod". The way that the sun is lashing the workers gives the impression of slaves been driven hard to work. The brutal lashing enhances the drama and intensity in the job that the workers are doing - it illustrates how the workers have to slave at their task under "savage" harsh, brutal conditions with no mercy being shown from any sphere. Even nature is relentless and unyielding. It stimulates the poem on its climb to a climax and increases the tension and emotion of the reader.
- 4 It completes the poem and it is the climax. The strain, the heat and the "suffering" are almost over and it gives purpose to the workers. It also filfuls the reader and brings the message of the poem home: That even though one must work, suffer, etc there are always thing to look forward to (a goal). It captures the "Light at the end of the tunnel" sinario.

E29 MT=English Other

- 1 Figures of speech are similies and metaphors. They normally compare inhuman things. Sometimes they give an an inhuman object a human characteristic or visa versa.
- 3 "Men jerk bags like feather cushions". This shows the strength or the labourers. The work is described as extremely hard, never mind the harsh sun. The day of labour is almost over and so there is motivation to finish out the rest of the day.
- 4 Throughout the whole poem the labour are refered to as almost being one sex. By in the last paragraph we realise that there are actually men and women, not just thick-limbed labourers covered in sweat and dust. The phrase above helps to show that these labourers are human and not just machines.

E30 MT=Eng/Afrikaans DEC FE

- 1 These are techniques used by poets to create a mood or atmostphere. Comparison may be made to living things, for example, metaphors, comparison, simile and personification. These images are often used to help the reader understand the poem.
- 3 "Tobacco-stained teeth as yellow as the harvested grain".

This help us to determine that their is a master, servant relationship or situation present. We can assume that their master is from a western culture. He is not seen by his employers as a human being, but as the man who oppresses them.

- 4 These women try and make the most of what life has dealt them. Even though they are oppressed, their spirits cannot be dampened. They may even be happy to able to go back to the "kraal" where they can drop all pretence, because there master is not there to watch them. Here they will be able to forget about work and pretend that they are free.

E31 MT=English DEC ELL104W FE

- 1 They are basically poetic devices used to express the poet's feelings better and its gives the poem a different style which would conform to that of the poet, ie similes.
- 3 "Men jerk bags like feather cushions". The vigorous movement of the men is probably due to the presence of the women. They are showing all their masculinity to the women. This supports the fact that their meeting the women are brief and they want to leave a good impression with the women. This event is definitely the highlight of their day.
- 4 Similar to No. 7 the women too feel the urge toimpress the men on this brief and probably most enjoyed occassion. They day is dull and laborious except for that moments when they are with the men. These actions by the women reveals that this event is clearly the highlight of their day.

E32 MT=English Cape

- 1 A figure of speech is an analogy between an image being written about and some other which enhances the reader's understanding or makes the image more vivid.
- 3 "Like a desert tanker/a dust-raising tractor/pulls a trailer". This analogy in which a tractor is compared to a desert tanker enhances the image of the intense heat and dust in which the reapers are working - like that of a desert. The use of "tanker" describes the tractor as large and powerful, as if it could drive over everything in its path, including the reapers.
- 4 This phrase describes how the knowledge of the nearing of the end of work and the women's brief rest and drink seems to rejuvenate them or set them free. The image of a prancing mare makes the reader think that the women are ready to resist the fines of work.

E33 MT=English DEC

- 1 Figures of speech is used in figurative language.
- 3 "like feather cushions". There is a direct comparison between the bags of corm and feather cushions. This comparison is used to emphasise the strength and endurance of the workmen. The words suggest a renewal in energy as if workers have sudden inspiration and

- strength. The phrase suggests an eagerness in the workers to compare the tiresome work.
- 4 The phrase suggests that the women are becoming excited at the prospect of returning home. Whereas before the women were involved in the drudgery and restriction of their work, they are soon to be released. The women are being compared to wild female horses who are prancing about and eager to be free. The image conjured is of wild horses baulking against restriction and wanting to be free to run. Similarly, the women are eager to be free of restriction of work.

E34 MT=English Cape

- 1 "Figures of speech" are the various techniques used in language to enhance or enrich a particular idea, thought, situation, vision, etc.
- 3 "The sun lashes" - personification. It intensifies the effect that the sun has on the workers and gives us a better idea on the circumstances and conditions under which they work. "Lashes" gives the effect of a "whipping" and so, we associate the sun's heat with this.
- 4 The phrase associates women with lively active and animated animals who are "prancing" around. This gives us a feeling that they are alive, busy and full of zest. Without having to use their terms (ie busy and full of zest), the poet immediately creates this image for us.

