

The copyright of this thesis rests with the University of Cape Town. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Identity and Coping Strategies in Academic Writing:
A study of first year Mauritian students at a South African University**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Philosophy

In the Applied Language and Literacy stream

by

Aditi Hunma – HNMADI001

September 2009

Table of Contents

Content	ii
Abbreviations	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Declaration	iv
Abstract	v
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Context/s of study	2
1.3 Research objectives	10
1.4 The writing-identity link	11
1.5 Ethnographic methods	12
1.6 Thesis structure	12
Chapter 2 Literature Review	13
2.1 Recent studies in the field	13
2.2 Possible fields of study - situating this study	22
2.3 Useful concepts	23
2.4 Heuristic tools in this study	31
2.5 Summary	34
Chapter 3 Research Design	35
3.1 The research trajectory and the paths	35
3.2 The ethnographic enterprise	36
3.3 Researcher identities	39
3.4 Data collection	42
3.5 Data analysis	46
3.6 Applying the New Literacy Studies model	49
3.7 Where does ethnography begin and end?	49
3.8 Research ethics	50
3.9 Limitations of research design	51
Chapter 4 Identities in writing: sites of contestation?	52
4.1 Participants' profiles	54

4.2 Case studies of Sarah, Yash and Ali	56
4.3 Different essays, similar student narratives	71
4.4 The site of contestation	72
Chapter 5 A Focusing: Coping Strategies	73
5.1 Focus group study	73
5.2 The card game	76
5.3 From key factors to coping strategies	84
5.4 Coping strategies and their effectiveness	85
5.5 Resistance or accommodation?	88
5.6 The politics of ‘peers versus faculty’ in the choice of strategies	90
5.7 A reflection on ‘nou base’ as a ‘safe house’	96
5.8 Summary	97
Chapter 6 Implications	99
6.1 Implications for different stakeholders	100
6.2 Summary - Synergy of efforts	109
Chapter 7 Conclusion and scope for further research	110
Appendices	113
A Informed consent form	113
B Students' essays	114
C The games	120
D Transcript	128

Abbreviations

UCT – University of Cape Town
IAPO – International Academic Programmes Office
NCHE – National Commission on Higher Education
CIE – Cambridge International Examinations
A-Level – Advanced Level (also Higher School Certificate)
O-Level – Ordinary Level (also School Certificate)
BICS – Basic Interpersonal Communications Skills
CALP – Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
TEC – Tertiary Education Commission (Mauritius)

Acknowledgments

I would like to heartily thank my supervisor, Dr Lucia Thesen for her guidance and valuable insights throughout the research process. She constantly valued 'voice' over 'discourse', 'agency' over 'structure' and encouraged me to be creative and enterprising in my research design and writing.

I would also like to thank my family for believing in me, advising me and being a source of inspiration.

Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date: 15th September 2009

Abstract

This study situates itself at the intersection between internationalization issues and students' experiences in academic writing at the University of Cape Town. What the study attempts to do is to place the two issues in a constructive dialogue and tease out how the one informs the other. Throughout, the student is viewed as the focal point of research and the study assesses how the student responds to this dialogue. His/her writing becomes an index of an internalized dialogue between institution, writing, self and community. It informs the researcher of the implications of the internationalization policy and developments in the pedagogy of academic writing on the ground.

As in previous studies on UCT's internationalization process (see Baker 2007, Geiser 2009), the study explores the systemic alignment or misalignment between policy statement and its implementation. The focus this time is on academic writing. Academic writing is used as a tangible example to assess the match between the university's aims, especially of 'Equity and Institutional Culture' and first year international students' actual academic experience.

The study focuses on the identities and coping strategies of Mauritian students in academic writing, in their first year of study at the University of Cape Town. Ideally, writing should offer the possibility for students to enact or voice their multiple identities: as students, individuals and writers.

To explore what happened in the field, participants were observed in their familiar peer group setting, their essays were collected and they were interviewed. The written texts were analysed using Roz Ivanić's clover model of writer-identity (Clark and Ivanić, 1997). The findings, coupled with participants' statements in the interview, suggested that students chose to foreground specific identities in the texts and that these were often in contestation with other writer identities.

The initial findings called for an exploration of students' coping strategies in writing. The strategies were apparent during fieldwork but needed to be confirmed. A focus group session was therefore organized with simulation activities that allowed participants to re-enact their tacit coping strategies. Students' responses in the activities suggested that they coped with academic challenges by consulting members of their Mauritian peer group rather than their respective

faculties. The preference of peers over faculty was linked to issues of identity, group solidarity, mobility and structure.

The study concluded that the presence of coping strategies in the case of well-performing international students suggested a mismatch between the university's aim of 'Equity and institutional culture' and its application, in this case, in academic writing. Faculties often failed to acknowledge the cultural and academic knowledges international students brought with them. The assumption of sameness prevented international students from voicing their difference or multiple identities in a constructive manner.

Writing in instances such as these engenders de-voicing rather than voicing at the university, and may hence undermine the project of 'equity'. Also, students' penchant for subculture practices to fulfil social and increasingly pedagogical needs, may indicate that the 'institutional culture' at the university is not equally accessible to all. This study suggests the need for a synergy of efforts at all levels of the institution to ensure that the internationalisation rhetoric is aligned with desired objectives and outcomes on the ground, in both social and academic spheres.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

This study explores the identities and coping strategies developed by first year international students from Mauritius in academic writing. The reason for analysing academic writing is that writing remains the main mode by which students' content knowledge and understanding are assessed at the university. Inadequate mastery of academic writing by the faculties' standards may be detrimental to students' overall performance and constitute a blow to their confidence right from their first semester at the University of Cape Town (UCT). A good grasp on academic writing, on the other hand may assist students in forging an academic identity, joining UCT's community of learners and gaining access to its shared resources for success.

An informal pilot study conducted in 2008, one year prior to the current study on the writing experiences of first year Engineering Mauritian students at UCT, suggested a disjunction between the faculty's expectations and Mauritian students' interpretation of writing tasks¹. It also hinted that tutor feedback was insufficient to fill this gap. The pilot study signalled that the issue was more profound than a contradiction between expectations and delivery. It was possibly linked to Mauritian students' schooling, attitudes, social backgrounds and identities. The preliminary study indicated that there was a need for detailed research focusing on students' academic writings, their backgrounds, writer identities, and coping strategies across different faculties.

The present study attempts to fill some contextual gaps in the analysis of academic writing. It is framed within the context of UCT's current internationalisation process. In line with its intention to be a university of 'global relevance', the university is opening doors to a larger number of international students from diverse backgrounds (UCT policy on internationalisation, 2009). As per the 2006 statistics, international students at UCT amounted to over three thousand, that is, approximately 20% of the university's overall student intake (IAPO international students statistics, 2009). One may therefore expect increasing pressure on the

¹ This pilot study consisted of an essay submitted for the 'Academic literacies' course at UCT.

university to devise means for ensuring international students' adaptation to the university's mores and academic practices. The measures adopted by the university would rely on the availability of resources and skills with which to respond, but more importantly, on UCT's interpretation of 'internationalisation' in the African context.

The study of academic writing hence allows one to place text in context and evaluate the match/mismatch between policy statement and implementation. It also places concepts such as writing, self, institution and community in a dialogue with one another. Writing, institution and community enable the voicing or enacting of university students' identities to varying degrees. The study focuses on the extent to which academic writing allows or incapacitates the voicing of identities. If the writing-identity link is weak, what resources do students rely on to validate their perceived or preferred self at the university? What do their choices indicate about prevailing knowledge structures with particular reference to UCT in a decade of global changes in higher education? What do the choices indicate about the experiences of first year Mauritian students or other international students for that matter?

1.2 Context/s of study

This section places the study within the context of internationalisation in South Africa and at UCT. It also provides a background into the cultural and academic background of Mauritian students.

(i) Internationalisation of higher education in South Africa

1. The National Commission on Higher Education

In South Africa, the higher education system reflects features of its turbulent history and the fast-paced global capitalist trends. After the first democratic elections in 1994, Nelson Mandela initiated a National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) in order to 'preserve what is valuable and to redress what is defective and requires transformation' (Cloete, Maasen et al, 2006:3). To achieve this goal, the Commission defined its tasks as 'rid(ding) higher education of the aberrations of apartheid and modernis(ing) it by infusing it with international experiences and best practices'(3).

The transformation and modernising of higher education is still a topical issue in South Africa. Cloete, Maasen et al. note that universities internationally are gradually eschewing their role as a social institution and affirming their position as an industry, actively engaged in the training and retraining of manpower for a demanding yet volatile job market (103). In South Africa, the NCHE identifies its target along similar lines namely: effectiveness, efficiency and equity. Effectiveness in the higher education context means ensuring the ‘relevance of higher education to the labour market’, efficiency is focused on ‘quality and throughputs’ and equity on ‘setting equity targets for the distribution of students and staff by race, gender and social class in different fields of learning and teaching’ (ibid). As it can be noted, NCHE defines its three-pronged target along capitalist lines, whereby higher education institutions are expected to produce not only socially acceptable citizens but also resources for a developing economy.

2. The University of Cape Town

UCT defines itself as an emerging ‘world class African university’ (IAPO welcome, 2009). Its current aim is to establish itself as an ‘Afropolitan’ university that is to become

A sought after destination for knowledge and expertise on Africa and establishing the university as an intellectual hub actively inserted into African networks (world@uct, Aug 2009).

As such, UCT’s journey is fraught with many challenges. Firstly, it needs to strike a balance between its objective of ‘diversity’ as it opens doors to an increasingly diverse student body with diverse needs and that of ‘convergence’ as it aims simultaneously to standardise its administrative and academic policies to meet international norms. In addition, it needs to establish itself as an authority on academic concerns within the continent and assert its Africanness, in spite of going global.

At the level of implementation, UCT needs to ensure continued relevance of its new policies to the local institutional context, while guaranteeing equality of opportunities for all students at the university irrespective of their regional background. In terms of pedagogy, the measures adopted to facilitate the knowledge exchange and equalise academic access would pertain for instance to the design of course materials and to the type of student support provided. The success of such

measures would be reflected in students' ability to adapt quickly to their new academic context. One should admit nevertheless that efforts to promote equality in academia are at times caught in tensions between student welfare, assimilated international policies and university administration.

At UCT, 'internationalisation' is defined in its policy statement as:

The process of integrating international and intercultural dimensions into the teaching, research and service functions of an institution of higher learning' (UCT policy on internationalisation, 2009).

This vision cannot be realized without paying due attention to the following principles: 'Excellence and Mutual Benefit', 'Position in Africa', 'Research and Academic Autonomy', 'Curriculum', 'International Student Numbers' and 'Equity and Institutional Culture'.

With UCT's annual intake of around three thousand international students from diverse backgrounds, the concept of 'equity', as an ideology and a goal, becomes central to discussions around pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and student support among others. It is elaborated in the policy statement as follows:

Internationalisation at UCT will promote the University's equity and transformation objectives. Exchanges and development opportunities will take into account the under-representation in academic life of women, black people and people with disabilities. Internationalisation should contribute to an institutional culture which values diversity. Every effort must be made to integrate international staff and students fully into the life of UCT (ibid).

If the integration of first year international students in academia is to be truly addressed, this cannot be without direct reference to the university's equity principle.

More importantly, as pointed out earlier, the need to empower international students in academic writing is imperative because writing is not only one of its main modes of assessment, it is also unequally acquired by first year students from different backgrounds. International students arrive at the university with their own cultural and academic baggage which may either be

consolidated or rejected in the course of their academic journey, as new forms of knowledge, some more prestigious than others, are acquired.

Bourdieu (1992) would claim that because students arrive at the institution with their own baggage or *habitus*, their disposition to schooled literacy would inevitably vary even if access to literacy were equalised. Nevertheless, the narrowing of gaps between different learners is a goal worth pursuing because students' baggage holds the potential to redefine and enrich the meaning and scope of 'knowledge' itself in higher education. To move towards equalising access to academic literacy for international students, students' and lecturers/tutors' views and experiences of literacy and academic writing firstly have to be examined. Secondly, one needs to probe into the other possible ways in which students become insider/outsider to the university's 'institutional culture', and how these impact on their academic experience.

(ii) International students from Mauritius

This section offers a basic picture of the Mauritian history and culture and its links to the education system for the purposes of our research.

1. Brief history

Mauritius was first colonised by the Dutch, who introduced sugarcane on the island, and named the island *Mauritius* after their prince, Maurice Van Naussau. This was perhaps their main contribution, for their settlement was of too short duration (from 1638 to 1710) to trigger any consequential impact (Bissoondoyal, 1982:2).

After the departure of the Dutch, the island was once more uninhabited until 1715, when it was colonized by the French and renamed *Isle de France*. In order to develop the island, the French brought slaves from parts of Africa to work in sugarcane fields, build roads and the naval base in Port-Louis (136). They also promoted the French culture on the island and addressed slaves in French, despite the fact that the latter were not yet conversant in the language (Thomason and Kaufman, 1988:148). The highly unequal power structures between master and slaves, coupled with an urgency to fill the communication gap in the fields, pressured slaves to acquire French,

the master's dominant language rapidly. Under these circumstances of urgency and limited input, a basic form of pidgin French emerged.

The pidgin gradually developed a distinct grammar and vocabulary to become the widely spoken Creole. It also received some input from Indian indentured labourers, who arrived on the island after the abolition of slavery in 1835. In fact, Creole was constantly reshaped by individuals of different cultures who came into contact over the years. Still, as Baissac (quoted in Vaughan, 2005:209) aptly puts it, Creole is a language that 'allows anything to be said, recognizes everything. But after all its capitulations on the public stage, it comes back home, resumes its personality... so *qualité même* as it says'. Today, Creole is the *lingua franca* in Mauritius and the mother-tongue of most inhabitants (see Mesthrie, 2000).

Back to our historical account, the French occupation ended in 1810 when the island was taken over by the British. The French capitulated but continued to live on the island and manage sugarcane plantations. The British occupants assumed administrative tasks. The 'Capitulation Act' in the Treaty of Paris of 1814 guaranteed respect for the language, customs, religion, laws and traditions of the 'original' inhabitants, the French (Miles, 2000:4).

To this day, four decades after independence and almost two centuries of British occupation, the French culture and language still retain a strong influence on the island. While Creole is the mother-tongue of most inhabitants, French is the second most widely spoken language. It is in fact the language of the social elite. English is used mainly for administrative purposes and is spoken by less than two percent of the population.

2. The Mauritian education system

Ironically, while a strong French culture and language predominates in Mauritius, the education system is typically British.

Primary schooling in Mauritius begins from the age of five and lasts until the age of eleven. It is free and compulsory for all students (Ministry of Education, 2009). Textbooks for all subjects, with the exception of language subjects such as French and Asian languages, are set in English. At the age of eleven, students take part in the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE)

examination and those who succeed are admitted to secondary schools. Admission into secondary schools is determined by their grades.

In their fifth year of secondary schooling, students take the Cambridge School Certificate exam (O-Levels). It consists of compulsory papers in English, French and Mathematics, and papers in five other subjects of their choice. In their seventh year, Form six, students take part in the Cambridge Higher School Certificate exam (A-Levels) which tests three main subjects and one subsidiary subject. Students also have to write a compulsory General Paper, which comprises a comprehension or data response task and an argumentative essay in English.

Most students compete for scholarships and those ranked among the ten best in each stream (Arts, Technical, Science, Economics) are offered state scholarships to study in foreign universities. The obsession with ranks often gives way to unhealthy competition. It also results in a shift from *risky* creative and critical thinking to *safe* modelling of teachers' answers and spotting of examination questions.

3. The Mauritian and South African education systems – a comparison

The general assumption that Mauritian students studying at UCT may have an advantage over South African students because of their Cambridge A-Levels background and their additional year of schooling may not entirely be true. The critics of post-Apartheid South African education system, the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) deplore that the OBE curriculum focuses excessively on 'outcomes' at the expense of 'pedagogical and cognitive aspects of schooling' (Cross, Mungadi et al, 2002:182, see Muller, 2000).

However, a curriculum where content is specified more carefully and where the examination criteria are communicated accurately has its own flaws since content specification in the curriculum is not a guarantee for real learning to take place in the classroom. There is still a discrepancy between the intended and the enacted curriculum in the Mauritian education system. In the secondary school classroom, a strict result-based approach still prevails. To prepare students for their final year exams, teachers tend to 'teach to the test'. Students on the other hand study for marks, resort to rote learning and thereby overlook the necessary but 'non-examinable

components of the syllabus' (Hunma, 2002). Consequently, the Mauritian secondary education system, though not 'outcome-based', becomes highly focused on exam preparation. Whether this preparation adequately equips students for University is however questionable.

Hence, while the South African and Mauritian education systems vary in their structure and content formulation, inadequate university preparation may to some degree be common to both, even if the nature of this inadequacy may differ in the two cases.

4. Linguistic ability of Mauritian students

One cannot establish students' readiness for university without assessing their linguistic ability, especially their proficiency in English, which is their second or even third language. Cummins (1996) defines 'language proficiency' in the second language, as the mastery of basic interpersonal communications skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (57). He holds that BICS in fact form the foundation of language acquisition. If the learner has mastered the basic interpersonal skills in the first language, these skills would transfer onto the second language and form the basis for the acquisition of a second language, hence allowing 'additive bilingualism' to take place.

By the time Mauritian students reach secondary school, one would assume that at least their BICS in English would be adequately developed. However, until students' final years of secondary schooling, the English language is barely used in classroom interaction. Students' BICS in English thus remain under-developed in most cases. In subjects such as English literature and General Paper, English features predominantly as a taught subject, while in the natural and social Sciences, English is the language of the textbook.

In both cases, the English textbooks used operate in a highly formalised style and register of English, which may require some translation to be more accessible for students. In the classroom, as pointed out by the participants in this research, teachers tend to code-switch to French to aid comprehension and accept responses in students' native tongue, Creole. Still, while Mauritian students have well-developed BICS in Creole, this is neither taught in schools nor used as an official medium of instruction by any particular institution.

As far as academic writing in English is concerned, students' answers are rarely original formulations of answers based on reflection. This is partly due to the fact in the rat race for scholarships in A-Levels, the pedagogical focus in the classroom shifts from the development of students' communicative or cognitive abilities to their ability to deliver excellent results, irrespective of whether these skills have been developed or not. This was confirmed in the course of interviews with the participants.

Moreover, school subjects such as the General Paper, which can considerably enhance students' BICS and CALP skills, are often neglected by students because of the subject's 'subsidiary' status. Ideally, the General Paper with its comprehension, data response and argumentative essay components, could allow for debates in the classroom and foster students' critical thinking skills. Participants stated that, in fact, the classroom was seldom a forum for discussion. Hence, one may wonder whether Mauritian students' CALP skills in English were sufficiently developed to equip them for higher education. Statistics show that, annually, only approximately ten percent of candidates score an A grade in General Paper (HSC statistics 2008). The difficulties encountered by Mauritian students in English writing are discussed in most relevant CIE reports.

4. Examiners' views on Mauritian students' scripts

In a report on the 2007 General Paper examination, taken by the participants in this study, the examiners pointed out how students' direct translation from French affected their performance in English essays.

Candidates' francophone background might certainly pose a challenge if they are writing in English, but problems it might give rise to can be systematically eliminated if candidates learn to recognise the 'false friends' lurking in vocabulary and grammatical structures. For instance [...], *Cher has 60 years* instead of *Cher is sixty years old/ aged 60*. Francophone influence was seen in many scripts this session in individual words such as *diffuse* instead of 'broadcast'; *propose* instead of 'offer' or 'suggest'; *divertissement* instead of 'entertainment' (CIE Report 2007).

The examiners admitted the influence of French on students' style, grammar and vocabulary. Still, their use of terms such as 'problem' and 'false friends', hinted that ultimately students were penalized for those errors.

Curry and Lillis (2004) would respond to these stylistic influences across languages differently. In their study, they examine the different responses or orientations reviewers have to ‘non-traditional’ scholars’ texts, especially when the scholars’ mother-tongue style intervenes in their English writing. Lillis (2008) notes with concern that ‘if the style is judged to be inappropriate, it is not just the text that is negatively evaluated but scholars themselves and their intellectual activity’(380). While the CIE examiners at least recognized students’ French influence in English writing, one wonders whether at university, tutors would take time to assess the individual texts in context, with a keen eye on the production process.

The other issue pointed out by CIE examiners was the evidence of memorized answers in students’ scripts.

Whilst preparation is a key factor in examination success, it was sometimes concerning to find such uniformity across particular Centres and suggested that candidates were relying completely on ‘learning’ material from issued templates to offload in the examination rather than making use of their content knowledge in thinking through the question asked and making original points or points argued with personal conviction (CIE Report 2007).

This will be discussed in greater length later in the study. The apparent inadequacies of secondary schools in fostering English language proficiency could potentially form a possible research topic in its own rights. However, this study focuses on the transition between secondary and tertiary education. Are Mauritian students adequately equipped to respond to the academic demands at an English-medium tertiary institution like UCT?

1.3 Research objectives

This study aims to explore how Mauritian students enact their multiple identities in academic writing in their initial essays at UCT and analyses possible sites of contestation. It then attempts to uncover the strategies devised by students to cope with the writing challenges. It explores the following:

- a. How are the writing-related strategies informed and reinforced through:
 - (i) students’ identities and perceptions?
 - (ii) particular group loyalties?

- b. How effective are the strategies in coping with the writing challenges?
- c. What are the implications of the coping strategies for UCT, pedagogical choices at the university, the orientation of international students, the secondary school system in Mauritius?

In this study, the coping strategies developed by Mauritian students signal that the challenges faced in academic writing go beyond the written text and are indexical of possible gaps in certain academic structures at UCT. Presently, programmes to integrate international students in academics are quasi-inexistent. Within the Commerce faculty for instance, students identified for language intensive programmes have mainly been South African students who are second language English speakers or who come from modest schooling backgrounds. This support, while part of South Africa's policy of redress, may be extended to students of other nationalities.

Still, it is perhaps naïve to assume that a 'one size fits all' intervention programme for international students is adequate to resolve the issue. In practice, the programme needs to be sensitive to these students' different regional and academic backgrounds and be adapted accordingly. Secondly, care needs to be taken not to further alienate international students at UCT, by making their cultural and academic differences more evident to other UCT students and staff. The findings may also be used to influence language teaching strategies upstream, that is, in Mauritian schools so that students may be better prepared for higher education linguistic requirements in the English language by the time they apply for university admission.

1.4 The writing-identity link

In their first year, Mauritian students at UCT are presumably still in a transitional phase, characterised by uncertainty for some, exploration for others. It is likely that this state of affairs may also filter through and be reflected in their handling of academic writing tasks.

In this context, *academic writing* is defined as a projection and negotiation of students' multiple identities - as Mauritians, as students, as writers. The writing-identity link, following Roz Ivanič's writer-identity model, is helpful in uncovering students' coping strategies (Clark and Ivanič, 1997). *Coping strategies* are the mechanisms devised by individuals to absorb or resist external shocks. Here, they are defined as measures, often of accommodation and resistance,

adopted by students in their production/reproduction of texts in response to what they perceive to be UCT's academic demands. The tacit devices they use give the illusion that everything on the surface is in working order; it may well be. However, at times the very existence of coping strategies signals a gap, often a systemic gap which the strategies attempt to mask or resolve to varying degrees of effectiveness. This will be delved in the implications chapter.

1.5 Ethnographic methods

When the objects of scrutiny are discreet, provisional and shifting, as in the case of coping strategies, they can at best be explored through ethnographic methods, which allow the researcher to become insider to the community of users. The methods used to this end are: participant observation, textual analysis of academic essays, interviews and a focus group study. The textual analysis of academic essays serves to identify areas where students are struggling in academic writing. This method only partly reveals the influences of students' backgrounds, writing conventions and attitudes upon the writing process.

Data on the writing process itself is gathered through one-to-one interviews with students. Particular attention is paid to how students' multiple identities, as Mauritian, as students and as writers, gain relevance in their academic writings, and how possible contestations in those identities may constitute challenges in the writing task. The study involved six students and the responses of three of them are presented in case studies. Patterns emerging around the participants' writing challenges are corroborated with data from a focus group session with participants to identify students' coping strategies.

1.6 Thesis structure

The structure is as follows:

Chapter two provides an overview of empirical studies in the field of academic writing and the conceptual framework used in this study. While the latter may guide the selection of the researcher's tool kit, it does not hinder the study's exploratory approach. Chapter three describes the research methods employed and discusses their limitations. Chapter four analyses three students' case studies as well as their respective faculties' feedback in order to locate the

students' writer identities and possible sites of contestation in academic writing. Chapter five uses data from a focus group session to present and discuss the coping strategies employed by participants in writing. The findings are confirmed through a triangulation process, by integrating data from the focus group study with previously collected data. Chapter six explores the implications of the study. Finally, Chapter seven concludes the study and lists potential areas for further research.

University of Cape Town

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter examines recent studies conducted in the field of internationalisation and academic writing and explores their relevance to the present research. It then articulates key concepts that will guide the research process.

2.1 Recent studies in the field

This section presents recent studies in internationalisation, academic literacies and writing and coping strategies both internationally and locally. It enables the researcher to situate the study within recent areas of research and topical interests and help develop a working definition of key concepts that will inform the study.

(i) Internationalisation

1. Internationalisation in Western universities

Research on internationalisation in higher education covers three interrelated dimensions: the conceptualisation of internationalisation at policy and implementation levels, challenges faced in implementation and the relevance of internationalisation at the workplace. Deem (2001), a Western scholar defines 'internationalisation' as 'the sharing of ideas, knowledge, and ways of doing things in similar ways across different countries' (7) and sees its origins in the wave of globalisation and capitalism. She observes that as capitalist principles seep deep into social and institutional discourses and practices, universities are not left indifferent to their influence. They too are operating increasingly as business organisations. To remain relevant and meet international standards, they are undertaking more collaborative and internationally funded research projects. They are hence becoming a fertile ground for a transaction of knowledges beyond the local.

Schooniran (1999) however shows that while initiatives are well-intentioned, administrators, teachers and students all apply internationalisation in ways that are only most relevant to their specific field. They fail to see its application in other nodes of the institution and underestimate the relevance of international students as viable 'educational resources'. Her paper therefore

urges for a definition that would ‘extend the dialogue’ between different stakeholders on the issue.

In addition, one would believe that the concept of ‘internationalisation’ cannot be isolated to the academic institutions where it is put in practice. Knight (2004) defines ‘internationalisation’ along these lines as ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education’. Her definition is pertinent not only to the institutions where it is implemented, but also to the State which exercises its influence on the process through regulatory frameworks and funding, and to the workplace.

2. Internationalisation in African universities

Mthembu (2004), currently the Vice-Chancellor and Principle at the Central University of Technology in the Free State (South Africa), presents an African perspective on ‘internationalisation’ and draws attention to the unequal power play underlying processes of knowledge exchange. This is particularly relevant to our study, since it speaks to UCT’s move to becoming an ‘Afropolitan’ university.

Mthembu opines that African universities can participate in the internationalisation process in three ways: ‘embedding of an external space into an internal space’, ‘embedding of an internal space into an external space’ or an ‘isomorphism of the two spaces’. The first type occurs when African universities absorb the ‘values, beliefs, conceptual system, philosophy and epistemology of the ‘other’’, such that it absorbs the latter’s identity. The second type occurs when other universities internalise the values of African universities. The third type occurs when both African and international universities share ‘equivalent - not necessarily similar values’ and can mesh gears together to generate world knowledge.

While thus far, African universities have been emulating Western higher education values, Mthembu believes that they now need to turn their uniqueness into an asset. They need to increase their influence in the global sphere by partnering with other universities as equal stakeholders. Hence, they would avoid entrapping themselves further in the first type of

embedding, 'the embedding of an external space into an internal space', which for Mthembu, is reminiscent of the colonial discourses of subservience (81).

In his view, remnants of colonial discourses still endure in the psyche of ex-colonies and continue to shape their perception of the West as superior. Though not generalisable across all walks of life, these perceptions do persist in higher education and inform Third World institutions' readiness to emulate the West. There is no doubt that Western institutions are better funded because of the economic situation prevailing in many of the Western countries; they even charge higher fees from students of Third World countries. However, if the perceived hegemony in the education system across the globe is to be truly challenged, the place to start is home. One needs to review what Mthembu believes to be 'subservient' institutions and a forging of partnerships with similarly under-valued institutions in the region to capitalise on common strengths and resources.

A glance at a few 'subservient' institutions at present would suggest that the Western influence on their pedagogy, curriculum and assessment is still strongly felt. The Mauritian education system, for instance, is still defined along British norms with English as the official medium of instruction and its reliance on the CIE syllabus in mainstream secondary schools. Other countries in the SADC region like Zimbabwe, Malawi and Swaziland may have similar stories to share.

Moja (2007, quoted by Kishun) cautions however that while arguing for an African identity, one should not misinterpret internationalisation as 'meeting global needs at the expense of local needs'. Rather, internationalisation should be seen as 'prepar(ing) human resources to make the country a partner in a globalised world'. In his view, the 'globalisation versus Africanisation' debate is based on a false distinction and does disservice to this vision of turning one's country an equal partner in the global exchange of resources.

On the other hand, Kraak (2004), McLellan (2008) and Rouhani (2007) focus on the local and explore issues such as the tension between the higher education policy's aim for 'transformation' and 'reconstruction' and the constraints presented by the macro economic

framework within which it operates; the need for ‘international offices’ in higher education institutions in South Africa and so on. At UCT, internationalisation policy issues are highlighted in two recent research papers by Baker and Geiser, where the alignment between policy and implementation are addressed.

