

Exploring the impact of (im)materiality on the literacy and meaning-making practices of first-year students at a South African distance education institution: implications for support

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Abstract

Open distance e-learning has been implemented at South African distance education institutions as a way to redress the inequalities of the country's apartheid past by way of enabling access to higher education for everyone, irrespective of location. Teaching and learning are delivered through modern electronic technologies, based on the assumption that students have access to and can use these technologies. The affordances of the objects that distance education students utilise as they engage in key literacy practices, as well as the spaces within which these practices take place, has not been given much empirical attention as a constituent aspect of distance education. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic foregrounded the significance of this focus when access to public spaces such as libraries or regional learning hubs became unavailable. This qualitative case study draws on the theory of (im)materiality (Burnett, 2015), Fenwick's (2015) notion of sociomateriality and its relevance to educational research, and Thomas Moore's theory of transactional distance (1997, 1989, 2018) to examine the ways in which distance education students' academic literacy and meaning-making practices are distributed across various personal and public sites and domains. In so doing it foregrounds the performativity of the distance education discourse through the material objects students use and the spaces which become materialised for learning. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 16 first-year distance education students to understand their use and perceptions of these objects and their negotiation of the spaces within which they are used. Drawing on Fairclough's (1992) model of Discourse, a critical discourse analysis of a key material object – the tutorial letter which is used for the mediation of the students' learning – was conducted to explore the ways in which students are positioned and its implications for power and access.

The interview findings illustrate how technology functions to influence the participants' engagement with literacy practices, with significant implications for those whose access to technological objects is compromised. In doing so, the inequality of the spatial resources that students have access to and how it affects their meaning-making and learning is foregrounded. The less space that distance-education students have access to, the more their enactment of their distance-education identity is restricted, which heightens all four types of transactional distance they experience.

The critical discourse analysis of the tutorial letters yielded two salient themes. The first relates to the implications of the use of intertextuality in the form of hyperlinks in the production and consumption of the tutorial letters and the potential for this to affect students' meaning-making practices. The second finding points to contrasting views of literacy in the tutorial letters where the autonomous and ideological approaches to literacy are utilised simultaneously, as reflected in the use of discourse at the level of text via pronouns and vocabulary. These findings raise important questions about students' access to material objects and the implications of their production and consumption for students' engagement.

The study draws on the above findings to propose an expansion of the theory of transactional distance by suggesting that another type of distance be considered: that of the distance between the student and the physical learning space. The study also takes into account one of the critiques of the theory of sociomateriality, which states that the role of social structures is largely not considered in research on this subject. This study illustrates how the social structures in which the sociomaterial intra-actions occur are central to students' meaning-making practices. In so doing, it contributes to the field of higher education through the insights it offers into the ways of being of distance-education students and the significance of access to a conducive learning space and material objects. The study concludes by providing recommendations that contribute to raising awareness of the impact of these on the literacy experiences of distance-education students.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables and Figures	viii
List of Abbreviations	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Background and context	2
1.2.1 Defining distance education	2
1.2.2 Defining ODL	3
1.2.3 Defining ODeL	3
1.2.4 The notion of blended learning in distance-education institutions	4
1.2.5 The role of technology in distance education: a brief consideration of key principles	4
1.3 The case of Umgama University	5
1.4 Insider research and positionality	6
1.5 The DE student and the ODeL discourse	7
1.6 The study participants	8
1.7 Problem statement	9
1.7.1 Exploring the concept of (im)materiality in DE	10
1.7.2 A sociomaterial perspective	11
1.8 The study's aims and objectives	12
1.9 Research questions	12
1.9.1 Main question	12
1.9.2 Sub-questions	12
1.10 Methodological tools	13
1.11 Layout of the dissertation	14
Chapter 2: Theoretical framework	15
2.1 Considering an Academic Literacies approach at a DE university	15
2.1.1 Discourse in distance education	16
2.1.2 The situatedness of literacy and distance education	17
2.2 (Im)materialising literacies	18
2.2.1 Materiality and the intentions and priorities of users	18
2.2.2 Materiality and the affective	19
2.2.3 Materiality and space	19
2.3 Sociomateriality	20

2.3.1 A focus on materials	20
2.3.2 Heterogenous assemblages.....	20
2.3.3 The performativity of practice.....	21
2.4 Transactional distance at a DE university: an outline of Moore's approach.....	22
2.4.1 Moore's transactional distance theory	22
Chapter 3: Literature review	25
3.1 Academic Literacies research and materiality	25
3.2 (Im)material relationships and literacy	27
3.3 Sociomateriality and education	28
3.3.1 Sociomateriality and literacy.....	28
3.3.2 Sociomateriality and higher education.....	29
3.4 Managing transactional distance	30
3.4.1 Transactional distance and the role of technology	30
3.4.2 Transactional distance and learning materials.....	31
3.4.3 Transactional distance and spaces and places to study	31
Chapter 4: Methodology	33
4.1 Qualitative research: The case study	33
4.2 The COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on research.....	34
4.3 Negotiating access to research participants	34
4.3.1 Informed consent.....	35
4.4 Student interviews	35
4.4.1 Online interviews.....	36
4.4.2 Audio recordings storage	37
4.4.3 Preparing data for analysis: transcription process	38
4.4.4 Computer Assisted Qualitative Data AnalysiS (CAQDAS)	38
4.4.4.1 NVivo	39
4.4.5 Data analysis	40
4.4.5.1 <i>Exploring the data</i>	40
4.4.5.2 <i>Organising the data</i>	40
4.4.5.3 <i>Interpreting and reflecting</i>	41
4.5 Document analysis.....	42
4.5.1 Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for CDA.....	42
4.5.1.1 <i>Discourse as text</i>	43
4.5.1.2 <i>Discourse as discursive practice</i>	43
4.5.1.3 <i>Discourse as social practice</i>	46
4.6 Trustworthiness	46
Chapter 5: Critical discourse analysis of two tutorial letters	48

5.1 Discourse as discursive practice	49
5.1.1 Intertextuality in the production of the texts	49
5.1.2 Intertextuality in the consumption of the tutorial letters	50
5.1.3 Complex distribution as a feature of discourse practice	52
5.2 Discourse as text: A consideration of the textual features of the tutorial letters	53
5.3 Discourse as social practice	55
Chapter 6: Interview findings and discussion	58
6.1 Ways of being a distance-education student.....	58
6.1.1 Using a laptop.....	58
6.1.2 Using a smartphone to supplement the laptop.....	60
6.1.3 Using both hard- and soft-copy learning materials	61
6.1.4 Being tech savvy	62
6.2 The inflections of space and literacy	62
6.2.1 Repurposing the bedroom, lounge and garage	63
6.2.2 In the car, the bus, at work and at McDonalds	63
6.2.3 Two hours to him, two hours to me: negotiating access to space.....	64
6.4.2 Navigating the Discourses of counter spaces	65
6.3 Dynamic sociomaterial assemblages and (im)material intra-actions at play.....	67
6.4 The effects of transactional distance on the DE student.....	70
6.4.1 Factors that mediate transactional distance	70
6.4.2 Factors that amplify transactional distance	71
6.4.3 Expanding Moore's theory.....	71
Chapter 7: Recommendations, contributions and conclusions	73
7.1 Recommendations	73
7.1.1 Access to technology	73
7.1.2 Access to learning materials.....	73
7.1.3 Access to conducive learning spaces.....	74
7.2 Theoretical contributions	75
7.3 Contributions to higher education	76
7.4 Conclusion	76
References.....	77
Appendix A (First invitation email to students)	88
Appendix B (Second invitation email to students)	89
Appendix C (Consent letter)	90
Appendix D (Interview guiding questions).....	95
Appendix E (Word frequency query)	97

Appendix F (A section of the NVivo codebook)	98
Appendix G (Nodes grouped under research questions)	100
Appendix H (NVivo map)	104
Appendix I (Text 1)	
Appendix J (Text 2)	

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Research participants' profiles	9
Figure 1: Screenshot from NVivo showing codes and coding stripes	39
Figure 2: Three-dimensional conception of discourse	43
Figure 3: Landing page for hyperlinked word “linguistic features” in Text 1	51
Figure 4: Student Exercise 1 in Text 1	56

List of Abbreviations

DE	distance education
CDA	critical discourse analysis
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis
HEIs	higher education institutions
ICT	Information Communications Technology
NLS	New Literacy Studies
ODeL	open distance e-learning
ODL	open distance learning
POPI	Protection of Personal Information
QDA	qualitative data analysis
TD	transactional distance
UK	United Kingdom
UCT	University of Cape Town

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Undergraduate students typically experience varying levels of academic unease upon entering higher education (Bangeni & Kapp, 2005, 2017; Meehan & Howells, 2018), especially as they enter new and unfamiliar social spaces associated with being a university student (Drennan, 2017; Mkgqwashu & Bengesai, 2016). While the cause of this academic unease may not be apparent to them initially, with the progression of time some find that they have adapted and adjusted to being a university student. The rate at which this transition occurs depends on a wide range of factors, such as their preparedness for tertiary education studies (Smit, 2012), the nature of their chosen academic studies (Meehan & Howells, 2018), the extent to which they feel they belong (*ibid.*) and, significantly for this study, the mode of learning, that is, whether the university they are studying at is a contact or a distance-education (DE) institution (Mittelmeier et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2013).

Students who study at DE institutions also experience challenges that are related to adapting and adjusting to being a university student (Brown et al., 2013; Lea & Street, 2006; Mittelmeier et al., 2019). What intensifies the challenges experienced as part of the adaptation process is that, for DE students, the DE university is unlike a contact university that is materialised in places and spaces such as lecture halls, cafeterias, and residence rooms where students interact and socialise, contributing to their overall university experience (Bayne, Gallagher & Lamb, 2013). Instead, DE students “... make sense of studying anywhere, anytime and anyplace” (*ibid.*: p. 8) – which could be at home, at work, in an internet café, in the local library or in a coffee shop. DE students move across social spaces (Burnett et al., 2012; Burnett, 2015) and “enact” (Gunter et al., 2020: p. 8) the university wherever they are. The invisibility or intangibility of the university in this sense could leave DE students feeling disoriented and overwhelmed, which is then often reflected in university retention rates. According to Lynch (2001), the dropout rate of students enrolled in online courses can be as high as 35–50%. By drawing on an Academic Literacies approach (see chapter 2 for a detailed outline of this approach), this study explores the ways in which first-year undergraduates at a South African DE institution, Umgama University (a pseudonym),

engage in literacy and meaning-making practices. It looks at the artefacts they use, the spaces in which they enact their literacy and meaning-making practices and what these experiences imply for the kinds of support that these students need in their initial year of study. In the section below I outline the background of and context to the study.

1.2 Background and context

The differences between distance and contact education, and the modes used for teaching and learning in each context, were more apparent before the effects of the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic which compelled contact universities in South Africa to deliver their curricula online. This study explores DE students' learning experiences that are delivered by electronic technologies that utilise the internet, otherwise referred to as online or e-learning (Kanuka & Conrad, 2003). The introduction of e-learning due to technological advancements and its incorporation into distance institutions' curricula delivery modes has added an additional layer that students have to negotiate as they make the transition from school to university, or when they return to university to enrol as a mature student. In the next section I define distance education, describe open distance learning (ODL) and open distance e-learning (ODEL) to enable an understanding of the potential effects of these modes on students' engagements with key literacies in their learning spaces.

1.2.1 Defining distance education

Distance education (DE) can be defined as teaching and learning that is characterised by the geographical and often temporal separation of students, teachers and the learning institution, and it is facilitated by technology (Anderson & Dron, 2011; Holmberg, 2005; Moore, 1997, 1989, 2018). Because DE refers to students' learning in places and times that suit students, distance *learning* is sometimes used synonymously with distance *education*. However, the term *education* refers to both teaching and learning activities, hence these terms are not to be used interchangeably. For the purposes of this study, the term *distance education* is used to describe students who have enrolled at DE institutions because it encompasses both the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged, and also the organisational apparatus of the institution delivering the educational programmes (Kanuka & Conrad, 2003). These programmes are delivered through open and/or e-learning models, referred to as ODL and ODEL. The word *learning* is used to reflect a learner-centred approach to teaching and

learning (Kanuka & Conrad, 2003). I now briefly describe aspects of these learning models and explain their role in student support.

1.2.2 Defining ODL

According to Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017), “ODL is an organized learning activity designed to afford [a] learning opportunity to everyone, everywhere they are located” (p. 112). DE institutions promote their ODL programmes as “open, accessible, flexible, supportive and affordable” (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2014: p. 1944). Here, the word *open* means to enable access to higher education where, in general, “all [students] can enrol, regardless of prior education, that [they] can begin a course [mostly] at any time and at any place, that tutoring is provided...” (Kanuka & Conrad, 2003). DE students are required to engage in independent study and it is assumed that they will acquire the necessary knowledge and skills through the learning materials provided. ODL, as implemented at DE institutions, can also be defined as

a learning model that endeavours to bridge the time, geographical, economic, social, education and communication distance between institutions and the students, the academics and the students, the learning materials and the students and among the students themselves (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017: p. 112).

In South Africa, this model has encouraged increased participation in higher education, contributing to redressing the inequalities and injustices of the country’s apartheid past. Students who would usually not be able to enter “full-time, contact and campus-based” tertiary study (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017: p. 112) find the offerings of ODL institutions appealing because of their affordability (Pitsoane, Mahlo & Lethole, 2015) and flexibility. DE’s potential to widen access to education is an important aspect of this study and it is explored in detail in the sections of the dissertation which engage with the study’s theoretical and methodological tools.

1.2.3 Defining ODeL

As technology has developed, DE institutions have incorporated modern communication technologies to mediate teaching and learning and have implemented an ODeL model of teaching and learning. This model delivers curricula through communication media and technologies which aim to help to minimise the “spatial distance that might exist between the lecturers and the students, the students and the learning content, and among the students

themselves” (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017: p. 113). The incorporation and implementation of ODeL assumes that students have access to and are equipped with the necessary skills, techniques and electronic technology such as smartphones, laptops, tablets and stable or reliable internet connectivity to engage with their learning (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017). Teaching and learning may be delivered via e-learning, which is fully online, or through a blended mode.

1.2.4 The notion of blended learning in distance-education institutions

Blended learning has been implemented at higher education institutions (HEIs) as an approach that effectively responds to the diverse needs of an ever-growing student population (Alammery, Sheard & Carbone, 2014). A number of definitions of this approach exist. However, for the purposes of this study, it can be defined as courses that include both face-to-face and computer-mediated components and incorporate various teaching approaches, such as lectures, discussion groups and self-paced activities (ibid.). In keeping with the ODeL approach, an e-tutoring programme that is delivered electronically plus a face-to-face tutorial programme (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017) can be offered. This aligns with Kanuka and Conrad’s (2003) notion of open education, as described in section 1.2.2. Universities which adopted this blended approach were, however, forced to move teaching and learning completely online due to the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic and a national lockdown to limit the transmission of the Coronavirus in South Africa. This precipitated the implementation of e-learning or online learning and foregrounded the role of technology.

1.2.5 The role of technology in distance education: a brief consideration of key principles

Scholars in the field of DE describe its evolution using a generational approach (Anderson & Dron, 2011; Heydenrych & Prinsloo, 2010), where the number of generations and the characteristics defining each generation may differ (Matheos & Archer, 2004). For the purposes of this study and its scope, I describe three generations of DE and the role that technology plays in each. Generation 1 saw the implementation of mass media, namely, print learning materials and the use of TV and radio (Anderson & Dron, 2011). Audio and video conferencing and the use of the internet were implemented in Generation 2 (Anderson & Dron, 2011; Heydenrych & Prinsloo, 2010). The third generation ushered in the implementation of Web 2.0 technologies which use social networks together with all the technologies of the previous generations (ibid.). Technology is a fundamental teaching tool

(Conole, 2014) in the delivery of DE today, one that requires students to have access to modern electronic devices such as laptops and smartphones and to be technologically savvy.

1.3 The case of Umgama University

This is a qualitative study which focuses on a specific case, that of Umgama University, a South African DE university. Umgama University plays an important role in the higher education landscape in that it enables access to those who may not usually be able to access tertiary-level education, as stated in section 1.2.2. Later, in section 1.5, I describe the typical DE student in more detail.

Umgama University students mostly engage with their studies through learning on their own. In keeping with the institution's blended approach to distance teaching and learning, students participate in the face-to-face tutorial programme as well as an e-tutoring programme that is delivered electronically. They also attend livestream tutorials offered by the lecturers, using MSTeams, or watch the recorded version that has been uploaded to the student portal should they be unable to attend these livestream tutorials. As stated before, it is assumed that these students are technologically proficient and have access to the necessary electronic technologies such as smartphones, laptops, tablets and stable or reliable internet connectivity to engage with their learning (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017).

In the past, students interacted with the academic, administrative and operational functions of the university through the use of the postal services. Nowadays this interaction occurs via email, with each student being allocated their own email address. Students receive hard-copy learning materials, printed in black and white, through the post but can also access these and additional learning resources on the online student portal, where they can interact with peers, lecturers and etutors, submit assignments, and view marked assignments.

Face-to-face tutorials are run from regional learning hubs during the week, in the evenings and on Saturdays to accommodate working students. Sometimes tutorials are presented via video-conferencing, where the tutor is in one location and the students are in another. However, owing to the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic, all the learning hubs were closed, which forced the university to implement online learning. One of the benefits of DE is that

asynchronous learning can occur (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017). Umgama therefore continued offering livestream lectures using MSTeams, some of which were recorded and uploaded on the student portal for later watching or listening. Podcasts were also made available to students on the online platform. Furthermore, virtual tutorial classes and Academic Literacies support for selected courses were offered, using MSTeams. These were recorded and made available for viewing because, for various reasons, not all students are able to attend live virtual tutorials. These could include their having to work, not having the technical proficiency and skills or the necessary electronic devices or a reliable internet connection. Students also had access to their assigned e-tutors with whom they could engage online on the student portal. In the next section I describe my tutor role and positionality.

1.4 Insider research and positionality

I am a tutor of both an academic and a business writing course at Umgama University. My tutor role is of significance to my positionality. Positionality locates the researcher in relation to the research topic, the research participants and the research context (Holmes, 2020). The study is contextualised as one that explores the lived experiences of DE students in both these courses, which means that the research site is my place of employment. During my face-to-face interactions with students before COVID, I observed how they used electronic devices such as laptops and smartphones to engage with their learning materials and this piqued my curiosity about its impact on their literacy and meaning-making practices. Furthermore, insider positionality refers to aspects of the researcher's identity which are shared with the participants (Greene, 2014). As mentioned earlier, teaching and learning moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant that I had to tutor virtually using MSTeams. This was a steep learning curve for me as I had to become acquainted with the functionality of MSTeams and learn how to keep students engaged online. In addition, I, too, was a (master's) student whose learning was moved online in 2020 due to the pandemic. I could therefore relate to some of the challenges the students faced when they attended my virtual tutorials. Thus, I am researching a social group which I am part of, which implicates me as an insider-researcher. To ensure that my subjectivity did not influence the study, I incorporate personal reflections (Rose & Johnson, 2020) throughout. Furthermore, the students who participated in the study all attended the virtual tutorials I facilitated during Semester 2 of 2021 (I detail this in chapter 4). This had implications for accessing the participants and the power relations

which shaped that process, which I explain in chapter 4 (Greene, 2014; Saidin, 2017; Unluer, 2015). The next section describes the DE student and aspects of the ODeL discourse that they are required to navigate.

1.5 The DE student and the ODeL discourse

A defining characteristic of DE is its flexibility: it enables employed people to study according to their own schedules in their homes, without much interference in their professional work life (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2014). Based on this, it is assumed that students who enrol at DE institutions are:

mature adult working students [who] take responsibility for their learning; they are capable of learning alone or in small groups; they can learn at their own pace and in their own time; they can learn from a variety of learning materials, including the use of audio-visual media; they are active rather than passive learners; they need less frequent help from their teachers; they learn from other people besides their teachers, and that they are capable of doing a lot of self-assessment. (ibid.: p. 1944)

The above description outlines some of the discourses, that is, the specific ways of being and doing that DE students are required to master as part of the ODeL student identity (Gee, 1996). These include self-directed learning, accessing information and engaging with academic and digital literacies in ways that are considered appropriate in DE environments.

A younger generation of students who study full time is, however, also enrolling at DE universities as they are unable to gain entrance to institutes of higher learning offering full-time contact programmes (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2014). These students spend most of their time studying for their various modules in university libraries, participating in class discussions (ibid.) and attending face-to-face tutorials.

During face-to-face tutorials, I have interacted with students who are “mature” and “working” (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017: p. 112) and also students who have enrolled in tertiary study immediately after high school. Those straight from high school are more likely to experience challenges with engaging with higher education, even more so with the added layer of having to engage with the ODeL discourses. This then problematises the assumption

that Letseka & Pitsoe (2014) foreground, particularly regarding “non-traditional” students. In South Africa, the term “non-traditional” (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017: p. 112) has been used to refer to students who are older and study part-time (ibid.). However, Smit (2012) has used this term inclusively to mean “disadvantaged... [and] ...underprepared” (p. 370). Smit (2012) describes these students as:

diverse in terms of age and educational, class, language and cultural backgrounds. They are often from lower socio-economic groups and some use English as an additional language. Many have not yet acquired the necessary literacy, numeracy and academic skills crucial to succeeding in higher education (p. 370).

Initially, my assumptions about students tended to align somewhat with the assumed capabilities in Letseka & Pitsoe’s (2014) quoted description above. Yet, in my tutor encounters with students, I found that even though students are diverse, as described above, the challenges they experience, including those of an academic nature, are not necessarily so because they are “disadvantaged [or] underprepared” (Smit, 2012: p. 370). Instead, it may be because they are unfamiliar with the social practices that characterise and create the higher education and DE discourse they find themselves in. My curiosity about how they navigate this educational landscape and its literacy practices has therefore prompted this study and the Academic Literacies approach it adopts to exploring DE students’ meaning-making practices and what they do with literacy (Street, 2003) as they navigate the DE terrain. In the section below I present the study participants’ profiles.

1.6 The study participants

Here I briefly introduce the profiles of eight students to illustrate the diversity of the DE student in South Africa. Whereas I interviewed 16 students, I draw on these eight below due to the scope of the dissertation, as well as the fact that their literacy experiences are representative of those comprising the full sample, drawing on both employed and full-time students.

Table 1: Research participants' profiles

NAME	LOCATION	EMPLOYMENT
Caleb	Western Cape	Lay HIV counsellor at NGO
Frank	Western Cape	Desktop publishing
Oliver	Gauteng	Full-time student
Kay	Western Cape	Teacher
Akhona	KwaZulu-Natal	Full-time student
Task	Mpumalanga	Apprenticeship in Electrical Engineering
Lawrence	Gauteng	Security company
Samantha	Western Cape	Office assistant at a school

From the data above, it is evident that the students' profiles in this study align with the descriptions in section 1.5 above: they are mostly part-time students who are employed, with two students who are studying full-time. I indicate their location to illustrate that DE students engage in their studies from any location, aligning with Ngubane-Mokiwa's (2017) "[a] learning opportunity to everyone, everywhere they are located" (p. 112). The participants' varying types of employment reflect their diversity and the social identities they bring to the university. The problem statement follows in which I consider the study's key concept, that of (im)materiality, which forms part of my theoretical or conceptual framework, alongside the Academic Literacies framework, and outline its relevance to my study.

1.7 Problem statement

DE students, in comparison to contact university students, "[enact] the university where they are" (Gunter et al., 2020: p. 8) as they engage with the ODeL discourse (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017). These negotiations constitute important ways of being and doing, with their literacy and meaning-making practices distributed across various sites and domains, such as home and work (Burnett et al., 2012; Gunter et al., 2020). This has implications for the spaces in which literacy and meaning-making occur and also for the material objects they use and the (im)material processes (Burnett, 2015) in which they engage as they enact these literacy and meaning-making practices.

Writing is regarded as a resource that is used to make meaning in the academic social spaces in which it is practised (Gee, 1990; 1996; Lea & Street, 1998; 2006). As a face-to-face tutor, I have observed how students' experiences of writing often reflect the tensions between what Gee calls their secondary discourses, that is, their reading, writing, ways of being as enacted in secondary contexts such as those of school or work, and the social practices of the DE institution (Gee, 1990; 1996). As Academic Literacies maintains, these challenges are compounded by students' desire to join discourse communities, to belong as academic citizens (Drennan, 2017; Meehan & Howells, 2018; Mgqwashu & Bengesai, 2016). As mentioned earlier, DE universities promote their learning programmes as being accessible. Gee (1990, 1996) explains how access to these discourse communities is granted when aspiring members engage appropriately in not only writing and the academic discourse (Gee, 1990, 1996), but also in the discourse communities' ways of being and doing. For DE students, this includes being socialised in the ODeL discourse, that is, its ways of saying, doing and being (Gee, 1996). One of the ways in which this socialisation occurs in a DE context is through students' engagement with their learning materials, which would enable access to both academic and DE discourses.

A critique of using Academic Literacies as a theoretical framework is that its focus on social practices overlooks the importance of texts and the ways in which they function as tools for both socialisation and exclusion. The study responds to this critique in its exploration of the extent to which students can meaningfully access the DE university's ways of doing and being through a critical analysis of a key text, the tutorial letter. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used to explore the ways students are positioned by discourse in the tutorial letter, and its implications for power and access. CDA as a tool of analysis and a theoretical framework is discussed in detail in chapter 4 section 4.5.

Below, I outline the concept of im(materiality) alongside the broader notion of sociomateriality to illustrate the relevance of its concepts to this study.

1.7.1 Exploring the concept of (im)materiality in DE

The theory of (im)materiality (Burnett, 2015) can be defined as the relationship between the material and the (im)material. According to Burnett (2015),

“Materialities” can be described as the stuff which is physically present as we make meanings, such as bodies, screens, artefacts, ... texts [and space]. “Immaterialities” are those things that are materially absent or intangible but central to making meaning: associations, memories, feelings and imaginings as well as all the events and processes that have led up to the production of the things that are physically present (p. 520).

The theory offers an expanded view of the complexity of literacy practices in a contemporary world and foregrounds the relationships between literacy practices, space, people, objects and emotions (Burnett, 2011, 2015; Burnett et al., 2012). These relationships are relevant to my study as it explores DE students’ literacy practices and how these are inflected by the objects they use and the spaces in which they enact these practices. The material invokes the immaterial, and vice versa, as students make meaning from the articulations between the artefacts they use, the spaces they occupy and the literacy practices in which they engage. This interconnected and recursive relationship of the material and the (im)material is referred to as *(im)materiality* (Burnett, 2015; Burnett et al., 2012) which is further explained in chapter 2 section 2.2. My study therefore does not prioritise an analysis of student writing; instead it aims to understand the (im)material relationships that occur as DE students enact their literacy practices and make meaning so as to produce written texts. The next section outlines the notion of sociomateriality.

1.7.2 A sociomaterial perspective

Sociomateriality has its foundations in Information Systems, where it is used to explore the interactions between social phenomena and materiality in work organisations (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014). These sociomaterial interactions underscore objects, events, identities and knowledge that are thought to be performed into being (Fenwick, 2015). The notion that there is no clear distinction between the human or social phenomena and non-human or materiality (Fenwick, 2015) is central to this perspective. Everyday practice is viewed as an entanglement and intra-action (Barad, 2003) of social and material forces that assemble and disperse continually (Fenwick, 2015). I draw on a sociomaterial perspective to articulate how and why the material objects that DE students engage with are inflected through its concepts of sociomaterial assemblages that are performed into being (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014) and the intra-action (Barad, 2003) of humans and non-humans. I engage with this theory in more detail in chapter 2.

1.8 The study's aims and objectives

Based on the issues outlined in the previous section, the study's aims and objectives are threefold. Firstly, the study aims to understand the impact of the artefacts that DE students use in their literacy and meaning-making practices. Here, the study explores the access that DE students have to material objects and the ways in which these inflect their literacy and meaning-making practices. Secondly, the study aims to explore the impact of the spaces in which DE students engage on their literacy and meaning-making practices. Access to a conducive learning space is important to DE students, the more so as there was no access to regional learning hubs and public libraries due to the pandemic-enforced national lockdown in South Africa. Finally, it sets out to explore, through the use of CDA, how a key material object such as the tutorial letter facilitates DE students' meaning-making and access to learning. These aims and objectives are reflected in the following research question and sub-questions, which are set out below.

1.9 Research questions

The above section provides the background and context for my proposed study. Based on the above rationale the study aims to investigate and respond to the following questions:

1.9.1 Main question

To what extent does (im)materiality influence first-year DE students' literacy and meaning-making practices in two writing courses at a DE university in South Africa? This broad question will be answered via the following sub-questions:

1.9.2 Sub-questions

1. What are the key artefacts used by first-year students to produce writing in an academic writing course and a business writing course at a DE university?

This question aims to identify the objects that students use and to understand the ways in which students use them to produce their written tasks in each writing course.

2. To what extent do the above artefacts and the spaces in which they are used shape students' literacy and meaning-making practices in these two courses?

This question expands on the first one to gain insight into the interplay between the artefacts that students use to produce writing, such as devices and course study guides and the spaces in which they use them, and the resultant impact on their literacy and meaning-making practices.

3. To what extent does a key material object such as the study guide, sometimes called a tutorial letter, facilitate DE students' meaning-making and access to learning?

This question takes the study's focus on materiality to the learning materials which are central to the way DE students are introduced to the literacy practices and ways of being and doing in DE institutions. It seeks, through CDA, to understand the extent to which the use of discourse in a key text, the tutorial letter, serves to facilitate meaning-making.

4. How can the findings shape institutional policy regarding DE institutions' mediation of the artefacts and spaces that students require for an effective enactment of key literacy practices?

The last sub-question aims to offer recommendations for considerations of the use of artefacts and the spaces which DE institutions such as Umgama University need to take into account as a way of being responsive to students' lived experiences.

1.10 Methodological tools

In order to gain insights into the artefacts that DE students use to enact their literacy practices as well as the spaces in which they engage in their meaning-making, I conducted in-depth interviews with 16 students enrolled in an academic writing course and a business writing course. The students were asked a set of questions that would explain the ways in which they used objects as they engaged in their literacy and meaning-making processes. Another set of questions that sought to make known the space in which they enacted these processes and to determine the nature of its effects was asked. In keeping with the Academic Literacies approach, this methodological tool gives voice to the DE students who are required to take on

the DE discourses, providing insights into their lived experiences of access to literacy and its implications for power. Then, CDA offers me an opportunity to explore and analyse the discursive and social practices reflected in Umgama's discourses (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 1990) that influence the students' abilities and inabilities to access and become part of the academy (Gee, 1996).

1.11 Layout of the dissertation

In chapter 2 I present the theoretical and conceptual framework of my study where I outline the study's key concepts and describe their relation to one another. A discussion of the relevant scholarly studies is presented in chapter 3 to note gaps in the contemporary literature on the topic and in doing so to foreground the gaps that the study seeks to remedy. In chapter 4 I describe my methodological tools and explain the process of research as well as considerations of ethics and trustworthiness. In chapter 5 I present the findings of the CDA of two tutorial letters with which the students engaged. In chapter 6 the student interview findings are presented, analysed and discussed. In chapter 7 I provide recommendations for Umgama University's consideration. I also explain and elaborate on the study's theoretical contributions and its contributions to higher education.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In this chapter I present the theories which frame the study. First, the Academic Literacies approach and its focus on social context and power is outlined. This is followed by Burnett's theory of (im)materiality (2015) and the relevance of (im)material relationships to the study. After that I explain sociomateriality, its notion of sociomaterial assemblages and its relevance to the study. I conclude with a description of Moore's theory of transactional distance (1997, 1989, 2018) and how I draw on its conceptualisations of the notion of 'transactional distance'.

2.1 Considering an Academic Literacies approach at a DE university

Academic Literacies is an approach that is rooted in the field of New Literacy Studies (NLS). NLS offers an alternative view to the standard autonomous model of literacy (Street, 2003) which regards literacy as a set of skills that is neutral and universal, unaffected by the cultural and ideological beliefs that underlie it (ibid.). The alternative or ideological model considers literacy as entrenched in social practices, such as those of a higher education context, where the process of socialising individuals into its practices will depend on its context (ibid.). This implies that the meanings and practices of literacy are contested, rooted in a specific worldview which is imbued with power, which implies that these individuals are subjected to its ideologies (Street, 2003). NLS researchers thus explore literacy as "concrete human activity [that involves] not just what people do with literacy but also what they make of what they do, how they construct its value, [and] the ideologies that surround it" (Baynham, 1995: p. 39).

NLS theorists Mary Lea and Brian Street (1998) present three approaches to literacy in academic contexts, namely, the study skills approach, an academic socialisation approach and the academic literacies approach. These approaches reflect the different ways in which literacy is understood, each approach foregrounding its engagement with literacy. In the section below I explain each approach and show how it relates to DE.

The study skills approach views literacy as a cognitive skill set that is acquired. It would consider DE students as having literacy deficits and focuses on surface features of language,

grammar and spelling. It also assumes that DE students would be able to transfer these acquired skills from one context to another (Lea & Street, 1998; 2006), pointing to an autonomous notion of literacy. The academic socialisation approach foregrounds students' assimilation into the DE academy's discourses and genres. It assumes that the university is a "homogenous culture" (Lea & Street, 1998: p. 159) and that once students have learnt and grasped the conventions of an academic discourse, they will be able to replicate them unproblematically and that they, through their acculturation, will have access to the entire DE institution (Lea & Street, 1998, 2006).

Unlike the skills and academic socialisation approaches which assume that genres and disciplines are fixed and unaffected by their contexts, the academic literacies approach recognises the variety of institutional discourses associated with the disciplinary practices that students are expected to navigate and master at a DE university. Lea and Street (1998) argue that the academic literacies approach integrates both the other two approaches so as to create a broader understanding of the nature of literacy practices "within institutional practices power relations and [social] identities" (ibid.). Importantly, this approach takes into account the contextual power relations and ideologies at play in literacy settings, and it views the associated university practices of writing and reading (and others) as contested and as reflections of the institution's discourses and power (Lea & Street, 1998). Another important feature of this approach is its foregrounding of the student voice in its attempt to understand their engagements with literacy. DE students are not only expected to acquire a repertoire of practices; they also need to know when to switch practices, based on the requirements of the context (ibid.). According to NLS, this switching between discourses creates potential conflict in identity and in the social meanings (ibid.) associated with their literacy practices. This conflict then possibly places students in a position of being dispossessed of power. Another aspect of DE that affects the extent to which DE students can be said to not possess power is the fact that they are not *at* university (Bayne, Gallagher & Lamb, 2013); yet they are expected to take on the university's social practices that may be invisible to them. In the next section, I describe the relevance of discourse in DE to my study.

2.1.1 Discourse in distance education

Discourses are related to, made up of and reflect the social practices of language and literacy (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 1990). As social beings we are required to engage with and master numerous discourses as we adopt different social identities based on the situation we find

ourselves in (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 1990). Gee (1996) refers to the characteristics and practices that make up social experiences, the ways of doing and being, as Discourse. Gee's use of a capital D signals the all-encompassing nature of discourse, as constituting an entire "identity kit" (Gee, 1996: p. 127) of doing, valuing and being. First-year DE students are required to adapt and adjust to "[these] new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge" (Lea & Street, 1998: p. 158) as part of this "identity kit". Once the Discourse is mastered, the student is then perceived as being literate (Gee, 1990). Making these new ways of being-doing (Gee, 1996) explicit to students in order for them to become accepted citizens of the Discourse who can be seen as powerful agents is a key principle of the Academic Literacies approach.

My study draws on the above understanding of Discourse to address the first sub-question, which seeks to gain insight into DE students' use of artefacts in their engagements with key literacy practices and the meanings they attach to these literacy practices in the contested social space of a DE university (Drennan, 2017; Lea & Street, 1998,; 2006).

2.1.2 The situatedness of literacy and distance education

As described in section 2.1, NLS acknowledges the social situatedness of literacy (Street, 1984) and that literacies differ across various social contexts (Burnett et al., 2012), such as work-based literacies in professional settings, which comprise particular ways of doing and being, and academic literacies in educational settings, such as HEIs. However, when literacy is situated in a confined context, it could suggest a boundedness (ibid.) since lived literacy practices often traverse various domains or "evoke a variety of contexts that intersect in multiple ways" (ibid.: p. 91). It is suggested that literacy practices should rather be considered in relation to "textuality, figured worlds, identity and power" (ibid.) so as to understand the way in which identity flows across different spaces (ibid.). This notion is central to the Academic Literacies approach, which seeks to understand how individuals negotiate the discourses that shape a particular context (Lea & Street, 1998). Conflict could be experienced in individuals' identity as they move from one domain and its discourse to another, thus affecting their power as they navigate these varying domains and discourses. Acknowledging the situatedness of literacy and its implications for power allows for an exploration of the articulations between different contexts, "the threads and traces of other times and places" (Burnett et al., 2012: p. 92). This is relevant to my study as the data illustrate how DE students' lived literacy practices extend across different domains, such as

home and work. According to Burnett (2011), educational spaces can be multi-dimensional, inflected by “personal, social, intellectual and imaginative dimensions ... patterned by experiences from other times and places” (p. 216). This multiplicity and “flexibly situated[ness]” (Burnett et al., 2012: p. 90) nature of literacy practices in DE provides the rationale for the second research question, which seeks to gain insights into the spaces of learning that DE students create (Burnett, 2011; Gunter et al., 2020).

In the next section, I present the relevance of (im)materiality (Burnett, 2015) to my study. This theory, like Academic Literacies, draws on the NLS notion of the relationship between literacy, power and identity. However, unlike Academic Literacies, it offers a framework within which to theorise about the materiality of DE students’ literacy practices, including the spaces in which these are enacted.

2.2 (Im)materialising literacies

The theory of (im)materiality (Burnett, 2015) is defined in the Introduction, section 1.7.1. Although Burnett’s (ibid.) ideas about this concept draw on online and offline spaces and digital texts, the principles of the (im)materiality theory are relevant in that my study explores DE students’ literacy practices and the objects they use, the spaces they produce, the processes they use for their learning and studying and also their attitudes and feelings.

DE students engage with a variety of artefacts as they engage in literacy and meaning making practices in spaces which could comprise home, work, the local coffee shop, a library, the nearest learning hub or internet café, to mention a few. As the spaces in which DE students engage “dissolve, overlay or merge” (Burnett 2015: p. 523), the ways in which social practices are materialised in different ways through texts, the students and devices (Burnett, 2015) are foregrounded. I draw on three perspectives of (im)materiality (ibid.) as follows: materiality and the intentions and priorities of users; materiality and the affective, and materiality and space.

2.2.1 Materiality and the intentions and priorities of users

According to Burnett (2015: p. 524), “[t]hings only come into use as people improvise with them in particular contexts – [making] materiality social.” I draw on this notion to theorise

about the ways in which DE students materialise their literacy practices through electronic devices, hard- and soft-copy versions of their learning materials and also pen and paper in a number of spaces and places in which they study and learn.

2.2.2 Materiality and the affective

The relationship between materiality and the affective recognises the importance of “felt associations, prior experiences and emotion” (Burnett, 2015: p. 525) which are brought up multimodally as DE students “handle ... view and create texts” (ibid.). Furthermore, materiality also evokes the links made to “other meanings and associations [from] ... other times and places” (ibid.). This is relevant to my study as DE students draw on their past experiences and associations of their work or school-based literacy practices as they make meaning in their studies.

2.2.3 Materiality and space

The material aspect of the spaces and places in which DE students study and learn relates to “its physical organisation ... the people and artefacts contained therein” (Burnett, 2011: p. 218). Alternative ways of making sense of the “relationships between place, space, time, power and social practice” (Bearne, 2005: p. 104) are considered. In this view, space is not regarded as a static context in which social action occurs (Burnett, 2011). Instead, space is seen to be socially produced (Burnett, 2011); its bounds and characteristics are produced by present and past actions, behaviour, beliefs, attitudes and feelings (Burnett, 2011; Burnett et al., 2012). In this study, DE students’ lived experience of space could create space that can be fluid and hybridised, made up of dominant discourses and various other forms of meaning (Burnett et al., 2012) as they engage in their studies at home or at work.

I draw on these relationships to respond to the first two research questions, which aim to identify the artefacts that DE students use as well as the spaces and places in which DE students study as they enact their literacy practices.

The theory of (im)materiality (Burnett, 2015) offers a framework in which to explore the relationships between the material and the (im)material in relation to the artefacts with which DE students engage, and the spaces that are materialised in their learning. However, it does not provide a vocabulary to articulate the ways in which the artefacts and space interact and

how the students and their identities are inherent constituents of this interaction. It is for this reason that I draw on the sociomaterial approach.

2.3 Sociomateriality

With its foundations in Information Systems and its focus on the social and technical in organisations, sociomateriality is an umbrella term that draws on a family of theoretical perspectives such as actor-network theory, sociotechnical studies, new materialisms, and practice theory, to name a few (Fenwick, 2015). To define this concept, I now present the mutual understandings from this range of theories.

2.3.1 A focus on materials

As with the theory of (im)materiality, sociomateriality centres its attention on the material, which are “objects, bodies, technologies and settings” (Fenwick, 2015: p. 85) that are entangled in everyday human activity. “Social” is defined as “symbols and meanings, desires and fears, and cultural discourses” (ibid.: p. 87). Everyday activity comes about through both material and social forces (Fenwick, 2015), the intra-action (Barad, 2003) of diverse components of nature, technologies, humanity and various materials (Fenwick, 2015). “Intra-action” (Barad, 2003) refers to the inseparability of humans from these diverse components, a key concept of sociomateriality. When considering DE students’ enactment of their literacy practices through the lens of this theory, then they themselves and their DE identities are not seen as separate from the setting in which they learn or the material objects they engage with.

2.3.2 Heterogenous assemblages

All sociomaterial objects are considered as heterogenous assemblages or collections of “natural, technical and cognitive elements” (Fenwick: p. 87). Researchers using this approach probe why and how assemblages come about, and when and why there are inclusions and exclusions within assemblages (Fenwick, 2015)). Finally, they are also interested in how components alter as they combine or intra-act (ibid.; Barad 2003). The interest is in the influence and inflection of one thing on another in ways that are constantly emerging (Fenwick, 2015). In this study the students, their identities, the objects they engage with together with the settings in which they study and learn could be regarded as components of a variety of assemblages that alter and inflect as the students enact their literacy practices.

2.3.3 The performativity of practice

All things, in sociomateriality, are viewed as “effects of connections and activity” (Fenwick, 2015: p. 89). Sociomateriality attempts to make sense of “the performative nature of practices, and the ways in which people and technologies, their properties and boundaries, are enacted and reenacted in practice” (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014). Reality is performed into being through entanglements of relations (ibid., Fenwick 2015) between the components of the assemblages described in 2.3.2. Furthermore, sociomateriality recognises that agency emerges when relations between human and non-human are mutually constitutive of practice (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014). In other words, both the students and the objects they interact with are imbued with agency as literacy practices are performed into being, reflecting the inseparability of the components of the assemblages that emerge.

