

**Master's Dissertation**

**30 November 2011**

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**Title**

*Investigating the efficacy of the “Skills for a Changing World” first-year literacy course*

I declare that this dissertation is my own original work undertaken in fulfilment of my Master's degree in the Faculty of Humanities, Department of English, at the University of the Free State. The use of any resources, materials or any part of another person's work has been acknowledged and is fully referenced in the reference list at the end of the text.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am indebted to my supervisor, Dr Arlys van Wyk, for her invaluable advice, support and encouragement.

I would also like to acknowledge the Language Facilitators at Bloemfontein South Campus for their participation in the study and their dedication to the programme throughout 2010. Furthermore, I thank Ms Merridy Wilson-Strydom, Prof. Carisma Nel, Dr Jacques Raubenheimer, and Dr Willfred Greyling and Prof. Kalie Strydom for their professional support and guidance.

I thank my loving husband, Gert, for all his support and encouragement without which the completion of this work would not have been possible; and my three precious children for their patience and understanding.

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## List of abbreviations

AARP:	Alternative Admissions Research Project
AL:	Academic Literacy Test
ALC 108:	English Academic Literacy Course
AP:	Admission Point
AQL:	Academic Literacy and Quantitative Literacy
BICS:	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CALP:	Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency
CBI:	Content-based Instruction
CHED:	Centre for Higher Education Development
CLA:	Critical Language Awareness
CPP:	Career Preparation Programme
EAL:	English as an Additional Language
EAP:	English for Academic Purposes
EM:	Extrinsic Motivation
ESL:	English Second Language
FET:	Further Education and Training
FSHEC:	Free State Higher Education Consortium
HE:	Higher Education
IELTS:	International English Language Testing System
IM:	Intrinsic Motivation
L1:	First Language
L2:	Second Language
MAT:	Mathematics Test
NBT:	National Benchmark Test
NCS:	National Senior Certificate
PTEEP:	Placement Test in English for Educational Purposes
QL:	Quantitative Literacy Test
SC:	Senior Certificate
SFCW:	Skills for a Changing World
SL:	Second Language
SLA:	Second Language Acquisition
SLL:	Second Language Learning
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages  
TL: Target Language  
UCT: University of Cape Town  
UFS: University of the Free State



## Abstract

The academic performance of students entering higher education in South Africa has been high on the agenda of universities, organisations working in this sector, the Department of Education, and the media. The reason for this is that many students do not meet the admission requirements for higher education institutions. The low level of academic language proficiency of first-year students in particular is evidenced by entry-level proficiency testing. In response to this problem, new English literacy materials were generated at the University of the Free State to target such students and provide a potential access route to higher education institutions.

The investigation of the efficacy of the *Skills for a Changing World* English literacy course employed a two-part study. The first, a pilot study, encompassed a non-equivalent quasi-experimental research approach which focussed on the performance of a non-equivalent control and experimental group in two different English literacy programmes. The results showed that the new English literacy course neither significantly improved the reading scores nor the academic performance of the students. Further qualitative research was required to investigate issues such as student motivation, students' perceptions of learning, and facilitators' perceptions of teaching. These are addressed in the current Master's study, which adopts a mixed-method approach, where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected simultaneously in the form of pre- and post-test scores, facilitator journal entries, student focus groups, transcriptions of facilitator meetings, and a student questionnaire. The research methodology encompassed an ethnographic study, which involved working with students and facilitators who had been exposed to the *Skills for a Changing World* English literacy materials for one academic year. The goal of the Master's study is to determine whether the course changed students' performance on the National Benchmark Tests (NBT); what students' perceptions were of their learning on the course; how facilitators experienced teaching the course materials; and whether students enjoyed the course content. The results unfortunately showed a drop in student performance on the NBT post-test, which could possibly be explained by lack of motivation to perform in a test that does not count for marks. Furthermore, the qualitative data seemed to indicate that some students failed to see the value of the course, and that some of the materials were irrelevant and uninteresting. It is postulated that this could have impacted on student motivation, and thus their

performance on the course. The lack of facilitator training in English Second Language (ESL) composition also became apparent in the assessment of students' work. Content-based instruction (CBI) is discussed as a potential solution to these issues, with a particular focus on formative assessment as an integral part thereof.

Key words: academic literacy, first-year literacy course, second language learning, tertiary language development

## **Chapter 1:**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

<sup>1\*</sup>The academic performance of students entering higher education, particularly those who completed the new National Senior Certificate (NSC) qualification, has been high on the agenda of universities, organizations working in the South African Higher Education (HE) sector, the Department of Education, and the media. There has been much speculation about the extent to which this new school-leaving qualification prepares students for university-level study (Wilson-Strydom, 2009), as many students do not meet the admission requirements for HE institutions. This stems partly from the new government policy, which enshrines the language rights of the individual. At the same time, government advocates teaching through the medium of the home language while additional languages are learnt as subjects; or teaching through the medium of two languages. Essentially, the early switch to English combined with poor teaching, results in the development of what Cummins (2008) terms basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) in English, but not the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) skills needed to deal with advanced levels of (context-reduced) literacy in either the home language or English (Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006: 30). Furthermore, the final matriculation examination system makes it possible to pass English Second Language (ESL) with only basic, functional literacy and low-level processing skills. Students from poorly resourced schools are failing the overall examination in large numbers and are not qualifying for university entrance (Thesen & Van Pletzen, 2006: 31) [Drennan, 2010: 8].

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<sup>1</sup> An asterisk (\*) is indicative of a repetition of information that appeared in a previous pilot study. Given that the current study is an extension of the pilot study, it is required that certain information be duplicated (Pilot source: Drennan, 2010).

## 1.2 Definition of key terms and components

**National Senior Certificate (NSC):** This refers to the school-leaving certificate in South Africa and is the equivalent of a high school diploma. This is otherwise known as the ‘matric’ certificate, obtained upon the successful completion of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade of school.

**Basic Interpersonal Skills (BICS):** This refers to conversational fluency in a language, English being the language of focus in this study.

**Cognitive Academic Language Skills (CALP):** This refers to a student’s ability, in both oral and written modes, to understand and express concepts and ideas relevant to school success. These skills are said to develop through social interaction from birth and reflect the language that children acquire at school which is needed for the successful progression through the various grades, hence the term ‘academic’.

**Alternative Admissions Research Project (AARP):** \*The genesis of the Alternative Admissions Research Project (AARP) was a “politico-educational strategy to increase the recruitment of black students” (Yeld, 2001: 8). The Placement Tests in English for Educational Purposes (PTEEP) of the AARP were developed by Nan Yeld, as leader of a development team, at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The intention was to provide an additional source of information in combination with information from the Senior Certificate (SC) examination to provide access opportunities for students whose SC results would not necessarily reveal their ability to succeed in Higher Education (Yeld, 2001). The PTEEP was developed “in recognition of the crucial role of the language of learning, English, in the academic progress of its students. The tests are based on the notion of what Cummins (e.g. 2000, 1984, 1980) has called ‘cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), and aim to identify students who will succeed in their studies, while recognising the effects of educational disadvantage on test performance” (Yeld, 2001: 8). The results of the AARP tests, written in February 2009, indicated that the area in which students struggle most concerns their understanding of the structure and organisation/relations between parts of text. Based on these findings, it was recommended in a report generated by the Free State Higher Education Consortium (FSHEC) that language development be extended and

intensified, given that language competence is critical for success in all areas, particularly in the area of learning (Wilson-Strydom, 2009) [Drennan, 2010: 8-9].

**Free State Higher Education Consortium (FSHEC):** \*Neil Butcher and Associates conducted a survey (Wilson-Strydom, 2007) of participating FSHEC institutions, as well as regional Further Education and Training (FET) colleges to assess what skills are required in the current globalised and increasingly computerised world, and how the education sector can respond. The key focus of the research was to identify areas of priority within the Free State region regarding the generic skills to be developed. Research participants were requested to identify the areas in which students were most under-prepared for post-schooling study. The following six areas of skills needs were identified (adapted from Wilson-Strydom, 2007: 18) [Drennan, 2010: 9]:

- Language and literacy (English reading, comprehension, writing skills) (73%)
- Thinking skills (critical, creative and higher order thinking skills) (43%)
- Numeracy (maths literacy) (36%)
- Communication and presentation skills (verbal and written communication) (30%)
- Study skills (managing study workload) (27%)
- Computer skills and information management (27%)

Thus, literacy skills were identified as the most crucial. The following student target group was identified (Wilson-Strydom, 2007: 24) in the survey report:

- Learners unable to automatically gain access to Higher Education (HE) mainstream programmes or extended HE degrees; and
- Learners wishing to obtain skills with which to exit into the world of work or who later wish to seek access into HE.

***Skills for a Changing World Programme (SFCW):*** \*In response to the areas of propriety identified by the FSHEC, the *Skills for a Changing World* programme (SFCW), funded by the Ford Foundation, was conceptualized to address the current crisis in school education in South Africa and address the above-mentioned skills needs. The aim is to provide an alternative for learners who have either dropped out or failed, but need skills to access the job market. The English language literacy course is one of four core modules developed for the programme. Sections of the literacy course were piloted successfully during two separate mini-pilot workshops in 2009,

one in March and another in September/October. Based on the success of the materials during these workshops, the University of the Free State (UFS) decided to pilot the English language literacy course at the UFS Bloemfontein South Campus (formerly known as Vista) as the language module (ALC 108) in the Career Preparation Programme (CPP) [Drennan, 2010: 9-10].

**Career Preparation Programme (CPP):** \*The UFS established a selection, development, and bridging programme (CPP) in collaboration with colleges in the Further Education Sector in 1990. The aim was to provide historically disadvantaged students, and students who qualify for higher education admission in subregions, with an opportunity to register for general-formative and vocationally-directed studies at various educational institutions in the region. The admission requirement to the CPP is a National Senior Certificate (NSC) with a minimum Admission Point (AP) of 17, which is calculated according to the levels of achievement obtained in the final Grade 12 examination for Grade 12 subjects [Drennan, 2010: 10].

The aforementioned information provides an understanding of the school-leaving achievement levels of student enrolled on the *Skills for a Changing World* Programme. It is, however, also important to assess the facilitators on the programme. There were ten facilitators who taught on the programme during the course of 2010. Their ages ranged between 22 and 67 years, the lowest qualification being a BA degree, and the highest a PhD. One facilitator had a BA degree, two had BA or BEd degrees with a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), two had honours degrees, three facilitators had MA degrees, and one facilitator had a PhD. The number of years these facilitators had been involved in language development ranged between 1 and 30 years, the average being 9 years. Many of the facilitators had been involved in the previous CPP programmes, the number of years ranging between 0 and 14 years, with an average of 5 years. Nine of the ten facilitators were female, and only one facilitator was male.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The proposed research topic examines the efficacy of the *Skills for a Changing World* English literacy course. Given that it is a new language intervention, and could possibly serve as a useful tool within higher education institutions, it is necessary to investigate as many factors as possible that could potentially influence the efficacy of such an intervention. For this reason, this ethnographic study encompasses a mixed-methodology approach, where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected in the form of facilitator journal entries, student focus groups, transcriptions of facilitator meetings, a student questionnaire, as well as pre- and post-test results and end-semester course results. The research questions for the current study are the following:

1. Did the course change student performance on the NBTs?
2. What are student perceptions of their learning on the course?
3. How did facilitators experience teaching the materials?
4. Did learners enjoy the content?

### **1.4 Significance of the study**

The SFCW English literacy course is a newly designed component of a programme that serves as an access route for students into mainstream university. It complies with the principle of good teaching practice in that the efficacy of a new intervention should be evaluated and refined before it is permanently adopted into a programme of learning. There was a two-part objective to the study of the efficacy of the programme. The first objective was to review the effect, if any, of these materials on students' summative assessment and their achievement in the English Reading Level test by means of a pilot study. The second objective included determining whether the course changed student performance on the NBTs; what student perceptions were of their learning on the course; how facilitators experienced teaching the materials; and whether students enjoyed the content of the course. This information was collected for the current Master's study. The findings of these two studies will facilitate the movement towards delivering improved outcomes, and the SFCW English literacy

course would subsequently become a useful tool at tertiary level to assist low-proficiency high-school graduates in university access programmes. Furthermore, government funding for foundation support programmes compels universities to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of service delivery to students who need the support.

Given that this particular study is an extension of a previous pilot study, *Investigating the efficacy of the “Skills for a Changing World” first-year literacy course: a small-scale quantitative study*, there are several theoretical underpinnings that pertain to this study as well. For this reason, various sections from the previous pilot dissertation have been included in the literature review of this paper, and reference is made to the quantitative findings of the previous paper. This study takes into account more recent theories, namely the *literacy studies* approach, and the sections from the previous study will be revised in the light of this particular approach. However, where replication occurs, reference is made to the pilot paper (Drennan, 2010) as the source. The Master’s study, however, includes substantial qualitative data and some quantitative data in an attempt to triangulate and elaborate on the findings of the first small, quantitative study.

The next section of the study comprises a literature review, followed by the research design and methodology, the results of the study, a discussion based on the findings, and finally a conclusion, implications and recommendations section.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **2. Literature review**

The literature review is comprised of 5 sections, namely academic literacy, academic reading, academic writing, content-based instruction (CBI), and motivation. The first section on academic literacy deals predominantly with literacy studies. Second language acquisition and second language learning, low proficiency, as well as basic interpersonal skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) are also addressed in the light of academic literacy. The second section explores academic reading, with background knowledge and extensive reading as two further important components of the framework for this study. Sections 3 and 4 of the

literature review deal with academic writing and content-based instruction respectively. The final section looks at motivation as an important contributing factor to student achievement and success. This section furthermore addresses the temporal dimension of motivation, the process-oriented approach to understanding student motivation, as well as a collaborative model of L2 motivation, which is used to evaluate student motivation pertaining to the SFCW English literacy course.

## 2.1 Academic literacy

According to Gee, there is a “way of talking about literacy and linguistics” (2001: 525), which involves integrating “psycho” and “social” approaches to languages. This approach is what is referred to as *literacy studies*. According to this perspective, the focus of literacy studies or applied linguistics should be on *social practices*, not language (or literacy) – “it is not just *what* you say, but *how* you say it” (2001: 525). This approach emphasises the importance of “*saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations*”, otherwise termed “Discourses”. These are “ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes” (2001: 526). Discourses can only be mastered by means of scaffolded, supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse – by means of practice. Gee identifies certain key terms; namely *primary Discourse*, *secondary Discourses*, *dominant and nondominant Discourses*, which require some clarification. Explanations of these terms are given in the table below.

**Table 1: Types of Discourses (adapted from Gee 2001: 527)**

Term	Definition	Use	Means of acquisition
<i>primary Discourse</i>	original and home-based sense of identity	to interact with others and make sense of the world	by being a member of a family, clan, peer group (socialising group)
<i>secondary Discourse</i>	the Discourses demanded by social institutions	fluency allows access to these institutions and permits practice within them	fluency in terms of Discourses of public sphere institutions (local stores, churches, schools, community groups, organisations and agencies, and the like)



<i>dominant Discourses</i>	secondary Discourses	used within particular public sphere institution	fluency gains one the acquisition of social “goods” (money, prestige, status)
<i>nondominant Discourses</i>	secondary Discourses	used within particular public sphere institution	mastery results in solidarity within particular social network, but no wider status and social goods

Gee argues that tension or conflict may exist between any two of a person’s Discourses, which can impact on acquisition of one or the other, or both of the conflicting Discourses. At the very least, this conflict can influence the fluency of a mastered Discourse. This tension is particularly acute when it involves an individual’s primary Discourse and a dominant secondary Discourse. The reason for this is because the power of dominant groups in society lies in the fluency of the dominant Discourse, so ‘tests’ of fluency in this regard are used as *gates* to exclude “non-natives”. Gee also states that two discourses can interfere with one another – aspects of one Discourse can be transferred to another Discourse. He uses the example of primary Discourse being influenced by secondary Discourses, such as those used in schools and business. Furthermore, if an individual fails to master a certain secondary Discourse, this can result in them falling back their primary Discourse, which could, according to Gee, be socially disastrous. For these reasons, Gee (2001: 529) insists that a definition of literacy should be based on the notion of Discourse, defining it as “*the mastery of or fluent control over a secondary Discourse...always being plural: literacies*”.

What does this mean in terms of this particular study? It could be understood as follows: the students involved in this study all have a similar primary Discourse – a Discourse, which is in conflict with the secondary Discourse - academic discourse in this case. In respect of the primary Discourse of the students involved in this study, there are a number of factors that need to be taken into account. It is a recognized fact that students’ general knowledge of the world is essential when it comes to second-language learning. Lightbown and Spada (1993: 19) are of the opinion that “this kind of knowledge makes it easier to understand language because one can sometimes make good guesses about what the interlocutor is probably saying even

when the language carrying the message is very difficult”. Their general knowledge of the world, however, is knowledge that would have been gained in their mother tongue via their primary Discourse. In this regard, Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991: 205) postulate that students’ mother tongue deeply affects progress in SL learning and inevitably their literacy. Furthermore, they argue that the development of L2 is partially dependent on the L1 academic language, and the development of the mother tongue as an academic language impacts on students’ ability to acquire second-language learning. Kapp (1994: 27) points out that many South African students are unable to cope with the demands at university since their schooling fails to provide them with the linguistic conceptual knowledge to do so. Moreover, given that cultural knowledge is gained via language through which knowledge of the world is gained, should cultural knowledge not be adequately acquired, this could have an impact on the acquisition of reading and writing – essential components of the secondary Discourse. Another very important factor regarding these students’ primary Discourse, as speakers of African vernaculars, is that they often require academic support as a result of their “primary and secondary education [having] been so impoverished that they missed out on the academic experiences which are necessary to develop some of the concepts and schema they need to deal with tertiary studies” (Blacquièrè, 1989: 78). The African culture also tends to have more of an oral tradition, which focuses on spoken rather than written language. In turn, culture is transmitted via face-to-face transmission, which could cause ‘tension’ between the primary Discourse and the emphasis on print of the secondary Discourse. Therefore, a culture of reading could serve as a potential challenge for such students (Seligmann, 1999: 5), given their print-poor background. As a result, these students would experience difficulty when confronted with the written forms of assessment at higher education institutions. Seligmann (1999: 77) argues that the “general practice of giving written formal tests and examinations suggests a serious cultural bias in favour of Western concepts of academic achievement”.

Considering that primary Discourse refers to their sense of identity in terms of how they make sense of the world, one cannot ignore the fact that this primary Discourse does not include mastery of the English academic language, which is a demand or requirement for gaining access to the secondary Discourse, or dominant academic discourse. The secondary Discourse, in this case, is dominant, as mastery of the

Discourse results in the acquisition of social ‘goods’ in the form of attaining a degree and potentially a place in whichever field of study the student has chosen – a potential career in other words. This secondary Discourse is used by the dominant social group (the university as institution) as a *gate* to exclude *non-natives (struggling students)*, since those who fail to demonstrate fluency in the secondary Discourse fail their courses as a result. This argument can be supported by Gee’s statement (2001: 531) that many middle-class mainstream status-giving Discourses stress the superficial features of language because they are “the *best* test as to whether one was apprenticed in the ‘right’ place, at the ‘right’ time, with the ‘right’ people”. A further obstacle for such students is that such “‘superficialities’ cannot be taught in a regular classroom...they can’t be ‘picked up’ later, outside the full context of an early apprenticeship” (2001: 533). There is, however, some hope. Classroom instruction (in content-based literacy, study skills, writing, critical thinking, and the like) leads to meta-knowledge, which is liberation and power, as it allows for the ability to manipulate, analyze, and to resist while advancing. Therefore, these ‘maladapted’ students could have the upper hand, since they experience difficulty in accommodating or adapting results while becoming consciously aware of what they are trying to do (Gee, 2001). By coupling meta-knowledge and resistance with Discourse development, the development of “mushfake” Discourse is possible. Gee (1990: 7) describes “mushfaking” in the following way: “You learn the Discourse by becoming a member of the group: you start as a ‘beginner’, watch what is done, go along with the group as if you know what you are doing when you don’t and eventually you can do it on your own” . Gee posits that a combination of these three elements (meta-knowledge, resistance and Discourse development) could possibly be a recipe for successful students and successful social change (Gee, 2001).

Gee furthermore specifies various important points about Discourse as follows (Gee, 1990: 144):

- Discourses are inherently ‘ideological’ – they involve a set of values and viewpoints about the relationships between people and the distribution of social goods.
- Discourses are resistant to internal criticism and self-scrutiny, since uttering viewpoints that seriously undermine them defines one as being on the outside. The Discourse itself defines what counts as acceptable criticism, which is

always lodged from some set of assumed values, attitudes, beliefs and ways of talking/writing, and from within some Discourse.

- Discourse-defined positions from which to speak and behave are not just defined internally by a Discourse, but also as standpoints taken up by the Discourse in its relation to other, ultimately opposing, Discourses.
- Any Discourse concerns itself with certain objects and puts forward certain concepts, viewpoints and values at the expense of others. In doing so, it will marginalize viewpoints and values central to other Discourses.
- Discourses are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society. Control over certain Discourses can lead to the acquisition of social goods (money, power, status) in a society. These Discourses empower those groups who have the least conflict with their other Discourses when they use them.

In accordance with the literacy-studies approach in an academic context, Lea and Street (2006) argue that three overlapping perspectives could be used to conceptualize approaches to student literacy. These perspectives include a study skills model, an academic socialisation model, and an academic literacies model. The first model presumes that students' knowledge of writing and literacy can be transferred from one context to another. It focuses on the transmission of skills. The second model is concerned with students' acquiring ways of talking, writing, thinking and using literacy pertaining to a particular discipline or subject area community. The presumption here is that these disciplinary discourses and genres are relatively stable and easily reproduced once ground rules are understood. Academic literacies, the third model, focus on meaning-making, identity, power and authority with regard to any particular academic context. These three models overlap since all three can be applied to any academic context, and, at a theoretical level, both the academic socialisation and academic literacies models focus on the relationship that exists between epistemology and acts of writing and literacy in subject areas and disciplines (Lea & Street, 2006).

Lea and Street's perspective relates to this study in that the three models are useful as they assist in the understanding of writing and other literacy practices in academic contexts. The literacy-studies approach obliges the language practitioner to interrogate

ways of delivering literacy courses in terms of framework; aims; content and teaching approach. They also serve to assist educators “who are developing curriculum, institutional programmes, and being reflective on their own teaching practices” (2006: 228). In practical terms, the relevance of Lea and Street’s perspective will be discussed in detail below. A table including the details of the three overlapping models is included prior to the discussion.