Baker (2007) analyses the different ways in which ‘internationalisation’ is conceptualized at UCT, the challenges faced by staff and students alike in implementing the internationalization policy and the ambiguous role played by the International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO) in coordinating the policy, since it is at once responsible for administrative and academic processes. Geiser (2009) focuses particularly on the experience of American students in study-abroad programmes at UCT, and explores through interviews how they ‘navigate’ their way through the social and academic practices at their host university. He notes the disjunctures or ‘critical moments’ characterizing their integration at the University, which call for important ‘navigational choices’ on the part of the students. His study demystifies the experiences of international students and offers good ground to suggest that study-abroad students need to be better equipped to meet the demands of their host university. Induction programmes for instance may need revising to ease international students’ ‘navigation’ through the different social and academic experiences at UCT.

These studies offer a viable lens to grasp the complex issues of ‘internationalisation’ as faced by the stakeholders at UCT, the challenges in aligning policy to practice and the particular experiences of international students in the process. Here, concepts such as ‘internationalisation’ in the South African context inevitably become a site of contestation, since in the process of recontextualisation, some meanings get lost, others are acquired and discursive gaps begin to appear between what is intended, interpreted and implemented. It is against this background that I wish to explore the academic writing of first year Mauritian students at UCT. The writings are used to exemplify, in a tangible way the academic experiences of international students.

(ii) Academic literacies and writing

1. The New Literacy Studies Movement

Studies abound in the realm of academic literacy and I will focus on those that emerge out of the New Literacy Studies movement. Street (1993), one of the key proponents of the movement,

opines that literacy is not reducible to any standard reading and writing skill acquired equally at school by all individuals (4). Its nature, value and acquisition are often influenced by societal norms, beliefs, needs, attitudes and so on. Learners' social background can either consolidate or inhibit their acquisition of schooled literacy. This explains why despite equal academic input at school, some students perform better than others.

One would agree with Brian Street that literacy can never be a totally standardized, universal, autonomous, ideologically neutral, or measurable entity across different settings.

Researchers dissatisfied with the autonomous model of literacy have come to view literacy practices as inextricably linked to culture and power cultures in society... Avoiding the reification of the autonomous model, they study these social practices rather than literacy-in-itself for their relationship to other aspects of social life (7).

In his view, socio-cultural forms of learning influence the way reading and writing are acquired in different contexts. By the same token, they challenge the hegemony of mainstream schooled literacy over traditional, indigenous literacies and apprenticeships (see also Gee, 1990, Hamilton, 2000).

For Lillis and Scott (2007), the plural form 'literacies' allows one to grasp 'academic literacies' not only as a 'field of inquiry' but also as an 'applied field' (5-16). The plural form enables one to situate 'literacies' at the 'juncture between theory building and application' and it fulfils particular strategic, epistemological and ideological functions each time it is used (5). In this study, the plural form opens up possibilities for the researcher to explore the theoretical field of literacy in new, unconventional ways. It allows one to be sensitive to the enmeshing of different cross-cultural literacies at UCT, as students from various backgrounds begin to share a common academic space. It affirms the significance of non-mainstream ways of knowing in the field, and validates studies that attempt to grasp students' dispositions towards academic writing from observations of their ways of knowing in the field.

Studies in academic writing in specific analyse the disjunction between teachers' expectations and students' interpretation of writing tasks. Throughout, the 'literacies' logic continues to inform both theoretical and empirical undertakings in the field. In Lea and Street (2000), the

authors focus on student writing and staff feedback in two different universities in south-east England, which leads them to conclude that while formal aspects of writing may be communicated explicitly, the interpretations of student writing on the whole, by students and staff rely upon assumptions of what counts as ‘valid knowledge’ within particular fields of study. These assumptions remain implicit in most cases.

Lillis (2001) similarly observes that within higher education institutions, the lack of explicitness around the writing practice turns it into a mystery. She explains that this practice of mystery excludes students, often ‘non-traditional’ students, who may lack awareness of the requisite conventions of academic writing. Hence, ‘essayist literacy’ remains a ‘privileged’ practice acquired unequally by students from different backgrounds. Making the faculty’s expectations explicit could be a starting point, though not a sufficient one. Lillis’s research captures the contradictions that characterize students’ academic experiences in higher education and how these can be mediated through specific kinds of dialogue between students and their tutors.

2. Studies in academic writing in South Africa and at UCT

In South Africa, a multilingual nation, some studies in academic writing focus on issues of second language acquisition of English, students’ experience of English as a second language in the classroom and the role of code-switching. These studies often illustrate the students’ problematic transition from BICS to CALP in English, and the inequality it creates when English becomes a medium of instruction (see Winkler 1997, Setati, Adler et al 2002). Other studies broaden the locus of analysis by looking at the interaction between diversity, culture and writing and issues of writing in the curriculum (Leibowitz and Mohamed, 2000).

At UCT, the Language Development Group has been actively involved in initiatives to assist and empower students in academic writing (Thesen and van Pletzen, 2006). The LDG programmes run thus far have aimed mostly at improving learning opportunities of South African students from ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘diverse’ backgrounds in the name of ‘national redress’ and ‘social justice’. LDG may now need to revise its application of ‘redress’ and ‘justice’ to increase their relevance in an internationalizing university. In this manner, LDG will be better able to respond

the particular needs of international students, who may also be lingering on the fringes of the university's institutional culture.

Thesen and van Pletzen (2006) offer an insight into recent research in academic writing by the LDG, against the background of the socio-political changes in South Africa. The research revolves around two key issues, namely *English as a second language* and *multimodality* i.e. the exploration of other modes in the meaning-making repertoire (20). The research is defined as 'progressive' since it delves into current obstacles and the potential for change at the individual and institutional level.

One of the contributors, Nomdo (2006), analyses how successful 'black' students from different schooling backgrounds, act out their complex identities and potential at the University where they still perceive that educators viewed them 'behind' and as 'somewhat removed from the middle class, English speaking norm' (180).

He demonstrates in his study, how two 'black' students construct their student identity during their participation during the Mellon Mays Fellowship Programme, in order to gain access to UCT's academic resources. Instead of simply mimicking values that could give them access to power structures, the strategy used by 'black' students in their self-representation at UCT is a reworking of their cultural backgrounds into something more empowering, which Nomdo coins as 'collateral capital'. The term 'capital' is defined by Bourdieu (1991) as an as a 'form of power' and a 'weapon and a stake of struggle' (98). Bourdieu makes the distinction between different forms of capital, namely the social, economic, cultural and symbolic forms of capital (ibid).

For Nomdo, the term 'capital' provides 'insights into the value systems and reward structures' (121) operating in students' lives. In his study, students' inability to acquire one form of capital does not necessarily lead to failure. In fact, other 'undervalued' forms of capital such as students' cultural capital are converted into 'collateral capital'. For instance, one of the students prefers Drama to History because unlike History where the writing is 'not expected to come from your home', Drama allows him to push the formal boundaries of the subject to 'recreate myself

... playing somebody else that I'm not everyday but that I might be inside'. What he is inside may refer to his home identity or his preferred one.

The collateral capital, according to Nomdo, operates as a 'motivation factor' for students because it validates how they truly perceive themselves. He states that 'when collateral capital is made conscious, it leads to the development of a powerful metalanguage of success' (180), giving students the tools and confidence to re-define and assert their identity as UCT students. Whether academic writing at UCT valorises students' backgrounds to generate a 'metalanguage of success' will be explored in the following chapters (see also Paxton, Thesen, 2006).

Like in Nomdo's study, the issue of student identity is at the centre of our concern. Nomdo's participants gained visibility and a 'metalanguage of success' which they could employ to voice their identities. However, the participants of this study still featured on the margins of UCT and had limited visibility, even if they had been high-performing, promising students in Mauritius. Also, it is unlikely that they had developed a particular 'metalanguage of success' to bolster their academic experience. They would possibly have to resort to other strategies in the meantime.

(iii) Coping strategies

As far as coping strategies are concerned, Leki's study 'Coping Strategies of ESL Students in Writing Tasks Across the Curriculum'(1995) may be a good place to start. It assesses the writing experiences of five English Second Language (ESL) international students, who differ in nationality, year in school, gender and academic subject area in their first semester in the US (235). It focuses specifically on how the students acquired 'discipline-specific discourses', the strategies they bring with them and those they developed to succeed in their courses. It involves an analysis of students' essays, examination papers, classroom observation and interviews of students and faculty with a view to identifying coping strategies.

These coping strategies are classified into the following: clarifying strategies, focusing strategies, relying on past writing experiences, taking advantage of first language/culture, using current experience or feedback, looking for models, using current or past ESL writing training, accommodating teachers' demands, resisting teachers' demands and managing competing

demands (240). Leki suggests that an awareness of students' strategies can enhance ESL teaching methods. Leki's study is relevant because it places the present study of Mauritian's writing experiences within a broader ambit of research conducted on international ESL students' writing experiences and hence widens the scope of this small scale study.

Similarly, Canagarajah's article 'Safe Houses in the Contact Zone: Coping Strategies of African-American Students in the Academy' probes into minority students' strategies. The article is based on a study conducted at the University of Texas on a programme designed to familiarise first year 'ethnic minority' students with the 'academic culture' at the university. Canagarajah (1997) analyses African-American students' oral and written discourse and notes that the communicative strategies they use, signal a negotiation of 'competing discourses of the academy'. It also suggests 'shifting identities' and 'community membership'(176) as students struggle to adapt to the university's academic culture. In his study, the observed classroom begins to operate as a 'safe house' where students can voice out and enact their minority identities and display strong group solidarity, which they cannot otherwise in the larger sphere of the academic contact zone. Canagarajah's explanation of 'safe houses' is elaborated later.

The present study attempts to make explicit the complexity of students' allegiance to the community and/or institution in the desire to voice their identities. There are strong reasons to believe that the situation of the African-American students may compare closely with Mauritian students' academic experience, their group loyalty and attitudes towards the institution.

2.2 Possible fields of study - situating this study

While studies have been conducted on the experiences of international students, academic writing in higher education and the coping strategies of minority students, there are potential areas to explore, with respect to the writing experience of hitherto well-performing international students, their coping strategies, the role of the institution and the (counter)influence of subcultures/communities in enabling students' integration.

At UCT, while there is a rich literature on academic writing at the university and an emerging trend to explore the experiences of international students, the academic writing experience of international students is still an unexplored field. Likewise, the coping strategies of students at

UCT in academia have not been given much attention, while in fact they are often important features in students' adaption and are bound to surface during students 'critical moments' (Geiser,2009). It is perhaps necessary to give the study of coping strategies its own place in research and display its complexities.

This study situates itself at the intersection between internationalization issues and students' experiences in academic writing at UCT. It assesses how international students' identities are enacted in their texts and how they resolve challenges linked to writing and more broadly to voice and agency. The choices students make in these moments of crisis bear implications for the implementation of UCT's internationalization policy and developments in the pedagogy of academic writing on the ground.

2.3 Useful concepts

1. Academic literacies

In this study, the popular definition of academic literacy as merely reading and writing is avoided, as well as the assumption that follows from it, that given adequate doses of a standardized form of literacy, individuals would behave in socially similar and predictable ways and would have equal access to the ivory tower of knowledge (Street, 1993).

Rather, the term 'academic literacy' is defined as social practices, in line with the precepts of the New Literacy Studies movement. While academic literacy still takes place within the walls of the academic institution, this definition opens up new possibilities in classroom teaching because it takes into account the way in which students' social context and practices shape learning. Gee notes that 'there is no such thing as reading and writing, but reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles' (1990:viii). By emphasizing on 'particularity', he rejects the pre-eminence of an abstract form of academic literacy and reinforces the fact that literacy practices are unavoidably products of the social context where they occur.

One would agree that unless literacy is defined beyond reading and writing, one is likely to overlook instances of writer identities and their background in student writings. The study is

hence inclined to using the plural form ‘literacies’ when referring to students’ own ways of knowing and their acquisition of the institutionalized form of ‘academic literacy’.

2. *Discourses*

Academic literacy in higher education is structured within a specific set of Discourses. Gee distinguishes between ‘discourses’ which are ‘connected stretches of language’ and ‘Discourses’ as ‘always more than just language’.

A Discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act... so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize (127).

In higher education, Discourses encompass beliefs, conventions and practices that govern the realm of academia. They can be formal literacy practices related to reading, essay writing, note-taking practices, classroom interaction, feedback, consultation with tutors and so on. They can be a set of skills that includes critical thinking and argumentation. They can also be a set of conventions such as research, compulsory tutorial attendance, plagiarism rules and so on. Less formal practices would include group study, participation in debates and sports, writing for the students’ newspaper so on. Discourses can be an intersection of all three forms as well, and are always governed by a set of ideologies or ‘tacit theories’ or values establishing what counts as acceptable in a given society (vix). Some of these are more obvious than others.

While first year students may have some exposure to the higher education Discourses, what needs to be investigated is the nature of their induction into those Discourses. Is it formal or informal? What push-pull factors enhance or inhibit their affiliation to those Discourses? Gee notes that ‘telling the rules’ is not a solution to making students insiders to a Discourse.

Rather, we have to let (them) become a fully accepted member of the group, and to do *that* we have to really accept (them), accept (their) home, (their) community; we have to understand (them), appreciate (them), and be aware of the Discourse-bound nature of all practices in and out of school (xviii).

In the case of academic literacy, Gee would suggest that it does not suffice to make writing demands explicit. Students’ diverse backgrounds need to be appreciated, otherwise students remain outsiders to the institutional culture and may choose to strengthen loyalties with

subcultures where they are acknowledged. In this study, emphasis is placed on students' induction into academic writing Discourses. Since the induction process is not always evident or straight-forward, one needs to probe into students' texts and their accounts of the writing process to uncover the tacit theories at play. One also needs to be sensitive to how participants cope with possible disjunctions between old and new knowledges and Discourses, between their multiple identities and between different allegiances, in their search for voice within a new institution.

3. Academic writing: reflexivity and identity

In the light of the above, academic writing cannot be defined without referring to its constituting Discourses i.e. its beliefs, conventions and practices. Lea and Street models of academic writing as 'study skills', 'academic socialisation' and 'academic literacies' aptly capture this multi-layered dimension of writing (2000:34). These models show a progression in the conceptualization of writing over time, but they all still have currency in the present day higher education system.

The 'study skills' model emerges out the behavioural tradition and views student writing as a set of standard, 'atomised' skills students needed to master to be called 'literate'. Insufficient mastery of these skills is regarded as a 'deficit' or handicap of a serious kind. The second model borrows from social psychology and anthropology and admits that more than skills, students need to be 'acculturated' to a specific set of institutional discourses in order to count as literate. What the second model overlooks is the fact that students arrive at the institution with their own cultural and academic baggage that need to be off-loaded, appreciated or rejected before new knowledge is acquired.

The third model goes a step further and defines literacies as 'social practices... at the level of epistemology and identities' (ibid) and regards student writings as signs of possible 'negotiation of conflicting literary practices' that are acquired in different learning contexts. It hence subscribes to the 'New Literacy Studies' movement. Still, in practice, the three models often co-exist and so, best define 'academic writing' when integrated in a hierarchy rather than viewed in isolation.

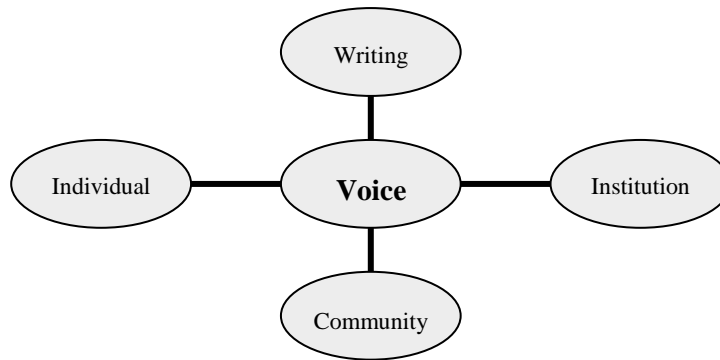
In this study, the role of the first two models as a foundation in ‘acculturating’ students into academic writing is acknowledged. However, we focus more on the ‘academic literacies’ view of writing since it has been relatively overlooked at the university, especially when one casts a close look at first year essay topics and the type of guidelines and feedback provided to students on their writing. Using the ‘academic literacies’ lens, this study views academic writing as a practice embedded in particular contexts, and more importantly as a means by which the student writes himself/herself into being.

Scott and Usher refer to this as ‘reflexivity’ in writing, though their focus is primarily on the researcher’s need to write reflexively. (1996:34) I would like to expand the application of ‘reflexivity’ to see how it plays out in students’ writings. I would define the term ‘reflexivity’ as the self-conscious process of writing, which enables the exploration of one’s relationship to worldly phenomena and engenders instances of self-definition. It sees writing as a projection of students’ multiple identities.

I am inclined to believe that an analysis of writing is incomplete without the acknowledgment of the author. Writing is governed not only by skills and conventions, but also by choices, motives and experiences of the author and unless these are explored, any analysis of writing will be lacking in depth. These motives may at times be tacit, ‘hidden’ and at times unconscious. To bring them to the surface, one would need a framework that separates out the different influences upon academic writing. In practice though, the boundaries between these influences may be fuzzy.

4. Voice

Carrying this further, in this study, the nexus between writing, individual, the institution and the community is that of ‘voice’. Students’ voice manifests itself in their writing as well as in their local community and it is indexical of one’s multiple identities at the university. An analysis of writer identities cannot therefore overlook the projection of voice.



2

Blommaert (2005) defines ‘voice’ as the ‘capacity to make oneself understood ... a capacity to generate an uptake of one’s words as close as possible to one’s desired contextualization’ (68). It is the capacity to use words or ‘linguistic resources’ to fulfill a desirable communicative and social purpose, while adhering to acceptable social values within a specific community. ‘Voice’ is therefore at once enabling and constraining. It allows for the validation of one’s views, beliefs and opinions but is restricted by the context or ‘space of meaning ratification’ where specific utterances have specific functions (ibid).

When individuals move from one contextual space to another, their voice is transformed in interesting ways. This is because the discourses defining ‘voice’ differ in different spaces; some Discourses ‘travel well’ and root themselves in new spaces, others don’t. What the Discourses ought to be, is prescribed by ‘centring institutions’, in this case the university. The university establishes acceptable academic writing conventions that its students ought to follow and thus regulates the degree to which voice ought to be displayed in academic texts. Specific social conventions also govern day-to-day interaction of students on campus. Hence, first year students, who are unfamiliar to academic and social conventions may have ‘differential access’ to UCT’s meaning making spaces. They may turn to less formal spaces in the search for meaning and these spaces may exercise their own kind of ‘centring’ pull. Suffice to say that within the formal structures of the university, first year students, especially international students may feel alienated and without voice, agency and the ‘right’ Discourses.

² My own diagram showing relationship between voice, identity, the institution and the community.

When Mauritian students travel from one contextual space to another, they may encounter a similar situation whereby their prior discourses fail to ‘travel’ or apply. Their voice, or lack thereof, may be reflected in their writing as well as in their interaction with South African students and members of their own community. To understand students’ attitude to writing and the coping strategies that emerge, one needs to examine the extent to which the institution and students’ informal peer group become enabling sites for voicing. It is likely that students may resist those social or academic sites where their voice is muzzled.

Thesen (1994) in ‘Voices in Discourse’ brings together notions of ‘discourse’ as structure and ‘voice’ as agency to bear upon her study of UCT students’ texts. She defines Discourse as ‘a process of meaning exchange, via language, in a given context’. She adds, like Blommaert, that students have differential access to these ‘processes of exchange’ that need to be negotiated to validate their agency or ‘voice’ (25). The difficulty, she notes, is that individuals also have unequal access to the process of negotiation.

It is possible that during the process of negotiation, some individual voices may be stifled by the widely used Discourses, established through group consensus. They may be challenged by institutions ‘whose routine nature pushes us to work for sameness rather than to recognize difference’ (Ruddock, quoted in Thesen, 1997:494). In addition, as Thesen points out, institutions may ‘label’ students into categories that do not reflect the students’ own perceptions of their identity (1997:489). Mauritian students, for instance, are assumed to have an excellent secondary schooling because of their CIE background and to be conversant in English because it is the official medium of instruction. This assumption takes away students’ option to call for help, or the prospect that they will be taken seriously and hence limits their voice at the institution.

It is in these moments of crisis between ‘structure’ and ‘agency’, that we situate the emergence of coping strategies to engender voicing. Voicing is viewed here as the externalization or enactment of inner dialogues or identities. While the act of writing holds the potential for

voicing, in practice, voicing may actually be enabled more by students' peer group, if the institution falls short of fulfilling that need.

5. Coping strategies - 'Safe houses'

When students' enacted identity is stifled within the institution, they may choose to resist certain hegemonic discourses. They may adopt coping strategies in order to re-valorise their own marginal identities. Leki expands the commonsense definition of 'coping' beyond mere alignment by conceptualizing 'coping strategies' both as accommodation or resistance. Etymologically speaking, the word 'coping' once signified resistance. The closely related term, 'couper' in French means to cut, and the term 'colper' in Old French from which it is presumably derived, means to 'fight, strike' (Skeat, 2005:111)

I agree with Leki to some extent that accommodation and resistance lie at different ends of the same scale and that students may choose to occupy any position therein depending on the requirements of the tasks. Still, while Leki's classification of different coping strategies may be useful in this study, excessive reliance on pre-conceived categories has been avoided. I also believe that one should allow for instances when coping strategies are less conscious, or when the purpose the strategies are intended to achieve are not aligned with what they actually achieve, or when they are devised to resolve an issue whose specific cause is still unknown to the students. It is also possible that at times attempts at accommodation look like resistance.

Canagarajah (1997) points out that these attempts may not always be explicit. While analyzing students' essays for instance, he noticed that they underplay their particular identities and appear to conform to the conventions. He observes, 'Although students are aware that the use of academic discourses would lead to deracination and domination, they are strongly motivated by academic success to still acknowledge the necessity of these discourses'(189). He is however wary of treating these instances as gestures of accommodation.

Borrowing the term 'fronting' from Kochman, he argues that at times there is 'a seeming conformism that masks deeper oppositional tendencies' (188). Thus what may seem like accommodation may actually be disguised resistance. The article hence cautions against a

simplistic view of coping strategies as either resistance or accommodation. One way in which the current study deals with the difficulty to extricate resistance from accommodation is by looking at the functions the coping strategies perform in different social and academic spheres and their effect in each case.

I define resistance strategies within the ambit of coping strategies, as alternatives developed by students to thrive without any intervention from the mainstream. These gestures often operate within an alternative space, to which members display solidarity. Hence resistance to the outside often involves accommodation within the alternative space. To make this more explicit, I would like to use Canagarajah's notion of 'safe houses'. The 'safe house' concept adds vividness to features of the alternative space that may be hidden from view. Introduced by Pratt in her study of postcolonial societies in contact, 'Safe houses' in the realm of academia are defined by Canagarajah as:

sites that are relatively free from surveillance, especially by authority figures, perhaps because these are considered unofficial, off-task or extrapedagogical (2004:121).

Canagarajah resists a strict definition of 'safe houses' because they are 'fluid' and 'mobile' and can assume any shape and direction. 'Safe houses' for Canagarajah are no new discovery but have always been lurking in the 'underlife' of mainstream activity, acting as a foil to suppressed spaces and offering minorities a sanctuary where they can enjoy a semblance of freedom.

It appears that minority communities have always collaboratively constructed sites of community underlife wherein they can celebrate suppressed identities and go further to develop subversive discourses that inspire resistance against their domination (ibid).

Whether the activities inside the 'safe houses' subvert, or in some ways, parallel mainstream happenings, can only be ascertained through investigation.

6. Coping strategies - 'Mushfake'

Another interesting concept is the 'mushfake'. Coined by Gee, the 'mushfake' is a Discourse of make-believe. He takes the term from prisoners, who in their deprived state, developed manoeuvres to 'make do with something less when the real thing is not available'(1990:146-248). Prisoners' 'mushfake' can, for instance take the form of miniature ship replicas crafted from matchsticks. These replicas become mementos of the real objects beyond their reach and

temporarily satiate their need to belong outside, while they are still in confinement. The ‘mushfake’ thus grows from an urge to recreate a particular Discourse to which the individuals have no access. This recreation in a sense represents a subversion of the prisoners’ entrapment and an alignment to the outside. (see also Wilson, 2000)

Compared to Canagarajah’s ‘safe house’, where the minority community closes upon itself to guard against the harshness outside (2004:121), the ‘mushfake’ is a discourse of the outside that allows individuals to feel liberated from their incarceration. In other words, while the ‘safe house’ alludes to closure, the ‘mushfake’ alludes to pushing boundaries. The motives behind the two gestures may differ, yet they both do convey the idea of resistance to one mode of existence and alignment to another.

For Gee, since access to the desired objects and Discourses is limited/forbidden, the non-members need to deploy a particular ‘metaknowledge and strategies of make do’ in order to enjoy ‘partial’ acquisition to the coveted objects. He elucidates his point by stating:

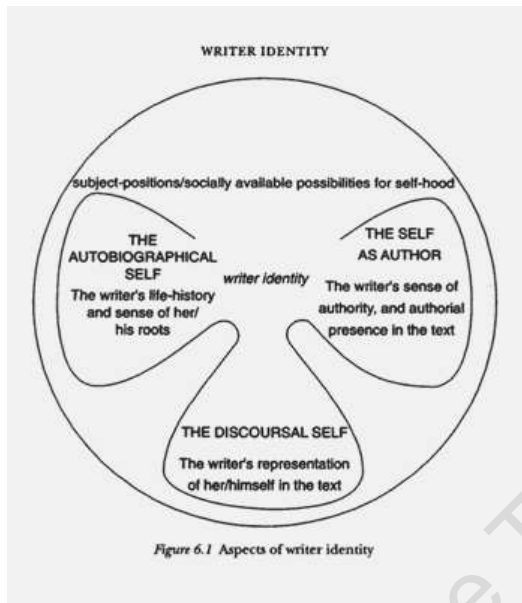
For many of us not acculturated early in life to ‘mainstream’ dominant Discourses, but who have lived large parts of our lives in them, we come to realise, I believe that part of our ‘success’ in evading the gate-keeping efforts of the elites in our society (a ‘success’ which is rarely, in my experience, total) is due to ‘mushfake’ (148).

The notion of ‘mushfake’ may apply to academic writing as a series of possible strategies that are used by students to appear well-versed in writing when they still actually lie on the periphery of UCT’s academic Discourse. The ‘mushfake’ strategies may pertain to instances of plagiarism or the use of complex terminology that would temporarily give students a scholarly air and presumably precipitate their acceptance into the UCT’s academic Discourse. Students could even resort to taking shortcuts. These speculations are investigated in subsequent sections of the study.

2.4 Heuristic tools in this study

In order to identify students’ *writer identities* in their written texts and interview responses, I will use Ivanič’s ‘clover model’ of writer identity as a heuristic tool. This model will be further operationalised in the following chapter. Clark and Ivanič (1997) describe writing as a lively

interaction between participants' 'autobiographical self', the 'authorial self' and the 'discoursal self' (136-140) as shown in the diagram.



(Clark and Ivanič, 1997:137)

The writer's 'autobiographical self' is reflected in his/her use of personal history, regional, cultural, linguistic and academic background that are reflected in the text. The 'discoursal self' refers to his/her representation in the text by following specific discourses or genres of writing. In this study, participants' 'discoursal self' will be inferred from the writing conventions that they subscribe to. There may be an overlap between the 'discoursal' and 'autobiographical' selves since the influence of students' prior 'discoursal self' from secondary schooling may also be categorised as 'autobiographical'. For the sake of analysis, the term 'discoursal self' is used to designate elements in students' writing where they make use of specific conventions, past and present. The term 'autobiographical self' on the other hand refers to elements in the writing that signal broader socio-cultural aspects of their identity. Finally, the 'authorial self' refers to his/her handling of content and style to display voice and credibility in the writing. These will be elaborated in the forthcoming chapters as they are operationalised.

Clark and Ivanič (1997) point out furthermore that the identities displayed in the text may or may not entirely map onto students' actual identity. This is because the writer identities are (re)constructions of students' identities. There may be overlaps between the voiced identity in

the text and the unvoiced actual identity. Students may also choose to display their preferred identity or that which is given more valency in the institution, rather than their actual identity. To get closer to students' actual identity, it is necessary to substantiate the textual analysis with what students say about the text even if their statements are also partly (re)constructions.

While the debate on the truth value of the account/recount may be a never-ending one, what is of interest is the instance when the enacted identities begin to coincide, morph or clash with one another and how the tension is resolved. This interaction and contestation of student's multiple writer identities is what we hope to uncover using the clover model in this study.

On the other hand, while concepts such as 'safe house' and 'mushfake' assist in broadening how strategies are conceptualised, it is hard to develop what Bernstein (1996) would call an 'external language of description' for identifying them in practice. This is because coping strategies are 'fluid', tacit and hence invisible to the naked eye. They require that one enters the field and engages with participants and assimilates the mores of the community of practice. In the process, they urge the researcher to herself become an instrument of research. They also require the researcher to temper with the boundaries between researcher and researched.

In this study, I enter the field, observe and participate in some of the activities of the Mauritian peer group. I substantiate my observations with a focus group session where I involve participants in simulation games to uncover their unconscious strategies. The identification of the strategies therefore involves role play, on both sides. In other words, I need to enact my membership in the Mauritian group, while participants need to enact their simulated roles. According to Feld (1997) 'a simulation is useful when the set of implications cannot be analytically derived from specified theoretical premises' (104). Hence it aptly suits the purposes of this study. Still, it is essential after the simulation, to step back and reflect on the significance of the simulation so as to bridge the gap between simulation and reality/ies, and between the empirical and the theoretical terrain. This will be elaborated in the next chapter.

2.5 Summary

This chapter covers the context and theoretical terrain that acts as a backdrop and that will be explored further in the course of the study. The internationalization process at UCT and the secondary school system in Mauritius have been described in some length so that the knowledge-exchange mechanism that operates between students, UCT and other universities can be appreciated. Some key theoretical concepts that have been examined are: ‘academic literacy’, ‘higher education Discourses’, ‘writing as reflexivity’, ‘voice’, ‘safe houses’ and ‘mushfake’.