E35 MT=English A-levels

- 1 A way of descriptively expressing an idea which might not make perfect sense but gives a good general impression of what the author is trying to put across eg "wasp waists" - wasps do not technically have waists but because they are such small insects we can imagine the person who has a wasp waist being very small in the waist.
- 3 "The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod" - the poet is using figurative speech here to express how hot the sun is, it lashes at them like a whip, we can imagine the sun punishing them and we have a strong impression of slave labour of someone ruling over them with "a red-hot rod". This idea of a rod not only reiterates the punishing heat of the sun but also stresses how subservient they are to the "pipe-puffing man" who follows them threateningly in his tractor.
- 4 The whole poem has been hot and heavy, depressing images of heat, dust and servility prevail. It is with relief therefore that in the final stanza we encounter the women "prancing" like "wild mares". It gives us hope that, though they are oppressed they have courage and hope, they can look to their futures (resting in their kraals) and refuse to be continually oppressed. The image of prancing mares enlightens the poem and provides a stark contrast to "vest baked with brown dust" and other figures of speech.

E36 MT=Eng/German Cape

- 1 Figurative language: metaphor, simile and

- personification. They are are comparisons which are descriptive, but not in a literal sense. Simile, metaphor, comparison of two usually unrelated things.
- 3 "like a desert tanker". This is a simile, a tractor is being compared to a vehicle or tanker in the desert. "Desert tanker" emphasises the heat and the harshness of the work in the field because it suggests that it is almost like working in the desert. Also a tanker carries water or other useful liquids, similarly, the tractor transports the valuable harvest. It emphasises the preciousness of the crop because people harvest in such harsh conditions.
- 4 Women are being compared to wild horses. This is a metaphor. The work in the fields is hard yet the women, like wild horses, still have energy and enthusiasm. Although the work is hard and physical the people are willing. This contributes to the meaning of the poem, namely that it is natural for the people to enjoy hard work in the field.

APPENDIX D

Discussions with students

TRANSCRIPTION¹ OF DISCUSSION WITH UWC ENGLISH 105 STUDENTS²
THURSDAY 19 AUGUST 1993 2:05 - 3:30

- 1 CW: Let's start off with that first question on "figures
of speech". Everybody here seems to know what
figures of speech are - but some answers are a bit
muddled. Mzwamadoda, you left that question out. Did
5 you forget?
Mzwamadoda: Yes.
CW: But you underlined most of the figures of speech in
question 2. What happened in question 1?
Mzwamadoda: I didn't know how to express it.
10 CW: Did you study things like metaphors, similes,
personifications at school?
Mzwamadoda: Yes.
CW: So is it coming back to you now?
Mzwamadoda: I remember, those words where you say as...
15 strong as a lion... I remember I did figures of
speech in poetry.
CW: Sindiswa, do you remember studying poetry at school.
Sindiswa: Yes I do. It was a long time ago.
[Laughter]
20 CW: Would you read out your definition of figures of
speech?
Sindiswa:[Reading] "A figure of speech is a phrase which
is to give a meaning by using either metaphor or
using human for natural meaning".
25 CW: I think I know what you mean, but that sentence is a
bit muddled. What do you mean "using human for
natural meaning"?
Sindiswa: When I say natural meaning, I mean the first
meaning that appears.
30 CW: The ordinary, everyday sort of meaning?
Sindiswa: Yes.
CW: And what do you mean by "human meaning"?
Sindiswa: That is the second meaning. It can mean
something else.
35 CW: Can you give me an example?
Sindiswa: Like Mzwamadoda said "He is a lion" - but that
can mean many things. Maybe the first meaning is he
is strong and then the second meaning is that he is
very violent.
40 CW: I see. So what you mean is that metaphor is one type
of figure of speech and that "symbol" is another.

¹ This class was tape recorded. My transcription is an edited version of the tape recording.

² Students were given the class test on "Reapers in a Mieliefield" on Tuesday 17 August. I marked the test and handed it out at the start of the lesson. I explained the research project and asked student for their permission to tape record the lesson. There were 27 students present at the discussion. All had their answers in front of them.