In the light of the above, sociomateriality is relevant for consideration in this study for exploring the “composite assemblages” (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014: p. 811) that are configured as DE students make meaning. Furthermore, the concept of agency helps to reference the actions that the students are (un)able to take to choose the artefacts they use and to access a learning space for productive meaning-making. I draw on this theory to answer the two research questions which examine the (im)materiality of DE students’ literacy practices.

Researchers in the field of sociomateriality, however, critique its application in that the social structures in which action occurs are neglected. This then has implications for the notion of power and the users’ “command of resources” (Mutch, 2013: p. 32). While it is recognised that Fenwick (2015) has included “setting” in their definition of material, this critique is important for my study in that it acknowledges the importance of considering how social structures and access to resources such as technology can affect students’ power and access to literacy and resources.

Academic Literacies assists in dealing with issues of access and power, immateriality provides a reference point from which to probe artefacts and space and sociomateriality deals with how humans and non-humans relate and intra-act. However, these theories do not provide a concrete discourse for theorising about the physical and psychological distance that

DE students have to negotiate. I therefore draw on Moore's theory of transactional distance (1997, 1989, 2018) in order to capture this aspect of the study.

2.4 Transactional distance at a DE university: an outline of Moore's approach

There are a number of definitions that describe the concept of transactional distance. However, two characteristics are common to most definitions, that is, the *separation* of teachers and students and the *mediation* or facilitation of their interaction using communication technology (Kanuka & Conrad, 2003). This separation is a "psychological & communications space" (Moore, 1997: p. 1), called the transactional distance (TD) that is mediated to ensure that the teachers and the students understand each other (ibid.). Furthermore, TD is not experienced generally or uniformly; rather, students perceive it differently based on their personal life experiences and level of study (see, for example, Giossos, Koutsouba & Mavroidis, 2016). In the context of this study, being a first-year student would influence the degree of TD experienced, based on a number of factors that are described below.

2.4.1 Moore's transactional distance theory

Michael G. Moore is generally known for his contribution to the field of DE. In his seminal theory of transactional distance, Moore (1997, 1989, 2018) argues that there are three types of interaction in DE and therefore three types of TD:

- (1) between students and teachers, referring to the psychological, communicative and collaborative distance they experience;
- (2) between students, referring to the psychological distance they experience; and
- (3) between students and the content of study, which takes into consideration their needs and expectations and the extent to which these are met.

Hillman, Willis and Gunawardena (1994) have added a fourth type of distance, namely, that between students and the interface, referring to the extent of user-friendliness and accessibility of the technologies used to deliver teaching and learning in the electronic classroom. This type of distance is relevant to the students in my study in that it is assumed that they have access to and are equipped with the necessary skills, techniques and electronic

technologies to engage with their learning (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017). Furthermore, these four types of interaction and the associated TD that is experienced all evoke the notion of (im)materiality, which has been defined previously.

Moore's theory not only conceptualises the geographical separation of students and teachers, but also accounts for TD as a pedagogical concept in DE. According to Gavrilisr, Mavroidisr and Giossos (2020), "transactional distance is the result of teaching as an initial action, while the dialogue, the autonomy and the structure of the curriculum describe the mechanisms by which it is produced" (p. 49).

According to Moore (1997, 1989, 2018), TD can first be mediated by the way in which courses are designed and structured so as to support student learning. Course rigidity or flexibility is influenced by the educational philosophy informing the design of the course, the personalities of the teachers and students, the subject-matter of the course and also the curricular restraints of the educational institution (Moore, 1997, 1989, 2018). Environmental factors such as the communications media used also play a role. Structure, therefore, makes clear "the rigidity or flexibility of [a] course's objectives, teaching strategies and evaluation methods" (Moore, 2018: p. 35).

The second mediating factor is dialogue or interaction between students and teachers; it can be defined as interactions that are "purposeful, constructive and valued by each party" (Moore, 1997: p. 2). The extent of dialogue in a course is affected by "the subject of the course, students' abilities to manage their side of the dialogic process, the personality and interpersonal communications skills of the teacher, and the cultural and language differences between instructors and students" (Moore, 2018: p. 36). TD and the degree of dialogue are also influenced by the interactive nature of the communications media – for example, printed learning materials received via the postal service as opposed to the those that form part of the virtual classroom.

Students' autonomy and their potential for independent learning is presented as the third mediating factor. Students' ability to learn independently varies according to the degree to which they make their own decisions about their learning goals, learning experiences and value judgements of the courses in which they are enrolled (Moore, 1997, 1989, 2018). It is necessary for students to be autonomous in their learning if they are to benefit from the affordances of courses that are structured in such a way that numerous paths are presented to

achieving the objectives together with collaborative activity, as well as being able to personalise their learning (Moore, 2018). In the light of this, this study takes into account how access to technical and spatial resources can significantly affect students' levels of autonomy. Previously I described the characteristics of students who enrol at DE institutions. It is therefore assumed that the participants in this study would manage the TD they experience based on these characteristics.

In the next chapter I conduct a review of the literature in the area of DE students' engagement with literacy, where I consider and critique the most relevant empirical research in order to note gaps that this study seeks to cover.

Chapter 3: Literature review

This chapter reviews selected literature on students' engagement with key literacy practices. I start by considering Academic Literacies research in relation to the concept of materiality in general before focusing on the extent to which this concept has been accommodated in DE and also in the literature that explores students' meaning-making processes. I then consider how educational research has drawn on sociomateriality, which is followed by a discussion of studies that draw on Moore's theory of transactional distance (TD) as a framework. In doing so, I note gaps in this body of literature and illustrate how my study deals with them through the questions it asks. In the next section I outline Academic Literacies research and the place that materiality occupies in it.

3.1 Academic Literacies research and materiality

Academic Literacies research on students' engagements with literacy practices has explored the challenges that first-year students experience with academic writing and the disciplinary discourses with which they are required to engage in their writing at university (Archer, 2008; 2010; Bangeni & Greenbaum, 2019; Drennan, 2017; Faragher & Huijser, 2014; Gourlay, 2009; Kapp & Bangeni, 2009; 2011; Kelly-Laubscher & Van der Merwe, 2014; Mqquashu & Bengesai, 2016). These studies consider students' experiences of writing at university in various countries, including South Africa, where students come from diverse language and educational backgrounds. Their findings point to the ways in which students negotiate access to the various discourses, the ways in which the discourses that students enter university with can be harnessed to support them in their writing (Archer, 2010), and how students engage with multiple identities (Gourlay, 2009; Kapp & Bangeni, 2009; 2011). While these studies consider students' literacy practices from a critical perspective that foregrounds access and power relations as significantly informing the enactment of literacy practices, they are located in contact universities, which means that the impact of DE on students' meaning-making processes and the implications for writing is not an aspect of their studies. They also do not foreground an exploration of students' use of artefacts in the writing process. Significantly for this study, they also do not explore the impact of spaces and places in which students study and learn on literacy and meaning-making practices.

Research in this field also explores the role of materiality in the ways that students enact literacy as a social practice. In their three-part polyvocal essay on the material ecology of reading and writing, Blewett, Morris and Rule (2016) suggest that literacy is not only a social practice, but that it also depends on the material because objects can play a significant role in the enactment of literacy. Furthermore, both the physical environment and the objects in that environment are “enabling ..., neutral ... and sometimes [distracting] forces” (ibid.: p. 33) in the process of composition. Blewett (2016), in Blewett, Morris and Rule (2016), in an open-ended survey, asked American undergraduates and postgraduates to imagine a scene of reading. It was found that students imagine a productive reading environment to include “tools to help them respond to reading” (p. 30). Blewett (2016) also found that ecologically engaged students became more mindful readers by deliberately engaging their environment through artefacts. Rule (2016), in Blewett, Morris and Rule (2016), in a multimodal case study with American postgraduate student writers, explored through semi-structured interviews the ways in which writing spaces and writing tools affect writers. The study found that distraction could be harnessed by helping writers to develop an awareness of and responsiveness to the changing forces of their material environments (Rule, 2016). While these studies focus on the materiality of undergraduate and postgraduate literacy practices, they do not reflect students’ literacy practices in a South African DE context: these would differ significantly in the socioeconomic resources that DE students have at their disposal and also the cultural meanings attached to spaces and artefacts in the Global South.

Similarly to the above studies, Burnett et al. (2012) explored the materiality of literacy, drawing on narratives of classroom practice in a vignette about a teacher who, through using Google Street View, explored the local area in which a class of young children live. Here, as the children interact with what is on the screen, the computer and cables have their place in the classroom and have material properties such as plastic and metal (Burnett et al, 2012). According to Burnett et al. (ibid.), “literacies need to be understood as linked to things. ... Texts are ... manifested in material forms; they are represented within things” (p. 97). Likewise, in a study of pre-service teachers, Burnett (2011) pointed out how “the nature and site of equipment” (p. 218) is said to be of importance to the space produced. The location and layout of things may be relevant to identity and practice as students and teachers would be positioned in certain ways (Burnett, 2011). While these studies highlight the materiality of things in relation to literacies, they are based on teachers’ and young children’s practices in a

UK classroom environment rather than on undergraduate students' literacy practices in a South African DE environment.

Other studies outside of the Academic Literacies framework but still from a critical perspective that foregrounds equity and access have explored first-year students' meaning-making. For example, Brown and Haupt (2018), through student surveys and focus groups, investigated the impact of the use of a personal mobile device on the learning experiences of South African students enrolled at a contact university. It was found that the flexibility of the devices affected the ways in which technology was integrated to assist the students' learning. Students' meaning-making was also improved through the use of a device. This study is of significance to my study because it considers the impact of the affordances of technology on students' meaning-making. However, while their study was located in South Africa, it was conducted at a contact university and the participants were provided with devices for the purposes of the study. The students in my study are engaged in DE and are assumed to have access to technology.

3.2 (Im)material relationships and literacy

A number of studies draw on literacy as a social practice from an (im)materiality perspective. In chapter 2 section 2.2, I explained the three perspectives from which (im)material relationships can be explored. Below I present studies relevant to each of these perspectives.

Materiality and the intentions and priorities of users is evident in an ethnographic exploration by Wohlwend et al. (2011) of American primary school children traversing barriers to online connectivity as they played Webkinz, an online game. The study found that while the children intended to play Webkinz as partners, the discourse of the school computer room hindered their participation and collaboration in the game. While the study by Wohlwend et al. (2011) reflects the relevance of materiality (online gaming) and users' intentions (gaming as partners), its focus was that of children playing games online. The present study, meanwhile, examines the intentions and priorities of DE students' as they materialise and enact their literacy practices in various spaces and places.

The relationship between materiality and the affective is noted in a qualitative study that included questionnaires, interviews, observation and the text analyses of children between 11 and 14 years of age, where Rowsell (2011) “witness[ed] how expressive and animated student participants were as they discussed objects that they loved and held dear.” (ibid.: p. 344). While this study reflects the centrality of material objects in literacy practices, my study extends this to the affective consequences of (in)access to artefacts and suitable spaces in which DE undergraduates study and learn.

The way in which materiality and space is related is outlined in the previously mentioned vignette (Burnett et al., 2012), which observes how the characteristics of space and its related connections and meanings are perceived to change moment by moment and differs from person to person. The enlarged projection of the street brings familiar places into the classroom for the children as they draw on their experience of that place, opening up new spaces as the material and immaterial relate in different ways. This study by Burnett et al. (2012) is significant in that it illustrates how space can be shaped in ways that are based on individuals’ experience of it. While my study also explores materiality and the spatialisation of literacy, it examines this relationship in relation to DE undergraduate students’ enactment of literacy practices.

3.3 Sociomateriality and education

Researchers in education have applied a sociomaterial perspective in various ways. Below I consider research that has drawn upon sociomateriality to explore literacy and higher education.

3.3.1 Sociomateriality and literacy

Several studies in HE have drawn on a sociomaterial approach to explore literacy. Gourlay and Oliver (2014) examined mature postgraduates’ digital literacies where data was collected through multi-modal journaling and in-depth interviews. The study “involved the creation and coordination of sociomaterial assemblages that span material and digital alike” (ibid.: p. 152). Furthermore, while spaces such as home were found to be important study sites, the students also adapted sites such as “a seat on a train, a laptop on a sofa” (ibid.: p. 152), underlining the everchanging, improvised and momentary characteristics of these

achievements (Gourlay & Oliver, 2014). While this study dealt with materiality and sites of study for students, the research site is a UK university with significant socioeconomic differences to my research site, which has the potential to affect the ways in which space and place are negotiated and coordinated.

Learning spaces were also the focus of an ethnographic study of an Australian writing classroom of 6–8-year-olds. In that study, Kervin, Comber and Baroutsis (2019) investigated the social and material dimensions of learning spaces by paying attention to the “assemblage of materials, ideas practices and pedagogies that are always active and interrelated” (ibid.: p. 6) in literacy and learning literacy. It was found that classrooms are negotiated spaces in which assemblages of people and things gather (Kervin, Comber & Baroutsis, 2019). While this study explored materiality in a writing classroom, its participants were young children who were learning to write, whereas my study explores undergraduate students who have encountered literacy practices in previous contexts.

3.3.2 Sociomateriality and higher education

A sociomaterial approach has also been used to explore various phenomena in higher education. In a mixed-methods study conducted at an African DE university, which included data analytics, a survey questionnaire and interviews, Gunter et al. (2020) explored DE students’ lived experiences of the interconnectivities of the university and home which bring students together through technology. It was found that “the university is fluid, multifaceted and connected along networks and relationships that change and adapt with the student’s socio-material environment” (ibid.: p. 8) and that different assemblages arise that are unique to the DE environment. While this study was located in DE, it did not examine the students’ literacy practices nor how these were inflected by the learning spaces they created and occupied.

In a similar study of the way online postgraduate students at Edinburgh University enact the university online, Bayne, Gallagher and Lamb (2013) found that students tended to be highly mobile, re-creating the classroom in spaces such as hotel rooms, cafés, airports and buses, “via a bringing-together of multiple sociomaterial assemblages of laptops, dongles, internet connections, texts, teachers, and peers” (ibid.: p. 580). While this study’s finding refers to “sociomaterial assemblages” (ibid.), it did not probe how these inflect the students’ literacy

practices; neither did it focus on the ways in which students repurpose spaces in order to study and learn.

In a recent case study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, Griffiths, Dickinson and Fletcher (2021) adopted a sociomaterial approach, using focus groups and interviews to explore students' perceptions of the move to a blended learning environment. The study found that students repurposed and adapted their living spaces to meet their online study needs based on their socioeconomic circumstances (ibid.). This study is relevant to my area of interest: the(im)materiality of student learning spaces. However, the students in the cited study were forced to study online due to the pandemic, unlike the students in my study, who are engaged in DE. Furthermore, my study also considers students' literacy practices and how physical spatial factors inflect these, whereas the study by Griffiths et al. (2021) did not extend its focus to consider this. In the next section I outline studies that are relevant to my study from a TD perspective.

3.4 Managing transactional distance

The effects of transactional distance and the ways in which students manage their learning experiences have been the subject of various types of study. The following sections present studies in this field which investigate phenomena such as technology, learning materials and physical learning environments.

3.4.1 Transactional distance and the role of technology

A significant number of studies explore the notion of TD in the area of students' experiences of technology. Motteram and Forrester's study (2005) used questionnaires and interviews to compare online postgraduate students' experiences of induction with those of face-to-face students in the UK. While both groups of students had similar experiences, it was found that students engaging with online learning needed first to become familiar with the technology that was used to facilitate their learning. For example, technology enabled students to access online libraries, databases and ejournals (ibid.) The researchers recommend that DE students be equipped with the "requisite access and retrieval skills" (ibid.: p. 287) in order to reduce the TD they experience. Motteram and Forrester (2005) also suggest that teachers should be familiar with the available tools that students could use. While this study is relevant in that it

involves students who learn online and their engagement with technology, it deals with the way induction would enhance their learning experiences rather than the ways in which students' literacy practices are inflected by the objects they use.

Benson and Samarawickrema (2009), in a series of qualitative case studies, explored e-learning content design in a variety of settings that ranged from classrooms to online contexts. In one of the case studies in which the research site and participants were similar to those of my study – that is, undergraduates who were off-campus, transnational and studied wholly online – it was found that where the TD was high, then high levels of dialogue and structure became important, suggesting that high levels of support have to be integrated into e-learning design so as to mediate the TD. Based on this finding, they recommend that teachers are to factor in “students' lack of familiarity with the use of Web 2.0 technologies for learning” (p. 18) by designing for high levels of dialogue and structure in relation to these technologies in order to minimise the TD students' experience. While the nature of the research site and the students are similar to those in my study and its recommendations are relevant, the participants are final-year undergraduates; moreover, the study does not extend its focus to the students' literacy practices and how these are affected by the objects they use.

3.4.2 Transactional distance and learning materials

Several studies have explored the TD between students and the learning content. Kanuka (2001) conducted a two-year mixed-methods study which included surveys and end-of-course evaluations to be able to understand the needs of mature under- and postgraduate university students in a distance-delivered degree programme that used the Web to deliver its content. As with the research by Benson and Samarawickrema (2009), the study found that offering more structure and dialogue is especially relevant to undergraduates, especially when there is a high level of TD. The study by Kanuka (2001), however, did not critically analyse the students' learning materials, nor did it focus on literacy practices or foreground the objects DE students used in their learning.

3.4.3 Transactional distance and spaces and places to study

The 2019 COVID-19 pandemic forced classroom-based tertiary institutions to implement online teaching and learning, which had implications for the spaces in which students engaged in their learning. In an American mixed-methods study of students engaged in remote emergency learning, which included questionnaires and open-ended questions, Aguilera-Hermida (2020) found that “accessibility is not only related to access to the internet

or a device, but it is also related to the number of people living in the same house” (p. 6); this has implications for the availability of space to study and learn. In a qualitative study of students enrolled at a South African university of technology who were forced to engage in online learning, it was found that the students experienced environmental challenges as they did not have access to an adequate space to study (Govender, Reddy & Bhagwan, 2021). In a similar study, Rotas and Cahapay (2020) also found that students in the Philippines did not have a suitable space to learn and study. While these studies are relevant in that they describe students’ lived experiences of distance learning and access to conducive learning space, they did not investigate students’ literacy practices, the objects they use or how the enactment of their literacy practices was shaped by space and place. They also did not include the TD that students may experience when material factors in the form of suitable study spaces implicate their literacy practices, as this study does.

The gaps in the studies cited in this chapter highlight the need for qualitative critical research on DE students’ lived experiences of the ways in which (im)materiality shapes their literacy practices. The gaps also highlight the importance of context, where an exploration of students’ use of material objects as well as the South African context in which literacy practices are enacted would produce a different picture from that of the studies cited in the chapter. In the next chapter I present the study’s methodological orientation.

Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter I present the rationale for adopting a case study approach. I then describe the research process, including how I gained access to the participants who participated in online interviews, how I used software to analyse the interviews and how I analysed their learning materials using Fairclough's (1992) approach to CDA. Throughout the description of the research process, I explain the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the research processes and procedures explored in the present study. I also describe how I navigated the ethical considerations in the various sections of the chapter. Finally, I describe how I established the trustworthiness of the study.

4.1 Qualitative research: The case study

Case study research is recognised as an effective methodology to analyse and explore the complexity of real-world settings (Harrison et al., 2017). It has been referred to as both a methodology and a method, where methods refer to the procedures and techniques used in the study and methodology is the perspective through which the researcher views the research project (ibid.). Numerous definitions are presented in the literature to understand case study research. I draw on Creswell et al. (2007), who define it as

... a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) ... through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., ..., interviews, ... and documents ...) and reports a case description and case-based themes (p. 33).

In this study, I use an interpretive lens which views reality as multi-faceted and subjective and prioritises an in-depth understanding of DE students' experiences and their interpretation of the world in context (ibid.; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). A critical approach is also adopted which allows me to examine power relations and the ways in which DE students are positioned by the literacy practices, their use of objects and the ways of the institution. This approach allows me to uncover students' agency, which might be affected by social practice (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

From the definitions of interpretivism and case study it is evident that multiple sources and methods of data collection and analysis are employed, with thick descriptions being used to convey findings (Harrison et al. 2017). Data-collection instruments such as interviews and document analysis are prioritised. I discuss this in detail in sections 4.4 and 4.5. In the section below I describe the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the research process.

4.2 The COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on research

As mentioned in the introduction, South Africa implemented various alert levels of lockdown in response to preventing the spread of the Corona virus in 2020 and 2021. This meant that my research was affected by the lockdown restrictions when the research site implemented its own alert levels of lockdown. The effects of these restrictions are outlined in various sections of this chapter as I describe the study's methodology. In the section below I describe the process of gaining access to the participants.

4.3 Negotiating access to research participants

There were several stages to accessing the participants. The first stage was navigating the ethical clearance process. After the University of Cape Town (UCT) granted its ethical clearance for the study to go ahead, the study also had to be granted ethical clearance by Umgama University. Further clearance giving permission to interview the university's students and to gain access to their course learning materials also had to be granted. Once this clearance was granted, I was able to invite students to participate in the study.

It can be assumed that as an insider I would have had easy access to the students (Green, 2104; Merriam et al., 2001); however, on 1 July 2021 the full enactment of the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act was implemented in South Africa. This meant that, in compliance with the Act, the university was not able to provide me with personal information such as the students' email addresses. Therefore, Umgama University's Information Communications Technology (ICT) Department sent an email to students who were registered for the 2021 academic and business writing courses in the Western Cape, inviting them to participate in the study. There was no response to this and the next invitation sent by

Umgama University ICT, which informed students that the data costs incurred for the online interview would be reimbursed (see Appendices A and B).

After further negotiation with the relevant gatekeepers, I was allowed to invite verbally the students who attended my virtual tutorial classes to participate in the study. However, I had to wait for the students to initiate email contact with me. After a few weeks, 16 students from various parts of South Africa responded to the verbal invitation via email, volunteering to participate in the study.

4.3.1 Informed consent

The practice of obtaining informed consent in qualitative research serves to protect participants and promote ethical research conduct (Jefford & Moore, 2008). The participants were emailed a consent letter (see Appendix C) describing the nature and purpose of the research and confirming confidentiality and anonymity. Permission for the audio recording of the interviews was granted in the consent form and the participants chose their own pseudonyms, which were used to protect their privacy and identities. As soon as I received the signed consent form, I arranged the interview dates and times with the participants (Warren, 2001) using WhatsApp, a secure messaging service. In order to ensure confidentiality and further protect the participants' identities, I saved each participant's details using their chosen pseudonym on my mobile phone.

4.4 Student interviews

Qualitative researchers want to understand other people and use interviews to gain a deep understanding of social phenomena in context (Gruber et al., 2008). Participants are interviewed so that in-depth knowledge can be gleaned from their perspective of an experience (deMarrais & Lapan, 2003; Edwards & Holland; 2020).

In this study DE students' first-hand, lived experiences of DE and their literacy practices were prioritised. Interviews as a data source respond to the first question which seeks to gain insights into DE students' use of artefacts and the way these shape their literacy practices. The interviews also respond to the second research question, which seeks to gain insights into the spaces and places in which DE students make meaning as they engage in

their studies and also the ways in which their physical learning environment shapes their literacy practices (see Appendix D for a list of the guiding questions used).

Interviewing my students was a concern for me due to possible power issues in the student–tutor relationship (Brinkmann, 2007; Karnieli-Miller, Strier & Pessach, 2009). It would have been preferable that the participants were students who had not attended my tutorials to avoid their responding in ways that might appear to please me during the interviews. This is a common ethical dilemma that researchers face when the interviewees may be known to the researcher. However, I had only ever interacted with the participants virtually and they only knew me in my capacity as their tutor. To address any potential issues I encouraged participants to be open about their experiences and reassured them that their responses would in no way affect their academic results. Furthermore, the extent to which I was an insider-researcher was minimised because I was not involved in the assessment process at all. At the end of every interview, I asked each student if the mobile number that I had on record was to be reimbursed for data, an offer which most students turned down. This could be because I was known to them as their tutor and they were aware of the power relations shaping the tutor–student relationship. It could also reflect the notion that the students who participated in my study were well resourced with technology and internet access, which, as is illustrated in the forthcoming chapters, has implications for the results of the study. Furthermore, it could also have been that the students acknowledged the benefits of the interviews and the overall research to their studies.

In keeping with the regulations of the COVID-19 Alert Level 3 at the time of the interviews in 2021, Umgama University did not allow in-person interviews to take place. In addition, the regional learning hub in Cape Town was closed, which meant that I could not use the offices there to interview students. I therefore had to interview the participants online.

4.4.1 Online interviews

The available technology has shaped the practice of qualitative interviews and has become an integral part of social science research (De Villiers, Farooq & Molinari, 2021; Edwards & Holland, 2020). I interviewed each student online, using the free version of Zoom, a cloud-based video-conferencing service. Below I outline the advantages of using Zoom and in doing so I also note some of the disadvantages.

The literature points to the benefits of synchronous interviews for research. According to Edwards and Holland (2020), synchronous interviews allow researchers to reach participants in places that are hard to reach or who are in difficult settings. This meant that the participants could be based anywhere in South Africa and not only in the Western Cape, as was initially planned. Secondly, the participants appeared more at ease during the interviews despite the physical separation (Weller, 2017). This may well be because I did not use the camera function of the service in order to minimise the amount of data used for the interview, which also added another layer of participant identity protection. It could also be that they were accustomed to such separation due to their experience of DE. Finally, Zoom has a built-in recording function, the audio file of which can be saved on a laptop for transcription.

There were several disadvantages presented by the use of technology for data collection. One disadvantage was that participants had to have data to participate in the study as reimbursement occurred only after the interview. Also of significance is the fact that the students who volunteered to participate in the study had to have a laptop or a smartphone in addition to the data and they had to be familiar with video-conferencing. These criteria may be the reasons why there was no response to the two emails that were sent by the university ICT Department (Irani, 2018). According to Edwards and Holland (2020), using technology brings to light the unequal access that students have to computers, internet connectivity and technology proficiency. Consequently, some students were not familiar with the technology. I therefore had to conduct a quick tutorial first on how to use Zoom. For example, I had to provide guidance on where to find the mute icon in some instances. A further disadvantage would be that, because we did not use cameras, I did not have the benefit of observing the students' body language during the interviews. This may have influenced my perceptions and understanding of their responses as I did not have access to their non-verbal cues and ways of communicating (Edwards & Holland, 2020). However, I was able to note pauses, repetitions and other verbal cues.

4.4.2 Audio recordings storage

The interview audio recordings were named, filed and stored using the participants' chosen pseudonyms to ensure that their identities would remain protected throughout the research process. These recordings were stored on my password-protected laptop, the files of which were backed up in the cloud (Google Drive) as well as on a portable hard drive that was stored separately from the laptop.

4.4.3 Preparing data for analysis: transcription process

Qualitative data analysis (QDA) software provides tools for managing and processing textual data effectively. However, researchers remain crucial in the preparation, entry or importation, analysis and interpretation of text (McLellan, MacQueen & Neidig, 2003).

By using software such as Descript, an audio word processing software tool that transcribes an audio recording and allows one to view and edit the transcription, I was able to manage the data efficiently by keeping them all in one place. I could also download the transcribed text as an MS Word document onto my laptop. From there I was able to manipulate the text where necessary. I could also easily import the saved MS Word transcriptions into NVivo, a description of which follows in section 4.4.4.1.

Each Zoom audio file was uploaded into Descript. However, changing speech into written text has its challenges and transcription can have a significant impact on the way participants are understood (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005). On reading the transcriptions, I found that Descript had in many instances incorrectly captured the interviewees' spoken words, often as incoherent text because, as an American programme, it did not always recognise the diverse South African accents. While Agar (1996) notes the labour-intensive nature of transcription, McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig (2003) assert that levels of transcription should complement levels of analysis. This means that when studies draw on the experiences of interviewees, "rich data" (Maxwell, 2005: p. 244) is required, necessitating a verbatim account of the interview, which is especially required for the data analysis stage (ibid.; McLellan, MacQueen & Neidig, 2003). I thus listened to each recording carefully, rectifying all the incorrectly transcribed text. Once the interviews were correctly transcribed, each file was saved as an MS Word document on my laptop.

4.4.4 Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS)

Computer software has become an indispensable tool for researchers to help them with QDA (Gibbs, 2013). CAQDAS software is a database that stores the source data such as transcripts in electronic form. It then supports annotation, coding, sorting and other manipulations of these documents, and it keeps a record of all of these activities (ibid.). It also aids in the management of the data, the organisation of the analysis and the creation of analytical concepts during the analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gibbs, 2013; Welsh, 2002).

4.4.4.1 NVivo

NVivo is a QDA computer software programme, a licence for which is available to registered UCT students. With NVivo, documents imported from a word editing program such as MS Word can easily and quickly be coded on screen. It is possible to make coding stripes visible in document margins so that the researcher may identify the locations where different codes have been applied (Welsh, 2002) (see Figure 1). Furthermore, analytical approaches involved in the formation of themes and the examination of data across cases are well supported by the functions of the software (Gibbs, 2013).

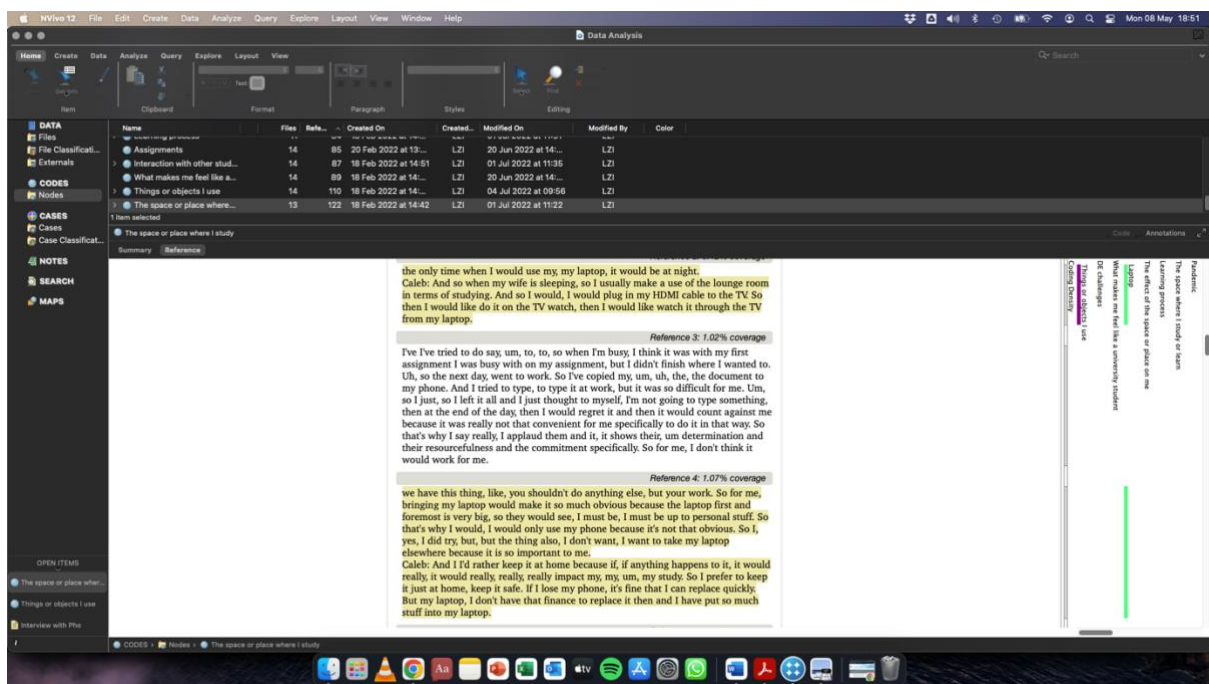


Figure 1: Screenshot from NVivo showing codes and coding stripes

Researchers use CAQDAS to facilitate the analytical process and to make QDA simpler, which the researcher must always maintain control over (Zamawe, 2015). According to Tesch (1990), cited in Gilbert, Jackson and Di Gregorio (2014), “there is no one ‘right’ way to manipulate qualitative data during analysis” (p 224). Therefore, to attain the best results, researchers should use the best aspects of the software and the manual approaches (Welsh, 2002), which is the approach I adopted, as described in the sections below.

4.4.5 Data analysis

Four broad activities are associated with QDA (Gilbert, Jackson & Di Gregorio, 2014): organising data, exploring data, interpreting or reflecting on data, and integrating data (ibid.) These activities occur iteratively with numerous rounds and intersections, together with reflection (ibid.). This was mirrored in my data-analysis experience, which was non-linear and therefore could not be expressed in the order indicated above.

4.4.5.1 Exploring the data

I described the process of correcting the transcriptions in section 4.4.3. This exercise immersed me in the data from the outset, aligning with Gibbs et al. (2002) in Edwards and Holland (2020), who point out that while using technology enables researchers to keep a record of the encounter, the effort taken to transcribe the audio recording into text can have an impact on the researcher's immersion in the data. This early immersion proved useful, especially as it allowed me to reflect on the ideas that were emerging. As suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), I read the transcripts many times to first get a sense of an interview as a whole before breaking it down into sections.

After importing each transcription into NVivo, I began reading the transcripts to familiarise myself with the data (Gilbert, Jackson & Di Gregorio, 2014). However, exploring the data also includes looking for content and connections using software tools (ibid.). I came across the word frequency query function by chance as I was playing with the software in an attempt to familiarise myself with it. I then ran a word frequency query to see what the result would be (see Appendix E). Unbeknown to me then, it identified possible “concept-indicator connections” (Swygart-Hobaugh, 2019: p. 5), a term which I explain below.

4.4.5.2 Organising the data

This is an iterative activity that is both “mechanical and analytical” (Gilbert, Jackson & Di Gregorio, 2014: p. 224). It involves linking data that are related using codes (ibid.) or, as Swygart-Hobaugh (2019) calls them, “concepts”. One codes by labelling or tagging a section of a text (Gibbs, 2013), which is called a node in Nvivo, as one reads the transcript. Swygart-Hobaugh (2019) refers to coded text segments as “indicators”. A concept-indicator (ibid.) is a useful term as it helps to simplify the NVivo terminology that I had to learn.

I read each transcription with a view to creating codes. However, I did not know how to do this using NVivo. While using software is intended to make QDA easier, learning how to use it is not always easy and can be time-consuming. Furthermore, there is an inherent assumption that researchers are computer literate (Zamawe, 2015). This is of significance as the same is assumed of the participants in my study and I was thus able to identify with them during this process. I am fairly computer literate, hence, after watching a video tutorial on how to allocate codes on YouTube, I proceeded to do exactly what I had seen in the video. As I read the text, I highlighted a section or a sentence, an indicator, and allocated a node or concept using a word or phrase that described or summarised its content: for example, *laptop*, or *how I learn or study*, using NVivo's tools. I did this with each transcript. However, as a novice researcher, I often felt as if I did not know where the coding was leading me, even though I had the word-frequency map to guide me.

Again, through playing with the software, I discovered that I could group nodes together using parent and child nodes: that is, all sections of texts that referred to the use of a laptop were grouped together under the parent node *laptop*. I also discovered that I could download the codebook (see Appendix F for a section of the codebook), which led me to the next stage of QDA, which is interpreting and reflecting (Gilbert, Jackson & Di Gregorio, 2014).

4.4.5.3 Interpreting and reflecting

In this step the researcher spends time thinking and rethinking (Gilbert, Jackson & Di Gregorio, 2014). Here, one is aiming to recognise patterns and relationships (ibid.). However, I often felt overwhelmed by the data and worried that I had not delved deeply enough during the interviews. I was concerned that the research questions would not be answered by the data. It is at this point that I adopted a manual approach to look for connections in the data using the codebook. As mentioned earlier, QDA is an iterative process and I returned to the organising stage as I manually rearranged the codes into new groups or themes, using the research questions to guide me (see Appendix G). Themes are also called “categories” and these are made up of multiple codes used to represent a single concept (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

It is at this point that the data began to make sense to me. Furthermore, seeing the data in visual form also helps one to make sense of it (Gilbert, Jackson & Di Gregorio, 2014). I discovered the maps function in NVivo, through playing with the software and being curious,

and created a map using the revised themes and the research questions (see Appendix H). This visualisation reassured me that the data I had gathered was relevant to my research questions. I was now able to see the data holistically (Gilbert, Jackson & Di Gregorio, 2014), and this would help me to present the findings in a narrative form. After this I would integrate the data, which involves linking it to other studies (ibid.).

4.5 Document analysis

Document analysis, in QDA, is a methodical approach to evaluating materials in order to elicit meaning and gain insight (Bowen, 2009). This study draws on Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model for CDA in order to uncover the way social conventions of power, ideology, dominance and inequality are reflected and produced in language use. It can also shed light on the inequality that might exist in social practices as a way of instigating social change (Pennycook, 1994).

As highlighted in chapter 1, DE students' ways of doing and being require them to engage with their learning materials independently. It is assumed that students will not only acquire the necessary knowledge and skills through the learning materials provided, but will also take on board the ways of being a DE student. Owing to the limited scope of this dissertation, I conducted a CDA on two tutorial letters as key documents of the academic writing course because they are material objects that DE students engage with as part of their meaning-making. The tutorial letter thus is a core document for DE students in that it imparts the DE ways of doing, being and thinking (Gee, 1990, 1996). The insights gleaned from the analysis attempt to answer the third research question:

To what extent does a key material object, the tutorial letter, facilitate DE students' meaning-making and access to learning?

4.5.1 Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for CDA

Fairclough (1992) conceptualises discourse in his three-dimensional framework for CDA, which allows for a foregrounding of the relationship between the linguistic features of a text and how these reflect the social structures and ideologies that shape particular contexts. The model presents three interlinked levels, namely: discourse as text, as discursive practice and

as social practice. The interlinked nature of these levels results in a bleeding over of analysis of discourse as text and discursive practice, as one is strongly informed by the other.

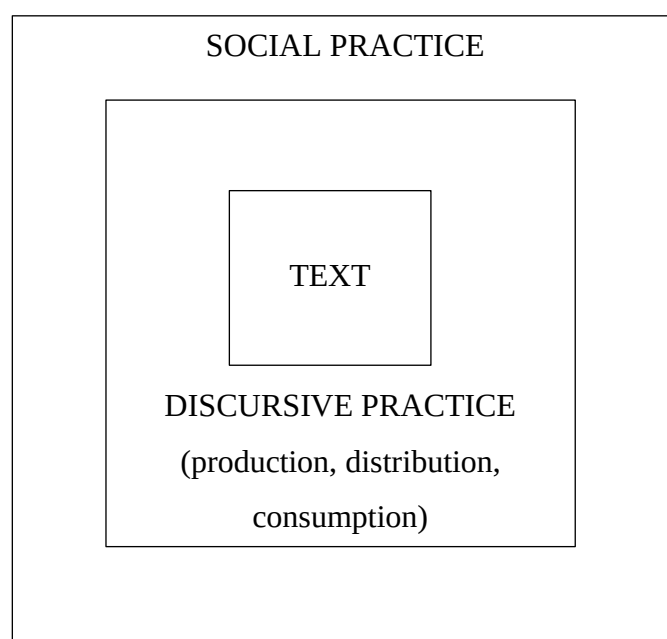


Figure 2: Three-dimensional conception of discourse (Fairclough, 1992)

In the sections below I explain Fairclough’s CDA model and describe its application in the analysis of the tutorial letters.

4.5.1.1 *Discourse as text*

An analysis of discourse at the level of text explores the use of features such as vocabulary, text structures in the form of cohesion, and structural conventions of the text. Vocabulary was thus analysed for the various meanings and interpretations underlying the words (Fairclough, 1992). Cohesive markers such as repetition, pronouns and conjunctions were also analysed. These elements and the ways in which they are used can reflect the values, knowledge and ideology that underlie social structures such as DE universities (Fairclough, 1992).

4.5.1.2 *Discourse as discursive practice*

Discursive practice is perceptible in the ways in which language is expressed in texts (Fairclough, 1992). It refers specifically to the social “processes of text production, distribution and consumption” (ibid.: p. 78) and calls for an enquiry into the institutional context in which the discourse is created. The nature of these processes therefore varies depending on their social context.

(a) Text production

The production of a text is related to its specific context (Fairclough, 1992). The text producer could be an animator, “the person who actually makes the ... marks on paper” (ibid.: p. 78), an author, “the one who puts the words together and is responsible for the wording” (ibid.), and/or a principal, “the one whose position is represented by the words” (ibid.). At a DE university the same lecturer or different lecturers could fill these roles when they produce learning materials. As with discourse as text, the lecturers’ interpretation and implementation of the university’s values and ideology can be mirrored in the learning materials they produce. Students also take on these roles when they produce texts such as essay assignments that are expected to be in alignment with the university’s discourse, as put forward by the lecturers.

(b) Text consumption

How a text is consumed (read) is also determined by its social context and this depends on whether it requires “close scrutiny ... or semi-focused attention” (Fairclough, 1992: p. 79). As with the production of a text, it can be consumed individually or collectively (ibid.). In a DE university context, for example, students, markers and tutors will read the tutorial letters and study guides. Furthermore, students will transform one text into another –for example, writing an essay based on a question or producing a set of notes from a recording of a lecture. Tutors will use tutorial letters and study guides to facilitate the teaching and learning of students and students are expected to consume these in a particular way based on the expectations of the tutor and the lecturers. Texts also “change people’s attitudes, beliefs or practices” (ibid.), where DE university students are required to adapt their literacy practices to the institution’s discourse, for example.

(c) Text distribution

Fairclough (1992) notes that the distribution of texts can be either simple or complex. The distribution could be simple where it is relevant “to the immediate context of situation in which it occurs” (Fairclough, 1992: p. 79). Text distribution could also be complex, spreading over various institutional areas, each with its own unique model for consumption and re-creating and modifying texts (ibid.). For example, at a DE university students will share tutorial letters or study guides with each other; essay markers will require the tutorial letter that includes the essay rubric and the essay questions when they mark; students will use

various tutorial letters depending on the information they require and what they need to do – for example, to answer assignment questions. Textual features such as intertextuality and coherence are often entangled with discursive practices (Fairclough, 1992), making the overlap that occurs an important aspect of CDA. The phenomenon of texts being made up of other texts is referred to as “intertextuality” (Fairclough, 1992), as in the case of a section of a journal article appearing as a cited paraphrase in a student essay.