These concepts are used in defining students’ writer identities and the complex coping strategies devised in participants’ first year, especially during the period of interregnum when what they have learnt previously, still falls short of fulfilling specific academic requirements at UCT and when their regional/cultural identities may clash with their new experiences in a different contextual space.

Chapter 3

Research design

This chapter describes the research trajectory, the ethnographic enterprise, the researcher's multiple identities, data collection methods, data analysis, the application of the New Literacy studies model, a reflection of the limits of ethnography and lastly the limitations of this research design.

Moments of reflexive writing throughout are either provided in the footnotes if short, or in the text in italics. In the next section, for instance, I reveal my experiences in the field and the fact that the path adopted did not always directly map onto the intended trajectory.

3.1 The research trajectory and the paths

The research journey from students' academic essays to the identification of their writer identities, to the signs of their coping strategies has been a relentless but interesting one. While there was a well-defined methodology in place, the methods had to be revisited in a way that made the tacit elements of students' identities and strategies more apparent.

Admittedly, the move from the textual analysis of essays to the identification of writer identities was facilitated by interviews with participants, however the move from writer identities to coping strategies remained daunting one. Students appeared to evade questions on their writing strategies by offering generic responses about how academic essays ought to be written. From their responses, one could infer that students refrained from overtly stating their strategies, or were not fully conscious of them, or never had recourse to any strategy whatsoever.

Observations of the larger Mauritian cohort however drew attention to a different underlying story. The circulation of texts and the 'talk around texts' among peers in an informal set up suggested that interviews had actually been restrictive in their scope to allow for comprehensive data on the strategies. In fact, while the objective of the research was to illuminate aspects of the everyday in particular contexts that were not available to readers, the research ethos and format had itself thickened the

boundaries between researcher and researched and made participants construct their utterances carefully, especially on issues that appeared more contentious, i.e. the coping strategies.

As a researcher, this experience increased my awareness of the limits and affordances of formal research and called for greater creativity and flexibility in the design of methods. The re-adapted methods served their purpose well, and also indicated that while research aims to construct knowledge, it may not fare very well if it overlooked the sensibilities of those researched.

3.2 The ethnographic enterprise

An awareness that identities and strategies could not be analysed fully unless they were seen being performed, and that the performance could not be appreciated unless the observer immersed herself in the observed community's rituals and codes, made me lean towards an ethnographic approach in this study. This section explores the definitions of ethnography and situates the field.

Ethnography

What is ethnography, what is it not? While ethnography is often, but not always, pitted against quantitative empirical studies to emphasise its qualitative nature, the study is at times misunderstood both within and outside its own field (see Hammersley, 1992). Van Maanen (1995) debunks some prevailing myths around ethnography. Ethnography is not a mere 'pleasant, peaceful, and instructive form of travel writing' but in fact 'something akin to an intense epistemological trial by fire' (2). Ethnography has been a trial in this study because it involved constructing knowledge about a community by stepping in and out of it and recontextualising the story for readers in as reliable and sincere a manner as possible, while being much aware of one's inevitable subjectivity in the rendition of facts.

Martyn Hammersley (1995) underlines some key features of ethnographic studies namely:

- Research takes place in the field

- Data is gathered from a range of sources, including documentary evidence of various kinds
- Data collection is, for the most part, relatively ‘unstructured’... First, it does not involve following a fixed and detailed research design specified at the start. Second, the categories that are used for interpreting what people do or say... are generate out of the process of data analysis.
- The focus is usually on a few cases, generally fairly small-scale ... to facilitate in-depth study
- The analysis of data involves interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local, and perhaps also wider contexts. (3)

The current study reflects the key features of the ethnography and these are elaborated below.

The field

The field in this study is UCT’s Maths Square, an open space on campus at the centre of the university avenue, where Mauritian students congregate daily to chat or study in groups. Mauritians have appropriated and affectionately renamed this field ‘nou base’, a Creole phrase meaning ‘our space’. The activities within ‘nou base’ are defined by particular codes and values that may bear similarities with youth subcultures in general.

Hall and Jefferson (1993) define ‘subcultures’ as having a

distinct enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different from their parent culture. They must be focused around certain activities, values, certain uses of material artifacts, territorial spaces etc. which significantly differentiate them from the wider culture.(13-14)

First year Mauritian students are granted access into the community on the basis of their nationality, however they still need to adjust to the new values within ‘nou base’. Back in Mauritius, one would associate youth subcultures at their far extreme, with delinquent behaviour i.e. bunking school, swearing, filling walls with graffiti etc. Students’ rebellion in that case would often be directed at the perceived excessive authority of parents and schools.

In the case of 'nou base' however, while the use of swear words is frequent among vociferous students, delinquent acts move to the background. This is because the nature and objects of rebellion if any, appear to have changed. Upon their arrival at UCT, Mauritian students' rebellious acts against parental or school authority lose their significance and ironically give way to some degree of nostalgia and homesickness.

'Nou base' then serves to rally the Mauritians to their roots, and guard them from the insecurities of being in a foreign territory. It becomes a familiar hub for all students sharing a common nationality and language. Interestingly, swear words in Creole become a means to strengthen bonds of solidarity and brotherhood within 'nou base', rather than signal rebellion. The use of the Creole language broadly speaking becomes a marker of the Mauritian identity and strengthens the outer boundaries of 'nou base'.

Still, allegiances inside the group are flexible and shifting, depending on the members' particular needs at particular times. In other words, while members visibly enact their common Mauritian identity, the different positions they hold in this performance are influenced by how strongly they situate themselves within some of the community's social or academic sub-networks.

Thus, an understanding of 'nou base' not only necessitates entry into the Mauritian community but also insider knowledge about how its different sub-networks operate. To grasp students' writer identities and coping strategies, one needs to be insider, not only to specific academic groups that guide the development of students' writings, but also to the social networks that influence the formation of students' particular coping strategies. A 'thick participation' in the field, which Sarangi defines as 'a form of socialisation [...] that would provide a threshold for interpretative understanding' (2006:377), would best assist the researcher in this endeavour, since it helps one acquire 'knowledge of the game' (ibid), its rules and application.

3.3 Researcher identities

Journeying back and forth between the field and other spaces, conversations and texts, the researcher begins to occupy various overlapping sites at once, such that her identity at any particular point in time is likely to be 'liminal', to use Jackson's words. Jackson holds that 'liminality necessarily occurs when we impose classification systems upon the natural world' (1995:37). What he implies is that as ethnographers cruise between worlds, they inevitably disrupt this classification. Their perceptions are informed both by their subjectivity and their newly-adopted meaning-making lenses, such as the language and discourses of the observed. This liminality 'betwixt and between worlds, selves ... words' (39) enriches ethnographers' insights, but it also complicates their task as researchers. In this study, I situated myself at once as an ethnographer, a Mauritian and a tutor. With these, I became insider to some Discourses and was granted access into their exclusive resources.

1. Identity as ethnographer

Geertz's definition of ethnography closely approximates the one adopted in this study. Geertz holds that ethnography is about 'understanding a people's culture' in a way that 'exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity' (2003:14). Thus, implicit in ethnographic studies, is an inevitable negotiation of positionality between the observer and the observed, and their respective notions of what counts as 'normalness' and 'particularity'. In this study, rather than studying the 'other', I explored what appeared 'normal' and familiar, that is the Mauritian community in order to extricate its 'particularity'. The 'other' in this case was UCT, a vast and unfamiliar institution with unfamiliar rules and values governing both social interactions and academic requirements. The distinctions between the familiar and the other often became blurred as the ethnographer shifted in and out of the field.

2. Identity as a Mauritian

As a Mauritian, I was not only socialized into many of the community's Discourses, but they continue to inform my worldview to this day. Throughout the study, I was particularly cautious of how my familiar experiences might precede and influence my analysis. I therefore gave more voice to my participants and allowed the data to speak for itself to limit possible value judgments

on my part. For instance, I asked participants to re-state what I might initially assume as a statement of the ‘obvious’, often to be surprised by how our versions of facts differed.

Looking back, I often had to step out of my insider role to acknowledge and critically revise my own preconceptions. In this study, I chose to do this through a triangulation of different methods such as observations, interviews and a focus group session, that would confirm or reject emerging patterns and minimize my interference in the findings.

3. Identity as Tutor

At UCT, I taught semantics to second year speech therapy students during Winter school in 2008. It was a ‘crash course’ designed for those who had previously failed the course. After a month of intensive tutoring, the students’ performance had significantly improved. Everyone had passed the course and approximately a quarter of the class had scored a first class in linguistics that term. What this suggests that there may be factors other than formal course components that could determine students’ success or failure in academia.

This logic applied to the analysis of student writings and coping strategies as well. Not only was there a need to look beyond formal course requirements but likewise, one had to follow Simon Pardoe’s advice and avoid making the facile assumption that coping strategies for instance signaled failure of some kind. Such an assumption would ring hollow unless one also explored the circumstances that led to the formation of the strategies in the first place. According to Pardoe (2000),

it is of course important to acknowledge that some instances of low status and unsuccessful writing may actually be (in one sense) failed attempts to access the dominant, standard form – on the basis that this was intended or demanded. But they are not *only* this. The problem is that if research adopts this deficit view, it fails to offer any further insight into such writing practices. In other words, to describe writing in terms of absence is not to offer an understanding of it. Such an account does not tell us what implicitly guided the writers (151).

Pardoe explains that matching students’ writing to the teacher’s requirements and categorizing them as pass or fail, offered a limited view of students’ performance. This kind of judgment

isolated the writing task from the writing agent and assumed that the written piece by itself was a valid index of the writer's ability or deficit. I agree with Pardoe that the motivations and sensibilities of the writing agent should also be factored in, even if these at times operated subconsciously or 'implicitly' in the writer. Only once both the writer and the writing were explored, could one form a fair opinion of students' writing abilities.

In this study, 'academic writing' is seen to be an evidence of students' multiple writer identities as elaborated in Ivanič's model. This view corresponds closely to definitions of 'academic writing' as proposed by proponents of the 'New Literacy Studies' movement such as Street and Lea. To derive the dispositions underlying writing, interviews were conducted with the participants. Writing hence became a means of research rather than an end in itself, serving to locate students' writer identities at UCT and eventually their coping strategies, which were evident from field observations.

While writing this section, I became increasingly aware of my own 'authorial' self. In the initial draft, I addressed myself as 'the researcher', and rarely used 'I'. 'The researcher' was used when I reflected on how I ought to act, and 'I' was used when I reflected on what I actually did in the field. Gradually I internalized the rules of the trade and applied them in my own practice. And the boundaries between 'the researcher' and 'I' began to disappear.

3.4 Data collection

The sample consisted of six Mauritian students from different faculties at UCT. As patterns emerged, the sample was narrowed to three main participants. The data collection method consisted of participant observation, collection of essays, interviews and a focus group study.

1. Participant observation

While I had briefly met few of the first year Mauritian students on campus at the beginning of the year, it was only in March 2009 that I approached them for the purposes of this study. I met them during the Mauritian Independence Day function on campus. I was certain that the turn-out of first year students would be high, judging from previous years and was not mistaken. During an informal chat with them, I introduced my research topic and briefly outlined its nature and

implications. Students agreed to hand me in their marked essays and two admitted that the marks were ‘mediocre’. On the whole, the students were excited that they would be researched at a University where they believed they still occupied a marginal status. Some of the faces beamed as they linked research to becoming famous.

The event was an ideal setting to get acquainted with potential participants. I subsequently met them frequently during meridian at ‘nou base’, the students’ familiar terrain, with a view of grasping a deep understanding of their academic texts which was not isolated from broader social and academic influences at UCT. The ‘thick participation’ in participants’ day-to-day university activities was facilitated by the fact that as a Mauritian, I had access into ‘nou base’. Entering the inner networks however required more effort. Throughout most of the first semester 2009, I observed the community on a daily basis for an hour during meridian and became familiar with the members’ favourite food stalls, their courses, upcoming assignments and more importantly their day-to-day challenges at UCT, especially in the case of the first year students.

My link with ‘nou base’ is as old as my academic journey at UCT, six years approximately. However, I remember being most of the time a keen observer of the group dynamics than an ardent participant. I was always intrigued by the way the influx of new students in ‘nou base’ radically changed the group dynamics every single year. Some networks became more porous, others more exclusive, and second year students, once called ‘freshers’ suddenly turned into caregivers or protectors. On the outside however, ‘nou base’ still appeared calm and unchanged despite the flux of newcomers. My observation, for the purposes of this study, lent support to my previous experiences within ‘nou base’. My insider position as a Mauritian, coupled with the other identities I assumed during the research were both enabling and challenging in different ways.

Had I gathered information indirectly through more formal channels such as faculty secretaries and student affairs officials on campus, the potential participants for this study would have remained until the research proper, names without faces and histories.

Out of the six volunteers for the research, three of the participants had studied at confessional schools, i.e. private Catholic schools and the three others were from state secondary schools. It

was expected that a sample of students from varied schooling backgrounds would yield more interesting and comprehensive research data. Schooling was an important variable in the study since it inducted students in specific writing conventions. The other variables were students' autobiographical background and their attitude to writing which altogether shaped their academic writings at UCT.

2. Essay collection and interviews

The participants' essays were collected and analysed in terms of how their ideas, knowledge and identities were constructed in the written text. The participants were then interviewed and asked about their academic background, the writing conventions they used, their general stance to writing. The interviews added contextual depth to the textual analysis of essays and helped identify important sites of contestation in academic writing.

3. Focus group study

Approximately a month later, a focus group session was conducted with the participants. Krueger and Casey define 'focus group study' as

a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments of others (quoted by Hennink, 2007:6).

This method is widely used nowadays in qualitative research to elicit spontaneous responses from participants, encourage dialogue and discussion leading to the formulation of new grounded theories. For, as Hennink puts it, focus group studies often provide 'the opportunity for issues to emerge that are unanticipated by the researchers' (8). The location, seating arrangement and the organization of focus group activities should enable participants to express themselves openly without fear of being criticised by others.

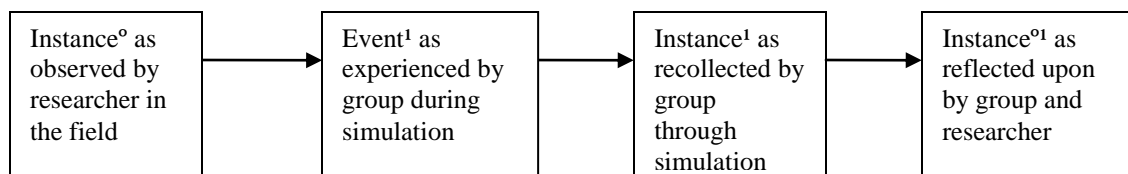
The advantage of the focus group in this study was that it engaged participants in a lively dialogue and projected their perspective on the researched issues. Unlike one-to-one interviews, the participants felt less pressured or scrutinized; they engaged in an informal discussion with their peers instead of giving self-monitored responses to the interviewer's questions. For the researcher, the focus group study was useful because of its flexible structure that could be

applied to exploratory as well as evaluative research. It also allowed her to collect a greater variety of data, from the spontaneous responses, debates, clarifications and so on. The challenge with focus group research on the other hand, was that the moderator should be skilled enough to manage group dynamics, to minimize the influence of peer pressure or domination by any one participant (7).

The aim of the focus group was to identify and discuss the coping strategies in writing that were partly apparent from my observations of 'nou base'.

The six participants were invited to the session, but two of them could not attend due to assignments and social commitments. The session lasted an hour and a half and consisted of several activities such as 'defining the concepts', 'filling the bubble', the 'survival kit' game (Lost at sea exercise, 2009) and a card game. The 'survival kit' game is generally organized by managers to encourage team building among workers. The rationale of the game here was to put participants in a frame of mind of danger and survival. It served to prepare them for the 'card game' where they would have to put the factors influencing writing in order of priority, as though these were a matter of survival. It was hoped that participants' psychological preparation through the 'survival kit' simulation would help them to re-enact the tacit 'coping strategies' that emerged in moments of crisis. These otherwise lurked in students' unconscious. For Feld (1997), simulations also revealed important insights into 'intervening sociological processes' such as the group dynamics that governed students' choices (105). This will be explored later in chapter 5.

The diagram illustrates how I moved from real-life observations to simulations to discussions with participants. In other words, it shows how the links were made between simulations and occurrences of coping strategies in the field. The move from one square to the other occurred in the following order.



The first square refers to a real-life instance that was observed by the researcher during fieldwork. It appeared then that coping strategies were being used, but the instance incomplete, being only a small part of the whole event where the strategies were deployed. It is referred to as ‘Instance⁰’ to differentiate it from other instances that will re-emerge during the simulation.

The second square refers to a simulated event organised during the focus group session: the ‘survival kit’ game. It was observed from the beginning to the end. It consisted of a set of sequenced instances. It was complete in itself because it had a clear problematic and the tools to resolve it. It was intended to put students in the right frame of mind for the next game.

The third square refers to the ‘card game’, which unlike the ‘simulation game’, was not guided by a narrative. Hence it was an instance rather than an event. The card game encouraged students to speak of and re-enact their coping strategies in writing. The purpose of the game was to bring students back to square one where a similar instance of the coping strategies had been observed. I employ the word ‘recollect’ because the task involved lifting facts out of the unconscious and bringing them into the conscious in a gesture of re-remembering. The instance is referred to as ‘Instance¹’ rather than ‘Instance⁰’ to account for possible discrepancies between the observed instance and the recalled one.

The fourth square refers to the moment of discussion, when the links between the simulation and the instances-as-lived were confirmed and evaluated. This instance aimed to reconcile possible discrepancies between the observed and recalled instances in squares one and three, to enable a deep understanding of the coping strategies. Hence it is referred to as ‘Instance⁰¹’.

The entire session was held in Mauritian Creole and tape recorded. Key components were later transcribed and translated into English³. Care was taken to ensure that the English translation still captured the speaker’s spontaneity of speech and that key meanings were not lost in translation. The findings will be discussed in Chapter five.

³ See Appendix D

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of textual analysis, analysis of coping strategies and triangulation to derive comprehensive findings of students' identities and coping strategies.

1. Textual analysis

Students' essays were analysed in terms of the writer identities they projected following Roz Ivanič's clover model, i.e their 'autobiographical', 'discoursal' and 'authorial' selves. These concepts were operationalised in the way they influenced the content, structure and style of essays, as shown in the following table:

	Content	Structure and Style
Autobiographical self	Knowledge of topic, orientation towards issues of interest, examples from life experiences.	Perceived fluency in English, intervening styles from other languages.
Discoursal self	Facts versus personal views, referencing of sources, elaboration, attention to word count.	Introduction-body-conclusion, use of tables, diagrams and subheadings.
Authorial self	Individual/critical thinking, taking responsibility over the content.	Use of 'I', active versus passive voice, originality in structure, assertiveness in style.

The table guided the analysis of students' multiple writer identities, but other possibilities were kept open during the analysis. Once some of the components had been identified in students' essays, they were confirmed through individual interviews.

The preliminary findings with respect to students' writer identities were organized into individual case studies. Hammersley (1992) defines case study as a 'case selection strategy' (184). He goes further to compare case studies with other case selection strategies namely surveys and experiments.

Compared with the survey, there is a trade-off between generalisability of findings to finite populations on the one hand and detail and accuracy of information on the other.

Compared with the experiment, case study involves a trade-off between control of variables and the level of reactivity (196)

What he means is that case studies allow the researcher to construct a deep understanding of issues, while acknowledging its complexity because the observed is also granted a voice and agency in the research process.

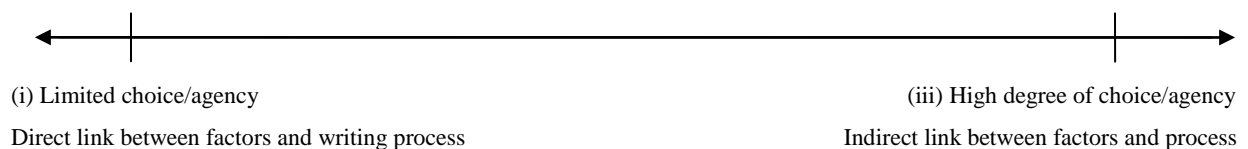
Emphasising particularity, Merriam (1988) states that the main advantage of case studies is that they focus on a specific happening, ‘on the way particular groups of people confront problems... are problem centred, small scale, entrepreneurial endeavors’ (11). Three participants featured in the case studies and they differed in terms of the secondary schools where they studied as well as the faculty they represented at UCT. This arrangement enabled the researcher to investigate whether Mauritian students with different academic experiences encountered similar experiences in academic writing at UCT.

2. Analysis of coping strategies

As pointed out earlier, it is hard to formulate an external language of description in the case of ‘coping strategies’ for two main reasons:

- (i) Coping strategies are tacit, hidden from view. At times, students themselves are not fully conscious about them.
- (ii) They may take different shapes to serves different objectives. Hence what may initially look like accommodation may in fact be resistance.

The following continuum diagram was as close as I could get to an external language of description for the strategies (Bernstein, 1996). It was only developed after a close observation of the coping strategies during the simulation games. The most important one was the card game, where students enumerated key factors in the writing process, and sorted them in order of importance. The following device helped in analyzing the key factors and subsequently in deriving the coping strategies in writing.



Factors were plotted on the continuum according to the degree of choice and agency they provided the user. It was observed that when the link between the writing process and the factors used in writing was a direct one, students had limited room for choice and agency. On the other hand when the link was an indirect one, there was room for choice and agency to play. Coping strategies, which can be defined as generally carefully chosen methods or plans guiding action, were identified in this study, as those factors situated on the right hand side of the continuum. They were in fact the factors which afforded the user most choice and agency. This will be elaborated in chapter 5.

3. Triangulation

The textual analysis and interviews were combined with focus group activities so that findings could be triangulated. The term ‘triangulation’ was coined by Webb et al. (quoted in Miles and Huberman, 1994:266-267) to mean ‘validating a finding by subjecting it to ‘the onslaught of a series of imperfect measures’’. It involves drawing together data from various methods, so that patterns may emerge and lead to more reliable findings. In the case of ethnographic studies, one would hope rather that the patterns would lead to a ‘deep theorising’ of the field and its players. (Blommaert quoted in Lillis, 2008)

3.6 Applying the New Literacy Studies model

In drawing meaning from the different forms of analysis, I applied the ‘academic literacies’ frame proposed by Lea and Street. I was particularly sensitive to moments of possible disjunctions in writers’ stance to writing, the choice they made consciously and perhaps unconsciously. I looked for signs of ‘authorial’ voice in the text, and if these were stifled, I attempted to extract them during the ‘talks around texts’ (Lillis, 2008). The analysis, in other words, was designed in such a way as to give voice to students’ beliefs and motives in writing. On the whole, it was aligned with the main theories of the New Literacy Studies movement.

3.7 Where does ethnography begin and end?

Interestingly, while different methods were brought to bear on the research, there was also a consistent ethnographic thread running through each and everyone of them. While ethnography is at times narrowly equated to fieldwork, its principles in this case, governed much of the textual analysis as well.

In fact, Van Maanen (1995) identifies three moments in ethnography, namely data collection, the ‘construction of an ethnographic report’ and thirdly the ‘reception of an ethnographic text across various audience segments’(5). One would agree with Van Maanen that all these moments constitute ethnography since they all involve a degree of meaning construction and recontextualisation in different set-ups. Yet how does one theorise about the ethnographic nature of ‘textwork’ and its links to different contexts in research?

This would require a redefinition of ethnography itself. Theresa Lillis’s paper ‘Ethnography as Method, Methodology, and Deep Theorizing’ comes to widen the scope of ethnography by acknowledging its various applications in research (2008). While previous attempts have been made by researchers to view ‘textwork’ (Van Maanen, 1995) as ethnography, Lillis argues that there is still a gap between the text itself and the context of text production and reception that now needs to be bridged in academic writing research (2008:374).

She begins by showing how ethnography operates as method, particularly as ‘talk around text’. She demonstrates how it ‘directs the researcher’s attention beyond the written text towards a consideration of some elements of writers’ perspectives about texts’ (376). However, she argues that the focus remains primarily on the text. Ethnography as methodology fares better by urging the researcher to use different data sources to ‘explore and track the dynamic and complex situated meanings and practices that are constituted in and by academic writing’ (355). Still, she interrogates the way in which text and context are framed as dichotomous entities in research, and she inclines towards ethnography as ‘deep theorizing’, by proposing analytical tools to close the gap between the two.

To this end, she offers two terms, borrowed from linguistic ethnography, namely ‘indexicality’ and ‘orientation’. The first term refers to ‘the specific ways in which bits of language (speech, writing) index, or point to aspects of social context’ and the second term refers to the ways in which ‘speakers/hearers orient to what is said and written, both aspects being embedded socio-historically’ (376). The two terms, she states are not ‘denotational’ but rather ‘mediational and relational categories’. Hence, as tools in research, they allow the researcher to demonstrate the links between text and context, and ‘navigate between emic and etic understandings’ that is between the outsider and insider perspectives (ibid).

The use of ‘indexicality’ as an analytical tool in this study proves useful since, to think of students’ texts as indexical of features in their social and academic context, widens the scope for textual interpretation beyond ‘talk around text’. ‘Orientation’, in this case, is helpful in understanding and differentiating the tutors’ and researcher’s responses to the academic texts. While tutors mark essays with a set list of criteria, the researcher relies on fieldwork to uncover underlying issues of identity and strategy in writing. In other words, the researcher herself becomes an instrument in research. She becomes a meaning making device and her orientation towards the text is likely to be imbued with greater subjective insights. These need to be articulated reflexively in order to gain credibility.

3.8 Research ethics

At the beginning of the research process, participants signed a consent form⁴ that stated that their involvement in the research would be voluntary and that their identity would remain confidential. Over and above the signatures, it was a pact between researcher and researched that guided the research practice ethics along a set of core values: confidentiality, respect, accuracy and transparency. For instance, while quoting participants’ statements, care was taken not to compromise their identity or relations with other parties, while aiming for clarity and accuracy. Also, participants’ queries about the objectives and implications of the study, for instance, what I would do with the essays, whether I was going to assess the grammar, were answered with honesty.

⁴ See Appendix A

3.9 Limitations of research design

On the whole, the research design aptly suited the aim of this study, which was to identify the writer identities and coping strategies of first year students in the initial phases of their integration at UCT. Being a small scale cross-sectional study, the assessment of long term coping methods of Mauritian students or other international students could not be addressed at this point. While I might have spent several years in the field observing the activities within 'nou base', the actual study was much shorter. The study was therefore designed along the lines of an ethnographic research rather than a long term ethnography per se.

The study did yield a high degree of internal validity and reliability due to the triangulation of various methods. However, the findings were not necessarily generalisable to other samples. This said, Hammersley (1992) would insist that 'empirical generalization' might still apply in ethnographic studies.

Its use does not necessarily require the study of a large proportion of instances in an aggregate... It does, however, require ethnographers to make rational decisions about the population to which generalization is to be made, and to collect and present evidence about the likely typicality of the case(s) they study (93).

Once the particularity and scope of the study were made explicit in the study, future researchers might posit that similar studies on Mauritian students, at other universities with comparable demands, may yield similar results. However, these possibilities should not reduce the researcher's enthusiasm to discover new facts, nor should they stifle participants' individual voices by blindly comparing them to the previously researched cohort.

Chapter 4

Identities in writing: sites of contestation?

This chapter analyses student interviews and marked academic essays in order to grasp how Mauritian students' identities impact on their writing, and to locate the space where they experience challenges in writing. The aim is to assist with coping strategies.

To know where students struggle in writing, it is necessary, following Roz Ivanič's model of writer identities to learn more about them, who they are: as Mauritians, as students and as writers. The case studies are designed along these lines, on the basis of interviews and essays collected in the first semester. Because students' identities are multiple and constantly shifting, a useful heuristic to organise the case studies is the one based on Ivanič's clover model. While I shall refer mostly to the way it is described in Clark and Ivanič (1997), it is a model also used later by Ivanič in Writing and Identity (1998). This model categorises participants' writer identities into their 'autobiographical', 'discoursal' and 'authorial' selves.

In this study, students' 'autobiographical self' is that aspect of their writing which is determined largely by their linguistic and academic background and their initial days at UCT. Their 'discoursal self' is that aspect which is conditioned by specific writing conventions at school. There may be an overlap between the 'discoursal' and 'autobiographical' selves since the influence of students' prior 'discoursal self' from secondary schooling may also be categorised as 'autobiographical'. The term 'discoursal self' is used here to designate elements in students' writing where they make use of specific conventions, past and present. This 'discoursal self' now needs to integrate UCT's academic conventions so that students may gain access to the university's academic resources. Finally, the 'authorial self' is broadly speaking that aspect of the writing associated with students' 'presence in the text', their voice and credibility. The three elements may be evident both in the text's content and style as mentioned in chapter 3. While the 'autobiographical' and 'discoursal' selves are relatively easy to grasp, the 'authorial self' has multiple connotations.

To develop a working definition of 'authorial self', I trace the concept's development through various articles. In The Politics of Writing, Clark and Ivanič (1997) define the 'authorial self' as

the extent to which writers ‘express their own ideas and beliefs in their writing’ and ‘their presence in the text.’ The ‘authorial self’ would hence be reflected in the type of content the author chooses to present and the manner in which s/he aligns himself/herself with that content in a way that marks his/her presence or absence.

The concept becomes easier to grasp if we look back at previous articles such as Who’s who in Academic Writing, where Ivanič (1992) refers to the ‘authorial self’ as the ‘I’ in inverted commas. It can be informed by the content through voicing, expressing one’s own ideas, drawing from personal experience and deciding what is worth expressing. The ‘I’ can also be informed by the style of writing through ‘choices from a range of alternatives within academic writing’ that best convey the identity the author wants to project. For instance, if the author wants to align herself with a particular feminist stance, one of her stylistic choices would revolve around the careful use of the generic pronoun ‘he’ to refer to an individual in general terms.