³ Sindiswa is the oldest member of the class. She has a son who is also at UWC.

What you've described is a symbolical meaning as opposed to a metaphorical meaning - and here we're in a very complicated area. I didn't mean for us to get into such a deep discussion so soon! Pearl, I think you wrote something similar. Would you read your definition?

Pearl: [Reading] "They are the words which the poet uses to decorate his poem which have two meanings the natural meaning and the meaning it has towards the poem to make us understand".

CW: Okay, so this "natural" meaning is the obvious, straightforward meaning and the second meaning is the symbolic one - is that what you mean?

Pearl: I think so.

[Laughter]

CW: Does everyone understand this - about the poem having two - or maybe several - meanings? Some obvious and some symbolical or hidden?

Class: No!

CW: Oh dear...I'm in deep water here!

Benjamin: I think I can explain somewhat with reference to a poem we have studied in Xhosa. There is a poem which says that people are waiting on the platform for hours, they are waiting, some are crying, they are waiting for the train to come. But the poem is really about death. And when the train is coming that is death, you see. Do you see what this means?

CW: So the whole poem is a symbol for other things?

Benjamin: Ja, ja. It is a symbol for death.

CW: Yes. And I suppose you could read this poem, "Reapers in a Mieliefeld" in that way too. The activity of reaping is a figure of speech - a symbol - for...for what?

Benjamin: Death!

[Laughter]

CW: Before we get more deeply involved in this discussion, let's get back to figures of speech. Weziwe, I made a note here that your definition was really good - nice and clear - not all this complicated symbolic stuff! Can you read what you said?

Weziwe: [Reading] "Figures of speech are phrases that try to give a clear picture of what is being said by means of comparing them to other things"

CW: I think that's a good definition - one of the important things about figures of speech is that they are comparisons. I've written that on most of your answers - if it seemed to me that you were unclear in your definitions. So very often in a figure of speech one thing is being compared to another thing. Okay? Now, in this comparison all sorts of things will emerge - all those different meanings and symbols and that we started talking about. Everybody happy about that definition?

Class: Yes.

CW: Let's look at one more definition - mainly to

- satisfy my own curiosity. McDonald, maybe I just can't read your handwriting. Is this what you said?
- 100 "Its when unleaving things are given people's action". "Unleaving things"? What on earth are "unleaving things"?"
- [Laughter]
- McDonald: I actually meant "unliving".
- 105 CW: Oh, unliving. You mean non-living, inanimate objects. Oh, I see. And "people's action" is human qualities. I thought you were talking about some kind of political action, like mass action or something.
- 110 [Laughter]
- McDonald: No. Like in the poem when the sun lashes the workers with a...stick - that's what I meant.
- CW: Personification.
- McDonald: Yes.
- 115 CW: McDonald, you see spelling is important. I completely misunderstood your definition.
- McDonald: But English spelling is impossible!
- CW: I know. I'm a bad speller too - but I use the spellcheck on the computer!
- 120 Elise: That's not fair - we need spellcheck more than you do!
- CW: Next term we'll be working on the computers again⁴ and you can "spellcheck" your work before you hand it in.
- [brief discussion on pros and cons of wordprocessing]
- 125 CW: Okay - let's move on. Most of you managed to underline most of the figures of speech - and also quite a few things that weren't figures of speech. Can I assume that a lot of you just sort of took a chance here?
- 130 Class: No/Yes
- CW: Okay, so some of you took a chance and just thought you'd underline everything and some of you thought really hard about what you were underlining?
- Class: Yes.
- 135 CW: Mzwamadoda, for question 3 you chose "faces furrowed". Do you want to read what you wrote?
- M/madoda: I wrote that the meaning of this "faces furrowed" is that the reapers were showing the seriousness of their work.
- 140 CW: Why does this "face furrowed" description show seriousness?
- M/madoda: It means you got lines on your forehead.
- CW: So this means that you are frowning and concentrating hard. Can you explain why
- 145 you think the poet chose this figure of speech?

⁴ During the second term we went through a writing process on computer - from brainstorming to final editing, using "spellcheck" and "grammatik".

M/madoda: I think he means...the workers they were working hard at this work.

CW: So why did he choose to use the word "furrowed"?

M/madoda: Because...the word is used of the reapers.

150 CW: McDonald - you said something similar, didn't you?

McDonald: Yes. I agree with Mzwamadoda. These reapers are working so hard so that their faces are lined.