Analysing a text from an intertextual perspective can reveal the various discourse types a text draws on and the ways in which it uses the past to create the present (Fairclough, 1992). When considering text production, intertextuality underscores the historical quality of texts where texts comprise “prior texts” (ibid.: p. 84). Intertextuality also plays a role in text distribution as it allows for a consideration of the way texts are transformed. Finally, with regard to consumption, I considered the text together with the other texts that formed part of it which would influence interpretation. However, consumers also bring texts to the text they are interpreting, which also implies interpretation (Fairclough, 1992). By examining the tutorial letters from this perspective, I was able to uncover the ways in which the DE students are either empowered or disempowered and the implications for their literacy practices and social identities as DE students.

Text coherence occurs when the “constituent parts [of a text] are meaningfully related so that the text as a whole makes sense, even though there may be ... relatively little explicit cohesion ...” (Fairclough, 1992: p. 83). However, a text will make sense only when someone can infer the meaning in the absence of clear indicators (ibid.). For Fairclough (1992), coherence is more about the interpretation of a text which depends on the interpretative resources being drawn on. He argues that certain “interpretative principles come to be associated ... with particular discourse types ...” (ibid.: p. 84). This notion has implications for the ways in which text coherence can be charged with ideology and interpellates subjects (ibid.). For students at a DE university who are new to academic reading and writing, when the interpretative resources they need to interpret a text are made explicit, they become discourse participants and are empowered as their social identity can develop. I examined the texts for this explication, which revealed the ways in which students are “subjected to and by the text” (ibid.)

4.5.1.3 Discourse as social practice

Fairclough's third dimension considers discourse as social practice; this reflects the ways in which social conventions are governed by ideology, which are in turn dictated by relations of power and hegemony in society (Fairclough, 1992; Pennycook, 1994). When analysing a text according to this third dimension, the ways in which the features of the text, which are referenced in the above two levels, are ideologically invested were considered (Fairclough, 1992). The meanings of words were examined for the ways in which these reflected the DE institution's ideology (ibid.). Similarly, intertextuality was also analysed in particular for the way it encourages or obstructs the development of social identity in a discourse, as mentioned above (ibid.), which then either grants access to or excludes participants from a discourse.

Furthermore, hegemony also plays a role in the acquiescence of subjects to a discourse where admission is granted through ideological means. In this way, ideological change can be effected (Fairclough, 1992). I therefore analysed the text for evidence of these power struggles where one specific world view is asserted at the expense of another. Ultimately, the CDA allowed me to ascertain the extent to which the tutorial letter as a key text that is meant to enable access to an institution's discourses effectively achieves this objective.

4.6 Trustworthiness

The extent to which qualitative research can be seen to be trustworthy is explored in the literature that advances this kind of research. In order to promote the trustworthiness of the study, I used methods such as triangulation, rich and thick description and also reflexivity to establish credibility (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006; Stahl & King, 2020; Stenfors, Kajamaa & Bennett, 2020). Triangulation refers to the use of several data sources and emergent data. In this study, I used in-depth interviews and documents as sources of data which provided multiple perspectives from which to interpret the data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006; Stahl & King, 2020). Furthermore, I collected "rich and thick data" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006: p. 244) in the form of in-depth interviews, from which I drew quotations that reflect the participants' lived experiences of DE and their literacy practices (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Finally, I disclosed the dual role I played from the outset of the study (Stenfors, Kajamaa & Bennett, 2020) and incorporated personal reflections about my subjectivity throughout (Rose

& Johnson, 2020). By adopting these practices in the study, I have ensured its trustworthiness.

This chapter has outlined the case study approach I adopted. It has also outlined the use of interviews and their analysis. The use of CDA as an analytical tool with which to analyse the tutorial letters has also been described to illustrate the consideration of discourse at the levels presented in Fairclough's model. The ethical issues that were considered are explained, as were the ways in which the study's trustworthiness was established. In the following chapter I present the findings of the CDA.

Chapter 5: Critical discourse analysis of two tutorial letters

This chapter presents the findings yielded by the critical discourse analysis (CDA) of two tutorial letters as key documents of the academic writing course. DE students engage with material objects such as tutorial letters as part of their meaning-making. Owing to the limited scope of this dissertation, I conducted a CDA on two tutorial letters in which the ways of doing and being a DE student are outlined. The insights gleaned from the analysis attempt to answer my third research question:

To what extent does a key material object, the tutorial letter, facilitate DE students' meaning-making and access to learning?

At Umgama University the learning materials for a course are called a tutorial letter, sometimes a study guide. The course learning materials, often used together with a prescribed textbook, are supplemented by further tutorial letters, which are provided by the lecturers during the semester and often include additional course instructions, information and guidelines. The tutorial letter is therefore a core document for DE students in that it imparts the DE ways of doing, being and thinking (Gee, 1990, 1996).

The focus now turns to the CDA, which draws on Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse (1992). I start by exploring discourse at the level of discursive practice (Fairclough, 1992) with a focus on intertextuality. I then proceed to consider discourse at the level of text, where I examine the textual features of the tutorial letters, with a focus on the use of pronouns and vocabulary. The location of discourse as social practice in the outer layer of Fairclough's diagram signals how this aspect of discourse shapes and affects the use of discourse in the other two layers. My analysis of discourse as discursive practice and text therefore makes reference to the ways in which the outer layer – the institution's social practices – is reflected at these levels and how they affect students' access to and engagement with key literacy practices. The last section of the CDA describes and discusses the ways in which Umgama's social practices as reflected in the tutorial letters possibly affect first-year undergraduate students' effective engagement with them.

5.1 Discourse as discursive practice

As discussed in chapter 4 section 4.5.1.2, discourse as discursive practice refers to the “processes of text production, distribution and consumption” (Fairclough, 1992: p. 78) and the way social factors can influence these processes. In this section, I focus on the discursive practices that shape Text 1 (see Appendix I) and Text 2 (see Appendix J), in particular the role of intertextuality in their production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough, 1992).

Both texts are tutorial letters for an academic writing course in the Department of English Studies and they have been produced by a group of lecturers in the same department whose names are listed on page two of Text 1 and pages five and six of Text 2. These lecturers are responsible for the course’s teaching and learning and its assessment. Text 1 is the main tutorial letter for the course and includes theoretical information on academic reading and writing, self-guided activities in addition to exercises that students are to complete on the online portal with their tutor. Text 2 provides general information about the course, the contact details for academic and administrative matters and the titles of prescribed and recommended books. General information regarding the various assessments and their criteria are also described and explained.

5.1.1 Intertextuality in the production of the texts

The intertextuality in the production of the texts (Fairclough, 1992) is evident in that Text 2 has been produced by lecturers and is intended to supplement Text 1. Further evidence of intertextuality is that Text 1 is referred to in Text 2: “[Text 1] will guide you through blended teaching and learning so that you can study independently” (page 9); it can be assumed, therefore, that the same group of lecturers produced both texts. General feedback on assignments and the examination guidelines are also communicated by lecturers in tutorial letters. Lecturers therefore produce a number of tutorial letters for this course and students are “encourage[d] to read this Tutorial letter in conjunction with all the other Tutorial Letters that are prescribed for the module in 2020” (Text 1: p. 6). It is significant that the lecturers have overlooked changing the year to 2022. This could create uncertainty, even anxiety, in students who are new to the ODeL discourse and the university in that they might be concerned about whether they have the correct learning materials for the course and year. It also points to what could be perceived as an uncritical reproduction of some learning materials from one year to the next. This stands in contradiction to the institution’s stated

values of “... the pedagogical renewal of teaching and assessment practices” (Text 2: p. 4) as reflected in its curriculum transformation agenda.

5.1.2 Intertextuality in the consumption of the tutorial letters

In this section, I describe instances of intertextuality where I focus on the use of hyperlinks in Text 1. Hyperlinks are electronic links in a hypertext document that when activated by clicking on a highlighted word or image, the reader is given direct access to another place in the same document or another text in another location (Merriam-Webster.com, 2018). Below I explore the ways in which hyperlinks in Text 1 impact the ways in which students interact with the text and how this interaction influences their meaning-making.

As mentioned in chapter 1, Umgama University students receive hard-copy learning materials, which are printed in black and white, via the postal service. They can, however, also download their learning materials from the online student portal. Students can then read the digital versions on their laptops or smartphones. Alternatively, they could print the learning materials in colour or black and white should they prefer a hard copy.

When reading a digital version of Text 1, hyperlinks are highlighted as blue text, mostly in bold typeface and underlined. They appear in the same way when reading a hard copy of Text 1 that has been printed in colour. However, when Text 1 is printed in black and white, hyperlinks appear as black text that is underlined with no indication that the underlined words are linked to other texts that contain explanations or descriptions of words and concepts. Students who do not have a suitable electronic device on which to read the digital version or who do not have data to download a digital version will therefore have access only to hard copies. This means they will not know that the underlined hyperlinked words are linked to explanatory information to assist in their understanding, which impedes their meaning-making. Furthermore, the underlining of a word in a written text suggests emphasis and students reading the hard copy tutorial letter may attach meaning and significance to this emphasis. Their attaching importance incorrectly to an underlined word further compromises their meaning-making.

Text 1 includes words and phrases that have been hyperlinked to online texts – for example, “[pro-life or pro-choice](#)” (page 8), and “Click [here](#) to access the text” (page 9). However, the purpose of the link to the online article “pro-life or pro-choice” (page 8) and its relevance to

the text in which it is placed is not made clear in the paragraph other than by the words “pro-life or pro-choice” forming part of the sentence in which they appear. This lack of explanation could create confusion for first-year students who may be new to digital reading, an aspect of the ODeL Discourse.

Another example is “[linguistic features](#)” (page 9), which is hyperlinked to linguistics.stackexchange.com, a website that is described as a “a question and answer site for professional linguists ...” (www.linguistics.stackexchange.com). See Figure 3 below.

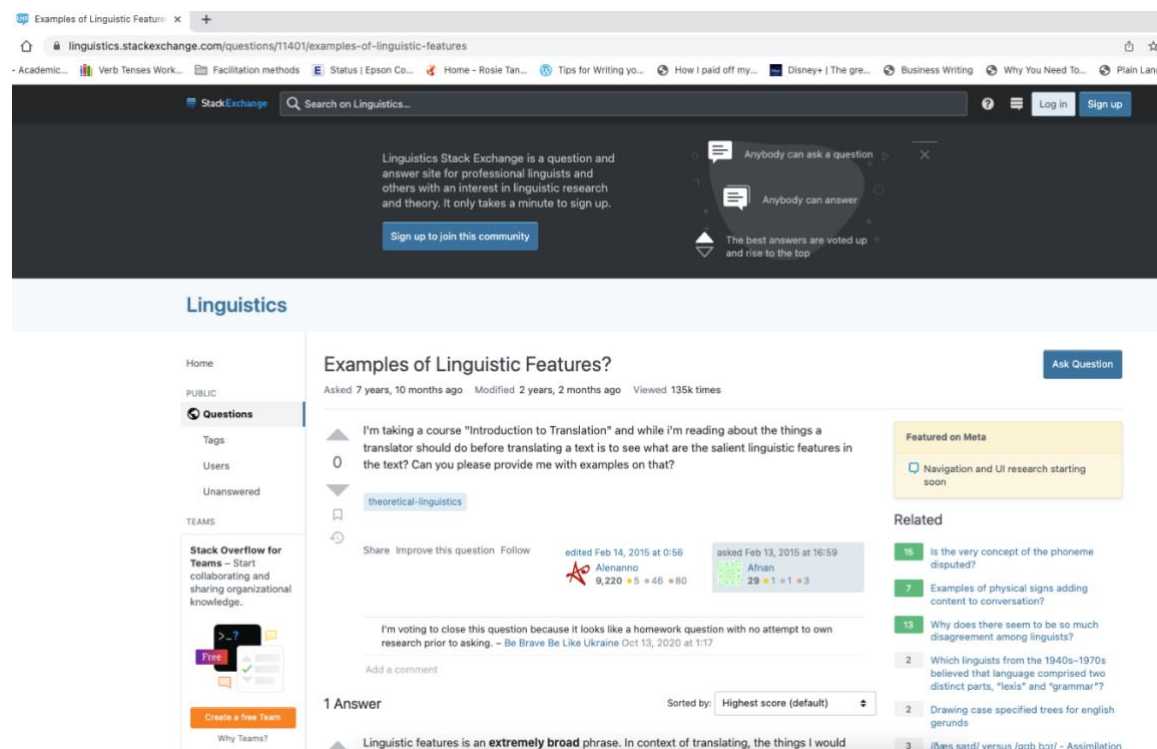


Figure 3: Landing page for hyperlinked words “linguistic features” in Text 1

There is no immediate visible connection to what “linguistic features” means from the landing page above. One has to read the question first and then scroll down the page to the answer, which includes a list of terms that are hyperlinked to another website, www.wikipedia.org. This means that students are then taken to a second website on which to find an explanation to aid their understanding of “linguistic features”. This cumbersome way of accessing information can be time-consuming and confusing to students who are engaging with the content for the first time, more so with digital reading. It also means that students need data to visit websites such as Stackexchange and Wikipedia.

In the example on page 9 there are three texts, “TEXT A ... TEXT B ... TEXT C”, that are to be accessed using hyperlinks, “Click [here](#) to access the text”. Later, on pages 10 and 11, the texts form the basis of Student Exercise 4, “List 5 features which define/distinguish these two texts as newspaper articles,” and Student Exercise 5, “... In a short paragraph describe the structure of the newspaper article” These texts are web-based articles found on the internet. This therefore requires students to have a laptop or a smartphone on which to read the articles and data so that they can access the articles on the internet. Students who do not have a suitable device, data or a reliable internet connection in the area where they live are therefore not able to complete these exercises – which impedes their meaning-making. While the use of hyperlinks might be an attempt by the lecturers to expose students to the ODeL Discourse, the purpose of the hyperlinks or the way in which hyperlinks work is not made explicit at all, which results in students’ loss of power to access the Discourse. Furthermore, the development of the DE identity of those who have access only to the hard copy version of Text 1 is handicapped, first, as they would not know that these are hyperlinks and, secondly, they will not be able to complete the exercises as required, with adverse implications for their meaning-making.

There are also links to videos hosted on internet-based platforms such as YouTube, a free video hosting service. For example, “Click on the [SQ4R](#) method to watch a 7 minutes video ... and answer the questions that follow” (Text 1: p. 18) and “Click on [Annotation](#) to watch a 5 minutes video and answer the questions that follow” (Text 1: p. 19), where the words in bold and blue have been hyperlinked. Students will need data to access and watch the videos. Furthermore, those students who are reading the black-and-white hard-copy version of Text 1 will lose out on the explanations contained in the videos, which means that their meaning-making is hampered.

In the section below I describe the way the tutorial letters are distributed across various institutional areas and what this means for their consumption by “multiple audiences” (Fairclough, 1992: p. 79), who are addressed either directly or indirectly.

5.1.3 Complex distribution as a feature of discourse practice

The tutorial letters are distributed across a variety of institutional areas, which influences the way they are consumed and makes their distribution complex (Fairclough, 1992). The ways in which students access the tutorial letters has been described earlier. The tutorial letters are

consumed by students not only as a source of information, but also in order to produce texts. For example, in Text 1 the students are required to read a text, then answer questions based on that text. On page 9, the students are instructed as follows: “Read Texts A, B and C below and answer the following questions for each text in your student exercise book” (Text 1: p. 9) and “... In a short paragraph describe the structure of the newspaper article” (Text 1: p. 11). The students also produce texts of different genres, such as the essay they write for Assignment 2.

However, while Texts 1 and 2 may be “directly addressed” (Fairclough, 1992: p. 79) to students enrolled in the course, they are not the only consumers of the tutorial letters. Those engaged in academic support – etutors and tutors such as me – use these texts to prepare for teaching and learning and as a teaching resource as “hearers” (ibid.) in that they are not directly addressed but are assumed to be part of the audience (Fairclough, 1992).

Furthermore, assessors are also consumers of tutorial letters because they prepare for the assessment of students’ assignments that are produced in response to the assessment tutorial letter. Text 2 includes the marking rubric for essays (p. 18) which assessors would use to mark students’ essays and also the marking codes that markers would use (pp. 19–20). The consumption patterns of the texts are therefore unique to Umgama’s institutional domains across which the texts are distributed (Fairclough, 1992).

The CDA now turns to discourse at a text level and here I analyse the text’s use of pronouns and vocabulary (Fairclough, 1992). In doing so, I consider in my analysis what the selected instances of language use imply about ideology and power, that is, discourse as social practice (Fairclough, 1992).

5.2 Discourse as text: A consideration of the textual features of the tutorial letters

The use of pronouns in Texts 1 and 2 helps to achieve a friendly, conversational and personal tone, as is reflected in the following sentences: “The purpose of this [course] is to develop your abilities of critical reading ...,” and “... as you develop your academic skills ...” (Text 1: p. 6); also in Text 2 (page 4), “The purpose of this tutorial letter is to provide you with

information that you need ...,” and “... you have to fit your studies into an already established routine ...”. The use of “you” and “your” in Text 1 and Text 2 personalises the text for each student, creating the effect of the lecturers’ addressing each student individually. The word “team” at the end of Text 2 (page 13) suggests collaboration and team work. The use of “we” affirms this collegiality between the student and the academic “team” (Text 1: p. 91; Text 2: p. 13).

However, the personalised, conversational and friendly tone is somewhat negated in Text 2, section 2 on page five when students are informed of the purpose and outcomes of the course. Sentences such as “The purpose of this module is to develop *learners*’ ability for critical reading and writing ... and to improve *their* Academic English competence” and “The [course] will help the *students* to develop *their* ability to read and write academic genres ...” diminish the personalised, individual form of address used elsewhere. Now “you” has become “learners” and “students”. The use of these two terms alongside each other in the same paragraph creates a mismatch that is potentially confusing, since “learners” is used in schooling contexts to describe school going individuals. It also negates the initial collaborative availability of lecturers and makes for a “team” who could be perceived as removed and distant, especially through the use of the third person “their” (Text 2: p. 5). This creates a line of tension (Fairclough, 1992) between the initial apparent conversational greeting and the lecturers’ underlying distance in their approach to students. Although ODeL requires solitary scholarship, this distance from “the team” isolates students in a way that would make them feel unsupported and powerless in the ODeL environment, despite their being told to “contact us via email if you are experiencing problems ... with any academic aspect of the [course]” (Text 2: p. 13).

Another text-based disconnect occurs in the study plan, Text 2 page 9, where the course is described as a “literacy-as-social-practice module”. Furthermore, in Text 1 Academic Literacies is defined as “a variety of skills, such as reading, thinking, doing, speaking, listening and writing in specific contexts” (page 6). These descriptions lead one to expect an ideological approach to literacy in which students’ identities and contexts are taken into consideration to be inherent to the course (Gee, 1990; Street, 2003). However, what could be perceived as the Department of English Studies’ autonomous view of literacy (Street, 2003) becomes evident in that the content of Text 1 focuses only on the “[ability] of critical reading and critical writing which are essential academic skills” (page 6). As Street maintains in the distinction he makes

between the ideological and autonomous approaches to literacy, an autonomous approach restricts its view of literacy to reading and writing, which are viewed as skills rather than socially situated literacy practices. In characterising literacy in this way, it foregrounds reading and writing as contributing to proficiency, contradicting the Academic Literacies definition which emphasises the need to take into account the multiplicity of literacies.

In the section that follows, I reflect on the ways in which this CDA reveals lines of tension (Fairclough, 1992) between the values espoused by the university and its practices.

5.3 Discourse as social practice

It is assumed that despite being sent a black-and-white hard copy of Text 1, students will engage with the digital version of the text even though Text 1 does not make this explicit in any way. It is also assumed that students have a laptop or a smartphone as well as data to access the learning materials of Text 1 intended to support and facilitate their meaning-making. These assumptions are evident in “... we encourage you to take part in all the learning resources that are suggested” (Text 1: p. 91). This creates a line of tension (Fairclough, 1992) between the producers’ intentions and expectations of the ways in which students are to engage with Text 1 and the ways that students’ lived experiences could limit their engagement with Text 1. The producers of Texts 1 and 2 have not acknowledged the identities that students bring to the university or their contexts, which disadvantages and disempowers “disadvantaged” and “underprepared” students (Smit, 2012) who are new to the ODeL ways of being and doing. This has the effect of undermining the implementation of “student-centred scholarship” (Text 2: p. 4) which forms part of the transformation charter.

Furthermore, in Text 2 page 10 it states that “you may be required to conduct research ...”; however, nowhere in Text 1 is there any explicit explanation or description of how and where to conduct research in the ODeL context. And even though section 6 in Text 2 (page 8) provides information about the library, no clear or explicit reference is made to research. This oversight by the producers of the text further minimises students’ capacity to engage in the ODeL discourses.

The ODeL discourses also perpetuate inequality because they privilege those students who enter the discourse with the relevant cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2011).



Student Exercise 1: Writing conventions

Find three journal articles from a typical research journal in your field and familiarize yourself with writing conventions in your field of study. To access three journals, visit the following link:

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/search/basic?sid=396e8be9-0e46-4039-9e0fbbebd314b805%40sdc-v-sessmgr05&vid=0&sdb=edspub&tid=3000EP>.

Then after the link select your subject area and after you have done so, select “journal” under “Resource type” in the bottom left part of the screen.

Figure 4: Student Exercise 1 in Text 1

Exercise 1 in Figure 4 above is the very first exercise in Text 1 (p. 7) which students are to complete. It assumes that students are “naturalised” (Fairclough, 1992: p. 87) in the ways of being-doing-saying-thinking-knowing (Gee, 1990, 1996) at Umgama, such as being familiar with the online library (the link takes students to a log-in page that can confuse students who are unfamiliar with the ODeL discourse, which requires one to log in to the online portal first in order to access the university’s online resources, such as the library). Students who have computers and internet access, and who are therefore familiar with online discourses and ways in which information is presented in an online context, could be said to possess power (Fairclough, 1992) because their opportunity to succeed is greater than those who come from under-resourced communities, where there are few or no libraries or schools with computer labs with internet connectivity and/or who come from poor families who are cannot provide such resources at home. This has the potential to diminish the opportunities for the less privileged to succeed academically, to access the ODeL discourse and to become part of the ODeL discourse (Gee, 1990, 1996). Furthermore, the original premise of ODL and ODeL as being accessible to all is being overlooked.

Whereas it could be said that students who opt for DE are expected to be technologically savvy, the CDA combined with the interview findings help to highlight how access works in students’ lived experiences of DE. Text 1 is the main teaching and learning document to be used by students to make meaning of the course. However, the production of the text privileges students

who have access to the relevant technology and pre-existing knowledge of practices such as referencing which would enable them to recognise and make sense of the in-text citations used in certain places, such as those on pages 11, 41, 46 and 53.

Therefore the approach to designing the learning materials might not be as beneficial as the academic staff believe it to be because the text is fully accessible only to a select few. This then enables and perpetuates the hegemony of a privileged group of students, which is inconsistent with Umgama's values of "student-centred scholarship" espoused in its approach to curriculum transformation (Text 2: p. 4).

In this CDA I have discussed discourse as discursive practice, illustrating how two tutorial letters are produced, distributed and consumed. From this analysis I emerge with two salient themes: the use of intertextuality in the form of hyperlinks in the production and consumption of tutorial letters, and contrasting views of literacy where the autonomous and ideological approaches are used simultaneously, as reflected in the use of discourse at the level of text (pronouns and vocabulary). I have also considered discourse as social practice, showing how the aspirant strategy and teaching and learning principles of the institution might be perceived as being at odds with its underlying ideologies (Fairclough, 1992) of opening up access to students who opt for DE. In the next chapter, I present and discuss the interview findings in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework, and also its context and relationship to the relevant literature.

Chapter 6: Interview findings and discussion

In this chapter, I present and discuss the interview findings in relation to the theories and literature that underpin this study. I begin by describing the ways of being a DE student and this is followed by a discussion of the inflections of space and literacy and how DE students take on multiple identities as they enact their literacy practices in various places. I then discuss the sociomaterial assemblages that emerge as DE students make meaning and the ways in which (im)material intra-actions play out through these assemblages. Finally, I explain the factors that mediate and heighten the transactional distance (TD) that DE students may experience.

6.1 Ways of being a distance-education student

In this section the first research question which deals with the key artefacts that DE students use to produce writing is responded to. The interview data illustrate the ways in which DE students take on the DE identity, or ways of doing–being (Gee, 1996). According to the findings, this identity is characterised by DE students’ incorporating technology into their literacy practices and using their learning materials in ways such that the affordances of technology are benefited from. DE students are also proficient in their use of technology and benefit from the affordances it offers. Below I discuss each of these characteristics.

6.1.1 Using a laptop

In this study, DE students integrate technology into their literacy practices through using electronic devices such as a laptop. According to Letseka and Pitsoe (2014: p. 1944), DE students “can learn from ... the use of audio-visual media”:

I would watch ... certain types of video[s] just to help me in terms ... of bettering my English and also ... reading a lot from my laptop. (Caleb)

The unspoken assumption for both Letseka and Pitsoe (2014) and Ngubane-Mokiwa (2017) is that DE students must have or own “modern electronic technology” (ibid.: p. 113). The study shows how important a laptop is to DE students:

Laptop is number one. I actually purchased the laptop, especially for this (Frank)

... it plays ... a big role in my studies ... I really cannot cope with my studies without having a laptop ... So yes, my laptop ... specifically plays a huge role in my learning ability and also as a student at [university]. (Caleb)

I ... would not be able to do any of my [university] work without a laptop ... That's the most important thing. (Oliver)

The findings also illustrate how the affordances of technology both support and facilitate their literacy practices and meaning-making, enhancing the DE learning experience and enabling students to access the ways of being a DE student (Gee, 1996):

I remember stuff when I hear it, so then what I do on my laptop sometimes is I copy and paste the work from the study guide, say a certain section. If I can't remember it then ... I ... let the laptop dictate it to me. So in that way I hear it, and it goes in quicker and I remember it faster. (Kay)

With a laptop, when you've made an error, you can just hit the backspace, then you can just start over. ... it is really convenient ... to use (Caleb)

... when I make my notes ... I would write in specific colours[.] ... my topic [sentence] would be in red, ... my supporting sentences would be ... blue, and my own words would be in green. So if I see too much blue, then something's wrong because ... there must be more green than blue. I would [type] my whole assignment. When I am done with a paragraph, it will be so full of colours. So when I'm satisfied, then I will change the colour to black. (Caleb)

Smit's (2012) description of the "non-traditional" student aligns with the DE students in this study in that it shows how choices regarding their use of material objects are affected by their (in)access to resources. This can be seen in the example of Akhona, who does not have a laptop and uses only a smartphone for engaging with the study materials:

... my phone is what I use mostly to do ... my schoolwork 'cause currently I don't have a laptop. I use my phone from applying, registering, studying, preparing for the exams and writing exams. ... That's the one thing that I know for sure that I use the primary thing, it's

my phone. I was using my phone, writing my assignments on paper and typing them on my phone, taking them direct from the paper. Even the exam, it was typed on my phone.
(Akhona)

Using only a smartphone and not having access to a laptop means that students like Akhona would not have access to the affordances of technology in the ways that Kay and Caleb do, which will affect their DE learning experience and impede their ways of being a DE student (Gee, 1996). However, DE students use their smartphones to supplement the use of their laptops. In the section below, the use of the smartphone, its affordances and barriers to meaning-making are discussed.

6.1.2 Using a smartphone to supplement the laptop

DE students use their smartphones as a key material object in the enactment of the DE Discourse (Gee, 1996), which is characterised by being a student anywhere, anytime (Gunter et al. 2020):

when I'm not around home, ... I send those PDF documents that ... I type on my PC to my phone and ... submit it via my phone when I'm not around home. ... [E]verything I save on my PC, it reflects back to my phone. ... My phone, I use it to log in on [the student portal] page ... to download ... the previous question papers, to search for announcements ... and to submit ... my assignments sometimes when I'm not around home. (Task)

While Brown and Haupt (2018) foreground the importance of a smartphone for access and equity for first-year students at a contact university, this study's findings illustrate how the sole use of a smartphone affects meaning-making in a DE context. Its use can be limiting to the enactment of DE students' literacy practices and ways of being (Gee, 1996):

... on a smartphone, there [are] things that you cannot do in terms of writing, you are limited. (Caleb)

It's very difficult, especially the cellphone is too small to read and you keep on ... zooming, going this side and this side of the phone, trying to follow the document. (Lawrence)

The above comments illustrate the challenges that DE students face when they use only a smartphone to engage with their studies. It also means that their lack of access to a laptop

compromises their DE ways of being (Gee, 1996) as they do not have access to the affordances of technology. This disempowers them and minimises their ability to access the DE community (Lea & Street, 1998).

6.1.3 Using both hard- and soft-copy learning materials

DE students use both hard- and soft-copy versions of their learning materials. The data reflect the ways in which DE students use the hard-copy versions of their learning materials and rely on their materiality as they make meaning:

using hard-copies is very easy because I can highlight words that I don't understand, Google them. Look for their meanings. (Akhona)

However, as reflected by the findings of the CDA of the tutorial letter, DE students' literacy practices and meaning-making can be affected negatively when they have access only to the black-and-white printed learning materials they receive. Furthermore, their access to the DE Discourse, which is characterised by reading electronic versions of the learning materials and accessing hyperlinks, is compromised when they are not able to access the hyperlinked information in a hard copy.

The interview data points to how DE students also use soft-copy versions of their learning materials on their laptops and smartphones. Its affordances emphasise the value that DE students place on using technology, as shown below:

my ... preference is using [a] soft copy because I ... know it is backed up on my laptop and I would also put it ... on my flash drive. So whenever ... I go through my study guide ... or tutorial letter, then I would highlight specific words. Then I would add comments. ... [W]hen I do this on a hard copy, I won't be able to get as much comments in because I will be limited because it is on a paper. So that's why I prefer using ... a soft copy on my laptop. (Caleb)

It's simple to search any question. ... you just type ... the question and it ... goes straight ... to the specific part where they talk about the ... something that I want to check. So it makes things easier for me rather than using ... the actual study guide. (Task)

However, as illustrated by the CDA, soft-copy users' DE learning experiences and meaning-making are affected when they do not have data to access the hyperlinked texts or are unfamiliar with hyperlinks and how they work in texts. Because hyperlinks and the way they work have not been explained by the producers of the texts, soft-copy and hard-copy versions of the learning materials situate DE students negatively in that they are disempowered by the DE Discourse embedded in their learning materials (Gee, 1996), which has implications for their literacy practices and meaning-making.

6.1.4 Being tech savvy

DE students are proficient in their use of technology which enhances and supports their literacy practices. The data show how students such as Kay, Caleb and Task benefit from the affordances that the technology offers, which then facilitates both their literacy practices and their learning experiences. This aligns with Ngubane-Mokiwa's assumption (2017) that DE students must be proficient in the use of modern technology, suggesting that this characteristic plays a significant role in the ways of being a DE student. This assumption is also illustrated in section 5.1.2 of the CDA, where hyperlinks are integrated into the learning materials. The students whose literacy practices and meaning-making include the use of technology have an advantage over those students who do not have access to technology or do not own a laptop, which affects their technological proficiency. Furthermore, not being technologically proficient places DE students at a disadvantage in that their learning experiences and meaning-making may be negatively affected. This also means that their access to the DE Discourse (Gee, 1996) is compromised, potentially excluding them from it (Lea & Street, 1998). In the next section I present and discuss the findings of the second research question, which explores the impact of spatial resources on students' literacy practices and meaning-making.

6.2 The inflections of space and literacy

The findings in this section respond to the second research question, which deals with the extent to which the artefacts described above and the spaces in which they are used shape the students' literacy and meaning-making practices. At the time of the study the regional learning hubs, community centres and public libraries were closed due the pandemic-related lockdown in South Africa. However, DE students' access to the regional learning hubs pre-

and post-COVID is determined by how far they live from the regional hubs, therefore the spatial resources they have access to become important.

6.2.1 Repurposing the bedroom, lounge and garage

The findings show that DE students engage in their learning in the spaces they have access to. For some they repurpose their bedrooms and lounges to become places in which to engage in their learning, which aligns with the study by Griffiths, Dickinson and Fletcher (2021), who found that students adapted their living spaces to meet their study needs:

I do all my studies ... in my bedroom I sit on my bed: put some continental pillows at my back, and the books, and my phone and start studying. (Akhona)

... this is my space, ... in ... the lounge which is ... very small, but I'm comfortable here. (Oliver)

Task, however, repurposed the garage and uses it as his study:

At home ... I use the garage. [I first remove the car]. I use the garage cause it's quiet. (Task)

6.2.2 In the car, the bus, at work and at McDonalds

DE students are resourceful in creating conducive spaces of learning for themselves. They enact the university (Gunter et al., 2020) and its discourses using the spatial resources they have access to “anywhere, anytime, anyplace” (ibid. p1). The data show how the car, the bus, their places of work and McDonalds become spaces in which they study and learn:

You just park the car in the safe area and you ... log in to the [virtual] class. (Lawrence)

... I'm on the bus early in the morning so that's ... where ... most of the time I study. (Task)

... after work after hours, I find it very, very nice to study ... when everybody's gone and you're alone. ... The workplace is the best place to stay. It's quiet. (Lawrence)

... we tend to have [virtual] lessons after three, after ... work. ... I would sit in McDonald's and then listen to the lesson [there]. (Kay)

6.2.3 Two hours to him, two hours to me: negotiating access to space

The findings highlight the inequality of access to well-resourced conducive spaces and places in which DE students engage in their studies. In response to the question asking about the spaces in which they engage in their learning, the participants described having to navigate shared spaces. For example, Caleb described how he had to share the common family space, whereas Oliver had “completely taken [over] ... the lounge”:

My ... lounge is best, but ... I need also to be considerate ... because I don't live alone. ...
[I] need to compromise (Caleb)

The stark differences in the socio-economic circumstances of the students in the study were apparent in that some students had a dedicated space such as a home office in which to study and learn:

... we had a study room built ... if I'm studying, then everyone knows you're not [to] enter.
(Kay)

Furthermore, the data show that in some instances the differences in circumstances were more severe than others in that some students did not have an adequate space in which to study and learn. This aligns with the study by Aguilera-Hermida (2020), who found that access was related not only to devices, but also about access to space based on how many people shared the same house. The interview data reflect how this challenge materialised in the lives of the research participants:

... there's no space. We're living in a very small house with the kids and wife. There's nowhere to study. You're gonna be studying probably ... sitting on the bed ... or in a chair in the sitting room ... but there [is] a noisy background. ... you can't be concentrating because there's a TV on and people are making noise. You just browse and do what you call scanning. (Lawrence)

I do not have my own space, so all my studying takes place in my living room. ... because that is the only place where I have actual space. ... my dad, he's busy with lots of work ... and sometimes we have to ... share the time [at the table]. So ... two hours to him, two hours to me. So ... the lack of space is probably ... the most difficult thing for me. [A]t times, ... [our] schedules clash. ... And sometimes I have to sacrifice some ... [virtual]

tutorials ... because he will be busy [t]here and [I] can't use the bedroom because my sister's there ... [The lack of space] has affected ... the managing because ... [the academic writing course] is my most difficult [course] that I'm doing because ... I can't fully grasp what they ... Urgh! ... I'm very frustrated. (Samantha)

The findings show that the less space DE students have access to, the more severely their literacy practices and meaning-making are compromised. Unlike the face-to-face university students who were forced to engage in online remote learning due to the pandemic (see chapter 3 section 3.4.3), DE students must enact the university (Gunter et al. 2020) and its Discourses, using the spatial resources they have access to because they do not attend lectures on a physical campus. Yet, when DE students' access to spatial resources are determined by their socio-economic circumstances, their literacy practices and meaning-making are hindered, affecting their access to the DE ways of being (Gee, 1996) and their ability to become part of the DE community (Lea & Street, 1998). In the next section I elaborate on how the DE Discourse is affected as students engage in their studies in the spaces they have access to.

6.4.2 Navigating the Discourses of counter spaces

Social spaces can be shaped by multiple Discourses (Burnett, 2011) when DE students take on multiple identities (Gee, 1996) as they engage in their learning in their homes, at McDonalds, at work and on the bus. Burnett (2011) refers to these spaces as “counter space[s] [each] representing different values and relationships” (p. 216). It is in such counter spaces that DE students have to navigate potentially clashing Discourses. On the one hand, the data show how DE students encounter space as permeable and fluid, the Discourse of which is based on the Discourse they are enacting at the time (Burnett et al., 2012). Lawrence and Kay take on their DE identities with ease and without interference at McDonalds, the Discourse of which they also enact, creating a hybridised space (Burnett, 2015):

I find it ... very, very conducive studying there, is very worthwhile ... it can be quiet. ... They don't bother you when you're sitting there. (Lawrence)

after ... work ... If I'm hungry or want to ... grab a snack, I would sit in McDonalds and then listen to the [virtual] lesson [there]. (Kay)

On the other hand, the findings also reveal the consequences of a conflict of Discourses (Gee, 1996) when a space is shared and resists being hybridised (Burnett, 2015). Caleb and Lawrence, for instance, attempt to enact their DE identity in the lounge, which they share with their families. However, the “intrusion” of family members becomes an obstacle to their taking on this identity in the lounge:

They keep on making noise. You know, the kids won't understand ... you are a university student and you are studying, as a father. ... interruptions from the wife, ... (Lawrence)

[M]y kids also ... want to watch TV, and my wife also wants to watch her programmes ... so I cannot always just [start]... when I feel ... I need to start. So, at 8 o'clock, even though I do start ... they are also watching their programmes. (Caleb)

The data also show how space becomes hostile and averse to being hybridised (Burnett, 2015) because there is not enough physical space for the enactment of other Discourses. Like Caleb and Lawrence, Samantha's DE student identity conflicts with her home Discourse and the work Discourse her father enacts when the table she shares with him is unavailable to her. In addition, there is no space in the bedroom, which she shares with her sister, for her to take on her student identity, resulting in her feeling frustrated and demotivated:

it overwhelms me 'cause sometimes I feel ... Why? I can't do this and that, I need to study, for example, my literature or essay writing. ... I get overwhelmed at times because I feel like certain things have times. With me, I planned everything out and ... then I can't do a certain thing, then everything falls [apart]. (Samantha)

The findings show how DE students' identities flow across different spaces (Burnett et al., 2012). However, the spatial resources they have access to determines the fluidity and uptake of these identities. DE students therefore stand to experience conflict in their social identity and social meaning which places them in a position of not having power (Lea & Street, 1998) and not being able to access the DE ways of being (Gee, 1996). This means that DE students who do not have access to conducive spaces for learning are at a disadvantage when compared to those students who do, emphasising the effects of the inequality of access to spatial resources.

6.3 Dynamic sociomaterial assemblages and (im)material intra-actions at play

The findings presented here respond to both the first and the second research questions, which deal with artefacts and space and their relationship. As DE students enact their literacy practices and make meaning, they become part of a heterogenous sociomaterial assemblage (Fenwick, 2015) that is dynamic (ibid.) and performed into being (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014). In the present study, these sociomaterial assemblages, described below, are made up of a variety of components:

I make a nest [on the couch in the lounge], so I've got the blanket with me, I've got the cup with me. ... then having the laptop ... in my lap, ... I think better with the laptop ... because it becomes a part of my space in my lap. ... like the pen in my hand. (Frank)

[the table] it's by the balcony door, so there's a lot of fresh air. There's a lot of sunlight. I'm close to the kitchen. I'm all [about] ... snacks and ... the kitchen's right here, ... And then I sit in front of a TV ... that I keep on, but very low ... as background noise. Cause I don't like silence. (Oliver)

[I] ... sit flat on the ground, but ... most of the times ... [I] would be on the couch because ... I don't have ... this whole ... study desk ... It's me and the couch. ... When I need to, then I would ... put ... the couch straight in front of the TV, then I ... plug in my HDMI cable to the TV. ... then I would ... watch [videos, read the study material] through the TV from my laptop. But if I don't plug it in, ... then I would just work straight on my laptop, but it depends on the mood and it depends on what I'm doing. ... when I plug it into my TV..., then I would listen to ... ambient ... study music (Caleb)

The components of the sociomaterial assemblages (Fenwick, 2015) do not operate independently as they intra-act (Barad, 2003). For example, Frank “thinks better with the laptop because it becomes a part of my space in my lap ... like the pen in my hand” and Caleb says, “It's me and the couch.” Likewise, the natural elements (Fenwick, 2015) of “fresh air” and “sunlight” intra-act with Oliver's sitting at the table in the lounge while the TV is on and the components in the kitchen are drawn into the assemblage when he wants to snack.

The data illustrate the dynamics of the sociomaterial assemblages and also the ways in which their configuration and composition are inflected (Fenwick, 2015) by the (im)material relationship or intra-action (Barad, 2003; Burnett, 2015) at play. For example, the intra-action (Barad, 2003) of the artefacts and the sociomaterial assemblage performed into being (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014) could be based on the students' goals and intentions (Burnett, 2015), shaping their literacy practices. The findings show how students use pen and paper depending on what stage of the writing process they are engaged in:

I have a small book ... which I would just scribble words on. ... when I'm brainstorming then I would use it. (Caleb)

While Caleb uses pen and paper for brainstorming, the laptop functions as a tool for the more formal function of making notes (see section 6.1.1). This means that the sociomaterial assemblage (Fenwick, 2015) is modified and reconfigured because his purpose has changed. Here we see how the colours he uses for the various sentence types become an integral part of the sociomaterial assemblage that is performed into being (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014).

The intra-action (Barad, 2003) of materiality and the affective (Burnett, 2015) can also influence the composition and inflection of the sociomaterial assemblages performed into being (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014). For example:

... the writing ... takes me longer ... than I thought it would. ... I edit so much, so often and then I get to the point where I'm not going to do anymore. ... the writing process ... is quite agonising still. Apparently it will get easier, but at this point it's quite labour intensive. You know ... you bring insecurities to it as well. ... I think it could have helped more if I had ... jotted down my points on foolscap ... just because ... the thinking is ... different when you write. (Frank)

Frank's reflection on academic writing above illustrates how the materiality of pen and paper might have shaped his ideas differently from when he uses his laptop. Here, we see how the composition of the sociomaterial assemblages performed into being (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014) would have differed. His feelings about academic writing are reflected in the above quote, where he explains how these might have been mitigated through using pen and paper as "it could have helped more". Likewise, Caleb's "mood" determines the composition of the

assemblage that emerges when he incorporates the TV into the enactment of his literacy practices.

In the next section, I discuss the intra-action (Barad, 2003) of materiality and space (Burnett, 2015) and how the composition of the sociomaterial assemblages are inflected (Fenwick, 2015) by it.