The notion of ‘I’ness or the ‘authorial self’ is crucial in understanding the students’ formation of their writer identities. For Ivanič, the ‘I’ness is the most important aspect in the writing process for ‘what motivation is there to a student writer to develop ideas when he’s positioned as someone displaying knowledge rather than someone making a contribution to it?’ (Ivanič, 1992). In this study, we use Ivanič’s model to extricate students’ multiple writer identities as they appear in their written texts and their talk around the texts. Since the different writer identities often serve different masters, it is likely that the writing process may trigger moments of contestation within the writer.

The first part of this chapter presents participants’ profiles and the case studies of Sarah, Yash and Ali from the Health Sciences faculty, Science faculty and Engineering faculty respectively, based on data gathered from their essays⁵ and interviews. The second part defines the contested space that emerges when participants’ multiple selves conflict with one another.

⁵ See Appendix B

4.1 Participants' profiles

Six first year Mauritian students were interviewed for the purposes of this study. The interview questionnaire consisted of closed and open-ended questions, with the aim of generating a 'thick description' of students' essay writing experience (Geertz, 1973). Six students from different faculties were interviewed. Their profiles are provided in the following table.

Name ⁶	Secondary School	A-Level Subjects	Grade	Degree at UCT	Essay for analysis	Marks (%)
Sarah	State Secondary School (SSS)	<u>Main:</u> Physics Chemistry Maths <u>Subsidiary:</u> General Paper (GP) French	A A A B A	Medicine	PPH 1001F Becoming A Professional	69%
Yash	SSS	<u>Main:</u> Physics Chemistry Maths <u>Subsidiary:</u> GP French	A D A C C	Actuarial Science	ECO 1010F Introduction to Economics	62.5%
Aryan	Confessional School	<u>Main:</u> Physics Chemistry Maths <u>Subsidiary:</u> GP Biology	A A A B C	Actuarial Science	ECO 1010F Introduction to Economics	87.5%
Rohit	Confessional School	<u>Main:</u> Physics Chemistry Maths <u>Subsidiary:</u>	A A A	Actuarial Science	ECO 1010F Introduction to Economics	50%

⁶ All participants have been given pseudonyms in this study keep their identities confidential.

		GP French	A A			
Ali	SSS, Confessional School for A- Levels	<u>Main:</u> Physics Chemistry Maths <u>Subsidiary:</u> GP French	A A A B A	Construction Studies	BUS 1036F Evidence- Based Management	58%
Priya	Confessional School	<u>Main:</u> Physics Chemistry Maths <u>Subsidiary:</u> GP French	C B A B A	Construction Studies	BUS 1036F Evidence- Based Management	58%

Table 4.1 Participants' profiles

As the table illustrates, participants scored high grades for their A-Levels, with As in most of their main subjects and with slightly better results in French than in General Paper at subsidiary level. They would rank among the high performing students in Mauritius. Yet, at UCT their performance in first semester was lower than average and most participants scored in the fifties and mid-sixties with the exception of Aryan and Sarah. Their case will be considered in the next chapter. At this stage, we need to ask ourselves where the participants' shortcomings lay.

To identify the challenges facing students in academic writing, three participants: Sarah, Yash and Ali were selected to feature in the main study, in a way that ensured fair representation of their different secondary schooling experiences, faculties at UCT, and writing practices. A backward-looking approach was adopted whereby participants' present writer identities were related to their previous academic baggage. In this way, more depth was added to the account. In the following section, students' writer identities are presented under three main headings: the 'autobiographical self', 'discoursal self' and 'authorial self'.

4.2 Case studies of Sarah, Yash and Ali

Sarah

Sarah is a first year Health Science student at UCT and is required to take up ‘Becoming a Professional’ (BOP) as a compulsory course in her first semester. Unlike her other Health Science courses, this course is designed to foster:

the development of interpersonal skills, which include being non-judgmental, sensitive, ethical and respectful of human rights when working with colleagues, clients, patients and community members who may have different values and traditions... (Faculty of Health Sciences Handbook 2009).

Autobiographical self: In order to situate ‘autobiographical self’ or the presence of ‘the writer’s life-history’⁷ in the text, one first needs to explore Sarah’s academic and cultural background. Sarah did her secondary schooling at one of the country’s leading secondary schools. For her A-Levels exams, she scored an A in all three science subjects, with a B in General Paper. She then enrolled for a Bachelor of Science at the University of Mauritius and in the same year wrote an entrance exam to secure admission into the faculty of Health Sciences at UCT. She topped in the exam and was granted admission to UCT in 2009.

At UCT, Sarah’s main challenge was the use of English as a mode of communication. She was accustomed to English as a medium of instruction at school and found it easier to understand textbook English than spoken English with its culturally-specific allusions and accents. At the onset, a lack of familiarity with spoken English hindered her interaction with others and her participation in tutorials, for she could no longer code-switch to French or Creole.

At times I would have the word at the tip of the tongue, and would be tempted to say it in French.

She resolved to pay more attention to her peers’ conversations, listen and practice to gain fluency in English and acquire some vernacular terms.

I became more sensitive to my friends’ tones, accents and their colloquial terms. I also decided to learn Xhosa by myself using books and CDs from the Medical School library.

⁷ Clark & Ivanič, p137

As much as the effort to learn a local language is laudable, it is evident that she took this decision under the pressure to adapt quickly to her new environment.

In Sarah's writing, the 'autobiographical self' surfaced in 'the knowing dimension' when she emphasized the importance to have a degree.

For the knowing dimension to be effective for me as well as for the patient, it is obvious that I must have a degree.

It appeared again partly in the 'empathetic dimension' and more saliently 'the reflective dimension' section where she reflected on how she ought to behave as a health professional.

I should constantly reflect on my actions [...] Questions like 'why did I do that' or [...] 'is what I am doing right or can it be improved' should be asked during or after the time of action.

At no point however, did Sarah draw on or validate her past self in her reflection of her actions as a future health professional. In terms of style, Sarah was most of the time able to avoid sentence constructions used in French. Minor lapses in vocabulary were however present. For example, Sarah wrote 'counting us their problems', a direct translation from the French 'nous conte leurs problèmes' instead of 'sharing their problems'. Apart from this, Sarah's 'autobiographical self' as a Mauritian student almost never surfaced in her writing.

Discoursal self: Clark and Ivanič (1997) define the 'discoursal self' as 'the writer's representation of her/himself in the text' (137). I focus specifically on the participant's use of specific writing conventions to represent herself in the text. In Sarah's first BOP essay entitled 'Professionalism, Empathy, Reflection and Knowledge', she was expected to discuss the importance of these values in her future role as Health Professional. The task required not only writing skills, knowledge but also a metalanguage to engage in a reflexive piece of this kind.

Back in secondary school, self-reflection was not encouraged because 'facts mattered more'; feelings were irrelevant. Also due to lack of motivation and her teacher's pessimistic attitude, Sarah's attendance in General Paper classes was poor and she recalls writing only two essays at school in two years. In private tuition, on the other hand, the exam preparation was intensive.

In tuition, we would write two essays per week and three towards the exam period for practice sake. At times we would write essays on the spot in exam conditions.

The private tuition teacher shared his notes with students and rarely welcomed students' views. The information load encouraged Sarah not to spend much time and effort on research prior to writing her General Paper essays.

Back then, I didn't read much or do much research. I thought I didn't have time, that it was a luxury at the expense of my science subjects. I didn't need to.

Sarah's essay writing was mainly motivated by marks. She displayed a preference for argumentative essays over narrative or descriptive ones because 'I had more points (ideas) to give'. The equation was simple for Sarah: more ideas meant more marks.

Writing at UCT was similar in some respects because Sarah still had to submit argumentative essays. Her prior writing experience however involved adapting a model supplied by the teacher and did not encourage self-reflection. In Sarah's essay, reflection was in fact on of the key themes of the question and Sarah handled that component with ease by stating how she would reflect on her actions and why. She admitted in the interview that she had seldom written in a reflexive manner but rather in a factual manner, and that the task was initially quite challenging. While she was glad to have more freedom to explore her ideas at UCT, she realised that more freedom implied the need for more intensive research. This was highlighted by the faculty through allocated readings on the topic and recommended additional research.

I had to put my understanding in my own words. Go over it several times. I had to explore more.

Authorial self: Clark and Ivanič (1997) define 'authorial self' as 'the writer's sense of authority and authorial presence in the text'. This relies on various factors such as the motivation to write in the first place. Initially, Sarah lacked interest in the writing task.

Medicine is about understanding your body, it's not about writing [...] Yeah I agree that writing helps you phrase your thinking, develop other ideas[...] I do write poems in my free time.

However, the objectives of the writing task for the BOP course appeared to clash with her motivation to study Medicine. This view was soon transformed during conversations with senior

Mauritian students studying Medicine. She learnt that the course inculcated skills that would be of relevance in her third year during her interaction with patients. Thereafter, she applied herself, wrote several drafts and researched further until the due date. The fact that it was her first essay at UCT also pressured her to be meticulous. The main challenges were sticking to the word count and the referencing.

Referencing made the essay never ending. Before, I would never pay attention to who the authors were. Now yes.

The essay was structured in four main parts namely, professionalism, empathy, reflection and knowledge. The content for each section consisted of a definition of key terms, explanation and elaboration using quotes from her readings and finally some examples. These examples were at times borrowed directly from the textbook and at times re-adapted for example,

[S]he could well understand how burdened and afraid she felt.

In this instance, Sarah was broaching on the issue of ‘empathy’ and therefore altered the subject’s gender in order to empathise with the situation and assert her authorial presence as a woman writer more strongly. Elsewhere she created her own example:

Several times we may have been unconsciously empathic; for instance when our friend is counting [sic] us their problems and we reassure them.

Her use of ‘several times’ and the pronoun ‘we’ served to generate consensus on the issue. Actually, her use of pronouns throughout the essay varied, depending on the degree of proximity she wished to establish with the reader or the degree to which she endorsed her own statements. The first person plural was used to draw the reader into the account, eg. ‘To help us understand the importance of empathy more, let us look...’. The first person singular featured primarily in the ‘reflection’ section and was used in the essay when she reflected on her role as a future health professional:

As a health professional, it is inadmissible that I ignore my work field.

When asked about ‘reflection’ during the interview, Sarah stated that it was an individual experience, and one intricately linked to one’s actions and accountability for them, especially in the case of a health professional. Hence the use of the pronoun ‘I’. In this case, Sarah’s

‘authorial self’ was explicit; she assumed authority through personal insights and highlighted her authorial presence by taking ownership of her statements. In other instances, Sarah used brackets e.g., ‘being sympathetic (when we are unable to think rationally because we are overwhelmed by the patient’s feelings)’. The definition of ‘sympathetic’ here was an appropriation of its dictionary meaning in the medical context. The bracketing could signal hesitation on Sarah’s part to endorse the definition, since it offered readers the option of reading or not reading its contents, and minimized her accountability for the facts.

As for style, Sarah expressed herself simply and focused more on constructing valid arguments, rather than using complicated words. For example when describing ‘the knowing dimension’ of a health professional, Sarah first defined the key term, then elaborated on her role as a health professional and gave evidence of its importance through a practical example. Finally, she supported her claim with a quotation.

As the name says, the knowing dimension encompasses the awareness of the problem or difficulty felt by the patient. As a health professional, it is crucial for me to know my topic well [...] A patient has come for help, and lacking information of any sort is of no help to the patient [...] Acquiring knowledge has no value if it is not practiced: it is about ‘the development of competencies...’.

All throughout, Sarah used evidence from various sources to support her claims e.g., ‘As clearly pointed out by Hudson in Health24’. The use of ‘clearly’ could hint that Sarah assigned more truth value to expert comments, than her own insights, where she used hedges such as ‘may’. It would appear that Sarah was more trusting of external views than her own in achieving the desirable persuasive ends in her writing.

On the whole, while Sarah’s ‘autobiographical self’ especially her linguistic background, prevented her initial participation in tutorials, it did not hinder her engagement with the writing task. In some cases though, readers would notice a disjunction between Sarah’s ‘discoursal self’, especially the way she had been schooled into the rigid writing conventions and the leeway she was presently given to explore her ‘authorial self’. It appeared that the school conventions prevented her from fully developing her ‘authorial self’, taking ownership over her ideas and innovating in her writing.

Feedback on first essay

This section presents the comments Sarah received in her essay. These may coincide with the issues identified by the researcher during the textual analysis of essays. However, the comments seldom displayed an awareness of the student's background, the motives and attitudes in the writing task, as was revealed in the student interviews.

Contents: Your essay shows that you understand the concepts of professionalism and the 3 dimensions of the IHP. There is good use of examples, however you could have integrated all 3 aspects of the IHP to show that they are interrelated.

Structure Introduction, Body, Conclusion: The essay [was] not divided by use of subheadings, these would have helped to make it easier to read.

Referencing In-text referencing, Reference list: Both forms of referencing are well done.

Overall comment: Your essay shows evidence of your own voice in some sections, you could have improved on it by integrating the 3 aspects of an IHP.

Sarah scored 69% in her essay after a two percent deduction for exceeding the word count. From the comments, it would appear that Sarah scored less well on the aspect of individual thinking, or lack of 'authorial voice' and the absence of subheadings, which relates directly to a lack of awareness of UCT's writing conventions, rather than lack of content knowledge. To improve her grade in future, Sarah would need to revisit her prior 'discoursal self' which may have inhibited her 'authorial' voice and adopt the new writing conventions at UCT that would enable her more space to display her reasoning.

Yash

Yash is a first year Actuarial Science student, in the BSc stream and with Mathematics, as an additional major. His first essay at UCT was for a compulsory Economics course ECO 1010F. This course ‘focuses on demand and supply analysis consumer behaviour; production functions and production costs; market forms and selected applied economic topics’ (Commerce Faculty Handbook 2009).

Autobiographical self: Yash did his schooling at a state secondary school in Mauritius. For his A-Levels, he opted for science subjects and scored a C both in General Paper and in subsidiary French while excelling in Mathematics and Physics. Yash’s transition into UCT was a smooth one since he had the support of his two elder sisters who preceded him in Cape Town and had little or no adaptation problem. One of them had completed her Actuarial Science degree and was working as an Equity Analyst, while the other was a second year student at UCT. Since his eldest sister and her fiancé had both specialized in his field, they became his mentors. They advised him on courses to take.

Nevertheless, the English language initially hindered his communication with non-Mauritians.

I am conversant in Creole, Bhojpuri⁸ and French. Now you ask me to think in English, it’s a bit hard. And I do have trouble with the accents.

To cope, Yash became an avid reader of English magazines, especially SA Motors, a South African motoring magazine. Learning the ‘lingo’ through magazines was less daunting than actually conversing with other South African students; it was perhaps a face-saving strategy. Also, magazines, unlike novels were less tedious to read in his view, and helped him improve his fluency in English, while increasing his knowledge of mechanics.

In his essay, Yash’s ‘autobiographical self’ rarely surfaced because of his desire to write objectively. His paraphrasing of other sources also made it hard to identify linguistic

⁸ Bhojpuri is a language spoken mostly in the provinces of Uttar Pradesh, India. Bhojpuri and Hindi are mutually intelligible languages (Mesthrie, 2002:166). When Indian indentured workers from parts of Bihar arrived in Mauritius in the 1830s, many of them initially only conversed in Bhojpuri. Later, they also acquired Creole. The Mauritian Bhojpuri vernacular is still spoken today and has absorbed many Creole words in its vocabulary. (See also Mesthrie:1992)

particularities linked to the fact that he is a native speaker of Creole or conversant in Bhojpuri. A closer look did reveal the presence of some misplaced prepositions eg. ‘the variation *of* the price of oil’, and phrases that may undermine understanding eg. ‘Consequently, a proportion of the state’s income is directed towards research so that the future becomes more promising *on the basis of* production’. On the whole, Yash’s ‘autobiographical self’ appeared understated throughout the essay.

Discoursal self: For a former natural science student, Actuarial Science could have constituted a major challenge. However, Yash exploited his prior life experience to his advantage. In Nomdo’s terms, he had made apt use of his ‘collateral capital’.

When helping out at my mother’s restaurant, I developed some accounting skills and while helping my father in his fish trade business, I learnt how prices were regulated. I tried to apply that knowledge in my new courses.

In terms of essay writing back in school, Yash would always begin his essays by ‘setting the scene’. He wrote the essays for the sake of meeting teacher’s requirements and scoring satisfactorily. Gradually, essay writing became a ritual, ‘there was a set pattern in place’ and presumably less and less of reflection. Yash was interested in military strategies and in robotics. Essays on these topics would give him more room to express his own voice, but that seldom happened at the secondary level.

In his first essay at UCT, Yash was required to ‘explain why oil prices increased so suddenly during the 1970s and so gradually in the 2000s’ using ‘appropriate supply demand diagrams in your explanation’ and additionally covering ‘the long-term responses to high oil prices and the role of OPEC and Saudi Arabia in setting the oil price’. He said he browsed through ‘well-established internet sites’ such as the economist.com and fin24.com to compile the relevant background information.

He then drafted the essay and consulted with his eldest sister, an Equity Analyst for feedback. She explained that unlike GP essays, he did not have to set the scene.

She said that this is a data sheet. Lecturers already have the scenario. I don’t need to explain.

Following this advice, Yash skimmed through the data and classified them into ‘basic’, ‘important’, ‘very important’ and ‘to be considered if space permits’. The ideas were ordered in terms of priority rather than cohesion to the other parts. Two main obstacles at that stage were the word count, which prevented him from elaborating on his ideas and referencing, which he found ‘new and confusing’. In the essay, he swapped the in-text references with the bibliography. He provided detailed references in the text and a mere list of websites in his bibliography.

Authorial self: During the interview, Yash elaborated on his essay and reiterated,

There’s no need to reorder the ideas, they are looking for the facts on their checklist.

Order does not matter.

This suggested that he was eschewing his authority as a writer and allowing conventions to structure his work, and the facts to speak for themselves.

Yash never articulated his essay plan in written form. He started typing straight away with a specific plan and structure etched in his mind. He wrote in his own words but admitted that some words from the sources could not be changed. Phrases such as ‘tossing the coin’ were borrowed directly from his readings. These served an aesthetic purpose and were not referenced because according to him, ‘I’m not borrowing any new idea’. It would appear that as Yash learnt to efface himself in his writing, he also began investing more credibility in external sources, like Sarah, by allowing them a voice in his essay. He believed that the borrowings enhanced his power as a good writer. Ironically, in my view, the more phrases he borrowed, the more writer space and authority he lent to the sources, and the less agency he asserted for himself.

Eventually, Yash’s essay lacked his initial flair for ‘setting the scene’ and investigating the rationale behind the issues at hand. The essay structure was linear and had four main headings, namely: ‘introduction’, ‘what happened in 1973 and what were the outcomes’, ‘what happened in 2007-2008 and what were the outcomes’ and ‘conclusion’. The headings in the body of his essay resembled detailed questions to make up for the essay’s lack of structure and made explicit the writer’s reasoning. Each paragraph was packed with facts in sequential order, and

elaboration or illustrations appeared mostly in the form of graphs, signaling a lack of coherent argumentation.

In 1972, the price of crude oil was about \$3.00 per barrel and by the end of 1974 the price of oil had quadrupled to over \$12.00. The year 1973 marks one of the most important turning points in the history of the twentieth century....

Yash wrote in his own words but the style lacked individual thinking and readers might feel they were reading excerpts from the Financial Times rather than an academic essay.

There was also a long, complicated formula that was left largely unexplained, though the source was referenced.

$$\epsilon = \frac{|\Delta \ln Q|}{\Delta \ln P} = \frac{\ln 90.5 - \ln 85.5}{\ln 142 - \ln 55} = 0.06$$

Yash stated, 'I didn't elaborate on it, but I understand it'. He assumed that lecturers would know the formula and believed that this technical knowledge would boost the essay's appeal. In the last paragraph, Yash displayed more reflection by assessing the elasticity of demand for oil both in the short run and long run and broaching on the alternatives of oil.

Oil is a non renewable resource and a drastic increase in its price is a measure of how important it is. This is why scientists are working out strategies to curb down consumption of oil [...] So far, the research has been pretty successful, especially with the creation of solar panels...

Still, he did not compare the oil crisis of 1973 with that of 2007-2008 but presented the two in separate blocks. The question did require students to compare the two crises by using the terms 'so gradually' and 'so suddenly', but it was not explicitly stated. Also, the question's requirements were so lengthy that it was quite likely that one would lose sight of the comparative component embedded in one of them. In fact, Yash's essay title illustrates that he had missed this point, 'The oil price shocks of 1970's and 2007/2008' as though the two crises could be simply juxtaposed.

While the conclusion allowed for personal opinion, Yash could not do full justice to it. He explained in the interview:

The recommended readings had only been updated until 2008. How could I comment on the oil situation in 2009? The investment banking crash[...] The lecturer may think, who am I to make such claims?

His hesitation to make additional points throughout the essay stemmed from his fear of losing marks by using ideas that did not emanate from the teacher. A similar attitude prevailed back in school, where students seldom gave their opinion for fear of being penalized by the teacher or being jeered by their peers for being too ‘pompous’.

Commenting on academic writing, Yash stated,

It's like in Maths, without poetry. I don't need to give my opinion because I am narrating events that have already occurred, not making up anything new.

In Yash's view, in Maths, one just had to provide the right answer and there was no debate about it. He likened his assignment to a mathematic exercise, because he believed he only had to refer to historical facts that were unquestionable. It would seem that for Yash, history was an uncontested terrain of previously proven facts and this attitude greatly influenced his deference to the facts and his detached writing style.

During the interview however, his explanations of the oil crisis were more engaging, thorough and also original. For instance, he explained the Arab War by making allusion to conflicts arising in ‘Voisin Voisine’, a Mauritian soap opera packed with drama: ploys, love, crime and treason. It would appear therefore that academic writing, with its assumed strictures, was stifling Yash's creative ‘authorial’ voice, even if a deliberate negation of the thinking agent perhaps simplified the writing process altogether. On the whole, it was evident that Yash had to negotiate between his evolving ‘discoursal self’ and his ‘authorial self’ in writing.

Feedback on first essay

Yash obtained 62.5% in his essay. He reported that his essay was marked and returned to him without any comment from the tutor. In that case, the faculty's expectations remained a ‘mystery’ (Lillis, 2001).

Ali

Ali is a first year Engineering student majoring in Construction Studies and Quantity Surveying. His first essay at UCT was for the Evidence Based Management course. This course focuses on:

the development of critical reasoning skills, including the ability to analyse and construct logical arguments, to research problems, to articulate competing viewpoints and to form independent judgments about contentious issues of policy and practice. The approach of the course is centered on case studies and controversies in areas of especial relevance to an understanding of commercial activity and the social and political environment in which it occurs (EBE Faculty handbook 2009).

Autobiographical self: Ali did his first five years of a State Secondary School before moving to a confessional school for his final two years. He scored a B in English General Paper in his A-levels. Ali's transition into UCT involved some difficulties. He was doing entirely new subjects and he had to converse in English. Also back in school, there was less interaction between teacher and students; students seldom challenged the teacher's word. Presently, Ali had to adapt to a totally new, more lively and engaging classroom environment.

To cope with academic work, I try to read my textbook every week, prepare my own notes progressively and practise questions... To become more fluent in English, well... in the first few days, I would speak to my local guardians frequently. I also befriended non-Mauritians at UCT, especially those from Durban. I find their accent easier to grasp.

In his essay, Ali's 'autobiographical self' was completely stifled, though ironically the essay required students to write about their experience of the Outcomes-Based Education system (OBE) and discuss whether it was an appropriate model for South Africa. This is because Ali, as a Mauritian student had had no experience of the OBE system. Neither could Ali respond to the question, nor could he use his own experiences to support his claims in the essay. The only time he validated his 'autobiographical self' was when he wrote: 'Personally, I have had no experience of an OBE system since I went through the Mauritian education system'. Rather than an assertion of self, this was a negation of what he was not. It not only signaled difference but in this case, also a deficit. He lacked something which the faculty expected him to have and this

lack proved to be detrimental to his writer identity and to some degree, to his performance in the essay.

Discoursal self: At his secondary school, Ali's General Paper class was spent in idleness and he hardly wrote any essay in two years for the teacher was apparently more engrossed in discussions about national politics rather than the 'prescribed' GP essay topics. Therefore, Ali depended heavily on private tuition where two essays were written weekly. His reliance on tuition went side by side with his readiness to be spoon fed. The tuition teacher did his own research and provided most of the input himself. Ali enjoyed the comfort of being spoon fed at that time and recalls that it was the norm. There were only two 'rebellious' students in class.

They had the guts to challenge, no not really challenge... but spice up the class by questioning the teacher.

To this day, Ali sees himself more as a listener rather than a conversationalist in class. One would wonder whether Ali was able to develop individual or critical thinking skills in those conditions.

Ali's first essay for the 'Evidence Based Management' course was very challenging for an international student who had arrived at UCT a few weeks earlier. The question was not only unrelated to his social and prior academic experience, it also unfairly required him to write reflexively on an issue about which he was totally ignorant .

I spoke to the tutor about this and he said I could mention that I was not familiar with the OBE system.

The essay question only exacerbated Ali's dislike for the course. He admitted that 'the course did help one write reports' but that was not customized specifically to the needs of Quantity Surveying students. Contrary to his GP class, guidelines in tutorials focused more on submission rules than content. On the other hand, he found the tips from the senior Mauritian students helpful especially those pertaining to the essay structure. In addition he consulted the EBM handbook for more detail on plagiarism issues. A lack of familiarity with the actual rules made him exceedingly cautious around his interaction with classmates.

I did interact with other Mauritian peers in class. But just in general. Not about the assignment, because [...] we have to be careful about plagiarism.

Authorial self: From the very onset, Ali's lack of familiarity with the first part of the essay question led him to neglect that component entirely, by stating in his introduction,

'I have had no experience of an OBE system since I went through the Mauritian education system'

He did not elaborate on the issue and failed to compare the two systems. His first paragraph began with 'What is OBE though?' This question mirrored his own journey through the writing task, requiring him to find out for himself first what OBE really meant. Each paragraph contained definitions and elaborations of the functions of the OBE, yet 'South Africa' was mentioned only twice in the essay.

The OBE issue was mostly addressed globally through statements such as 'those who implement it' with the assumption that what worked in other countries would also work in the South African context, though as local readers would attest, South Africa had a unique educational history. Each time he attempted to embark on the situation of OBE in South Africa, he quickly digressed to generalizations. This was signaled by the use of words such as 'many', 'either', 'or' which were anything but specific.

The introduction of the OBE system in South Africa did not come without problems though. Among the shortcomings put forward by OBE opponents is the proposed outcomes. Many believe that the standards set are either too undemanding or too high or simply incorrectly conjured up. (Wikipedia, 12/03/09) [sic].

On the whole, Ali was a proficient writer with a good grasp on language and structure. His essay was neatly divided in the pros and cons of the OBE system, with well-integrated references and an evaluative component of the pros and cons in his conclusion. However, his authorial presence was less felt, since he could not establish the link between his readings on OBE's status in different parts of the world and its implications in South Africa. His tutor made a similar remark in the margin:

OK, but that's not exactly the way it was implemented here.

When asked in the interview why he had not made inferences to the South African system, he stated, 'I don't know anything about the South African system'.

In all fairness, part of the writing challenge did stem from a lack of background knowledge about the essay components,. However, the fact that Ali was successful in researching some aspects of the essay, would hint that the lack of knowledge was not the only issue here. The difficulty possibly pertained to a lack of ease or skill in appropriating general research findings about the OBE and contextualizing them in the South African context. From the interview, it also appeared that there were misconceptions around the assertion of an authorial voice in academic essays. It was assumed that such ventures might be equated to ‘bias’. This might be another reason for resistance to critical engagement in the EBM essay.

In view of the above, readers would note a tension between Ali’s ‘discoursal self’ and his ‘authorial self’ and an anxiety not only to follow the rules but also to avoid breaking them at all costs, that made him excessively cautious to the detriment of his writing agency. On the other hand, given the nature of the topic, that is, Ali lack of familiarity with the OBE system, he could not write from experience or convey his ideas with confidence. Hence there was clearly a clash between his ‘autobiographical self’ and his ‘authorial self’.

Feedback on first essay

Thesis of the paper is unclear or absent			/		The thesis statement is clearly stated
Does not answer the essay question			/		Answers the question
Does not define/understand key terms				/	Defines/understands key terms
No critical understanding of literature			/		Critical understanding of literature
Not a clear and cogent argument			/		Clear and cogent argument
Does not deal with possible objections	/				Objections raised and adequately met
Essay rambles or lacks structure			/		Essay is structured logically
Many grammatical and spelling errors			/		Few/no errors
Essay contains excessive quoting			/		Excessive quoting is avoided
Referencing is not acceptable			/		Referencing acceptable

Ali scored 58% on his essay. The tutor’s main concern was the lack of detail and engagement in the essay.

This is a very good introduction to the concept of OBE but you have not provided much of an argument to show why/how it might work in SA, basically this was too theoretical and lacking in detail. You needed to consider some of the practical issues with implementing OBE here.

Hence, Ali was penalized less on content knowledge, since the tutor conceded that he had no experience of OBE, and was penalized more because his prior writing conventions restricted his critical thinking.

4.3 Different essays, similar student narratives

To use Lillis's words, the essays were 'indexical' of students' multiple identities (2008:376). The forms of writer identity enacted in the text might not directly correspond to students' actual identities, but provided important cues to who the students were as individuals, social beings, students and writers. Initially, writing was defined as a space for the voicing of students' identities. Yet, from the above, it appears that students had differential access to this space, and that some aspects of the writer identity were promoted at the expense of others. Hence, the text also became 'indexical' of possible moments of contestation between forms of writer identity, as well as those that transcended the text. In the study, different essays from different faculties were analysed, yet it emerged that they had a similar story to tell about their writers.