CW: But you went further - you said "And as planters they are not just throwing mielies and leaving the space open - but have to close it with the ground or even put fertilizer in it". I think you mean that the description, "faces furrowed" links, or associates the workers with the earth that they are working on because the word "furrows" can be used of both faces and fields. Is that right?

155 160 McDonald: Yes. Can you write that on the board?

CW: Why?

McDonald: Because you said it better than me. What you said has got more meaning in it.

165 CW: Do you think so?! Okay. [writes sentence on board] [To class] What is the difference between what I said and what McDonald said?

Elise: Your sentence is better because...I don't know... there is too much details in MacDonald's.

170 CW: You mean because he talks about the mielies and the ground and fertilizer?

Elise: Yes. Also McDonald is talking about the planting activities not only the reaping ones.

CW: Good point. You've wandered off the point a bit,

175 McDonald...Any other differences between McDonald's description and mine?

McDonald: You use bigger words than me.

CW: But am I saying the same thing with bigger words?

McDonald: No, you are saying something at a deeper and wider level.

180 CW: You mean my sentence is more general?

McDonald: Yes. It's like that...general.

CW: McDonald and Mzwamadoda, I think you both have very interesting ideas. But should explain these ideas by stating why you think the poet used the description "faces furrowed". Substantiate your ideas but saying how the word "furrowed" can be used.

185 Linda: I was also trying to say the same thing. But I didn't know how to express it.

190 CW: I know that it's difficult. You know that a figure of speech implies a comparison. So in "faces furrowed" - what is being compared to what?

Linda: The workers' faces are compared to the...the furrow.

195 CW: Right. Now - why are they being compared to the furrow.

Linda: Because [looks at board] the description associates the workers with the earth that they are working on.

200 CW: Through the use of the word "furrowed". Right. We have just had a very interesting discussion about

"faces furrowed", but I must tell you that when I first read the poem I didn't notice that this was a metaphor, because in English, we use the expression "a furrowed brow" (brow is the same as "forehead") so often that it has become a dead metaphor. A dead metaphor is one that is used so much you don't notice it anymore.

205 Linda: So you mean that to choose this "faces furrowed" is wrong?

210 CW: No. Poets often bring dead metaphors back to life. And I think this one has been resurrected in this poem. I just thought you might like to know that teachers often learn from their students. If you

215 hadn't pointed it out, I would not have noticed it.

Elise: Well it is not a dead metaphor to me.

CW: Trust me. It's a dead metaphor. But now it's alive again.

[Laughter!]

220 CW: There's another dead metaphor that some of you chose - that's the "vests baked brown with dust" one. To say that something is "baked with dust" is a very common expression in English. Suzan, I think you chose that one, didn't you.

225 Suzan: Yes. I said this is a metaphor. [Reading] "this phrase indicate a figure of speech, a metaphor. It shows how dirty was the vests of the workers, dust has covered them, made them dirty as if they are baked in an oven to show a brownish colour".

230 CW: A clear description. Who else chose that one.

Brian F: I did.

CW: But I must say that I don't think the "baked brown with dust" metaphor is as exciting as the "faces furrowed" one. I think it's pretty much dead.

235 Suzan: That's because you're English.

[Laughter]

To me this metaphor is alive because it shows how hot the sun is. You know like baking hot.

Brian F: Yes, like an oven.

240 CW: Okay. I give up. "Vests baked brown with dust" is another resurrected metaphor!

[Laughter]

Most of the rest of you chose either "the sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod" or the teeth one -

245 "teeth as yellow as the harvested grain". So, we'll look at "the sun" first. And now things are going to get really interesting. I've got some interpretations of this description written by first year UCT students. They are mainly white, English

250 speaking students and I'd like to compare some of your responses with their responses. Very often I think that there's a difference in perspective in the answers. You look puzzled, but I think you'll see what I mean. Who wants to read about the sun

255 metaphor? Okay, Elise, go ahead.

Elise: [reading] "The real meaning behind this sentence is that the day is hot and the sun is burning. The

red-hot rod demonstrates the heat emitted by the sun. We all know that a rod is metal and
 260 when this rod is red-hot one can image how hot it is. The red-hot rod contributes to show how the sun was affecting the workers and to show the conditions the workers are working in. It also enables us to understand why the workers have to stop for a
 265 drink".