The data show how the composition of the sociomaterial assemblage (Fenwick, 2015) that unfolds when DE students enact their literacy practices can be inflected by the intra-action (Barad, 2003) of the material and the counter spaces (Burnett, 2015) that DE students have access to. This suggests that space is to be considered as a component of the sociomaterial assemblage that emerges. Earlier I made the point that DE students take on multiple identities in the counter spaces (Burnett, 2011) they have access to. This then suggests that the Discourses being enacted are also components of the sociomaterial assemblage when DE students take on multiple identities. The findings show how the sociomaterial assemblages that emerge are infused with components that are reminiscent of “... other times and places” (Burnett, 2015: p. 525) – for example, the television in the lounge (Caleb), the menus and food at McDonalds (Kay). The students take on the DE ways of being (Gee, 1996) in these counter spaces as well as the Discourse of the counter space, that is, the social identity they enact when they are at home in the lounge and at McDonalds. Furthermore, the components from “other times and places” (Burnett, 2015: p. 525) are given agency (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014) when, for example, Caleb connects his laptop to the television in the lounge with an HDMI cable and uses it as a monitor on which to read his learning material, and Kay eats a snack while she attends a virtual tutorial at McDonalds.

In the section below I discuss the factors that mediate and heighten the transactional distance that DE students experience as they enact their literacy practices.

6.4 The effects of transactional distance on the DE student

In this section, the interview data respond to the first three research questions that deal with the artefacts that students use, the spaces in which they use these artefacts and the extent to which the tutorial letter facilitates their meaning-making and access to learning.

6.4.1 Factors that mediate transactional distance

As explained in chapter 4, the participants in this study all attended my online tutorials that were conducted during the pandemic. During the online classes, the students would interact with me, other students and the content, mitigating Moore's three types of transactional distance (1997, 1989, 2018) discussed in chapter 3 and signifying how important the laptop and smartphone are to DE students' ways of being (Gee, 1996). Furthermore, the study shows how Hillman, Willis and Gunawardena's (1994) fourth type of distance can be mediated. Alongside the user-friendliness and accessibility of the technology used by the DE institution, the participants in this study were familiar with the technology, MSTeams, which was used to deliver teaching and learning. This means that the study participants also had access to either a laptop or a smartphone. Therefore, when DE students integrate technology and electronic devices such as laptops and smartphones into their DE learning experience then the transactional distance is minimised.

The findings also show how using a smartphone helps to minimise the TD (Moore, 1997, 1989, 2018) between students when they communicate with each other on social media sites such as Telegram:

I use Telegram because we created a group where we're ... students for [the course]. We discuss questions. We answer questions, just ... like I'm in a classroom. (Task)

Furthermore, when DE students use their laptops and smartphones for Umgama emails then the TD (ibid.) between students and teachers as well as students and institution is minimised:

It's synched so I would use my phone, my laptop. So whenever I get any message, on my [university] email address, then it would pop on my phone and also on my laptop. (Caleb)

However, there are factors that enhance the transactional distance (ibid.) that DE students experience, as described below.

6.4.2 Factors that amplify transactional distance

The findings show the implications of DE students' not owning a suitable electronic device with which to engage in their studies. Not owning a laptop amplifies the distance between students and the content of study (Moore, 1997, 1989, 2018) as they do not have access to the benefits of the affordances of technology; this affects their literacy practices and meaning-making negatively. The data also show the discomfort students experience when reading the learning materials on their smartphones (see section 6.1.2). Furthermore, the distance between students and the interface (Hillman, Willis & Gunawardena, 1994) might also be heightened because they might not be able to access with ease the technologies used to deliver teaching and learning. The data also show various levels of access to spatial resources and how this affects students' DE identity. The less space they have access to, the more their enactment of their DE identity is restricted, which heightens all four types of TD they experience.

As shown in the CDA, when hyperlinks are used in the learning materials without an explanation of how they work, affecting students' meaning-making, then the TD between students and the course content (Moore, 1997, 1989, 2018) is amplified. This TD is exacerbated when students who do not have data or a reliable internet connection are not able to access the hyperlinked information, as this has a negative impact on their meaning-making. Furthermore, as shown in the CDA, the distance between students and teachers is heightened through the inconsistent use of pronouns in the course content. This inconsistency negates the educators' attempt to establish a connection with students through the learning materials.

6.4.3 Expanding Moore's theory

Whereas Moore's theory (1997, 1989, 2018) focuses on the TD that arises when students interact with their teachers, their peers and their learning materials, the findings point to the importance of the physical learning spaces in which DE students make meaning. DE students require access to well-resourced and suitable spaces and places to take on their DE student identity. When a suitable space is not accessible, then not only are the enactment and accessibility of the DE Discourse at risk, but the TD that DE students experience is also

amplified. It is thus suggested that Moore's theory (ibid.) be expanded to include another type of TD, namely, that between the student and the physical learning environment.

In this chapter I have presented the interview data and provided a discussion and an evaluation of those data. These include the characteristics of the DE identity, the sociomaterial assemblages that emerge as DE students engage in their literacy practices and meaning-making, in addition to the effects of the physical learning environment on these elements of the DE experience. Furthermore, the factors that minimise and heighten TD have been discussed. In the next chapter, I present the recommendations that emerge from this discussion and conclude this mini-dissertation.

Chapter 7: Recommendations, contributions and conclusions

7.1 Recommendations

This chapter responds to the last research question, which deals with the ways in which the findings of this study can shape institutional policy regarding DE institutions' mediation of the artefacts and spaces that students require for an effective enactment of key literacy practices. Here I present a set of recommendations for Umgama University in which students' access to technology, learning materials and a conducive learning space are addressed. I also explain and elaborate on the study's theoretical contributions and also its contributions to higher education.

7.1.1 Access to technology

This study illustrates that the integration of technology into literacy practices and meaning-making is a key characteristic of the DE student identity. DE students rely on the affordances of technology to support and facilitate the DE experience. It is thus important for DE students to have access to a laptop and to be familiar with technology that can enhance and support their literacy practices and meaning-making (Motteram & Forrester, 2005). It is recommended that Umgama University offer rental laptops to its students in an affordable way so that technology becomes accessible to them. It is also recommended that the university create an easily accessible web site that contains audio-visual resources related to the affordances of technology and the ways in which it can benefit DE students. For example, accessibility tools such as speech to text and text to speech features on DE students' laptops can enhance and support their literacy practices and meaning making.

7.1.2 Access to learning materials

The ways in which DE students use hard copies and rely on their materiality point to its importance to the DE Discourse. It is therefore suggested that the university continue to provide note paper and printed learning materials to students. The findings also reflect the manner in which the TD between students and the learning materials (Moore, 1997, 1989, 2018) is amplified. Benson and Samarawickrema (2009) recommend that teachers factor in "students' lack of familiarity with the use of Web 2.0 technologies for learning" (p. 18) by designing for high levels of dialogue and structure in relation to these technologies to

minimise the TD students' experience. It is therefore suggested that the main tutorial letter of the academic writing course, Text 1, include clear explanations of what hyperlinks are and how they work, and how this translates into their presence in hard copies. The affordances of an internet connection for accessing hyperlinked information should also be made explicit rather than be assumed to form part of students' knowledge when they enter the DE space.

Regarding the design of key texts in the DE space, it is also recommended that the main tutorial letter for this course be updated to include step-by-step and detailed explanations and screenshots showing how to conduct research using Umgama's online library. Motteram and Forrester's (2005) findings foreground how DE students are to be equipped with the "requisite access and retrieval skills" (ibid.: p. 287) in order to reduce the TD they experience. Alternatively, this could be integrated into the online site for the course. It is further recommended that pronouns be used consistently to retain the personalised and friendly tone throughout Text 2 as this would enhance the dialogue between lecturers and students, minimising the TD between them. In this way the ideological approach to literacy as espoused in Text 2 would be implemented as the diverse social identities that first-year DE students bring to the course would be considered. In addition, the DE students' ways of being (Gee, 1996) will be explicated and supported.

7.1.3 Access to conducive learning spaces

While it is acknowledged that the regional learning hubs and other public spaces such as libraries were closed when this study was conducted, the study has highlighted how a lack of access to well-resourced conducive physical learning environments in which to engage in their learning adversely affects students' literacy practices and meaning-making. In addition, this finding has implications for the aspirations of the DE institutions who implement ODeL as a way of redressing the inequalities of the country's apartheid past by way of enabling access to higher education for everyone, irrespective of location (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017). It is evident that South African students engaged in DE experience challenges with regard to access to technology, as shown in section 6.1, and also access to conducive spaces in which to study and learn. DE universities must take cognisance of these challenges and take into account the diversity of the student population when implementing ODeL as its teaching and learning approach.

Furthermore, the ODeL model of DE is intended to offer learning opportunities “everywhere [students] are located” (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017: p. 112). Therefore, it is recommended that Umgama University should build more accessible regional learning hubs where students can study and learn. The university should also continue to build relationships with community centres that have internet access and partner with other universities where DE students can study and learn should they not have access to a conducive learning space at home.

7.2 Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to the theories which frame it in a number of ways. First, I draw on the intersections between (im)materiality and sociomateriality. I point out that sociomaterial assemblages are inflected by (im)material relationships that occur as DE students, who are considered a component of the assemblage, enact their literacy practices. Secondly, I suggest that the counter spaces in which DE students engage and the multiple Discourses that are enacted in them are components of the sociomaterial assemblages that emerge. This notion then intertwines the theory of Academic Literacies with (im)materiality and the approach of sociomateriality.

The findings also respond to the critique that sociomateriality does not take into account the social structures in which intra-action (Barad, 2003) occurs. In this study the contexts and settings such as home, work and the public spaces in which DE students engage in their literacy practices and meaning-making are considered. This is advanced by the finding that DE students’ identities can be fluid and multiple, inflected by the spatial resources that DE students have access to, which has an impact on the sociomaterial assemblages that emerge. Here again we see a confluence of the theories of Academic Literacies and (im)materiality and the perspective of sociomateriality.

The theory of transactional distance (Moore, 1997, 1989, 2018) is also expanded upon by this study. The findings show that all four types of TD are heightened when DE students do not have access to the spatial resources in which to engage in their learning and enact their DE identity. It is therefore suggested that space or the physical learning environment be considered as an contributing factor to the transactional distance that DE students may experience, the mediation of which is described above in section 7.1.3.

7.3 Contributions to higher education

This study contributes to the higher education landscape in that it provides insights into the lived experiences of DE students' literacy practices, the sociomaterial assemblages that emerge as they enact their literacy practices and make meaning and the counter spaces that they have access to in which they study and learn. These insights are relevant to face-to-face universities too in that these universities today implement remote emergency learning so as not to interrupt the academic project when faced with situations such as student protests that sometimes interfere with teaching and learning on campus.

A limitation of the study, however, is that it does not examine student performance in relation to the artefacts they use and the spaces in which they engage in their literacy and meaning-making practices. A basis for future research has been created, though, to better understand DE students' literacy practices and lived experiences of fluid spaces and multiple Discourses and how this contributes to or impedes their academic success in a South African context.

7.4 Conclusion

This study has highlighted the lived experiences of DE students and the ways in which they enact their literacy practices and make meaning through sociomaterial assemblages that inflect according to the counter spaces they have access to and the (im)material intra-actions (Barad, 2003) at play. The notion of access and its implications for the DE students' identity has been a common thread in the study – regarding access to technology and conducive learning spaces. Furthermore, the CDA has also shown how the use of discourse at the levels of text and discursive practice in the learning materials affect DE students' access to meaning-making. These findings provide insights that can serve as entry points that DE institutions can access in responding to the challenges that have become evident through this study, which can work towards facilitating the provision of learning that is accessible to all.

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Appendix A (First invitation email to students)

Ref#: 2021_RPSC_043

Dear [REDACTED] student

My name is Lynne Isaacs. I am a Masters student in the School of Education at UCT. I am also a [REDACTED] tutor in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] - courses that you are enrolled in.

As a researcher, I am interested in how you experience writing at university as a first-year distance education student. I am also interested in how you create your sense of being a university student since Unisa does not have a campus like contact universities do. I would like to find out what items or objects, such as your smartphone/laptop/pen and paper, you use to produce your written tasks and the connection between these objects and the space in which you use these objects. I am also interested in how the space/environment you are in affects your producing a written task such as an essay or a report.

As a first-year student at [REDACTED], you are in the ideal position to provide valuable first-hand information about writing at university from your own perspective. I would like to talk to you for about an hour via MS Teams/Zoom/Skype/WhatsApp or just through an ordinary phone call, depending on your personal preference and your access to the internet. In this time, I will try to capture your unique experiences as a first-year distance education student.

You will choose a false name (pseudonym) for me to use in the interview as a way to protect your personal information and maintain confidentiality. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refrain from answering questions which you are not comfortable with and you may withdraw from the interview at any point without any consequences. If you feel distressed by any of the content discussed or feel the need to seek professional help: please contact Counselling and Career Development on [cptcounselling@\[REDACTED\].ac.za](mailto:cptcounselling@[REDACTED].ac.za).

If you are willing to participate: please click [here](#).

If you have any research study related questions please email me at isaacs.lynne@gmail.com or call me on 082 876 5448. For any ethical concerns contact Dr Retha Visagie – Deputy Chairperson of the Research Ethics Review Committee on (012) 429-2478 or [visagrg@\[REDACTED\].ac.za](mailto:visagrg@[REDACTED].ac.za).

Best regards
Lynne Isaacs

Appendix B (Second invitation email to students)

Ref#: 2021_RPSC_043

Dear [REDACTED] student

My name is Lynne Isaacs. I am a Masters student in the School of Education at UCT. I am also a [REDACTED] tutor in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] - courses that you are enrolled in.

As a researcher, I am interested in how you experience writing at university as a first-year distance education student. I am also interested in how you create your sense of being a university student since Unisa does not have a campus like contact universities do. I would like to find out what items or objects, such as your smartphone/laptop/pen and paper, you use to produce your written tasks and the connection between these objects and the space in which you use these objects. I am also interested in how the space/environment you are in affects your producing a written task such as an essay or a report.

As a first-year student at [REDACTED] you are in the ideal position to provide valuable first-hand information about writing at university from your own perspective. I would like to talk to you for about an hour via MS Teams/Zoom/Skype/WhatsApp or just through an ordinary phone call, depending on your personal preference and your access to the internet. The airtime/data costs will be covered by the study. In this time, I will try to capture your unique experiences as a first-year distance education student.

You will choose a false name (pseudonym) for me to use in the interview as a way to protect your personal information and maintain confidentiality. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refrain from answering questions which you are not comfortable with and you may withdraw from the interview at any point without any consequences. If you feel distressed by any of the content discussed or feel the need to seek professional help, please contact Counselling and Career Development on [cptcounselling@\[REDACTED\].ac.za](mailto:cptcounselling@[REDACTED].ac.za).

If you are willing to participate, please click [here](#).

If you have any research study related questions, please email me at isaacs.lynne@gmail.com or call me on 082 876 5448. For any ethical concerns contact Dr Retha Visagie – Deputy Chairperson of the Research Ethics Review Committee on (012) 429-2478 or [visagrg@\[REDACTED\].ac.za](mailto:visagrg@[REDACTED].ac.za).

Best regards
Lynne Isaacs

Appendix C (Consent letter)

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

5.07 Hoerikwaggo Building

North Lane, Upper Campus

Postal Address: University of Cape Town, Private Bag, Rondebosch 7701

Telephone: (021) 650-5040

Fax: (021) 650-5045

Email: Abongwe.Bangeni@uct.ac.za

Website: <http://www.ched.uct.ac.za/>

Ethics clearance reference number: 2021_URERC_010

Research permission reference number (if applicable): 2021_RPSC_043

17 August 2021

Title

Exploring the impact of (im)materiality on the literacy and meaning-making practices of first-year students at a South African distance education institution: implications for support

Dear

My name is Lynne Isaacs and I am doing research towards a MA in Education (Applied Language and Literacy Studies) at the University of Cape Town, which is supervised by Associate Professor Bongki Bangeni who is based in the Center for Higher Education Development (CHED). We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled *Exploring the impact of (im)materiality on the literacy and meaning-making practices of first-year students at a South African distance education institution: implications for support*.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to explore first-time enrolled first year distance education students' experiences of writing at university. I am also interested in how you create your sense of being a university student since your university does not have a campus like contact universities do. I would like to find out what items/objects/stuff, such as your smartphone/laptop/pen and paper, you use to produce your written tasks and the connection between these objects and the space in which you use these objects. I am also interested in finding out how the space/environment you are in affects your process of producing a written task such as an essay or a report.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

Your contact details were obtained from the ICT Department in Pretoria. As a first-time enrolled first year student at a distance education university, you are in an ideal position to provide valuable first-hand information about the process of writing at university from your perspective. Twelve students from an academic writing course and twelve students from a business writing course are invited to participate in the study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

I will interview you for approximately an hour within which time I hope to capture your unique experiences by asking you questions about the objects you use to produce your writing and where you produce your writing as a first-time enrolled first year distance education student.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participation in this study is voluntary and there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. You are under no obligation to consent to participate. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You may choose to not answer questions that you are not comfortable with. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will gain an awareness of and insight into your literacy practices and the ways in which the objects you use to produce writing and the space(s) in which you produce writing influences your writing practices at university.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects should you participate in the study. If you feel distressed by any of the questions asked during the interview, you may withdraw from the interview. If you feel the need to seek professional help, please contact Counselling & Career Development on cptcounselling@█.ac.za

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Your identity will be kept confidential. No one, apart from me (the researcher), will know about your involvement in this research. No one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. You will choose a pseudonym (false name) when you give consent to participate in the study and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

I will store hard copies of your answers for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in my study for future research or academic purposes. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further research ethics review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of my computer through the use of a relevant software programme, if necessary.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no payment or reward offered, financial or otherwise. In the event of virtual interviews, due to COVID-19 legislation, you will be reimbursed for your data usage.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Humanities. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

The interview transcripts will be available for your consideration. If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact me, Lynne Isaacs, on 082 876 5448 or isclyn005@uct.ac.za.

Should you require any further information or want to contact me about any aspect of this study, please contact me on 082 876 5448 or isclyn005@uct.ac.za.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Associate Professor Bongani Bangeni on (021) 650 5040 or Abongwe.Bangeni@uct.ac.za.

If you have any ethical concerns, contact Dr Retha Visagie – Deputy Chairperson of the Research Ethics Review Committee on (012) 429-2478 or visargr@uct.ac.za.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Kind regards

Lynne Isaacs

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant's Name and Surname..... (please print)

Participant's chosen pseudonym: _____

Participant's Signature : Date.....

Researcher's Name and Surname: LYNNE ISAACS

Researcher's signature: Date.....

Appendix D (Interview guiding questions)

Guidelines for semi-structured Interview questions

The first sub-question will inform the first series of question:

Sub-question 1:

What are the key artefacts used by first-year distance education students to produce writing in an academic writing course and a business writing course at a distance education university?

Guiding Questions:

- What are some of the items/objects that you use as a distance education student to study/complete your assignments/be a student in this course?
- Study materials – are they printed hard copies or soft copies?
- Which do you prefer? Why?
- Explore the advantages and disadvantages of either choice stated
- Explain how you use the study guide to prepare for your assignments/exams?
- Do you write or type your assignments?
- What do you use to do this?
- Do you use a laptop/smartphone/desktop computer? Why
- How does this help you in your studies?
- Do you use mobile data or a fixed internet connection? Why?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages for you?
- Can you explain how you go about submitting your assignments?
- What are difficulties are you experiencing in this course? Why do you think this is so?
- Explore any aspects of the above that may emerge by “Tell me more about.... “

The second sub-question will inform the second set of questions:

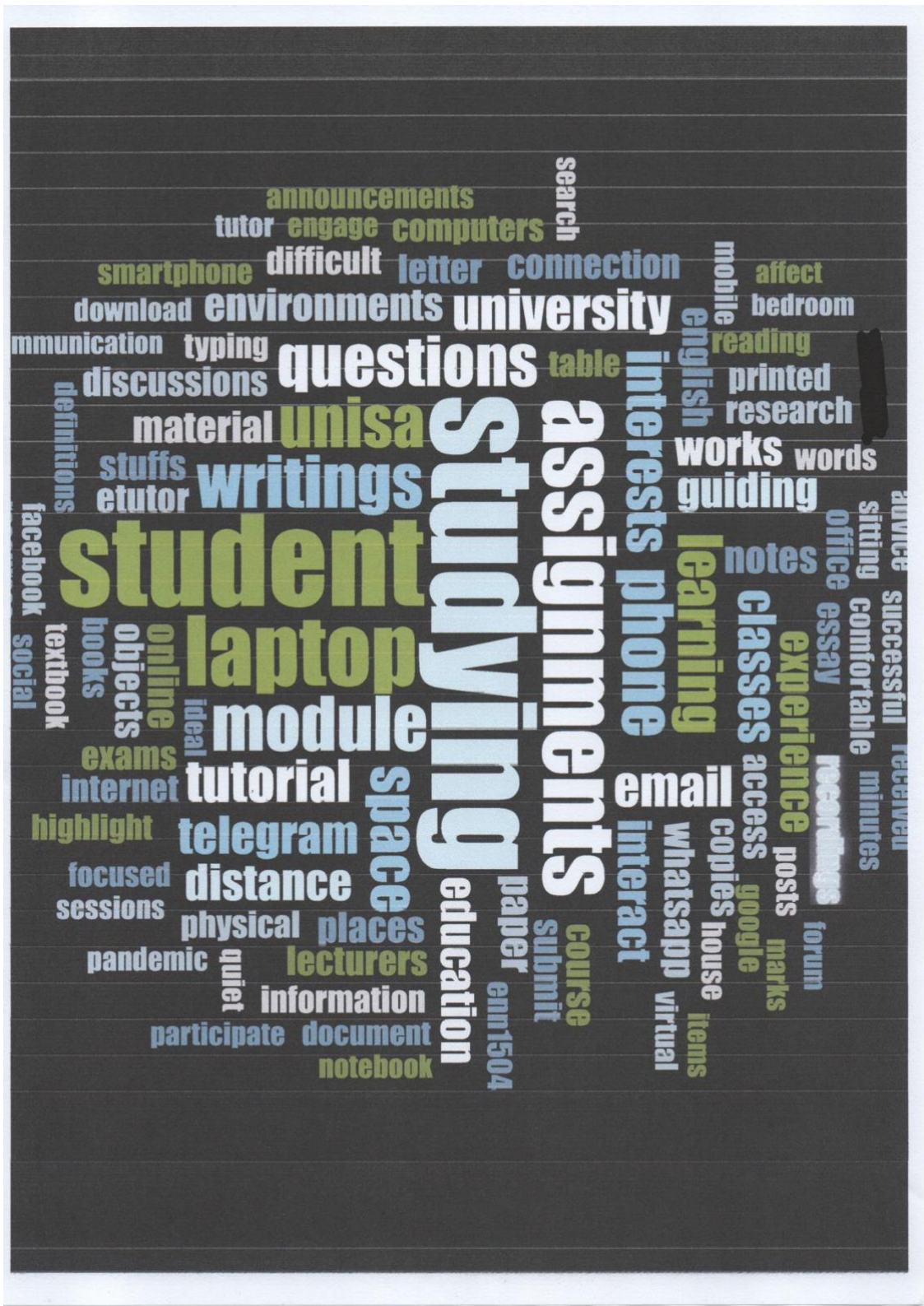
Sub-question 2:

To what extent does physical and intangible materiality in the form of the above artefacts and the spaces in which they are used shape students’ literacy and meaning-making practices in these two courses

Guiding Questions:

- What objects/items help to make you feel like a university student?
- In which ways do these items help to make you feel like a university student?
- Where do you do your studying/assignments – at home, work, learning centre, library? Why?
- What do you do to create/how do you create a learning environment/space for yourself?
- How does this affect the way that you manage the requirements of this course?
- How does this affect your understanding of the written assignments?
- Which physical space/environment works best for you? Why?
- How do go about meeting other students in this course?
- Do you meet physically with other students? Where and when do you meet?
- Do you interact with other students online? What about lecturers and tutors?
- Which virtual spaces/social media are you active on that are related to this course? (university approved or not approved)
- Which type of interaction do you prefer? Why?
- In which ways does this interaction help/contribute to your being a distance education student/ to your writing tasks?
- What do you wish you knew before you registered at this university? Before you enrolled in this writing course?
- What advice would you give students who are new to this university? learning environment/experience/this course?
- What is the ideal environment for a distance education student to be successful and to be successful in this course?
- Explore any aspects of the above that may emerge by “Tell me more about.... “

Appendix E (Word frequency query)



Appendix F (A section of the NVivo codebook)

Interview Themes

Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Advice		0	0
Advice for ENN [REDACTED] success		1	3
Advice for success		6	17
Advice to new ENG [REDACTED] students		2	2
Advice to new ENN [REDACTED] students		3	4
Advice to new students		10	24
Things/objects I use		14	110
Applications I use		2	2
Software		8	13
Internet Connection		15	53
Mobile data		3	4
Laptop		15	95
Disadvantage of the laptop		1	1
Learning materials		0	0
Hard copies		15	38
Soft copies		10	26
Study Guide		7	16
Textbook		10	16

Appendix G (Nodes grouped under research questions)

1. What are the key artefacts used by first-year students to produce writing in an academic writing course and a business writing course at a distance education university?

Things/objects I use
Applications I use
Software
Internet Connection
Mobile data
Laptop
Disadvantage of the laptop
Learning Material
Hard copies
Soft copies
Study Guide
Textbook
Tutorial letters
My desk
Need tangible things
Smartphone
Stationery
Things I have around me when engaged in studies
What I need to study
Learning process
How and why I colour code
How I learn or study

I take screenshots during virtual classes
Writing process
Organising myself
My studies have changed the way I do things

2. To what extent does physical and intangible materiality in the form of the above artefacts and the spaces in which they are used shape students' literacy and meaning-making practices in these two courses?

The space or place where I study
Creating a learning space for myself
Creating a learning space is not only physical but also mental
Studying at work
Support at work
The effect of the space or place on me
The space where I study or learn
Times that I start on studies
What I'm doing determines where I do it and vice versa

Being online

Using the internet to supplement the SG and WB - ENN

Social media
Benefits of social media
Disadvantages of social media
Facebook
Telegram
Telegram (2)
WhatsApp

I prefer studying at home

3. How can the findings shape policy and instructional design within distance education teaching and learning programmes to facilitate students' literacy and meaning-making practices?

Student Support

Communication from the WC Learning Centre

Discussion forums

ENG General Site

etutor

etutor vs virtual tutorials

Frustration with academic staff

Frustration with virtual classes

Lecturers responses

my

No classes to attend

Online classes

Prefer going to a class

Suggestions to course designers

Tutor

Virtual classes - what I appreciate or like - how to run them

Virtual sessions hosted by academics

Virtual tutorial classes

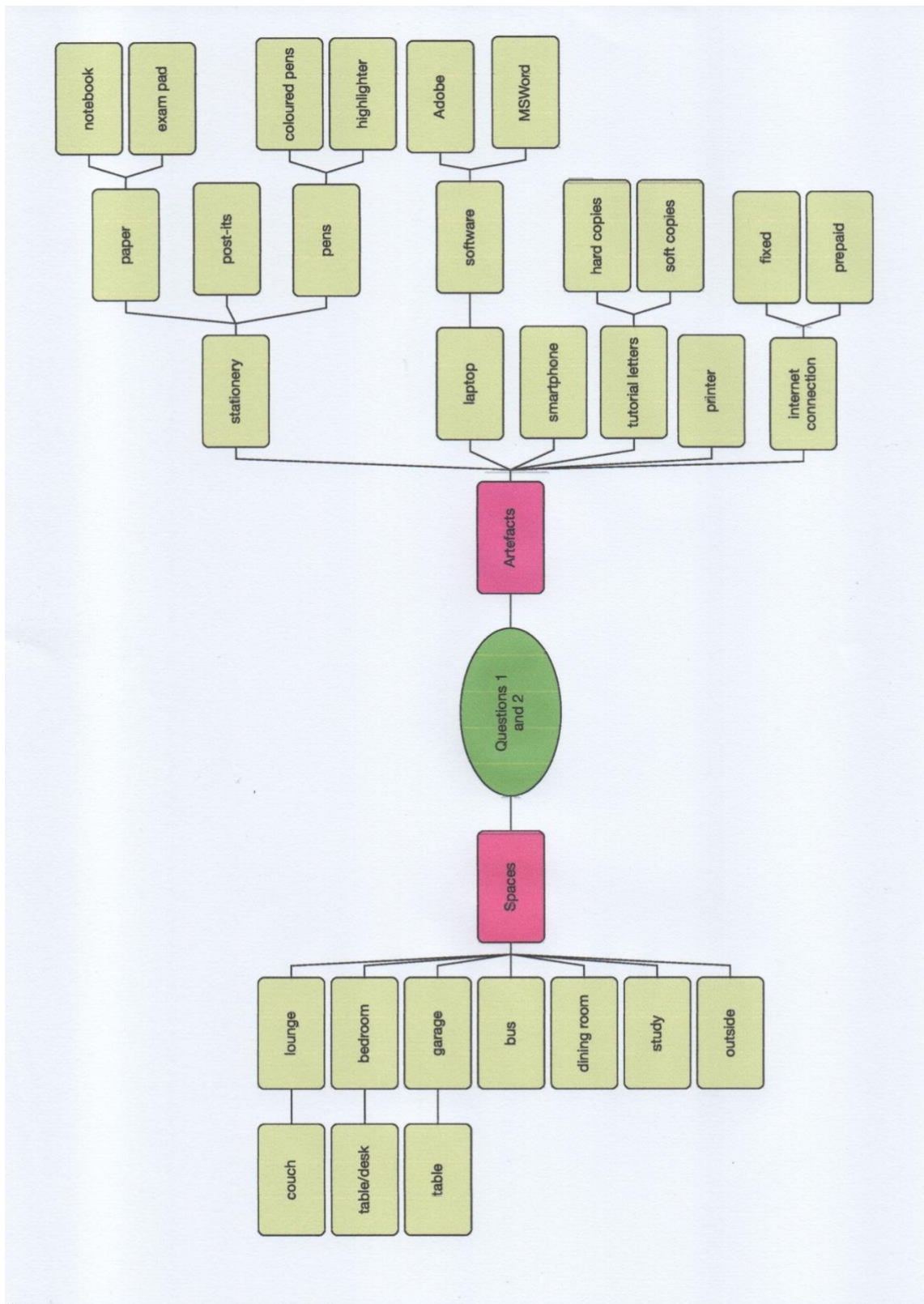
What makes me feel like a university student

Tech savvy or not

Getting help with technology

Preparing for university

Appendix H (NVivo map)



Tutorial Letter [REDACTED]3/2022

Academic Language and Literacy in English



Semesters 1 and 2

Department of English Studies

This tutorial letter contains important information about your module.

BARCODE



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Compiler and Administrator

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULE	6
1 LEARNING UNIT 1: Integrating Reading and Writing	6
1.1 Learning Objectives	6
1.2 Introduction.....	6
1.3 Learning Activity 1: Decoding a variety of academic texts	7
1.4 Learning Activity 2: Purpose of Academic Reading	8
1.5 Learning Activity 3: Reading Strategies for Academic Texts	8
1.6 Learning Activity 4: Reading and Writing Strategies.....	9
1.7 E-tutor Task 1	11
1.8 Learning Activity 5: Digital Reading and Writing Strategies.....	11
1.9 Learning Activity 6: Digital Reading Strategies.....	11
1.10 Learning Activity 7: Digital Writing Strategies	12
1.11 References	15
2 Learning Unit 2: Reading and Writing in Academic Contexts – Essay types Part 1	15
2.1 Learning Objectives	15
2.2 Introduction.....	15
2.3 Learning Activity 1: Expository Essay Writing	15
2.4 E-Tutor Task 2.....	22
2.5 Learning Activity 2: Writing for Audience and Purpose.....	22
2.6 Learning Activity 3: Format of an academic expository essay	23
2.7. Learning Activity 4: The Writing Process.....	25
2.8 Learning Activity 5: Prewriting Strategies.....	27
2.9 Learning Activity 6: Argumentative Essay writing	32
2.10 Learning Activity 7: Developing supporting sentences or sub-claims	34
2.11 Learning Activity 8: The comparison and contrast essay.....	36
2.12 Learning Activity 9: Cause and Effect	37
2.13 References	40
3 Learning Unit 3: Genre Awareness - Essay types Part 2	40
3.1 Learning Objectives	40
3.2 Introduction.....	40
3.3 Learning Activity 1: Genre awareness and types of genres.....	41
3.4 Learning Activity 2: What is genre?.....	41
3.5 E-Tutor Task 1	42

3.6 Learning Activity 3: Genre: a set of processes	42
3.7 E-Tutor Task 2.....	43
3.8 Learning Activity 4: How to recognise “genre”?.....	43
3.9 Learning Activity 4: The genre of expository writing	44
3.10 E-Tutor Task 3.....	45
3.11 Learning Activity 5: The importance of a thesis driven argument	46
3.12 Learning Activity 6: Prewriting stage	48
3.13. E-Tutor Task 4.....	50
3.14 Learning Activity 7: The genre of discussion.....	50
3.15. e-Tutor Task 5.....	51
3.16 Learning Activity 8: What is Discussion?.....	51
3.17 Learning Activity 9: The genre of cause and effect writing	54
3.18 Learning Activity 10: Using Graphic Organizers	55
3.19. E-Tutor Task 6.....	56
3.20 Learning Activity 11: Incorporating Graphic tools into the planning of a cause and effect essay	57
3.21 E-Tutor Task 7	57
3.22 Conclusion.....	58
3.23 References	58
4 Learning Unit 4: Research-based Essays.....	59
4.1 Learning Objectives	59
4.2 Introduction.....	59
4.3 Learning Activity 1: Research based essay writing	59
4.4 Learning Activity 2: Synthesising information	62
4.5 Learning Activity 3: Gathering information about research essay topic	63
4.6 E-tutor Task 1	66
4.7 E-Tutor Task 2.....	67
4.8 Learning Activity 4: Referencing	67
4.9 Learning Activity 5: Citations and references	68
4.10 Learning Activity 6: Referencing in the text of your assignment	69
4.11 Learning Activity 7: Recommended reading and other library sources	70
4.12 Learning Activity 8: Evaluating and using information	71
4.13 Learning Activity 9: Reference List.....	71
4.14 E-tutor Task 3	73
4.15 Learning Activity 10: Writing reports.....	73
4.16 Learning Activity 11: Types of reports	74
4.17 References	76
5 Learning Unit 5: Academic Language across the Curriculum.....	76

5.1 Learning Objectives	76
5.2 Introduction.....	77
5.3. Learning Activity 1: Defining academic language	77
5.4 E-Tutor Task 1	78
5.5 Learning Activity 2: Titles or Headings	78
5.6 Learning Activity 3: Analyzing the Language of a Text.....	79
5.7 Learning Activity 4: Academic Features of Texts	81
5.8 Learning Activity 5: An Op-ed	83
5.9 Learning Activity 6: Reading short texts such as journal abstracts, and summaries	83
5.10 Learning Activity 7: Academic vocabulary and academic discourse	85
5.11 E-Tutor Task 2	86
5.12 Learning Activity 8: What is a paragraph?.....	86
5.13 Learning Activity 9: General tips on writing a paragraph	87
5.14 Learning Activity 10: Sentences, Vocab, and Discourse	87
5.15 E-tutor Task 3	88
5.16 Learning Activity 11: Academic discourse	88
5.17 E-tutor Task 4	89
5.18 Learning Activity 12: Academic Word Lists	90
5.19 Learning Activity 13: Subject-specific vocabulary	90
5.20 Conclusion	91
5.21 References	91

INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULE

The purpose of the module is to develop your abilities of critical reading and critical writing which are essential academic skills, and to improve your Academic English competence. The module will help you to develop your ability to read and write academic genres, such as argumentative essay writing, research-based essays, research articles, lectures, and using appropriate academic conventions, such as citation.

As a university student, you will be exposed to a variety of texts which may contain unfamiliar terminology or complex concepts. However, as you develop your academic skills, reading academic material will become easier. Good reading skills also leads to good writing. In Unit 1, you will be exposed to the interconnectedness between reading, writing and digital literacies.

Throughout the Tutorial Letter, we present English for Academic Purposes as a major component of what is widely referred to as Academic Literacies. Academic Literacies refers to a variety of skills, such as reading, thinking, doing, speaking, listening, and writing in specific academic contexts. The new module is therefore named, Academic Language and Literacy in English.

We encourage you to read this Tutorial Letter in conjunction with all the other Tutorial Letters that are prescribed for the module in 2020.

1 LEARNING UNIT 1: Integrating Reading and Writing

1.1 Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this learning unit students will be able to:

- Decode a variety of academic texts to which they have been exposed.
- Display insight into various academic reading and writing strategies. □ Display knowledge of various digital reading and writing strategies.

1.2 Introduction

In order to develop academic writing skills you need to be familiar with the discourses of your discipline. Different areas of study have different discourses (types of writing structures and language use, e.g engineers write differently from social scientists). When reading and writing academic texts, important aspects like *purpose*, *audience* and *structure* have an impact on how you decode a particular text. As a student you will encounter various types of texts within your discipline as well as outside of your discipline.

In this module, we encourage you to practice reading-to-learn, meaningful learning, and transformative learning. This requires participating in all the activities that are in this Tutorial Letter, including the activities that are in the prescribed and recommended books. In order to do this, you must create or keep a **student exercise** book, diary, journal or electronic diary.

1.3 Learning Activity 1: Decoding a variety of academic texts

In order to achieve the second outcome, you will need many opportunities to gain knowledge and practice in the following:

- Skimming and scanning texts for relevant information
- Using context clues to infer meaning of unknown words
- Identifying the argument, purpose and target audience of the text
- Identify and understanding the genre of a text
- Distinguishing main ideas from supporting information
- Understanding the writer's use of research to support argument
- Understanding how information from various academic texts is synthesized to create a cohesive, coherent and unified composition



Student Exercise 1: Writing conventions

Find three journal articles from a typical research journal in your field and familiarize yourself with writing [conventions](#) in your field of study. To access three journals, visit the following link:

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/search/basic?sid=396e8be9-0e46-4039-9e0fbee314b805%40sdc-v-sessmgr05&vid=0&sdb=edspub&tid=3000EP>.

Then after the link select your subject area and after you have done so, select “journal” under “Resource type” in the bottom left part of the screen.



Student Exercise 2: Text types

Text types: Here is a list of text types and some information about them. Match the text types and information in order to establish valid pairs.

TEXT TYPE	INFORMATION
Textbooks	These could be 80,000 words long for PhD students.
Shorter student texts: essays	These describe changes or developments, e.g. within a company or social group.
Longer student texts: dissertations and theses	These are written for readers who have expert knowledge of a topic.

Research articles	These show the importance of a piece of research.
Case studies	Access these to find out about writing in your discipline.
Reports	This is a good place to start your research.

1.4 Learning Activity 2: Purpose of Academic Reading

Reading across genres, from books and magazines to newspapers and blogs, is something students should be encouraged to do in their free time because it can be both educational and fun. At [REDACTED] however, we generally expect students to read sources that have particular value in the context of a course. Why is academic reading beneficial?

- **Information comes from reputable sources:** Web sites and blogs can be a source of insight and information, but not all are useful as academic resources. They may be written by people or companies whose main purpose is to share an opinion or sell you something. Academic sources such as textbooks and scholarly journal articles, on the other hand, are usually written by experts in the field and have to pass stringent [peer review](#) requirements in order to get published.
- **Learn how to form arguments:** In most universities except for creating writing, when lecturers ask you to write an essay, they expect it to be argumentative in style. This means that the goal of the paper is to research a topic and develop an argument about it using evidence and facts to support your position. Since many of our university reading assignments (especially journal articles) are written in a similar style, you'll gain experience studying their strategies and learning to emulate them.
- **Exposure to different viewpoints:** One purpose of assigned academic readings is to give students exposure to different viewpoints and ideas. For example, in an ethics class, you might be asked to read a series of articles written by medical professionals and religious leaders who are [pro-life or pro-choice](#) and consider the validity of their arguments. Such experience can help you wrestle with ideas and beliefs in new ways and develop a better understanding of how others' views differ from your own.

1.5 Learning Activity 3: Reading Strategies for Academic Texts

In unit 2 you will learn more about academic reading. Effective reading requires more engagement than just reading the words on the page. In order to learn and retain what you read, it's a good idea to do things like circling key words, writing notes, and reflecting. Actively reading academic texts can be challenging for students who are used to reading for entertainment alone, but practicing the following steps will get you up to speed:

- **Preview:** You can gain insight from an academic text before you even begin the reading assignment. For example, if you are assigned a nonfiction book, read the title, the back of the book, and table of contents. Scanning this information can give you an initial idea of what you'll be reading and some useful context for thinking about it. You can also

start to make connections between the new reading and knowledge you already have, which is another strategy for retaining information.

- **Read:** While you read an academic text, you should have a pen or pencil in hand. Circle or highlight key concepts. Write questions or comments in the margins or in a notebook. This will help you remember what you are reading and also build a personal connection with the subject matter.
- **Summarize:** After you read an academic text, it's worth taking the time to write a short summary—even if your instructor doesn't require it. The exercise of jotting down a few sentences or a short paragraph capturing the main ideas of the reading is enormously beneficial: it not only helps you understand and absorb what you read but gives you ready study and review materials for exams and other writing assignments.
- **Review:** It always helps to revisit what you've read for a quick refresher. It may not be practical to thoroughly reread assignments from start to finish, but before class discussions or tests, it's a good idea to skim through them to identify the main points, reread any notes at the ends of chapters, and review any summaries you've written.



Student Exercise 3

Read Texts A, B and C below and answer the following questions for each text in your student exercise book:

- Which discipline, do you think, it was written for?
- What do you think the text is about?
- Highlight any words and [linguistic features](#) you think are noteworthy.

- **TEXT A**

Click [here](#) to access the text. The title of the text is 'What we teach must be relevant.'

- **TEXT B**

Click [here](#) to access the text. The title of the text is 'Lesson 28: Choices, Consequences (Genesis 13: 5 – 18).'

- **TEXT C**

Click [here](#) to access the text. The title is 'Education improves decision-making ability, study finds.'

1.6 Learning Activity 4: Reading and Writing Strategies

Imagine if you could not read or write; would you survive in academia? The answer is No. It would be like living in water yet you cannot swim. Reading and writing are two of the most important skills for academic success.

The question is how do we read and write academic texts? This section of the unit introduces you to the strategies of reading and writing different academic texts. The section begins with reading and later discusses writing strategies.

We can fill up pages if we were to list all the type of texts you will be expected to read in your academic journey. However, we can name a few. Academic texts can be conveniently classified into categories such as:

1. informational texts which include
 - explanations
 - laboratory and filed reports
 - articles
 - instructions
 - case study
 - abstracts
- 2 graphical texts, which include:
 - maps,
 - diagrams,
 - charts,
 - tables,
 - graphs
 - timetables etc... and
3. literary texts, such as:
 - stories,
 - novels,
 - descriptions, □ biographies
 - and poems.