In terms of their 'autobiographical' selves, Sarah, Yash and Ali encountered similar difficulties around the use of English as a mode of communication and resorted to interaction with South Africans and magazine reading to improve their fluency. Also, coincidentally, all three participants had a science background. This not only signified that they had less writing practice than other secondary school students from the Arts or Commerce stream, but could also potentially explain, given more evidence and research, reasons behind their disinterest in the writing tasks.

Participants' emerging 'discoursal self' at UCT was shaped primarily by their prior writing experience and to some extent by tips from seniors. Two of the three participants also questioned the purpose of the essay before investing themselves in the exercise. While tutors' feedback could assist students during the development of their 'discoursal self', it would first

require an ‘orientation’ or response to the text, where tutors took into account students’ previous ‘discoursal’ selves. In other words, tutors would need to respond to the conventions used by students in their initial essays and approve of or critique them. In actual fact, tutors responded to the conventions used by students to varying degrees of clarity and precision, while in the case of Yash, feedback was altogether absent.

As far as the ‘authorial self’ was concerned, the writing task by itself appeared to promote critical engagement, however students’ prior school experience and their apprehensions around ‘bias’ and ‘irrelevance’ stifled their writing agency. Even Sarah who used her own examples in the essay, appeared to value external sources more than her own voice.

On the whole, if the three participants had not scored high marks in their essays, it was primarily because of conflicts between their ‘discoursal’ and ‘authorial’ selves in their first essays at UCT. In the case of Ali, this was compounded by the perceived irrelevance of the essay question to his ‘autobiographical self’.

4.4 The site of contestation

Most writing challenges stemmed from a disjunction between participants’ ‘discoursal’ writing identity and their ‘authorial’ one. The site of contestation raised the following questions: How did students cope with this disjunction? Were the coping strategies observed in the field, intended to resolve this issue? Were they effective? If writing did not allow for the voicing or enactment of identities, then what did? These will be investigated in the next chapter through focus group activities.

Chapter 5

A Focusing: Coping Strategies

The previous chapter identified a disjunction between students' 'discoursal' and 'authorial' selves and inferred on the basis of interviews and feedback that coping strategies might have emerged to resolve it. While some instances of coping strategies were observed in the field, they would need to be confirmed.

This chapter asks the following question: What are these strategies, how do they emerge and evolve? To answer this, different research methods were triangulated. 'Triangulation' is defined by Webb et al. as a means of confirming a finding by 'subjecting it to 'the onslaught of a series of imperfect measures'' (quoted in Miles and Huberman, 1994:266-267). In this study, it allows for a 'deep theorising' of students' identities and strategies in writing (Blommaert, quoted in Lillis, 2008).

To build on data from academic essays and interviews, I engaged in a focus group study with the participants. The purpose of the focus group study was to validate information gathered during observations and interviews about possible coping strategies in writing. This method gave participants more agency by allowing them to formulate their own hypotheses alongside the researcher's.

The first part of this chapter describes the focus group approach used, explains how the activity was organized for the purposes of this study and details the main findings. The second part is devoted to a discussion of the findings that emerged from the triangulation.

5.1 Focus Group Study

The focus group study was held on Saturday 22 May 2009, four months after the participants' arrival at UCT and two months after the one-to-one interviews. Participants were thus in a good position to critically assess their writing strategies at the university. The session was held in a common area of Tugwell Hall, a UCT residence and was convenient for participants because of

its proximity to the main campus and other residences in the Rondebosch area. Yash, Sarah, Rohit and Aryan⁹ attended the session.

Participants were provided with name tags on which they wrote their own pseudonyms. This measure was taken to prevent participants from addressing each other by their actual names at any point during the session. A tape recorder was placed at the centre of the table but it was hardly noticeable because of its small size. It thus did not intimidate the participants. Participants were briefed about the structure of the focus group and the ground rules, such as switching off cellular phones and avoiding interrupting each other.

It was important nevertheless that participants take the session less seriously than the interviews. This is because the object of the focus group was to foster a friendly atmosphere, almost similar to 'nou base' where they could reveal some of their overt, and hopefully tacit coping strategies. The games served that purpose and freed them from their initial inhibitions. In a sense, the session differed from the usual focus group due to its informality, however the significance of the session could not be understated. It could be said that the informality was a deliberate feature in the design of the focus group to achieve a particular goal – revealing the students' coping strategies. In reality though, the session was tightly managed all throughout and focused on the strategies, even if the participants were unaware of it. The session lasted an hour and a half.

The session was structured around four activities namely: defining the key terms, completing the bubble, the 'survival kit' game¹⁰ and a card game¹¹. To begin with, participants were asked to define some key terms such as 'academic writing' and 'plagiarism' and room was allowed for discussion. They were then given a sheet of paper with a teacher's outline and a speech bubble which they had to complete. They were told to imagine themselves as lecturers and dispense a lesson to first year students about academic writing. Participants were amused by the idea. For the researcher, the purpose of this activity was to delve into their knowledge of writing conventions and what they considered important.

⁹ See student profiles, chapter 4

¹⁰ see Chapter 3

¹¹ See Appendix C

The participants then engaged in the 'survival kit' game, which is often used to promote team building. In this game, the participants had to pretend that their ship was on fire, that they had to escape and that they were now stranded in the middle of the ocean in a small raft, with fifteen objects in their possession. Their task was to discuss and rearrange the objects in order of priority in order to survive in that situation. Participants were so engrossed in the game that they spontaneously began to fill the gaps in the simulated story. For instance, they began to speculate who had set the ship on fire. This task served as a precursor to the main activity, the card game. It was hoped that participants would respond to the card game with the same mind frame as the 'survival kit' game, and treat the activity as though it were in some ways, a matter of life and death.

This is how the card game proceeded. Students were asked to enumerate the key factors involved in essay writing at the university. The transition from the previous game to this one was a smooth one and participants replied spontaneously. The factors identified by the participants during the discussion were filled in 10 cm by 10cm cards. The cards confirmed data gathered during previous interviews with participants. There were twelve cards in all, and participants were asked to rearrange these in order of priority. The purpose of the game was to derive from participants' prioritized list what their coping strategies in writing were. The method through which the strategies were derived will be elaborated later.

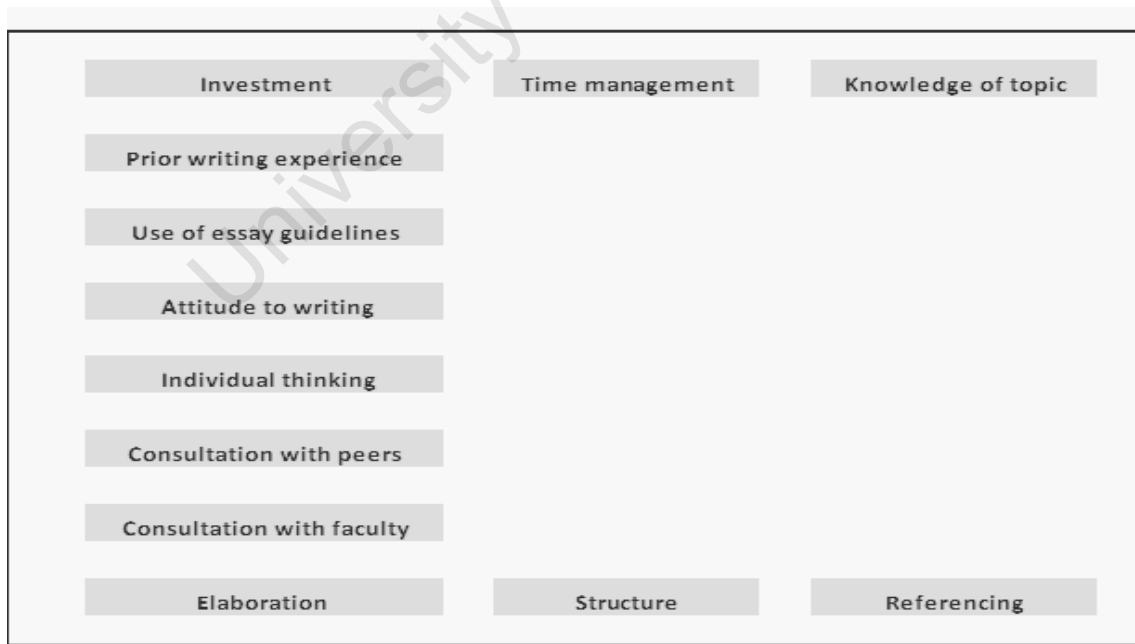
The other activities during the focus group study did yield important findings. The first activity around definitions of key terms suggested possible inconsistencies between the participants' and the faculty's definitions of 'academic writing' and 'referencing'. The second one, 'filling the bubble' drew attention to participants' expectations from lecturers and their idea of the ideal lecture. I will however focus mostly on the findings from the card game since it was by far the most consequential. Information from other activities and previous interviews will be used where relevant in the triangulation process.

5.2 The card game

This game in particular yielded insights because participants were less conscious of their statements. They actively discussed the task among themselves and took turns to lead the dialogue, before addressing the researcher directly. As Ritchie and Lewis put it, ‘In a sense, the group participants take over some of the ‘interviewing’ role, and the researcher is at times more in the position of listening in’ (quoted by Hennink, 2007:5).

Initially, there was some debate about how the cards needed to be ordered but consensus followed as participants explained their reasoning to one another. Sarah and Rohit at times appeared to be more persuasive than the other participants and the researcher had to intervene to validate others’ input in the discussion. On the whole however, there was no disagreement whatsoever about the fact that ‘prior writing experience’ preceded ‘use of essay guidelines’ or that ‘consultation with peers’ preceded ‘consultation with faculty’.

The cards were placed in the following order: knowledge of topic, time management, investment, prior writing experience, use of essay guidelines, attitude to writing, individual thinking, consultation with peers, consultation with faculty, elaboration, structure and referencing.



Cards as laid out on the table

The reason for this particular ordering was explained by participants, as shown below.

1. Knowledge of topic: All participants agreed that adequate knowledge of the essay topic needed to be ranked first, as Rohit said ‘if we can’t even grasp what they expect from the essay, we won’t be able to do it’. Aryan pointed out that coupled with knowledge, one had to ensure relevance. For Yash, ‘knowledge of topic’ was often a challenge because they were at times completely ignorant about the topic.

Before we came here, many didn’t even know what price elasticity was. You didn’t even know. We need to know. What does that mean?... Yeah but they were asking about the oil crisis in 1979. I didn’t even know there was a crisis.

2. Time management: The next card was time management. Yash pointed out that one needed to ‘find time’ to write an assignment. Aryan added that effective use of time also mattered. During the interviews, participants did mention difficulties in remaining focused and avoiding distractions, especially at University where there was less control and no spoon feeding.

Assignments are not well-spread out. And there are so many other things to do [at the same time]. And the motivation to learn is not always there. You have to become more self-centered [sic]. The decision to bunk or not, to work or not, all depends on you.

3. Investment: Participants outlined various factors that influenced the ‘investment’ in writing, that is the amount of time and effort devoted to the process. For Aryan, ‘investment’ depended on the essay topic and for Sarah, it depended on which task carried more marks. Sarah’s response still displayed the common secondary school utilitarian mentality, where one of the main reasons for investment in a task was marks. Rohit stated that they would tackle the essay first, because they believed it was more familiar than other academic tasks. Yash agreed, though in the interview, he stated he was not proficient in writing. Perhaps he was just less confident in his other subjects, hence opted to write his essays first.

In the other subjects (Economics, Accounts etc) you are tackling totally new things. You do the essay first because you’re more confident in it.

4. Prior writing experience: Initially, Aryan denied the fact that ‘prior writing experience’ was useful in essay writing at UCT. Later, though he had to agree with Rohit that:

If you didn't have prior writing experience you would never have been able to write an essay here. [...] It's just that you know what you are writing, you know how to formulate your sentences, you know what sentence structure you are using, your topic sentence etc.

From Rohit's statement, it was evident that he still relied heavily on GP conventions in his essays at UCT. In fact the phrase 'topic sentence' is one commonly drilled into students during their secondary schooling. The impression that such reliance continued to prevail was reinforced by the fact that 'prior writing experience' preceded 'use of essay guidelines'.

5. *Use of essay guidelines:* All participants with the exception of Sarah, denied that they had used the guidelines. Yash said that he had not got any guidelines, only to be rebuked by Aryan the guidelines had been provided but that none of them had taken them seriously. The only part of the guidelines which Aryan had found useful was the one concerning referencing. The previous interviews indicated that Yash and Rohit had not consulted the referencing guidelines. Unlike Aryan, both had been penalized on referencing.

During interviews, participants also stated that the guidelines were not used because they were a repetition of what they already knew or that they were time consuming. For Ali, 'it's like GP, I used the same procedures'; for Priya, the tutor's guidelines were a 'repetition of the notes on Vula'¹²; for Rohit, the tutor only explained how to submit using the 'Turnitin' software; for Aryan 'with all the things to read, I had no time to consult the guidelines'. Participants were gradually coming to terms with the fact that the use of essay guidelines could help them to score well in future but they did not say that they would consult them for subsequent essays.

6. *Attitude to writing:* The participants deemed it imperative to have a positive attitude towards writing. For Rohit, without a positive attitude, 'There'll be no individual thinking, not this and this and this' (pointing to what was written on the different cards). For the others, a positive attitude to writing was not a given, it evolved as they progressed through the writing. Previous interviews revealed that students were initially not very comfortable with the assignments. They may well have had good schooling, but they were apprehensive around other issues such as

¹² UCT's open-source service where students can access academic resources, communicate in chatrooms and submit assignments

plagiarism, bias and so treaded very carefully during the initial phases of the task. This may explain why the attitude to writing was not as positive at the onset.

As Yash put it, 'We changed it (our attitude to writing) afterwards'. Aryan admitted, 'When you write in neat, then you get that (positive) attitude'. What they failed to realize was the circular logic characterizing positive attitude and writing. In fact, high performance in essay writing contributed to positive attitude and vice versa.

7. *Individual thinking*: 'Individual thinking' enables the writer to take ownership of his writing and often helps foster a positive attitude towards the task. For the participants, it was linked to giving one's own ideas and opinions. From interviews, it was apparent that students feared to explore their ideas for various reasons. For Aryan,

There are times you are scared to give your opinion ... What if it... What if... the person does not agree with your opinion, and then he can penalize you for your idea.

His fear was confirmed in a discussion that erupted between Aryan and Rohit.

Aryan: For instance, you may think that the recession is caused by such and such, but he may not agree[...]

Rohit: The things that are factual, you cannot change, but your personal opinion always counts.

Researcher: And if [...]

Aryan: (murmurs)

Rohit: No. Your opinion is your opinion. He has the right to object but your opinion is your opinion.

Aryan: Yeah but... He can tell you, 'you can't think like this'. You agree?

Rohit: No but your opinion also needs to have a certain logic. You can't be saying something totally different.

The discussion underlined students' confusion about what their respective faculties expected from them in written assignments. It may explain why participants preferred not to experiment or explore their own ideas. As Yash categorically stated,

It's only in the conclusion that you can give your opinion.

During the interview, Yash also deplored the fact that he could not insert his own opinion in his conclusion since his views were not based on the prescribed readings.

How could I comment on the oil situation in 2009? The lecturer may think who am I to make such claims?

The discussion about ‘individual thinking’ was clearly influenced by the participants’ inaccurate assumptions about faculty’s expectations. At no point, however, did the participants mention the need to clarify those assumptions with faculty members. Hence, these erroneous assumptions continued to prevail unchallenged.

8. *Consultation with peers:* The next card was ‘consultation with peers’. Interestingly, it preceded ‘consultation with faculty’. Yash explained his reasoning.

Peers increase your knowledge. To meet faculty, you need to have knowledge.

This was a clear Catch-22 situation¹³. Aryan elaborated on his preference to consult with peers, ‘With peers, you can understand easily. You can ask them more questions’. Rohit mentioned that peers shared the same viewpoint and ‘with peers, you get that connection which you get when you work in a team’. Yash concurred:

When you go to see a friend, you don’t say ‘Hey is that right?’ No it’s not like that. He may have read ten books, you may have read ten other books. So we are sharing our ideas and indirectly we get to share the knowledge of twenty books. You see, it’s like that.

Yash reiterated that one needed to secure ‘maximum knowledge’ before consulting with the faculty. When asked whether the participants felt intimidated to consult lecturers and tutors, the participants disagreed. Yash rephrased the statement by stating that one needed to be ‘prepared before meeting with them’. It appeared that the question caused some unease among participants. Aryan later conceded,

Yeah with faculty you can feel a bit intimidated in the sense that you cannot go and ask him... You feel uneasy. He may ask you something that you don’t know. He may say, ‘You didn’t read this about demand and supply?’ Normally with peers, you don’t get that problem.

Aryan was perhaps brushing an ideal picture of the peer group. From my observations of ‘nou base’, peers at times did revel in their role as imparters of knowledge. However, they seldom judged the participants to be ignorant. It is likely that even faculty members did not necessarily

¹³ To meet the faculty, one would need to have knowledge. To have knowledge, one would need to meet the faculty. Peers were perceived as the only way out of this catch, though it is doubtful. Doing the prescribed readings may have been of greater assistance.

look at students in a condescending manner, but participants' fears gave them the justification to hold such beliefs.

9. *Consultation with the faculty:* From the above statements, one would rightly speculate that most of the participants did not consult with the faculty. Aryan was reluctant to consult with the faculty because

They won't have time... with all the people who go for consultations... There are too many people.

He was quickly corrected by Rohit who stated,

No. But only those who want to consult with them go there, not everyone.

Once again, we notice how easily assumptions are spun around what lecturers think, how much time they can allocate to consultations and so on. These assumptions served to justify participants' resistance to faculty consultations. However, most of their assumptions were not rationally explained and it would appear that there were other apprehensions underlying their statements.

10. *Elaboration:* Participants viewed 'elaboration' of one's ideas amongst the less important factors and claimed that they resisted it for fear of being accused of 'plagiarism'. This statement was unexpected and prompted further probing.

Rohit explained that in order to elaborate, one would need to engage in more research, which entailed higher risks of plagiarizing others' work. Therefore it was resisted. Yash agreed and stated that local students were more fluent in English and so they could express themselves with appropriate words and elaborate without plagiarising. Aryan on the other hand, was of the opinion that one could elaborate without plagiarizing, if one was equipped with good 'prior writing experience'.

That's why I was saying it's important to have prior writing experience. If you have very good writing skills you can change the words, and thus avoid plagiarism.

The reduction of 'prior writing experience' to the paraphrasing skills prevented participants from seeing how crucial writing skills were in the development and elaboration of one's ideas. Being

used to regurgitating the teacher's model answers back in school, students did not view writing as an empowering tool that would enable them to create a space and a voice of their own within the text. If there were signs of elaboration in participants' essays, they were mostly of others' ideas and not their own. This explains why participants spontaneously associated elaboration with plagiarism.

The fact that students' schooling seldom required them to elaborate their own ideas, was also hinted at during prior interviews. For instance, Ali mentioned how he benefited from spoon feeding before arriving at UCT. 'He (the teacher) did his own research. That was a relief'. His essay for the Evidence Based Management course did contain well-elaborated paragraphs, but they were seldom based on his own reflection.

Priya avoided elaboration for fear that it may constitute a 'fallacy'. She may have meant 'subjective response' rather than 'fallacy'. However, her use of the word 'fallacy' cannot be overlooked; it may suggest that she equated 'subjective' to 'untrue'. She did not openly say so but she did insist that the writing, as she had been taught in school, needed to be dispassionate to be credible. She therefore wrote in the third person, effacing herself in the process.

I can't use the first person, because though my statement may be logical, it might appear like a fallacy.

Yash avoided elaborating his ideas because 'this is like a data sheet. They already have the scenario. I don't need to explain'. On the other hand, he was tempted to borrow 'beautiful' phrases from other sources for effect. Hence, it was evident that while the faculty required elaboration in the construction of cogent arguments, participants felt that it was undesirable and even risky for various reasons.

11. Structure: This was placed near the end because as Rohit put it 'you develop your ideas extensively first, then you decide what to write in you intro etc'. A glance at the essays showed that two out of six had a simple and linear structure, following the order in which the questions had been set, without additional sub-parts to develop their own thinking. The rest of the essays followed the structural conventions that had been taught in GP classes where variations in style

and presentation were avoided. In some cases, these conventions were reinforced by their UCT courses or students' perceptions of the course requirements.

12. Referencing: This card was placed last, because it was considered the least important. While the factors were ranked in order of significance, the order also indicated to some degree the writing process. Students' first and most important step in the process was research, to have a good grasp over the topic. Referencing on the other hand, was tackled last in the writing process. In terms of significance as well, it was ranked last, to some extent because participants had not discerned the link between referencing and avoidance of plagiarism. Aryan alone seemed to acknowledge the importance of referencing even if his understanding of it was superficial,

Referencing. That's the most important. Well if you don't have that, you fail.

The interviews and analysis of essays revealed that participants focused more on what to avoid, rather than what to act on. The desire to avoid plagiarism had been students' key concern. One would notice that participants constantly mentioned 'plagiarism' throughout the above discussion. It was the invisible foe that participants were trying to dodge as best they could. However, four out of the six participants did not reference as expected and were heavily penalized.

The irony is that participants were not penalized on 'bias', or the reproduction of others' ideas in the body of the essay. They were penalized because of poor referencing. This is perhaps because the referencing task was neglected or left for the last minute. In terms of the writing process, the lapse between research on the topic and referencing was so large that students found the whole exercise overwhelming. In haste, many participants assumed that simply mentioning the source would be sufficient. Possibly they lacked knowledge about referencing conventions; others sought advice from 'nou base'. Rohit for instance, was told by a friend 'so long as there's the author and title, it's fine'. Rohit scored four out of eight in his essay and his tutor's comment on referencing was as follows,

It's disappointing that your referencing was so poor because your economic understanding was not bad ☺[sic].

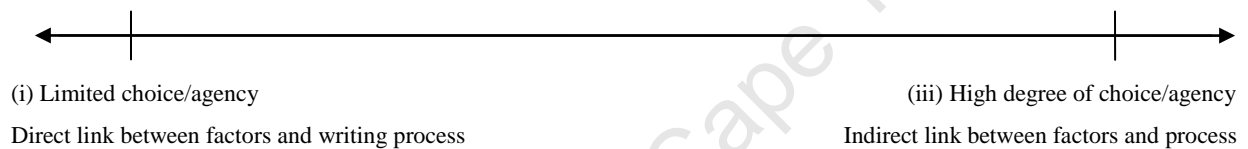
5.3 From key factors to coping strategies¹⁴

The key factors influencing writing were classified in relation to choice and agency:

(i) Factors involving limited choice; they appeared necessary – knowledge of topic, structure and referencing. These appeared necessary, affected the writing process directly and therefore allowed little room for agency.

(ii) Factors involving choice over the application – attitude to writing, investment, time management. While these were deemed necessary, students had the agency to decide how they would apply them.

(iii) Factors involving a high degree of choice over the ‘what’ and ‘how’ – prior writing experience, use of guidelines, individual thinking, elaboration, consultation with peers and consultation with faculty. Some of these factors were opted often at the expense of other factors in the same category.



This continuum shows how the factors influencing writing varied in terms of the choice and agency they provided the user. If the link between the writing process and the factors it involved was indirect, it offered more room for the user to display agency. If the link between process and method was a direct one, agency was restricted.

The notions of choice and agency are essential in our understanding of students’ coping strategies. The term strategy is defined as a ‘plan of action’ (Jewell, 2006:826). The first step to identifying strategies is to identify the choices that are made by participants in achieving a desired outcome and the factors that are opted for, at the expense of the next best alternative. One gets closer to strategies by looking for signs of choice because strategies usually involve reasoning and some degree of agency over design and procedure, even if students may not always be fully aware of them. In this study, students’ strategies in writing emerged as those factors to the far right hand side of the continuum which involved more choice and agency.

¹⁴ See chapter 3, p47

At first glance, the strategies adopted by participants seemed to address their writing challenges. They nevertheless served a role larger than the reconciliation of their ‘discoursal’ and ‘authorial’ selves. This is explored in due course. Currently, the effectiveness of students’ strategies in resolving students’ writing challenges is discussed.

5.4 Coping strategies and their effectiveness

Accommodation strategies: The accommodation strategies used by participants were the reliance on prior writing experience, attendance in tutorials and consultation with peers. Prior writing experience pertained to the GP essay writing conventions to which the participants had been conditioned. It also involved excessive spoon feeding at secondary school and private tuition which did not adequately equip students with the required critical thinking skills for university.

In spite of these limitations, participants continued to rely heavily on their prior writing experience in their first semester at UCT. In the absence of teachers’ spoon feeding though, they resorted to liberal use of external sources, especially the internet websites. Four of the six essays analysed showed evidence of some borrowing of ideas, even if these were referenced and often poorly. The reliance on a limited secondary school experience at tertiary level might not be restricted to Mauritian students alone and might be part of students’ initial phase of adaptation. It nevertheless proved disastrous since participants who had overlooked UCT’s essay guidelines received borderline marks in their essays.

The second accommodation strategy was attendance in tutorials. While seventy-five percent attendance in tutorials was compulsory anyway, participants did not attend tutorials out of compulsion but because they considered it more useful than lectures. The preference for tutorials over lectures was a remnant of the students’ attitude back in Mauritius. Likewise, participants felt that tutorials could replace lectures.

Yeah, I’ve been bunking lectures. Not sure what’s happening there [...] Tutors can help you more with the content.’ (Aryan)

Yet, regular tutorial attendance while missing out on lectures affected participants adversely. Some admitted in interviews that they were not aware of what was being covered in lectures. Gradually, they realized that tutorials did not cover much of the content required for the assignments.

The tutor didn't explain the topic, nor the essay format... (Rohit)

This meant that participants had to rely on themselves without much assistance from the faculty and engage in much more independent research.

Since tutorials were not as helpful as expected, participants opted for the third strategy which was consultation with peers. The input from peers, in this case senior Mauritian students doing the same degree, was superficial at best and did not focus sufficiently on the 'details', such as referencing. It is unlikely that senior peers were unaware of referencing, but they did not communicate its importance strongly to the participants.

Nina¹⁵ just explained the format and where I could get the facts. I didn't think referencing was so important. (Yash)

Consequently, participants ended up with poorly-referenced essays. Content was not discussed with peers for fear that it might result in plagiarism. Yet discussion about the nature of the content such as the need for elaboration and critical thinking could have been useful. This was clearly lacking.

On the whole, while the accommodation strategies could have served to bridge the gap between students' 'discoursal' and 'authorial' selves, they led to the development of makeshift, precarious 'discoursal' selves and furthered the suppression of participants' 'authorial' selves. In other words, in the attempt to meet UCT's writing conventions, participants relied on strategies that only partially fulfilled this bridging objective because of reliance on inadequate prior writing experience, tutorials (as opposed to, instead of preceded by, lectures) and consultation with peers who were, based on the above, not always resourceful or models worth emulating. These strategies used by participants instilled or increased the fear associated with UCT's writing conventions, and in the process stifled students' creative and critical authorial voices.

Resistance strategies: Participants resisted the use of essay guidelines, individual thinking, elaboration and consultation with faculty. The use of essay guidelines was resisted on different grounds.

We've done GP. Obviously, we know how to structure an essay. (Aryan)

¹⁵ pseudonym

Students assumed further that UCT's guidelines were meant for students lacking good writing skills. They perhaps failed to realise that UCT had its own specific writing requirements, and that 'good writing skills' might not be uniform across all academic contexts. To use Blommaert's image of 'discourses (that) travel' (2005:72), discourses differed across space, among different groups. Actually, the academic discourses in which participants were acculturated in secondary school did not travel well to their new learning site.

From the focus group discussion, it appeared that deep down some participants, like Rohit and Aryan, were beginning to realize the inconsistencies between the school conventions and those at UCT. Participants stated that they would follow the guidelines in future, however in their list of priorities they still placed 'prior writing experience' before faculty guidelines. Their ambivalence suggested that they were possibly just reluctant to admit the necessity of the guidelines. Perhaps, they realized that if they agreed that guidelines were important, they would then be urged to relinquish what they had painstakingly acquired during most of their schooling. For instance Aryan's comment:

With all these things to read, I have no time to consult guidelines

could suggest an unease in coming face-to-face with contradictions between his old conventions and the new ones, between his previous and expected 'discoursal' selves. It is possible that participants dreaded the gap between un-learning and re-learning the academic conventions and the instability it created in the process. Their resistance to the new guidelines affected them adversely.

This said, compliance with essay guidelines was a necessary but not sufficient condition for scoring high marks in the essays. More importantly, these guidelines ought to be accompanied by explanations regarding their *raison-d'être* in order to be meaningful. Prior writing conventions had been acquired with the belief that they would contribute to higher marks. Thus if students resisted current conventions it is perhaps because they were unaware of the rationale underlying those conventions.

The other strategy was resistance to ‘individual thinking’. Back in school, teachers often discouraged ‘individual thinking’ and classmates on the other hand ridiculed such preposterous attempts to be different.

Everyone was stressed, the competition was tight, no room for discussion, no joking, only pin drop silence. (Rohit)

The tuition teacher explained the essays. You just copy – don’t stop copying. At the end of the year, I had three hardbound notebooks filled with model essays. (Aryan)

By the same token, students resisted ‘elaboration’. At UCT, such resistance was motivated by other reasons as well. It was feared that ‘individual thinking’ and ‘elaboration’ could lead to ‘bias’ or ‘irrelevance’, as some participants put it, and therefore needed to be avoided if one wished to score high marks. From their words, writing appeared to be the re-phrasing of facts in a scientific, objective manner, without much room for ‘authorial’ voice or originality of design. This resistance to ‘individual thinking’ and ‘elaboration’ unfortunately backfired. In Sarah’s essay, she was asked to display more of her own voice by integrating the three qualities needed by a health professional.