CW: Thank you, Elise. I think all of you who chose that metaphor answered in much the same way, didn't you? Elise has provided a lot of detail, but you all said
 270 basically that this metaphor indicates the heat, how extremely hot it was in the mieliefeld where the workers were working. You emphasised the conditions of work - is that right?

Elise: What kind of a perspective is that?

CW: I don't know. We need to think about this a bit. Let
 275 me tell you what some English speakers wrote. Remember what Benjamin said about one thing representing or symbolising another? Well, here is what a UCT student wrote: "'The sun lashes the workers with a red-hot rod' - the poet is using
 280 figurative speech here to express how hot the sun is, it lashes at them like a whip, we can imagine the sun punishing them and we have a strong impression of slave labour of someone ruling over them with a 'red-hot rod'." Do you understand what
 285 this student is saying?

Elise: This student is saying that the workers are slaves.

CW: Yes. He (let's assume it's a male student) says
 290 firstly, the same as you are saying, that it is very hot. But he goes on to see the sun as a symbol of oppression. He says the sun is a "slave driver".

Elise: I never gave any thought to oppression and slavery. Should I have said that the sun is the oppressor?

295 CW: Not necessarily. I think your interpretation is valid. You have written what you found in the sun metaphor. That's fine. If you were suffering from liberal white guilt, maybe you would have seen the sun as a symbol for the oppressive farm owner who is
 300 exploiting his workers.
 [Laughter]

Elise: But now that you said this, that the sun is a symbol for the farmer, I think that interpretation could be right.

305 CW: If you want to change your mind, that's also fine. What I found interesting is that all of you emphasised the conditions of work. You wrote about the workers as workers - ordinary people working in the field - and I think you saw things from the
 310 workers' perspective. While the UCT English speaking students, they saw things as outsiders - they felt bad about the workers - but they didn't identify with them. Let me ask you what you think: are there

differences in the two perspectives?

315 Elise: First of all let me say about interpretation. It's like what you are always saying.

CW: What am I always saying?

Elise: That you must substantiate. It should not be an interpretation of like...It's like giving an opinion and then as long as you can substantiate - you can give reasons for your opinion I don't think you can ever go wrong. Only if you happen to give an opinion that you can not give substantial evidence about then you are like arguing without evidence. But if you are giving - like interpreting something you understand, you should say 'this is what I think' and the reason why I think so are because of this and that. And as long as it is understandable that you could express yourself like that, then it's not wrong; but I don't think that interpretation should be based on just your own ideas.

320

325

330

CW: Right. Interpretation is a very personal thing, but you must be able to back up that interpretation from the text and say why you think that way. Different readers are going to bring different things to the poem. I'm sure we all have different interpretations of the poem - all interpretations are valid - but maybe there are some interpretations that go into more detail and are therefore more complex than other interpretations...

335

340

Elise: So if this is the case, this UCT student is not telling us how he substantiate his thinking about how the sun is an oppressor.

CW: Well, he refers to the words "lashes" and "rod".

345

"Lashes" is used of whipping, of punishment. The word "rod" has another meaning, it is the thing you sometimes kings and queens carrying - a sceptre - which a symbol of authority. These words have strong emotive connotations. He has used these connotations to substantiate his claims.

350

Elise: But this would never be accepted in a court of law!

CW: But you're in the Arts faculty now. We're allowed to refer to the connotations of words, too!

355

Elise: But you did not write this in your dictionary.

CW: I know, that's because I didn't think of the other meaning of rod until after I read some of the students' interpretations, I'm afraid.

Let's move on to another description: the "teeth as yellow as the harvested grain". Put up your hands those of you who chose this metaphor.

360

[Hands go up]

Adam, is the driver a black or a white person?

Adam: He's black.

365

CW: Does everyone agree?

Class: Yes.

CW: Lawrence, you had a really nice response. Would you read it, please?

Lawrence: "'teeth as yellow as the harvested grain'. This

370 is a simile, it contributes to the meaning of the poem in the way that these people are reaping grain and the teeth of the tractor's driver are yellow as the grain which they are harvesting".

375 CW: [pointing to the board] I think the point you are making is the same one as the "faces furrowed" metaphor. The fact that the tractor driver's teeth are "as yellow as the harvested grain" associates him with the harvesting of the mielies.

Lawrence: Yes.

380 CW: Benjamin, you said that the driver was working so hard that he didn't have time to brush his teeth, is that right?