The first question to think about is: If all the texts we have listed above are regarded as academic texts, why then do they have different names? Why is a case study referred to as such, and an abstract, called an abstract? The answer is simple, texts are different in structure and in purpose. In order to read a text, you must first have an idea of:

- Its structure – how it is laid out
- Its purpose – why or for what reason it has been written.

Let's examine one familiar type of text: the Newspaper.

You can instantly recognize text A and text B above as newspaper articles, typically found in the news section of the paper.



Student Exercise 4

List 5 features which define/ distinguish these two texts as newspaper articles.

You may have mentioned features such as headings, subheadings, indexes, graphics, italicized or bolded words or lines, columns, pictures etc. these form just some of the feature that constitute the structure of a newspaper.



Student Exercise 5

All Texts have structure. In a short paragraph describe the structure of the newspaper article. Now do the same with an academic text that you have encountered on one of the subjects you study.

- What is the name of the text?
- How is the information in the text organized? (are there charts, tables, etc)?
- Which of the following features were used in your chosen text?
- Where were they used?
- Why do you think the feature was used?

1.7 E-tutor Task 1

Here is an organizer you can use. The first three entries under “FEATURE” are just examples.

FEATURE	WHERE WAS IT USED	WHY WAS IT USED
Headings		
Bolded words		
Graphs		

This might seem a mundane exercise, but it is essential as a beginner exercise for understanding the structure of a text and most importantly what purpose the feature serves and where it appears.

1.8 Learning Activity 5: Digital Reading and Writing Strategies

The higher educational landscape in the 21st century is continuously changing due to the rapid introduction and advancement of digital technologies for teaching and learning purposes. Open distance institutions of learning conduct their teaching and learning mostly on digital platforms. Before we get into the ‘know-how’ and the nuances of digital reading and writing strategies, firstly, we should give you a broad and a brief definition of digital literacy in context. Digital literacy involves the ability to use the technological tools available to you for teaching and learning in a particular institution, course or a subject. Consult (Blikstad-Balas, 2015; Osterman, 2013; Belshaw, 2012) to discover more about digital literacy.

1.9 Learning Activity 6: Digital Reading Strategies

Reading is a precursor to writing but it is a challenging and a daunting task for one to engage in especially when one does not know how to execute it. Reading in the 21st century is mostly done on digital platforms as alluded to above – this means that it is consistently moving away from the old paper-based reading. It can be done through digital platforms, either online (reading texts on

the internet) or offline (reading texts not on internet e.g. pdf or Microsoft Office texts). *Figure 1* below is an example of how to read a digital text offline.

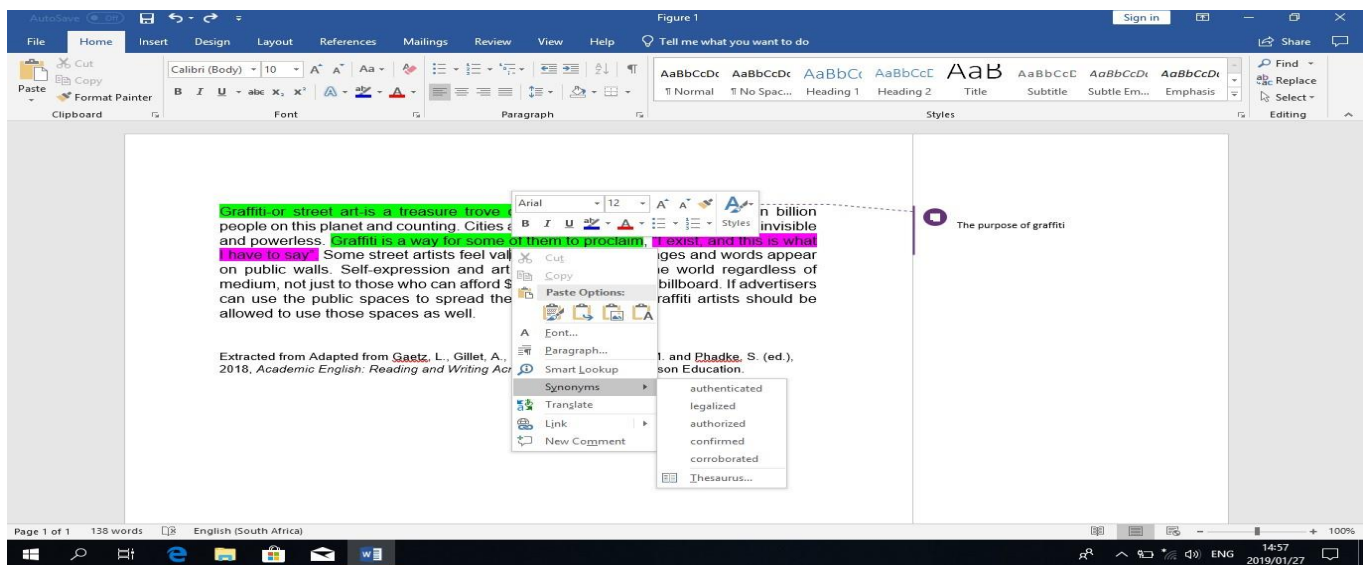


Figure 1.1: Digital Reading

Figure 1 above is an illustration of how to use Microsoft Word to read a given text. The text is highlighted in different colours to show the main ideas of the text or what the text is about. The different colours represent different ideas. It shows the reader is using Microsoft Word to check for the synonyms of words that he or she is unsure/unfamiliar with for further clarity. It also shows the notes that the reader is making while reading the given text. Digital reading enables the readers to store either read or non-read texts on their digital devices. These texts can also be accessed anytime and anywhere as long as the readers have digital devices to access them. The reader may choose to share the text shown on figure 1 to other recipients for reading purposes and to connect with one another's line of thinking and reading. Because digital texts can be constantly worked with they do not deteriorate or lose quality as can happen with a written text. This means that such texts can be used for longer periods of time thereby saving money and print resources.



Student Exercise 6

Identify any text of your choice in your prescribed textbook, apply your own digital reading strategies on it, share it with a fellow student or on the e-tutor's site for this module, and ask for comments. Use figure 1 above as an example. You should also use your own digital reading strategies. A screenshot should be taken and uploaded on the e-tutor's site and ask for comments from the e-tutor and fellow students.

1.10 Learning Activity 7: Digital Writing Strategies

Digital writing enables you to write and share what you have written with your fellow students or your lecturers for comments by sending the written text to and from each other repeatedly. The comments can be done in track changes and the suggested ideas can either be accepted or rejected by the original writer.

By so doing, you will be engaged in writing as a process until such text is ready to be submitted as a final product. Digital writing can be performed on different digital platforms such as a learning management system (LMS) of a university () in our case) or on any digital text (online or offline). *Figure 2* below shows a process of digital writing.

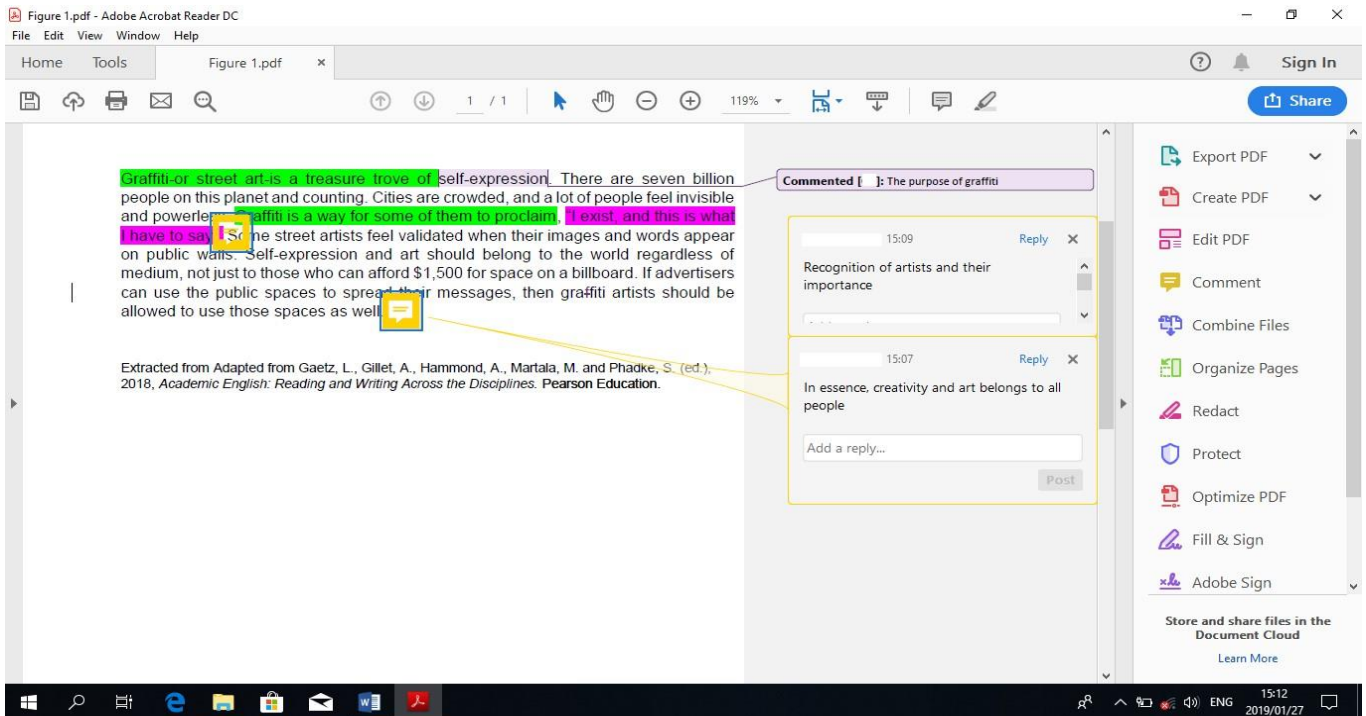


Figure 1.2: Digital Writing

Figure 1.2 above shows how the reader annotated the given text to generate ideas about what the given text is about and the ideas can be used during the writing process.

The purpose of reading for students is to write either for formative or summative assessment. Reading paves the way for writing in that it equips the writer with the knowledge and ideas that they can write about in relation to a given topic. *Figure 3* below shows the other strategies that the writer uses in his or her application of the digital writing strategies during the writing process. It shows how the writer uses Microsoft Word spell-check to correct spelling and highlight the important parts of the text.

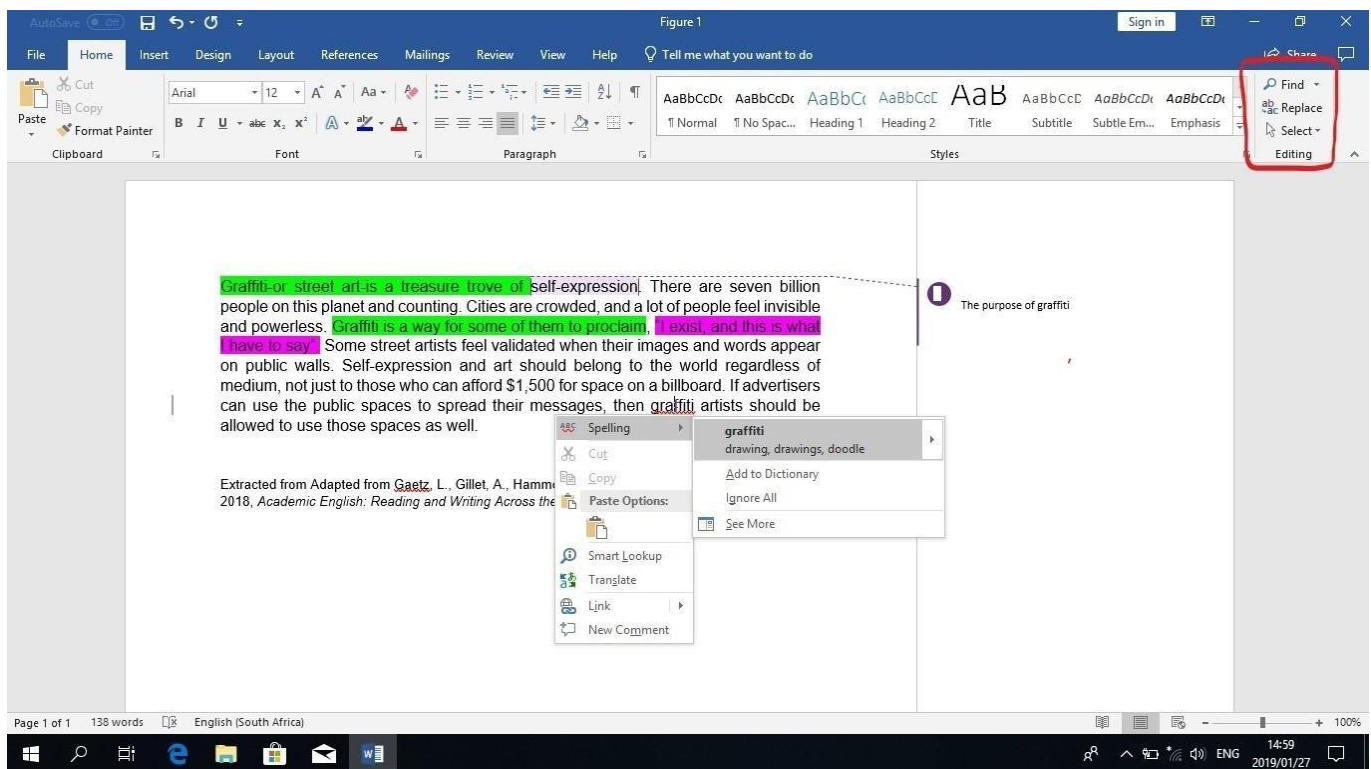


Figure 1.3: Digital Writing Process

There are various digital tools that you may use as a student during the writing process such as Grammarly and NoRedInk. You can use these tools for revising and editing your written tasks. However, these online tools for writing lack human intelligence/instinct/ability for detecting cohesion and coherence in one's writing, hence your lecturers and tutors are available to assist you.

One of the main objectives of this module is to expose you to different essay types such as *expository*, *discursive* and *argumentative* essays. In order to master or gain knowledge of how to write the aforementioned essays, we introduce you to the genre-staged approach which entails the process of writing each section (introduction, body/supporting paragraphs and conclusion) for a particular period of time and then gradually moving on to the other sections once the instructors or co-contributors are satisfied that you have mastered the said skills. You may follow similar examples as shown on figures 2 and 3 but you can also follow your own digital writing practices to write the said sections.



Student Exercise 7

- Use the digital tools as demonstrated above (Adobe Reader and Microsoft Word) during your writing process and focus on only writing an introduction of any topic of your choice and share it with a fellow student or on e-tutor's site for this module and ask for comments.
- You may choose any social media platform or any digital platform to share the written task for comments and suggestions. You should move on to the other sections of the essay once you feel you have mastered the aforementioned skills.

- You may send what you have been sharing and writing with your fellow student to any lecturer or e-tutor for ENG

1.11 References

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Osterman, M.D., 2013. Digital literacy: Definition, theoretical framework, and competencies.

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2 Learning Unit 2: Reading and Writing in Academic Contexts – Essay types Part 1

2.1 Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this learning unit students will be able to:

- Describe basic facts about expository writing.
- Successfully complete activities about critical reading strategies.
- Apply principles associated with writing for purpose and audience.
- Answer short questions about writing processes.
- Participate constructively in a discussion about argumentative writing.
- Identify comparison and contrast patterns in essays.
- Describe the proper application of cause and effect writing.

2.2 Introduction

Unit 2 focuses on the reading and writing of various types of essays, including expository or research, argumentative, comparison and contrast, as well as cause and effects. The aim of the unit is to draw your attention to the features of each type of essay writing and on the importance of the specific context, purpose and audience. Each type of writing requires you to adhere to certain formats and rules, and you will be exposed to some of these in this unit.

Generally, once you have learnt how to brainstorm ideas, develop a plan for writing and expand on those initial ideas to produce a fully-fledged essay, you will find it easier and easier to write. Writing develops through writing; so, take time to practice writing a full essay with each section in this material. This unit starts with reading strategies because to write, you need to read effectively, and vice-versa. Remember, practice makes perfect: be hands on and enjoy the unit.

2.3 Learning Activity 1: Expository Essay Writing

In this section, you will be required to read a text and answer a few questions afterwards. However, before you start reading, we would like to discuss a few strategies that you will need to read effectively at university. The most commonly used are skimming and scanning, and the SQ4R strategies.

2.3.1 Reading Strategies

Reasons for reading

Have you ever asked yourself the question “why do people read?” The answer to the question depends perhaps on the reason why you need or want to read in the first place. The following are some of the reasons why people read:



Figure 2.1: Reasons for Reading

Reading difficulties

Ask yourself: “What difficulties have I been encountering while reading for study or research purposes? How have I overcome them?” **Reading at university**

- At university you are required to use academic reading (or deep reading), which is more challenging than reading in high school (or surface reading).
- The level, complexity and volume of academic reading required is higher.
- Research has shown that there is a correlation between reading proficiency and academic success. Students who make effort to improve their reading skills fair better than those who do not.
- Good readers tends to be good writers, and vice-versa.
- Reading forms the basis of academic writing.

Important Note: It is important that you develop and improve your skills for reading academically in order to study and learn more effectively.

“A man who chooses not to read is just as ignorant as a man who cannot read.” (Mark Twain)

How do “good” readers read academic texts?

Good readers make use of various reading strategies and reading techniques before reading, during reading, and after reading. Learn the following strategies:

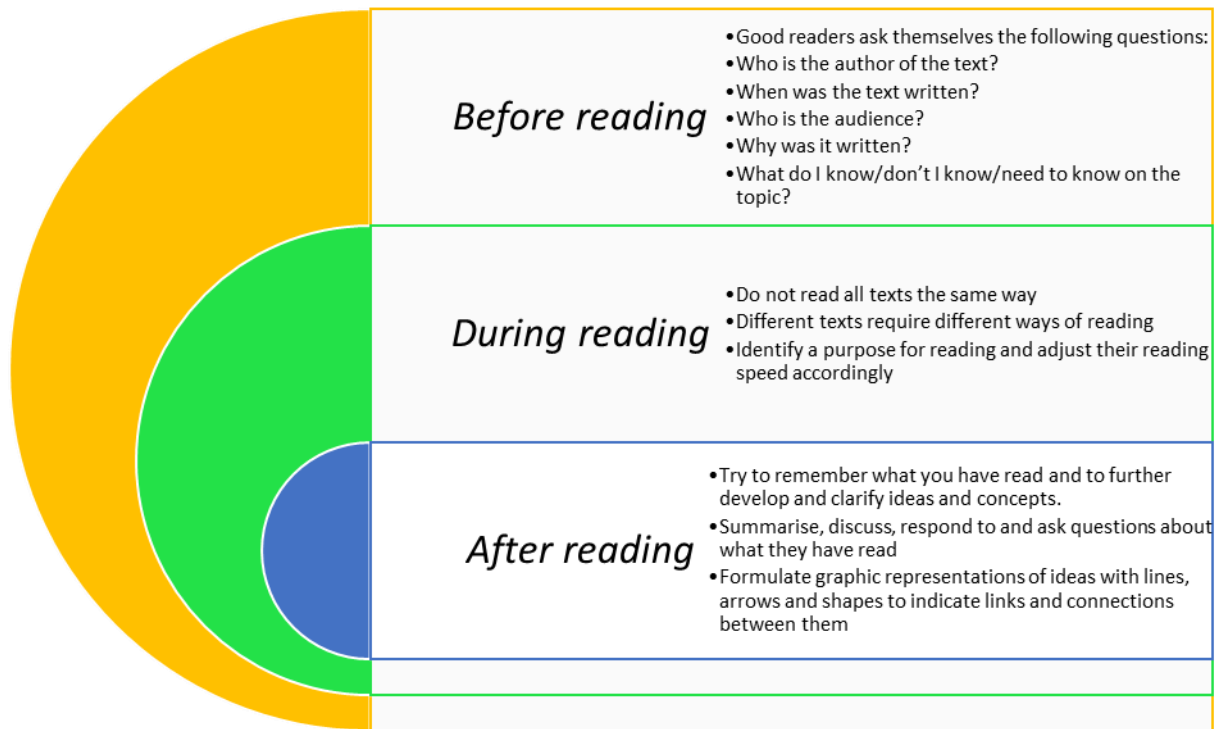


Figure 2.2: Reading strategies

2.3.2 General Reading Techniques

Effective readers employ different reading techniques: *speed-reading*, *skimming*, *scanning*, and *study reading*.

Speed reading

- Reading quickly to get a preliminary understanding of a text or to find background information on a topic
- The more familiar you are with advanced reading texts the more quickly you will be able to access information - reading improves with practice!

Skimming

- To preview or get an overview of a text - reading quickly to gather as much information about a text as possible in the shortest amount of time
- When you skim, you do not read everything
- Read only the following:
 - Title
 - Introduction and/ or first paragraph
 - Headings/ sub-headings
 - First sentence of each paragraph
 - Key words in bold or italics
 - Pictures, diagrams, graphs or charts
 - Conclusion or summary

Scanning

Reading quickly to find specific information in a text

- Names & dates
- Words in a dictionary
- Definitions in glossaries
- Table of contents
- Timetables & directories

Study reading

- Study reading is deep reading
- The purpose of study reading is to understand and remember the details
- Good readers also struggle with difficult texts in order to make them comprehensible
- Good readers read academic texts slowly and re-read often (sometimes two or three times)
- Study reading involves reading interactively and critically

How do we read interactively? ○ We relate what we are reading to our own

experience and knowledge of the world ○ We read actively and have a

“conversation” with the text ○ We [annotate](#) the text

- Identify main idea & topic sentence in each paragraph
- Make notes in the margins; paraphrase & summarise key points; ask questions & make comments
- Highlight key words/ concepts in the text
- Highlight unfamiliar words and work out possible meanings from the context; look up words you still do not understand

How do we read critically?

- We read [“against the grain”](#)
- We do not believe everything we read; we ask questions and challenge the writer’s assumptions
- We analyse arguments
- We weigh an author’s claims against evidence ○ We discount arguments based on faulty reasoning ○ We distinguish between fact and opinion ○ We form our own opinion on the topic

The SQ4R Method

SQ4R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. Click on the [SQ4R](#) method to watch a 7 minutes 45 seconds video and answer the questions that follow:

Important Note: SQ4R will help build a framework to help you understand your reading assignments.

Annotation

What is [annotation](#)? It is the process of making notes while reading. These notes can be taken directly in the book or text, on sticky notes, or on another piece of paper or computer. Annotation can help you monitor your progress, focus, and comprehension.

Click on [Annotation](#) to watch a 5 minutes video and answer the questions that follow:



Student Exercise 1

Answer the following questions:

- What is annotation?
- What does annotation help you to do?
- List four things that you do when annotating.



Student Exercise 2

Read the following text, underline the main points being made by the author, circle unfamiliar words, cross(x) the reasons used to support these points, and tick (✓) the ideas that you agree with in the text.

The Happiness Factor

David Brooks

David Brook writes for the *New York Times*, *The Weekly Standard*, *Newsweek*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*. He is also a commentator on *The NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer. In the following essay, Brooks makes an interesting comparison.

- 1 Two things happened to Sandra Bullock in 2010. First, she won an Academy Award for best actress. Then came the news reports claiming that her husband was an adulterous jerk. So the philosophic question of the day is: would you take that as a deal? Would you exchange a tremendous professional triumph for a severe personal blow? On the one hand, an Academy Award is nothing to sneeze at. Bullock has earned the admiration of her peers in a way very few experience. She'll make more money for years to come. She may even live longer. Research by Donald A. Redelmeier and Sheldon M. Singh has found that, on average, Oscar winners live nearly four years longer than nominees that don't win.
- 2 Nonetheless, if you had to take more than three seconds to think about this question, you are absolutely crazy. Marital happiness is far more important than anything else in determining personal well-being. If you have a successful marriage, it doesn't matter how many professional setbacks you endure, you will be reasonably happy. If you have an unsuccessful marriage, it doesn't matter how many career triumphs you record, you will remain significantly unfulfilled.

- 3 This isn't just sermonising. This is the age of research, so there's data to back this up. Over the past few decades, teams of researchers have been studying happiness. Their work, which seems flimsy at first, has developed an impressive rigor, and one of the key findings is that, just as the old sages predicted, worldly success has shallow roots while interpersonal bonds permeate through and through.
- 4 For example, the relationship between happiness and income is complicated, and after a point, tenuous. It is true that poor nations become happier as they become middle-class nations. But once the basic necessities have been achieved, future income lightly connected to well-being. Growing countries are slightly less happy than countries with slower growth rates, according to Carol Graham of the Brookings Institution and Eduardo Lora. The United States is much richer than it was fifty years ago, but this has produced no measurable increase in overall happiness. On the other hand, it has become a much more unequal country, but this inequality doesn't seem to have reduced national happiness.
- 5 On a personal scale, winning the lottery doesn't seem to produce lasting gains in well-being. People aren't happiest during the years when they are winning the most promotions. Instead, people are happy in their twenties, dip in middle age and then, on average, hit peak happiness just after retirement at age sixty-five. People get slightly happier as they climb the income scale, but this depends on how they experience growth. Does wealth inflame unrealistic expectations? Does it flow from virtuous cycle in which an interesting job produces hard work that in turn leads to more interesting opportunities?
- 6 If the relationship between money and well-being is complicated, the correspondence between personal relationships and happiness is not. The daily activities most associated with happiness are sex, socialising after work, and having dinner with others. The daily activity most injurious to happiness is commuting. According to one study, joining a group that meets even just once a month produces the same happiness gain as doubling your income. According to another, being married produces a psychic gain equivalent to more than \$100,000 a year.
- 7 If you want to find a good place to live, just ask people if they trust their neighbours. Levels of social trust vary enormously, but countries with high social trust have happier people, better health, more efficient government, more economic growth, and less fear of crime (regardless of whether actual crime rates are increasing or decreasing). The overall impression from this research is that the economic and professional success exist on a surface of life, and that they emerge out of interpersonal relationships, which are much deeper and more important.
- 8 The second impression is that most of us pay attention to the wrong things. Most people vastly overestimate the extent to which more money would improve their lives. Most schools and colleges spend too much time preparing students for careers and not enough preparing them to make social decisions. Most governments release a ton of data on economic trends but not enough on trust and other social conditions. In short, modern societies have developed vast institutions oriented around the things that are easy to count, not around the things that matter the most. They have affinity for material concerns and a primordial fear of moral and social ones.
- 9 This may be changing. There is a rash of compelling books – including *The Hidden Wealth of Nations* by David Halpern and *The Politics of Happiness* by Derek Bok – that argue that public institutions should pay attention to well-being and not just material growth narrowly conceived. Governments keep initiating policies they think will produce prosperity, only to get sacked, time and again, from their spiritual blind side.

Adapted from Gaetz et al. (2018). *Academic English : reading and writing across the disciplines*. Harlow, England: Pearson

Comprehension and critical thinking questions Student Exercise 3

In the previous activity, you read and annotated the text. Now referring to the same text, please answer the following questions.

1) In paragraph 4, what is the meaning of *tenuous*?

2) In your own words, what is the writer's main point?

3) According to the essay, what factors are associated with increased levels of happiness?

4) In which paragraph does the writer use expert opinion?

5) In paragraph 5, the writer states that people are happy in their twenties and after retirement, but not in their middle ages. Why are people probably less happy in the middle age? Make three guesses.

6) In paragraph 7, the writer mentions social trust but doesn't clearly define it. Infer or guess what social trust is.

7) In paragraph 8, the writer criticises college because they don't prepare students to make social decisions. Think of ways that college could teach students to make moral and social decision.

2.4 E-Tutor Task 2

Students are to engage fellow students on their E-Tutor sites about any of these questions and their responses to them.



Student exercise 4

Compare the two types of writing in the following table. In the table, Palesa is writing about how her assignment presentation went: in the left column, she is writing to her friend and in the right column to her supervisor.

Text A (to a friend)	Text B (to a supervisor)
Hey Sbosh, Things didn't go well. All those eyes staring, yoh! I could just drop the mic and run... It didn't go well, but who cares? I passed the test anyway.. See you ya!	Dear Dr Dikeledi, My presentation failed due to fear of the audience and lack of confidence. I hope my test mark will enable me to meet the departmental requirements. I will make an appointment to see you for advice. Best, Ms Motabi
<i>Describe the language in Text A</i>	<i>Describe the language in Text B</i>

Table 2.1

2.5 Learning Activity 2: Writing for Audience and Purpose

Audience

Text A and Text B show how the tone and vocabulary can be adapted in your writing to suit your audience's profile and interest. While writing to a friend, the tone is more relaxed and can be even be humorous or sarcastic, compared to a more reserved and serious tone used while writing to your supervisor, manager, or business partner. For an audience appropriate writing, considering the following questions:

- Who will read the essay/report? Will my lecturer be my only reader, or will others also read it?
- What does my audience already know about the topic?
- What information will my readers expect?
- Should I use formal or informal language?
- How should I adjust my vocabulary and tone to appeal to my readers?

Important Note: Remember that your lecturer represents the intended audience. However, your writing can be read by other educated readers: they will expect you to use correct grammar and demonstrate what you have learnt and understood about the topic.

Do not leave out important information because you assume that your lecturer is an expert in the field. Your ideas should be presented in a clear and organised manner.

Purpose

Your purpose is your reason for writing. Sometimes, you may have more than one purpose. While considering your purpose, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my goal to entertain? Do I want to tell a personal story or anecdote?
- Is my goal to persuade? Do I want to convince readers that my point of view is the correct one?
- Is my goal to inform? Do I want to explain something or present information?

Important Note: Your general purpose is to entertain, persuade or inform. Your specific purpose is your more precise reason for writing. For example, if you are writing about education. You may have the following general and specific purposes:

- General purpose: to inform
- Specific purpose: to explain the impact that education can have on a person's life.



Student Exercise 5

Critically read the following text, answer the questions, and do the exercise that follows.

Hi, I don't think whoever marked my essay even read it. It's like he's playing with people's lives... R u ok with this? Do something to fix this. WhatsApp me: 070 000 1111. Or U can drop me a line: thabs000@[REDACTED]ac.za

Questions:

Who is the email addressed to?

Is the language appropriate?

In the space below, rewrite the email using a more formal and respectful tone.

2.6 Learning Activity 3: Format of an academic expository essay

The text *The Happiness Factor* by David Brooks read previously can be said to be an expository essay. Expository writing often aims to present information or argue for a specific point of view. Although the specific format, content and organisation of expository or research essays may vary according to subject, what they have in common is the purpose as presented in a clear argument to the reader.

In an expository essay, you will be expected to argue your position clearly and support it with evidence. Your own voice should be clear throughout and it should be supported by the voices of other people you have collected through your reading. This means that you will say something using your own ideas and the ideas of the subject and of other people. In other words, you will present the ideas you have learnt in your own way. As in all academic writing, the ideas and people that you refer to need to be made explicit by a system of referencing.

Essays are normally written as a continuous piece of writing without headings and subheadings. Diagrams and tables are not normally used in essays, neither are bullet points or numbered lists. Words and sentences are used to show the structure. The main focus of the essay depends on its purpose, which should be clearly specified in the title, topic or assignment question. To reiterate, the main purpose of an expository essay is to argue a point, to present a position, or defend it with evidence. You should do the following:

- Start by introducing the topic
- Decide what your position is and provide reasons and evidence to support it.
- You will almost certainly need to consider other points of view and evaluate them positively or negatively.
- At this point you may need to give examples and to compare and contrast the different points of view.
- Finish by concluding, making it clear what your position is.

Important Note: Essays do not usually have a heading and subheading, but check with your department.

A typical essay will follow the stages shown in Table 2.2:

<u>Topic</u>	<i>Help to keep the essay focused</i>
<u>Introduction</u>	• <i>Description of the situation/context</i> • <i>Explanation of why it is important</i> • <i>Statement of main point of view</i> • <i>Presentation of organisation of essay</i>
<u>Paragraph 1</u>	• <i>Topic sentence: statement of main point/reason 1</i> • <i>Explanation of point</i> • <i>Support of point with evidence/examples</i> • <i>Evaluation and closing of point</i>
<u>Paragraph 2</u>	• <i>Topic sentence: statement of main point/reason 2</i> • <i>Explanation of point</i> • <i>Support of point with evidence/examples</i> • <i>Evaluation and closing of point</i>

<u>Paragraph 3</u>	• <i>Topic sentence: statement of main point/reason 3</i> • <i>Explanation of point</i> • <i>Support of point with evidence/examples</i> • <i>Evaluation and closing of point</i>
<u>Conclusion</u>	• <i>Summary of main all (three) points</i> • <i>Evaluation of the points</i> • <i>Statement of own point of view</i>
<u>References</u>	<i>Only list the sources used in essay (in full)</i>

Table 2.2



Student Exercise 6

Match the stages in Table 2 with the paragraphs in the text *The Happiness Factor* by David Brooks read earlier. Use the paragraph number and write them next to specific stages in Figure 2.

2.7. Learning Activity 4: The Writing Process

In general, students may approach the writing of assignments in two ways. Some students adopt a 'product' approach to writing leaving by starting to work on or write the assignment only a few hours before submission date and time and by submitting the first rough draft they complete. More skilled students create a writing plan and start working on the assignment weeks before submission date by creating a process where drafts are written, revised, edited, and proofread repeatedly. You are encouraged to adopt the latter approach, which is based on a writing process. The writing process includes various stages such as the prewriting strategies, planning, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading stages.



Student Exercise 7

Reflecting on your own writing process. Please describe your usual writing process in ten steps or less. What are the things you do between the time you are given an assignment (say two weeks earlier) and the time of submission?

Steps:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

The writing process refers to processes, routines, strategies for problem-solving, reflective practices, and meta-awareness about writing. Students often have **self-limiting or unrealistic** beliefs about their own writing at university. Consider the following facts about writing.



Student Exercise 8

State whether you agree or disagree with each one of the statements:

	Belief about writing	Agree(✓) or Disagree (x)
1	Everyone can write better	
2	You learn to write by writing!	
3	Writing is a tool for thinking	
4	Writing is a social process	
5	Writing is a way of building or creating new ideas	
6	Good grammar does not guarantee good writing	
7	Most effective texts have been substantially revised	
8	Revising one required hard work and persistence	

The stages of the writing process are **planning, prewriting, drafting, reflection, peer-review, revising, editing, and proofreading.**



Figure 2.2: The Writing Process

The writing process is not a linear process. It is rather cyclical with recurring lines, meaning that from any stage in the process, you can redo to the previous stage in case of unsatisfactory elements in a specific writing area. Each stage of the process is explained in the following lines.

2.8 Learning Activity 5: Prewriting Strategies

Prewriting strategies pertain to what you do before beginning to write your first draft, including

- Reading the topic/instruction/question closely to understanding the requirements of the task.
- Thinking about and reflecting on the topic/ instruction/question.
- Recognising your own opinions and/or feelings about the topic. □ Gathering initial data/content/evidence.

The required information can be gathered through **research**. The latter is important for three reasons:

- It allows you to develop ideas.
- It allows you to refine your ideas.
- It allows you to support your ideas.

After gathering the needed information, it should be evaluated for **reliability, appropriateness and relevance**. To **evaluate sources** ask the following questions:

- Where does the evidence come from?
- Who is the source of the information?
- Is the source qualified and competent to address the issue?
- Is the source reliable?
- Is the source biased?
- Is the evidence relevant?
- Is the evidence current?
- Is the evidence representative?

Use a **variety of sources**. Here are some tips:

- Do not rely only on internet sources.
- Do not waste time looking for sources that are not available to you.

- Use Journal articles mostly as they offer much more recent sources in scholarly/scientific information and know about the key journals in your field.

When using **the Internet**, you must be discerning of the online information you use. Although the internet is a useful means of accessing information, it is not regulated and anyone can publish anything online at any time.

Planning

After gathering the preliminary information on the topic, you can now plan for the writing. Planning means creating an overview of or setting in advance the details of the writing to do. Planning is important for you to have

- a clear main claim/purpose/argument/point
- a complete view of the topic
- enough research
- a clear and logical first draft

Planning can be done through

- brainstorming
- freewriting
- outlining
- mindmapping

For example:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindmapping allows you to create a visual, diagrammatic representation of the most important ideas to be discussed in an essay. |
|--|
- Essay Outlining is making a point form, a linear or prose summary of the main ideas.

Drafting

Drafting refers to the act of composing the first draft, by 'filling in' the outline, the mindmap, the brainstormed information into a text, or sorting and reorganising the product of your freewriting into a text. Drafting means:

- Putting your ideas into complete thoughts, such as sentences and paragraphs.
- Organising your ideas in a way that allows the reader to understand your message.
- Focusing on which ideas or topics to include in the piece of writing.
- Composing an introduction to the piece. □ Developing rough paragraphs.
- Completing a "rough draft."

For effective drafting, do the following:

- Begin the process of drafting a piece of writing with an analysis of the prewriting.
- Use your prewriting notes to determine a focus for the piece.
- Narrow narrowing the focus of the topic and perhaps identify a purpose for the piece.
- Focus should be on logical connections between topics.

- Compose the body of a piece of writing by including detail sentences related to the topic sentence, or by organising your writing into paragraphs. Each paragraph should include its own topic sentence.
- Create smooth transitions between paragraphs are important in creating a cohesive piece of writing, no matter the subject.
- Keep referring to your prewriting to remain on track and ensure that the piece of writing maintains its focus.

Your aim should be to complete a full rough draft as early as possible without necessarily focusing on fixing writing, grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors. These will be dealt with later. Focus on broad ideas first.

More tips for drafting effectively

Find a quiet time and space to concentrate on writing your draft. If you are writing your essay with the television on, with loud music, with your cell phone ringing, and with three friends talking to you, you might find it difficult to focus your attention on the task of completing a draft of your essay.

- Try to type your essay in MSWord from the beginning. Avoid hand writing an essay before typing it into the computer. MSWord can be useful in identifying spelling errors, easily deleting, and inserting information.
- Start with any part of the essay. You do not have to start with the introduction.
- Do not focus on correcting mistakes. In most cases, you will be the only one to see the first draft of your essay. There will be enough time for revision before any other person can read it. Focus on letting your ideas flow.
- Use an outline or mindmap of your major ideas to maintain a sense of direction and remain organised.
- Focus on broad ideas: the main points, the organisation, and the support and development of ideas.

Reflection

Reflecting means looking back in time carefully or analytically to think about past actions, words, experiences, and images, to elicit any errors or mistakes. It means reliving past actions, thoughts, and experiences, for purposes of self-evaluation and future improvement. When you reflect over your writing, you relive your decisions, thoughts, actions, as you were writing to understand your writing and yourself as a student writer.

Reflection is the first step of revision, which is dealt with later in this manual. When reflecting, ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I addressed the topic?
- Have I kept to the topic throughout?
- Have I included any irrelevant/unnecessary information?
- Have I made the purpose/aim of the essay made clear to the reader?
- Have I left out any important information or are there “holes” in the argument/essay?

Peer Review

Peer review refers to any activity where one student provides feedback to another on their work. The following are some of the benefits of peer review:

- You can develop your analytical skills. □ You improve your revision, editing and proofreading skills.
- You learn how to decide which advice to take as a writer.
- You become more comfortable with various editorial processes, which you may encounter in your academic or professional careers.

It is important to be clear on why you are engaging in peer review and on how the process meets your broader academic writing development goals. As such, your aim should not only be to pass an essay writing assignment, but also to grow as a writer.

Revising

Revising is done by rearranging, adding, or deleting content, and by making the tone, style, and content, to meet the requirements of academic writing. Revising aims to improve the draft by making changes at the level of ideas, structure, coherence and cohesion.

Revision aims to address the **high order of concerns** by asking the following questions:

- Have I addressed the topic?
- Have I kept to the topic throughout?
- Have I included any irrelevant/unnecessary information?
- Have I made the purpose/aim of the essay made clear to the reader?
- Have I left out any important information or are there “holes” in the argument/essay?

Revision seeks to achieve coherence and cohesion.

- Coherence refers to whether or not a piece of writing “makes sense” and to the logic of the writing.
- Cohesion refers to whether or not a piece of writing “flows” and to the ease with which that writing can be read.
- Text unity (coherence and cohesion) is created in three ways:
 - repetition of key terms
 - substitution of key terms with pronouns or other words
 - signposting / linking words/cohesive devices

Tips for effective revising

- Do not submit the first draft you have completed. Revise your draft to make it more acceptable and effective. Even professors submit their writing to editors before submission. Please set time aside for revision and do it.
- Revision, editing, and proofreading, do not mean the same thing. Revision focuses on improving all aspects of the piece of writing, including the argument or main point, structure, support, and evidence. Revision also means rewriting parts of the piece of writing or whole of it. Editing refers to the action of identifying and removing irrelevant materials, inserting missing

material, and moving paragraphs or sentences around for logic and clarity. Proofreading focuses on correcting grammar, spelling and punctuation errors.

- The great American writer Ernest Hemingway once said that he rewrote the first part of his novel *A Farewell to Arms* at least 50 times and rewrote the ending of the novel 39 times. Hemingway revised so much not because he was a bad writer but because he was a good writer.

Editing

Once you are satisfied with the content of your document (as a whole and in specific parts), you can then begin editing. Editing involves identifying and removing irrelevant materials, inserting missing material, and moving paragraphs or sentences around for logic and clarity. It focuses on structure or organisation.

To edit effectively:

- Read each paragraph and sentence closely and evaluate its function in the paragraph or the piece of writing.
- See if the sentence can be rewritten differently or more effectively
- Check for connections between paragraphs and sentences to see if they can be improved.
- Assess each paragraph or sentence through questions such as
 - Have I used the correct vocabulary?
 - Is the register appropriate?
 - Can the sentence structure be improved or made clearer or more effective?
 - Have I corrected grammatical errors, such as subject-verb agreement, run-on sentences, wordiness, and incomplete sentences?
 - Have I checked for and corrected spelling and punctuation errors?

Editing aims to address **middle-order concern** by asking the following questions:

- Can any ideas be clarified/expanded upon?
- Could ideas be arranged more logically?
- Does each new idea follow logically from the previous one?
- Are there clear links between paragraphs and sections?
- Is the essay logically organized and appropriately structured?

Proofreading

Proofreading is the final step of the writing process, which check for and corrects grammar, spelling and punctuation errors. These constitute the **lower-order of concerns** to be addressed last.

To proofread effectively:

- Read each sentence aloud visually inspecting the spelling and sentence structure to identify mistakes that your eye can't always see.
- Allow some time between the time you finish the draft and proofreading to return to the piece of writing with a fresh perspective
- Ask a friend or a writing consultant to read over your work to check for errors as an additional strategy

- Do not rely on your computer's spell check to correct all the spelling errors, as it cannot identify errors such as
 - o 'We ends this paper by ...' → 'We end ...'
 - o 'organize' (American English) → 'organise' (South African English).