**Table 2: Overlapping models (adapted from Lea and Street, 2006: 228)**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Focus</b>
<i>Skills model</i>	focuses on use of written language (sentence structure, grammar, punctuation)
<i>Academic socialisation model</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focuses on use of various genres and discourses to construct knowledge</li> <li>• focuses on growth in constructivism and situated learning as organising frames</li> </ul>
<i>Academic literacies model</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focuses on skills and academic socialisation models</li> <li>• focus goes further by concentrating on relationship power, authority, meaning-making and identity</li> <li>• does not view literacy practices as residing entirely in disciplinary and subject-based communities</li> <li>• examines how literacy practices from other institutions are implicated in what students need to learn to do</li> </ul>

Lea and Street (2006: 229) argue that the academic literacies model can be used as a “design frame for the development of curriculum and instruction in two academic contexts”. These two academic contexts refer to a university programme for widening participation in the university for linguistic minority students, and a university law programme. Reference to this particular programme reveals the following (2006: 229):

- the link between cultural practices and different genres is identified;

- the importance of feedback on students' written assignments in the learning process is identified; and
- both students and tutors can learn much from the foregrounding of both meaning-making and identity in the writing process.

In order to emphasise the relevance of the above focus in terms of the *Skills for a Changing World* programme, the researcher has tabulated the similarities between the Academic Literacy Development Programme (UK) and the SFCW first-year literacy course (SA) below. The programme referred to in Lea and Street's article is the Academic Literacy Development Programme offered by King's College London, in the UK. This particular programme is relevant since the students who participated in the programme were from linguistic minority community backgrounds and they wanted to study at a university. These students encountered difficulties with writing and education as they shifted into higher education. The students on the *Skills for a Changing World* Programme are from print-poor backgrounds, and they too struggle with the transition from school to a higher education institution where they are unfamiliar with the academic language and literacy practices required for university courses. The goal of the UK programme was to provide additional educational opportunity for pre-university students who were still in the process of learning English as an additional language. This is also the case with the students on the SFCW programme. For this reason, the similarities between the two programmes, the UK programme and the SFCW programme, have been tabulated in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Similarities between the Academic Literacy Development Programme (UK) and the *Skills for a Changing World* first-year literacy course (SA)**

<b>Academic Literacy Development Programme (UK)</b>	<b><i>Skills for a Changing World</i> first-year literacy course (SA)</b>
*Students find writing and academic discourse difficult when moving into HE.	*The students' low AP scores are indicative of their lack of CALP skills, which are required in the academic context. Writing and academic discourse are an integral part in this regard.
*Students from linguistic minority community backgrounds experience such difficulties to a greater degree than some other students.	*These students are also from print-poor backgrounds and are at a greater disadvantage.

<p>*King's College London instituted the Programme for students from linguistic minority community backgrounds attending schools in the nearby area who intended to move on to study at university</p> <p>*The programme was intended to provide additional educational opportunities for "A" level students (pre-university students in the UK) who were still in the process of learning English as an additional language.</p> <p>*Participation in the Programme would hopefully enhance their "A" level performance and increase their chances of entering HE.</p>	<p>*The CPP, of which the SFCW ALC 108 was the English language literacy course, also served as an access route for students wanting to gain entrance to HE institutions.</p> <p>*These students were also SL learners of English.</p> <p>*The intention of the literacy course was also to improve their academic literacy levels, a requirement for success within HE.</p>
<p>*The Programme was not an English language programme per se, but was geared towards the use of English in HE contexts.</p>	<p>*The SFCW English literacy course had the same objectives in this regard. The focus was more on meaning-making and content than on superficial language forms.</p>
<p>*Students were required to interact with different categories of text that were defined as different genres (spoken and written text, student discussions, written notes, letters, academic essays) and modes associated with academic contexts.</p>	<p>*Similarly, students were required to participate in group and class discussions, produce written responses in the form of paragraphs, essays, journal entries, short responses to content-based comprehension activities.</p>

One tutor in the Academic Literacy Development Programme (UK) presented genre switching in the form of the following table (left), whose purpose was to make students more aware of the "different language and semiotic practices associated with the requirements of different genres in academic contexts" (Lea & Street, 2006: 230). As in the case above, similarities in this regard have been tabulated for the SFCW English literacy materials (SA) as well (right) in order to determine the extent to which the SFCW course materials meet the intended goal of genre switching.

**Table 4: Similarities in mode switching between the Academic Literacy Development Programme and the *Skills for a Changing World* first-year literacy course (adapted from Lea & Street, 2006: 230)**

Academic Literacy Development Programme		<i>Skills for a Changing World</i> literacy course
Mode	Description	
<i>Thoughts/ Ideas</i>	Free flowing; not sentences	Pre-reading activities activate thoughts and ideas (background knowledge)
<i>Talk/ Discussion</i>	Some explicitness; awareness of interlocutor's communicative needs, language mode/speech patterns	Group work and class discussions facilitate the shift from internal thought to external speech in the target language (English)
<i>Notes</i>	Some structure, headings, layout, use of visual and language mode	Facilitated by while-reading text-based (content-based) activities in materials
<i>Overhead</i>	Key terms, single words, layout, semiosis	Relevant text-based themes are brainstormed by the class as a whole and key words/concepts are written on the board or on the overhead projector
<i>Written text</i>	Joined-up sentences, coherence/cohesion; if academic, then formal conventions; editing and revision	Key concepts from brainstorming used to draft paragraphs and essays. These written texts are assessed and students receive feedback on the content, structure (in terms of formal academic conventions), coherence and cohesion of their written responses

Based on the analysis of the Academic Literacy Development Programme (UK), students took part in both the community of academy and in the community that was formed by students during the course, by means of being provided the opportunity to “express personal styles and learning strategies during classroom activities and engage with their related genres” (Lea & Street, 2006: 232). Furthermore, the interaction with other students and tutors was considered key in clarifying the different types of knowledge that students already use and need to develop to meet the demands of HE standards (Lea & Street, 2006).

Treating such students as collaborators in the development of the academic literacies necessary for engagement with HE in the UK, can perhaps offer a different and more supportive route to ‘Widening Participation’ than the more traditional focus on either study skills or academic socialisation (Lea & Street, 2006: 232).



Given the similarities between the two programmes (see Tables 3 and 4 above), it could be argued that the academic literacies model as ‘design frame’ posed by Lea and Street has been implemented to a certain extent in the SFCW English literacy course materials, as the design compares well with the UK model, which is also based on the literacies model.

Considering that the literacy-studies approach will serve as the lens through which various key theoretical principles are viewed, it is necessary to distinguish between second-language acquisition and second-language learning. This is necessary as the literacy-studies approach proposes that the ‘superficialities’ associated with secondary Discourses cannot be taught and *learned* in a regular classroom, instead fluency in secondary Discourse needs to be *acquired*. Second-language learning and second-language acquisition deal with the concepts of learning and acquisition. The following section encompasses these two concepts.

### **2.1.1 Second-language acquisition (SLA) and second-language learning (SLL)**

SLA and SLL are among the theoretical principles touched on in the pilot study. All the content that makes mention of Krashen, Terrell, Ellis, Saville-Troike, Van Lier and Van Wyk is taken from the pilot study (Drennan, 2010). These sections (paragraphs) have been marked with an asterisk (\*) and have been referenced accordingly.

\*Language acquisition, according to Krashen (1981: 1), is similar to the “process children use in acquiring first and second language”, where meaningful interaction in the target language is required. Here, the speakers’ main concern is the messages they try to convey and understand, rather than the form of their utterances (Krashen, 1981). Ellis (1996: 3) defines second ‘L2 acquisition’ as “the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom”, and ‘second-language acquisition (SLA)’ as the study of this. The additional language or second language (L2) can actually be the third, fourth, or tenth to be acquired. It is commonly referred to as the target language (TL), since this language is the aim or goal of learning (Saville-Troike, 2006: 2) [Drennan, 2010: 12].

In terms of the *literacy-studies* approach, Gee (1990: 146) defines *acquisition* as follows:

*Acquisition* is a process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching. It happens in natural settings which are meaningful and functional in the sense that acquirers know that they need to acquire the thing they are exposed to in order to function and they in fact want to function. This is how most people come to control their first language.

\*On the other hand, Krashen (1981: 2) explains that language learning is facilitated by error correction and the presentation of explicit rules. Second-language learning (SLL) “is a conscious process, which results in knowledge about language usually gained in an instruction setting” (Van Wyk, 2001: 86). Van Lier (1996: 43) states that “language learning is the cumulative result of sustained effort and engagement over time, with continuity being central” [Drennan, 2010: 12].

Accordingly, Gee (1990: 146) defines language *learning* as:

...a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching (though not necessarily from someone officially designated a teacher) or through certain life-experiences that trigger conscious reflection. This teaching or reflection involves explanation and analysis, that is, breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts. It inherently involves attaining, along with the matter being taught, some degree of meta-knowledge about the matter.

Krashen and Terrell summarize the characteristics of acquisition and learning as follows [Drennan, 2010: 12]:

**Table 5: The acquisition-learning distinction adapted from Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 27**

<b>Acquisition</b>	<b>Learning</b>
similar to child first language acquisition	formal knowledge of language
‘picking up’ a language	‘knowing about’ a language
subconscious	Conscious
implicit knowledge	explicit knowledge
formal teaching does not help	formal teaching helps

\*It is important to note the goals of SLA, since knowledge of how students acquire an L2 can inform the development of courses, such as the *Skills for a Changing World*

course, so as to maximise the efficacy of such courses in terms of SLL, and ultimately SLA. Ellis (1996: 4) states that one of the goals of SLA is *explanation* – “identifying the external and internal factors that account for why learners acquire an L2 in the way they do”. The following table presents a summary of the external and internal factors that account for why learners acquire an L2 in the way they do [Drennan, 2010: 12].

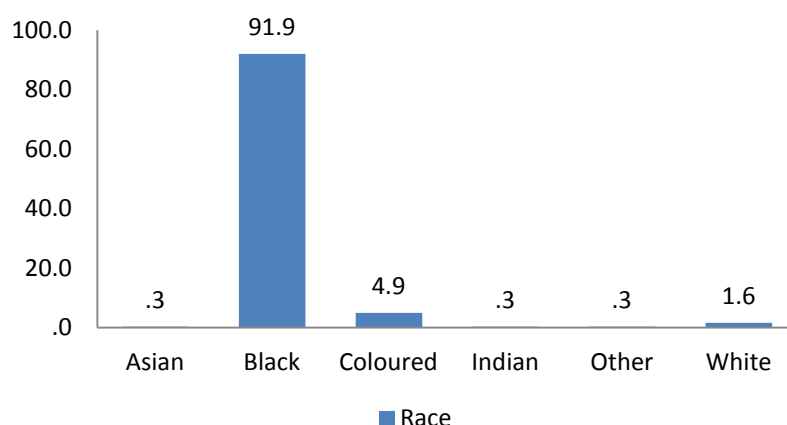
**Table 6: External and internal factors influencing L2 acquisition (adapted from Ellis, 1996: 4-6) [Drennan, 2010: 12]**

<b>External factors</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Internal factors</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Social conditions</i>	Influence learner opportunities to hear and speak the target language, and learner attitudes towards the language.	<i>Cognitive mechanisms</i>	Enable learners to extract information about the L2 from the input.
<i>Input</i>	Samples of language to which learners are exposed, without which learning cannot occur.	<i>L1 transfer</i>	Learners draw on their mother tongue language when they learn an L2.
		<i>General world knowledge</i>	Knowledge about the world that learners draw on to help them understand L2 input.
		<i>Communicative strategies</i>	Help learners make effective use of L2 knowledge.
		<i>Language aptitude</i>	The natural disposition for learning an L2 (some find it easier than others)

The *literacy-studies* approach argues that much of what we encounter in life involves a mixture of acquisition and learning. An important aspect in this regard is that of culture. Some cultures place much emphasis on acquisition and expose children to adults so that they may ‘pick up’ the activity being modelled. Whereas other cultures value teaching and, as a result, engage in explicit explanation of sequential steps

involving what is to be mastered. The concept is thus an important one, considering the cultural background of students comprising the SFCW study. Based on a questionnaire that was completed by students enrolled in the literacy course, which will be discussed in detail in the methodology section, the following graph illustrates the notion of culture.

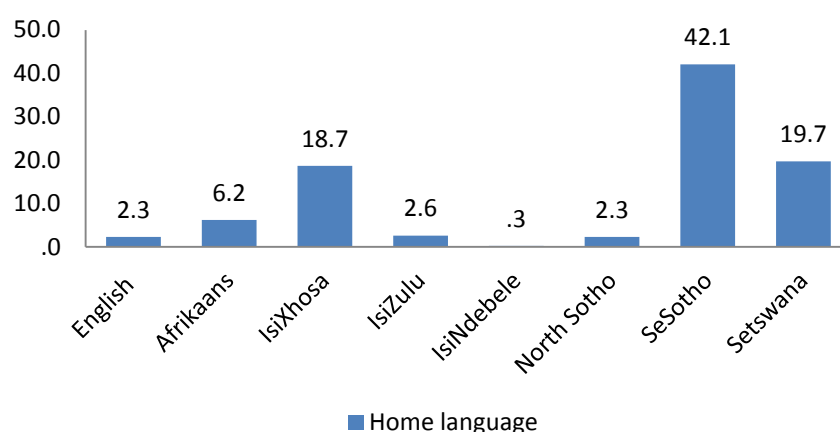
**Figure 1: Frequency of race of students on SFCW Programme**



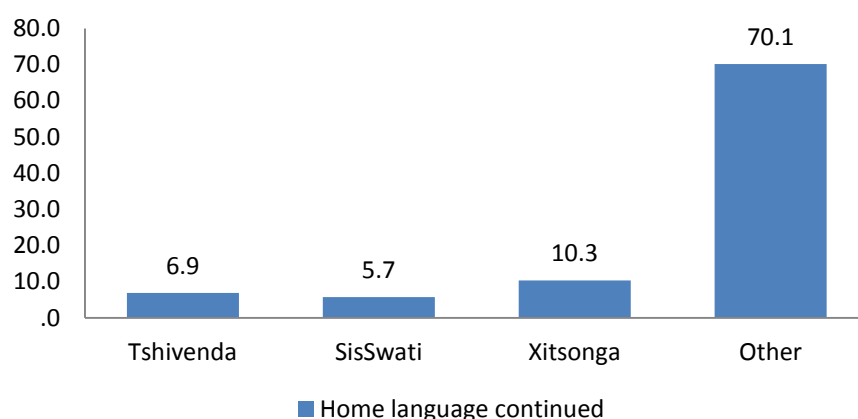
As illustrated by the graph above, most students were Black (91.9%) and a small percentage were Coloured (4.9%). There were very few White, Indian, Asian or ‘Other’ students on the course. From the perspective of the *literacy-studies* approach, Gee (1989) explains that all humans acquire a primary Discourse, which is the socio-culturally determined manner in which the native language is used in face-to-face communication with people with whom much knowledge is shared as a result of frequent contact and similar experiences (intimates). This is also often referred to as ‘the oral mode’. Gee argues that there are socio-cultural differences in primary Discourses, even among English-speakers. He refers to lower socio-economic black children who use English differently than middle-class children to make sense of their experiences; these children “use language, behaviour, values, and beliefs to give a different shape to their experience” (1989: 539). However, beyond this primary Discourse are social institutions that demand other discourses, namely secondary Discourses required to communicate with ‘non-intimates’. These secondary Discourses are “developed in association with and by having access to and practice with these secondary institutions” (Gee, 1989: 539), and these build on the uses of language acquired as part of the primary Discourse. Consequently, if the print-poor

background of the students on the SFCW course, as well as their home language (mother tongue), are regarded in this light, it becomes clear that for these students' fluency in the secondary Discourse, the academic discourse, is a challenge. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the fact that not one student on the course had English as a home language; all students were thus L2 learners of English, which is the language of instruction of their other courses on the CPP. One possible explanation for why such a large percentage of students (70.1%) selected 'other' under *home language continued*, might be that they misunderstood the question that stated that they only had to answer the *home language continued* question if their home language did not appear under *home language*.

**Figure 2: Frequency of home language of students on SFCW Programme**



**Figure 3: Frequency of home language of students on SFCW Programme (continued)**



The *literacy-studies* approach thus also accommodates the factors that Ellis identified as external and internal factors influencing L2 acquisition. The external factors *social*

*conditions* and *input* refer to the face-to-face communication with ‘intimates’, which shape and develop the primary Discourse (oral mode). The internal factors *L1 transfer*, *general world knowledge*, and *communicative strategies* are also applicable, considering people draw on their primary Discourses when acquiring a secondary Discourse in a social institution beyond the family. The following section deals with issues pertaining to factors influencing students’ primary Discourses.

#### **2.1.1.1 Low proficiency**

\*Under the Apartheid system in South Africa, language was used to instil constructions of inferiority and superiority in order to separate and divide people. As a result, the official policy of the new South Africa has reconceptualized language as a ‘right’ and ‘resource’ for learning and development to emphasize equity, unity and nation-building. Accordingly, a policy of multilingualism has been adopted to enshrine the language rights of the individual. The “‘Language-in-Education’ policy advocates teaching through the medium of the home language while learning additional languages as subjects, or else teaching through the medium of two languages” (Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006: 30). The problem here is that an early switch to English, together with poor teaching, results in the development of BICS in English, but not CALP skills, which are required for dealing with advanced literacy in either the home language or English. Furthermore, students are exposed to English as medium of instruction across the curriculum, but take English language and literature classes at second-language level, which means that these students have once more been placed at a disadvantage in terms of meaningful access to education. Students can pass English Second Language matriculation examinations with only basic literacy and low-level processing skills. However, because language plays a key role in cognitive development across the curriculum, students who only have basic literacy skills end up failing the overall matriculation examinations, which puts them at an immediate disadvantage when it comes to qualifying for university entrance (Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006: 30-31) [Drennan, 2010: 12].

\*In order to fully understand the concept ‘low proficiency’, a definition of ‘proficiency’ is required. Cummins (1980) provides a description, which features prominently in SLA research, where there are two types of ‘proficiency’:

cognitive/academic language (CALP) and basic interpersonal communication Skills (BICS). These are discussed in detail below [Drennan, 2010: 12].

#### **2.1.1.2 Basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP)**

\*For the purpose of this study, it is important to differentiate between CALP (cognitive/academic language proficiency) and BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills), since the lack of CALP requires the interventions which are the focus of this particular study. BICS refers to conversational fluency in a language, whereas CALP refers to a student's ability, in both oral and written modes, to understand and express concepts and ideas relevant to school success. The latter is said to develop through social interaction from birth and reflects the language that children acquire at school which is needed for the successful progression through the various grades, hence the term 'academic'. Cummins (2008: 76) defines academic language proficiency as "the extent to which an individual has access to and command of the oral and written academic registers of schooling" [Drennan, 2010: 15].

In terms of language proficiency and academic development, Cummins (2009: 22-23) identifies three aspects of language proficiency. The first is *conversational fluency*, which involves the ability to maintain a conversation in face-to-face situations. Fluency in this regard reflects only a "fraction of the language skills required for academic success", since it involves using "high frequency words and relatively simple grammar construction". The second aspect is that of *discrete language skills*, where students learn rule-governed aspects of grammar, such as phonology, grammar and spelling, and their having acquired the general case allows generalisation to other cases governed by that particular rule. Cummins (2009: 23) argues that these skills can be developed by direct instruction and "through immersion in a language- and literacy-rich home or school environment, where meanings are elaborated through language and attention is drawn to literate forms of language". In the case where students learn through the medium of a second language, little direct transference is seen to other parts of oral language proficiency (linguistic concepts, vocabulary, sentence memory and word memory). *Academic language proficiency* involves the knowledge of less frequent vocabulary, as well as being able to "interpret and produce

increasingly complex written language” (Cummins, 2009: 23). Furthermore, here students are required to use the linguistic and conceptual language encountered in various demanding content-area texts in their own writing, and they are required to do so accurately and coherently. In the case of this type of language proficiency, minority students require at least 5 years to catch up to grade expectations in the majority language.

The distinction between BICS and CALP is relevant since studies have shown that educators and policy-makers tend to conflate conversational and academic dimensions of English language proficiency, which in turn contributes to the creation of academic difficulties for EAL (English as an additional language) students. Research indicates that there is a gap of several years between a student attaining peer-appropriate fluency in English and grade norms in academic aspects of English. In the past, educators assumed that because students’ English communicative skills were presumably sufficiently well developed, they had acquired English and were ready to be integrated into English-only programmes. Consequently students inevitably experienced academic difficulties because there was no support to assist them in understanding instruction and continuing their development of English academic skills as is discussed below. (Cummins, 2008) [Drennan, 2010: 12].

\*These two concepts (BICS and CALP) can be explained further in terms of cognitive demands and contextual support regarding particular language tasks or activities. Context constitutes both “what we bring to a task (e.g. our prior knowledge, interests, and motivation) and the range of supports that may be incorporated in the task itself (e.g. visual supports such as graphic organisers)” (Cummins, 2008: 75). According to this, the argument is that in order for instruction of EAL students to be effective, the primary focus should be on context-embedded and cognitively demanding tasks. What this refers to is the extent to which contextual or interpersonal cues (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, intonation in face-to-face interaction) support the intended meaning being communicated, or the extent to which the latter is supported by linguistic cues. Research has illuminated the distinction between conversational and academic aspects of language. For example, Gee (1990) refers to Biber’s (1986) factor analysis in this regard revealed the factor scores on telephone and face-to-face conversation to be at opposite extremes from official documents and academic prose



on the Textual Dimensions of Interactive vs. Edited Text, and Abstract vs. Situated Content. Conversational and academic language registers can also be related to the distinction between *primary* and *secondary* Discourses. The former are acquired through home-based face-to-face interactions and represent the “language of initial socialisation”; and the acquisition of the latter pertains to social institutions beyond the family, involving the acquisition of “specialised vocabulary and functions of language appropriate to those settings” (Cummins, 2008:76). Accordingly, the individual’s access to and command of the characteristic vocabulary and language functions of the social institution of schooling are represented by academic language proficiency. This acquisition is deemed crucial because the degree of expertise that students acquire in understanding and using this language directly determines their life chances. Cummins argues that an effective learning environment comprises extensive engaged reading, as academic language is found primarily in written texts; opportunities for collaborative learning and talk about text, as this fosters the internalisation and comprehension of academic language encountered through extensive reading of text. Writing for authentic purposes is also considered crucial, since writing about issues of personal interest consolidates aspects of academic language encountered through reading and encourages the expression of identity [Drennan, 2010: 12].