Benjamin: That's what I said.

[Laughter]

385 CW: People are laughing because they don't think "teeth" are a very poetic subject. Do you think that, if you want to, you should be able to talk freely about teeth when you are discussing a poem?

[Laughter]

390 Benjamin: I think that all things, even teeth, can be spoken about.

[Laughter]

CW: Benjamin has always got an answer for everything! But does brushing your teeth contribute to the meaning of the poem?...Brian C, you said that the driver's teeth were yellow because he smoked a lot, is that right?

Brian C: Yes.

CW: And then you deduced that he must have a lot of

405 worries, right?

Brian C: Yes.

CW: You actually call the tractor driver a labourer, don't you?

Brian C: Yes. I think he's a black worker.

410 CW: And he's got all these worries because he's a worker?

Brian C: Yes.

CW: He's not a farm owner?

Brian C: No.

415 CW: Now this is very interesting to me, because when I first read the poem, I thought that the tractor driver was the boss - the farm owner.

Class: No!

CW: I thought those flashing yellow teeth were quite

420 sinister - you know - sort of gobbling up the workers and their produce and everything... Colleen?

Colleen: I thought he was smiling because he was happy.

CW: Adam, is the driver a black or a white person?

Adam: He's black.

425 CW: Does everyone agree?

Class: Yes.

CW: I have no experience of farms. You tell me - anyone who knows about farm life - who is this person on the tractor? Who knows about farm work here? What is

500 the situation on farms?

Elise: I didn't expect him to be a farmer.
 CW: You didn't expect him to be a farmer?
 Elise: In Namibia you don't see so many white men on
 tractors. But he is not an ordinary worker, but
 505 someone who is a bit higher up.
 CW: A supervisor?
 Brian F: The boss boy.
 [Laughter]
 Sbongile: Yeah. The boss boy.
 510 CW: Did anybody grow up on a farm?
 Benjamin: Ja. But now there is two types of farm, you
 see. A big farm in which people are employed to work
 there; but there are farms which are smaller; not
 farms but fields. There are people who are employed
 515 to plough these fields only in the seasons. Like in
 the planting season...in the spring they will employ
 people with tractors to plough their fields. And
 what they are doing is all the work, the ploughing
 and planting the mielies. These workers, these
 520 contract labourers, are usually black. Now on the
 big farms, these farmers are usually owned by a
 white farmer and sometimes he drives his own
 tractor.
 CW: So it is possible that the tractor driver could be
 525 either black or white?
 Benjamin: Ja.
 CW: But you thought he was one of these contract people,
 a black worker?
 Benjamin: Ja.
 530 CW: So when I assumed that the tractor driver was white,
 that was just ignorance and prejudice?
 [Laughter]
 Sindiswa: Yes. It was your prejudice.
 CW: Ja. I know. I just assumed that the whites always
 535 got the best jobs.
 [Laughter]
 Elise: To come back to this thing about people being
 oppressed. When I read the poem my impression
 was never about people suffering, being oppressed.
 To me
 540 it was about people working so hard to get their
 work done by the end of the day - without being
 oppressed or whatever.
 CW: That's very interesting.
 Weziwe: But there's another thing about the meaning of
 545 the poem and the hardship of the workers. It is not
 that the hardship is not there. There is hidden
 meaning about the hardship in the poem.
 CW: So you think there is something of oppression in the
 poem?
 550 Weziwe: Yes.
 CW: John, you've got your hand up?
 John: I just wanted to say that a lot depends on when the
 poem was written. How far in the past it is. So when
 was this poem written?
 555 CW: I think in about 1960... maybe 1970...

John: Because then it could have been more likely that there were no black tractor drivers.

Benjamin: Yes. There was still job reservation then.

560 CW: So are you changing your mind? Do you think that the driver was the white farmer?

Benjamin: Ja.

CW: So do you think I should have marked as "wrong" everyone who said that the driver was black?

Benjamin: No...

565 CW: What if I gave you the date of the poem?

Benjamin: Maybe.

CW: Do you think that the English Department should expect a strictly accurate - in terms of the time when the poem was written - interpretation of the poem?

570 Benjamin: No. I don't think so.

Elise: I would like to make a comment about the expectations of the English Department. If we are going to make politicised observations - like Weziwe said - it is there as a hidden meaning. Now that someone else has brought up the oppression angle, I can understand that there is a hidden meaning behind it. But it is still a poem and it is telling me about something so I am able to understand it myself.