Student Exercise 9

Please read the text '*SA school libraries in crisis*' (IOL, 2016) and rewrite paragraphs 1 to 4 of the passage correctly in academic language in the space below. Click [here](#) to access the text.



Student Exercise 10

Referring (remember or remind yourself) to the text 'The Happiness Factor', read previously, write your own three-paragraph essay on one of the following topics. Note that the length of a paragraph can range between five and ten lines. Remember to revise and edit your work paying particular attention to the audience, purpose, context and register.

- Compare two jobs you have had. What elements in the jobs provided you with the most pleasure?
- Define personal happiness, and give examples to support your definition.
- Define social trust. Break the topic down into categories, and list examples for each category. For instance, you could write about trust in the government, trust in the police, and trust in one's neighbours.

2.9 Learning Activity 6: Argumentative Essay writing

Argumentation

People use argument in their daily lives. For instance, at home, you might argue about the distribution of work, providing examples to support your point. At university, students can argue for a better cafeteria or Wi-Fi connectivity. At work, women can argue for equal salaries with men.

Essay topic

Higher education should be free in South Africa. State whether you agree or disagree with this statement and provide three reasons for your position.

'Higher education should be free in South Africa' is the thesis statement or claim. Each one of the reasons you may provide will constitute a supporting idea or sub-claim. Let us start by defining what an argument is. Argument is taking a position on an issue, and try to prove or defend your position. Using effective argument strategies can help you convince somebody that your point of view is a valid one.

Important Note: Many students feel reluctant to take a stand on an issue. They may feel that it is too personal or impolite to do so. However, in academic writing, it is perfectly acceptable, and even desirable to state an argument in a direct manner and then support it with evidence.

The argumentative essay

Network administrator Bongo Manana uses argument writing in this excerpt from a memo to her director.

The topic sentence states the topic and accompanying	We need to invest in a new email server. Firstly, the slow speed and unreliability of the present equipment is becoming a serious inconvenience. While the cost of replacing the server and controlling idea. software will be very high, the cost of not doing so is going to be much higher in lost time and productivity. It would not be an exaggeration to say that for the last three months, we lost more
The supporting sentences provide details and examples.	than a thousand billable hours as a result of the poor condition of our equipment. The average hourly rate per user is \$30, thus, those lost sentences provide details hours of productivity have cost the company more than \$30,000.
The concluding sentence brings the paragraph to a satisfactory close.	Also, consider the impact on our company's reputation when the clients have problems communicating with us. We cannot afford to wait any longer to invest in new equipment and technology. In fact, over the long term, replacing the email server will actually increase The productivity and profitability.

Adapted from Gaetz et al. (2018). *Academic English : reading and writing across the disciplines*. Harlow, England: Pearson

Developing a thesis statement for argument

In a thesis statement of an argumentative essay, state your position on the issue. It should be debatable and should not be simply a fact or a statement of opinion. For example:

Topic

Controlling idea (the writer's position)

Most companies' CEOs in South Africa are overpaid for very substandard work.

Consider the following differences between fact, opinion and argument:

Fact	In South African restaurants, people generally tip for service. (This is a fact. It cannot be debated).
Opinion	I think that tipping for service should be abolished in South African restaurants. (This is a statement of opinion. Nobody can deny that you feel this way. Therefore, do not use phrases such as <i>in my opinion</i> , <i>I think</i> , <i>I believe</i> in your thesis statement).
Argument	Tipping for service should be abolished In South African restaurants. (This is a debatable statement).



Student Exercise 11

Evaluate the following statements. Write F for Fact or O for Opinion.

- a) In our province, many students drop out of university. _____
- b) I think that Johannesburg needs more police officers. _____
- c) Our mayor should resign for three reasons. _____
- d) The cost of petrol is too high. _____
- e) I don't think the police, firefighters and nurses should be allowed to strike _____

2.10 Learning Activity 7: Developing supporting sentences or sub-claims

For a strong, logical and reasoned argument, you should support you main points or claims with facts, examples, and statistics. You can also include the following:

- **Quotation of informed sources:** these can be words, ideas, or thoughts from experts in the field.
- **Consider logical consequences:** you can state the long term consequences of a proposed solution. For example, if you oppose any increase in the price of petrol, you might want to argue that it will result in an increase in the price of food and transport and result in more misery for the consumers.
- **Acknowledge opposing viewpoints:** this is also referred to as counter-claim. Anticipating and responding to the views of your opposition can strengthen your position. You can concede that some of the aspects of the opposing views are valid to a point and refute some of the strongest views of their argument.

Making an emotional appeal

Generally, an effective argument may appeal to the reader's reason, but it can also appeal to his/her emotions. However, emotional appeal should be used sparingly. If you use emotionally charged words such as *sell-out*, *tsotsi*, or if you appeal to base instinct such as fear or prejudice, then you may seriously undermine your argument. Review the following examples of emotional appeal:

Overemotional	Crazy women go to the fertility clinics, have multiple births, and then feed off the state like leeches. The innocent premature infants, facing chronic illness and blindness, can end up needing lifelong medical care.
Reasonable and more neutral	Women visiting fertility clinics may underestimate potential problems. If multiple births ensue, the parents may face financial difficulties. Additionally, premature infants can suffer from a variety of long-term medical problems.

Important Note: While writing your argument, avoid the following mistakes.

- a) **Do not make generalisations:** If you begin a statement with Everyone knows or It is common knowledge, then the reader may mistrust what you say. You cannot possibly know what everyone else knows or does not know. It is better to refer to specific sources.
- *Generalisation:* Children in the suburbs are spoiled brats.
 - *Better:* Parents in the suburb tend to overindulge their children.
- b) **Do not make exaggerated claims:** Ensure that your arguments are plausible.
- *Exaggerated:* If corporal punishment is reinstated physical abuse will soar in school across the country.
 - *Better:* If corporal punishment is reinstated physical abuse may increase in school across the country.

Format of an argumentative essay

<u>Topic</u>	<i>Can be a thesis statement</i>
<u>Introduction</u>	• <i>Description of the situation/context</i> • <i>Explanation of why it is important</i> • <i>Statement of main point of view</i> • <i>Presentation of organisation of essay</i>
<u>Paragraph 1</u>	<i>Sub-claim 1:</i> • <i>statement of main point/reason 1</i> • <i>Explanation of point</i> • <i>Support of point with evidence/examples</i> • <i>Evaluation and closing of point</i>
<u>Paragraph 2</u>	<i>Sub-claim 2:</i> • <i>statement of main point/reason 2</i> • <i>Explanation of point</i> • <i>Support of point with evidence/examples</i> • <i>Evaluation and closing of point</i>
<u>Paragraph 3</u>	<i>Counter-Claim (concession and/or refutation):</i> • <i>statement of opposing view</i> • <i>Explanation of point/ concession</i> • <i>Support of point with evidence/examples</i> • <i>Evaluation, refutation, and closing of point</i>
<u>Conclusion</u>	• <i>Summary of main all sub-claims</i> • <i>Evaluation of the opposing views</i> • <i>Statement of own point of view</i>
<u>References</u>	<i>Only list the sources used in essay (in full)</i>



Student Exercise 12

Read each of the following thesis statements, and think of two sub-claims and one counter claim for each of them. Use the type of support suggested in the parentheses.

- a) Volunteer work should be mandatory in all high schools (Logical consequence)

- b) Online dating is a great way to meet potential mates. (Acknowledge opposing views)

- c) Children should be spanked. (Emotional appeal)

- d) High school dropout rates are higher for girls. (Logical consequence)



Student Exercise 13

Choose one of the thesis statements with the associated sub-claims and counter claim, and write a short argumentative essay. When you are done, swap essays with another student through any tutor or etutor groups to give each other feedback.



Student Exercise 14

Bearing in mind the text *Slum Tourism* by Eric Weiner on page 280 of the prescribed book, compare and contrast a slum tourism and regular tourism.

When you want to decide between options, you compare and contrast. You compare to find similarities and contrast to find differences. The exercise of comparing and contrasting can help you make judgements about things. It can also help you better understand familiar things.

People use comparison and contrast in their daily lives. For instance, at home, you might explain to your father or partner why a laptop is more useful than a tablet. At university, students might have to compare and contrast two courses. In workplaces, managers might compare various marketing plans to highlight the advantages and disadvantages.

2.11 Learning Activity 8: The comparison and contrast essay

Ofentse Mabate works in public relations. In the next memo, she compares two job candidates. To respect each person's privacy, she has numbered the candidates.

The topic sentence states that both candidates have the required education, Candidate 1 sentence states has qualities that will make her a better fit for this company. Her sales the topic and experience is more relevant to our industry. She also has good social controlling idea. skills, so clients will like her. In her reference letters, notice that she is	Although both candidates have the required education, Candidate 1 sentence states has qualities that will make her a better fit for this company. Her sales the topic and experience is more relevant to our industry. She also has good social controlling idea. skills, so clients will like her. In her reference letters, notice that she is	
worked in sales, but in the garment industry, not in high tech. he was quite nervous, and he may not be at ease with clients. On the other The supporting sentences about the business. I also appreciate his sense of humour. Perhaps we provide details should keep his resume on file in case a second position opens up. and examples.	worked in sales, but in the garment industry, not in high tech. he was quite nervous, and he may not be at ease with clients. On the other The supporting sentences about the business. I also appreciate his sense of humour. Perhaps we provide details should keep his resume on file in case a second position opens up. and examples.	may
The concluding sentence brings the paragraph to a satisfactory close. Adapted from Gaetz et al. (2018). <i>Academic English : reading and writing across the disciplines</i>. Harlow, England: Pearson	Both candidates were good, but right now we should go with Candidate 1.	

Comparison and contrast patterns

Comparison and contrast essays follow two common patterns.

- **Point by point or zig-zag format:** present one point about Topic A and then present the same point about Topic B. Keep following this pattern until you have a few points for each topic. Go back and forth from one side to the other like tennis players hitting a ball back and forth across the net.
- **Topic by topic or block format:** present all your points about one topic, and then present all of your points about the second topic. Offer one side and then the other side, just as opposing lawyers would do in the closing arguments of a court case.



Student Exercise 15

In a short essay, compare and contrast two very different places that you have visited. You can compare two neighbourhoods, two towns, or rural areas with an urban area.

2.12 Learning Activity 9: Cause and Effect

Cause and effect writing explains why an event happened or what the consequences of such an event were. A cause and effect essay can focus on causes, effects, or both. People often analyse causes or effects of something. For example, at home parents might explain why breaking the law is a bad idea. At university, a tutor might explain to students the reasons of having a study schedule. In the workplace, a manager might explain to workers the reasons for downsizing.

The cause and effect essay

While writing a cause and effect essay focus on two tasks:

- 1) Indicate whether you are focusing on causes, effects, or both. If you decide to focus both on the causes and effects, ensure that your thesis statement indicates your purpose to the reader.
- 2) Ensure that your causes and effects are valid. You should determine real causes and effects and not simply list things that happened before or after the event. Also, verify that your assumptions are logical.

For example:

Illogical	The air conditioner stopped working because the weather was cold. (This is illogical because cold weather cannot stop an air conditioner from working)
Logical	The air conditioner stopped working because the filters needed replacing and the thermostat needed adjusting.

Example of a cause and effect essay

In a petition to stop the expansion of O.R. Tambo airport, Benoni residents explain the effects of noise pollution on the quality of life of the surrounding communities.

The topic states	If the airport expands, increasing noise pollution would significantly alter the quality of life for our communities. First, we may not be able to enjoy daily activities, such as outdoor braais, outdoor parties, or relaxing in our yards if noise increases. Next, excessive noise may affect our health. Research has shown that noise pollution can in some instances lead to hypertension, hearing loss, and sleep disruption. In addition, we may also suffer psychological effects, such as stress and annoyance. Therefore, we must ensure that the expansion of the airport is stopped.
The supporting sentences	provide details and examples.
The concluding sentence brings	

the paragraph to a satisfactory close.

Adapted from Gaetz et al. (2018). Academic English : reading and writing across the disciplines. Harlow, England: Pearson

Example of cause and effect essay plan

Question: What are the causes and effect of workplace hostility?

- Jealousy and competition
- Demanding boss
- Employee burnout

Thesis statement:

A hostile workplace, which can lead to several problems, is often triggered by jealousy, an unpleasant boss, or employee burnout.

Supporting ideas:

Paragraph 1:

A hostile work environment may be caused by employee arrogance or envy.

- Some groups are tight-knit and do not easily accept newcomers. □ Some employees have high opinions of themselves.
- Co-workers may feel jealous of a new employee's expertise.

Paragraph 2:

Another reason for a hostile workplace is a strict boss.

- Some employees may be frightened by a difficult boss.
- Some bosses may overreact if an employee makes a mistake.
- A strict boss generates a lot of stress for employees.

Paragraph 3:

People in stressful workplaces may experience physical and psychological stress.

- Some people may suffer from insomnia.
- Some employees may develop burnout or depression.

With this plan, you can develop complete sentences and use transition words or expression for your ideas to flow smoothly. The following transitional expressions are useful for showing causes and effects:

To show causes	To show effects
For this reason	Accordingly
The first cause	As a result
The most important cause	Consequently

Important note: Before starting to write the essay, you need to brainstorm as many causes and corresponding effects as possible. Then, develop an essay plan, before starting to expand on the ideas and using linking or transitional words or expressions.



Student Exercise 16

Write a short essay on some of the causes and effects of workplace conflict. Develop a plan and then expand on the ideas. When you are done, swap drafts with a classmate and give each other feedback.

2.13 References

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3 Learning Unit 3: Genre Awareness - Essay types Part 2

3.1 Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this learning unit students will be able to: Describe a variety of reading skills and strategies that are required in academic studies.

- Practice and apply the selected reading skills to chosen texts.
- Apply the reading strategies in their specific disciplines.
- Identify at least two academic genres: Discussion, and Cause and Effect.
- Identify what language is used and how the language is used.
- Recognize the moves and structure of the texts. □ Demonstrate rhetorical awareness of the texts.

3.2 Introduction

We engage with genre on a daily basis. You might be familiar with genre from films such as romantic comedy, horror and thrillers. In most cases we can work out the genre from the style of the film. For example, a horror movie has a distinctive ominous type of music, particular play with lighting, and preference for the use of darker shades of colour. Our knowledge of genre helps us to make choices regarding our preference for entertainment. Genre in writing is something we have less choice over: we are constantly bombarded with different genres of writing in our daily lives. It is highly likely that in the workplace you will be expected to engage with, respond to and write in different genres. It is therefore imperative for any student to develop an understanding of genre. The sections covered in this unit are intended to help you develop a “genre awareness” and in so doing, help improve your confidence when you are tasked to write within various genres. Let us begin by unpacking the notion of “genre awareness”.

3.3 Learning Activity 1: Genre awareness and types of genres

Click on the link below to watch a short video on the relevance of “genre awareness” to your life as a student. The 3 minute video on genre awareness can be found [here](#). There is a 87 seconds video on the different types of genres [here](#). For example, descriptive writing, expository writing, narrative writing, persuasive writing and so on.

Many accomplished writers argue that genre is *the* most important form or shape to consider when tasked with writing. In fact, developing genre awareness is believed to be the key to successful writing. Valerie Francis supports this argument in her blog, stating that:

“the bottom line is this: genre in writing refers to the kind of Story that is being told. It’s about audience expectation. It’s that simple. For a book to be successful, the author, marketer and reader must all have the same understanding of what kind of a Story is being told.”

The point that is highlighted here is that a writers’ choice of genre, spells out the writer’s intentions, which sets the reader up for certain expectations. Poor choices obviously suggest a lack of success in writing. As a writer, it is your primary responsibility to understand genre and use this knowledge to make effective choices to suit your writing purposes.

3.4 Learning Activity 2: What is genre?

Genre revolves around two important elements: *social purpose* and *structural patterns*. Collerson (1988), in *Writing for Life*, sums up genre well:

We can think of genre as a social process, i.e. as a particular set of activities or a way of doing something [...] these activities are carried out for some purpose. This is true of any genre; it is a social process which has a purpose - some goal that people are working towards. It also has a recognisable structure or pattern. Finally, a genre is something that arises within a particular culture; it is a product of the culture.

The point that is highlighted here is that the structure adopted by the writer, spells out certain social intentions, which sets the reader up for different expectations.

Genre is centred around different structural patterns. The way we structure our texts varies according to three important elements:

1. Why we write (the purpose)
2. Who we write for (the intended audience)
3. What we write about (the topic)

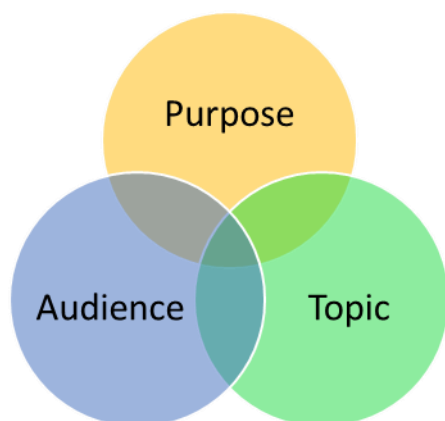


Figure 3.1. 3 elements which underpin writing

In written language, these variations have become predictable patterns, which are known as *genres*. Generally, genres become distinct when their structures are easily recognised. For example, in reading about an undergraduate programme at a distance university such as Unisa, the following two beginning sentences may evoke completely different expectations of the texts:

1. "Once upon a time ..."
2. "The teaching of formal grammar in distance programmes is necessary..."

The first beginning sets the reader up for a form of narrative to follow. The second beginning seems to be setting out an argument.

3.5 E-Tutor Task 1

Identify samples of 3 or 4 different genres of writing. Focus on one of these genres, paying attention to the issues highlighted in the text and the role the writer expects the reader to play. For example, you can focus on a memoir, which is a literary genre. Point out to students that they should be reading thoroughly and particularly following the story line. To show a contrasting genre, expose students to a workplace genre such as a business report. Point out to them that their roles as readers is to obtain very specific information from the text, so that they can skip certain information and skim read. Now expose students to the text openings from the remaining 2 genres you initially selected. Ask students to discuss the expectations that each beginning sets the reader up for.

3.6 Learning Activity 3: Genre: a set of processes

It is quite likely that we may think of the term "genre" as a set of prescribed text structures. Although this understanding may have some relevance, the meaning of genre goes deeper than

the mere act of identifying texts. Genre refers to the *processes* that are needed to utilize when producing a text. For example, you might need to explain something, or describe an experience, argue a case or narrate a story.

We may, in addition, confuse the term “genre” with “types” of writing. A type of writing could be a play. Here again, genre goes far deeper than identifying type, extending into the *purposes* of the writing. In fact, it is the purpose of the writing which defines the genre.

Let’s look at a simple letter as an example of genre. Think of all the reasons one would need to write a letter:

- **To explain why you could not write a test.**
Typically this type of letter explains in detail, the problem which prevented you from writing the test. It provides factual evidence in the form of dates, times, and even names of people who could verify your situation. It appeals for another opportunity to write the test and thanks the reader in advance.
- **To argue a case for the reimbursement of funds for a product which does not work.**
This type of letter typically provides factual detail in terms of the date the product was purchased, the store or branch at which it was purchased and the price paid for it. It explains the fault of the product, justifying in detail, the need to be reimbursed financially.
- **To apply for a job.**
Typically such a letter responds to an offer of employment from a company. The letter describes the candidate’s suitability for the position in terms of their key skills, qualifications and experience. It informs the reader of their availability for an interview, providing further contact information.
- **To thank a sponsor for funds rendered.**
Typically, such a letter is written from a personal standpoint to thank a person and to express gratitude for receipt of such funds. It is written to maintain goodwill and build for the future. It highlights the importance of the contribution to the individual or company.

As we can see, the different social purposes of writing draw on specific genres or patterns of writing.

3.7 E-Tutor Task 2

Find similar examples of academic writing. Prompt students to think of all the social reasons for writing such a piece. Help them to draw relationships between writing purposes, expectations and structure.

3.8 Learning Activity 4: How to recognise “genre”?

In developing your competence as a writer, you should work on building a strong base of linguistic knowledge. The idea is to draw on this core of ideas when making decisions for your own social

purposes of writing, as well as when engaging with the writing of others. The following guidelines are useful:

1. How is the text organised?
2. How is the topic developed?
3. What specific grammatical structures are chosen?
4. What kind of vocabulary is used?

How do genres shape our writing?

Let us look next at examples of how texts can be structured so as to set up different expectations on the part of the reader. The first text is a *recount* and the second is an *argument*.

Recount

The purpose of a recount is to tell the reader about a past experience. The emphasis is on what happened. The writer presents a sequence of occurrences, which usually relate to one specific event. The text is then structured using the sequence of time. A recount starts by providing the reader with enough background information to understand the text. The linguistic structure is characterised by the use of verbs such as; It began, after, later, at this time.

Argument

Argument is a genre of writing which persuades the reader to agree with a point of view. The argument begins with a statement clarifying the writer's position on a topic and provides some background information about the issue. The structure takes the form of a logical sequence of ideas, where points are raised and supported by evidence. The argument ends by summing up the position. Linguistic features include transitions and connecting words which are associated with reason. For example, "in fact", "but", "therefore", "it is this".

Apart from structure, the language used by the writer is influenced by the writer's choice of genre. There are no set rules for the type of language used typically in different situations, but there are predictable patterns of language which are most likely to be used for each purpose and audience (see Unit 5 for more on this). While personal writing often uses language that expresses emotion, feelings, or opinions, impersonal writing centralises an audience that is distant and unknown. Impersonal writing is characterised by formality and the use of the passive voice.

In the next section, we explore genre more deeply, particularly examining expository writing.

3.9 Learning Activity 4: The genre of expository writing

Did you know that you use expository writing all the time? If you are not sure, have a look at the list below. Have you ever done any of these tasks?

- Explained a process.
- Showed how one event causes other things to happen.
- Divided a topic into categories.
- Explained the meaning of a term or an idea.
- Pointed out-similarities and differences between items.

Most likely you have done some or all of these tasks. Therefore, you have been using expository writing to communicate your ideas. The centrality of expository writing to our daily lives makes it necessary for us to understand it fully. In the discussion which follows, we review the principles underpinning expository writing and apply them in various activities. We start by looking closely at a typical expository writing task.



Student Exercise 1

Expository writing activity

Watch the following video of a speech Nelson Mandela made at the Laureus World Sports Awards 2000 in Monaco.

VIDEO

The 2 minute 44 seconds video is [here](#). In this speech Mandela states, “*Sport can create hope where once there was only despair...*”

Assignment

Using examples from your own experiences, write an essay of about 500 words in which you develop your point of view on the statement above.

Your essay should demonstrate the required conventions regarding structure and layout. This includes forming a thesis statement, clarity of message, taking a clear position and stance, using the appropriate words for the type of essay; cohesion and logical organisation of information, proper paragraphing, correct sentence structure and referencing.

3.10 E-Tutor Task 3

Note the way in which quotations have been used as topics to engage student thinking around expository writing. Identify similar examples of quotes from well-known figures in history, literature, business or politics. A few examples are listed below:

- “Success is most often achieved by those who don’t know that failure is inevitable.” – **Coco Chanel**
- “There is only one way to avoid criticism: do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing.” – **Aristotle**
- “Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.” – **T. S. Eliot**
- “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.” – **Robert Louis Stevenson**

Use the following prompt to engage students in practicing the writing of expository essays.

“....insert quotation.....”

Using examples from your own experiences, write an essay of about 500 words in which you develop your point of view on this statement. Your essay should demonstrate the required conventions regarding structure and layout.

3.11 Learning Activity 5: The importance of a thesis driven argument

Although you might be tempted to jump right into organizing your essay, research in this field suggests that a *thesis* should be formed before you attempt to plan and draft your essay (Lester, 2005). Let's have a closer look at how researchers justify the approach of a *thesis driven strategy*.

Do you know of someone who is weak at telling stories? Do you have difficulty following their train of thought? Do they jump around from point to point? Are they sketchy in some places and unnecessarily detailed on pointless elements? Perhaps they told you the end of the story first, scattering details from the middle to the end? Were you frustrated because the story did not flow very well? It is possible that you were left with many questions.

Just as a personal story can be out of order and confusing, an essay can also fall into the same trap of being a disorganized mess. This is why a thesis statement is needed by writers. It provides a particular focus for an essay and helps to organize the writer's thoughts and ideas. It signposts the point you want to establish in your essay, signalling the essay's destination. For these important reasons, a thesis statement should be formed before you attempt to organize your essay (McLean, 2012). However, keep an open mind, because you may need to revise as you develop your essay.

How to develop a Thesis Statement

An interesting way to develop a thesis statement is to focus on a central idea which stems from your chosen topic. You then have to form a particular opinion, and then turn that into a *controlling idea*—this then becomes the main idea upon which you build your thesis.

Students sometimes confuse a thesis statement with the topic itself. A thesis statement is actually your interpretation of the topic. When you are given a topic, ask yourself, "What do I want to say about it?" Asking and then answering this question is a good way to form a thesis that is specific, powerful and self-assured.

Your thesis statement should embody the following characteristics:

- It should be about one sentence long and appear towards the end of your introduction.
- It should be specific and focus on points that you are able to demonstrate in the body.
- It should forecast the content of the essay.
- It should suggest how you will organize your information (McLean, 2012).

The qualities of a strong Thesis Statement

The following is a summary of the qualities of a strong thesis statement as portrayed by McLean (2012):

- **Specificity:** A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic.
- **Precision:** A strong thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and to remain focused on the topic.
- **Ability to be argued:** A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable.
- **Ability to be demonstrated:** For any claim you make in your thesis, you must be able to provide reasons and examples for your opinion.
- **Forcefulness:** A thesis statement that is forceful shows readers that you are, in fact, making an argument. The tone is assertive and takes a stance that others might oppose.
- **Confidence:** In addition to using force in your thesis statement, you must also use confidence in your claim. Taking an authoritative stance on the matter persuades your readers to have faith in your argument and open their minds to what you have to say.

Now that you have read about the contents of a good thesis statement, let us look next at what to avoid when creating your own thesis. The following set of guidelines is summarised from (McLean, 2012):

A thesis is weak when:

- it is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay.
- it makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insults the opposing side.
- it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a 'dead end.'
- the statement is too broad.

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

- Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
- In today's crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, and lucrative job.



Student Exercise 2

Read the following thesis statements which are reproduced from McLean (2012). Using the table provided, identify each as weak or strong. For those that are weak, list the reasons why. Then revise the weak statements so that they conform to the requirements of a strong thesis.

Thesis statements	Weak or Strong	Possible revision
1. The subject of this paper is my experience with ferrets as pets.		

2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.		
3. In this essay, I will give you lots of reasons why slot machines should not be legalized in Baltimore.		
4. Because many children's toys have potential safety hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children's toys are safe.		
5. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can		

A thesis statement is written in any of the genres that you have read about in the units.

As shown in Unit 2, on the writing process, writing can be done in stages. To begin, you can start with the prewriting stage. The following guidelines, which are summarised from Lester (2005: 214) are useful in planning and drafting an expository essay.

3.12 Learning Activity 6: Prewriting stage

Guidelines	Suggested detailed activities
Establish your topic and be clear about your purpose—in other words, be clear about why you are writing.	To inform and persuade the audience.
Identify your audience. Knowing your audience will help you determine what details to include.	Gather details that will support your purpose by asking yourself the following about your topic: who, what, when, where, why, and how?

Decide on the best method of organizing your essay.	Summarize why you decided to start your own business and explain what you need in order to get started.
---	---

Drafting Stage

Compose a one-sentence thesis statement that clearly expresses your main idea.	Use this statement to guide you through the drafting stage.
Discard any details that do not support your thesis statement.	
Use transitional words and phrases, such as <i>first</i> , <i>however</i> , <i>because</i> , <i>on the other hand</i> , <i>after</i> , <i>finally</i> , <i>most important</i> , <i>next</i> , and <i>since</i> , to show how the ideas in your essay are related and organized.	See Unit 5 for more details on linking devices.

Organizing Your Writing

Your expository writing should reflect a clear organizational pattern, so as not to confuse your reader and to sustain their interest. The discussion below, which is summarised from McLean (2012) provides you with three useful strategies to help you to organize your body paragraphs:

1. Chronological order
2. Order of importance
3. Spatial order

Chronological order

Chronological ordering of ideas is most suitable for expository writing. It involves arranging the events as they happened, or will happen if you are giving instructions. This method requires you to use words such as *first*, *second*, *then*, *after that*, *later*, and *finally*. These transition words guide you and your reader through the paper as you expand your thesis. **Order of Importance**

One of the strategic ways to build your essay's strength is to start with the least and move to the most important point. This is not necessarily a hard and fast rule. In the case where your essay contains a thesis that is highly debatable, it is advisable to begin with your most important supporting point. Starting with the most important point can help to captivate your readers and compel them to continue reading in a persuasive piece of writing. The following key transitional words are effective with this method of organization: *most importantly*, *almost as importantly*, *just as importantly*, and *finally*.

Spatial Order

When you use the strategy of spatial order you explain or describe objects as they are arranged around you in your space. In a sense, you create a picture for your reader. The viewpoint you

present is from what is around you. Using spatial order does not imply randomness. On the contrary, your view reflects an orderly, logical progression. You need to give your reader clear signals to follow from place to place. The strategic part about this method is your choice of an interesting starting point and being able to guide them in an orderly trajectory.

In Unit 5 there are guidelines on how to write paragraphs. Chapter 3 of the prescribed book has information about organizing your essay.



Student Exercise 4

At some point in your career, you may have to file a complaint with your human resources department. Using chronological order, describe the events that led up to your filing the grievance. Make sure you position the events in the order that they occurred. Use key transition words to logically lay out your ideas. Remember that the more logical your complaint is, the more likely you will be assisted.

3.13. E-Tutor Task 4

Introduce students to the topic of sub-genre and macro-genre. Then go on to illustrate their respective meanings using examples from videos on YouTube.

Start by explaining that sub-genre is a subordinate of genre. An example is that fiction is a genre, but science-fiction is a sub-genre: it challenges what is possible in reality.

Ask students to watch the following 8 minute [video](#) for more clarity.

Explain that macrogenre relates to the merging of two or more basic genres into a more complex one. For example, when a horror story is told/written as a romantic comedy, or a historical documentary is converted into an action movie. Using examples from Youtube explain how the merging of genres might offer interesting creative opportunities.

The following 3 minute 47 second [video](#) is example of macrogenre: a serious story is turned into a parody.

3.14 Learning Activity 7: The genre of discussion

In this section, we introduce you to the genre of *discussion*. We first unpack the concept of discussion and then provide you with a systematic structure to support your writing endeavours.

General questions about discussions

Answer the following questions

- Why would someone write a discussion?
- What type of person do you think writes a discussion?
- Who is it written for?
- Who would read a discussion?
- Why would they read it?
- What would you expect the reader to do after reading it?
- In what situation would someone else need to write a Discussion?

In what situation do you think you might need to write or read one?

Reproduced from Knapp & Callaghan (1989: 15)

In a short paragraph, draw a relationship between the text and its social purpose.

3.15. e-Tutor Task 5

Find similar examples of videos/audios of parliamentary speeches or political debates. Using the framework of questions as a guide, prompt students to draw relationships between each of the texts and their social purposes.

3.16 Learning Activity 8: What is Discussion?

Discussion is a genre of writing which provides the reader with two or more different points of view. It generally concludes with a recommendation based on the evidence. (Knapp & Callaghan, 1989: 8). In most descriptions, the social context is highlighted as the central premise of the genre of discussion. For example, Knapp & Callaghan (1989:11) describe genre as a “*powerful means for decision making and conflict resolution in our society*”. The genre of discussion is used extensively in decision-making environments like courts of law, parliament and public meetings. Its use in the corporate world happens mainly through board and staff meetings. It is also used widely in everyday situations, such as in general household decisions. These uses reinforce the social purpose of discussions.

Discussion characteristically happens in both oral and written forms, as well as in both formal and informal ways. Examples of discussion in oral mode are classroom discussions, debates, talk shows, etc. Examples of discussion in the written mode include newspaper articles, essays, feasibility studies, etc. When certain discussions are presented in the oral mode, they are generally written first. For example, parliamentary debates, political statements, media and panel discussions and judicial summaries (Knapp & Callaghan, 1989). An important point made here is

that in most societies, the written mode is more powerful than the oral mode. For this reason, we will focus only on the written mode, going forward.

How is the discussion structured? The generic structure used for discussion involves four key stages (Knapp & Callaghan, 1989: 9):

- Stating the Issue: the main idea is stated.
- Supporting Point: the supporting point is presented.
- Contrastive Point: the contradictory idea is presented.
- Recommendation/comment: This text ends with a recommendation/comment on the topic.

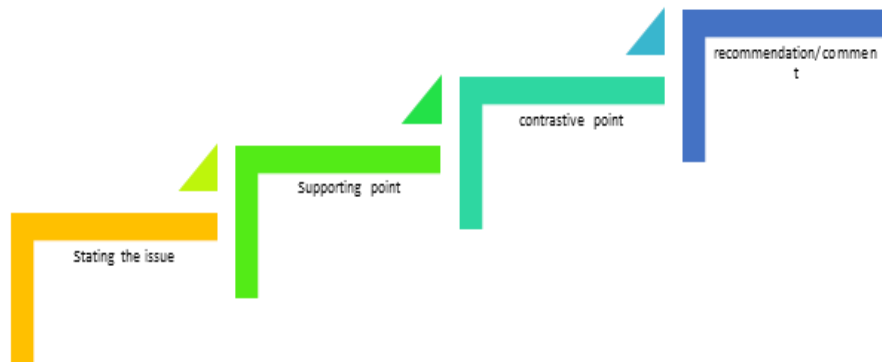


Figure 3.2: Four key stages of discussion (Knapp & Callaghan, 1989: 9).

The discussion is a process in which the writer attempts to show the reader the meeting point between two different ideas. The aim of the writer is to accurately convey the understanding between the two differences. In a social sense, discussion can serve as an effective way to settle down friction and differences in thought and perception. The stages of the Discussion facilitate the logical sequencing of arguments. Sequencing arguments in such a way facilitate easier following. The writer displays a sense of being organised.

Let's practice

The following paragraph which is reproduced from Bailey (2006: 84), discusses the environmental effects of deforestation. Read it carefully and try to identify the polarised viewpoints. The generic structure is presented below.

Lomborg (2001) claims that the danger of extinction of species has been exaggerated. He says that the number of species had been expected to decline dramatically within the next half century, but maintains that this is unlikely: 'Species . . . seem more resilient than expected.' He points out that in the eastern USA, although 98% of the original forests have been cleared, only one forest bird became extinct in the process. Against this, Brooks (2001) feels that Lomborg is ignoring the true rate of forest loss and the related extinction of species: 'The ongoing wave of extinctions, due primarily to deforestation in the moist tropics, has been widely documented.' It seems that Lomborg, as a statistician, is too dependent on optimistic data, and is ignoring the widespread concerns of wildlife experts.

This example of discussion presents the two polarised viewpoints: on the one hand, the exaggerated danger of the extinction of the species and on the other, the real concerns of risks brought about by deforestation. It is a case which needs to be discussed from two points. The generic structure which is used is as follows:

- **Stating the Issue:** In the first sentence, a claim is made that the danger of extinction of species has been exaggerated.
- **Supporting Point:** The second and third sentences explain and therefore support Lomborg's (2001) claim.
- **Contrastive Point:** The fourth sentence shows the balance. It gives the contradictory idea by Brooks (2001), that the true rate of forest loss is being ignored. The sixth sentence and seventh sentences add weight to the contradictory idea by Brooks (2001)
- **Recommendation:** In this text, the writer offers a comment on Lomborg (2001) and presents an opinion.



Student Exercise 5

Complete the following paragraph, which discusses air pollution, to give a recommendation/comment (Bailey, 2006: 85)

1. According to Lomborg (2001), air quality is improving in rich countries. He gives the example of London, where he claims that the air is cleaner now than it has been since 1585, thanks to decreases in smoke and sulphur dioxide. Brooks (2001), however, argues that Lomborg is 'ignoring the more recent global rise in toxic contaminants, now found at high concentrations even in the remote reaches of the Arctic.'
It appears that
2. Read the following example of discussion. The title of the passage is *advantages and disadvantages of the internet you must be aware of*. Use the table below to illustrate its generic structure.

The text is available on this website: www.buzzle.com/articles/advantagesdisadvantages-internet.html

List in the box as many ideas as possible for and against the growth of the Internet. Complete the generic structure below:

Advantages of the growth of the internet	Disadvantages of the growth of the internet

<i>Generic Structure</i>		
Stating the Issue		
Supporting Points		
Contrastive Points		
Recommendation/comment		



Student Exercise 6

Now that you have been introduced to the Discussion genre and its social context through first hand experiences, reinforce your understanding by returning to the questions posed to you after viewing the speech made by Obama. Reflect on your answers.

3.17 Learning Activity 9: The genre of cause and effect writing

In this section, you will broaden your understanding of the genre of cause and effect writing. We first review a few basic principles and then look into ways of incorporating graphic tools into the planning of a cause and effect essay. We additionally look at making inferences and drawing conclusions in a cause and effect essay. Practicing these skills will improve your confidence to write an effective cause and effect essay.

The main principle underpinning a cause and effect essay is that of explaining the causes or the effects of a situation. A cause and effect first presents a reason or motive for a particular event, situation or trend and then explains the results or consequences of that situation. In other words, as a writer you provide the reasons which create certain results in a situation. The following are examples of cause and effect topics:

- Causes of global warming (multiple factors leading to global warming).
- Effects of eating unhealthy food (the many effects of a situation).
- Causes of substance abuse by the youth



Writing thesis statements Student Exercise 7

Bearing in mind the ideas you have been introduced to in earlier sections of this unit, write a thesis statement for each of the following cause and effect topics. Remember to make each statement specific, precise, demonstrable, forceful and confident.

Topics

- Texting while driving
- Steroid use among professional athletes
- The legalisation of abortion
- Ongoing racist attitudes in South Africa

3.18 Learning Activity 10: Using Graphic Organizers

A useful strategy to help you to record the cause and effect aspects from a text is to use *Graphic organizers*. This tool will help you to display information visually so that you may easily identify and analyse the critical causes and effects in a sequence of events or a process. For this purpose, two forms of graphic organizer may be used: *The Cause and Effect Column Organizer* and *The Cause and Effect Chain*.

The Cause and Effect Column Organizer

When using this graphic organizer, you need to create two columns which you would label as cause and effect respectively. It is more practical to record your “causes” in the left hand column and the corresponding effects in the opposite right-hand column. This strategy would allow you to easily connect the dots between causes and their related effects. If you are writing up a cause and effect essay for studying purposes, this tool can come in handy to review your material.

The following illustration is an example of how to use a graphic organizer. The passage is: “College students and the Challenge of credit card debt” (Gaetz, et al. 2018: 117).

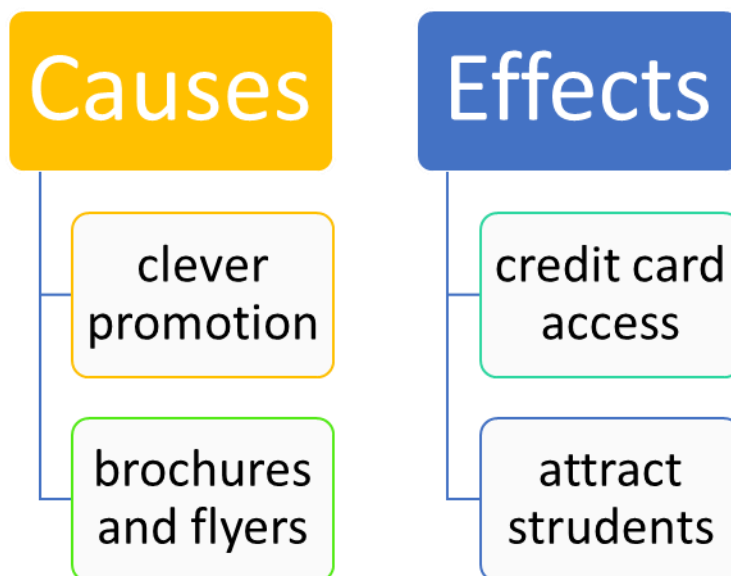


Figure 3.3: The Cause and Effect

The Cause and Effect Chain

When using this graphic organiser, you would need to create a series of sequential boxes which you would join using arrows. You would then record events as they occur chronologically in the boxes. The arrows serve to indicate or display the relationships between each event. When an event occurs, it then becomes simple to trace the subsequent event it causes. This tool may also help you to visually comprehend how effects themselves become causes.



Figure

3.4

Using Graphic Organizers for Complex Events

Graphic organizers are invaluable when dealing with complex relationships of cause and effect. They help you to visually display the complexity of the relationship particularly when an event has multiple causes or effects. You would simply add more arrows and boxes to display the multi-dimensional relationships that exist between diverse events. As you practice and gain more experience you may venture on to more sophisticated approaches, where you can play around with customising your graphic organizers to meet the needs of the specific reading material you are engaged with.

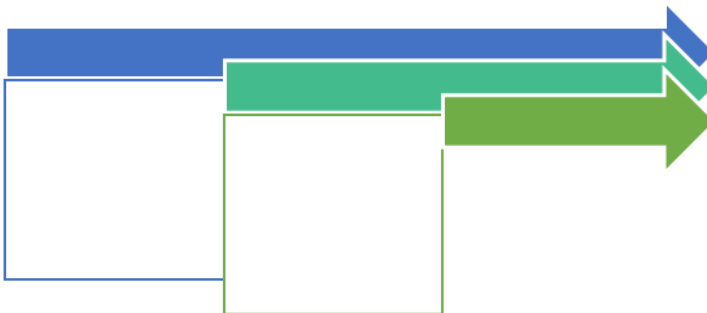


Figure 3.5

3.19. E-Tutor Task 6

Ask students to identify their own visual literacy graphics online. Spend time teaching on how graphic organizers can be used for identifying any text structure, especially as both a reading and writing skill.

3.20 Learning Activity 11: Incorporating Graphic tools into the planning of a cause and effect essay

The following template will help you when planning a cause and effect essay. Practice these steps using a wide range of reading material in a variety of genres and of various complexities.

1. Read the extract/s or reading passage/s in order to gain an overview of the main events.
2. Choose the appropriate graphic organizer for the reading material/s chosen.
3. Identify the key events or actions within the passage/s.
4. Determine whether each event or action is a cause or an effect.
5. Record each of the events or actions on the graphic organizer.

As you advance in your experience and ability to use graphic organizers, you may be able to make further links with inference strategies as well.