\*The development of the English Academic Language Course indicates that the reading proficiency of the student plays a crucial role in obtaining tertiary access; Grabe (1986: 35) argues that reading proficiency can be seen as “the critical skill needed by second-language students for academic success”. The reason why such great emphasis is placed on reading is because of the four generally recognized skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing), reading is “accepted as the primary goal” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 11). According to Coleman (1929: 170), “experience and statistical evidence in teaching the vernacular indicate that the amount of reading that the pupils do is directly related to achievement both in rate of silent reading and in comprehension. Furthermore, experiments show conclusively that increasing the amount of reading that is required results in rapid progress in rate and comprehension” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 11). Day and Bamford (1998: 4) emphasise that “the more students read, the better they become at it. Reading...must be developed, and can only be developed, by means of extensive and continual practice. People learn to read, and

to read better, by reading”. Accordingly, the course incorporates extensive reading in the form of graded readers in addition to the intensive reading that focuses more on smaller passages in terms of detailed grammatical analyses [Drennan, 2010: 12].

\*In his discussion on the relationship between L1 and L2 reading, Grabe (2009:140) points out that reading proficiency is not automatically transferred from the mother tongue to the L2. Students who do not come from a print-rich culture in their mother tongue may have difficulty in settings where proficient transfer is required such as the academic setting. Cummins (2008: 173) emphasizes that “academic proficiency transfers across languages such that students who have developed literacy in their first language will tend to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in their second language”. The students on the SFCW programme are second-language speakers of English acquiring a ‘new’ literacy, viz. academic literacy in a language that is not their mother tongue. Thus, a course for this group would have to focus on developing the target language and, simultaneously, scaffolding students into the communicative tasks of the academy. Scaffolding involves gradually increasing the level of difficulty of activities based on input students will be able to process and understand [Drennan, 2010: 12].

## **2.2 Academic reading**

### **2.2.1 Background knowledge**

\*Background knowledge refers to “prior knowledge that readers utilise in interpreting text, [which] includes general, cultural and topic-specific knowledge” (Grabe & Stoller, 2002: 257). The knowledge that the reader brings to the text is critical, since the “construction of meaning depends on the reader’s knowledge of the language, the structure of texts, a knowledge of the subject of the reading, and a broad-based background or world knowledge” (Day & Bamford, 1998: 14). This background knowledge determines how students construct meaning in terms of their knowledge of the language, the subject of the reading, the structure of the text, as well as their world knowledge. If students have a print-poor background, they have limited understanding of print conventions, text genres and the organisation of such texts. A schema helps facilitate understanding, but this is often not part of the SL reader’s world knowledge. Fluent readers gain this by means of reading, which is an

indication that a reading programme should focus on the wide reading of text in order to develop this world knowledge (Van Wyk & Greyling, 2006) [Drennan, 2010: 27].

\*Schema refers to the knowledge the reader brings to the text. The schema theory plays an important role in understanding how readers organise and access knowledge; “[k]nowledge does not just consist simply of an unstructured set of individual facts, but rather of organised, interrelated structures or schemata” (Day & Bamford, 1998: 15). There are various types of schemata; namely content schema, formal schema, and linguistic schema. *Content schema* “provides readers with a foundation, a basis for comparison” (Aebersold & Field, 1997: 16). In other words, when reading a text about weddings, readers can relate the content to their own personal experiences of weddings, as well as to the general pattern of wedding ceremonies in their culture. *Formal schema* refers to “the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of written texts...[t]he knowledge that you bring to a text about structure, vocabulary, grammar and level of formality (or register) constitutes your formal schema” (Aebersold & Field, 1997: 17). Finally, *linguistic schema* refers to decoding features required for the recognition of words and seeing how they fit together in a sentence. Therefore, if a reader has not studied a word or grammar rule in their L1, they cannot use that information when they read. They might be able to identify a pattern or guess the meanings of words, but this information was not part of their linguistic schema to start off with. Because cognitive thinking ability and metacognitive awareness are essential in terms of strategic reading, these will be discussed below [Drennan, 2010: 27].

There is another way to view background knowledge and reading, one which is aligned with the literacy-studies approach. This approach does not necessarily contest any of the above-mentioned theories on reading, but rather provides a more rounded perspective from which to view students’ background knowledge and reading abilities, one which is in accordance with the intended goal of access in terms of the SFCW English literacy course. Gee (2001: 715) postulates that human language has two fundamental functions; namely to “scaffold the performance of action in the world, including social activities and interactions”, and “to scaffold human affiliation in cultures and social groups and institutions through creating and enticing others to take certain perspectives on experience”. Action and perspectives are emphasized, since it is thought that meaning in language is connected to experiences people have

of situated action in the material and social world. These experiences, in terms of perceptions, feeling, actions and intentions, are retained in the mind in the form of images that are related to views of the world and one's own body, internal states and feelings. "Increasing evidence suggests that perceptual simulation is indeed central to comprehension" (Gee, 2001: 715). He explains this notion of the link between experience and mental images in terms of a library of videotapes of experience. Each time new situations are encountered, an individual will draw on these videotapes and re-run them. This is done "to apply...old experiences to...new experience and to aid...in making, editing, and storing the videotape that will capture this new experience, integrate it into [a] library, and allow [for] mak[ing] sense of it" (Gee, 2001: 715). These metaphorical movies serve as 'value-laden', 'perspective-taking' resources, utilised to give meaning to experiences, words and sentences. Therefore, the meanings of words, phrases and sentences are situated in that they take into account an actual context in terms of purposes, values, and proposed routes of action and interaction. What this means is that the meaning associated with a particular word in context is not different from the way we perceive an experience, object, or tool in the world. In other words, "the embodied models constructed to understand language are the same as those that underlie comprehension of the natural environment" (Glenberg, 1997: 17). The following example demonstrates this perspective:

The meaning of [a] glass..., at [a] particular moment, is in terms of the actions available. The meaning of the glass changes when different constraints on action are combined. For example, in a noisy room, the glass may become a mechanism for capturing attention (by tapping it with a spoon), rather than a mechanism for quenching thirst (adapted from Glenberg, 1997: 41).

This particular perspective relates to reading whereby the situated meanings conveyed by oral or written language are centrally linked to embodied action and social activity. It goes without saying that reading instruction must be extended beyond relations internal to texts. Reading instruction should rather be based on the associations in texts to "engagement in and simulations of actions, activities, and interactions – to real and imagined material and social worlds" (Gee, 2001: 176).

In terms of *perspective taking*, words and grammar are essentially about giving and getting different perspectives on experience. No wording is ever 'just the facts', but rather all wordings are "perspectives on experience that comport with competing

perspectives in the grammar of the language and in actual social interactions” (Gee, 2001: 717). Gee explains that children learn how to use words and grammar to express particular perspectives on experience by means of interactive, intersubjective dialogue with more advanced peers and adults. Through them, children realise that there are perspectives beyond their own and they internalise these variations of perspective and integrate them into their existing repertoire of experience. Then, in later interactions, these simulations can be drawn upon and the corresponding perspective-taking of adults or advanced peers can be imitated by means of using certain sorts of words and grammar. In this way, the particular meaning for words, grammar and objects are derived from intersubjective dialogue and interaction. For this reason, reading instruction should be grounded in the “taking and imagining of diverse perspectives on real and imagined material and social worlds”, since “reading the word and reading the world are...one and the same process” (Gee, 2001: 717).

Gee’s (2001) take on social languages involves viewing human language as a composition of different styles, registers, or social languages, the latter constituting various patterns of vocabulary, syntax and discourse connectors, each being connected to particular kinds of social activities and to a particular socially situated identity. The various social languages are also recognised by these patterns. Take the following excerpt as an example:

The destruction of a land surface by the combined effects of abrasion and removal of weathered material by transporting agents is called erosion...The production of rock waste by mechanical processes and chemical changes is called weathering (Gee, 2001: 718).

When exposed to such language, the reader will form a classificatory scheme in their mind along the lines of there being two kinds of change (erosion and weathering) and two kinds of weathering (mechanical and chemical). The elements of vocabulary, syntax and discourse are mapped out, which is as much part of reading and writing as is the phonics (sound-to-letter) mapping. In other words, this reflects knowledge of a particular social language and its characteristic design features and how they are combined to execute various social activities. What is of particular importance, given the cultural background of the students involved in this particular study, is the concept of cultural models and how these influence reading.

When an individual is socialised into a particular Discourse, they acquire a particular cultural model, in terms of everyday theories regarding storyline, images, schemas, metaphors and models. These cultural models inform the individual's perception of what is typical or normal in terms of a particular Discourse. They are therefore value laden and, in turn, inform the social practices in which individuals in a particular Discourse engage. In this way, early literacy is a socioculturally situated practice. Gee (2001) refers to a case where an upper-middle-class, highly educated father engages in a reading activity with his 3-year-old son. The father is aware that the child is still 'learning to read' and his awareness of the fact that his child has before stated that he 'cannot [yet] read'. However, the manner in which he engages the child in the reading activity indicates several things: firstly, that the father is confident in the child's ability to answer a question posed in the activity; secondly, that the father values the child's active engagement with texts; and thirdly, that the father values the child's belief in his identity as 'a reader' and in turn facilitates the acquisition of this identity and its associated skills. "Parents co-construct an identity with a child (attribute, and get the child to believe in, a certain competence) before the child can actually fully carry out all the skills associated with this identity (competence before performance)" (Gee, 2001: 721). What the father is actually doing is facilitating a socially situated identity which involves a "self-orientation as active producer of appropriate meanings in conjunction with print; meanings that...turn out to be school and academically related" (Gee, 2001: 721). In so doing, the child is being prepared for what will be encountered in the early years of school and this is also part of the child's acquisition of his primary Discourse. Furthermore, the child's acquisition of the reader Discourse is aligned at the same time with school-based Discourses and the acquisition of his primary Discourse, which will influence the child's reaction to school-based ways with words and things (Gee, 2001).

This is relevant to the SFCW study in that most of the students originate from print-poor backgrounds, where such interaction with texts would most likely have been limited. Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction to this study, there is speculation about the extent to which the school-leaving qualification prepares students to meet the academic requirements of HE institutions such as the UFS. Not only are these students denied the privilege of parental facilitation of their primary

Discourse, but this is only exacerbated by the challenges they face within the current schooling system, particularly in the case of less privileged schools where resources and teaching skills are lacking. These factors contribute to the tension between such students' primary Discourse (which, in this case, is unrelated to school and academic-based Discourses) and the secondary Discourses relevant to HE institutions.

Gee (2001) also makes mention of the significant correlation between early phonological awareness and later success in learning to read, as well as the connection between early language abilities and success in learning to read. These early language abilities are important for later success in school, since they include aspects such as vocabulary, the ability to remember and understand sentences and stories, as well as the ability to partake in verbal interaction. What Gee does emphasise, however, is the fact that virtually all children have impressive language abilities. "The verbal abilities that children who fail in school lack are not just some general set of such abilities, but rather specific verbal abilities tied to specific school-based practices and school-based genres of oral and written language...These protoforms...embedded in specific social practices connected to specific socially situated identities...are the stuff from which success in school-based and academic reading flows" (Gee, 2001: 724). In response to addressing the issue of reading, the following section deals with extensive reading and its benefits and the subsequent rationale for its inclusion in the SRCW programme.

### **2.2.2 Extensive reading**

\*Extensive reading is the "approach to the teaching and learning of reading in which learners read large quantities of material that are within their linguistic competence" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002: 259). According to Day and Bamford (1998: 16), extensive reading plays an important role in "developing the components upon which fluent second language reading depends: a large sight vocabulary; a wide general vocabulary; and knowledge of the target language, the world and text types". As a requirement of the course under discussion in this study, students choose graded readers from a variety of available titles and are required to reflect on these in the form of reading reactions, written in class time according to various formats provided by facilitators. Students read approximately 100 pages per week. Grabe (2009: 321)

states that “[m]ultiple large-scale literacy-survey studies have shown consistently that the amount of reading is associated with reading comprehension achievement” [Drennan, 2010: 28].

\*With reference to the components upon which fluent L2 language reading depends, firstly, *sight vocabulary* is the only way to automatically recognise certain printed words is by reading a great deal. “As a result of multiple encounters, the word enters the reader’s sight vocabulary. Familiarity breeds automaticity” (Day & Bamford, 1998: 16). The development of sight vocabulary is explained in terms of a reformulation of Krashen’s second language comprehensible input – “*i minus 1*”, as opposed to “*i + 1*” (Krashen’s theory of comprehensible input will be discussed in detail below). The reason for the latter is that the goal of the automatic training is developing a large sight vocabulary rather than learning new linguistic elements, thus the “*i minus 1*” represents vocabulary and grammar that is well within the reader’s competence. In this way, students read materials with a very low ration of unknown words, which facilitates the “process of guessing, learning and refining the knowledge of words from context”. Therefore, in terms of the *development of general vocabulary knowledge*, the larger the student’s vocabulary, the better their comprehension. The following table encapsulates the statements of various authorities in the field on the importance of the development of vocabulary (Day & Bamford, 1998: 17-18):

**Table 7: The importance of vocabulary development**

Authority	Reference	Statement
William Grabe	1998: 63	Fluent readers need “a massive receptive vocabulary that is rapidly, accurately, and automatically accessed”.  The lack of such a vocabulary “may be the greatest single impediment to fluent reading by ESL students”.
Nagy and Herman	1987: 27	“Incidental learning of words during reading may be the easiest and single most powerful means of promoting large-scale vocabulary growth”.
James Coady	1993: 18	“The incidental acquisition hypothesis suggests that there is <b>gradual but steady incremental growth of</b>



		<b>vocabulary</b> knowledge through meaningful interaction with text”.
Fredricka Stoller & William Grabe	1993: 31-32	Regarding the efficiency of the process of incidental vocabulary learning, “[o]nce a certain level of knowledge (and vocabulary) is achieved...students will then be able to apply the richer knowledge to learning new vocabulary”
Huckin & Haynes	1993: 290	“A clear sense of a word’s defining features can only be reached through repeated encounters in diverse contexts”.
Paul Nation & James Coady	1988: 108	“In general the research leaves us in little doubt about the importance of vocabulary knowledge for reading, and the value of reading as a means of increasing vocabulary”.

\*Day and Bamford (1998: 18) suggest that general knowledge is the final factor required for fluent reading and that reading is an “excellent source of knowledge that is needed for reading comprehension”. Wide reading is thought to be beneficial both for increasing word-meaning knowledge, as well as for topical and world knowledge, which facilitate reading comprehension; “the more reading done, of the greatest informational variety and range of purposes, the quicker the reader will achieve...the capacity for creating, refining, and connecting diverse arrays of cognitive schemata” (Day & Bamford, 1998: 19) [Drennan, 2010: 28].

\*Furthermore, vocabulary knowledge is essential for the development of reading, academic performance, and for related background knowledge. In order to be successful readers, students require knowledge of approximately 95% of words in most academic texts in order to be able to access them, as “knowledge of words and their variety of possible meanings in a text are associated with conceptual knowledge and knowledge of the world” (Van Wyk & Greyling, 2006). The SL reader’s understanding of text structure and devices signalling sequences in text, such as cause-effect, comparison and contrast are determined by discourse knowledge. A further problem area for SL readers is connective devices, which is why it is critical that a reading programme focuses on the systematic processing of these textual structures in

order to create an awareness of how these cohesive devices combine ideas in a text. Cummins (2009: 24) also argues that extensive reading is essential as a “means of enabling students to gain access to [academic language]”. These problem areas form part of academic writing, which is the focus of the following section [Drennan, 2010: 28].



## **2.3 Academic writing**

\*Student writing in academic settings “is...seen as the way in which students consolidate their understanding of subject areas [as is furthermore indicative of] the extent and nature of individual student’s understanding” (Lillis, 2002: 20). The extent to which students are successful in terms of writing impacts on their participation and success in Higher Education (HE), and possibly their life opportunities after HE. This problem of poor student writing has become central to official, public and pedagogic discourse in several parts of the world. The source of the problem may be linked to the “widening access to students from social groups previously excluded” (Lillis, 2002: 21). This is especially relevant to the students of this particular study, who are predominantly from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and their low admission point (AP) scores do not give them automatic access to tertiary learning [Drennan, 2010: 31].

Lillis and Scott (2007) refer to the phrase ‘academic literacy/ies’ as one used in applied settings to refer to courses that are aimed at enabling students to meet the writing demands at university. Within institutions such as the UFS, the term is associated with the expansion of HE and escalating involvement of ‘local’ and ‘international’ students, aimed essentially at widening access and embracing transformation by moving away from a highly exclusive system. However, Lillis (2003) also argues that the academic writing that is required of students in HE is monologic in nature. Critical language awareness (CLA) is also mentioned in terms of its continuation to work from within such a monologic frame. In terms of moving away from a monologic approach, Lillis also addresses the important sites of dialogue emerging from student-writers’ perspectives and dialogic approaches to meaning-making in student academic writing.

The term *monologic* refers to “the goals of higher education ...where the institutional and pedagogic practices are oriented to the reproduction of official discourses of knowledge” (Lillis, 2003: 193), whereas *dialogic* refers to the goals of higher education “where pedagogic practices are oriented towards making visible / challenging/playing with official and unofficial discourse” (Lillis, 2003: 193). The goals of such a dialogic approach are grounded in an acknowledged heterogeneous community of participants. The following table represents Lea and Street’s three-levelled model for theorising approaches to student writing in HE, defined as *skills*, *socialisation* and *academic literacies*.

**Table 8: Approaches to student writing in higher education (UK) [Lillis, 2003: 194]**

Status within Higher Education, UK	Theory of language	Student writing pedagogy	Goal of higher education
<p><b>Dominant</b></p>  <p><b>Oppositional</b></p>	Language as a transparent and autonomous system, the elements of which are acquired by individuals.	(a) Skills – explicit teaching of discrete elements of language.	<p>Practices oriented to the reproduction of official discourses:</p> <p><i>Monologic</i></p> 
	Language / meaning as the product of individual mind	(b) Creative self-expression – teaching as facilitating individual expression.	
	Language as discourse practices which students will / must gradually come to learn implicitly.	(c) Socialisation (1) teaching as (implicit) induction into established discourse practices.	
	Language as genres which are characterised by specific clusters of linguistic features.	(d) Socialisation (2) explicit teaching of features of academic genres.	
	Language as socially situated discourse practices which are	(e) Academic literacies – what are the implications for pedagogy?	<p><i>Dialogic</i></p> <p>Practices oriented towards making visible / challenging / playing</p>

	ideologically inscribed.		with official and unofficial discourse practices: Dialogic -what are the implications for pedagogy?
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The pedagogy reflected in (a) to (d) is representative of current approaches in HE to student writing pedagogy. The academic literacies category (e), on the other hand, highlights the socially situated and ideological nature of student academic writing – “a lens through which the nature of the former approaches is made visible”. Thus, category (a), Skills, can be seen as one way of conceptualizing language, literacy and student writing in HE. The goal of the academic literacies frame is to foreground many dimensions of student academic writing that have previously remained invisible or have been ignored. These dimensions include the following (Lillis, 2003: 195):

- the impact of power relations on student writing
- the centrality of identity in academic writing
- academic writing as ideologically inscribed knowledge construction
- the nature of generic academic and disciplinary specific writing practices

Consider Spack’s (1988: 29) argument that “L2 English...teachers should focus on general principles of inquiry and rhetoric, with emphasis on writing from sources”, the primary goal being to prepare students to become better academic writers. The attainment of this goal is, however, complicated by the large gap that exists between what is expected of students and what they bring to the academic community. Social situation (and culture) and prior training could potentially influence their academic success. The gap is said to be even greater for those ESL students who have been classified as basic writers, since this classification includes L2 linguistic and cultural deficiencies (Spack, 1988) [Drennan, 2010: 31]. Lillis (2003: 195) views this more conventional writing pedagogy with criticism, as in the case of CLA, which involves “consciousness-raising amongst learners about power and ideology in relation to language use”. What is noticeable in Spack’s argument is the reference to the ‘ESL

gap', as well as 'L2 linguistic and cultural deficiencies', which is indicative of the deficit view of such conventional writing pedagogies. A further case in point is Lillis' criticism of CLA in that "meaning-making continues to be construed as monologic, with an emphasis on a single, unified version of truth" (2003: 195). She furthermore identifies the following limitations in the theoretical and pedagogical framing of CLA:

- **Theoretical framing**

- Synthesis as the goal of meaning-making
- A version of dialectic governed by binary framings where one version of truth is privileged over others

- **Pedagogical framing**

- CLA pedagogy privileges only the tutor/institution's perspectives and denies students' contributions to, and struggles around, meaning-making
- Tutors still hold the main responsibility for posing the problem to which they are assumed to know the answer.

In order to make a shift from a monologic to a dialogic approach, Lillis (2003) identifies three chief challenges that need to be addressed. Firstly, researchers need to draw on critique, without being tied to the conceptual framework which governs the purpose of that critique. Secondly, new possibilities for meaning-making in academic writing need to be imagined by researchers, teachers and student-writers. Finally, the interests of student-writers need to be placed centrally within student writing research and pedagogy. In other words, a shift needs to be made away from the conventional ways of thinking about meaning-making in academia, and participants' perspectives need to be valued and an effort should be made to support, rather than control, their meaning-making (Lillis, 2003: 196-197).

Lillis (2003) refers to Bakhtin's two levels of dialogue: the first is a 'given' – an "all-persuasive dimension to human language and communication". The second states that "dialogue is an ideal to be worked for, against the forces of monologism". The following table reflects these two levels.

**Table 9: Levels of dialogue/ism in Bakhtin (Lillis, 2003: 198)**

<p><b>Level 1: Dialogue as a ‘given’</b>  <i>Descriptive</i> as to the nature of language</p>	<p>All utterances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are dialogic</li> <li>• involve addressivity</li> <li>• are part of a chain of communication</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 2: Dialogue as something to struggle for</b>  <i>Ideal</i> as to the nature of language in human communication</p>	<p>All utterances involve a tension between centrifugal/centripetal cultural forces and authoritative/internally persuasive discourses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centripetal-<i>monologism</i> – one truth, one voice, one identity, binary logic, authoritative discourse</li> <li>• Centrifugal-<i>dialogism</i> – many truths, many voices, many identities, hybridity, internally persuasive discourse</li> </ul>

In terms of level 1, *addressivity* refers to who and what is being addressed, and the specific meanings (accents) that wordings develop within specific sociohistorical contexts, referred to by Bakhtin as *a chain of communication*, the fact that wordings do not exist in isolation. Level 2 deals with the concepts of *centripetal vs. centrifugal forces*, and *authoritative* and *internally persuasive discourse*. The former set of terms refers to the drive to impose one version of truth on the one hand, and a range of possible truths and interpretations on the other. *Authoritative* discourses aim at imposing particular meanings and are therefore monologic in nature, whereas *internally persuasive* discourses refer to dialogical engagement (questioning, exploring and connecting) resulting in the development of ‘newer way(s) to mean’ (Lillis, 2003: 198). The second level serves as a radical approach to student academic writing in terms of the way in which a student may respond to an essay question based on knowledge authorised in lectures, seminars and course materials. Bakhtin’s theory of dialogue/ism maintains that (Lillis, 2003: 199):

- the goal is to maintain difference always in play
- emphasis should be placed on concrete, actual utterance which is socially and historically situated and saturated
- emphasis should be placed on difference and constant interplay of wordings, meanings and consciousness.