‘Consultation with faculty’ was also resisted with the same conviction.

Yeah with the faculty, you can feel a bit intimidated (Aryan)

It was motivated by lack of confidence and the fear of appearing ignorant in front of the lecturer and was replaced by ‘consultation with peers’. This resulted in a failure to meet faculty’s expectations. Participants’ low scores further decreased their confidence and increased their unwillingness to consult with the faculty. There seemed to be no way to break this vicious circle. The resistance strategies overall emerged out of assumptions about the course expectations, prior attitudes to writing and speculations about how the faculty would react to their difficulties.

5.5 Resistance or Accommodation?

For Leki (1995), coping strategies can refer both to accommodation and resistance, since in her view, ‘the question of accommodating versus resisting teachers’ requirements is an issue of balance’. In other words, she suggests that individuals can accept or resist a particular action to varying degrees. Blommaert (1999) argues further that resistance to one thing is often a possible

adherence to something else. For instance, participants' resisted to consultation with the faculty and adhered to the peer group for guidelines and advice. This resistance to the faculty and adherence to the group were unfortunately in conflict with their adherence to UCT's academic practices. However, it is misleading to infer from this that had participants resisted the peer group and adhered to the faculty instead, they would have benefitted more.

In my view, the attempt to establish whether a strategy is one of accommodation or resistance traps us into a circular logic and detracts here from the research objective which is to ask: *What* is being resisted/accepted; at *whose* expense; and to what *ends*? In fact, the nature of the strategy can only be known after considering its functions and outcomes in a particular context. At this point, I find it useful to draw upon Blommaert's notion of 'borders' (167). He notes that resistance and adherence are ambivalent concepts and what they achieve depends on where individuals place the 'borders'. '...it's about borders. In order to deliberately ignore borders, you have to accept that there is a border to ignore'. To grasp the strategies, one needs to be give due attention to where participants have created or perceived borders between themselves and the mainstream. These will be elaborated in the next section.

Moreover, one needs to realize that, beyond the apparent divide of accommodation or resistance, strategies often emerge in response to sensitive issues of status and power. Harries explains that reading and writing can become a 'sign and source' of power when those at the grassroots decide to use it to circumvent the existing differences and inequalities.

If literacy is imbued with different meanings in different contexts, learning to read will never be value-free (2001:405).

In this case, while participants' coping strategies in writing were motivated by a desire to gain membership into UCT's academic community and learn its conventions, it would be erroneous to believe that these were by any means 'value-free'. To identify the value dimensions, one may need to look beyond the general purpose of coping strategies, to examine the motives behind the preference of some strategies over others.

5.6 The politics of ‘peers versus faculty’ in the choice of strategies

It was observed that while in interviews participants pretended to be confident about UCT’s conventions and its practices, in the intimate focus group session, they revealed their persisting fear about being guilty of plagiarism and their hesitation to meet with the faculty. It would appear that below the veneer of confidence, they were still struggling to find a voice at the university. They preferred to rely on peers rather than making their fear obvious to the faculty. The peer group behaviour was similar to that of ‘subcultures’ which had a ‘distinct enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different from their parent culture’ (Hall and Jefferson,1993:13). In this case, the parent culture would refer to UCT’s institutional culture. The reasons behind students’ preference for ‘nou base’ over the parent culture are discussed under the themes of identity, group solidarity, structure and mobility

1. Identity and barriers to communication

From the very onset, student identity has been one of our chief concerns in this study. Identity could be voiced through writing, the community or the academic institution. When writing failed to allow for voicing, students promptly approached the community, not the institution.

It appeared that there were barriers to communication between students and the institution that prevented voicing. Following on from Blommaert’s notion of ‘borders’, two main barriers to communication were identified between participants and the faculty. The first barrier was a perceptual one and the second was linked to the use of the English language.

The perceptual barrier between Mauritian students and the faculty was hard to surmount for many participants. It was reinforced by participants’ previous attitudes towards institutions and private tuition on the one hand, and teacher-students relations on the other. Back in Mauritius, participants used to skip classes because most of them found the school system inefficient and unrewarding. They attended private tuition instead where exam preparation was intensive and model answers were drilled into them frequently. This resistance to the mainstream had now become fossilized. Lectures represented the mainstream education system, while tutorials, supplemented by ‘nou base’ were the equivalent of their former private tuition. ‘Nou base’ in

addition, stood for the safe, familiar, intimate site in an alien environment, where they could afford to experiment, look foolish, 'swear' etc.

Aryan: *With peers, you can understand easily. You can ask them more questions.*

Rohit: *You can swear at them if they don't...*

Rohit: *And also the way peers and lecturers think is differently. You can easily connect with peers just like you would when you work in a team.*

The intimate site, where perceptual barriers were continually reinforced is what Canagarajah refers to as the 'safe house'.

A site that (is) relatively free from surveillance, especially by authority figures, perhaps because these are considered unofficial, off-task or extrapedagogical (2004:121).

Reflecting on the purpose of 'safe houses', Canagarajah opines,

... minority communities have always collaboratively constructed sites of community underlife wherein they can celebrate suppressed identities and go further to develop subversive discourses that inspire resistance against their domination (121).

'Nou base' appeared like a 'safe house' where the minority was to assert their voice and marginal identities, to 'swear' and be subversive, as opposed to the mainstream institution where they were forced to conform.

The perceptual barrier was also reinforced by participants' limited understanding of teacher-student relations. Participants' habit of being spoon fed, of listening without questioning the teacher, made them reify the teacher as a distant omniscient persona, rather than a mentor. Tutors, on the other hand appeared more accessible because they were relatively younger than lecturers, worked with smaller groups of students, and could provide individual attention. However, even tutors were not consulted because participants felt they had a better option: 'nou base'.

This leads us to the second barrier between participants and the faculty, the linguistic barrier. Evidence from interviews and the focus group, suggests that the lure of 'nou base' was sustained by linguistic preferences. Even if participants could express themselves accurately in written English, it was the first time that they were required to use English for communicative purposes.

Participants pointed out that the difference between the English accents of Mauritian students and South Africans hindered comprehension on both sides. It is likely that given the choice between peers and the faculty, participants would opt for the former, as they could converse with them in their native tongue, Creole.

The role of Creole amongst Mauritian students goes beyond communicative purpose, if placed in a wider sociological context. As Bourdieu suggests, one needs to acknowledge that different linguistic utterances are not produced in vacuum but within different 'markets' (1991:18). If speakers enter the market with sufficient 'linguistic capital', they can enjoy the 'value' that the market places on the utterances. From observations and interviews, it was evident that the participants possessed more 'linguistic capital' to engage in meaningful conversations within the 'nou base' 'market', than to converse with faculty members in English.

Hence, it was in 'nou base' that they derived the benefits or 'profit of distinction' from being fluent in Creole. The main profits of Creole were the fostering of friendly ties and solidarity within the group. At the individual level, Creole was also the participants' language of thought and their language of empathy. With respect to academic work, participants could best express their difficulties and anxieties in Creole than in English, which had thus far only been the province of dispassionate writing, not feelings. Hence the appeal of 'nou base'.

2. Group solidarity: the push and pull factors

'Nou base' was also appealing because it fostered a group culture, defined by close links of solidarity between individuals, as opposed to the institution, where individuals fended for themselves. My observation of the group over the past few years, showed that when first year students' first writing attempts did not meet with phenomenal success, their solidarity towards 'nou base' and vice-versa was felt even more strongly.

A glance at students' essays this year showed that most participants had scored average marks and were penalized for poor referencing and/or lack of critical thinking, with the exception of Sarah and Aryan. If the latter performed relatively better in their essays, it was not because they

had fully adapted themselves to the academic system or employed better coping strategies, but because they had *prioritized the strategies differently*. Sarah had privileged individual thinking and elaboration to some degree and the tutor commented that ‘your essay shows evidence of your own voice in some sections’. Aryan on the other hand had paid close attention to referencing and had consulted some books for examples. He was not penalized on referencing. These strategies were resisted by the other participants. This would explain why most participants remained on the periphery of UCT’s mainstream academic sphere and the students’ power structures within it.

Student power in academia is synonymous with students’ ability to decode, observe and appropriate UCT’s conventions to enhance their academic experience. In other words, student power is linked to the development of a full-fledged ‘discoursal self’ in the institution or in an alternative sphere such as student politics as well as a ‘metalanguage of success’ (Nomdo, 2006). Participants were however still in the initial phases of negotiation between their former and emerging ‘discoursal’ selves. During this phase, few of them questioned their learning methods and attitudes, though they continued to show allegiance to ‘nou base’. Sarah and Yash claimed that they would consult with the faculty in future, though Yash conjured more reasons to justify why a consultation with peers was more desirable.

So we are sharing our ideas and indirectly we get to share the knowledge of twenty books.

Hence, one would doubt whether he was serious about consulting the faculty.

In the case of most participants, the loyalty to ‘nou base’ was stronger than before because their first attempt to step out of the familiar space had ended in failure. To them, the academic realm was still unfamiliar and menacing, hence the *push inwards*. In the case of Aryan, who actually performed well in his essay, the *pull inwards* to the ‘nou base’ could be explained by the fact that the group had fulfilled its promise so far. This was reflected in the following exchange:

Researcher: *But will you do so (consult with the faculty) in future?*

Aryan: *No [...] Normally... They won't get time... with all the people who go for consultations... There are too many people.*

His excuse displayed a reluctance to step out of ‘nou base’, where he could derive comfort from an intimate, one-to-one informal dialogue with someone he considered to be an informed peer.

In short, poor performance further increased the fear or sense of intimidation with respect to the faculty and strengthened the push towards 'nou base'. On the other hand, good performance seemed to emphasize the effectiveness their peer support system and further enhanced the pull of 'nou base'.

3. Mobility and structure: keeping up appearances

In Canagarajah's view, 'safe houses' cannot be described in a schematic manner because they can evolve in any manner, they are 'fluid' and 'mobile'. 'Nou base' was centrally situated on University Avenue, however members could reconvene at other sites before or after meridian. Three years back, 'nou base' used to be located on the benches to the right of Jammie stairs. As the Mauritian group expanded, 'nou base' moved to the Maths square which could accommodate more people, was centrally situated and prestigious by the group's own standards. The fluidity and flexibility of 'nou base' both in form and function differed from the faculty's perceived concreteness, rootedness, formality and uncompromising character.

In 'nou base', a politics of the underdogs prevailed. Its structure unlike that of the institution was a horizontal one and allowed its members to enter a forum with equals, where they could share their ignorance, frustrations and doubts without being sanctioned. This is apparent in Aryan's statement:

He may ask you something that you don't know. He may say, 'You didn't read this about demand and supply?' Normally with peers, you don't face that problem.

For the participants, the easiest way to integrate UCT was to mask their difference and pretend to merge with the crowd. 'Nou base' allowed students to vent their frustrations in the group and keep up appearances outside. In fact, participants approached 'nou base' so that their powerlessness would not be visible to the mainstream.

However, 'nou base' only partially replaced the faculty; it was what Gee would call a 'mushfake', a replica. In their first semester, as participants were struggling to enter into UCT's mainstream academic discourse 'nou base' helped to create the illusion of integration into the faculty, even if it was a 'mushfake' one. Senior members also offered first years what they

thought were useful ‘tips’, with the belief that their advice would help bridge the divide between participants and the faculty.

From my observation of ‘nou base’ members during meridian, I noticed that it was always bustling with activity. Students were constantly on the move, dispensing advice, writing, debating etc. ‘Nou base’ had its own mishmash of lecturers - the seemingly diligent seniors, its own secretaries: seniors with useful contacts, its own representative council - The Mauritian Students Society, its own rhetoricians - the cynical seniors and its own librarians - seniors with old notes, books and past exam papers.

On the whole, the academic subnetwork within ‘nou base’ functioned as a parallel faculty- that claimed to prepare its new members for what was considered to be a similar and tangible University experience and help them to appear knowledgeable until they finally integrated the mainstream. For some, the integration process could take longer than expected. Others became even more staunchly attached to the subnetwork over the years. This calls for a critical reflection on ‘nou base’.

5.7 A reflection on ‘nou base’ as a ‘safe house’

Structure of ‘nou base’ – a site of resistance?

The presence of different sub-networks within ‘nou base’ makes it hard to establish whether it was a site of resistance or not. Canagarajah uses the notion of ‘fronting’ to suggest moments when resistance looked like accommodation, but actually was not. In this case, while resistance and fronting may have governed students’ social interaction, there was also an attempt by the academic sub-network to develop a positive space running in parallel with the faculty. Its existence depended on its ability to imitate the faculty. A few senior students channeled new information into ‘nou base’ to ensure its survival as a students’ only academic resort. The sub-network thus tried to locate itself at an important nodal point between Mauritian students and the faculty.

However, since the academic subnetwork operated on the margins of 'nou base' and the group's main social preoccupations, the support it provided was seldom dispensed seriously. I would argue that it perpetuated the tradition of spoon feeding, created a vicious circle of dependence between seniors and first year students and did not offer tools for students' empowerment. For instance, instead of drawing students' attention to the writing centre, one of the seniors offered partially correct referencing tips to them. The other danger of having an academic space running in parallel with the faculty was that students who may have wished to distance themselves from 'nou base'- the site of resistance, were misled into thinking that the academic subnetwork was actually a bridge between the subculture and the institutional culture. In actual fact, the academic space within 'nou base' operated in parallel but could never quite replace the faculty.

'Nou base' - All good and rosy?

There are more reasons to believe that while operating in a horizontal structure and promoting equality within the group, 'nou base' actually isolated students further from the mainstream. It made students' attempts to gain access and benefit from opportunities outside the group appear redundant. While it boasted to be self-sufficient, it actually discouraged students from interacting with individuals from different cultural or academic backgrounds in a way that allowed the sharing of knowledges. Also, while 'nou base', as a subculture perpetuated the social mores and practices of Mauritian students, it also hampered their integration into the 'institutional culture', which has been one of the main aims of UCT's internationalization policy.

In short, it is often assumed that subcultures or 'safe houses' are actually 'safe' and supportive structures that help students develop their own voice. While this may be the case within the group, this 'voice' was seldom heard on the outside. It remained confined to the group and provided members with a *false sense of security*. In terms of students' academic experience, the subculture's actions failed to match its intentions and they actually did more harm than good. Thus, an understanding of how subcultures operated on campus might reveal illuminating facts about international students' social and academic experiences at UCT, especially as the university implements its internationalization policy on campus.

5.8 Summary

This chapter described the focus group study conducted with participants and the coping strategies that emerged out of the discussion during the card game. The accommodation strategies were prior writing experience, attendance in tutorials and consultation with peers. The resistance strategies were the use of essay guidelines, individual thinking, elaboration and consultation with the faculty.

Patterns were identified in the strategies that had emerged. The accommodation strategies leaned mostly towards the informal sites, especially 'nou base', while the resistance strategies pertained to anything remotely related to the faculty. It transpired that participants' decisions were not 'value-free' but were taken deliberately to mask their perceived marginal position at UCT. 'Nou base' was preferred over the faculty by participants as a source of support for reasons linked to identity, group solidarity, mobility and structure. The findings indicated that there were still perceptual and linguistic barriers that hindered students' communication directly with the faculty. Also, 'nou base' smacked of the familiar and therefore pulled participants in especially when their attempts to venture outside the 'safe house' had not met with success and it provided them with the tools to appear knowledgeable. In the discussion that followed, the role, structure and benefits of 'nou base' were critically assessed.

Chapter 6

Implications

While the participants' A-Level results would attest that they were among the high achievers in Mauritius, they scored average marks in their first semester essays at UCT. Common sense would suggest that participants were still adapting to the UCT system and that it was only a matter of time. However, the findings of this study suggested that the problem space was more profound than it would appear on the surface. The below average performance of students in the essays analysed, appeared to be more a result of contradictions between students' 'discoursal' selves and their 'authorial' selves than a result of flawed content knowledge or laziness.

In other words, while participants were faithful to the writing conventions they had used successfully in secondary school, and were overly cautious regarding plagiarism issues at UCT, these very conventions inhibited the development of their individual thinking skills and led them to score poorly in their essays at UCT. Though participants had not yet identified the true nature of the contradiction, they knew something was amiss and developed a series of strategies to cope with academic writing, with varying degrees of success.

The previous chapter outlined the coping strategies of first year Mauritian students in academic writing and reflected on their actual effectiveness. While accommodation strategies pertained to informal measures such as consultation with peers, resistance strategies were directed at the faculty. The reasons behind the 'peers versus faculty' distinction in the choice of strategies were also discussed at some length. The most significant of them was the fact that there were perceptual as well as linguistic barriers that affected participants' direct communication with the faculty.

This chapter will discuss the implications of these findings. The very existence of 'coping strategies' in the case of high achievers is meaningful. Coping strategies are make-shift

solutions to fill a gap temporarily, until a long term solution is found¹⁶. The contradictions between participants' 'discoursal' and 'authorial' selves may signal some contradictions within and between the institutions that trained the participants.

The findings of the study will be discussed with respect to its implications for

1. A world class tertiary institution like the University of Cape Town,
2. Pedagogical orientations in higher education,
3. Orientation of international students,
4. The secondary school system in Mauritius.

6.1 Implications for different stakeholders

1. *The University of Cape Town*

The University of Cape Town, which now proclaims its desire to be an 'Afropolitan' university, recently adopted an 'internationalisation policy' where 'internationalisation' was defined as: 'the process of integrating international and intercultural dimensions into teaching, research and service functions of an institution of higher education' (UCT policy on internationalisation 2009). The implementation of this policy meant two things, firstly that the intake of international students would grow incrementally over the years, and secondly that care had to be taken to ensure that the higher education system met international standards.

UCT today is indeed a meeting point for students from various parts of the African continent, Asia, Europe and the United States. International students account for approximately one fifth of the University's total first year population. This suggests that issues around student support and other infrastructure would need to be revisited to support UCT's internationalisation policy and more specifically its principle of 'Equity and Institutional Culture'.

Internationalisation at UCT will promote the University's equity and transformation objectives. Exchanges and development opportunities will take into account the under-

¹⁶ *From my observation in previous years, the long term solution is not always found. Some Mauritian students continue to receive below average marks in their essays and laugh it off by saying that they are not 'gifted' in writing. I have also come across at least two students who have failed the 'Evidence-based management' course over the past two years. Within the Mauritian community, those students compare themselves to others who have failed it more than once. Clearly, each failure reinforces the 'can't do' attitude, as well as an ironic sense of pride about failing, perhaps in order to save face.*

representation in academic life of women, black people and people with disabilities. Internationalisation should contribute to an institutional culture which values diversity. Every effort must be made to integrate international staff and students fully into the life of UCT (ibid).

To ensure the integration of international students, the International Academic Programme Office (IAPO) organises an intensive orientation programme at the beginning of the academic year, packed with talks, tours around the peninsula, cultural shows etc. It is complemented by a faculty orientation where students are given useful advice about the curriculum and offered campus and library tours, all to ease students' adaptation to the conventions prevailing at UCT.

What is lacking however is a programme designed specifically to ensure that students from different regional backgrounds are made effectively aware of academic conventions especially the writing conventions at UCT, since writing remains by far the main means by which students are examined throughout the semester.

Ivanič and Lea (2006) note that the emergence of 'new universities' that were once polytechnics, the move from elite to mass education, the possibilities for students to enroll for modular or combined degrees, and the integration of vocational subjects in academic streams, are re-defining what counts as knowledge (7-8). These changes are also signaling that the student body at the universities is increasingly heterogeneous and that assumptions cannot be made that all students are equally predisposed towards a particular version of academic writing. They suggest that programmes in future need to be sensitive to the changing higher education structures and to the particular needs of diverse student groupings (14).

- *The Writing Centre*

One cannot discuss programmes in academic writing without acknowledging the role and contribution of the Writing Centre at UCT. The Writing Centre is a student support infrastructure, which is active on campus and has considerable potential to respond to the needs of a growing international student body. It is staffed by the University's leading experts on higher education and academic writing. The Writing Centre offers a wide range of facilities such as advice on essay writing and seminars for students at all stages of their academic journey. It is

a pity though that none of the participants in this study consulted the centre. Only two out of the six participants were aware of its existence, but perceived it to be for those with poor writing skills (which did not include them!). The perceptual barrier was confirmed as one of the participants admitted:

It's not that we don't know how to structure an essay. The facility is for students who've never written essays in their lives.

While the Writing Centre does advertise its services during the Orientation week every year, it does escape some first year students' attention. Others resist it believing that it is designed for students who cannot write. Actually, the Writing Centre can play crucial role in facilitating the development of students' 'discoursal self', abating their fear around plagiarism and emphasising the importance of their 'authorial self' in academic essays.

A two-week intensive module by the Writing Centre on academic writing at UCT may be a first step towards effectively introducing international students as well as local students to the writing conventions in the University, since core course lecturers and tutors covering the syllabus within a strict timeframe may lack sufficient time to do so. In fact, the study's findings would seem to indicate that such an intervention is desirable for both low and high achieving students. This module could possibly be made a prerequisite by different faculties and be introduced to students as a means to boost their performance, rather than as a remedial course for students with difficulties. The study showed that students were often reticent to join structures that were excessively formalised, that treated them as special cases or that potentially revealed their vulnerability. Hence, the module would need to be framed as a supplement rather than a cure. The need for a 'bridging course' was also emphasised by one of the lecturers interviewed.

The Faculty or University needs to either introduce bridging courses, make 3-year degrees 4-year degrees instead, or significantly raise entrance requirements.

I am not entirely convinced that 'raising entrance requirements' alone would resolve the issue. Well-performing secondary school students, such the participants of this study would definitely meet the entrance requirements even if these were raised. However, they would continue to face writing challenges (often unresolved) once at the university, for various reasons mentioned in the

course of this study. Also, raising the requirements would exclude students who may have performed less well in secondary school or came from disadvantaged learning backgrounds but had the potential to succeed at University. It is doubtful that secondary schools would respond to the raising standards in higher education institutions by teaching more efficiently, unless they saw university readiness as one of the core objectives. This seems unlikely in the case of the many secondary institutions in South Africa as well as in Mauritius¹⁷.

On the other hand, the design and implementation of a customised writing module for first year international students could better assist in equalising academic opportunities for students from different backgrounds. The module could be structured as an intensive workshop introducing students to the academic Discourses at UCT and helping them leverage some of their prior knowledges in academic writing. Also, as the study indicated, students felt more comfortable consulting with peers in an informal set-up rather than consulting with staff members. The workshop could therefore be conducted by postgraduate students working at the Writing Centre, so that it closely resembled the informal 'nou base' structure. Students could subsequently consult with the Writing Centre to check whether their essays met the University standards. The rationale behind the development of such a module would be to pre-empt academic failure soon enough in students' academic journey and help them secure a strong foundation and boost their confidence from the very start. The module would also increase the Writing Centre's mobility and approachability as it makes the first move towards the timid first year students.

- *The faculty*

As shown in the study, participants felt hesitant to consult with the faculty for various reasons, especially because they did not want to appear foolish before the lecturer. In the process, they fell short of satisfying some of the faculty's expectations.

One of the UCT lecturers approached in the context of this study, stated that while students were required to produce 'coherent and cogent arguments in written form', their performance often failed to impress. The same lecturer observed that,

¹⁷ See comparison between the two education systems, chapter 2

All students have poor writing skills, and many struggle with English generally, but while many international students are poor in this respect, so are many from poorer rural schools in SA.

In his comment, the lecturer seemed to adopt the deficit approach to 'academic writing'. Also, he subsumed the challenges faced by local and international students within the same category. This might be the case, but not necessarily so, as pointed out in this study, whereby even high performing students from reputed schools scored average marks in their essays. Nevertheless, he made a valid point that there was certainly a link between text and context, between 'poor' English and 'poor' schooling, that could not be overlooked.

At UCT, while programmes such as 'Academic Literacy in the Humanities' and 'Language and Communications' in the Commerce faculty, have been designed by the Writing Centre to assist students from 'poorer' rural schools in South Africa, and while the Writing Centre's services are in effect open to all students irrespective of their background, the need for a specific response for international students is increasingly being felt as more and more students from diverse backgrounds enter the university. As discussed earlier, the issue in the case of international students may not necessarily pertain to 'poor writing skills' or incorrect content knowledge but to a lack of awareness about UCT's academic writing conventions and about available support structures.

While lecturers try their best to be approachable and attend to the needs of all, they do admit that the lecture set up does not allow them to get to know all their students.

With 760 students, I get to know only a handful personally.

This is where tutors are required to bridge the gap between the faculty and students. The small group set-up encourages dialogue in a familiar, less threatening environment. Participants in this study demonstrated a favourable attitude towards tutors – though for a different reason – the tutors reminded them of their A-Level tuition teachers, and tutorial sessions were erroneously viewed as substitutes for, rather than supplement to, formal lectures.

The study nevertheless drew attention to the fact there was scope for tutors to do more to facilitate students' integration at UCT. The participants felt that while tutors did provide useful

support, they could not mitigate their fears regarding plagiarism, for instance. Participants also hoped that the feedback could be more detailed and ‘helpful’. As Rohit stated,

It says that my referencing ‘is so poor’ and ‘troubling’ but it does not say how I should reference.

Four months had elapsed since Rohit wrote his first essay at UCT and he was still uncertain about plagiarism. While Rohit could consult referencing guidelines in future instead of expecting to be spoon fed, the point is that generally speaking, tutors’ feedback could actually serve a stronger formative purpose.

Feedback could also constructively close the gap between students’ prior and current writing experience by being more sensitive to local and international students’ academic backgrounds, rather than be a set of generic comments. Ivanič, Clark et al (2000), observe the role of feedback and the effects it has on students. They collect tutors’ feedback on student writing for different subjects and for English for Academic purposes in Lancaster University and an African university. They identify and discuss different ‘styles’ of responses, their purpose, their reception by students and their implications. They explain that tutors often respond insufficiently or inaccurate, often failing to realize the mixed messages they convey through this exercise, such as ‘messages about themselves (students)’, ‘about academic writing’, ‘about university values and beliefs’ (60-62). They would agree that feedback on writing is crucial as one of the teaching tools for imparting content, but also the values and ideologies that underlie the content. At UCT, this may require a few intensive tutor training sessions to achieve, as well as the monitoring of tutors’ practice and more dialogue between the staff and the tutors (see Lillis, 2001 on types of ‘dialogue’).

2. Pedagogy and curriculum

The study illustrated that participants resisted writing tasks if they could not see its relevance to their core courses. While add-on courses such as ‘Evidence-Based Management’ and ‘Becoming a Professional’ are aimed at fostering students’ critical thinking skills, their objectives might need to be made more explicit to students in future so as to enhance student motivation.

Secondly, the course and assessments ought to be designed in such a way as to integrate students from varied backgrounds, and enable them to leverage their background and ‘autobiographical self’ as an asset. This could increase their agency within the institution as well as their ‘collateral capital’ to use Gideon Nomdo’s term. In his view,

When (students’) collateral capital is made conscious, it leads to the development of a powerful metalanguage of success. (2006:180)

The design of course materials would also necessitate a redefinition of ‘student writing’ in higher education along the lines suggested by Lea and Street as an integration of ‘study skills’, ‘academic socialisation’ and ‘academic literacies’ (2000:xx).

The ‘study skills’ model by itself is limited because it assumes that student writing is a standard skill. An absence of this skill leads to the tagging of students as ‘poor’ or ‘deficient’ writers. The second model fares better than the first one, since it views writing more broadly as part of higher education Discourses. However, in its attempt to ‘acculturate’ all students to higher education Discourses, it overlooks the influence of students’ varied cultural and academic baggage in the acquisition of those Discourses. On the other hand, the ‘academic literacies’ model, attributes due importance to the intricacies of writing, by responding to students’ prior academic experiences, identities and motivations that ultimately characterize their writing in higher education. The three models together provide a holistic picture of ‘student writing’.

By broadening the definition of ‘student writing’ following Lea and Street, one is better able to understand why some participants like Ali and Priya struggled over the OBE essay. They could not attempt the first part of the essay because it required students to speak of their own experience of the OBE system, which the participants lacked. It is believed that greater sensitivity to the international students’ background in the organization of course material and assignments in future could ease their transition into UCT.

3. International students

- *The first year students*

The study points out that the onus to ensure that one is adequately equipped for the academic journey at UCT also rests on the student. The study showed that participants’ habit of being

spoon fed was actually detrimental to their academic experience in the first semester. This was also pointed out by a lecturer in general terms.

Students need to read more, and be more proactive in terms of not waiting to be spoon fed.

Participants had developed their own strategies in order to cope with the essay-writing challenges. However, the study revealed that the preference of peers over faculty might not have been the wisest decision to take. Also, many of these strategies did not address the disjunction between participant's 'discoursal' and 'authorial self'.

In fact, during the focus group session, participants were asked which of the strategies they would now focus on after having received feedback from their first essay. They pointed out 'investment' and 'referencing' as future strategies, but none of them identified 'individual thinking' as an important strategy. This suggests that they were applying strategies intuitively without necessarily resolving the actual weaknesses of their essays. This was partly because they were responding to the problem on the surface, without being aware of the root of the problem. The strategies they chose also helped them display group loyalty, and were therefore used despite being less effective in resolving the issue.

While peers could advise on methods that had worked for them, the faculty would be better suited to point out the shortcomings in students' essays as per its requirements. Hence, in future, participants would need to be more exploratory, to look for other support systems and be less dependent on 'nou base'.

- *'Nou base'*

This is not to say that 'nou base' is an ineffective support system for first year international students. In fact, the study showed that 'nou base' validated participants' personal histories, their 'autobiographical' selves and fostered a sense of belonging and compensated partly for the shortcomings of large formal lecture theatre sessions.