575

580 Weziwe: When you read this poem: you are expecting the black man to be working and the white man to be boss. If the poet is talking from his or her own experience. So now we've got to take that experience and understand what it was.

585 CW: You mean we need to do a bit of research on the poem - like who is the poet, where did he grow up, that sort of thing?

Weziwe: Yes.

590 CW: I think you're right. Knowing more about the poet's background will probably enrich our understanding of the poem. Although we - people in the English Department - talk about the "death of the author". That means that we don't need to worry about who Oswald Mtshali was - we read the poem in the light of our own experience - not the author's.

595 Benjamin: Then you should give a good mark to everyone who said that this tractor driver is black.

CW: I did! Let's look at another figure of speech now.

600 The one about the "dust raising tractor". Sbongile. I think you chose that metaphor - or simile, rather. Will you read out what you have written?

Sbongile: "This figure of speech contributes to the meaning of the poem because it explains the dust raising by the tractor in the mieliefeld so the writer compare this mieliefeld dust with desert tanker. We know a desert is so dry and it will be worse if the tanker moves there because it will raised all the dust of the desert. As it moving, so in this poem is used to explain the dust of the mieliefeld".

605

610

CW: Thank you Sbongile. Tell me, what is a "tanker"?
 Sbongile: A tanker is a...a...
 Brian F: It's a...
 CW: Sbongile - I'm asking Sbongile.
 615 Sbongile: A tanker... The tanker that I know is the one
 that looks like the... the army, you know.
 CW: Mmmm.
 Sbongile: It's got long wheels - and...
 CW: It's a military vehicle.
 620 Sbongile: Yes.
 CW: Does everyone agree?
 Class: Yes.
 CW: No one though it was a water tanker?
 Class: No.
 625 CW: Sbongile, when you wrote about the comparison, did
 you think about the military aspect - I mean the
 fact that the tanker is a weapon of war - a
 destructive thing?
 Sbongile: No I only thought of the dust. The clouds of
 630 dust in a desert.
 CW: Let me read to you a description from a UCT student.
 This student writes: "'Like a desert tanker a dust-
 raising tractor pulls a trailer'. This analogy in
 which a tractor is compared to a desert tanker
 635 enhances the image of the intense heat and dust in
 which the reapers are working - like that of a
 desert. The use of 'tanker' describes the tractor as
 large and powerful, as if it could drive over
 everything in its path, including the reapers". What
 640 do you think of that interpretation?
 Sbongile: I think it's better than mine.
 CW: Why?
 Sbongile: Well this person, he or she first says what I
 say. But there is the statement that it can
 645 drive over... destroy the workers, too.
 CW: But are tractors destructive things?
 Sbongile: No. Not really.
 CW: Why are they not destructive?
 Sbongile: Well...they are good, useful vehicles.
 650 CW: Right. But is there a situation in which they can be
 destructive.
 Sbongile: Maybe they can kill people...
 CW: Or be used to exploit people?
 Sbongile: I'm not sure what you mean.
 655 CW: If I think that the tractor is being described - not
 in terms of it being as dusty as a tanker - but as
 destructive as a tanker - then I must say why. I
 would say that normally the tractor is used
 creatively, that is for harvesting or planting - but
 670 it could be seen as destructive if I see it as a
 symbol of oppression - the white farmer's tractor.
 So we're back at the farmer again - who is he?
 Sbongile: I see...
 CW: Let's move on. We're running out of time so let's go
 675 on to question 4 - the one that everyone answered on
 - the one about women becoming wild mares. Okay, now

we're going to go round the class and everyone must give me a synonym - you know what a synonym is?...

Class: Yes.

680 CW: Look at what you wrote in your answers and give me a synonym for "wild":

Sindiswa: Angry.

Patience: Cross.

Suzan: Quick.

685 Linda: Rushing.

Elise: Untamed.

Benjamin: All these things!

Mzwamadoda: Very busy.

Fezikile: Moving very fast.

690 Pearl: Lack of control.

Lliony: Busy.

Vincent: Irritated.

Zimasa: Fast.

Nathemba: Exaggerate.

695 Brian C: Uncontrollable.

Adam: Fast.

John: I was absent for the test.

McDonald: Working hard.

Colleen: Strong.