However, this dialogic approach does not refute relevant theoretical claims \*the primary skill that ESL teachers should make students focus on is the ability to write from other texts, since this forms a major part of the academic writing experience. “[W]e must cultivate various techniques of absorbing, reforming, commenting on, and using reading if we want to prepare our students to enter the written exchanges of their chosen disciplines and the various discussions of personal and public interest” (Spack, 1988: 42). This is true for the literacy-studies approach too, which addresses the notion of secondary Discourses – the “exchanges of their [students’] chosen disciplines”. \*Research illustrates the interdependent relationship between reading and writing, since both focus on constructing meaning from words, text, background knowledge and emotions. In order for students’ writing abilities to improve, they need to become better readers and need to fully understand the texts – not just facts and ideas, but the author’s intention as well. This notion of interdependence between reading and writing is supported by Ferris and Hedgcock (2005: 31) who state that “meaningful writing instruction *is* literacy instruction and that one cannot successfully teach writing without also simultaneously teaching reading”. In Day and Bamford’s (1998: 37) discussion of extensive reading, they also support the notion that “we learn to write through reading” by referring to Janopoulos’s (1986) investigation of university ESL students, which yielded a significant correlation between pleasure reading and proficiency in written English [Drennan, 2010: 31].

\*Various techniques of L2 reading instruction are required for the guidance of students to become better academic writers. These include marginal notes, note taking, working journals and response statements, which facilitate the discovery and recording of students’ own reactions to texts. Processes of summarising, paraphrasing, and quoting can assist students in understanding an author’s style and purpose. These processes, in turn, become part of students’ texts when they work in key ideas and relevant facts from their reading into their writing, thereby developing

informed views on issues pursued. The reading content can also be theme-based, but the background knowledge of the students that is expected to be brought to written texts should be carefully considered when selecting reading material. Spack (1988: 44) states that “[w]riting tasks should build upon knowledge students already possess but should also be designed to allow new learning to occur. Students can initially write about their own experiences or views, then read, discuss, and respond informally in writing to the assigned readings”. Accordingly, the SFCW course materials require students to reflect on their background knowledge while reading various texts. Class discussions and group work allow students to express their experiences and views before they embark on reading different theme-based texts. While-reading and post-reading activities furthermore build upon knowledge they already possess [Drennan, 2010: 31].

\*Students also need to be given adequate time to learn how to write. Assignments should be accompanied by useful strategies that facilitate the completion of tasks at hand. Students should also understand fully what the task requires and what the evaluative criteria will be. The constraints of form are intended to “enable writers to communicate accurately and effectively to readers” (Spack, 1988: 46). Thus, form can provide students with the knowledge of, for example, what comes at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of a particular discourse type, which in turn affords the student a writing strategy or cognitive framework. The SFCW course materials focus on building up skills from discrete competencies, such as writing a sentence and a paragraph, to writing essays and reports, based on real-life scenarios. The first semester is dedicated to mastering the skill of sentence and paragraph writing, and only in the second semester are students required to produce essay-type responses [Drennan, 2010: 31-32]. In accordance with the dialogic perspective, *talkback* should be given on these written assignments, not *feedback*. Feedback is what is typically referred to as “a focus on the student’s written text as a product, a tendency towards closed commentary, including evaluative language such as ‘good’, weak, etc.” (Lillis, 2003: 204). Talkback, on the other hand, focuses on “the student’s text in process, and acknowledgment of the partial nature of any text and hence the range of potential meanings, an attempt to open up space where the student-writer[s] can say what [they] like and [do not] like about [their] writing” (Lillis, 2003: 204). This could possibly be one of the criticisms of the SFCW English literacy materials



since such a formative approach to marking the students' written responses was not taken, but rather a summative approach. Yorke (2003: 478) suggests that the central purpose of formative assessment is "to contribute to student learning through the provision of information about performance". In other words, it is expected that formative assessment awards students' the opportunity to learn from whatever feedback is provided, as opposed to summative assessment, where the grade awarded contributes to the overall grade at the end of the course. The possibility of a more formative assessment approach will be investigated further in the discussion section of the paper.

A number of critical concepts regarding academic writing have been mentioned thus far, namely enabling students to meet the writing demands at university, valuing and supporting participants' perspectives, types of L2 techniques geared towards improving writing skills, and feedback, amongst others. Leki and Carson (1994) did a study on students' perceptions of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) writing instruction and writing needs across the disciplines. Although this study might be slightly dated, the findings of this particular study are still relevant. Despite the fact that the SFCW English literacy course is not explicitly an EAP course, the development of academic writing skills is an integral part of the course, and the objective is similar in that there is an assumption that what is taught and learned in these classes will help L2 students improve their performance in their writing tasks across the curriculum. Student perspective in this regard is important, since "the question of writing requirements and needs...must also take into account the perceptions that writing students have about those requirements and needs...[Since W]hat learners believe about what they are learning and about what they need to learn strongly influences their receptiveness to learning" (Leki & Carson, 1994: 82). Accordingly, whatever these students learn is very much determined by what they *want* to learn. Upon interviewing L2 students enrolled at 5 universities who had completed language courses in intensive English programmes, students indicated that writing skills were used only 10% of all the time spent on academic tasks. Leki and Carson argue that despite this, "the importance of writing to achieving academic success may well be far greater than the amount of time reported devoted to writing would suggest because many courses evaluate students through some form of written text (e.g. essay exams, short-answer essays, research papers)" (1994: 83), which is the

case for the students enrolled in the CPP. Furthermore, in terms of the required fluency in the secondary Discourse at HE institutions, Leki and Carson argue that “university requirements implicitly support the notion that ability to write well is integral to academic success” (1994: 83).

Amongst the findings of the Leki and Carson’s study was that some students suggested that there be more of a focus on intellectually stimulating and demanding subject matter, since this might better prepare them for their writing across the curriculum. What was also interesting was that some students felt that they would benefit more from writing on subjects related to their majors or to materials they would study in other college courses. Leki and Carson thus suggest that perhaps the only way to build real confidence in students’ writing is by means of success at writing on “topics more central to their academic and intellectual lives” (1994: 93). For this reason, it might be necessary to investigate the notion of content-based instruction and what it entails. This forms the focus of the following section.

## **2.4 Content-based instruction (CBI)**

As content-based instruction is not part of the approach taken to the development and compilation of the SFCW English literacy course materials, this will only be discussed briefly. CBI does, however, tie in very well with several theoretical principles discussed so far, which is one possible justification for its inclusion in the literature review of this particular paper. The possible value of CBI in terms of the SFCW English literacy course materials will be discussed in more depth in the recommendations section of the study.

CBI has become a widespread approach in many contexts, due to the recognition of “the importance of preparing students for further academic study in the content areas” (Crandall & Kaufman, 2002: 1). CBI programmes have been developed to address the need for enhanced academic English language proficiency and assist English language students with their disciplinary and professional objectives. As a result, the need for collaboration across disciplines has been realised. Crandall and Kaufman (2002) state that these programmes have raised the awareness amongst content-area teachers and administrators, of the crucial role played by English language faculty in the academic

development of a growing number of students. They claim that, within such a CBI context, “both language and content faculty gain in their understanding of the interplay of language and content and the respective contributions of all faculty to enhancing the language and academic proficiency of English language learners” (2002: 1).

Much support for CBI stems from L2 acquisition research, particularly from the work of Krashen, Swain and Cummins. Early rationale for the development of CBI came from Krashen’s theory of comprehensible input, where language was thought to be best acquired through extensive exposure to understandable L2 input. Swain, however, argued that there were limitations regarding instruction which only promoted comprehensible input and, as a result, provided a balance of integrated language and content instruction. Swain was of the opinion that Canadian immersion programmes were not as successful in teaching speaking and writing skills as they were in teaching L2 comprehension skills (listening and reading). Accordingly, Swain proposed the output hypothesis, which argued that student learning depended on explicit attention to productive language skills (speaking and writing). This was later expanded on in terms of a focus on relevant and contextually appropriate language forms to support content-learning in the classroom. This combination of focused language instruction and content teaching is a key feature of many CBI approaches. Further research (Garrett, Lightbown and Spada, Swain, Tarone and Swain) raised the argument that “both form and meaning (content) are important and not readily separable in language learning” (Grabe & Stoller, 1997: 7). Grabe and Stoller (1997: 7) suggest that two components work together towards communicative ends, and students and teachers are required to negotiate language form (as well as content) which, in turn, reinforces recent sociocultural approaches to L2 acquisition, namely the literacy studies approach.

CBI complements the principles of the literacy-studies approach in that students are given the opportunity to negotiate the knowledge that they are learning. Students continuously extend their knowledge “at increasing levels of complexity as more content is incorporated into the lessons” (Grabe & Stoller, 1997: 7). In addition, students are awarded opportunities to learn from teachers and peers and, in turn, appropriate activities, strategies, and content in ongoing cycles of learning. According

to the literacy-studies approach, students are thus developing fluency in terms of their secondary Discourse, which is the academic discourse of any given field of study at university. Thus, students could potentially be afforded the opportunity of acquiring both the content and the discourse required by the university to communicate in the appropriate secondary Discourse.

Furthermore, Grabe and Stoller refer to Cummins' notion of CALP, which has already been discussed at length earlier. Cummins argues that students require CALP skills in order to succeed in academic L2 learning contexts. He is of the opinion that "[p]ostponing content instruction while students develop more advanced academic language is impractical and ignores students' complex education needs" (Grabe & Stoller, 1997: 8). Furthermore, Cummins (2009: 24) proposes that the "encouragement of extensive writing, across multiple genres, is...a crucial element in enabling students to gain a sense of control over academic language that is active rather than just passive". Students should be learning content information and acquiring CALP simultaneously, considering that CALP is the language of academic content areas. In agreement with Cummins, Grabe and Stoller postulate that a CBI approach would be the most effective way for students to develop CALP skills.

Owens (2002: 46) makes mention of a CBI course for undergraduate students at a Thai university, Asian University of Science and Technology (Asian UST). The goal for this Communication Skills programme was to "provide high quality professional education in the fields of science, engineering, business and management" and "to provide an enhanced regional capacity for the use of the English language medium in the field of university education". Upon the completion of the course, students' grades accurately reflected their abilities and degree of participation and learning. Furthermore, student evaluation forms illustrated that students had a sense of achievement. As a result, Owens suggested that content-based learning should feature more strongly in terms of the rest of the language programme so that students would take courses that were designed around their needs. This would demonstrate the integration of language and content, and because it is appreciated by students and teachers alike, would promote lifelong learning (Owens, 2002).

Extensive reading is said to improve language abilities (reading ability, vocabulary, general knowledge) and widens content-area learning, which leads to higher motivation, particularly in L2 contexts. Grabe and Stoller argue that “reading research provides one of the strongest cases of skills transfer and the potential benefits of a CBI curricular approach” (1997: 9).

Two principal goals of CBI involve student access of challenging informational activities and the learning of complex skills, which are supported by motivation, positive attributions and interest. Research (Grabe & Stoller, 1997: 12) indicates that the recognition that learning is occurring and that learning sophisticated and challenging information justifies the effort and results in motivation and interest. In other words, motivated students develop an interest in curricular learning goals and activities, and those who see themselves as successful and capable, learn more and essentially do better. Essentially, motivation and interest lead to students engaging with learning materials to a greater extent, which explains the relationship that exists between better learning and the depth-of-processing and discourse-processing. Should students be interested in the content information, they are better able to learn the content, which results in powerful intrinsic motivation. This is one goal of CBI, which is geared towards generating interest in content information by means of “stimulating material resources and instruction, leading students to develop intrinsic motivation to learn” (Grabe and Stoller, 1997: 12). The relevance of motivation is discussed in depth in the following section.

## **2.5 Motivation**

Motivation is a very important notion in language education, and is frequently used to explain what causes success or failure in learning. Motivation is said to afford the primary impulsion to initiate L2 learning, as well as the driving force to sustaining the learning process. Regardless of whether a student possesses noteworthy ability, or whether appropriate curricula and good teaching are in place, without motivation, student achievement cannot be ensured (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Oxford and Shearin (1994: 12) argue that research shows that motivation has a direct influence on:

- how often students use L2 learning strategies
- how much students interact with native speakers

- how much input they receive in the target language being learned
- how well they do on curriculum-related achievement tests
- how high their general proficiency level becomes
- how long they persevere and maintain L2 skills after language study is over

Should this be the case, motivation could then serve as an important factor with regard to the two research questions of this study; namely *student perceptions of their learning on the course*, as well as *whether they enjoyed the content*.

Motivational theories are generally aimed at explaining three interrelated aspects of human behaviour. These include “the *choice* of a particular action (*why* people decide to do something), *persistence* with it (*how long* they are willing to sustain the activity), and *effort* expended on it (*how hard* they are going to pursue it)” (Dörnyei, 2000: 520). Dörnyei identifies four primary challenges faced by students which prevent consensus in terms of motivational research. The following table serves to illustrate these challenges:

**Table 10: Primary challenges faced by students (adapted from Dörnyei, 2000: 520)**

Challenge	Description
<i>Consciousness vs. unconsciousness</i>	Distinguishes conscious vs. unconscious influences on human behaviour
<i>Cognition vs. affect</i>	Explains the cognitive and affective/emotional influences on human behaviour
<i>Context</i>	Explains the interrelationship of the individual organism, the individual’s immediate environment and the broader socio-cultural context
<i>Time (temporal dimension)</i>	Accounts for the diachronic nature of motivation / Conceptualizes a motivation construct with a prominent temporal axis

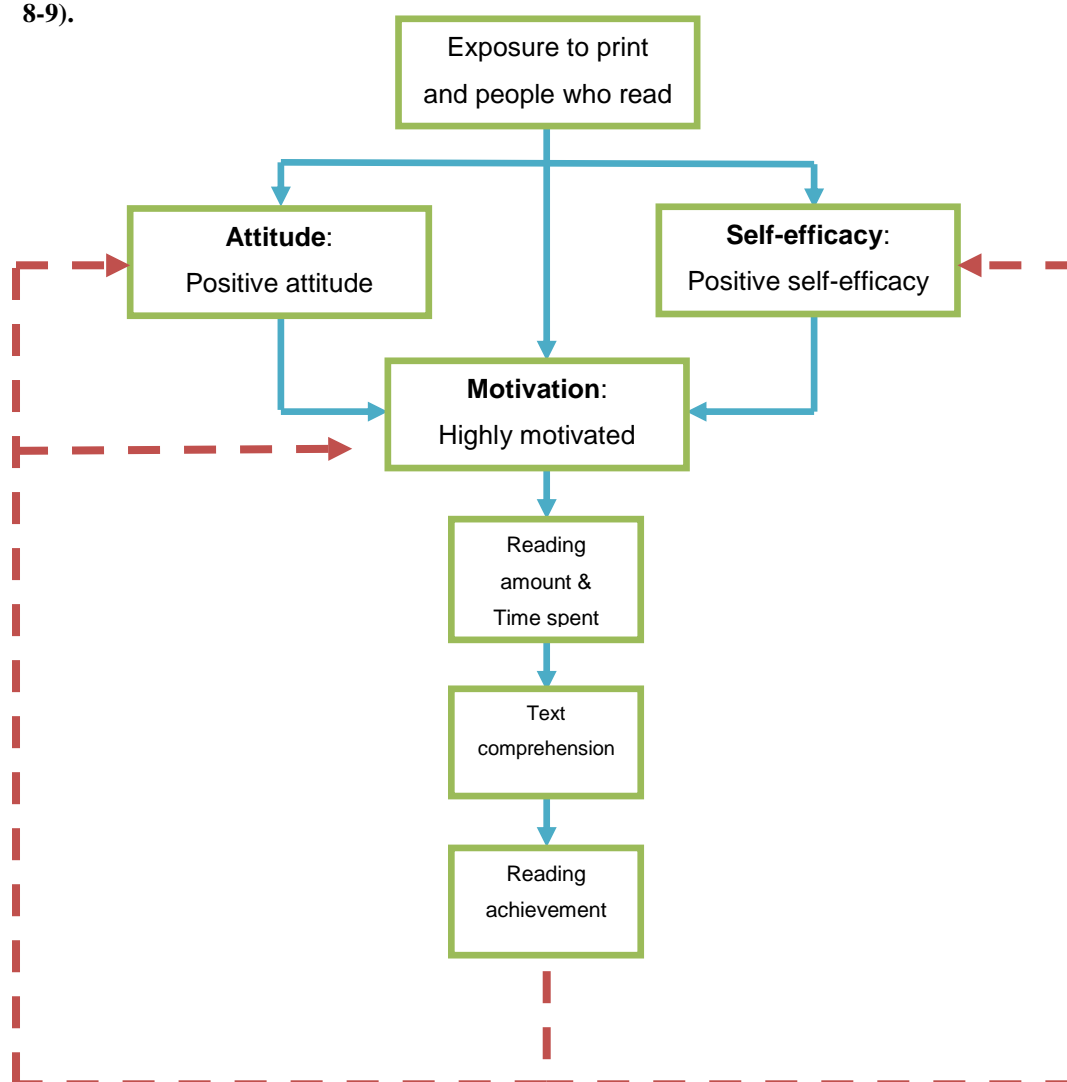
Boakye and Southey (2008: 7-24) address the issue of student motivation *regarding the motivation to read*. This is relevant, given the emphasis placed on the reading component in the SFCW literacy course materials. Boakye and Southey (2008) postulate that L2 students display a variety of different motivations and attitudes

towards reading. They quote Grabe and Stoller who argue that students' attitudes and motivations are related to their "previous experiences of reading, exposure to print and people who read, and to perceptions about the usefulness of reading" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002: 242). Students' motivations and attitudes ultimately have an effect on how willing they are to participate in reading classes and related activities, which, in turn, influences the success of their reading development. The lower the motivation, the less reading is done, resulting in the difficulty in accessing and understanding text, use of ineffective strategies, and poor reading ability (Boakye and Southey, 2008). Given the focus on reading in the SFCW English literacy course, low motivation could have a detrimental effect on their performance on the course. This would consequently also be relevant in terms of the research question pertaining to *whether the course changed student performance on the NBTs*.

Boakye and Southey (2008: 8) go on to explain that reading motivation can be defined as the "individual's personal goals, values and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes and outcomes of reading". This is said to be linked to the amount of reading done by an individual. Highly motivated students tend to increase their reading amount and therefore the time spent reading, which has an effect on their ability to comprehend text. Text comprehension is defined as "the capacity of the learner to construct new knowledge or information from written texts" (2008: 8). It is thus logical to assume that if a student is motivated, they spend more time reading, which increases their conceptual understanding of texts and thus contributes to reading achievement. Thus, if students on the SFCW programme are motivated, they would spend more time reading, particularly in the form of the extensive reading component of the course, which would have a bearing on their accessing and comprehending the more theme-based academic texts comprising the materials.

Attitude and self-efficacy are two further factors associated with reading comprehension. A positive attitude towards reading will result in an increase in motivation to read more. Similarly, the belief in one's ability to comprehend complex texts leads to the motivation to read more. These various factors influencing reading ability are illustrated in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Factors influencing reading comprehension (adapted from Boakye and Southey, 2008: 8-9).**



It can thus be postulated that, should students come from a print-poor background, where people did not show an interest or ability in reading, as is the case of many of the students on the SFCW Programme, their attitude, self-efficacy and motivation would be adversely affected. A negative attitude towards reading, and doubting their ability to understand and access complex texts would thus result in low motivation. This, in turn, would lead to the student reading less, which would negatively affect their text comprehension, and ultimately their reading achievement on the English literacy course. These possibilities will be addressed in the analysis section of the paper.

Gardner and his associates (2003) address the relationship of second-language achievement in terms of five attitude/motivation variables from Gardner's



socioeducational model, namely integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation, integrative orientation, and instrumental orientation. The following table represents these variables (Gardner & Masgoret, 2003: 171).

**Table 11: Attitude/motivation variables from Gardner's socio-educational model of second-language acquisition (adapted from Gardner & Masgoret, 2003: 171)**

Variable	Description	Hypotheses
<i>Attitudes toward the learning situation</i>	Refers to individual's reaction to anything associated with immediate context in which language is taught, relative to others in the class.	Possibly different for various classes, given variation in classroom environment
-----	-----	----->
Evaluation of the course Evaluation of the teacher		
<i>Integrativeness</i>	Refers to an openness to identify with another language community. Involves the adoption of word sounds, pronunciations, word orders, behavioural and cognitive features part of another culture.	Openness facilitates motivation to learn material. Individuals willing to identify are more motivated to learn target language. Individuals not willing to identify are less motivated to learn target language.
Attitudes toward the target language group		Favourable attitudes toward group facilitates openness. Negative attitudes toward group impede openness.
-----	-----	----->
Interest in foreign languages	Learning a language in order to interact, meet, socialise and become friends with member of the other community.	Those interested in learning a language are more open. Those not interested in learning a language are less open.
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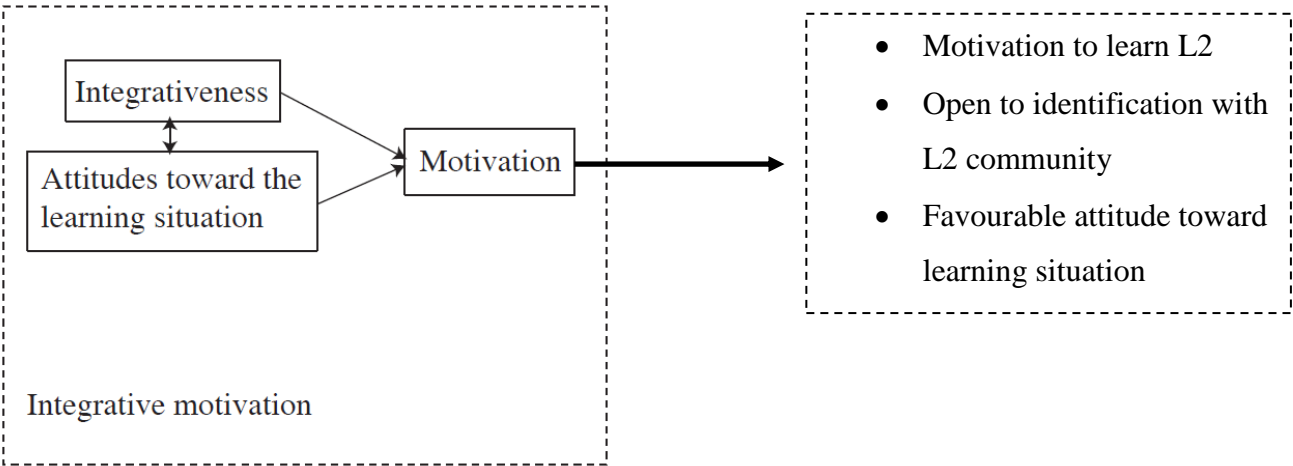
Integrative orientation	May not have particular interest in target language, but simply open to all groups.	
<b>Motivation</b>	Refers to goal-directed behaviour. Attention is an important contributing factor.	<p>Motivated individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expend effort</li> <li>• are persistent and attentive to the task at hand</li> <li>• have goals, desires and aspirations</li> <li>• experience reinforcement from success and disappointment from failure</li> <li>• make attributions regarding success and/or failure</li> <li>• make use of strategies to aid in achieving goals</li> </ul> <p>Unmotivated individuals do not exhibit such behaviours, feelings, and cognitions.</p>
Motivational intensity	Assesses the effort expended by the individual in learning the language.	→
Attitudes toward learning the target language	Assesses the extent to which there is a desire to achieve a high level of competence in the language.	→
Desire to learn the target language	Refers to the affect experienced while learning the language	→

**Measures of reasons for learning another language included in the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery**

<i><b>Orientations</b></i>	Reasons for studying L2	
	Do not necessarily reflect motivation	
-----	-----	----->
Instrumental orientation	Practical reasons for learning L2	
-----	-----	----->
Integrative orientation	May or may not be motivated to study L2	

Gardner and Masgoret (2003) found that there were high correlations between achievement and motivation, more so than between achievement and integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, or integrative and instrumental orientation. Furthermore, they also found that integrative motivation promotes successful second-language acquisition. These findings therefore support their argument that motivation is the major affective individual-difference variable contributing to achievement in another language (Gardner & Masgoret, 2003: 201), which notion is represented by the following figure. If this is the case, it serves as an important factor to consider when looking at the achievement of students on the SFCW English literacy programme.