Making Inferences and Drawing conclusions in a cause and effect essay

Being able to identify the causes and effects in an essay is only one part of the task. You have to then draw conclusions or make inferences. The art of drawing a conclusion involves your ability to bring to the fore information which is never openly stated, but usually implied or inferred. Try not to feel overwhelmed because, generally writers give us hints or clues that help us to "read between the lines." The task of **inferring requires** you to go beyond the surface details to see other meanings that the details suggest or **imply** (not stated). When the meanings of words are not stated clearly in the context of the text, they may be *implied* – that is, suggested or hinted at. When meanings are implied, you may *infer* them.

We make inferences on a daily basis, mostly without thinking about it. For example, you are sitting in a taxi which has stopped at a red traffic light. You see nothing, but hear the sounds of tyres screeching, something crashing and glass breaking. You *are highly likely to infer* that there has been a car accident because it is common knowledge that such sounds *almost always* mean a car accident. Before we offer an inference, we first consider other possibilities and therefore another explanation for the sounds. Making *inferences* means choosing the most likely explanation from the facts at hand.



Student Exercise 30

Read the essay "*Workplace Hostility*" (Gaetz, et al. 2018: 125) and complete the following tasks:

1. Use *The Cause and Effect Column Organizer* to record the cause and effect aspects from the text. You may do this digitally or on hard copy.
2. Use *The Cause and Effect Chain* to record the cause and effect aspects from the text. You may do this digitally or on hard copy.

Use ONE of your graphic organisers to draw inferences from the text.

3.21 E-Tutor Task 7

Find ways to introduce students to the concept of **inference**. The following are suggested:

1. Show students several pictures that reflect controversial social issues. These can include cartoons or photographs, and ask them to answer text-based questions about the issues.
2. Ask students to use the pictures to try and identify the social issues and think about causes, effects and inferences that can be drawn.
3. Provide students with a list of incomplete sentences. Ask them to complete the sentences to show that they understand the logic of cause and effect.

For example:

Mozambique experienced heavy flooding last night. Consequently _____.

3.22 Conclusion

In this unit, you were introduced to what genres are and how they help writers and readers communicate. You were given opportunities to engage with the idea of developing genre awareness and to acknowledge its value in developing a writing process that will help you write efficiently and effectively. You would have arrived at an understanding of the extent to which genres pervade our lives. You were exposed to different ways in which we use them consciously as well as unconsciously, for social functions and individual purposes and with critical awareness, as well as blind immersion. It is indeed apparent that genres shape our experiences, and our experiences shape them.

3.23 References

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4 Learning Unit 4: Research-based Essays

4.1 Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this learning unit students will be able to:

- Analyse an essay topic.
- Demonstrate an ability to combine the ideas of more than one source with their own.
- Distinguish between summarizing and paraphrasing.
- Use appropriate citation and referencing styles.

4.2 Introduction

Writing for academic purposes is quite different from writing for other purposes. It is not a skill that most of us master before entering a higher education institution. Developing your academic writing skills includes learning to conform to acceptable writing conventions with regard to style, tone and presentation, while at the same time learning how best, as a first time academic author, to develop presenting your own voice and position. Academic writing is based on a process of reading and evaluating credible sources of information, which then helps you as the writer to organize and use other writer's information to answer a question and suggest a solution or validate a position.

4.3 Learning Activity 1: Research based essay writing

Academic writing is the primary means of assessment at university level, and therefore determines success in academic studies. It is for that reason that we focus on the *research based* essay. As the name suggests, when you write this type of essay, you are expected to conduct research by looking for information that will shed more light and help you better understand the subject that you are writing about. In chapter 1 of your prescribed book, you are introduced to key steps in exploring an academic essay.

How long should an essay be?

The length of the essay will depend on the level at which you are writing and the type of text that is expected. For instance, at an undergraduate level, you may be asked to write an essay of about three to four pages as part of an assignment or between 500 words and 1000 words. At post graduate level, you are more likely to write longer research essays or even research reports and dissertations which may even be divided into chapters.

The starting point

Step 1, Think about the topic. Determine what you will write about.

Step 2, Think about your audience. Consider your intended readers and what interests them.

Step 3, Think about your purpose. Ask yourself what your goal is.

Step 4, Try exploring strategies. Experiment with different ways to generate ideas.

Let us look at the first step on analyzing essay topics or titles:

Topics or titles contain key words that tell the student what to do. Note that topics/titles often have two or more parts. For example:

What is meant by ineffectiveness of advertising and why would you believe the contrary?

In this case, 'what' is asking for a description and 'why' for a reason or explanation. The following are some task or action words that are often found on research essays.



Student Exercise 1 Understanding key words

Match the key words on the left to the definitions on the right.

Analyse	Give examples
Assess/ Evaluate	Deal with complex subject by reducing it to the main elements
Describe	Divide into section and discuss each critically
Discuss	Break down into the various parts and their relationships
Examine/ Explore	Make a proposal and support it
Illustrate	Look at various aspects of a topic, compare benefits and drawbacks
Outline/ Trace	Give a detailed account of something
Suggest	Explain a topic briefly and clearly
Summarise	Decide the value or worth of a subject

Understanding the task words in an essay instruction gives you an idea of what you are required to do in a particular essay. If you are able to identify key words, that will shed more light on the essay topic. Consider the next activity and practice how to identify key words in a topic.



Student Exercise 2

Identifying key words in a topic

Read the passage and answer the following questions.

My African Childhood

By David Sedaris

When Hugh was in the fifth grade, his class took a field trip to an Ethiopian slaughterhouse. He was living in Addis Ababa at the time, and the slaughterhouse was chosen because, he says, "it was convenient". This was a school system in which the matter of proximity outweighed such petty concerns as what may or may not be appropriate for a busload of eleven year olds.

"What?" I asked. Were there no autopsies scheduled at the local morgue? Was the federal prison just a bit too far out of the way?

Hugh defends his former school, saying, "Well, isn't that the whole point of a field trip? To see something new?"

"Technically yes, but...."

"All right then", he says. "So we saw some new things". One of his field trips was literally a trip where the class watched a wrinkled man fill his mouth with rotten goat meat and feed it to a pack of waiting hyenas. On another occasion, they were taken to examine the bloodied bedroom curtains hanging in the place of the former dictator. There were tamer trips, to textile factories and sugar refineries, but my favorite is always the slaughterhouse. It wasn't a big company, just a small rural enterprise run by a couple of brothers operating out of a lowceilinged concrete building. Following a brief lecture on the importance of proper sanitation, a small white piglet was herded into the room, its dainty hooves clicking against the concrete floor. The class gathered in a circle to get a better look at the animal that seemed delighted with the attention he was getting. He turned from face to face and was looking up at Hugh when one of the brothers drew a pistol from his back pocket, held it against the animal's temple, and shot the piglet, execution-style. Blood spattered, frightened children wept, and the man with the gun offered the teacher and bus driver some meat from a freshly slaughtered goat.

Underline the key words in the following questions and consider what they are asking you to do.

- Briefly describe the writer's attitude to fieldtrips.
- Summarise the good memories that the writer has of his childhood.
- What were the benefits for shorter school fieldtrips?
- Discuss the examples of fieldtrips cited in paragraph 4.

The second step is to think about the **audience** that you are writing for. This refers to the readers who may be in your personal, academic, and professional life. This influences the tone and the register that you will use in your writing. Through the tone, you are able to express your attitude or feeling towards the topic, by adopting a humorous, sarcastic or serious approach in your writing. Knowing your reader is important when you are preparing academic or workplace documents.

When considering your audience, you may ask yourself the following questions:

- Who will read my essay? Will my lecturer be the only reader, or will others also read it?
- What does my audience already know about the topic?
- What information will my readers expect?
- Should I use formal or informal language?
- How should I adjust my vocabulary and tone to appeal to my readers?

Step 3 requires that you think about the **purpose** of your writing. This requires the writer to be clear about why they are writing. Your goal may be to *entertain*, *persuade* or *inform* your audience about a certain topic. As a student, you may be required by your lecturers to answer a given or chosen question relevant to your course of study. Sometimes you may be asked to discuss a subject of common interest and give your own view. At a slightly advanced level, you may be asked to write a report on a piece of research that you might have conducted. In this case, you need to demonstrate the ability to **synthesise** and **summarise** research done by others on a similar topic.

What other reasons can you think of?

-
-

Whatever the purpose, it is important to plan your essay appropriately and address the reason for writing that piece in the first place.

4.4 Learning Activity 2: Synthesising information

Perhaps one of the most important but difficult processes in writing is the *synthesis* of various writers' ideas. Substantiating your position on an argument means being able to summarise and connect your own and other author's views in **your own words**. In this way *evidence* for your argument is presented, and *plagiarism* is avoided. One of the main reasons why students tend to summarise their evidence rather than using it to substantiate their thesis and develop an argument is that they fail to see the relationships between the different pieces of evidence. Instead, they see the evidence simply as a list of various sources without asking themselves how the ideas in one source are related to other sources. In other words, they do not *synthesise* the information and ideas in their sources.

Let us unpack the idea of synthesizing information after using information from different sources. When you synthesise information, you demonstrate your ability to combine the ideas of more than one source with your **own**.

Consider the following diagram as a simple demonstration of synthesizing:

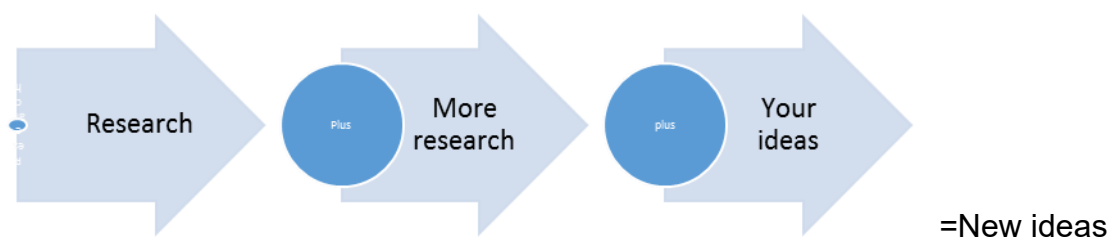


Figure 4.1: Synthesizing

Perhaps one of the most important but difficult processes in writing is the *synthesis* of various writers' ideas. Substantiating your position on an argument means being able to summarise and connect your own and other author's views in **your own words**. In this way *evidence* for your argument is presented, and *plagiarism* is avoided. One of the main reasons why students tend to summarise evidence at their disposal rather than using it to substantiate their thesis and develop an argument is that they fail to see the relationships between the different pieces of evidence. Instead, they see the evidence simply as a list of various sources without asking themselves how the ideas in one source are related to other sources. In other words, they do not [synthesise](#) (2 min 30 sec video) the information and ideas in their sources. Click on the hyperlink on synthesizing and get more information.

N/B Remember that synthesizing and summarizing information go hand in hand.



Student Exercise 3 Purpose of writing an academic essay

When you consider the purpose or reason for writing an essay on a particular topic, it may be to tell a personal story, to convince readers that your point of view is the correct view, or to explain something or present information. Can you identify the purpose of writing an academic essay in these sentences?

- Classical music soothes the soul.
- Advanced driving lessons should be compulsory for taxi drivers.
- My first job interview.
- Smoking cigarettes is better than drinking alcohol.

The fourth step involves **exploring strategies**. After you have selected your topic, determined the audience and purpose, you can use exploring strategies which involve prewriting strategies. Those include freewriting where you record your first thoughts by writing continuously without stopping until you run out of ideas. Brainstorming is another strategy that helps you shape your ideas by creating a list of ideas while taking time to think about the topic. This can be followed by asking yourself a series of questions that will help you to narrow and define your focus on the topic at hand. You can ask yourself questions like *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* questions. Finally, you can use clustering where you can arrange ideas in a visual image. You can begin by drawing a circle in the middle of the page and writing your topic inside. That will lead to other ideas, which you will also put inside circles. This will help you cluster or group ideas together so that you can see connections.

4.5 Learning Activity 3: Gathering information about research essay topic

In your academic writing journey, you will be writing on topics that will sometimes require you to collect information from other sources like print books, internet sources, newspapers and various other media platforms. One of the most important aspects of writing for academic purposes is:

- Finding information
- Evaluating it
- Using it to support your argument
- Indicating exactly where you found the information, **both** in the body of your answer, directly after you have mentioned the idea **and** at the end, in a bibliography or list of references.

When we draft an essay on a particular topic, we initially depend on our own experiences, thoughts and reflections which shape up our line of argument. However, we are not experts in everything, and for that reason, we rely on extra sources in order to:

- Find information that we don't know,
- Confirm (or question) our ideas and,
- Discover what other people are thinking.



Student Exercise 4 Evaluating information

Look at the sentence and answer the questions that will help you evaluate information:

More than 13 million young women between the ages of 20 and 25 abstained from the 2019 National elections in South Africa.

- Where is this information coming from?
- Do you believe the statement?
- How do you know if it is true or not?

The above example is to help you think carefully about how you use and capture other writers' ideas without being accused of **plagiarism**.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is submitting statements, ideas, opinions or findings copied without acknowledgement from another source, as if they were one's own (Killen and Walker: 1979:15).

In the context of electronic texts, it has become easy to manipulate the electronically available knowledge capital in the students' assignments that makes electronic sources attractive to them (Chandrasoma, Thompson and Pennycook (2004). We have come to understand that writers, especially novice ones, may end up plagiarising for different reasons, some of which could be the following:

- Inability to paraphrase.
- Failure to summarise ideas.
- Improper punctuation, including direct quotes.

Types of plagiarism Copying

- Copying another student's essay.
- Copying from books or articles without using quotation marks.

Copying directly from lecture notes.

Paraphrasing

- Paraphrasing an author's work, i.e. rewording it, re-ordering the ideas, and presenting them as your own.

Lifting ideas

- Using an author's ideas, expressed in your own words; and pretending that they are yours.

Cutting and Pasting

- Putting together extracts from various authors to make up your essay. Even if you use quotes or acceptable paraphrasing, this sort of essay cannot be regarded as your own work.

Bailey (2015: 42) states that *summarising* and *paraphrasing* are normally used together in essay writing. While summarising aims to reduce information to a suitable length, allowing the writer to condense lengthy sources into a concise form, paraphrasing means changing the wording of a text so that it is significantly different from the original source, without changing the meaning. The table below addresses summarising, paraphrasing, and quoting from other sources:

SUMMARISING	PARAPHRASING	QUOTING
- Must reference the original source. - The text is much shorter than the original text. (For example, one may write a single page to summarize a four-page article.) - Must use your own words, usually with a very limited use of quotations.	- Must reference the original source. - The text produced may be shorter or longer than the original text - Must use your own words.	- Must reference the original source. - The text produced is the exact length of the original text quoted (unless ellipses are used). - Use the original author's exact words. - Put quotation marks around the original author's exact words. - Include the page number of the original source from which you borrowed the author's original language.

Note that an effective paraphrase usually:

- Has a different structure to the original.
- Has mainly different vocabulary.
- Retains the same meaning.
- Keeps some phrases from the original that are in common use (e.g. 'Industrial revolution', 'twentieth century', 'technological disruption').

The following are some of the techniques that can assist you with paraphrasing:

- Changing vocabulary by using synonyms: *argues-claims, economise-save*
- Changing word class: *explanation(noun)-explain(verb), profitable(adjective)profitability(noun)*
- Changing word order:*the best explanation for the British location of the Industrial Revolution is found by studying demand factors. OR*

A focus on demand may help explain the UK origin of the Industrial Revolution.

Notice that the meaning conveyed in the two sentences has not changed, but the author simply wrote the sentences differently.

Sometimes writers confuse paraphrasing with summarizing. The main difference between a paraphrase and a summary is the length. A paraphrase can be close to the same length as the original selection, but a summary is much shorter. To summarise or paraphrase successfully you can do the following:

- Paraphrase if your audience needs detailed information about the subject.
- Summarise if the audience needs to know only general information. A summary is generally a maximum of 30 percent of the length of the original selection.
- Restate the main ideas using your own words. You can keep specialized words, common words, and names of people or places. However, make sure that you also find other synonyms for other words, and use your own sentence structure.
- Maintain the original author's ideas and intent.
- Acknowledge the source. Mention the author or title of the work. When available, also include the page number.
- Proofread your writing to ensure that you have expressed the message in your own words.

4.6 E-tutor Task 1

Preparing for summary

As students, you are usually expected to summarise huge chunks of information which is sometimes turned into lecture notes, an assignment or a piece of writing that is appropriate for the message that needs to be conveyed.

Write a short description of one of the topics below in no more than 50 words.

- A book you have enjoyed.
- A town or city you know well.
- A film you have recently watched.

What do you think is needed for a good summary?

-
-

□

Integrating paraphrases, summaries and quotations

In a research essay, you can support your main points with paraphrases, summaries and integrated quotations. They strengthen your research paper and make it more forceful and convincing. All of these strategies are valid ways to incorporate research into your writing, as long as you give credit to the author or speaker.

4.7 E-Tutor Task 2

Quoting sources

Look carefully at the text below and see how the skills of summarizing, paraphrasing and quoting can be used in your own writing:

Organising an interview involves a series of steps (Davies, 2007), including recruiting interviewees, finding a suitable venue and writing appropriate guidelines. However, depending on the research subject, a more flexible approach can be adopted, resulting in a less structured interview (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). As King states: 'gathering a large volume of cases does not guarantee the credibility of a study' (King, 2004:16).

- a) How many authors/sources have been used in this text?
- b) Has the writer quoted any author's work? Which author has been quoted and how do you know that this is a quotation?

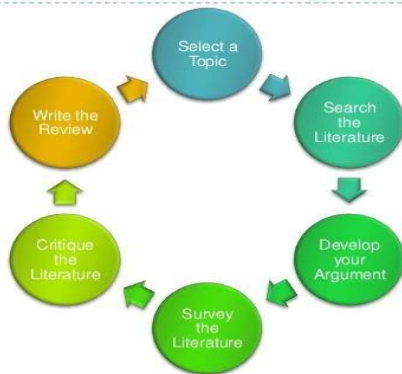
4.8 Learning Activity 4: Referencing

Why should you use a referencing system?

Referencing is important for reasons other than avoiding plagiarism. When you reference correctly, you are demonstrating that you have read widely on the topic. You are also supporting your hypothesis with comments from expert authors. This lends credibility to your own work. Also, by correctly referencing, you allow the marker or reader to follow-up your references and to check the validity of your arguments for themselves. This is an important part of the academic process, as it leads to student accountability.

The diagram below is a demonstration of the steps involved when you conduct a literature search on your chosen topic. This process is also called *literature review*.

The Literature Review Process



From *The Literature Review* (2009) by Machi and McEvoy

Figure 4.2: Literature review

Figure 1 demonstrates that the process of searching for information involves a few activities before you can use that information as part of a complete text. When you plan your own writing, try and follow these steps as they will guide you to a good end product.

4.9 Learning Activity 5: Citations and references

Failure to acknowledge sources may have serious real life consequences. You may have heard of instances where people had to face sanctions because of such acts of dishonesty. Read the story of plagiarism which you can access from this [link](#):



Student Exercise 5 Thinking about referencing practice

Decide if you need to give a reference in the following cases.

- | | |
|---|--------|
| a) Data you found from your own primary research | Yes/No |
| b) A graph from an internet article | Yes/No |
| c) A quotation from a book | Yes/No |
| d) An item of common knowledge | Yes/No |
| e) A theory from a journal article | Yes/No |
| f) An idea of your own based on reading several sources | Yes/No |

N.B. Feedback on the above exercise will be discussed by tutors.

It is important to refer correctly to the work of other writers that you have used. You may present these sources as a summary/ paraphrase, as a quotation, or use both. In each case, a citation is included to provide a link to the list of references at the end of your essay. There are various referencing styles that can be used by authors, for example, Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association, Chicago Style and the Harvard style. The preferred style for ENGLISH 1503 is the Harvard style. If you are in another discipline like psychology, Education or any other field of study, make sure that you are familiar with the preferred style of referencing in that area. Your lecturers will guide you with this.

When taking notes, use a separate page for each new book, journal article or electronic source. At the top of each page, clearly record the following information for future reference.

- The author's or editor's name (names)
- The year the book was published
- The title of the book
- If it is an edition other than the first
- The city the book was published in
- The name of the publisher

For **journal articles** record:

- The author's name or names
- The year in which the journal was published
- The title of the article
- The title of the journal
- The page number/s of the article in the journal
- As much other information as you can find about the journal, for example the volume and issue numbers.

For **electronic resources**, try to collect the information on the left if it is available, but also record:

- The date you accessed the source
- The electronic address or email
- The type of electronic resource (email, discussion forum, www page, etc)

In addition to these details, when you are taking notes, if you copy direct quotations or if you put the author's ideas in your own words, write down the page numbers you got the information from.

In the Harvard system illustrated here, the list is organized alphabetically by the family name of the author. You should be clear about the difference between first names and family names. On title pages, the normal format of first name, then family name is used.

4.10 Learning Activity 6: Referencing in the text of your assignment

The following section shows you a number of different examples when quoting and paraphrasing in the text of your assessment. In all references, you will need to list the author/editor name/s and the year of publication. The year of publication can be found on the first couple of pages of the book, along with the other bibliographic information. Look for the author's name, a copyright symbol and then a date. This will be the date of publication. In most references, you will also need to list the page number/s where you found the specific information. The only type of reference where this is not required is when you paraphrase a summary of an entire piece of work. Let us use a hypothetical example about Chinua Achebe who might have written a book about colonialism in Nigeria. You might summarise and correctly reference the entire gist of his book in the following way:

Achebe (1958) depicts details about life in an African culture as compared to the Western culture.

If this was a direct quote from a book or journal article, it would have looked like this:

Achebe (1958:5) states that “ African culture is completely different from Western culture”.

OR

When comparing cultures “African culture is completely different from Western culture” (Achebe, 1958:5).

In these examples, *Achebe* is the *author*, ‘1958’ is the year of publication and ‘5’ is the page number where the direct quote can be found.

For a direct quote from a journal or article with two authors you would have referenced like this:

Achebe and Mphahlele (1958:5) state that ‘ African culture is completely different from Western culture”.

OR

When comparing cultures “African culture is completely different from Western culture” (Achebe and Mphahlele,1958:5).

For three authors you would follow the same pattern as illustrated by the examples above. Take particular note when the book has more than three authors. For example, if Achebe, Mphahlele, Tsotetsi, Brown and Naidoo wrote the book or journal article, you would use the first author’s name followed by ‘et al.’ which means ‘and others’.

Achebe et al (1958:5) states that “ African culture is completely different from Western culture”.

When you paraphrase, it will look much the same as the direct quotation examples, but without the inverted commas. For example, if we paraphrased an example from Achebe and Mphahlele’s book, it would look like this:

When compared to Western culture, African culture is completely different (Achebe and Mphahlele, 1958:5)

You can visit the site and listen to the short [video](#) on citation.

Your prescribed books and study guides.

These have been prescribed for a reason. They generally represent the most useful and relevant books in the field which you are studying. Use them fully and thoughtfully, but do not accept their views without testing them against other sources or your own ideas. This also applies to the study guides themselves. Your lecturers are also human and they may commit errors.

4.11 Learning Activity 7: Recommended reading and other library sources

The Library is making more and more resources available online, including books.

How to find a book

If you are physically in the Library but a book you want is not available, you can always browse amongst other books nearby since these will deal with related topics. You can also do this electronically by using the catalogue online to show you which other books have similar shelf numbers (e.g. they will cover similar subjects).

How to find an article

Do an electronic search through information resources such as electronic databases which will lead you to full-text articles. You can download these immediately.

The [REDACTED] Library is an outstanding resource, one of the best in the continent. Please use it to the full. Further advice is available:

- In [http://libguides\[REDACTED\].ac.za](http://libguides[REDACTED].ac.za) (More information is listed in your Tutorial letter)
- On the Library home page, look under Research support, but note that the librarians cannot handle requests for help by undergraduate students; and
- On the [REDACTED] module site for ENG [REDACTED]

4.12 Learning Activity 8: Evaluating and using information

A good English *dictionary* is essential if you are a student.

- It has to be more comprehensive than a school dictionary and ideally give you more details about word usage.
- Reliable publishers of advanced learners' dictionaries include Cambridge, Collins, Longman, Oxford, AND Webster. A very good online dictionary is that by MerriamWebster.
- As far as *encyclopaedias* are concerned, the Encyclopaedia Britannica is one of the best available. Some of its articles are online. When it comes to web-based encyclopaedias, these may not be reliable. Usually their authors are not named, and the material in the articles is **not** reviewed by experts.
- Wikipedia is usually easy to access, but its contents may be very uneven. There are some good articles, but also many inaccurate ones. Use them with great caution.

Some writers find it challenging to reference internet sources. The principle is to give readers enough detail to be able to locate exactly the same source if it still exists. Here is an example that you can refer to:

Setiyadi, A.B. (2019). Exploring motivational orientations of English as foreign language (EFL) learners: A case study in Indonesia. *South African Journal of Education*, 39, (1), 1-12.
<http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za/index.php/saje/article/view/1500/844>

4.13 Learning Activity 9: Reference List

All of the sources you refer to in the main body of your assignment need to be listed at the end of the assignment in a reference list.

In a reference list, you only need to list those sources from which you have either quoted or paraphrased. For example, you do not have to list books you used for background reading purposes. When creating a reference list, the sources should be listed alphabetically by author's surname, should be left justified, and the references should **never** be preceded by a bullet-point or number. All sources should be listed together, that is, books, electronic journals and normal journal articles.

When you use the Harvard System, you are usually required to produce a reference list. However, some lecturers may want you to produce a bibliography instead of a reference list.

What is the difference between the two? As stated before, a *reference* list only has sources from which you have quoted or paraphrased, whereas a *bibliography* contains all the works cited in a paper including other sources that the author consulted even if they are not mentioned in the text. Here is an example of a list of references (Harvard style):

Kirk, E. 1996. 'Evaluating information on the internet'. The Sheridan Libraries at Johns Hopkins University. <http://www.library.jhu.edu/researchhelp/general/evaluating/> (Accessed 2009-06-04; revisited 2013-04-29)

Morris, W. 'David Hume'. 2009. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Summer 2009 Edition), E. N. Zalta (ed.). http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum_2009/entries/hume/. (Accessed: 2009-08-15; revisited 2013-04-29) University of California Berkeley Library. 2009. URL=

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.HTML> (accessed 2009-06-04; revisited 2013-04-29)

Please take note of the *punctuation* and stick to the original web address as it appears on the internet.

Let us now look at how you can tackle the *research* essay, bearing in mind that this type of essay involves gathering, evaluating and synthesising information from various sources, which also need to be acknowledged through proper referencing. As a student, you may be required to gather information not only from written material, but also from *interviews* or *surveys*, depending on the topic given. Read the following text and use it to practice your information searching skills.



Student Exercise 6 Preparing for essay writing

As a starting point, you would prepare yourself for this task by asking a few questions like: what mood disorders are, information about the drug Ritalin, attention deficit disorder and antidepressants etc.

Medicating ourselves

It is hard to pick up a magazine these days without finding an article attacking or defending some pharmaceutical remedy for syndromes of mood or behaviour. These drugs are in vogue because they have shown themselves spectacularly effective for a range of conditions, though their exact workings are not well understood, and their long-term effects are not known. Yet, for all the noise we continue to hear about, say, Ritalin, for children with attention deficit disorders and related learning or behaviour problems-or Prozac and the new family of anti-depressants prescribed to the stressed and distressed of all ages-the real debate on pharmaceuticals has yet to begin.

If you were to talk to someone from your local clinic or anyone in the health profession, what questions would you ask about *attention-deficit* disorder?

Question 1

Question 2.....

Question 3.....

4.14 E-tutor Task 3

Essay writing

Many teachers are faced with the problem of dealing with children who suffer from Attention deficit disorder (also known as ADD). Write a research essay in which you describe the symptoms of ADD and possible interventions to deal with it.

Refer to Figure 1 on literature review and follow those steps in searching and using the information for your essay.

Checklist: Research Essay

- Have I narrowed my topic?
- Have I created a guiding research question?
- Are my sources reliable?
- Have I organised my notes?
- Have I integrated source information using quotations, paraphrases, and summaries?
- Have I correctly documented my in-text citations?
- Have I correctly prepared and punctuated my Works Cited or Reference page?

4.15 Learning Activity 10: Writing reports

Although essays are the most common assignments in many academic disciplines, students of science and business are often asked to write reports. Reports and essays are similar in many ways. In this section, you will see the difference between essays and reports.

Similarities	Differences
• Both have clear and logical format. • Use objective and accurate academic style. • Include citations and references. • Make use of visual information in the form of graphs and tables. • Include appendices where necessary.	• May describe an experiment you have conducted. • Reports are likely to be based on primary or secondary data. • Use numbering (1.1, 1.2 etc) • Are more specific and detailed.



Student Exercise 7

Report writing

Consider these topics and state whether they are likely to be written as reports or essays:

- a) The development of trade unions in South Africa.
- b) Two alternative plans for improving the sports centre.
- c) A study you conducted to compare male and female attitudes to eating.
- d) An overview of recent research on the cause of obesity among 15 year old girls.
- e) The arguments for and against corporal punishment in schools.

4.16 Learning Activity 11: Types of reports

At university, you may be required to write different types of reports that are relevant to your discipline. The following are some of the common reports:

- Technical and business reports

These are common in disciplines like Engineering, Information Technology, Commerce, Accounting and finance. Your lecturers may give you an assignment that requires you to research a particular problem and present results of the research in the form of a report.

- Field reports

These are common in disciplines like Law, Psychology, Nursing, History and Education. These types of reports require careful analyses and observation of phenomena or events in the **real** world.

- Scientific reports

This type of report is usually conducted in order to support a [hypothesis](#) (6 minute video) or to validate the work of others. In this case, the writer is expected to provide an accurate record of the experiment which may be shared among other researchers. At graduate level or above, your research is adding to a body of data on your particular area of study. In general, scientific reports follow the same guidelines as other academic writing in terms of style and vocabulary. However, your department may well have its own requirements, for instance, the organisation of a report, so it is advisable to ask if these exist.

Reports in disciplines such as biology, chemistry and physics, business and education generally include the following:

Title

This gives a brief description of what the report is about.

Abstract

This section summarises the main points of the report, including conclusions and recommendations.

Introduction

This is where you justify the research by explaining why the study was undertaken. **Methods**

This section reports on how the study was done. It normally includes procedures and materials.

Results

This reports what the study found from the data collected.

Discussion

This section discusses what findings might mean, and why they matter, especially in relation to what other researchers have found. It clearly connects the results with your conclusion.

References

This is a list of all the materials that you referred to in your writing.

Note that it is important to ascertain what structure is used in your discipline. More on this is available on pages 320-340 of your prescribed book.

The 4 minute 48 second [video](#) on this link explains each step of the academic report.

**Student Exercise 8 Report writing**

Write a report on the topic: "*A study that I conducted to compare male and female attitudes to eating*", in conjunction with the video that you watched on report writing. Your research report should have an introduction, methods, results and discussion. You are free to use other sources for more information on the subject.

4.17 References

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5 Learning Unit 5: Academic Language across the Curriculum

5.1 Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this learning unit students will be able to:

- Identify types of sentences that are common in academic writing.
- Describe academic vocabulary, register, style, and nominalization.
- Read and write a paragraph.
- Relate the specific language features to text structures and academic genres.
- Demonstrate competency in editing, and revising sentences and paragraphs.
- Describe features of academic language occurring in specific disciplines.

5.2 Introduction

In academic reading and writing across the disciplines, you will encounter many genres. These include the following:

- Argumentative essay
- Journal article
- Conference abstract
- Book review
- Dissertation
- Textbook
- Laboratory report
- On page 319 to 340 of the prescribed book, more information is provided on some of these genres.

What is meant by genre?

Genre means text type. The term has been used in music, cooking, literature, film studies, and so on. In fact, the internet has introduced many new genres, such as e-mails, Facebook, and twitter.

This term has been used and explained in other units, however, in this section on language, some of the genre features and characteristics that relate to language and academic discourse will be elaborated. See Unit 3 on Genre for more information.

The above is a recap of what has already been taught in the previous Units. What is key for this unit is academic language and discourse. Academic discourse is defined [here](#). Moffett (2014: 26) defines academic discourse as, “the use of a specific register and vocabulary (including scientific terminology) that implies acceptance of a certain history of ideas, while also demonstrating competence in current ideas.”

In this Unit, the focus is on language. Language is central to both academic [style](#) and academic register. Style is defined [here](#). Academic discourse is important for you as a student so that you can learn to speak and write like specialists in your own field of study. For example, you may learn to use language from disciplines such as Law, Medicine, Accounting, Social Science and so on. Different disciplines have different specialist discourses. You are learning to become a member in one or more of these communities.

In this lesson, you will learn about academic vocabulary, sentences, paragraphs, and text types. You will be exposed to examples of typical academic language, and style. The main text that will be used is ‘Brands R Us’, available on page 267 of the prescribed book. There will be extracts from other texts that show different versions and extracts of more appropriate academic texts.

The extracts come from a variety of academic contexts. In all of them, you will be expected to describe the genre. In fact, you will find that, just by changing the language, style, and register, the genre also changes, yet the topic remains relatively the same.

5.3. Learning Activity 1: Defining academic language

What is academic language? Typically academic language has been described as formal, factual, objective, and supported by evidence.

Some of the characteristics of academic language are:

- Tentative statements or hedging
- Full forms of words instead of contractions
- Nominalized phrases or nominalization
- Passive voice
- Third person pronouns
- Few direct questions
- Formal negative forms
- No clichés, redundant words or colloquialisms

5.4 E-Tutor Task 1

You have an opportunity to discuss the characteristics of academic discourse with your etutor and fellow students. The discussion covers an explanation of audience, register and style. You can refer to Moffett et. Al. 2014. Note that register can be used as an analytical term that describes the language features of discussion, cause and effect, and argument. Some of the genres have been discussed. See the video [here](#).

Etutors will find out if students agree with all of the above characteristics of academic language. Etutors will discuss these characteristics and show examples from specific disciplines. It is important to note that these characteristics are suggestions and guidelines. Some disciplines may alter some of the rules, for example, by using the active voice and the first person pronouns.

5.5 Learning Activity 2: Titles or Headings

The same topic can be presented in different genres. Journalists do this all the time whenever they present on or write about the same topic in different mediums. The following passage is about advertising. It is on page 267 of the prescribed book.

The following argumentative essay is written in an informal style, and register. In this Unit, you are going to learn about academic language in order to be able to convert any text from an informal one to a more formal academic style. As mentioned above, genre features such as audience, purpose, context and content/message will be used in the analysis.

As an academic reader and writer, right from the beginning of this text, one notices that the title is informal, '**Brands R Us**'. This style of writing is often referred to as SMS language, textese, or netspeak by sociolinguists. In academic language, the standard and formal spelling is preferred, for example, '**Brands Are Us**.'

Formal versus informal titles

Informal	Brands R Us
----------	-------------

Formal	Brands Are Us

Can you think of more examples of titles? Use the internet to search for possible examples and complete the table above.

Now let us compare this title in the prescribed textbook with other titles. The following two research articles have been placed on e-reserves. Here are two titles that are used as examples in this lesson:

- a) Youth perceptions of alcohol advertising: are current advertising regulations working?
- b) The effects of television advertisements on adolescents: An exploratory study

Comment: The two titles above are typical headings from academic journals. They are written in formal academic language.



Student Exercise 1

Look for titles from three sources and compare them. You can use google, an online library, or other search engines, etc. The titles should be from a magazine, a newspaper, and a journal article.

Titles and contexts of use

	Magazine	Newspaper	Journal article
Titles			
Structure/introduction			

Complete the table above. You can keep a virtual journal or a print journal where you practice the activities for ENG1503. This was mentioned in Unit 1.

5.6 Learning Activity 3: Analyzing the Language of a Text

Let us analyze the [Brands R Us](#) passage again

Notice that the essay begins with background information, and gives some indication or hint about the theme of the essay. This is not how typical academic genres like essays, and journal articles are written. However, in newspapers this would be permissible. Journalists often highlight the

main idea of an article immediately after the title. This is also called *the lead*. We are referring to the words in italics below:

(Stephen Garey is a writer and a former advertising industry creative executive. He has published many articles about consumption and the environment. In the following essay he makes a powerful argument about advertising)



Student Exercise 2

- Define the following three terms: academic jargon, style, and register.
- Read the passage on page 267. Identify and explain how or why some of the language used or linguistic features that are used are inappropriate.
- Rewrite portions of some of the paragraphs in more academic language
- Before asking for help from a tutor, work with a fellow student to rewrite some of the paragraphs

Text 1

- [1] Most people don't believe, don't remember, and don't think about advertising. Focus groups and other forms of testing have proven time and time again that the majority of ads are inefficient and ineffective. Indeed, it's been estimated that some 80-85 percent of all advertising is neither consciously "seen" nor remembered by the consuming public. Within a few minutes after being exposed to an advertising message and brand, consumers have a hard time remembering the message or the brand that delivered it!
- [2] And yet, there's a direct connection between an individual's level of exposure to advertising and levels of product consumption. How can this be? If advertising is largely ineffective, if most advertising is neither seen nor remembered by most people, and if – two minutes after being exposed to a particular message or brand – consumers can't remember the brand or the message, then where's the connection? How does something so seemingly benign and banal impact consumption patterns and habits?
- [3] While we may not be paying much attention to each and every individual message that comes our way, the collective effect of all this advertising is quite powerful. All during our waking hours, some 3000 to 5000 messages per day *per individual* are instructing us to Buy, Buy, Buy and Buy Some more. Sometimes these messages are delivered quietly. Many times the advertisers shout them from the rooftops. But no matter how these messages are delivered to us – and as much as we might tend to consider advertising mere background or "wallpaper" in our day-to-day lives – there's little doubt that advertising as a *whole* strongly influences overall consumer behavior. In other words, by itself, the advertising for Hyundai automobiles has little effect upon one's personal life. But Hyundai ads combined with Apple Computer ads, Tide detergent TV commercials, Chivas Regal outdoor boards, GE television program sponsorships, and Johnson's Floor Wax coupons in the Sunday newspaper – not to mention the specials down each and every aisle at the local department store or supermarket – have a very powerful *collective* effect indeed.
- [4] Because advertising is generally so lighthearted and entertaining, this collective messaging practically gives us permission to ignore the long term consequences of our daily purchasing decisions. The almost comedic presentation of most advertising carries with it the underlying suggestion that we shouldn't take any of it too seriously.

- [5] But we should...and we must.
- [6] At one time, advertising's collective message to buy – and to replace what we have rather than repair what we have – served us well. When we were far fewer in numbers, when nations and communities were growing and businesses large and small were trying to build their customer base, consumption of goods in high volume was not only desirable, it was also respectable. But our population has exploded, and we're no longer naïve about the hazards of our consumer culture. It's all too clear that advertising's collective power and our collective responses to it over time have had a profound, often adverse, impact upon people's lives and the planet we all share.
- [7] Wanton consumption now presents serious dangers to our health and well-being. It's a way of life that has outlived its usefulness, and what needs to change is *us*, not the advertising that influences us. We need to change our view of advertising as a banal and benign medium and fully recognize its powerful, collective effect.
- [8] We most certainly need to reduce consumption, and one of the first steps we can take towards consuming fewer unnecessary goods is to consume less advertising. Keep counters in the kitchen free of brand names; use unbranded containers. Take the roads less travelled: Use local streets at the edge of town and the old back highways as a way of exposure to commercial clutter. Steer clear of T-shirt advertising: Why should you be a walking, unpaid billboard? Watch less commercial television; listen to less commercial radio. Implementing just one or two of these suggestions can help you consume less advertising and, in turn, fewer products. And that's the whole idea.

5.7 Learning Activity 4: Academic Features of Texts

Feedback for Student Exercise 2

- 1) Paragraph 5 consists of one sentence with omitted words (This is called ellipsis). The paragraph begins with a conjunction. It is highly unlikely that such an incomplete sentence would be an appropriate paragraph in an academic essay, journal article, or in some textbooks that belong to your many different disciplines, such as Sociology, Law, Environmental Science etc.
- 2) The writer has a tendency to repeat words, phrases, expressions as if it's a conversation amongst friends, almost like a group chat. There are numerous instances of this in the text.
- 3) Most paragraphs begin with conjunctions as opposed to linking devices or cohesive devices. For example, "and yet", "because", "but"...
- 4) There are many rhetorical questions as opposed to statements, or declaratives.
- 5) The methods used for developing paragraphs are inconsistent. See chapter 6 of the prescribed book on page 71 for methods of developing paragraphs.
- 6) This text is more like speech or speaking than formal academic writing.
- 7) This text does not cite any sources, so it cannot be a researchbased essay. It is solely based on the opinion, experience and knowledge of the author.

Here are some more characteristics of academic paragraphs to help you understand the passage:

Hint: The topic sentence usually appears at the beginning of a paragraph. Sometimes a topic sentence can be in the middle or at the end of a paragraph. At times the writer may not use a topic sentence at all, but expect the reader to infer the main idea from the other sentences in the paragraph. A paragraph always develops one main idea.

In a well written paragraph, all the supporting sentences are linked to, and develop the topic sentence or main idea by giving evidence, examples, facts, statistics, quotations, and so on. Supporting sentences in a paragraph should be arranged in a logical order – they should build onto one another seamlessly. The ideas should be connected with appropriate links so that the paragraph is easier to read.



Student Exercise 3

- In your own words, write the thesis statement for the entire text “Brands R Us” □
What is the topic sentence in paragraph 3?

5.8 Learning Activity 5: An Op-ed

Text 1 is a typical opinion piece, popularly known as op-ed (opinion editorial) in online newspapers, see for example, the [Daily Maverick](#), the [Guardian.org](#) or the [Atlantic](#). It is an argument that is based on an opinion supported by facts, statistics or scientific research. Thomas Friedman, the columnist for the New York Times explains an op-ed [here](#).

Here is an online dictionary definition of an op-ed: [op-ed](#).

Now read the following extract from an academic journal (The full article is on e-reserves):

Text 2

A significant body of work indicates that exposure to alcohol advertising is associated with increased positive beliefs about alcohol, intentions to drink, likelihood of underage drinking, and increased consumption by young people (Anderson, et al. 2008). Increasing identification with advertising produces changes in consumers' attitudes and behaviors (Krugman, 1965). Alcohol advertisements with greater youth appeal appear to have more of an influence on young people's drinking. The desirability of characters in alcohol advertising predicts identification with these characters, which in turn predicts positive alcohol expectancies, frequency and quantity of alcohol use (Austin & Knaus, 2000). More active engagement with alcohol marketing by young people has been associated with consuming larger quantities of alcohol (Lin et al. 2012).

Adapted from; Alexandra Alken, Tina Lam, William Gillmore, Lucy Burns, Tanya Chlkritzhs, Simon Lenton, 2018. Youth perceptions of alcohol advertising: are current advertising regulations working? *Youth and Children*, 42(3), 234 – 239



Student Exercise 4

Compare and contrast the paragraph above (Text 2) with paragraph 1 from 'Brands R Us' [Text 1].