Nevertheless, 'nou base' animators need to be aware of the power they wield among first year students and use it responsibly. They need to offer referrals on issues that they cannot resolve,

rather than assume to be all-resourceful. This study suggests that ‘nou base’ has tremendous potential to influence students. Ideally, senior could be better resourced to guide first years and do justice to the trust students have in them. However, this is only an ideal! Any actual attempt to place structure on the subculture may trigger defiance and actually push the group further underground. Perhaps ‘nou base’ needs to be purely appreciated for its social contribution.

4. Secondary schools in Mauritius

One would assume that the Mauritian secondary school curriculum, influenced by the University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) would adequately prepare Mauritian students for University studies. The CIE General Paper syllabus for instance proposes to:

- promote the skills of rational thought, persuasion, analysis, interpretation and evaluation;
- encourage candidates to explore and appraise social, cultural, economic, philosophical, scientific and technological issues;
- promote maturity of thought and clarity of expression;
- promote understanding and appreciation of individual, societal and cultural diversity;
- encourage independent, critical, reading (CIE General Paper syllabus 2007).

However, as expected there is a significant gap between the syllabus objectives and actual classroom practices. The excessive spoon feeding that characterizes Mauritian secondary schools is far from conducive to ‘maturity of thought’, ‘persuasion’, ‘independent, critical reading’. As previously shown in the 2007 CIE report, ‘it was sometimes concerning to find such uniformity across particular Centres and suggested that candidates were relying completely on ‘learning’ material from issued templates to offload in the examination’ (ibid). This illustrates the high incidence of spoon feeding in secondary schools and private tuition. It is observed that even the best students rely on ‘prepared’ material though without necessarily ‘rehashing’ it in an unthinking manner.

It is thus not surprising that high performing students find it difficult to engage in the kind of ‘individual thinking’ that UCT, or any other university would require and where their prior reliance on ‘prepared’ material may even count as plagiarism. This partly explains why participants who succeeded in their A-Levels with flying colours were suddenly reaping average

marks, for reasons other than flawed content knowledge and why they were excessively anxious about plagiarism. The issue is not an isolated one and may affect most Mauritian students enrolling for university. This accounts for an annual figure of about twenty-six thousand Mauritian students, out of which approximately five thousand study overseas (TEC Report 2004).

It is clear that secondary school teachers as well as tuition teachers must pay due attention to the letter and spirit of the CIE syllabus and avoid easy shortcuts like spoon feeding. This could contribute to failure at tertiary level and jeopardize the students' future. An effective implementation of the curriculum would require among other things adequate teacher training and strong school management. A detailed discussion of these requirements however lies beyond the purview of this study and could constitute a potential area for further research.

6.2 Summary - Synergy of efforts

This study suggests that efforts by different stakeholders need to be synergized to ensure better alignment between secondary and tertiary academic institutions.

Internationalisation means the sharing of resources as well as the sharing of responsibilities so as to ensure the proper development of educated world citizens. It also means laying greater emphasis on the delivery of quality education. Secondary schools need to devise new ways to produce fully rounded and autonomous adults prepared for University (as well as the world of work), rather than subservient students. Universities, on the other hand, need to appreciate students' varied regional and academic backgrounds and offer relevant programmes to help bridge the gaps that may exist between students' prior academic experience and the universities' requirements.

As UCT endorses the internationalisation policy, it is also necessary that it conducts regular research to assess the effectiveness of the policy deployment to ensure that the ground reality is aligned with the university's intentions and desired outcomes.

Chapter 7

Conclusion and scope for further research

This study aimed at investigating how international students coped with academic writing in their first semester at the University of Cape Town. Given the scope of the subject, the study focused on first year Mauritian students and the writing strategies they devised in their first few months at UCT.

The study took into account UCT's recent internationalization policy that involved, among other things, opening doors to larger numbers of international students and ensuring their integration at the University. It aimed to assess what was actually happening on the ground. It asked the following question: How effectively were international students, and particularly Mauritian students, adjusting to the academic conventions at UCT?

Academic writing and the coping strategies in writing used by participants were the key focus of this study because academic writing is still the main means by which students are assessed at the University. The academic essays of six first year Mauritian students were collected and the students were interviewed. What emerged from the research was that while these students had performed very well in their A-Level exams they had scored average marks in their first essays at UCT.

To better grasp the situation, three of the six initial participants from three different faculties were selected to feature in a case study. Their responses were assessed along the lines of Roz Ivanič's clover model that characterized writer identities in terms of 'autobiographical', 'discoursal' and 'authorial' components. A disjunction was identified between participants' 'discoursal' and 'authorial' selves in writing.

From the observation of 'nou base', it appeared that students were using some coping strategies to address challenges in writing. To identify the strategies and assess whether they would bridge the gap between students' 'discoursal' and 'authorial' selves, a focus group study was organized with the participants. It was found that there were indeed a series of coping strategies that

emphasized their ‘discoursal self’ but relatively less their ‘authorial self’. Regarding the nature and development of the coping strategies, there was a greater dependence on peers or ‘nou base’ rather than on the faculty.

The reasons behind this preference were evaluated and it was found that participants preferred ‘nou base’ because it was a ‘mushfake’ faculty that was more likely to tolerate ignorance and mistakes; it was a ‘safe house’ which had been helpful thus far and was less threatening than the actual UCT faculties. Moreover, there were perceptual and linguistic barriers that hindered participants’ consultation with their respective faculties.

The fact that hitherto high achieving international students relied so heavily on informal coping strategies in academic writing in their first semester begged the question whether the issue was not limited to the students themselves but reflected on an entire infrastructure that may need to be revisited in future.

The implications for higher education pedagogical orientations, international students’ induction and the Mauritian secondary school education system were also addressed in some length. What was recommended was a synergy between different institutions, especially at a time when emphasis was being placed on the collaboration between academic institutions in various parts of the world.

Scope for further research

The reliability and internal validity of the findings were optimized through a triangulation of various methods. However, given the limited sample size and approach, generalization to international students of other nationalities will not be appropriate.

This study nevertheless offers sufficient ground to believe that Mauritian students in the years to come may well confront similar challenges unless certain secondary school practices are revisited and relevant measures are initiated at UCT to further facilitate international students’ academic integration.

Admittedly, this may be a challenge for UCT owing to the overwhelming diversity of its international student body. However it remains a necessity, especially at this point in time when 'Equity and Institutional Culture' issues are being eagerly discussed and appear at the top of the University's concerns.

As expected, this study produced more questions than answers. Thus, further research studies could include at least the following:

1. A longitudinal study tracking the academic performance of Mauritian students over time;
2. An action research initiated in secondary schools in Mauritius at A-Level to develop new teaching methods to enhance students' preparedness for higher studies;
3. Similar studies involving international students from other countries;
4. Projects aimed at developing 'mutual responsiveness' that would facilitate first year international students' adaptation to university realities.

Appendices

Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Essay collection, Interview and Focus Group session

Name of Researcher: Aditi Hunma

Institution: University of Cape Town

Degree and Stream: MPhil in Education, Applied Language and Literacy Stream

Supervisor: Dr Lucia Thesen

You are invited to participate in a qualitative study designed to explore academic writing of international students at UCT.

If you decide to participate, you will need to hand in a marked copy of your initial academic essays. We will then carry out a forty-five minute semi-structured interview delving into your writing experience. Thirdly, we will conduct a focus group session where you will be able to meet other participants and launch yourself in a healthy discussion around academic writing.

One of the upshots of this research is that it will promote awareness about how international students at UCT engage in writing tasks. Should you require academic assistance from the researcher at any point, your request will be favorably met only once the research findings chapter has been written and submitted. You also reserve the right to information about the research proceedings, and the research findings once the dissertation has been submitted.

The information will be used only for academic purposes and education research and your right to privacy will be respected throughout the research process and after submission. Any research component that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. The tape recorded session will be transcribed; however your name will not be disclosed at any point in the dissertation.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your relations with other participants or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any point in time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will be happy to answer them. You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be entitled after signing this form.

Signature

Date

Appendix B: Students' essays

Sarah's essay

Mark Sheet: Becoming a Professional 2009			
Name of student	Student number		
Name of group facilitator	Group number		
Assignment number	Essay mark	+Referencing Mark	=TOTAL
1	40	1	71%
Name of marker	Date		
	02 Nov 109		
FEEDBACK			
Contents Your essay shows that you understood the concepts of professionalism and the 3 dimensions of the HP. There is good use of examples, however you could have integrated all 3 aspects of the HP to show that they are interrelated.			
Structure Introduction, Body, Conclusion The essay is not divided by use of sub-heading. These would have helped to make it easier to read.			
Referencing In-text referencing, Reference list Both forms of referencing are well done.			
Overall comment Your essay shows evidence of your own work. In some sections you could have improved on it by integrating the 3 aspects of an HP.			
Plan of action based on feedback (to be completed by student)			

-2 = 10%
Corrected word val

It could have helped to indicate how to your introduction.
Health is gold for every human being and to ensure that almost all human beings are healthy is an important role of the health professional. It is crucial for me, as a future health professional, to practice and deliver good health. This requires the mastering of necessary skills, continuous learning (referred to as knowledge), the caring, moral and ethical understanding of health (empathy) and the self-personal development (reflection).

To begin with, professionalism is about the expertise one shows in one's field of work. During our class activities, we said that a professional is knowledgeable, respected and respectable, rational and critical: A professional is full of knowledge, knows how to apply it to his work and is constantly adding on to what he already knows. He is respected by people around him, whether they are clients or colleagues. He also respects people around him and gives all of them their due importance. This is crucial for team work which is much needed in professionalism: the interaction among different people brings several ideas which provide or offer a better understanding of any situation. Being rational and critical is also an asset of a professional: he cannot risk taking wrong decisions for this will have unbearable consequences. Moreover, a professional is one who can work under pressure and make sure the work is done. Above all, the professional must be caring and competent, caring for people around him creates a nice environment to work in, and competence gives way to creativity and progress.

As quoted by Council for Higher Education (2001, quoted by Ockers L, Gibbs TJ & Duncan M, 2007: 2) "[p]rofessionalism is associated with respectful self-presentation, a caring attitude, interpersonal competence and commitment to life-long learning".

All the above-mentioned qualities need to be present in a health professional. The latter relates to people about their health, and this includes the social, biological and mental aspect of health. It is important for the health professional to make sure that his patients understand their own problems and that they act appropriately onwards. It is equally important for the health professional to be completely informed about the patients and their respective problems.

This brings forward the idea of being an Integrated Health Professional (IHP) which implies three distinctive great: reflective, knowledge and empathy. Ockers L, Gibbs TJ & Duncan M (2007: 4) mention it well: "A sense of professional identity emerges... when being able to do something through gaining knowledge, technical skills and problem solving abilities (the knowing dimension), to being able to do it with understanding within the context of self and others (the empathic dimension) (and) to being increasingly self-aware and culturally sensitive (the reflective dimension)".

The knowing dimension

As the name says, the knowing dimension encompasses the awareness of the problem or difficulty felt by the patient. As a health professional, it is crucial for me to know my topic very well and to establish the links between different problems or symptoms and their medical knowledge. A patient has come for help, and lacking information of any sort is of no help to the patient. For the knowing dimension to be effective for me as well as for the patient, it is obvious that I must have a degree, and keeping on adding to that knowledge must be a regular practice. Acquiring knowledge has no value if it is not practiced. It is about "The development of competencies that enable the professional to practice in increasingly accountable and technological environments." (Bates AW, Peow G (2002); Subbinga L & Scott JM (2004) quoted by Ockers L, Gibbs TJ & Duncan M, 2007: 3)

As clearly pointed out by Hulsan M in health 24, healthy mothers are dying after or during delivery because unskilled doctors in administering obstetric anaesthesia are practicing it without any supervisor or any experience. Hence, it is crucial to mention here that as a health professional, mistakes about how to deliver the proper treatment are unacceptable. Proper knowledge and mastering of the required skills are basic to saving people's lives. Keeping up-to-date to those treatments is also very important, as it helps us to use our time properly and to treat patients as effectively as possible.

The empathic dimension

Being empathic means to be able to feel what our patient is going through, the difficulties the disease or abnormality are causing to them; and through that feeling, to be able to come to a solution that will lessen the patient's pain and suffering. From Klaus Papatadopoulos (quoted by Gilson K, Swartz L & Sanderbergh R, 2009: 9) "[e]mpathy... is the ability to understand another person's distress, without either ignoring its significance or being overwhelmed by one's own emotional response." Several times we may have been unconsciously empathic; for instance, when our friend is starting us their problems, and we reassure them by offering solutions that we know for sure will help them feel better. Hence, as health professionals, it is important to be empathic towards our patients, understand their problems and be able to offer solutions. To help us understand the importance of empathy more, let us have a look at this example (adapted from Gilson K, Swartz L & Sanderbergh R, 2009): a pupil in a teacher's class was very sad because she knew that her mother was about to die in the coming future. The teacher, having been in a similar position when she was a child, now knows how to react to such events. She helped the child through her experience and nature knowledge. If we look at the example, we clearly see that the teacher, being empathic, understood and helped the child through her difficult times. "... [S]he could well... understand how burdened and afraid she [the child] felt" (Gilson K, Swartz L & Sanderbergh R, 2009: 2). This should be the case for health professionals, where we act people because we understand their pain. Another example is that of Dr Dana de Bruyn, who "... want[s] to encourage HIV patients to live positively and to teach pregnant women with the virus how to prepare themselves optimally" (Schermbaucker R, What's New Doc). Her empathy towards HIV-positive people allows her to understand them and hence to help them as much as she can.

We have to beware, though, not to fall into being sympathetic (where we are unable to think rationally because we are being overwhelmed by the patient's feelings) and being apathetic (where we are completely careless about the feelings of the patient). To care for a patient and to help him/her get better or alleviating his/her problem is natural, human and ethical. We should not, however, intrude in the personal life of our patient. Thus, we will always

ask ourselves where to draw the lines among all these dimensions: sympathetic, empathic and apathetic. This is why reflection is important.

The reflective dimension

Reflection is an important part of the Integrated Health Professional. As quoted by Odoan L, Gibbs T & Duncan M (2007: 3): "[T]he reflective dimension is concerned with a process that links the self with the outside, in both a learning (self-enriching) and a design (self-expressing) relationship." It demands thinking over my emotions and actions and taking the necessary steps to improve my skills. As a professional, I have to judge myself and correct whatever has to be corrected. This is important because it will help me to develop personally as well as skillfully. In other words, thinking about past experiences and reflecting on them will help me develop my health-related skills since I shall question those ways of practice which went wrong and modify them.

As a health professional, it is inadvisable that I ignore mistakes related to my work-field. Providing help to patients is not a simple task whereby I can assume that everything is fine when such is not the case. However, by performing self-reflective practice (applying the changes we have come to notice after reflection), I am ensuring that my patients are well cared for and that I am doing my best to help them. I should constantly reflect on my actions, emotions and decisions. Questions like 'why did I do that' or 'why did I think like that at that time' or 'is what I am doing right or can it be improved' should be asked during or after the time of action. They are crucial for reflective practice, which will enhance my knowledge and experience.

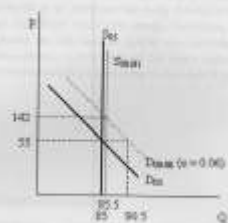
On a personal level, it has never been wrong to change oneself for the better. Self-reflection is a means of progress and motivation. It encourages me to move towards progress and away from stagnation. One demonstration of self-reflection comes from the previous example, where a student was telling her teacher why she was sad, and the teacher comforted her, but, in trying to do so, made the child feel worse. The teacher kept thinking about that situation, and with the help of a colleague, got to think rationally. She was able to understand

her own emotion, why she reacted the way she did with her student, and to even understand the learner's situation (Gibson K, Swartz I & Sandenbergh F, 2009).

To conclude, I would say that a health professional never stops learning. As a professional, I need to respect my patients and treat them equally. My knowledge, as a health professional, should be the basis for their treatment, which must be constantly increasing. Empathy should be my asset as it will motivate me to find a cure for the disease of my patients and hence, alleviate their suffering. Reflection is an important basis in my practice as well since this will help me progress on an inner and outer personal level.

References

- Bates AM, Pool G. Design and stability in teaching with technologies. In *Effective Teaching with Technology in Higher Education: Foundations for Success*. San Francisco: CA, Jossey-Bass, 2009.
- Council for Higher Education (CHE). *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century*. Pretoria: South Africa, 2001.
- Gibson K, Swartz I & Sandenbergh F. 2009. *Counseling and caring*. 2nd Ed. South Africa: Oxford University Press Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd.
- Hudson Mari. 2009. Fatal decisions. *What's New* Dec: 2: 1.
- Odoan L, Gibbs T & Duncan M. 2007. Developing health science students into integrated health professionals: a practical tool for learning. *BMC Medical Education*, 7: 48.
- Kenneth Papadopoulos. Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies, University of Cape.
- Scheurbaeker Karin. 2009. The spirit of Ho. *What's New* Dec: 2: 37.
- Stubbings L, Scott JM. NHS workforce issues: implications for future practice. *Journal of Health, Organisation and Management*. 2004. 28 (2-3): 179-184.



Short-run price elasticities of 3.7 and 0.14 for oil and 2.1 and 0.14 for coal and 2.5 and 0.14 for natural gas. Source: Hamilton (2009) and 2010. All monetary price elasticities of 0.06. Source: Hamilton (2009)

Initially the large increase in the price of oil per barrel did not cause a lot of problems. The income of consumers increased and since oil has a positive income elasticity of demand, and increase in the oil price caused a larger proportion of the increased income to be directed to oil consumption. The reason is that producers and consumers take time to respond to a change in price. The longer the time period, the bigger the response and thus the greater the elasticity of demand and supply.

In the long run, the demand and supply for oil became more elastic due to the presence of substitutes. For example, people in Brazil are now using cars that run with a mixture of ethanol and oil. Public transport has been promoted and emerging industries are investing in research to develop more economic ways of production. Oil is a non-renewable resource and a drastic increase in its price is a matter of how important it is. This is the why scientists are working out strategies to curb down the consumption of oil by finding alternative sources of energy. So far, the research has been pretty successful, especially with the creation of solar ponds and the use of winds to generate electricity instead of the burning of charcoal.

Conclusion

After considering the above mentioned arguments we feel convinced that oil is a really important natural resource that contributes primarily into each field of production. The price of oil is one of the major determinants of cost of production and hence the economy of a country. Also price of oil is driven by the rate of growth of the economy that is for a positive growth (inflation), the

price of oil will rise and in the case of a negative growth (deflation), the price of oil will fall. Even if the consumption of oil is costly and has many drawbacks such as pollution, the latter remains the traditional and easiest way to get energy. Nowadays, due to the oil price shocks which hit the world during the past decades, people are conscious about the scarcity and the importance of oil. Consequently, a proportion of the state's income is now directed towards research so that the future becomes more promising on the basis of production.

Reference list:

Links: <http://www.fishbase.org/abstract.asp>
http://www.annualreviews.org/2009/04/energy_of_the_oil.html
http://www.annualreviews.org/2009/04/energy_of_the_oil.html
<http://www.lockpage.com>
<http://www.economicshelp.com>

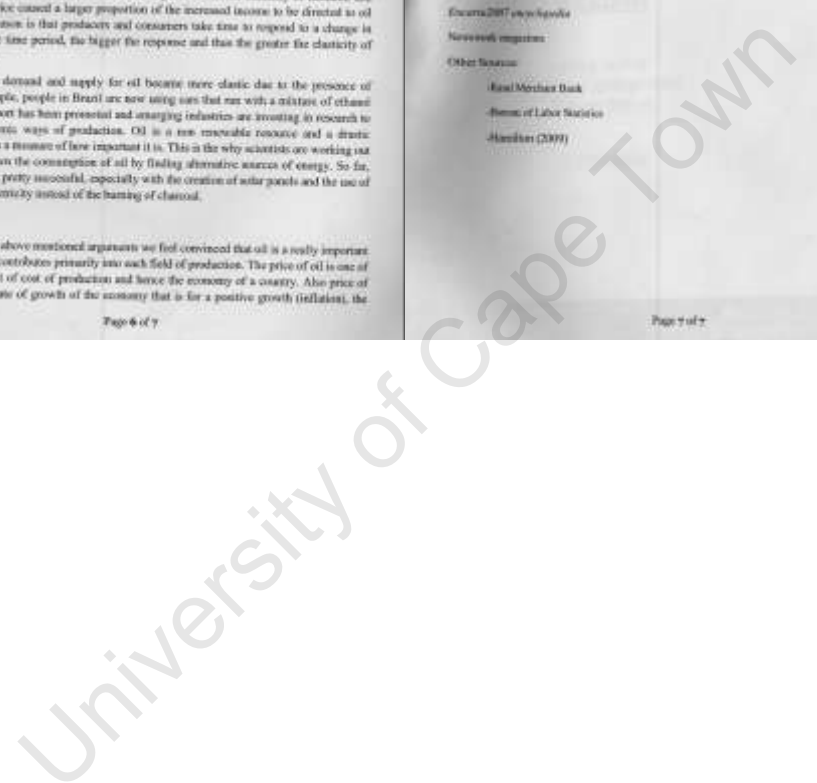
Books: John Hamon, Economics, 10 edition

Economic 2007 www.4mat.com

Newsweek magazine

Other Sources

- Real Market Data
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Hamilton (2009)



Ali's essay

Essay number 1 question:

This profile is designed to give you information about the strengths and weaknesses of your essay. It is not the sole basis for calculating your final mark. Rather, it indicates areas of achievement and areas where you could improve.

Thesis of the paper is unclear or absent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The thesis statement is clearly stated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does not answer the essay question	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Answers the question	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does not define/understand key terms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Defines/understands key terms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No critical understanding of literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Critical understanding of literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Not a clear and cogent argument	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Clear and cogent argument	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does not deal with possible objections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Objections raised and adequately met	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Essay rambles and lacks structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Essay is structured logically	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Many grammatical and spelling errors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Few or no errors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Essay contains excessive quoting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Excessive quoting is avoided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Referencing not acceptable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Referencing acceptable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Comments: This is a very good introduction to the concept of OBE but you have not provided much of an argument to show why/why not it might work in SA, basically this was too theoretical & lacking in detail. You need to consider some of the practical issues with implementing OBE here.

Mark	
Minus into penalty	
Minus referencing penalty	
Final mark	58%

Do we really have OBE? Outcome based education? Is it really as good as it sounds? Or is it just a fancy name for the same old system? But OBE is an appropriate model for the South African education system?

This essay is to deal with the advantages and disadvantages of having an outcome based education (OBE) system in South Africa. Up to 1998, the education system in South Africa was the traditional skills-based education system (Engelbrecht, J., 2003:59). The Council of Education Ministers then made the decision in 1997 to replace this system, also known as the old apartheid curriculum, with the OBE one. The OBE approach was thus implemented into schools in Grades 1-6 in 1999 and progressively phased in after that. (Engelbrecht, J., 2003:59) Personally, I have had to experience of an OBE system since I went through the Mauritian education system.

What is an OBE system though? An OBE system is one which focuses and organizes everything around the essential things a student is expected to do successfully at the end of their learning experience. (Spady, William G., 1994) For this to happen, clear outcomes – these are the main foundation of OBE – has to be set. Outcomes are what are required from students to demonstrate at the end of their learning experience. In other words, outcomes are what students can actually do with the knowledge, competence and qualities they have gained from school in their everyday life. "This means that outcomes are actions and performances that anybody and anybody learner competences in using related information, ideas and tools successfully." (Spady, William G., 1994) Hence, outcomes can be used to monitor at or after the learning experience. Therefore, these can be considered to be the ultimate result that is sought from the learning. (Spady, William G., 1994) Ever since its introduction in South Africa though, OBE has been subject to lots of debates as to whether it is the appropriate educational system for the country or not.

"The OBE paradigm that shapes decision making and patterns of concrete action is the viewpoint that WHAT and WHETHER students learn successfully is more important than WHEN and HOW they learn something." (Spady, William G., 1994) The focus in the grading system whereby learners are awarded "levels" instead of letter grades. This type of grading is an objective one which can be used by teachers under the OBE system. A student will thus earn a "level" only when the teacher is persuaded that the learner has gained enough knowledge from the current material to be able to succeed at the next level of work. Thus, any student who needs to undergo the current material again simply will not obtain the next level at the same time as most of the same-age peers. (Wikipedia, 12/03/09) In other words, a student cannot fail in this system. In fact, this reinforces the philosophy of OBE that all students can learn and succeed. (Gibber, R.E., 12/03/09) If any levels for the fact that all students cannot learn at the same pace. (Spady, William G., 1994) *OK, but that's not exactly the way it was implemented here*

In the traditional education system, students are constantly being tested and given grades all throughout the curriculum. As a result, students mistake knowing part of their goal instead, thus accumulating and continuously reminding them of past errors. Hence, only students who emerge with the best grades and records in this system are those who are resilient and persistent performers. As for the others, it gets really hard to catch up because of their record of earlier mistakes which cannot be erased. On the other hand, an OBE system views these errors as being "inevitable steps along the way to having students develop, internalize and demonstrate high-level performance capabilities". Actually, outcome-based systems assess before learning school, students reach their highest level of performance by focusing on increasing the student's abilities to the highest possible levels. (Spady, William G., 1994) *Is this realistic?*

Those who implement OBE have to regard four clear principles of decision making and action. These principles are in fact considered to be the heart of OBE. The most important and fundamental one among these is the "clarity of focus". In fact, nothing can work in an outcome-based system without it. To begin with, the clarity of focus helps teachers (at least a clear picture of the outcomes they want students to demonstrate. It thus becomes a priority for teachers to ensure that students succeed on these performance demonstrations by instructional planning and student assessment. The clarity of focus also makes sure there is a clear picture of the desired outcome. This is in fact the starting point for curriculum, instruction and assessment planning and implementation. It is imperative for this to go with with the targeted outcome. Finally, the process of teaching begins when the teacher shares, explains and models the outcome on the first day in the classroom and continually thereafter. In this way, both students and the teacher "work together as partners towards achieving a viable clear goal." (Spady, William G., 1994)

Another positive aspect of OBE is that this system promotes cooperative learning as teaching strategy. In fact, learning with or from friends is a normal phenomenon throughout the world. In the school life of a student, this process actually starts once the learner enters kindergarten. In an outcome-based system, a student is encouraged to work with other people within an authentic work environment. Group work will indeed form part of the everyday life of any student. (Gibber, R.E., 12/03/09) This is no doubt very useful in the development of a student. As a matter of fact, once they have entered the labour market, the learner will need to work with various types of persons: people of different race, sex, religion and so on. In other words, the aspect of OBE provides the student with social abilities. As a result, the learner will most probably become a better citizen of tomorrow.