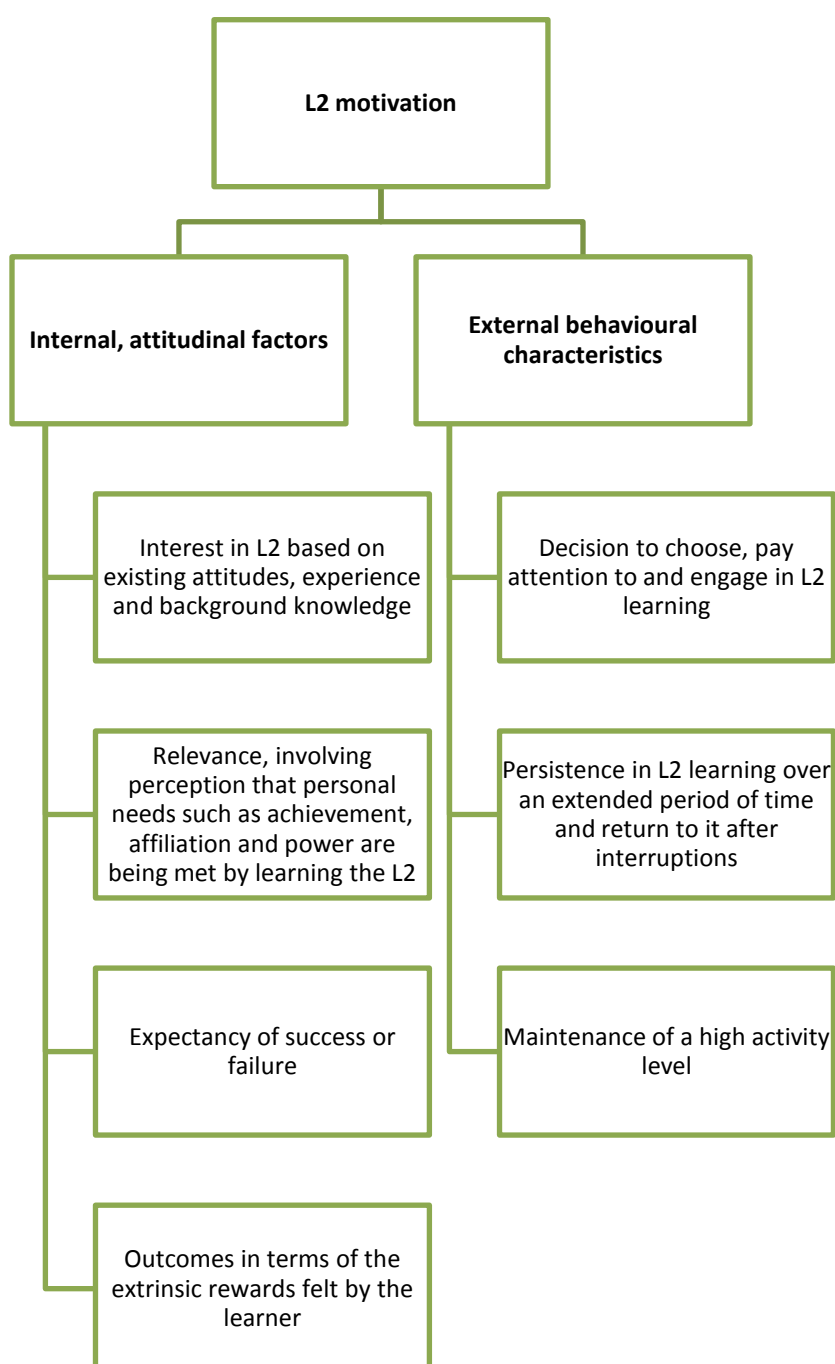
**Figure 5 : The role of motivation in L2 learning (adapted from Ushida, 2005: 52)**



Crookes and Schmidt (1989) expand on the definition of L2 motivation by suggesting that internal and external features comprise motivation to learn. The following diagram illustrates the various components relative to these internal and external features. This is relevant in terms of the study since internal, attitudinal factors deal

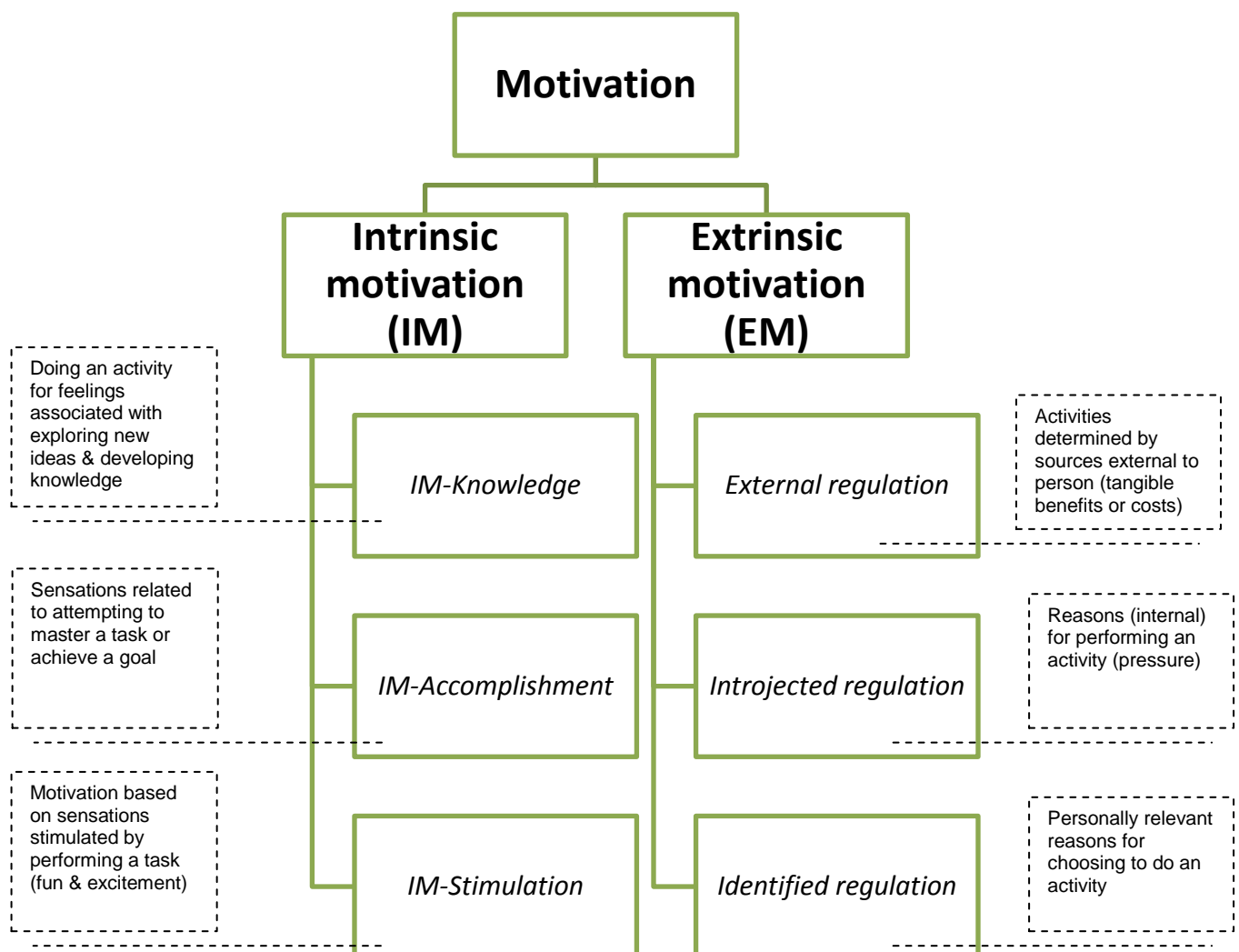
with concepts such as existing attitudes, experience and background knowledge and student perceptions of relevance of learning L2. Taking into consideration the background of the students involved in the study, these factors are pertinent. Furthermore, regarding the external behavioural characteristics, which focus on aspects such as students' choice in terms of learning an L2, this is relevant since the SFCW English literacy course (ALC 108) is a mandatory subject which could possibly impact on L2 motivation.

**Figure 6: Internal and external features of L2 motivation (adapted from Oxford & Shearin, 1994: 14)**



Crookes and Schmidt's expanded theory above can be related to what Noels, Pelletier, Clément and Vallerand (2000) refer to as Intrinsic (IM) and Extrinsic Motivation (EM). The former involves motivation to take part in a particular activity because it is pleasant and fulfilling to do so. Also, when an individual is free to choose to partake in an activity, they are likely to rise to the challenges presented by the activity, and in so doing, develop a sense of competence in their abilities. EM, on the other hand, refers to the actions carried out toward some instrumental end, like earning a reward or avoiding punishment. Again, for the sake of clarity, the various types of IM and EM are represented in the figure below.

**Figure 7: Self-determination approach to motivation (adapted from Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2000: 61)**



*Amotivation* occurs when an individual sees no relation between their actions and the consequences of those actions. In such a case, there appears to be no reason, neither intrinsic nor extrinsic, for performing a particular activity, and given the opportunity, they would cease to take part in the activity as soon as possible (Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2000).

Noels, Pelletier, Clément and Vallerand (2000) argue that although IM and EM are related, IM lies on a continuum separate from EM. This suggests that students who enjoy the feeling of learning an L2 may not necessarily feel personally involved in the learning process, but may actually view language learning in terms of a game that has few repercussions in everyday life. In order to foster sustained learning, students must be convinced of the personal importance of learning the language, rather than convincing them that it is enjoyable and interesting. This is important, since the data indicated that some students failed to see the purpose of the SFCW English literacy course (ALC 108). These responses are dealt with in detail in the discussion section of the study. Furthermore, this motivation paradigm is considered useful in terms of predicting educational outcomes, since there is a link between a more self-determined form to motivation and an increased perception of freedom and choice and perceived competence. In contrast, higher levels of amotivation are linked to low perceptions of freedom of choice and perceived competence. “[T]he more students perceived their teachers as controlling and as failing to provide constructive feedback, the less they were intrinsically motivated” (Noels, Pelletier, Clément and Vallerand 2000: 76).

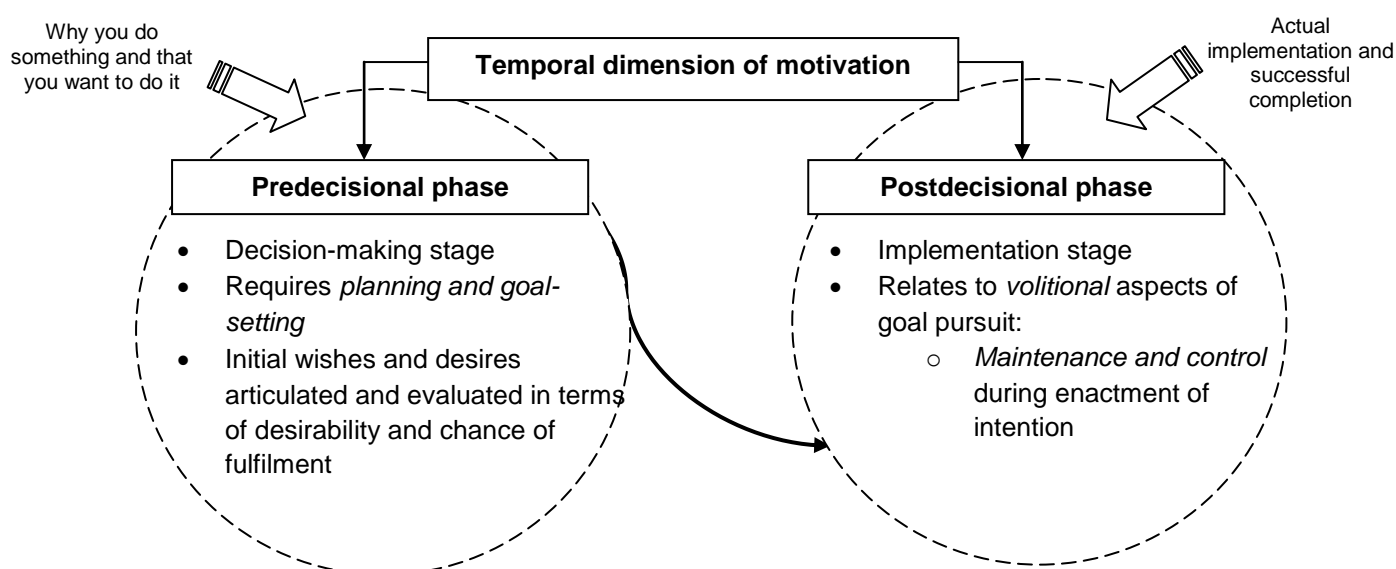
It was also found that students are inclined to be more comfortable and preserving the more internalised their reasons for learning a second language. The more autonomy-supportive the environment, where a sense of competence is enhanced by means of feedback, the more likely students are to perceive learning as pleasurable or appealing in terms of their self-concept. Therefore, the argument is that “language programs that emphasise autonomy will likely foster student motivation and potential success” (Noels, Pelletier, Clément and Vallerand 2000: 76). This concept of feedback fostering student motivation and potential success is relevant to the study, particularly since the qualitative data elicited responses pertaining to facilitators on the programme who failed to provide constructive feedback.

### 2.5.1 The temporal dimension of motivation

In his article on *Motivation in action*, Dörnyei focuses on the challenge of time and the relevance of this challenge with regard to understanding motivation in educational contexts. His justification for focusing only on one particular challenge is based on the manifoldness of the concept of motivation. Dörnyei (2000: 521) quotes Heinz Heckhausen, who argues that “one possible approach to restricting this manifoldness is to try to ‘separate the sequence of events involved in being motivated into natural, i.e., discrete phases’”. Further justification for the process-oriented view is the fact that motivation involves various mental processes that lead to the initiation and maintenance of action. The temporal dimension of motivation is thus of importance here, since a “temporal perspective...begins with the awakening of a person’s wishes prior to goal setting and continues through the evaluative thoughts entertained after goal striving has ended” (2000: 521).

Two phases are identified for the temporal perspective; firstly, the *predecisional phase* involves the intention-formation process, and secondly, the *postdecisional phase* focuses on the action-implementation process. The following figure serves to represent the particulars of these two phases.

**Figure 8: The temporal dimension of motivation (adapted from Dörnyei, 2000: 521)**



## 2.5.2 A process-oriented approach to understanding student motivation

This temporal dimension of motivation is key to understanding student motivation, and a process-oriented approach has considerable practical implications. This view targets two constructs, namely *motivational maintenance and volition*, and *motivational evolution and fluctuation*. The former emphasises the fact that sustained deep learning entails extended processes, whereby students acquire skill/knowledge which results in expertise in a field. This type of learning encompasses different motivational characteristics from simple learning tasks, since prolonged learning situations require that the motivational drive be sustained for an extended period. The reason for this is that it takes time for an individual to develop an understanding of the task and skills proficiency relevant to performance required for skills training, and thus, goal accomplishment can be a lengthy process. Furthermore, with regard to complex learning in an institutional context, such as the CPP and SFCW, many of the decisions and goals are imposed on students by the system. This limited involvement of the student regarding the design of learning schedules or choice in which activities to engage, affects the choice aspect of student motivation. But, in an instructional setting, the maintenance of assigned goals, elaboration on subgoals, and the exercise of control over other thoughts and behaviours often more desirable than concentration on academic work are key in terms of motivational issues. “The point is that motivation, conceptualised as a choice process, can be a necessary but insufficient condition for enhancing learning and performance in many...endeavours...During pursuit of difficult or long-term goals, effective volitional control over action can enhance learning and performance, as well sustain motivation for goal striving” (Dörnyei, 2000: 523).

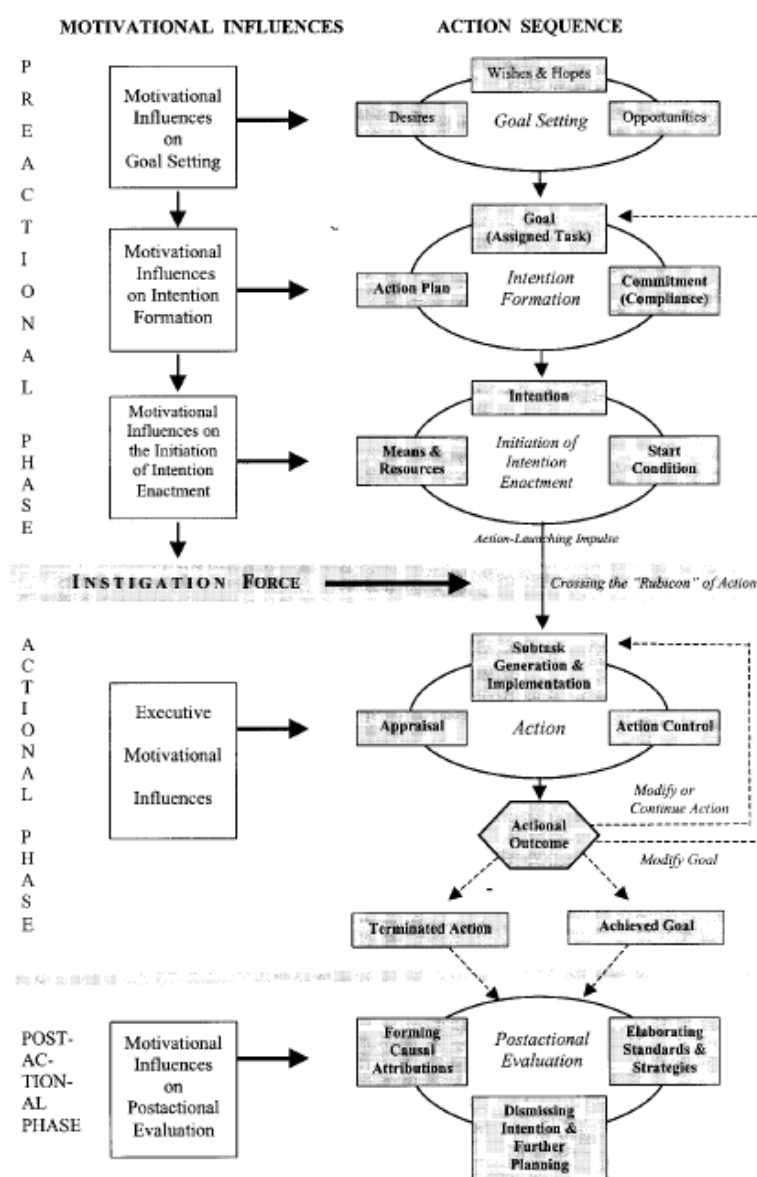
The notion of *motivation evolution and fluctuation* deals with the continuous (re)appraisal and balancing of internal and external influences to which an individual is exposed. In other words, when dealing with long-term activities, motivation does not remain constant, but rather involves a fluctuating pattern of effort and commitment as a result of the internal and external influences. Campbell and Storch (2011: 184) also agree that L2 learning motivation changes and fluctuates over time, “confirming that within the context of institutionalised learning...the common experience would seem to be motivational flux rather than stability”. For this reason,



an accurate definition of motivation would thus be “the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritised, operationalised, and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out” (Dörnyei, 2000: 524).

Figure 9 represents the process model of student motivation, which constitutes two main dimensions. The first dimension, *Action Sequence*, illustrates the behavioural process - the transformation of wishes, hopes and desires into goals, intentions, actions, and finally the accomplishment of goals, after which the process is submitted to final evaluation. The second dimension, *Motivational Influence*, illustrates the energy sources and motivational forces that fuel the behavioural process (Dörnyei, 2000: 526).

**Figure 9: Schematic representation of Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) process model of student motivation (taken from Dörnyei, 2000: 525)**



Dörnyei considers such a process-oriented framework as a concrete theoretical background to developing motivational strategies, because it is so comprehensive. He furthermore proposes a ‘taxonomy of motivational strategies’ constituting the following main classes (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008: 58; Dörnyei, 2000: 533).

- *Creating the basic motivational conditions*
  - appropriate teacher behaviours and good relationship with students
  - pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere
  - cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms

The research question pertaining to *student perceptions of their learning on the course* is applicable here, since student responses revealed important information pertaining to facilitator-learner relationships, classroom atmosphere and student group norms. Some of these concepts are also relevant in terms of the research question of *how facilitators experienced teaching the materials*.