Possible answers:

- Text 2 is formal.
- Text 2 uses in-text citation.
- The text probably comes from a textbook or Journal article.

On the other hand, Text 1 lacks all these features.

Can you add more examples of the differences between Text 1 and Text 2?

5.9 Learning Activity 6: Reading short texts such as journal abstracts, and summaries.

We should practice reading short texts in order to identify the language, genre, style, or register that is used in the text. This will make us better academic writers. Remember in Unit 1, we illustrated different strategies and techniques of connecting reading and writing.

What is an abstract?

Bailey (2011: 22) defines abstracts by mentioning that they are normally found in journal articles. Abstracts act as summaries to enable the reader or researcher to decide if the information contained in the article is worth reading. Undergraduate students do not usually have to write abstracts, however, it is important to be able to read them.

Abstracts normally have a standard structure. The structure is as follows:

- Background position
- Aim and thesis of article
- Method of research
- Results of research

Other features of abstract for journal articles are:

- The research questions
- Recommendations



Student Exercise 5

Collect at least three abstracts from your own discipline and identify the aim, objectives, and main argument. Text 3 and Text 4 below are examples of acceptable abstracts. You can analyze them for further practice. Ask the library to assist with finding the texts.

Text 3 Alcohol marketing and adolescent alcohol consumption: Results from the International Alcohol Control Study (South Africa)

The harmful use of alcohol leads to 3.3 million deaths per annum globally (5.9% of all deaths) and is a major predictor of morbidity. The impact of alcohol use is not only experienced by adults but also by adolescents, for whom alcohol consumption is a key risk factor for noncommunicable and infectious diseases as well as various social and psychological harms, including school failure and drop-out. In South Africa (SA), rates of alcohol consumption among adolescents are very high. According to the 2011 Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) conducted among grade 8 – 11 learners in public schools, about half of the learners had ever consumed alcohol, about a quarter had engaged in binge drinking in the 30 days prior to the survey, and about 12 % had initiated consumption before the age of 12 years.

Adapted from: Morojele, NK; C Lombard, C; Harker Burnhams, N; Petersen Williams, P; Nel, E; & Harry, CDH (2018) Alcohol marketing and adolescent alcohol consumption: Results from the International Alcohol Control study (South Africa), *SAMJ*, 108(9), 782 – 788

Text 4 The impact of exposure to alcohol advertisements on adolescents: A literature review

Alcohol consumption occurs worldwide and is widespread among youth. Although, alcohol was once given as it was cleaner than water, neurological research continues to inform individuals of the toxicity of alcohol on the brain. The topic of interest is the subtle relationship between exposure to alcohol advertisements and alcohol consumption in children. The purpose of this literature review was to determine the current perception held by researchers concerning the relationship between exposure to alcohol advertisements and alcohol consumption by adolescents.

Adapted from: Boggs, M. & Durgampudi, P. (2017) The impact of exposure to alcohol advertisements on adolescents: A literature review, *Int. Public Health J.* 9(1): 13 - 22

5.10 Learning Activity 7: Academic vocabulary and academic discourse

What is the difference between speech and writing? Consider the following table. Do you agree with some of the characteristics of speech and writing? Add some of your own features.

Speaking	Writing
Many repetitions	Less or no repetitions
More actions and processes as seen in the use of verbs	Complex noun phrases and complex sentences
Tends to be based on the context/ e.g. the here and now, with evidence from Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, and interpersonal cues.	Decontextualized to some degree and depends on Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency.

Text 1 above, **Brands R Us**, has a mixture of both spoken and written language, both formal and informal. Consider some of the following words:

Contractions: don't, there's

Pronouns: we,

Nouns: ads

Punctuation: exclamation marks

Repetitive words: Buy, Buy, Buy and Buy Some More (note the emphasis through repetition and use of capital letters)

Figurative language: But many times the advertisers shout them from the rooftops.

N.B note that Text 1 uses academic vocabulary as well. Therefore, the same text can be used to illustrate examples of academic and none academic vocabulary.

Now let us compare some of the vocabulary from other academic texts like Text 2, Text 3, and Text 4.

The following words represent academic language:

Advertising, consumption, alcohol advertisements, identification, alcohol marketing, regulations.

One of the characteristics of academic vocabulary is a process called nominalization. **Nominalization is a process of** changing a verb and making an abstract noun by adding a suffix like – ance, - ment, or – ation. [Nominalization](#) means converting a word into a noun usually from verbs.

For example:

Govern – governance

Induce – inducement

Nationalize – nationalization

Besides the use of content words in the form of nominalization, academic vocabulary also uses linking words and phrases. As you read, find examples of these.

5.11 E-Tutor Task 2

Activity on nominalization and the use of transitional words

- Page 59 and page 89 of the prescribed book has tables of transitional words, and signaling words.
- Identify all the linking devices used in paragraph 1 to 3 of **Brands R Us**. □ Explain the functions of all the linking words identified above.

You can learn more about grammar and Academic English on the Queen Mary University by clicking on [Academic English](#). You will also find an activity on nominalization on this website and several other academic language related exercises.

Think about the words as the basic building blocks for sentences and paragraphs. You can use both to develop full paragraphs.

5.12 Learning Activity 8: What is a paragraph?

It is a series of sentences that deal with the same idea/theme/topic or issue. The rule is to have one theme per paragraph. A paragraph has three different types of sentences. These are:

- a) **Topic sentence:** This is the sentence that tells the reader the theme of the paragraph. The topic sentence gives the reader a sense of what the paragraph will be about. Topic sentences are precise and straight to the point.
- b) **Supporting sentences:** These are a group of sentences that explain the topic sentence. They elaborate on the topic sentence by doing any of the following: elaboration, definition, description, explanation, research and so on. Supporting sentences should be relevant and relate to the topic sentence. Research can refer to the facts that are provided by the information sources that you consult on this theme. It is also essential to acknowledge your sources by writing in-text references.

- c) **Concluding sentence:** This is the last sentence of the paragraph. When the reader reads it, s/he must get a sense that the theme of the paragraph has been dealt with adequately. The concluding sentence often sums up the theme of the paragraph.



Student Exercise 6

Turn to page 84 of the prescribed textbook: Activity 6.12. Dividing a text into paragraphs, Divide the following text into three paragraphs by adding ‘//’ where you think one paragraph ends and the next begins. Remember that each paragraph should have a topic sentence. The idea introduced in that topic sentence is then developed.

5.13 Learning Activity 9: General tips on writing a paragraph

A paragraph has the following qualities:

- Deals with a single theme.
- Provides all the answers to questions that the reader might have. Remember that you will not be there to explain to the reader when s/he does not understand.
- Uses appropriate academic language.
- Acknowledges information sources used in the paragraph.

When writing a paragraph, keep the following tips in mind:

- Ensure that your sentences are complete.
- Vary the structure of the sentences.
- Maintain the correct tenses.
- Start every sentence with a capital letter.
- Do not use words or terms that you do not understand.
- Ensure that your concords correspond with the sentence. □ Use correct punctuations, spelling and grammar.

Another tip or strategy of formulating paragraphs is to think of a paragraph as an answer to the 5 W's and 1 H. A paragraph must answer the following What, Who, When and Where, Why and How. The topic sentence answers the ‘What’ of a paragraph. This is because it tells the reader what the paragraph is about. The rest of the sentences answer the 5 W's and H. The concluding sentence ends the paragraph.

5.14 Learning Activity 10: Sentences, Vocab, and Discourse

What makes academic discourse difficult to follow is not just the fact that more complex words are used but the style, register, lexical density and jargon can also make it challenging. The various texts that have been used above make use of complex sentences, abstract words and academic vocabulary. The sentences in which the words occur are explained below: Types of sentences

- Fragments
- Simple sentences
- Compound sentences
- Complex sentences

5.15 E-tutor Task 3

Write your own examples under each column. You can look for examples from newspapers, books, and journals.

Sentence types in different discourses		
Simple sentence	Compound sentence	Complex sentence

In addition, the sentences may be

- Statements
- Commands/imperatives
- Questions
- Exclamations

Statement	Command	Question	Exclamation
I realized that I needed to go for a run.	Be original, be yourself.	What do West African countries have in common?	Stay away!

5.16 Learning Activity 11: Academic discourse

You do not need to know everything about grammar. What is important is that your brain associates particular types of diction, sentence structure and sentence types with a particular discourse. Association, inferencing, and sociocultural background will make you a good reader.

In addition, you need to train your brain (through social practice) to recognize and interpret the discourse of your chosen field of study, for example legal discourse, medical discourse, or economic discourse. This will help you identify with a particular discourse community, and give you a sense of belonging. The benefit of extensive reading and frequent practice is that it is an excellent way of training the brain to recognize any discourse. The more you read, the more knowledge that you gain.

Look at the text below entitled “Translating academic discourse”. You are aiming for a state where your brain will naturally process the text on the left so that it remains in your memory, as the text on the right:

'Translating' academic discourse	
What the journal article or book says	What you should understand
Excessive drinking of alcohol provides the best known example of the type of behavior which constitutes the theme of this book – namely apparent loss of control over a form of activity which, for most people, serves as a pleasurable and moderate indulgence. It forces upon our attention the major psychological issues with which this book attempts to deal, and at the same time illustrates how the same phenomenon can be viewed from totally different perspectives depending upon the fashion of thought at the time and the orientation of the observer. Such an excessive appetite may be viewed as non-problematic overindulgence, as sinful behavior, or as deviance; there is no better illustration of this diversity of view than the recent history of thought concerning excessive drinking.	This book is about activities (like drinking) which many people enjoy but which some people do to excess. Drinking is a good example because it highlights the psychological reasons for addiction. Also, different people have different opinions on the topic (depending on where they're coming from), and this is true of other addictions. These opinions range from "it's not a problem" to the idea that it's "a sin", "a disease", "a behavior problem" or "a crime".

Adapted from ENN103F study guide

5.17 E-tutor Task 4

Audience, Purpose and Register

Audience and purpose determines the register of the text. Register refers to the overall tone or effect achieved by all the text features, including diction, grammar, etc. that we have discussed so far. The process is shown in the following table. Add your own examples to the table.

Audience & Purpose	Discourse	Register
☐ To ask bank manager for a loan	☐ Business letter/fax	☐ Formal
☐	☐	☐

Informal register is often marked by longer sentences and words. Informal register can also be identified by abbreviations and contractions ('that'll'), colloquial language and even slang. Sentences may be shorter, simpler, or even fragmented.

Informal register is often found in personal circumstances where the parties are well known to one another. But it is also used in adverts (to create a false sense of intimacy), motivational speeches, humorous writing, written dialogues and some types of business document (the email and certain memos). All our ordinary, daily conversations are informal. You need to be self-conscious of the

situations where you use informal and formal register. In Unit 2, there is an example of a formal and an informal email addressed to a professor and to a friend, respectively. Refer to these.



Student Exercise 7

Identify texts from your own field of study and complete the following table by identifying and analyzing their audience, purpose and register.

Text	Audience	Purpose	Register
Constitution of RSA	Population of SA		
Song			
Cartoon	Children		
Sermon			
Textbook			
Poem			
Newspaper report			
Advert			
Biography			
Journal Article			

5.18 Learning Activity 12: Academic Word Lists

Academic vocabulary is essential to academic reading and writing. Researchers and teachers have created a corpus or data base of some of the most common words in academic contexts. This is known as the Coxhead list of common academic word lists. This list also includes commonly used task or action words. Most of these words can be found in the language used in assignments and examinations. See the list on page 190 of the prescribed textbook.

The following website from Victoria University in New Zealand has several lists of the most common academic word lists. Click [here](#).

5.19 Learning Activity 13: Subject-specific vocabulary

Academic vocabulary, glossaries, and subject-specific dictionaries are meant to assist students and academics to learn and use the appropriate language that is related to a particular profession. There are various types of dictionaries that can guide you in the development of subject-specific vocabulary, for example, economics, statistics, legal dictionary and so on.



Student Exercise 8

Complete the following table with your own glossary over time, based on the semester or year you are in. This is a very useful way for recording new words in any subject or discipline, to remember them and to use them correctly. This will be particularly helpful when writing assignments and answering exam questions.

Name of your discipline

Word	Your own definition	Dictionary definition	Subjectspecific definition	Your own sentence including the word

Adapted from, Beekman, et. Al 2016 *Academic Literacy* 2nd edition, Cape Town: Juta

5.20 Conclusion

This Tutorial Letter seeks to equip students with academic literacies. We know that many students belong to different disciplines, therefore, we have tried to cater for all of them without focusing on Science, Economics, or Humanities, etc. This is the first time that the module is offered in this way, we encourage you to take part in all the learning resources that are suggested. This will enrich your learning experience. We will continually improve the content and methods of teaching in the module and incorporate feedback from students.

5.21 References

Bailey, S. 2011 *Academic Writing: a handbook for international students* 3rd edition, London: Routledge

Beekman, et al. 2016 *Academic Literacy* 2nd edition, Cape Town: Juta

Tutorial Letter [REDACTED]/3/2022

Academic Language and Literacy in English



Semester 1 and 2

Department of English studies

This tutorial letter contains important information about the 2022 academic year module.

BARCODE



CONTENTS

Page

1	INTRODUCTION	4
1.1	Primary Lecturers	5
1.2	Level Coordinators	5
1.3	Quality Assurance Coordinator	5
1.4	Chair of the Department	5
1.5	Admin Officers	5
2	PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES	5
2.1	Purpose	5
2.2	Outcomes	5
3	CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION	6
4	LECTURER(S) AND CONTACT DETAILS.....	6
4.1	Lecturer(s)	6
4.2	Department.....	7
4.2.1	Mail us	7
4.3	University	7
5	RESOURCES	7
5.1	Prescribed book(s).....	7
5.2	Recommended book(s).....	8
5.3	Electronic reserves (e-reserves)	8
6	5.4 Library services and resources information	8
7	STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES.....	9
7.1	First-Year Experience Programme @	9
8	STUDY PLAN.....	9
9	PRACTICAL WORK.....	9
10	ASSESSMENT	10
10.1	Assessment criteria.....	10
10.2	Assessment plan	10
10.3	Assignment due dates	11
10.4	Submission of assignments	11
10.5	The assignment	11
10.6	Other assessment methods	12
10.7	The examination	12
11	ACADEMIC DISHONESTY	12

11. 1 Plagiarism.....	12
11. 2 Cheating.....	12
12 STUDENT WITH DISABILITY	12
13 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	12
14 SOURCES CONSULTED	13
15 IN CLOSING.....	13
16 ADDENDUM.....	13
16.1 ADDENDUM A: MODULE INFORMATION.....	13
16. 2 ADDENDUM B: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR ESSAYS (MARKING RUBRIC)	18
16. 3 ADDENDUM C: MARKING CODES.....	18

Dear Student

As part of this tutorial letter, we wish to inform you that [REDACTED] has implemented a transformation charter based on five pillars and eight dimensions. In response to this charter, we have also placed curriculum transformation high on the agenda. For your information, curriculum transformation includes the following pillars: student-centred scholarship, the pedagogical renewal of teaching and assessment practices, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and the infusion of African epistemologies and philosophies. These pillars and their principles will be integrated at both the programme and module levels, as a phased-in approach. You will notice the implementation thereof in your modules, and we encourage you to fully embrace these changes during your studies at [REDACTED]

1 INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the module, Academic Language and Literacy in English (ENG [REDACTED]). This module is offered in the Department of English Studies.

The information that is in this Tutorial Letter is very important. Please keep it handy and refer to it regularly so that you do not miss important module activities.

The purpose of this tutorial letter is to provide you with information that you need to navigate the course in 2022. We hope that it will answer most of your questions and ease anxieties associated with unfamiliarity with learning in a long distance higher education institution as well as the forced changes to modes of learning that have been imposed by COVID-19.

As a distance education student, you have to fit your studies into an already established routine of work, family and various other commitments. Therefore, create adequate space for reading the study material and writing assignments. Do not procrastinate; make it a habit to do your assignments as early in the year as possible. Do not hesitate to contact the lecturing team should you experience any problems that might make it difficult for you to do your prescribed assignments on time.

To facilitate communication during your studies, you must be registered on [REDACTED]. Access to [REDACTED] will enable you to submit assignments, gain access to the Library functions and various learning resources, download study material, "chat" to your lecturers and fellow students about your studies and the challenges you encounter, and participate in online discussion forums. In other words, myUnisa provides you with additional opportunities to take part in activities and discussions of relevance to your module topics, assignments, marks and examinations.

1.1 Primary Lecturers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

1.2 Level Coordinators

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

1.3 Quality Assurance Coordinator

[REDACTED]

1.4 Chair of the Department

[REDACTED]

1.5 Admin Officers

[REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]@ [REDACTED].ac.za

[REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]@ [REDACTED].ac.za

2 PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this module is to develop learners' ability for critical reading and writing which are essential academic skills, and to improve their Academic English competence. The module will also help the students to develop their ability to read and write academic genres from various disciplines and academic contexts, such as argumentative and discursive essay writing, research-based essays, research articles, lectures, using appropriate conventions citation, and research skills.

2.2 Outcomes

On completion of the module, students should be able to:

- Select and apply critical reading strategies to increase reading efficiency and comprehension within specific academic contexts.
- Apply principles related to writing effectively for different contexts and purposes by implementing writing processes and genre approaches to writing.

- Communicate information reliably, accurately and coherently in the form of written material that represent academic genres for specific contexts using conventions appropriate to the context.
- Produce academic language and discourse that is grammatically correct and socially appropriate in different contexts.

3 CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION

■■■■■ has implemented a transformation charter based on five pillars and eight dimensions. In response to this charter, we have placed curriculum transformation high on the teaching and learning agenda. Curriculum transformation includes the following pillars: student-centred scholarship, the pedagogical renewal of teaching and assessment practices, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and the infusion of African epistemologies and philosophies. These pillars and their principles will be integrated at both programme and module levels as a phased-in approach. You will notice a marked change in the teaching and learning strategy implemented by ■■■■■ together with how the content is conceptualised in your modules. We encourage you to embrace these changes during your studies at ■■■■■ in a responsive way within the framework of transformation.

4 LECTURER(S) AND CONTACT DETAILS

4.1 Lecturer(s)

NB: Whenever you contact the Department of English Studies, you should have your student number handy. Always use it in correspondence with the university and have it ready when you phone the university. Please also specify your course code (ENG■■■■■). If you phone and the person you are looking for is not available, please follow up with an email message.

The ■■■■■ system gives you the opportunity to contact your lecturers as well as fellow students through the Discussion Forum.

For all academic matters, you may contact the following lecturers:

Lecturers:	Email addresses
■■■■■	■■■■■
■■■■■	■■■■■
■■■■■	■■■■■
■■■■■	■■■■■
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■■■■■	■■■■■
■■■■■	■■■■■ ac.za
Administrative officer:	Email address
■■■■■	■■■■■
■■■■■	■■■■■ @■■■■■ac.za

For all other queries about the module: [eng\[REDACTED\]@\[REDACTED\].ac.za](mailto:eng[REDACTED]@[REDACTED].ac.za)

For all general queries: [engstudieshelp@\[REDACTED\].ac.za](mailto:engstudieshelp@[REDACTED].ac.za)

NB: You may contact your lecturers using the contact details above. Never use your private email accounts to reach your lecturers; always **use your allocated [REDACTED] email account**. Lecturers will not be responding to emails from students using their private email address.

4.2 Department

Department of English Studies

Room 6-04, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] main campus

4.2.1 Mail us

Dept. of English Studies

PO Box [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

0003

4.3 University

For general enquiries, please use the contact details below:

The Registrar: Academic

PO Box 392

[REDACTED]

0003

For assignment-related queries: [assign@\[REDACTED\].ac.za](mailto:assign@[REDACTED].ac.za)

For examination-related queries: [exams@\[REDACTED\].ac.za](mailto:exams@[REDACTED].ac.za)

5 RESOURCES

5.1 Prescribed book(s)

The prescribed book for this course is: **Academic English: Reading and Writing Across the Disciplines (2018)** Compiled for [REDACTED] from the works by Gaetz, Phadke, Gillet, Hammond and Martala, published by Pearson Education.

5.2 Recommended book(s)

We recommend that you purchase a copy of one of the following books listed below. The library also has copies for borrowing:

- a. Bailey, S. (2011) Academic writing; A handbook for international students 3rd ed. London: Routledge
- b. Beekman, L., Dube, C., and Underhill, J. (2011) Academic Literacy, Cape Town: Juta
- c. Balfour, R., Mitchell, B., Nchindila, B., Seligmann, D. and Shober, D. (2014) English for Academic Purposes, Cape Town: OUP Southern Africa
- d. Gaetz, L. (2015) The Writer's World, Boston: Pearson
- e. Shober, D. (2010) Writing English with style, Pretoria: Van Schaik

Recommended books can be requested online, via the Library catalogue.

5.3 Electronic reserves (e-reserves)

E-reserves can be downloaded from the Library catalogue. More information is available at: [http://libguides\[REDACTED\]ac.za/request/request](http://libguides[REDACTED]ac.za/request/request)

6 5.4 Library services and resources information

The Unisa Library offers a range of information services and resources:

- For brief information, go to [https://www\[REDACTED\]ac.za/library/libatglance](https://www[REDACTED]ac.za/library/libatglance)
- For more detailed Library information, go to [http://www\[REDACTED\]ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Library](http://www[REDACTED]ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Library)
- For research support and services (eg Personal Librarians and literature search services), go to [http://www\[REDACTED\]ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Library/Library-services/Research-support](http://www[REDACTED]ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Library/Library-services/Research-support)

The Library has created numerous Library guides: [http://libguides\[REDACTED\]ac.za](http://libguides[REDACTED]ac.za)

Recommended guides:

- Request and find library material/download recommended material: [http://libguides\[REDACTED\]ac.za/request/request](http://libguides[REDACTED]ac.za/request/request)
- Postgraduate information services: [http://libguides\[REDACTED\]ac.za/request/postgrad](http://libguides[REDACTED]ac.za/request/postgrad)
- Finding and using library resources and tools: [http://libguides\[REDACTED\]ac.za/Research_skills](http://libguides[REDACTED]ac.za/Research_skills)
- Frequently asked questions about the library: [http://libguides\[REDACTED\]ac.za/ask](http://libguides[REDACTED]ac.za/ask)
- Services to students living with disabilities: [http://libguides\[REDACTED\]ac.za/disability](http://libguides[REDACTED]ac.za/disability)

Important contact information:

- Ask a Librarian: [https://libguides\[REDACTED\]ac.za/ask](https://libguides[REDACTED]ac.za/ask)
- Technical problems accessing library online services: [Lib-help@\[REDACTED\]ac.za](mailto:Lib-help@[REDACTED]ac.za)
- General library related queries: [Library-enquiries@\[REDACTED\]ac.za](mailto:Library-enquiries@[REDACTED]ac.za)
- For queries related to library fines and payments: [Library-fines@\[REDACTED\]ac.za](mailto:Library-fines@[REDACTED]ac.za)

7 STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The *Study @* [REDACTED] website is available on [REDACTED] [www.\[REDACTED\].ac.za/brochures/studies](http://www.[REDACTED].ac.za/brochures/studies)

The website has all the tips and information you need to succeed at [REDACTED]

7.1 First-Year Experience Programme @ [REDACTED]

For many students, the transition from school education to tertiary education is beset with anxiety. This is also true for first-time students to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is a dedicated open distance and e-learning institution. Unlike face-to-face/contact institutions, [REDACTED] is somewhat different. It is a mega university, and all our programmes are offered through a blended learning mode or fully online learning mode. It is for this reason that we thought it necessary to offer first-time students additional/extended support so that you can seamlessly navigate the [REDACTED] teaching and learning journey with little difficulty and few barriers. In this regard we offer a specialised student support programme to students entering [REDACTED] for the first time. We refer to this programme as [REDACTED] First-Year Experience (FYE) Programme. The FYE is designed to provide you with prompt and helpful information about services that the institution offers and how you can access information. The following FYE programmes are currently offered:

- FYE website: All the guides and resources you need to navigate through your first year at Unisa can be accessed using the following link: [www.\[REDACTED\].ac.za/FYE](http://www.[REDACTED].ac.za/FYE)
- FYE e-mails: You will receive regular e-mails to help you stay focused and motivated.
- FYE broadcasts: You will receive e-mails with links to broadcasts on various topics related to your first-year studies (eg videos on how to submit assignments online).
- FYE mailbox: For assistance with queries related to your first year of study, send an e-mail to [fye@\[REDACTED\].ac.za](mailto:fye@[REDACTED].ac.za)

8 STUDY PLAN

This literacy-as-social-practice module requires you to read and write extensively in order to improve your general English Language and Literacy proficiency. This will enable you to master the Academic Literacy skills, which are taught in the module and apply them in academic studies across the University. Refer to the addendum in this Tutorial Letter for the outcomes, assessment criteria and marking procedure for the module.

Tutorial Letter 501 will guide you through blended teaching and learning so that you can study independently. It is based on the principle of integrating reading and writing, teaching genres, and engaging in constant activities that build the skills that you need to succeed in any discipline.

9 PRACTICAL WORK

There are no practical sessions for this module.

10 ASSESSMENT

10.1 Assessment criteria

It is important that you do well in the assignments, since the combined marks for the assignments give you a semester mark that in turn counts towards your final mark for this module.

Assignment 01 counts 50%, and Assignment 02 counts 50%. All the assignments are compulsory.

Your final mark will be calculated as follows:

- Semester mark (40%)
- Examination mark (60%)

A student needs to achieve a minimum mark of 40% in the summative assessment, for his or her year mark to be taken into account for the purpose of calculating the final examination mark. Please note that from 2020 [REDACTED] moved to online, non-venue based examination method. This means that most of the services will be conducted online. The University will only accept assignments and portfolios submitted online. Additionally, your study materials will be available online through the module site for ENG [REDACTED]

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, [REDACTED] resolved that all [REDACTED] **examinations will be done online**. Thus, no venue-based examinations will be written in 2022.

10.2 Assessment plan

Assignments are regarded as part of the learning materials for this module. As you work on your assignments, you should study the reading texts, consult other resources, discuss the work with fellow students, lecturers and tutors. In addition, you may be required to conduct research to ensure that you are actively engaged in the learning process. The assessment criteria given for each assignment will help you understand the requirements of each assignment. For students attending face to face tutorial sessions and those who are linked to online tutors, your tutors may also set additional tasks and give feedback during such sessions.

- To complete this module, you will be required to submit two compulsory assignments for each semester.
- All information on when and where to submit your assignments will be made available to you via the [REDACTED] site for your module.
- Due dates for assignments, as well as the actual assignments are available on the m [REDACTED] site for this module.
- To gain admission to the examination, you will be required to submit two compulsory assignments for each semester.
- Your assignments will comprise a combination of essay types and short paragraph questions.
- You need to obtain a year mark average of 40% for the assignment/s to gain admission to the examination.
- The assignment weighting for the module is 40%

- The examination will be a take home.
- The examination will count 60% towards the final module mark.

10.3 Assignment due dates

- There are no assignment due dates included in this tutorial letter. Assignment due dates will be made available to you on the landing page of [REDACTED] for this module. We envisage that the due dates will be available to you upon registration.
- Please start working on your assignments as soon as you register for the module.
- Log on to the [REDACTED] site for this module to obtain more information on the due dates for the submission of the assignments.

10.4 Submission of assignments

- Modules offered by [REDACTED] are either *blended* (meaning that we use a *combination* of printed and online material to engage with you) or *online* (all information is available via the *internet*). In all cases of online engagement, we use [REDACTED] as our virtual campus.
- From 2022, the [REDACTED] virtual campus will be offered via a new learning management system. This is an online system that is used to administer, document and deliver educational material to you and support engagement with you.
- Look out for information from your lecturer as well as other [REDACTED] platforms to determine how to access the virtual [REDACTED] module site.
- Information on the tools that will be available to engage with the lecturer and fellow students to support your learning will also be communicated via various platforms.
- The University undertakes to communicate as clearly and as frequently as is necessary to ensure optimum advantage in the use of the new learning management system.
- Additional information on the use of the [REDACTED] site for the module, as well as features to engage and communicate with your lecturer and other students will also be made available via the online site for the module.
- Therefore, log on to the [REDACTED] site for your module to gain more information on where to complete and/or upload your assignments and how to communicate with your lecturer.

10.5 The assignment

There are no assignments included in this tutorial letter. Assignments will be available to you upon registration.

As indicated in section 9.2, you need to complete two compulsory assignments for each semester for this module.

Note that these unique numbers tell us which assignment has been submitted, but we still need your student number to indicate who submitted it.

10.6 Other assessment methods

There are no other assessment methods

10.7 The examination

Examination information and details on the format of the examination will be made available to you online via the [REDACTED] site. Look out for information that will be shared with you by your lecturer and e-tutors (where relevant) and for communication from the University.

11 ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

11.1 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of taking the words, ideas and thoughts of others and presenting them as your own. It is a form of theft which involves several dishonest academic activities, such as the following:

- Cutting and pasting from any source without acknowledging the source.
- Not including or using incorrect references.
- Paraphrasing without acknowledging the original source of the information.

11.2 Cheating

Cheating includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Completing assessments on behalf of another student, copying from another student during an assessment or allowing a student to copy from you.
- Using social media (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram) or other platforms to disseminate assessment information.
- Submitting corrupt or irrelevant files.
- Buying completed answers from “tutors” or internet sites (contract cheating).

More information about plagiarism can be downloaded on the link below

[https://www.\[REDACTED\]](https://www.[REDACTED])

12 STUDENT WITH DISABILITY

The Advocacy and Resource Centre for Student with Disability (ARCSWiD) provides an opportunity for staff to interact with new and returning students with disabilities.

If you are a student with a disability and would like additional support or need additional time for assessments, you are invited to contact [REDACTED] on [REDACTED]@[REDACTED].ac.za

13 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question: Can I submit my assignment late?

Answer: No, you must submit your assignments on time. Lecturers do **not** have the authority to change submission dates on the [REDACTED] system.

Question: I submitted only part of my assignment. Can I submit the rest of it?

Answer: If you submit an incomplete assignment, it will be processed as a complete document, that is, the system will not recognise that it is incomplete. If you submit the same assignment again, it will be treated as a duplicate and returned to you unmarked. Please ensure that your assignment is complete before you submit it. If you work on computer, please make sure that your complete answer is in the one file/document that you submit.

Question: I submitted the wrong file / module code / assignment. I have received 0% for it. Can I resubmit the correct assignment?

Answer: It is your responsibility to ensure that you have submitted the correct assignment. If you submit an incorrect document, it will be processed as though it were the correct assignment, that is, the system will not recognise that it does not contain the correct content. If you submit the same assignment again, it will be treated as a duplicate and returned to you unmarked. If you work on computer, please make sure that you use a meaningful name (e.g. "ENG [REDACTED] – Assignment 1") so that you submit the correct document.

14 SOURCES CONSULTED

No sources were consulted to prepare this tutorial letter.

15 IN CLOSING

Other useful material will be uploaded on [REDACTED] under Additional Resources, Announcements, and Podcasts. In addition, join the online tutorial groups and other online learning activities to gain more knowledge. Do not hesitate to contact us via email if you are experiencing problems with this tutorial letter's content or with any academic aspect of the module.

We wish you all the best in your studies.

ENG [REDACTED] TEAM

16 ADDENDUM

16.1 ADDENDUM A: MODULE INFORMATION

1	Module title	Academic Language and Literacy in English													
2	Module code	ENG [REDACTED]													
3	Implementation date	New module	2020												
		Revised module	2020												
4	Levels	Study level	1		2		3		4		5		6		

		NQF level	5	X	6		7		8		9		10	
5	Credits						12		24		156		336	
	Credits (Other)													
	Total Credits													
6	Semester / year module						Semester		X					
							Year							
7	Module type						Taught		X					
							Research							
							Practical							
							Experiential Learning e.g. (WIL)							
8	CESM Category	Number	Name of category											
	First order	11	Languages, Linguistics and Literature											
	Second order	1102	English Language and Literature											
	Third order	110202	English Composition											
9	Requisites	Modules (<i>list module codes or "none" if no requisites</i>)												
	Pre-requisites	None												
	Co-requisites	None												
	Recommendations	It is recommended that students who wish to enrol for ENC [REDACTED] but who obtained less than a 50% pass mark for English (English as a home language/English as an Additional Language or any other equivalent) should register for ENC [REDACTED] first.												
10	Purpose statement (<i>maximum 1000 characters including spaces</i>)													
	The purpose of this module is to develop learners' ability for critical reading and critical writing which are essential academic skills, improve their Academic English competence (academic discourse and literacy) and develop their ability to read and write academic genres (for disciplines and various contexts), such as argumentative and essay writing, research based essays, research articles, lectures, using appropriate conventions, such as citation, and research skills.													
11	Syllabus (<i>maximum 1000 characters including spaces</i>)													
	<i>Academic Reading</i> Critical reading and reading strategies Effective academic reading of various text types Employment of various skills of reading such as, summary, synthesis, comprehension and critical thinking Note taking <i>Writing academic genres</i> Essay writing Argumentative writing Thesis driven academic texts													

	Writing for a purpose and audience The writing processes Comparison and contrast Cause and effect <i>Research writing</i> Writing in the disciplines, such as, reports, journals, abstracts, referencing and citation practices <i>Language and Discourse</i> Sentence structure Ideas in sentences Punctuation Paragraphs Style Variety and standard Academic vocabulary					
12	Language of tuition	English only	X			
		Afrikaans and English				
		Other language(s)				
		Specify other language(s)				
13	Programme(s) where module is included ('N')	The module is offered to many qualifications in the entire university.				
14	Subject linking ('N') (Under which subject in myModules?)	English Studies				
	Mode of delivery (Tuition)	Blended	X			
		Online				
15	Mode of delivery (Study Material)	Print				
		Blended	X			
		Online				
16	Assessment Criteria					
	Formative	Blended	X			
		Online				
	Summative	Venue based	Yes		No	X
		Supplementary	Yes		No	
		Supplementary subminimum	40%		50%	
			Continuous			X

			assessment	
		Specify "Other"		
	Final mark composition	Formative assessment (%)	40%	
	(Total should be 100%)	Summative assessment (%)	60%	

Specific outcomes and assessment criteria	
Specific outcome (SO)	Assessment criteria (AC)
1. Select and apply critical reading strategies to increase reading efficiency and comprehension within specific academic contexts.	1. Reading strategies suited to the specific type of academic text and suited to the specific reading purpose are successfully chosen. 2. A variety of texts are critically read, main ideas identified, predictions and inferences made, and conclusions drawn. 3. Academic texts are read with comprehension and critical thinking. 4. Academic texts are successfully summarized, paraphrased, synthesized, and analysed.
2. Apply principles related to writing effectively for different contexts and purposes by implementing writing processes and genre approaches to writing.	1. A rough draft plan is submitted and a final revised edited product produced. 2. Texts are produced in the appropriate structure/genre and rhetorical awareness to achieve the intended purpose. 3. Final texts show the suitable organisation through the introduction, body and conclusion.
3. Communicate information reliably, accurately and coherently in the form of written material that represent academic/research genres for specific contexts using conventions appropriate to the context.	1. Academic texts like essays, expositions and arguments are written, using appropriate academic conventions. 2. The ability to conduct introductory research, based on a given/identified problem is displayed in the form of a written report. 3. Appropriate citation practices and writing conventions are used.
4. Produce academic discourse that is grammatically correct and socially appropriate in different contexts.	1. Students understand how the language of the text is structured and have a grasp of both every day and academic vocabulary. 2. Students communicate clearly in their writing because they are using appropriate grammar, suitable vocabulary and academic discourse. 3. Final texts are produced in the appropriate variety, style, standard, and point of view.

16. 2 ADDENDUM B: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR ESSAYS (MARKING RUBRIC)

1	0-9	• Very little or no evidence of understanding and knowledge of the topic. • Very little understanding of the genre conventions • Fragmented/disjointed/ muddled ideas • No evidence of research on the topic • Writer stance and voice muddled	• Poor command of vocabulary, sentence structure and punctuation • Very limited use of the appropriate grammar and syntactic structures • Inappropriate use of expressions	• Cluttered presentation • Illegible handwriting/ many grammatical and typographical errors • No to inadequate referencing	Very Poor
2	10-19	• Unsatisfactory handling of the topic • Some irrelevant and repeated information • Mundane handling of the topic • Flawed by generalizations and inadequate supporting detail • Very little to no evidence of research on the topic • Writer stance and voice vague and indeterminate	• Limited vocabulary and sentence variety • Inadequate use of appropriate syntactic language features/structures • Poor punctuation and sentence construction • Obscured/confused meaning	• Inconsistently defined paragraphs • Progression of ideas hard to follow • References used but inappropriately presented	Poor
3	20-25	• Some understanding and knowledge of the topic • Some evidence of research based arguments with clear supporting details. • Reasonable development of idea inadequate appraisal of positions on the topic. • A few lapses in content, claims not fully supported • Sometimes disjointed and loosely presented ideas • Inadequate/incomplete sequencing of ideas	• Occasional flawed sentences, punctuation and spelling errors • Word choice, vocabulary and diction is appropriate for the genre • Sentence structures are correct but not as varied • Sentences are not so well linked and coherent	• Reasonably good presentation • A few poorly structured paragraph breaks • Legible, but with some typing errors. • Incomplete bibliography, but incorrectly listed and no in-text citing.	Satisfactory - Good
4	26-30	• Sound understanding and knowledge of the topic • Convincing but not captivating presentation of the topic • A concerted effort at originality • Relevant supporting details • Evidence of a research based argument but not well substantiated • Writer stance and voice but with some hesitation	• Very good command of grammatical structures • A wide range of vocabulary, linking devices and sentence structures • Demonstrates a mastery of the register of the genre • Sentence are linked, and coherent • Meaning clear, occasionally hindered by grammatical errors	• Well-structured essay , neat and legible • Clearly defined paragraphs • Structure is easy to follow and adheres to the structure of the genre. • Complete and correctly formatted references with few slips in citation conventions	Good-very good
5	31-40	• An excellent understanding and knowledge of the topic. • Clear evidence of research based arguments and very good to exceptional understanding of supporting research evidence • Well-conducted appraisal of positions on the topic • Insightful and original demonstrating a clear stance and voice • Highly selective supporting details • Captivating introduction and highly convincing	• Punctuation and grammar are correct • Word choice, vocabulary and diction is highly appropriate for the genre • Demonstrates a mastery of the register of the genre • Sentence structure is correct and varied • Sentence are linked, coherent • Meaning clear with very few or no grammar errors	• Logical flow of ideas in the essay and within paragraphs. • Clear introduction and conclusion as well as clearly defined paragraphs. • Structure is easy to follow and adheres to the structure of the genre • Sources cited accurately using an appropriate format both in and end of text referencing	Excellent-outstanding
Level	Range	Content 40 %	Language 40 %	Presentation and writing conventions. 20 %	Overall comment

16.3 ADDENDUM C: MARKING CODES

When assessing your essays, markers use the following codes in addition to written feedback.

Symbol	Error	Explanation
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abb	<u>Abbreviation</u>	- Do not use abbreviations or contractions (such as can't, don't, etc.) in <u>formal</u> writing (e.g. a written assignment).
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agr (s/v)	<u>Agreement error</u>	- Your verb does not agree with your subject in number. Check whether your subject is singular or plural.
-----------	------------------------	---

A plural subject takes a plural verb: The students read the book.

A singular subject takes a singular verb: The student reads the book.

amb	<u>Ambiguity</u>	- Your statement could have two meanings. Rephrase.
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ap	<u>Apostrophe error</u>	- An apostrophe is a comma that hangs above the line.
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An apostrophe is used to indicate possession.

- The boy's hands are dirty (the hands of the boy).
- Mandela's leadership (the leadership of Mandela).
- The boys' privileges (the privileges of the boys).

An apostrophe is used to indicate when letters are left out (contraction or omission).

- We'll (we will)
- Can't (cannot)
- I've (I have)
- It's (it is)

Contractions such as these are unacceptable in formal writing.

NB: 'its' (without an apostrophe) is the possessive form. The dog chewed its bone.

arg	<u>Argument</u>	- Your argument/explanation is not methodical/coherent/relevant. A clear and logical line of thought needs to emerge.
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art	<u>Article error</u>	- You have used a instead of the , or the instead of a , or you have omitted to use a or the where you should have. Alternatively, you have used a or the with a word that should not have an article.
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awk	<u>Awkward phrasing</u>	- Your sentence sounds awkward and clumsy. You need to revise your word choice and word order.
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cap	<u>Capital letter</u>	- The word should begin with a capital letter, either because it begins a sentence, or because it is a proper noun.
-----	-----------------------	---

c/s	<u>Comma splice</u>	- You have joined two ideas (i.e. two separate sentences) without using a connecting word or proper punctuation. Either add a connecting word, or change the comma to a semi-colon, or break the comma-spliced sentence into two separate sentences.
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exp	<u>Expression faulty</u>	- Your sentence is difficult to understand because of errors
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too numerous to list.

frag Fragmentary sentence - Your sentence does not have a verb and, therefore, is only a fragment of a sentence.

inc Incomplete sentence - You have left out part of the sentence.

irr Irrelevant - What you have said has nothing to do with the topic.

L?/ill Logic faulty/illogical - Illogical, or your writing does not make sense here.

N.P. New paragraph - You have started discussing a new idea, so you need a new paragraph.

Para Paragraph structure - A paragraph consists of a main idea (usually expressed in a topic sentence) and several supporting sentences that explain the main idea or give examples and/or details concerning the main idea. Single-sentence paragraphs are not acceptable because a single sentence cannot develop or expand the main idea.

Your paragraph is too long and needs to be divided where appropriate.

p Punctuation - You have misused a punctuation mark, or omitted one where it was necessary.

sp Spelling - You have misspelt a word. Try to get into the habit of using a dictionary consistently.

T Tense error - Your verb is in the wrong tense.

Note: Use the present and related tenses when discussing a literary work, such as "Bosman's humour has a strong South African flavour."

"In her short stories, Nadine Gordimer touches on issues ..."

voc/ Vocabulary error/ - You have used the wrong word or you could have used a better one. (Look up the word you have used in the dictionary. You will find that its meaning is either not correct or not appropriate in your sentence.)

wdy Wordiness - You have used too many words to say something that could be said far more simply and concisely.

WO Word order incorrect - The words in your sentence are in the wrong place. Your marker will have used arrows

DECLARATION

Name and Student number.....

Assignment Topic.....

I declare that this assignment is my own original work. Where secondary material has been used (either from a printed source or from the internet), this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the department's policy in this regard. I have not allowed anyone else to borrow or copy my work.

Signature..... Date.....