The introduction of the OBE system in South Africa did not come without problems though. Among the shortcomings put forward by OBE opponents is the proposed outcome. Many believe that the standards set are either too understating or too high or simply incorrectly conjured up. (Wikipedia, 12/03/09) Where standards are set too low, many fear that students' achievement will lead to "skinning alive" the academic competence to such a low level that even the weakest student will find it relatively easy to achieve. (Wikipedia, 12/03/09) "Glibly be unhappy with all students meet a minimum standard instead of more students meeting a somewhat higher standard." (Wikipedia, 12/03/09) In cases where standards are set too high, there is a problem of social promotion. Indeed, students may be held back or required to take additional instruction if they do not meet the required standards. (Wikipedia, 12/03/09) This occur especially when the standards are new. As schools are "beginning to adjust to the new standards, a majority of students struggle with at least some of the requirements." (Wikipedia, 12/03/09)

The fact that the OBE system does not provide the teaching context with any specific learning objectives can be considered as another flaw in the system. This system unfortunately "puts the teacher in an inappropriate role – that of a curriculum designer." (Allen, Stephanie M., 20/03/09) This is something that their working day obviously does not allow time for. A good syllabus document usually provides teachers with useful information about the subject they are teaching. For instance, it will provide them about the order the different sections of the subject need to be taught, what approach they need to use and the amount of time required to spend on each. However, an outcome-based curriculum does not provide these useful information. The idea is that it does not matter in what the knowledge areas and skills of the subject are taught in provided students "master the learning outcomes". Yet, order is very important for many subjects. When the OBE system was implemented in South Africa, teachers were allowed to teach the content of their choice, provided they believe that learners will be able to master the learning outcomes. Since the teachers had absolutely no idea what to teach, the approach was a complete disaster. (Allen, Stephanie M., 20/03/09)

Moreover, another huge problem encountered by teachers with the OBE system is the huge paperwork for accommodations. In fact, say when providing results for a class, it would be much easier for the teacher to simply issue a single letter or number for every student. However, the OBE system requires more than that. Instead of providing a grade summarizing an entire term's achievement, the teacher has to give several reports of separate outcomes for a single subject. This system of viewing is surely beneficial for students to know their strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, it is burdensome for teachers as, for example, a "report based in mathematics class" is not sufficient. Instead, the teacher has provide the student results

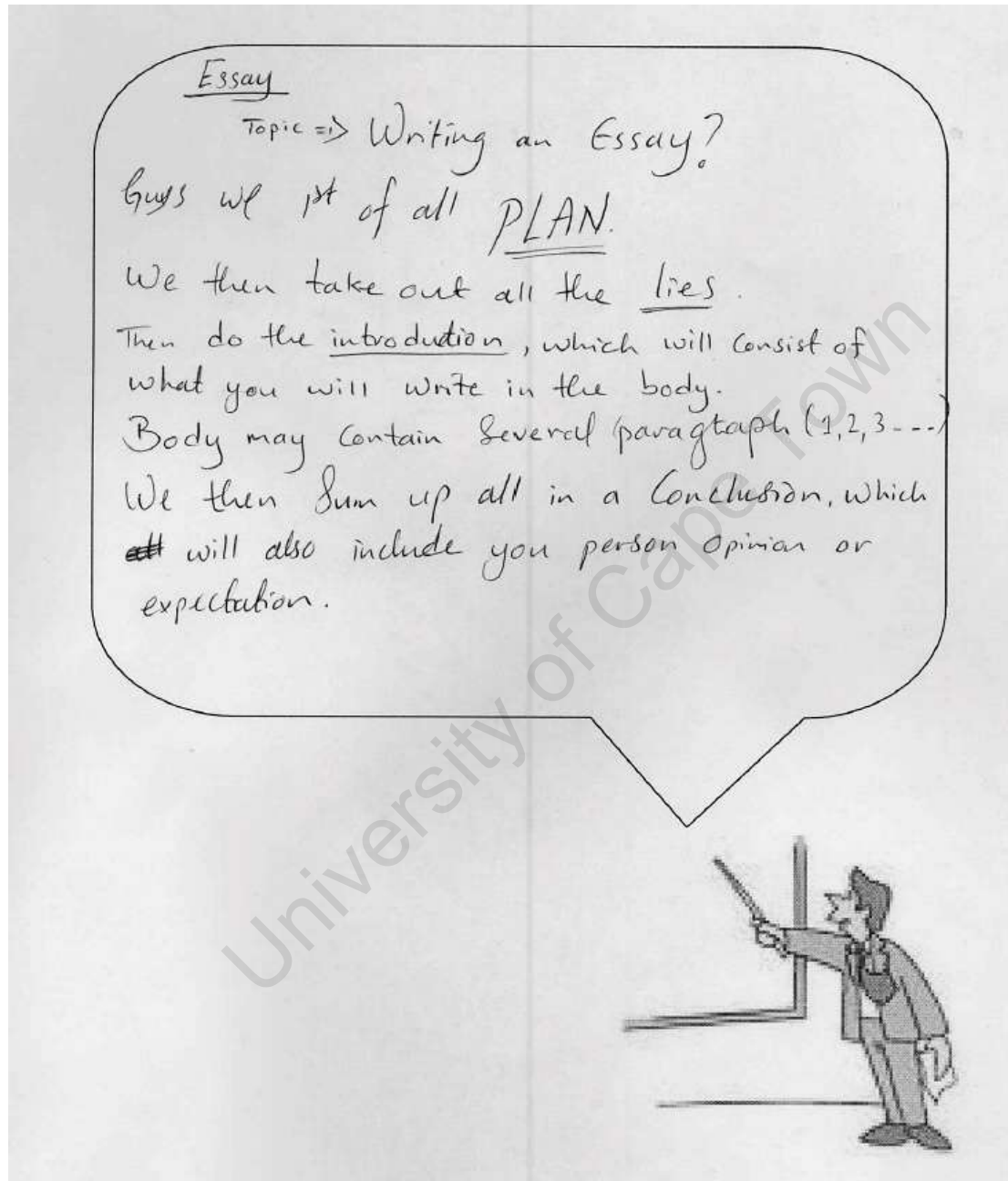
measuring whether he has grasped the concepts of and can add, subtract, multiply and divide and so on. (Doherty, P., 2002:109)

As demonstrated from the above arguments, OBE can have positive, as well as negative, effects on the educational system of South Africa. The introduction of OBE in South Africa was undeniably controversial. However, from my point of view, OBE has much more positive aspects. It is indeed beneficial for South Africa to maintain this system.

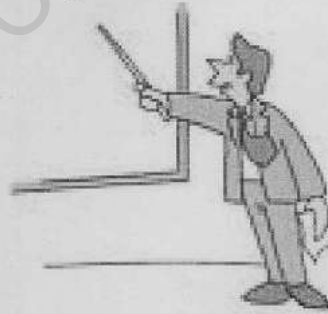
University of Cape Town

Appendix C: The games

1. 'Filling the bubble' – some examples



Hi dear students! How are you all. Today we'll discuss about academic writing. Its quite tough but I'll give you proper guidelines to tackle the problem. First of all, you need to read and understand the question. Underline the keywords and make small notes based on the question. This will help you to avoid irrelevancy. As you are all used to make a plan, it is advised to do so even in the case of an academic essay. Then, find some resources using internet or books. You are not allowed to copy someone else idea. This is plagiarism. For you need to reference each resource. Then make your draft. Remember not to exceed the word limit. Use a DELL inspiron 1525 laptop to write your essay on Microsoft word. Search for graphs to illustrate your ideas. Pictures and illustrations are easier to understand than writing 100 words. At the end don't forget to reference. So the essay should be made up an introduction body and conclusion (personal opinion). Hope the class was not boring class.
Bye ☺



2. The 'survival kit' game

Scenario:

- You and your team have chartered a yacht.
- None of you have any previous sailing experience, and you have hired an experienced skipper and two-person crew.
- As you sail through the Southern Pacific Ocean a fire breaks out and much of the yacht and its contents are destroyed.
- The yacht is slowly sinking.
- Your location is unclear because vital navigational and radio equipment has been damaged.
- The yacht skipper and crew have been lost whilst trying to fight the fire.
- Your best estimate is that you are approximately 1000 miles South West of the nearest landfall.
- You and your friends have managed to save the following 15 items, undamaged and intact after the fire.

1. A sextant
2. A shaving mirror
3. A quantity of mosquito netting
4. A 5 gallon can of water
5. A case of army rations
6. Maps of the Pacific Ocean
7. A floating seat cushion

8. A 2 gallon can of oil/petrol mixture
9. A small transistor radio
10. 20 square feet of Opaque plastic sheeting
11. Shark repellent
12. One quart of 160 per cent proof rum
13. 15ft nylon rope
14. 2 boxes of chocolate bars

15. A fishing kit

· In addition to the above, you have salvaged a four man rubber life craft.

· The total contents of your combined pocket's amounts to a packet of cigarettes, three boxes of matches and 3 £5 notes.

YOUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL WILL DEPEND UPON YOUR ABILITY TO RANK THE ABOVE 15 ITEMS IN THEIR RELATIVE ORDER OF IMPORTANCE.

GOOD LUCK!

Appendix D: Transcript

Excerpt of focus group discussions (transcript translated from Creole)

Researcher: Aditi Hunma

Participants: Sarah, Aryan, Rohit and Yash

Location: Tugwell Hall, UCT Residence

Discussion: Sorting out of cards in order of priority

Duration: fifteen minutes

Italics = intonation

... = short pause

[...] = interruption

() = laughs, murmurs, body language

[[]] = additional information provided by researcher

1. Researcher: OK so discuss amongst yourselves and sort these cards in order of priority.
[[Students discuss the task among themselves]]

Excerpt of the original transcript in Creole (lines 1-7)

' ' = uttered in English

1. Researcher: Ok Dakor. Aster zot explik mwa ... 'knowledge of topic', kifer zot in met sa en premie
2. Rohit: Parse ki si... Guet kuma esse Eco-la, si nou pa ti compran em ki le pe rod dir, pa ti pou cav fer li non ?
3. Sarah : Oui
4. Rohit : Guet couma esse 'demand and supply', si mo pa ti ena en 'knowledge' lor 'demand and supply', mo pa ti pou kav fer li.
5. Researcher: Uh huh
6. Aryan: Apres li bizin 'relevant' ousi.
7. Yash : Apres si, mo pa pense, mo kwar... avan nou vin la, nou ti em cone 'oil crisis' ki ti ete. Pa ti em cone ti ena enn 'crisis'. To pa ti cone. Nou bizin cone. Ki sa pe rod dir?

2. Researcher: OK so now explain to me... Why does 'knowledge of topic' come first?
3. Rohit: Because if... if we can't even grasp what they expect from the essay, we won't be able to do it.
4. Sarah: Yeah
5. Rohit: For instance here it was on demand and supply. If I had no knowledge on demand and supply I wouldn't have been able to do it.
6. Researcher: Uh huh.
7. Aryan: And then it has to be relevant also.
8. Yash: And then also, I don't think... before we came here, many didn't even know what price elasticity was. You didn't even know. We need to know. What does that mean?

9. Aryan: No. 'Knowledge of topic' means understand what the topic is, what are they looking for.
10. Yash: Yeah but they were asking about the oil crisis in 1979. I didn't even know there was a crisis.
11. Researcher: And in lectures, were you given enough knowledge on...
12. Yash: No. You don't get it in lectures
13. Aryan: Yeah
14. Yash: It's only in tutorials that they explain.
15. Aryan: Yeah in tutorials.
16. All: (*murmurs*)

17. Researcher: Alright. And 'time management'?
18. Rohit: It's very very important. Our friend Aryan will tell us more about it. [[Rohit is teasing Aryan here]].
19. Aryan: Time management is extremely - *ironic tone*- important, the most important thing in life.
20. All: (*laughs*)
21. Aryan: You need to know how much time you have. If you have little time, five to ten minutes, you can't do the essay. You need to find time for it, despite all the assignments and pressure.
22. Yash: You need to find – *emphasis* - time.
23. Aryan: Yeah exactly. You need to find time. Then you can use your time more usefully.
24. Rohit: Apart from sitting there and watching Jackie Chan.
25. Aryan: Yeah exactly.

26. Researcher: And how much time do you devote to writing as compared to your other priorities in life?
27. Aryan: You've learnt how to do it. It does not mean using big words [...]
28. Sarah: it's not last but [...]
29. Aryan: It's just the ideas that you need.
30. Researcher: But when you have assignments for other subjects, your core courses then [...]?
31. Aryan: Depends on the question
32. Researcher: What will you tackle first?
33. Yash: Essay essay (*giggles*)
34. Sarah: No other assignments
35. Aryan: Yeah I'll say essay.
36. Sarah: It depends. You look at which one is more scoring.
37. Aryan: Or which one you find more appealing
38. Researcher: So in terms of what you prefer, and you're saying it depends on which one is more scoring.
39. Sarah and Aryan: Yes
40. Yash: It depends on how much time we have [...]
41. Rohit: In the other subjects (Economics, Accounts etc) you are tackling totally new things. You do the essay first because you're more confident in it.

42. Researcher: I see. Now ‘prior writing experience’. We’ve brushed a bit on that.
43. Aryan: Not useful –*categorical tone*.
44. Researcher: So you don’t use it?
45. Rohit: No. You do use it. – *emphasis* - Because if you didn’t have prior writing experience you would never have been able to write an essay here.
46. Sarah: Yeah
47. Rohit: Prior writing experience doesn’t necessarily mean that you do it like GP [...]
48. Aryan: Yeah for me, it’s important because then you can prevent plagiarism and all. You would know what you are writing and you could change it so then it didn’t count as plagiarism.
49. Rohit: I don’t see where plagiarism gets in this – *aggressive tone*. It’s just that you know what you are writing, you know how to formulate your sentences, you know what sentence structure you are using, your topic sentence etc.
50. Researcher: Let us now look at ‘use of essay guidelines’. You said that it’s something you didn’t really use but is it something you will use in future?
51. Rohit: Yeah of course. If we get it.
52. Aryan: (*laughs*)
53. Researcher: ‘Attitude to writing’? How important is it to you?
54. Rohit: If you don’t have a positive attitude towards writing, there’ll be none of this. There’ll be no individual thinking, not this and this and this.
55. Researcher: So all of you, when you were writing your essays, you had a positive attitude towards the exercise?
56. Yash: We changed it afterwards.
57. (*laughs*)
58. Aryan: When you write it in neat, then you get that attitude.
59. All: (*Murmurs*)
60. Researcher: ‘Individual thinking’ [...]
61. Rohit: It’s understanding the topic, thinking what we will write on it, extracting the key words, thinking about how we will develop each key word, extrapolate on the question.
62. Researcher to everyone: So you agree that individual thinking has a role to play when you write essays.
63. Yash: Yes of course
64. Sarah: Of course
65. Researcher: So when you are writing, do you reflect and include your own opinion?
66. Yash: No *softly*
67. Aryan: There are times you are scared to give your opinion. What if...
68. Rohit: No. There are things that are factual that you cannot change
69. Researcher: What if? – *probing tone*
70. Aryan: What if it... What if... the person does not agree with your opinion, and then he can penalize you for your idea.
71. Researcher: OK

72. Aryan: For instance, you may think that the recession is caused by such and such, but he may not agree [...]
73. Rohit: The things that are factual, you cannot change, but your personal opinion always counts.
74. Researcher: And if [...]
75. Aryan: (*murmurs incoherently*)
76. Rohit: No. Your opinion is your opinion. He has the right to object but your opinion is your opinion.
77. Aryan: Yeah but... He can tell you, you can't think like this. You agree.
78. Rohit: No but your opinion also needs to have a certain logic. Not that you are saying something totally different.
79. Researcher: So if you give your opinion and it's logical, you will not be penalized for it?
80. Rohit: Well the factual things cannot be changed.
81. Yash: It's only in your conclusion that you can give your opinion.
82. Rohit: Yeah
83. Researcher: And does your opinion play a role in the way you structure your essay?
84. Rohit: That's right, that's right.
85. Researcher: 'Consultation with peers'. I notice that you have placed it before consultation with faculty.
86. Rohit: Yes
87. Aryan: With peers, you can understand easily. You can ask them more questions.
88. Rohit: *joking tone* - You can swear at them, ill-treat them and if they don't [...]
89. Aryan: Also with peers [...]
90. Yash: Yeah they'll tell you what they've read [...]
91. Rohit: And also the way peers and lecturers think is different. With peers, you get that connection which you get when you work in a team.
92. Yash: When you go to see a friend, you don't say 'Hey is that right?' No it's not like that. He may have read ten books, you may have read ten other books. So we are sharing our ideas and indirectly we get to share the knowledge of twenty books. You see, it's like that.
93. Researcher: ok
94. Yash: Whereas when we go to meet someone from the faculty... we need to have maximum knowledge, then we go to see him.
95. Researcher: So would you feel a bit intimidated let's say to go and see a lecturer?
96. Yash: No, not intimidated
97. Rohit: Not intimidated
98. Yash: Let's say we need to be prepared before meeting with them.
99. Aryan: Yeah with faculty you can feel a bit intimidated in the sense that you cannot go and ask him... You feel uneasy. He may ask you something that you don't know. He may say, 'You didn't read this about demand and supply?' Normally with peers, you don't get that problem.
100. Researcher: So for your first essay, did you consult with the faculty?
101. All: No

102. Researcher: But will you do so in future?
103. Aryan: No
104. Yash: Yes
105. Sarah: For the second one, I did.
106. Aryan: Normally... They won't get time - *rising intonation*... with all the people who go for consultations... There are too many people.
107. Rohit: No. But only those who want to consult with them go there, not everyone.
108. Researcher: OK now 'elaboration'. What are the constraints to elaboration?
109. Yash: Plagiarism
110. Researcher: So you have an idea, you elaborate on it, and it counts as plagiarism?
111. Rohit: When we have a topic, we will have the tendency to Google it, copy, paste that's all.
112. Aryan: That's why I was saying it's important to have prior writing experience. If you have very good writing skills you can change the words, and thus avoid plagiarism'
113. Researcher: So you mean you can then paraphrase adequately.
114. Aryan: Yeah, then you can change it.
115. Yash: You know students here have a good grasp on language. They can use better words to express themselves. You see?
116. Researcher: So then you will still reference it?
117. *Brief silence*
118. All: Yes
119. Researcher: I notice that you have placed 'structure' towards the end. Why?
120. Rohit: Because you develop your ideas extensively first, then you decide what to write in you intro etc. You then format the essay...

Bibliography:

- Baker, F: 2007. 'Internationalisation in higher education: implications and challenges for the University of Cape Town'. Masters Thesis in Social Anthropology. (unpublished).
- Barton, D and Hamilton, M: 2000. 'Literacy practices' in Barton, D, Hamilton, M et al. (eds). Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context. London & New York: Routledge.
- Bernstein, B:1996. Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique. Taylor & Francis: London.
- Bialostok, S and Whitman, R 2006. 'Literacy Campaigns and the Indigenization of Modernity' in Anthropology & Education Quarterly. December 2006, Vol. 37, No. 4. Available online: <http://www.anthrosource.net/doi/abs/10.1525/aeq.2006.37.4.381>. Accessed on 27 October 2008.
- Bissoondoyal, S: 1982. Concise History of Mauritius. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Blommaert, J: 1999. Language Ideological Debates. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Blommaert, J:2005. Discourse: A Critical Introduction.Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Bourdieu, P and Wacquant L:1992. An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, P: 1991. Language and symbolic power (Raymond, G & Adamson, M. Trans.) Cambridge, MA: Polity.
- Cameron, D: 1992. Researching language: issues of power and method. London: Routledge.
- Canagarajah, S:1997. 'Safe Houses in the Contact Zone: Coping Strategies of African-American Students in the Academy' in College Composition and Communication, Vol 48, No 2. Available online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/358665>. Accessed on 27 July 2009.
- Canagarajah, S:2004. 'Subversive identities, pedagogical safe houses' in Norton, B and Toohey, K (ed): 2004. Critical Pedagogies and Languages of Learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, R and Ivanič, R: 1997. The politics of writing. London: Routledge.
- Cloete, N, Maasen, P et al: 2006 (eds). Transformation in higher education: Global pressures and local realities. Michigan: Springer.
- Cross & Mugandi et al:2002. 'From policy to practice' in Comparative Education. Vol.38, no.2, p171-187. Available online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3099783>. Accessed on 2 September 2009.
- Cummins ,J: 1996. Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society. California: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Curry, M.J and Lillis, T: 2004. 'Multilingual scholars and their imperative to publish in English: Negotiating interests, demands, and awards' in TESOL Quarterly. Vol. 38, No. 4, p663-688.

- Deem, R: 2001. 'Globalisation, New Managerialism, Academic Capitalism and Entrepreneurialism in Universities: Is the local dimension important?' in Comparative Education. Vol.37, no.1, p7-20. Available online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3099730>. Accessed on 14 April 2009.
- Feld, S: 1997. 'Simulation Games in Theory Development' in Sociological Forum. Vol.12, No. 1, p103-115. Available online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/684857>. Accessed on 29 August 2009.
- Gee, J.P:1990. Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in discourse. London: Falwer Press.
- Gee, J.P:2000. 'The New Literacy Studies: from 'socially situated' to the work of the social' in Barton, D, Hamilton, M & Ivanič, R. (eds). Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context. London & New York: Routledge.
- Geertz, C: 1973. The interpretation of cultures. New York: Basic Books.
- Geertz, C: 2003. The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays. New York: Basic Books.
- Geiser, J:2009. 'How international students navigate the social and academic practices of a South African University'. Master of Philosophy in Education. (unpublished).
- Hall, S & Jefferson, T: 1993. Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain. London: Routledge.
- Hamilton, M: 2000. 'Expanding the new literacy studies: using photographs to explore literacy as social practice' in Barton, D, Hamilton, M & Ivanič, R. (eds). Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context. London & New York: Routledge.
- Hammersley: 1992. What's wrong with Ethnography? Methodological Explorations. London: Routledge.
- Hammersely:1995. Ethnography: Principles in Practice. London: Routledge.
- Harries,P:2001. 'Missionaries, Marxists and Magic: Power and the Politics of Literacy in South East Africa' in Journal of Southern African Studies. Vol. 27, No. 3. p 405-427. Accessed on 15 March 2009.
- Hennink,M:2007. International Focus Group Research: A Handbook for the Health and Social Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hunma, V: 2002. 'Secondary School Science and Technology in Mauritius' in Science and Technology. Vol, No. p497-511. Available online: <http://springerlink.com>. Accessed on 29 August 2009.
- Hunma, A:2008. 'Analysis of student writings in the faculty of Engineering and Built Environment at UCT'. (unpublished).
- Ivanič, R & Simpson, J: 1992. 'Who's who in academic writing' in Fairclough, N. (ed). Critical Language Awareness. Singapore: Longman.

- Ivanič, R: 1998. Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Ivanic, R, Clark, R et al:2000. 'What Am I Supposed to Make of This? The Messages Conveyed to Students by Tutors' Written Comments' in Lea, M & Stierer, B (eds). Student Writing in Higher Education. UK: Open University Press.
- Ivanič, R & Lea, M.R: 2006. 'New contexts, new challenges: the teaching of writing in UK Higher Education' in Ganobcsik-Williams, L. (ed) Teaching Academic Writing in UK Higher Education. China: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jackson, J: 1995. 'Deja Entendu: The Liminal Qualities of Anthropological Fieldnotes' in Van Maanen (ed). Representation in Ethnography. Michigan: Sage Publications.
- Jewell, E: 2006. The Pocket Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jones, C, Turner, J and Street, B:1999. Student Writing in the University: Cultural and Epistemological Issues. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Co.
- Kishun, R: 2007. 'The Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa: Progress and Challenges' in Journal of Studies in International Education. Vol. 11, No. 3-4, p 455-469. Available online: <http://jsi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/11/3-4/455>. Accessed on 25 July 2009.
- Kraak, A: 2004. 'Discursive Tensions in South Africa Higher Education' in Journal of Studies in International Education. Vol. 8, No. 3, p 244-281. Available online: <http://jsi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/8/3/244>. Accessed on 25 July 2009.
- Lane, J.F: 2000. Pierre Bourdieu: A Critical Introduction. London:Pluto Press.
- Lea, M and Street, B: 2000. 'Student Writing and Staff Feedback in Higher Education: An Academic Literacies Approach' in Lea, M and Stierer (ed). Student Writing in Higher Education: New Contexts. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Leibowitz, B and Mohamed, Y(ed): 2000. Routes to Writing in South Africa. Cape Town: Silk Road International Publishers.
- Leki,I:1995. 'Coping strategies of ESL students in writing tasks across the curriculum' in TESOL Quarterly. Vol. 29, No.2. Available online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3587624>. Accessed on 26 March 2009.
- Lillis, T: 2001. Student Writing: Access, Regulation, Desire. London & New York: Routledge.
- Lillis, T and Scott, M: 2007. 'Defining academic literacies research: issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy' in Journal of Applied Linguistics. Available online:

- <http://www.equinoxjournals.com/ojs/index.php/JAL/article/viewArticle/4563>. Accessed on 10 September 2009.
- Lillis, T:2008. 'Ethnography as Method, Methodology and "Deep Theorising": Closing the Gap Between Text and Context in Academic Writing Research' in Written Communication. Vol. 25, No. 3, p 353-388. Available online: <http://wcx.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/25/3/353>. Accessed on 29 April 2009.
- Maybin, J: 1994. 'Children's voices: talk, knowledge and identity' in Graddol, D, Maybin, J and Stierer, B. (Eds.) Researching language and literacy in social context. UK: Multilingual Matters.
- McLellan, C: 2008. 'Speaking of Internationalisation: An Analysis Policy of Discourses on Internationalisation in Higher Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa' in Journal of Studies in International Education. Vol. 12, No. 2, p 131-147. Available online: <http://jsi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/12/2/131>. Accessed on 25 July 2009
- Merriam, S: 1988. Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach. London: Jossey Bass.
- Mesthrie, R: 1992. Language in Indenture: A sociolinguistic study of Bhojpuri-Hindi in South Africa. London:Routledge.
- Mesthrie, R:2000. Introducing Sociolinguistics. Edingburgh: Edingburgh University Press.
- Mesthrie, R: 2002 (ed). Language in South Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Miles, M and Huberman, M:1994. Qualitative Data Analysis. London: Sage Publications.
- Miles, W: 2000. 'The Politics of Language Equilibrium in a Multilingual Society: Mauritius' in Comparative Politics. Vol. 32, No. 2, p 215-230. Available online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/422398>. Accessed on 28 August 2009.
- Mthembu, T: 2004. 'Creating a niche in internationalization for (South) African higher education institutions' in Journal of Studies in International Education. Vol. 8, No. 3, p 282-296. Available online: <http://jsi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/8/3/282>. Accessed on 14 April 2009
- Muller, J: 2000. Reclaiming knowledge. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Nomdo, G: 2006. 'Identity, power and discourse: The socio-political self-representations of successful 'black' students' in Thesen, L and van Pletzen, E (eds). Academic Literacy and the Languages of Change. London: Continuum.
- Pardoe, S: 2000. 'Respect and the pursuit of 'symmetry' in researching literacy and student writing' in Barton, D, Hamilton, M and Ivanič, R (eds). Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context. London:Routledge.

- Paxton, M: 2006. 'Intertextual analysis: a research tool for uncovering the writer's emerging meanings' in Thesen, L and van Pletzen, E. (eds.) Academic literacy and the language of change. London: Continuum.
- Rouhani, S: 2007. 'Internationalisation of South African Higher Education in the Post-Apartheid era' in Journal of Studies in International Education. Vol.11, No. 3-4, p 470-485. Available online: <http://jsi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/11/3-4/470>. Accessed on 29 August 2009.
- Sarangi, S: 2006. 'The conditions and consequences of professional discourse studies' in Kiely, R, Rea-Dickins, P, Woodfield, H and Clibbon, G. (Eds.) Language, culture and identity in applied linguistics. London: Equinox.
- Schoorinan, D: 1999. 'The Pedagogical Implications of Diverse Conceptualizations of Internationalization: A U.S. Based Case Study' in Journal of Studies in International Education. Vol.3, No. 9, p 19-46. Available online: <http://jsi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/3/9/19>. Accessed on 29 August 2009.
- Scott, D and Usher, R: 1996. Understanding educational research. London: Routledge.
- Seepe, S (ed): 2004. Towards an African Identity of Higher Education. Pretoria: Vista University.
- Setati, M, Adler, J, Reed, Y and Bapoo, A: 2002. 'Code-switching and other language practices in mathematics, science and English language classrooms in South Africa' in Adler, J and Reed, Y. (Eds.) Challenges of Teacher-Development: An Investigation of take-up in South Africa. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Skeat, W: 2005. A Concise Etymological Dictionary of English Language. New York: Cosimo Inc.
- Street, B: 1993. Cross-cultural approaches to literacy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thesen, L: 1994. 'Voices in Discourse: Re-thinking shared meaning in academic writing'. Master of Philosophy Thesis in Education. (unpublished).
- Thesen, L: 1997. 'Voices, Discourse, and Transition: In Search of New Categories in EAP' in TESOL Quarterly. Vol. 31, No. 3, p 487-511.
- Thesen, L and van Pletzen, E: 2006. Academic literacy and the language of change. London: Continuum.
- Thomason S, Kaufman, T: 1991. Language contact, creolisation and genetic linguistics. Oxford: University of California Press.
- Torres, R-M: 2001. Lifelong Learning: Where and how does basic adult education fit? Study commissioned by SIDA. Buenos Aires.
- Van Maanen, J: 1995. 'An end to innocence. The ethnography of ethnography' in Van Maanen, J. (ed) Representation in Ethnography. Michigan: Sage Publications.

- Vaughan, M:2005. Creating the Creole Island: Slavery in Eighteenth Century Mauritius. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Wilson, A:2000. 'There is no escape from third-space theory: borderland discourse and the 'in-between' literacies of prisons' in Barton, D, Hamilton, M et al. (eds). Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context. London:Routledge.
- Winkler, G: 1997. 'The myth of the mother tongue: evidence from Maryvale College, Johannesburg' in South African Journal of Applied Language Studies. Vol.5, no.1, p 29-39.

Online electronic resources:

- 'Commerce Faculty Handbook 2009'. Available online:
http://www.uct.ac.za/downloads/uct.ac.za/apply/handbooks/fac_com_09.pdf. Accessed on 12 April 2009.
- 'Engineering and Built-in Environment (EBE) Handbook 2009'. Available online:
http://www.uct.ac.za/downloads/uct.ac.za/apply/handbooks/fac_ebe_2009.pdf. Accessed on 12 April 2009.
- 'Health Science Faculty Handbook 2009'. Available online:
http://www.uct.ac.za/downloads/uct.ac.za/apply/handbooks/fac_health_09.pdf. Accessed on 12 April 2009.
- 'CIE General paper syllabus'. Available online:
[http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/mesweb/CIE%20Sullabus%20and%20support%20for%20Cen%20\(E\)/pdf/8009_w07_er.pdf](http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/mesweb/CIE%20Sullabus%20and%20support%20for%20Cen%20(E)/pdf/8009_w07_er.pdf). Accessed on 25 May 2009.
- 'CIE Report 2007'. Available online:
[http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/mesweb/CIE%20Sullabus%20and%20support%20for%20Cen%20\(E\)/pdf/8009_w07_er.pdf](http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/mesweb/CIE%20Sullabus%20and%20support%20for%20Cen%20(E)/pdf/8009_w07_er.pdf). (Also visit <http://www.cie.org.uk/docs>) Accessed on 23 May 2009.
- 'IAPO International students statistics 2009'. Available online:
www.uct.ac.za/about/iapo/overview/statistics/. Accessed on 4 June 2009.
- 'IAPO Welcome 2009'. Available online: [http:// www.uct.ac.za/about/iapo/overview/welcome/](http://www.uct.ac.za/about/iapo/overview/welcome/). Accessed on 3 April 2009.
- 'Lost at Sea exercise'. Available online: <http://www.training-manager.co.uk/documents/TMSS-LostatSeaExercise.pdf>. Accessed on 30 April 2009.
- 'Ministry of Education, Government of Mauritius'. Available online:
<http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/education>. Accessed on 21 June 2009.

'TEC Report 2004'. Available online: <http://tec.intnet.mu/tertiary%20education%20system.htm>.

Accessed on 4 July 2009.

'World@UCT, August 2009'. Available online: <http://www.world@uct.ac.za>. Accessed on 2 September 2009.

'HSC Statistics 2008'. Available online:

http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/mesweb/hscstats/hsc2008_grd_disbpersub_as_level.htm. Accessed on 29 March 2009.

'UCT - policy on internationalization'. Available online:

www.uct.ac.za/downloads/uct.ac.za/about/iapo/internat_pol.doc. Accessed on 3 March 2009.

University of Cape Town

University of Cape Town