- *Generating initial motivation*
  - enhancing learners’ subject-matter-related values and attitudes
  - increasing learners’ goal-orientedness
  - increasing learners’ expectancy of success
  - making the curriculum relevant for the learners
  - creating realistic learner beliefs

This is relevant, given student responses pertaining to the content of the course. The data indicated that some students found certain themes/topics irrelevant, and thus uninteresting. Such responses could influence a number of facets related to generating initial motivation.

- *Maintaining and protecting motivation*
  - setting proximal subgoals
  - presenting and administering tasks in a motivating way
  - increasing the quality of the learning experience
  - increasing the learners’ self-confidence
  - allowing learners to maintain a positive self and social image
  - creating learner autonomy
  - promoting self-motivating learner strategies

This class is also pertinent, given that some students found certain themes/topics irrelevant and uninteresting. The discussion section of the study deals with CBI as a

possible means of maintaining and protecting motivation, since such an approach would expose students to topics more central to their academic and intellectual lives.

- *Rounding off the learner experience: Encouraging positive self-evaluation*
  - promoting attributions to effort rather than to ability
  - providing motivational feedback
  - increasing learner satisfaction
  - the issue of rewards, grades and punishments

Student and facilitator responses in the study pointed out certain issues pertaining to assessment on the SFCW English literacy course. Formative assessment is discussed as a possible means to promote rounding off student experience regarding attributions to effort, motivational feedback, and elevating student satisfaction.

### **2.5.3 The changing face of motivation**

With regard to the most recent theory on L2 motivation, Ushioda (2006) postulates that motivational issues require examination regarding linguistic diversity, mobility and social integration. Ushioda (2006: 148) refers specifically to the concept of integrative motivation in terms of the framework of theories of self and identity, with particular focus on the “social context in which motivation and identity are embedded and co-constructed, or constrained”. In terms of ‘integrative orientation’ and the motivational role of attitudes towards target language speakers and their culture, Ushioda highlights the problem that there is no specific target reference group of speakers, particularly in the case of English as a target language. The reason for this is because English is increasingly becoming a global language, a “lingua franca employed as a common means of communication between speakers from different language backgrounds” (Ushioda, 2006: 150). She thus suggests that the notion of integrativeness be expanded on so that it incorporates a generalised international outlook or attitudes to the international community at large and broadens the external reference group to a nonspecific global community of English language users. Campbell and Storch (2011: 167) agree that integrativeness is no longer defined by a desire to assimilate with an identifiable L2 speaking community. Rather, they argue that it is understood more as an openness and respect for the L2 speaking community, or as an “interest in becoming a member of a global English-speaking community”.

The most radical theoretical shift pertaining to the concept of integrative motivation is marked by the focus on self and identity. Ushioda (2006: 150) refers to Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) who are of the opinion that the “process of identification theorised to underpin integrativeness might be better explained as an internal process of identification within the individual’s self-concept, rather than identification with an external reference group”. Dörnyei’s (2006: 53) L2 Motivational Self-System deals with the notion of the L2 self, where a distinction is made between the *ideal* and an *ought-to* L2 self. The *Ideal L2 Self* refers to the attributes that an individual would like to possess, such as one’s hopes, aspirations and desires. Should the Ideal self be associated with the mastery of an L2, then one is said to have an ‘integrative disposition’. The *Ought-to L2 Self* refers to the attributes one believes one *ought to* possess with regard to various duties, obligations or responsibilities. These might not necessarily be aligned with the individual’s own desires or wishes. Although the two selves are similar in their relation to the attainment of a desired end-state, they are motivationally distinct from one another in that the Ideal self-guides have a *promotion focus*, while the Ought-to self-guides have a *prevention focus*. Dörnyei (2006: 54) postulates that L2 motivation can be viewed as “the desire to reduce the perceived discrepancies between the learner’s actual self and his/her ideal or ought-to L2 selves”. This theory of ‘possible selves’ “represent[s] individuals’ ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming and so provide a conceptual link between the self-concept and motivation” (Ushioda, 2006: 150). The third dimension of the L2 Motivational Self-System is that of *L2 Learning Experience* which refers to the immediate learning environment and experience and is more situation specific.

Ushioda (2006: 151) proposes that an important motivational question for the individual language learner is whether “the pursuit of mutual intelligibility and participation in the global community are perceived as somehow a threat to, or an enrichment of, one’s linguistic identity and sense of self”. She also makes mention of an important concept dealt with in literacy studies – that of ‘gatekeeping’ and how native speakers deploy gatekeeping strategies in institutional interaction with non-native speakers. She remarks on the inequitable power relations in L2 learners’ struggle to participate in interactional settings in desired social and professional communities of practice and that these can pose severe constraints on the processes of

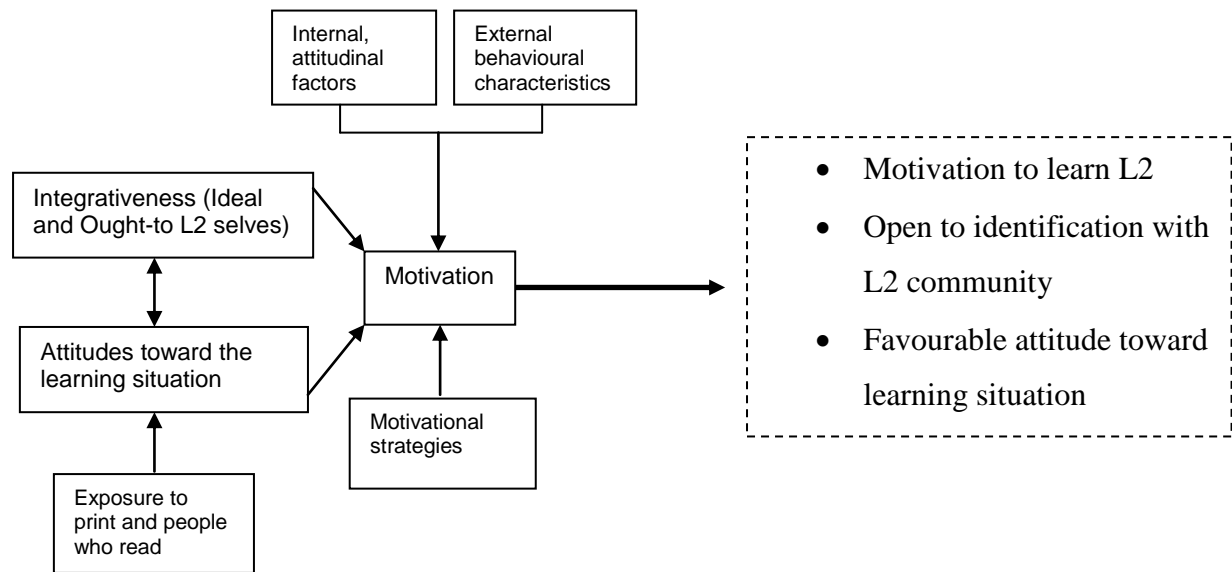
individual L2 motivation in terms of the degree to which an individual invests in an L2. She also suggests that an L2 learners' pursued identity "is in a constant state of flux, being locally constructed, negotiated and re-formed each time through a person's participation in community practices" (Ushioda, 2006: 153). Ultimately, the facilitation or construction of non-native language users' attempts to learn the L2 by linguistic community practices, together with how L2 learners engage with their identities, will have a bearing on their investment in the language (Ushioda, 2006).

Notably, there is much theory on L2 motivation, but what is required is a collaborative model that can be applied to the analysis of student and facilitators' learning and teaching experiences. Given the nature of the responses in the qualitative data, certain theoretical models on L2 motivation have been selected to form such a collaborative model, whose specifics are discussed in the following section.

#### **2.5.4 A collaborative model of L2 motivation**

Given the various motivational theories and models that have been discussed so far, it is necessary to consider integrating the constructs that can be applied and are relevant to the SFCW English literacy course in terms of student and facilitator perspectives of learning and teaching respectively. For this reason, certain aspects have been lifted from various theoretical models and combined in Figure 10, based on the backgrounds and individual needs of the students who form part of this study. The models and theories that have been utilised for this purpose include *factors influencing reading comprehension* (Boakye and Southey, 2008), *the role of motivation in L2 learning* [Gardner & Masgoret (2003) and Ushioda (2005)], *the L2 Motivational Self-System* (Dörnyei, 2006), *internal and external features of L2 motivation* (Oxford & Shearin, 1994), and *a taxonomy of motivational strategies* (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008).

**Figure 10: A collaborative model of motivational theories and perspectives**



This model will be used to analyse student responses on the questionnaire and in student focus groups, as well as facilitator journal entries and transcriptions of facilitator meetings in the analysis section of the study. The objective is to have a comprehensive understanding of the possible factors contributing to L2 motivation and how these influence learning perspectives and performance on initiatives such as the SFCW English literacy course materials.

## Chapter 3:

### 3. Research design and research methodology

This section deals predominantly with the particulars of qualitative and quantitative data management and analysis. The subsection on quantitative data encompasses a description of a reading level test that was used in the pilot study; a summary of the components of the summative assessment for the first and second semester; and the particulars of the National Benchmark Test, which were taken down on two separate occasions for pre- and post-test purposes. The qualitative data subsection deals with the following; a description of the various components of a student questionnaire; the process involved in selecting sample questionnaires; the particulars of how students were selected for two follow-up focus groups based on their open-ended questionnaire responses; details of facilitator journal entries; and how these were used towards organising facilitator meetings whose transcriptions form part of the qualitative data bank.

The study adopted a mixed-method approach, where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected simultaneously in the form of facilitator journal entries, student focus groups, transcriptions of facilitator meetings, a student questionnaire, as well as pre- and post-test results and end-semester course results. The research methodology encompasses an ethnographic study, which involves working with students and facilitators who have been exposed to the same phenomenon – a language intervention programme in the form of the *Skills for a Changing World* English literacy materials – for one academic year, which constitutes prolonged fieldwork. The data was utilised to determine the efficacy of the language literacy course in terms of the following research objectives:

- Did the course change student performance on the NBTs?
- What are student perceptions of their learning on the course?
- How did facilitators experience teaching the materials?
- Did learners enjoy the content?

As mentioned earlier, this particular study is an extension of a previous pilot study that was conducted in 2010 (see Drennan, 2010). This encompassed a small-scale

non-equivalent, quasi-experimental quantitative study of students' performance on the SFCW English literacy course. The research questions of this particular study focused on the performance of an experimental and control group on a reading test and overall academic performance. A summary of the findings of this study will be included in the analysis section of the current study.

Ethnography stems from investigations of culture in anthropology, thus it attempts to describe shared understandings and knowledge among participants that guide behaviour in a specific context. Investigations are conducted as field research, where the researcher avoids manipulating events and controlling all variables. Such investigations involve the researcher taking detailed field notes and co-ordinating it with other records relating to classroom interaction. In addition, such an approach incorporates the views of other participants in the form of interviews, diary entries and learning logs, for example. This allows for the identification of congruent moments from a diversity of perspectives, thereby building as rich a picture of the context in which language learning, in this particular case, takes place, allowing for the emergence of a variety of potential interpretations of the learning. The diary entries of the facilitators in this particular study serve as a record of language learning and teaching events, as well as a record for the purpose of identifying recurrent patterns or pivotal events in the process of learning and teaching (Weideman, 2010).

More specifically, this particular study constitutes classroom ethnography, which refers to "the application of ethnographic and socio-linguistic or discourse analytic research methods to the study of behaviour, activities, interaction, and discourse in formal and semi-formal educational settings such as adult education programmes", which "emphasises the socio-cultural nature of teaching and learning processes, incorporates participants' perspectives on their own behaviour, and offers a holistic analysis sensitive to levels of context in which interactions and classrooms are situated" (Hornberger & Corson, 1997). Typical to an ethnographic study, classroom ethnography involves the intensive, detailed observation of the learning environment over a period of time, in this case one year. This type of study also takes into account the setting of the learning environment, the principles underlying the social organisation of the learning environment, and the social norms guiding participants' behaviour and shaping their interpretations of specific interactions. Current trends in



classroom ethnography allow for both *qualitative and quantitative techniques* due to the recognition of “the value in analysing and displaying results from repeated observations and interviews” (Hornberger & Corson, 1997).

Ethnographic research is therefore considered appealing by researchers, because it serves as a solution to the “isolating, abstract character of experimental research” in its ability to “yield a depth of understanding that other approaches cannot match” (Weideman, 2010).

This simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data in terms of facilitator journal entries, transcriptions of facilitator meetings, a student questionnaire, student focus groups, pre- and post-testing, semester-end results, can furthermore be justified by a triangulation design, which is used to provide a more comprehensive and valid set of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this way, the simultaneous analysis of quantitative and qualitative data can potentially be used to strengthen and support findings. Again, the congruent sets of data may potentially yield recurrent patterns and insight into pivotal events and components.

As mentioned earlier, the following data-gathering methods were implemented in the previous pilot study and the current Master’s study:

Pilot study data-gathering methods:

- Results of pre- and post-reading level tests; and
- Results of first and second semesters.

Current Master’s study data-gathering methods:

- Results of the 2010 pre and post NBTs;
- Student questionnaire;
- Student focus groups;
- Analysis of facilitator journal entries; and
- Transcriptions of facilitator meetings.

### 3.1 Data management and analysis methods

#### 3.1.1 Quantitative data

The previous pilot study utilised the results of a reading-level test, as well as students' overall academic results in the form of first and second semester scores. A brief overview of this data will be provided given that they will be referred to in the analysis section of the study.

The English Language Proficiency test (referred to as the reading-level test) has been used on the CPP for many years as a tool to assess reading proficiency. Students were placed on reading levels based on their performance on the test and were required to write responses on the books they had read. These writing responses (reading reactions) then formed part of students' continuous academic assessment for semesters one and two respectively. The reading-level test was a 40-minute test, based on the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) model. It consisted of 27 multiple-choice questions that were divided into 3 sections: a text comprehension section of 13 questions; a cloze section of 7 questions; and a sentence-cloze section of 7 questions. The reliability coefficient for the reading-level test was 0.74, slightly above the international benchmark minimum of 0.70.

In terms of the summative assessment that constituted the students' overall academic performance, the following table summarizes the summative assessment for the first and second semesters respectively.

**Table 12: Summative assessment for first and second semester (Drennan, 2010: 37)**

Quizzes	Reading reactions	Paragraphs / Essays	1 <sup>st</sup> term Dict test	2 <sup>nd</sup> term Dict test	Summative test	Total
4x5 = 20	5x20=100	3x10=30	20	50	100	320
6x5 = 30	5x10=50	3x30=90	20	50	100	340

As stipulated in Table 12 above, students enrolled in the SFCW English literacy course wrote weekly quizzes (vocabulary tests based on new vocabulary); reading reactions (similar to book reports written on the graded readers that students took out from the library on a weekly basis); paragraphs in the first semester (based on topics given to students by facilitators in order to foster paragraph writing skills); essays in

the second semester (based on a topic given to students by facilitators to foster essay writing skills); 2 dictionary tests (based on work done using Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionaries), and a summative test at the end of each semester.

Students' overall (total) academic scores were taken into account when the quantitative analysis was done in the pilot study, together with their performance on the pre- and post-reading-level test.

The quantitative data that forms the focus of this particular study is the students' performance on the pre and post NBTs (National Benchmark Tests). The NBTs mirror approximately a decade of research and collaboration among leading content specialists and researchers from various HE institutions across South Africa. The AARP in the CHED (Centre for Higher Education Development) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) manages the NBT Project. The NBTs were developed to serve as a placement measure and were designed "to be used in addition to NSC (National Senior Certificate) results, to assist higher education institutions to understand the meanings of the results, with the aim of helping institutions place students onto appropriate curricular provision such as extended or augmented programmes, or remedial language courses" (Yeld, 2007: 611). The NBTs consist of two tests, the AQL (Academic Literacy and Quantitative Literacy) test and the MAT (Mathematics) test. Yeld (2010: 28) distinguishes the NBTs from the NSC, in terms of what should be assessed, as the NBTs assess the "transfer of knowledge and skill", since "[h]igher education is particularly interested in students' abilities to transfer knowledge. For this reason the NBT questions, while firmly embedded in the NSC curriculum, and completely aligned with the Subject Assessment Guidelines, tap into students' abilities to transfer learnt concepts to slightly different contexts".

There are three benchmark levels of performance, aimed at assisting HE institutions with the placement of students on various programmes. Table 13 illustrates these three performance categories. Furthermore, the NBTs, together with AP scores, are thought to serve as a possible predictor of academic success (Wilson-Strydom, 2010). This possibility will be addressed further in the analysis section of the study.

**Table 13: National Benchmark Test performance categories (Yeld, 2010: 29)**

Proficient	Test performance suggests that future academic performance will not be adversely affected (students may pass or fail at university, but this is highly unlikely to be attributable to strengths or weaknesses in the domains tested). If admitted, students may be placed into regular programmes of study.
Intermediate	The challenges identified are such that it is predicted that academic progress will be adversely affected. If admitted, students' educational needs should be met as deemed appropriate by the institution (e.g. extended or augmented programmes, special skills provision).
Basic	Test performance reveals serious learning challenges: it is predicted that students will not cope with degree-level study without extensive and long-term support, perhaps best provided through bridging programmes (i.e. non-credit preparatory courses) or FET provision. Institutions admitting students performing at this level would need to provide such support themselves.

The test of relevance for this particular study is the AQL test. This is a one 3-hour test that was written as a pre-test measure in February 2010, and again as a post-test measure in October 2010, over two days. This was done so that the writing of the NBT corresponded with the day on which students had their ALC 108 classes, so as to avoid infringing on other subjects' class times. However, as a result of the test being written on two consecutive days, UCT sent through two different tests for the two test days, so as to protect the content of the NBT. The following table illustrates the various abilities that are tested in terms of academic literacy and quantitative literacy respectively.

**Table 14: Particulars of the NBT AQL test (NBT, 2011)**

<b>Academic literacy</b>	<b>Quantitative literacy</b>
<p>The NBT in academic literacy aims to assess learners' ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read carefully and make meaning from texts that are typical of the kinds that they will encounter in their studies;</li> </ul>	<p>The NBT in quantitative literacy aims to assess learners' ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and use a range of quantitative terms and phrases;</li> <li>• Apply quantitative procedures in various</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand vocabulary, including vocabulary related to academic study, in their contexts;</li> <li>• Understand and evaluate the evidence that is used to support claims made by writers of texts;</li> <li>• Extrapolate and draw inferences and conclusions from what is stated or given in text;</li> <li>• Identify main from supporting ideas in the overall and specific organisation of a text;</li> <li>• Identify and understand the different types and purposes of communication in texts;</li> <li>• Be aware of and identify text differences that relate to writers' different purposes, audiences, and kinds of communication;</li> <li>• Understand and interpret information that is presented visually (e.g. in graphs, tables, flow-charts);</li> <li>• Understand basic numerical concepts and information used in text, and be able to do basic numerical manipulations.</li> </ul>	<p>situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulate and apply formulae;</li> <li>• Read and interpret tables, graphs, charts and text and integrate information from different sources;</li> <li>• Do calculations involving multiple steps accurately;</li> <li>• Identify trends and patterns in various situations;</li> <li>• Reason logically and</li> <li>• Competently interpret quantitative information.</li> </ul>
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The part of the AQL that is of particular interest is the academic literacy section of the test, as it tests the abilities that relate to the competences pertaining to academic proficiency. It is for this reason that the results of the academic literacy section of the AQL test will receive more attention in the analysis section of the study than the quantitative literacy section.

### 3.1.2 Qualitative data

The qualitative data that was collected for this particular study includes a student questionnaire, transcriptions of two consecutive student focus groups, facilitator journal entries, and transcriptions of facilitator meetings.

The student questionnaire (see Appendix 2) comprises three sections. The first consists of 7 demographic information questions; the second includes 17 questions based on students' experiences of the ALC 108 English literacy course; and section 3 contains 4 open-ended questions. In total, the questionnaire consists of 27 questions. Questions 1 to 25 were answered on multiple choice optic answer sheets, which were sent through for evaluation at the computer centre on the UFS main campus. The results were then combined in an Excel spreadsheet. This information was subsequently processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and graphs representing frequencies for each question were generated. Questions 25 to 27 constituted the open-ended section of the questionnaire, where students were asked to reflect on what they considered most beneficial about the course; what they enjoyed least about the course; and to provide any additional information that they considered useful or felt they would like to share pertaining to their experience of the course.

The questionnaire was piloted with a group of 33 students who were not part of the study. One facilitator on the programme was not prepared to participate in the study, so her students' perspectives of the course and their learning were excluded. However, this provided an opportunity to pilot the questionnaire. The pilot revealed that some students had trouble completing the optical, multiple-choice answer sheet. As a result, additional information was given to both students and facilitators prior to the bulk of students' completion of the questionnaire. A total of 386 questionnaires were completed on the day they were submitted to facilitators. Students were required to fill in their student numbers on the open-ended part of the questionnaires, so that 8 could be selected, based on their responses, for the focus groups. Students were informed of the intention to hold follow-up focus groups before the completion of the questionnaires, and each student signed the letter of consent before the completion of the questionnaire. The letter of consent informed students that nothing they wrote or reported on the questionnaire would affect their course grades; only one researcher (myself) would have access to the responses of the questionnaires, nobody else; the information gathered would inform course developers about potential flaws in the course and/or successes; some students would be selected for a follow-up focus group in the 4<sup>th</sup> term based on their open-ended responses; their honest responses are valuable and greatly appreciated (See Appendix 1 and 2 for the letter of consent and student questionnaire respectively).

From these 386 completed questionnaires, 52 were selected according to specific criteria. From these 52, 16 students were selected for two follow-up focus groups of 8 students per focus group. The goal of qualitative research is said to be to enrich “the understanding of an experience” by selecting “fertile exemplars of the experience for study” (Polkinghorne, 2005: 140). The experience of interest here, in terms of the research questions, is (1) students’ perception of their learning on the ALC 108 English literacy course and (2) whether they enjoyed the content. A purposive sampling method was utilised in order to “bring refinement and clarity to understanding an experience” (Polinghorne, 2005: 140). This process involves selecting data that is ‘information rich’ in order to learn about “issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Polinghorne, 2005: 140). The issues that are of importance regarding this study are those pertaining to students’ experiences of their learning on the course. Multiple responses to the questionnaire were considered in order to deepen the understanding of students’ perceptions of their learning.