700 Brian F: Strong and fast.

Lawrence: In a hurry.

Kagiso: Energy.

Shireen: Fast.

Althea: Anxious.

705 Lindele: Fast.

Weziwe: High tempered.

Sbongile: Fast.

CW: That's very interesting. Not one of you said "Free".

Elise: Wild means free?

710 CW: No. "wild" means all the things you have mentioned. But it can also mean free. You all said that the women were working really hard, and rushing wildly to get their work done - right?

Class: Yes.

715 CW: Here's what a UCT student wrote: "Here is a change from the slow oppressed labour that they have been doing. The comparison shows that they instead of just being objects of labour - performing a mechanical task, they are in fact free human beings not just machines"⁵. In other words, what this student is saying is that the comparison means that the women are free - free to go home, or whatever. And you are saying the opposite - they are not free, they have to work very hard to finish their work.

725 Let me try to explain that a bit better if I can. Wild mares. Now in the South African experience... on farms and in nature...there are no wild horses. Horses are not indigenous to this country. Our horses were all brought here from Europe or America

⁵ An edited version of student E5's answer.

730 once upon a time. Now they are all in captivity -
farm horses, race horses, horses for riding. But in
Europe and in America, you know, there are wild
horses. They roam in herds over the prairies. You've
735 seen cowboy movies. Have you seen the cowboys
capturing these wild horses and then they...what you
call it...there's a special word, but I've forgotten
it... they corral them and they sort of break them
in, you know. Put a saddle on them and reins and
740 stuff and then they ride them. Now in Western minds,
these wild horses, they are a very powerful symbol
of freedom. I always feel very sorry for these wild
horses when the cowboys capture them and they
harness them and brand them with a hot branding
745 iron. Poor things. Anyway, I don't really see them
as animals, I see them as symbols - they symbolise
freedom. Do you understand what I mean? So if we
apply that understanding to the poem - like that UCT
student did - then you think that the women are
happy and free, not working hard and...and
750 irritated. Do you see?

Class: Yes.

CW: Now everyone here, without exception, saw the women
as hurrying up, working hard, putting in that last
bit of effort to get the work done before they
755 finish off for the day. Do you agree?

Elise: Yes. Sometimes you end up feeling stupid.

CW: Why do you say that?

Elise: Because I didn't know that there were wild horses.

CW: I don't think that's very important. You yourself
760 said that it is important to substantiate your
opinion. You said the women were working hard, and
you interpreted the meaning of wild as
"enthusiastic" - that meaning is in the dictionary
so your interpretation is fine. What do the rest of
765 you think?

Lawrence: This interpretation of the word "wild" will be
influenced by the way in which you see the
whole poem.

CW: Explain.

770 Lawrence: I think you must tell this UCT student that
there is a contradiction in what he or she is
writing.

CW: What do you mean?

Lawrence: So this student said that the poem is
775 associated with oppression. So why now does this
student say that this worker is "free"?

CW: That's a very good point? Did you all hear that?

Class: No.

CW: Lawrence says I must tell this UCT student that
780 there is a contradiction in his or her argument. If
that is a white farmer on the tractor oppressing his
workers - then why are the women suddenly so free...
happy and unoppressed at the end of the poem? That's
a good point. I think that this interpretation
785 assumes that the working day is at an end and the

workers are free to go home.

Weziwe: It says in the poem that "soon the day's work will be done and the reapers will rest in their kraals".

790 CW: You mean the working day is not over yet..."soon"... but not yet.

Weziwe: That is right.

CW: Good point. You're all very sharp today. I'm impressed!

800 Elise: Honestly I feel that to understand this poem I must think so many things...

Benjamin: Somehow I don't that we should take all these outside things, like oppression, and fit the poem to it. Make it symbolise these things. There

805 are other factors that I didn't take into account when I read the poem - like this thing about the wild horses.

CW: What about what you said at the beginning of the class about the poem as a symbol. Can you say what

810 the poem is a symbol of?

Benjamin: That is too difficult for me to say now. [Laughter] Maybe it is a symbol for oppression; but maybe it is just a poem about workers.

CW Do you think that either interpretation is valid?

815 Benjamin: Yes, both are valid.

CW: What do the rest of you think?⁶

⁶ There seemed to be general agreement that a number of readings was valid. We were by now about 5 minutes over time so people were packing up, etc. The final comments are not audible on the tape.