During the analysis of the open-ended responses on the questionnaire, common themes were isolated and noted. These themes formed the basis of the sampling process that followed. The common themes across the bulk of the open-ended responses were the following:

**Table 15: Common themes across the bulk of open-ended responses on questionnaire**

<b>General</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Course materials</b>	<b>Journaling</b>	<b>Quizzes/ vocabulary</b>	<b>Classrooms</b>
*Classes too late in afternoon, which resulted in poor concentration *Facilitator attitudes problematic *Have to wait too long on campus for classes to start in the afternoon - would prefer morning slots *2 hours too long, they struggle to concentrate for so long; others felt that this is not enough time to accommodate the work load *There should be an option to do the course the following year if they feel their English is still not up to standard *The course should be taught right throughout their tertiary education	*Marking strict and unclear *Not clear about what is expected of them *Reading a book every week is too taxing in conjunction with other courses; others say it helped improve their reading proficiency *Improvement in correct essay structure *Reading reaction formats irrelevant in terms of some books they read *One page for essays too short – cannot express opinion fully *Never did badly in essay	*Don’t understand content of summative test *Mark allocation to multiple-choice questions in Summative test too high *Some found dictionary work very beneficial, others found it too easy *Dictionary work helped improve pronunciation of words *Course improved reasoning skills and ability to express themselves; also improves critical thinking *Materials allows for students to work at their own	*Journaling is boring and has no point (never awarded marks for it or receive any feedback)	*Useful as they help improve their English *Enhance vocabulary *Helped improve verbal communication skills *Time allocated to quizzes should be increased *Some were unsure of what was going to be asked in the	*Cramped classrooms

<p>*Marks should be revealed more often so they can see their progress</p> <p>*Need for dedicated facilitators; some facilitators are not committed or fair</p> <p>*Facilitators should be more patient</p> <p>*Displeased when students disrespect facilitators in class</p> <p>*Some students feel they are treated as though they are stupid</p> <p>*Facilitator helps them understand the course materials</p> <p>*Students should be given more opportunities to participate in class</p>	<p>writing at school, but now they fail them on a regular basis</p> <p>*Did not get proper feedback regarding essays and paragraphs</p> <p>*Learned to draft a mind map</p> <p>*Able to learn from mistakes</p> <p>*Essay rubric too strict; others say it allows them to achieve better marks</p>	<p>pace</p> <p>*Helped them in their other subjects as well</p> <p>*There should be more of a variety in terms of topics that they can relate to, they tend to get bored; others said the topics were informative and helped improve general knowledge</p> <p>*Topics should be relevant to South Africa</p> <p>*Topic choice disallows student participation</p>		quizzes	
<p>(Continuation of 'Course materials')</p> <p>*Skills pack very useful; helped them with basics they did not know; others mentioned that it was never used</p> <p>*There should be additional resources to help them pass ALC</p> <p>*Do not enjoy class presentations</p> <p>*Some instructions in course guide are unclear</p> <p>*Some feel that there is too little content for one year</p> <p>*Course materials are not student-friendly and are unsystematic – students should be consulted with regard to the compilation</p> <p>*Course materials not challenging enough – answers should be omitted from materials (skills pack); they get bored if the materials are too easy</p> <p>*Allows for students to voice their own opinions</p> <p>*Dictionary module provided in stapled form, which resulted in the loss of some pages</p> <p>*Some of the course work can be done at home and not in class</p>					

In terms of purposive sampling, the criteria according to which the 52 responses were sampled are as follows:

Student responses were considered if:

- responses contained comments about the course activities and content;
- the response contained comments about issues which impact on the effectiveness of the course content and activities;
- the comments were accompanied by some explanation;
- the comments contained information concerning the impact of the content/activities on the students' knowledge/skills regarding academic English.

Student responses were not considered if they contained:

- personally offensive remarks about facilitators;



- remarks about content/activities that were not at least explained or backed up by some reason(s);
- remarks about content/activities that reflected only personal preference;
- reactions that were left incomplete.

Of the 52 responses, 16 were selected according to the following set of criteria:

Each class had to be represented. There were 12 classes; therefore at least 1 response from each class was selected. This was done to ensure that the data reflected different perspectives about students' learning experiences across the course. The selected responses had to reflect the general remarks pertaining to the sampling criteria mentioned above.

The 16 selected responses are tabulated below (cf. Table 16). Note that the responses have not been edited, but reflect the students' original responses. Student numbers have been omitted in order to honour students' privacy.

**Table 16: Selected open-ended student responses**

What do you find most beneficial about the course?	What do you enjoy least about the course	Please provide additional information that may be helpful to us about any previous questions you have already responded to in this questionnaire.	Please comment on anything about the ALC 108 English Literacy Course and your experience of it, which you feel we need to know and which we may not have asked you about in this questionnaire.
The course lets one to be able to extend his/her vocabulary without Putting forth any limits. It also enables one to think broader than just reading the texts in the book.	The journaling we do every Wednesday.	ALC 108 is a very useful course in regards with having to better your English in speaking or in writing it.	<i>The ALC academic course has turned out to be something I didn't expect and it has helped me to better my writing and reading skills.</i>
I am able to write an academic essay with better introduction than before	<i>The fact that we do too many things at a short time</i>	<i>Time for class should be extended or some activities should not be done</i>	ALC 108 course is very good especially for those who struggle with vocabulary and also helps to improve our knowlegde.
<i>Vocabulary activities and the skills pack are useful resources that even in higher learning, provide us with knowledge of things we might not have ben aware of and help us understand language better than we have been.</i>	There's nothing I do not enjoy.	<i>Other facilitators should be more responsive, some students find it difficult to participate if facilitators only give orders or instructions and do not explain.</i>	This program/course will help many students in regard to how they use language.

The vocabulary or dictionary work, it helps me understand more on how to use english words. The essays are also beneficial because they help us know how to shape our essays & write an effective essay.	I don't enjoy writing reading reactions	The time allocation for class is not good, as it is too late during the day. Tests also need to be written more often in order to help students with the assessment of the work they have been doing & learning.	<i>Students must be given more chances to participate in the work done in class, and also the level of difficulty or challenge in the work book should increase in order to help us use our minds unlike always refering to the essay for answers.</i>
It helps me a lot. My English has improved. <i>When I first got here, I did not know or understand many things. ALC has polished my English. I am now able to write clear and understandable essays. It is a skill of a life time. I am going to use it for the rest of my life. It is useful.</i>	<i>I do not like the time I feel it is not enough. We only have ALC classes 2 times a week. It is not enough. We should maybe have it three or four times a week that will be very helpful.</i>	I do not really think there is much to comment about I love ALC. The only thing I do not like it is time I feel it is not enough.	I love ALC. I enjoy it very much. It teaches me on how to work. ALC is very useful, it is like a business course. You learn how to read and write.
<i>I get to read any book I want, each and every week and My spelling has improved. I now know how to write an essay and a formal and informal letter.</i>	I just hate dictionary work.	<i>What I like about the ALC course is that its broad. We get to be more practical, for example we use news papers more often to write our essays. (we get to comment about some topics in the newspaper)</i>	<i>I think it would have been better if the themes focused more on the youth rather than being global. I'd like to read about interesting stuff like e.g. Aids, Drugs, alcohol, Sugar Daddies/Momies and Money.</i>
The book reviews, or rather having to read a new book every week has helped me a lot. I have advanced to higher levels of reading and my vocabulary and reading has been enhanced remarkably. I found the book reading most beneficial.	What I enjoyed least about the course is the dictionary work session. <i>Because the class is +- 2 hours long, I begin to lose interest doing the same thing for such a long period.</i> However, I do appreciate and enjoy dictionary work sessions.	<i>The material is mostly interesting and I love the relevance of the themes/topic. The themes/topic are about the current events, things that we witnessed in our life time.</i>	<i>I love the fact that the course is designed for every student, despite which kind of school you come from or your predisposition. I like that it does not undermine our intelligence and gives us the opportunity to be effective in english, etc.</i>
What I find most beneficial about the course is that my facilitator she has never come to class with a long face and I appreciate the way she teaches	Reading reactions and short stories	I don't think that some questions were important to ask because you already know or have the information at the main campus	<i>You could have atleast do we want to do the course again next year if we feel that our English is not up to the level best.</i>
Reading reactions, as reading extends one's vocabulary and knowledge	some stories but not all!	<i>I do not know much about the skills pack because as far as my memory extends, we haven't used it or used it a little.</i>	<i>Helping in the use of dictionary, it also helps in extending vocabulary.</i>
Writing of essays and reading reactions improved my vocabulary.	Time slots. Wednesday class.	<i>Some of the instruction in the course guide were not clear.</i>	The experience was fascinating.

<i>I personally believe that I haven't benefited in anyway what so ever. In a sense that everything is confusing, things aren't systematic. Because Bride Price stretches over a course of 6 to 8 pages, which I feel is unnecessary.</i>	<i>The fact that I have had three different facilitators. Each term I had a different one. Their teaching techniques differed.</i>	<i>I think that the resources should be student-friendly, in-order for student to have easy excess to the information. I think that in compiling these resources, student should be there to help.</i>	<i>I think that I have said enough about his course and everything is just negative.</i>
<i>The skills pack, it's a beneficial tool which evokes the need to constantly increase your vocabulary and english literature. The educated and skilled lecture who shares opinionated and non-bais thought which helps develop critical thinking. The dictionary work is a good tool to help with bettering your english.</i>	<i>The quiz, because the vocabulary is at an elementary state and does not challenge my knowledge and ideas. The journal for it is not monitored and it does not help in improving you vocabulary or bettering your english.</i>	<i>They should increase the difficulty of the course because it will encourage student to make an effort to pass and excel. At this current level of difficulty I could pass the course with a distinciton without studying.</i>	<i>I personally feel that the course does little in improving your english literature and insight because it does not accomidate for those who did english as a first language in matric.</i>
<i>The change of the rubric rewards me more marks</i>	<i>It is sometimes frustrating in terms of less word requirements for essays. I sometimes have to limit myself.</i>	<i>Some material mostly in the module and the dictionary work can sometimes be vague and unclear.</i>	<i>The allocated time of the classes for the course is too long</i>
<i>The vocabulary work as well as the hidden lessons behind the topics that we deal with.</i>	<i>Not knowing how exactly my reading reactions are assessed. I never know what is really expected of me, and that makes me anxious.</i>	<i>It needs to be made clear to us what is expected of us in the various forms of assessemnt and how we are graded on them, there is too much uncertainty.</i>	<i>The course is very relevant, but I would like to know from time to time what the class average is, that will motivate us to pull up our socks if we need to or keep up the good work.</i>
<i>It gives a wide variety of reading and writing skills that are needed by every student. This also enhances the understanding of the english language.</i>	<i>The old Reading Reaction format (questions).</i>	<i>Graded Reader levels need to be evaluated time and again to assess student performance.</i>	<i>Dictionary work helps a lot in improving our vocabulary.</i>
<i>The langauge, and how one must use it, and The way in which we use it in our everyday-lives. The different types of words and how to use them</i>	<i>That we don't write tests often and that we are always writing.</i>		<i>It must have more time, atleast 3 times a week.</i>

Two focus groups were organised that complied with the times allocated to the ALC 108 course during the week. In this way, students were not required to miss classes for any of their other subjects. The purpose of the student focus groups was to elaborate on and gain depth in understanding based on students' responses in Table 15 above. The responses that have been italicised in Table 16 are those that formed the basis for generating the questions that were used to structure the two focus groups. Students were slotted into focus groups based on their ALC 108 class times, so as to avoid infringing on their other subject periods. For this reason, the questions that

were generated for the two groups differ slightly, since they are based on the students' responses constituting that particular focus group. The focus groups were 1 hour in duration and 8 students were allocated per focus group; thus, there were 16 students in total who participated in the two focus groups. The questions that were posed during each session were as follows:

**Group one:** Monday, 11 October 2010

1. How do you feel about the time allocated to the ALC 108 classes and the work that is required of you per class?
2. How do you feel about the materials and additional resources (Skills Pack and Dictionary work)? Do you find them useful? Do you feel that they have improved your English skills? What do you think of the level of difficulty of the course materials?
3. How have you experienced the facilitation (teaching) of the course? How do you experience your participation in class?
4. What do you think of the reading reactions as assessment activities?
5. How do you feel about the number of tests written throughout the year so far?
6. How have you experienced the various themes in the materials? (Bride Price, Global Warming, Nature Conservation, Xenophobia and the Short Story)
7. What do you think of the journaling?

**Group two:** Wednesday, 13 October 2010

1. How do you feel about the time allocated to the ALC 108 classes and the work that is required of you per class?
2. How do you feel about the materials and additional resources (Skills Pack and Dictionary work)? Do you find them useful? Do you feel that they have improved your English skills? What do you think of the level of difficulty of the course materials?
3. What is your opinion of the weekly quizzes, have they improved your vocabulary?
4. What do you think of the journaling?

5. How do you feel about the new essay rubric that was handed out in the second semester?
6. How have you experienced the facilitation (teaching) of the course?
7. How have you experienced the various themes in the materials? (Bride Price, Global Warming, Nature Conservation, Xenophobia and the Short Story)

Polkinghorne (2005: 142) defines this type of interviewing as a “technique of gathering data from humans by asking them questions and getting them to react verbally”. Morgan (1997: 13-15) identifies a number of advantages to using focus groups as a qualitative data collection method. Firstly, they are said to produce concentrated amounts of data regarding a particular topic of interest, thereby ensuring that the data is directly targeted to the researcher’s interests. Also, considering the time constraint in terms of class time available for students participating in the focus groups, two 8-person focus groups seemed a more efficient option. Morgan (1997: 14) supports the notion that two such groups would be more efficient, since they would produce as many ideas as 10 individual interviews. A further advantage lies in the reliance on interaction in focus groups to produce data. Morgan (1997: 15) suggests that “the comparisons that participants make among each others’ experiences and opinions are a valuable source of insights into complex behaviours and motivations”. Even though focus groups are most often unstructured (Polinghorne, 2005), questions were generated from students’ actual open-ended responses in order to guide the sessions, given that only 1 hour was allocated per session. The intention was to get students to elaborate on the brief responses that were given in the questionnaire.

The data collection on how facilitators experienced teaching the SFCW English literacy course materials involved weekly journal entries by the facilitators. They were required to submit journal entries for research purposes once a month for the duration of the course, from February to October 2010. The goal of these journal entries was to get facilitators to reflect on the teaching and learning environments within their classes, as well as their perception of students’ learning and engagement with the course materials. According to Nagamine (2007: 75, 77) the keeping of a journal is thought to be an effective exploratory activity to empower teachers in the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language) field, since it provides an

opportunity for teachers to search for “hidden variables, patterns, and routinized behaviours in teaching settings” and “celebrate discoveries and successes”. The intrapersonal journal, which is used by the facilitators on the SFCW English literacy course, “enables a teacher to be the writer and audience at the same time...the focus [being] on obtaining a personal account of one’s feelings and thoughts” (Nagamine, 2007: 75). The teaching journal is furthermore considered an instrument through which a rich source of data can be obtained.

Facilitators were remunerated for their entries, which served as an incentive to get them to provide these entries for research purposes. Common themes were identified across the journal entries, which included: reflections on the course in general (logistics, student-facilitator interaction, student behaviour, class attendance, and the like); writing (paragraph and essay writing); student and facilitator perspectives on the course materials in general; journaling; quizzes and vocabulary; classroom environment; and content-related issues (errors or problems pertaining to the layout and/or design of the materials). Each facilitator’s journal entries were then analysed according to these common themes and an agenda was generated accordingly for 2 follow-up facilitator meetings, one in March and another in October 2010 (see Appendix 3 and 4 for the agendas of the two meetings). The discussions that emanated from these focus group sessions were transcribed and will form part of the investigation of facilitator perspectives in the analysis section of the study.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **4.1 Results**

The pilot study (Drennan, 2010) done prior to this study comprised a small-scale quantitative study, with an experimental and a control group. The experimental group was exposed to the SFCW English literacy course materials, whereas the control group completed the literacy course that had already been running for a number of years. The focus of the study was to compare the two groups in terms of their performance on the English reading-level test, as well as their overall academic performance. The findings showed that the experimental group showed a slight improvement in their reading skills and a slight decline in semester marks compared with the results evidenced by the control group. Furthermore, it was also found that

the experimental group showed a mean improvement of 1.09 (4.04%) on the reading test, which was attributed largely to the overall statistically significant improvement of .99 (3.67%). By and large, however, the statistics seemed to indicate that the SFCW English literacy course materials (for the experimental group) did not significantly improve either the reading scores or their academic performance.

With regard to the NBTs, the initial sample consisted of 440 students from the UFS who had written the academic and quantitative literacy tests. These tests were administered on 13 February, 2010. Of these, 391 (88.9%) completed the same test at the end of the academic year, 203 on 19 October and 188 on 20 October.

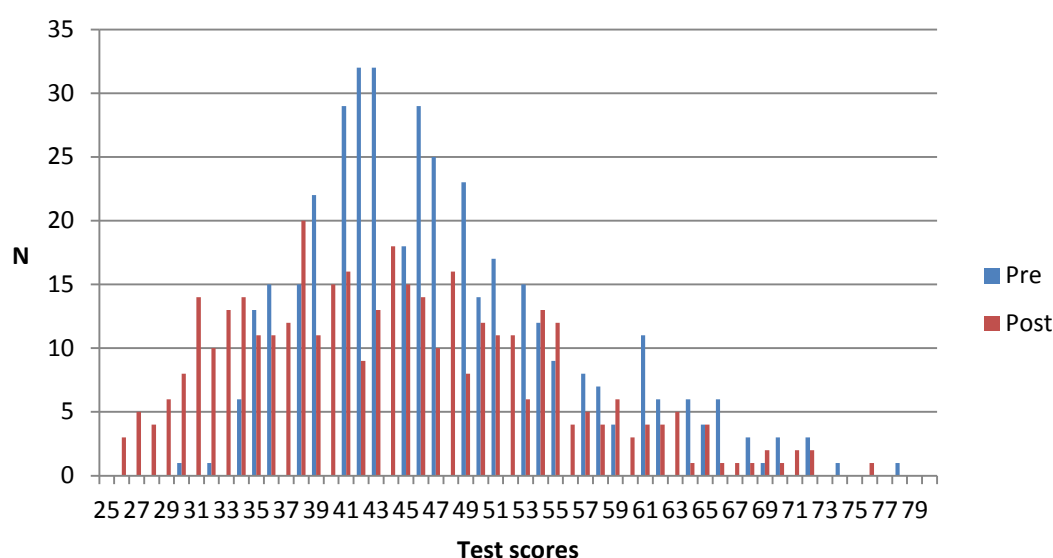
For the academic literacy test, 391 students completed both the pre- and post-tests. It is evident from Table 17 that the students fared worse in the post-test, with a mean score of 44.3 as opposed to 47.4 in the pre-test, and these students also had a much wider standard deviation in the post-test, showing a generally larger number of respondents located near the tails of the distribution for the post-test (unfortunately mostly towards the lower tail). This can be seen clearly in Figure 11. The pre- and post-test scores showed a statistically significant Pearson correlation of .79. Huysamen (1988: 73) notes that test-retest reliability coefficients for maximal performance typically range between 0.70 and 0.90. Given that the pre- and post-tests were almost a year apart, this would probably be acceptable.

Furthermore, a paired t-test showed that the students' results were statistically significantly weaker in the post-test than in the pre-test ( $t=10.04$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ).

Because the content of the tests was administered by UCT, the research had no way of determining whether the pre- and post-tests were truly functionally equivalent. In other words, the tests (and the reliability values produced) are not only pre- and post-test applications of the same test, or parallel forms administered with a short interval, but rather parallel forms administered with a very long interval. The reliabilities presented here (in the form of Pearson correlations) should thus not be seen as test-retest reliabilities, but rather as parallel forms reliabilities (referred to by Huysamen, p. 74, as the coefficient of stability and equivalence).

**Table 17: Pre- and post-test scores for academic literacy**

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
Pre-test	391	47.42	8.81	30	78
Post-test	391	44.25	10.18	26	76

**Figure 11: AL distribution for pre- and post-test scores (N=391)**

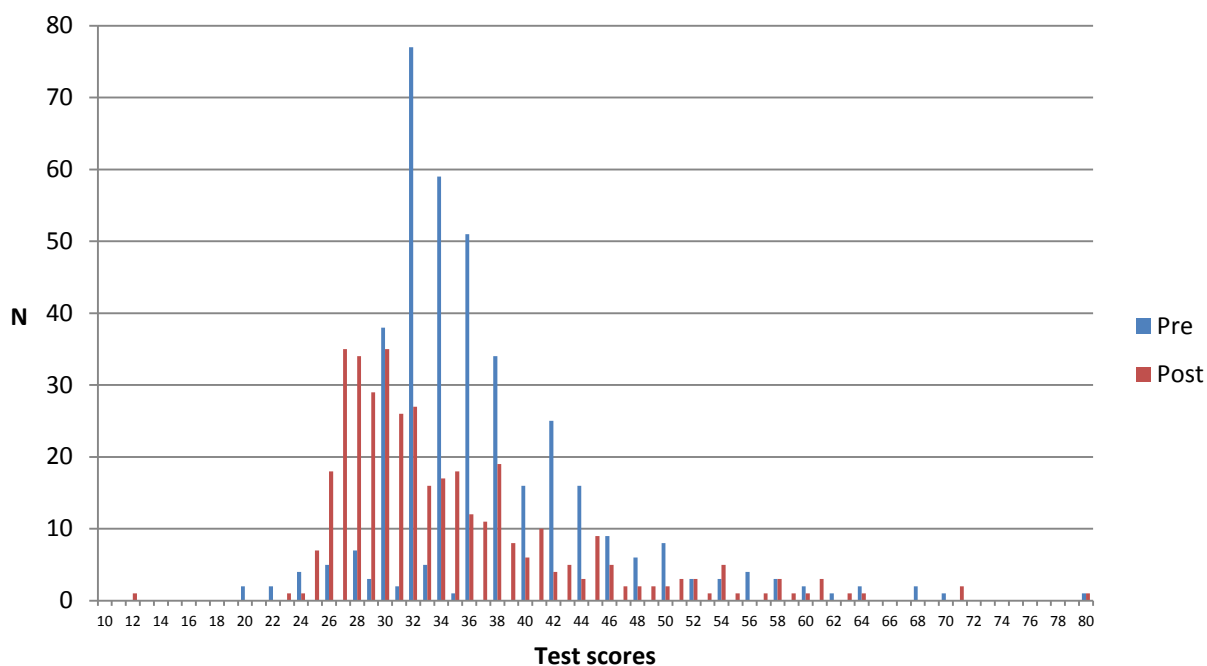
Much the same was found with the quantitative literacy test. Again, the post-test scores were significantly lower than the pre-test scores (means of 34.5 vs. 36.8) with again a wider standard deviation (Table 18). However, when the distributions of the scores on the two tests are compared (Figure 12), it becomes evident that for quantitative literacy, the students as a whole tended to congregate towards the lower end of the distribution, showing poorer general quantitative skills in the group than academic literacy skills (the AL scores showed a skewness of only .82 and .49 for the pre- and post-tests respectively, as opposed to 1.74 and 1.73 respectively for the QL tests). Similar to the academic literacy scores, the correlation (i.e., parallel form reliability) between the quantitative literacy pre- and post-tests was .76, and a paired t-test also showed a statistically significantly weaker result in the post-test than in the pre-test ( $t=7.56, p<0.0001$ ).



**Table 18: Pre- and post-test scores for quantitative literacy**

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
Pre-test	391	36.75	7.89	20	80
Post-test	391	34.52	8.73	12	80

**Figure 12: QL distribution for pre- and post-test scores (N=391)**



Because the pre-test was done in one session (i.e., all the students wrote the same test), and the post-test was done in two sessions, where the students wrote on the two days what the test compilers claim to be functionally equivalent tests, it was decided to compare the results obtained on the two post-tests separately.

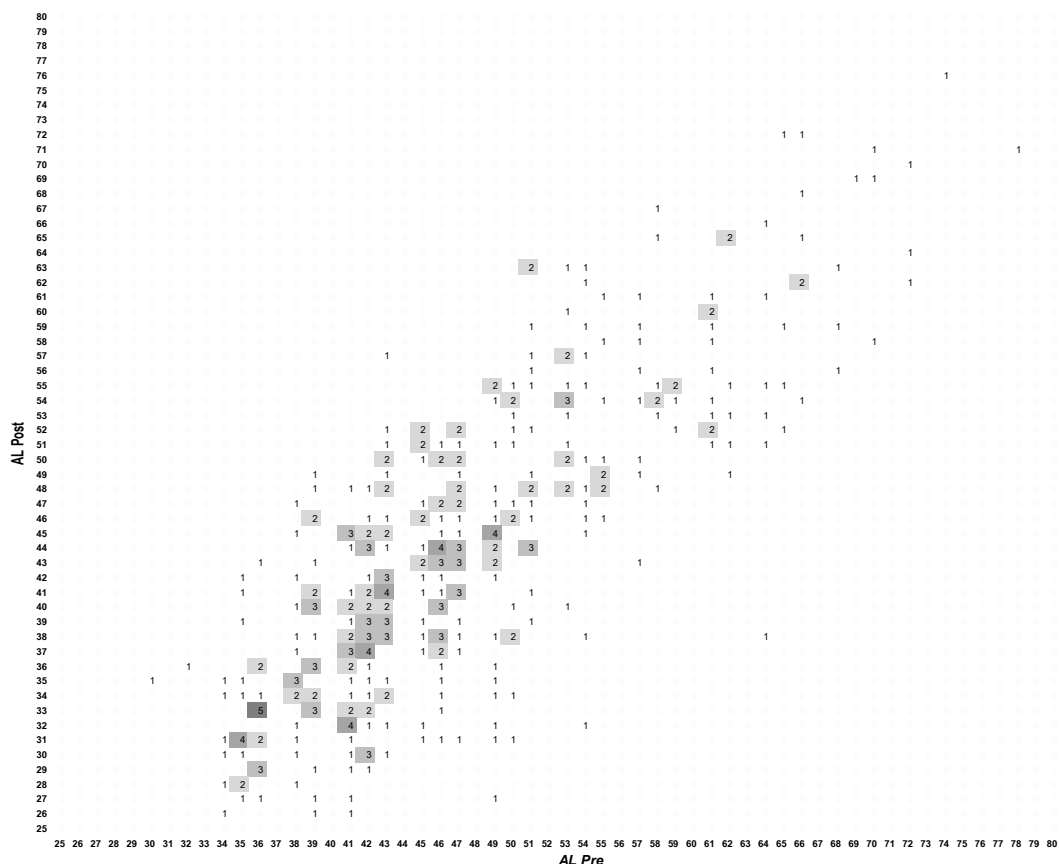
**Table 19: Descriptive statistics for separate test instances of AL and QL pre- and post-tests**

Test	Instance	Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum	Pre-post r
Academic literacy	Combined	Pre	391	47.42	8.81	30	78	0.79
		Post	391	44.25	10.18	26	76	
	19th	Pre	203	47.58	8.98	30	74	0.83
		Post	203	44.36	10.57	26	76	
	20th	Pre	188	47.24	8.64	34	78	0.76
		Post	188	44.14	9.77	27	72	

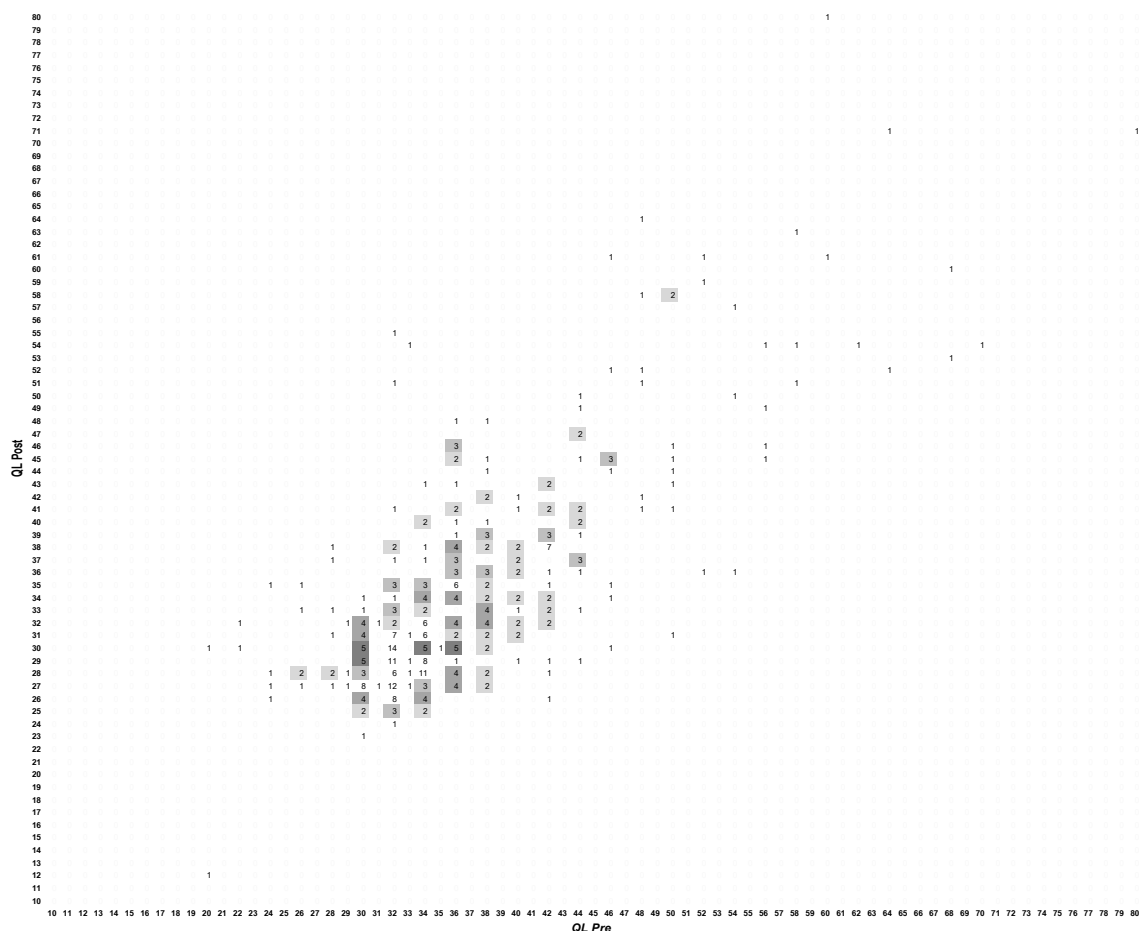
Quantitative literacy	Combined	Pre	391	36.75	7.89	20	80	0.76
		Post	391	34.52	8.73	12	80	
	19th	Pre	203	36.95	8.41	22	80	0.78
		Post	203	34.90	9.51	23	80	
	20th	Pre	188	36.53	7.30	20	70	0.72
		Post	188	34.11	7.80	12	64	

Table 19 shows the comparison of the various testing instances. The means remain very similar for the two post-test occasions, and the means of the pre-test for the students in the two groups are nearly identical, which seems to indicate that there was no chance differentiation between the students who took the two post-tests. However, it can be seen that for both academic literacy and quantitative literacy, the correlation between the pre- and post-tests was much lower for the second post-test than for the first. Also, the second post-test tended to show a narrower range of scores, and an accordingly narrower standard deviation than the first post-test. Although it cannot be proved that the two tests were not functionally equivalent, because the same individuals did not complete the two tests, it does seem as if the results returned by the two post-tests might show a degree of incompatibility.

**Figure 13: AL pre- and post-test comparison**



**Figure 14: QL pre- and post-test comparison**



Finally, Figure 13 and Figure 14 show comparisons between the academic literacy and quantitative literacy pre- and post-tests scores. Each value in the chart indicates the count for that intersection of pre- and post-test scores, and the shading serves to further highlight larger counts. Interesting results can be seen. Firstly, while both show the distribution to be expected from such relatively high correlations, both also show a number of outliers (seen here correlation outliers, not distribution outliers, i.e., students who performed very differently on the two tests, and thus fall far from the oval shape defined by the correlation). While the highest counts for both are in the bottom left (i.e., students who tended to do badly on both the pre- and post-tests), the outliers on the academic literacy test tended to be towards the bottom, especially the bottom right—these were thus students who achieved an average score on the pre-test but a low score on the post-test. For the quantitative tests, though, the outliers tended to be towards the top, indicating students who did well on the pre-test, but then had

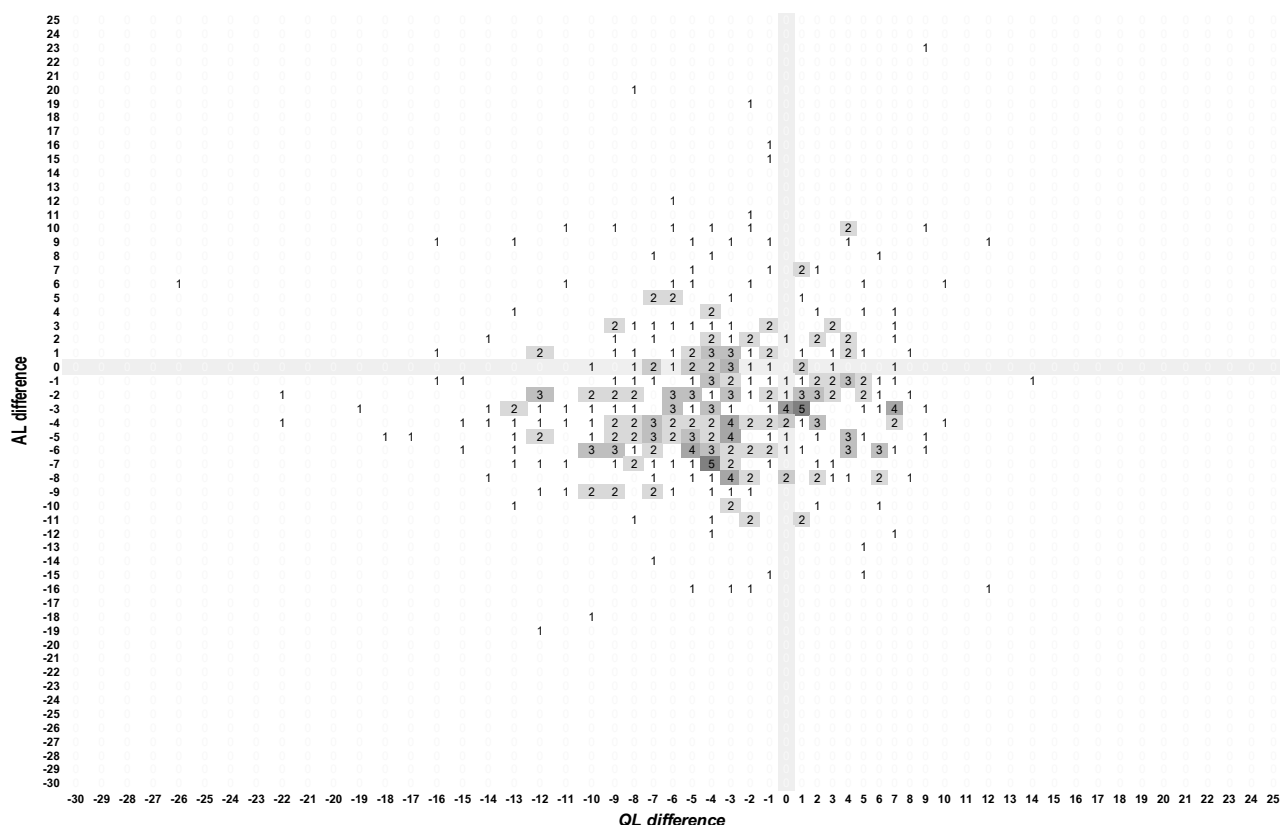
their scores fall to more average levels on the post-test (and some, but far fewer, who performed average on the pre-test and showed a moderate increase on the post-test).

**Table 20: Change from pre- to post-test for academic literacy and quantitative literacy**

Pre-post change	Instance	N	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Std Dev
Academic literacy	Combined	391	-26	14	-3	-3.16	6.23
	19th	203	-22	14	-4	-3.22	5.95
	20th	188	-26	10	-3	-3.11	6.53
Quantitative literacy	Combined	391	-19	23	-3	-2.23	5.84
	19th	203	-16	23	-3	-2.05	5.99
	20th	188	-19	21	-3	-2.42	5.68

In closing this part of the discussion, it can be seen from Table 20 that the students showed an average drop of 3.16 points on the academic literacy test, and 2.23 points on the quantitative literacy test (both tests showing a median decline of 3 points). While some students did improve on both tests, by as much as 14 and 23 points respectively, it is evident that by far the majority of students fared worse on the post-test, and again, some by as much as 26 points on the academic literacy test, and 19 points on the quantitative literacy test. What was quite interesting was that the change in academic literacy and quantitative literacy scores showed almost no correlation ( $r=0.06$ ). This is vividly displayed in Figure 15. Furthermore, in keeping with the lower mean scores for both the academic literacy and quantitative literacy tests on the second post-test testing occasion (Table 19), the first post-test testing occasion was, for both the academic literacy and quantitative literacy tests, the occasion on which the highest positive change from pre- to post-test was obtained, and the second post-test testing occasion was, for both the academic literacy and quantitative literacy tests, the occasion on which the largest decline from pre- to post-test was noted. Students' t-tests were performed to compare the change in academic and quantitative literacy scores from the pre-test to the first post-test (19<sup>th</sup>), and from the pre-test to the second post-test (20<sup>th</sup>). However, neither produced a significant result.

**Figure 15: Change in AL and QL pre- and post-test scores performance levels**



It was also possible to classify the students into various performance levels based on their test scores. The scores according to which these classifications are made are shown in Table 21.

It should be borne in mind that classifications such as these are of necessity somewhat coarse. For example, two students differing only 1 point on a test may fall into two different levels (e.g., 41 and 42 on the academic literacy test), while another two students differing as much as 64 points could still fall into the same two levels (e.g., 0 and 63 on the academic literacy test).

**Table 21: Criteria for performance levels**

Performance level	Academic literacy scores	Quantitative literacy scores
Proficient	$\geq 65$	$\geq 66$
Intermediate	42-64	38-65
Basic	0-41	0-37

Nonetheless, it may be instructive to take note of the levels into which the students fell, and how they moved across levels from the pre- to the post-test. The distributions for these performance levels for the pre- and post-academic and quantitative literacy tests are shown in Table 22 and Table 23 respectively.

In summary, when looking at the performance levels for academic literacy (Table 22), only half of the students who fell into the basic level on the post-test (N=86) were in the basic level on the pre-test—a further 50% (N=86) of those students had been placed into the intermediate level on the pre-test. For the students who were in the intermediate level, the statistics looked somewhat better—86.8% (N=177) of those students had been placed into the intermediate level in the pre-test, and a further 7.4% (N=15) had moved up from the basic level, while only 5.9% (N=12) had fallen from the proficient level. For the proficient level, two thirds (N=10) had remained there from the pre-test, and one third (N=5) had moved up from the intermediate level in the pre-test, although this particular group was so small that their changes should be viewed with circumspection. By and large it would thus seem as if the decline from pre- to post-test was largest with the basic to intermediate students (confirming the deduction already made earlier from Figure 13). A chi-square test on the distribution found in Table 22 (but only for the 391 students who wrote both tests) proved highly significant ( $\chi^2=199.99.4$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ), confirming that there were definite differences in various levels.

**Table 22: Performance levels for academic literacy**

		Post-test				
		Not written	Basic	Intermediate	Proficient	Total
Pre-test	Basic	15	86	15	0	116
	Intermediate	30	86	177	5	298
	Proficient	4	0	12	10	26
	Total	49	172	204	15	440

When looking at the performance levels for quantitative literacy (Table 23), it can be seen that the changes between levels were far less dramatic than for academic literacy, although a very likely explanation for this was the fact that a far larger number of students had already fallen into the basic level for quantitative literacy than for academic literacy on the pre-test (64.96% vs. 25.83%). Nonetheless, 79.8% (N=229) of the students who fell into the basic level for the post-test had also fallen into that

level on the pre-test, while 20.2% (N=58) had dropped from the intermediate level on the pre-test. The majority of students (72.0%, N=72) who had been placed into the intermediate level for the post-test had also been in that level with the pre-test, and only 3.0% (N=3) had fallen from the proficient level, while one quarter (N=25) had moved up from the basic level on the pre-test. Only three students had reached the proficient level on the post-test, and two of these had moved up from the intermediate level, while one had also fallen on the proficient level in the pre-test. This was again in keeping with what was seen in Figure 14. Again, a chi-square test on the distribution found in Table 23, of the 391 students who had written both tests, proved highly significant ( $\chi^2=133.16$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p< 0.0001$ ), confirming that there were definite differences in various levels.

**Table 23: Performance levels for quantitative literacy**

		Post-test				
		Not written	Basic	Intermediate	Proficient	Total
Pre-test	Basic	32	230	25	0	287
	Intermediate	15	58	72	2	147
	Proficient	2	0	3	1	6
	Total	48	288	101	3	440

While the theoretical maximum score for the academic and quantitative literacy tests is 100, Table 19 shows that the highest scores obtained for these two tests by the students were 78 and 80 respectively. Given that inclusion in the proficient levels is only achieved from 65 or 66 respectively, this helps explain why so few students reached this level.

### **Relationship between academic literacy and quantitative literacy tests and academic performance**

It has been posited (Wilson-Strydom, 2010) that the academic literacy and quantitative literacy tests should show a relationship to academic performance. Some of the students (N=305) who took the tests used in this study also formed part of a concurrent study (Drennan, 2010) in which they did a reading pre-test (taken also during the first quarter of 2010), followed an experimental programme, and then completed a reading post-test (in the last quarter of 2010). These pre- and post-tests were thus taken at roughly the same time as the academic literacy and quantitative

literacy pre- and post-tests. These students' academic marks for the year were also recorded. The data for these students (i.e., the students whose complete data was available) are summarised in Table 24.

**Table 24: Descriptive statistics for separate test instances of AL and QL pre- and post-tests**

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
AL Pre-test	305	47.12	8.67	30	78
AL Post-test	305	43.85	10.03	26	72
QL Pre-test	305	36.48	7.55	20	80
QL Post-test	305	34.02	8.25	12	80
Reading Pre-test	305	11.61	4.19	3	25
Reading Post-test	305	12.63	4.30	3	25
Semester 1	305	204.74	32.41	69	285
Semester 2	305	200.80	34.71	58	287
Year total	305	405.42	61.00	171	556

Table 25 shows the correlations between the academic literacy and quantitative literacy pre- and post-tests, and the various measures from the other study. All of the correlations were highly significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ). However, it is interesting to note that while the academic literacy tests showed a much stronger correlation with both the reading test and the academic scores, there was also a marked difference between the correlations of the academic literacy tests and the reading tests on the one hand, and the academic literacy tests and the academic results on the other, while the correlations between the quantitative literacy test and the reading scores and academic results remained relatively constant.

**Table 25: Correlations between AL and QL scores and reading and academic scores (N=305)**

	Reading Pre-test	Reading Post-test	Semester 1	Semester 2	Year total
AL Pre-test	0.66	0.64	0.49	0.51	0.55
AL Post-test	0.63	0.64	0.48	0.52	0.55
QL Pre-test	0.42	0.43	0.41	0.40	0.45
QL Post-test	0.42	0.43	0.40	0.43	0.45

By and large, though, it would appear as if the academic and quantitative literacy tests did show a reasonably strong correlation with academic performance.



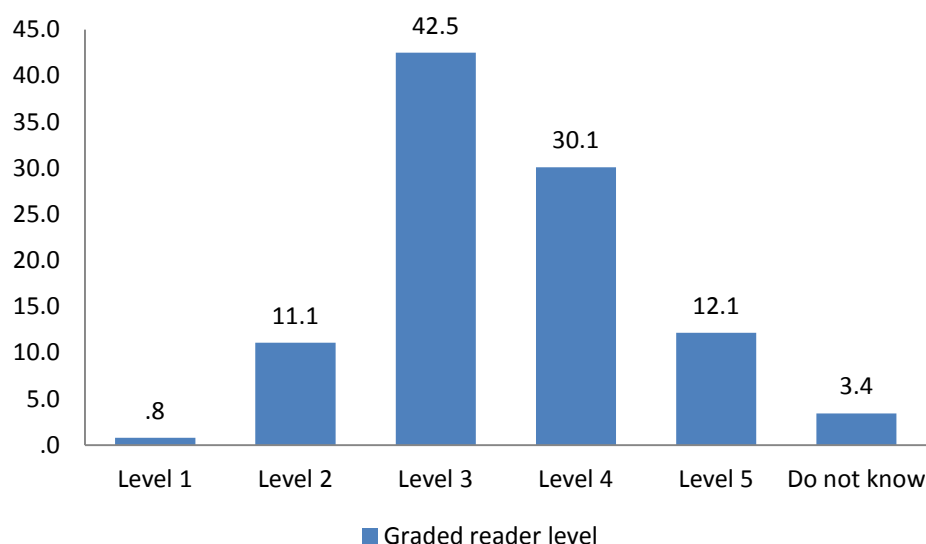
## 4.2. Discussion

### 4.2.1 Assessing the findings of the pilot study

Given that the pilot study focused only on quantitative data, certain factors were identified as possible reasons for the findings of the quantitative analysis. It was mentioned that these reasons would be investigated in the light of the qualitative data offered by the current study. One possible reason identified in the previous study was a shortage of graded readers on the course and, as a result, students were reading books that were either above or below their current reading level. It was postulated (Drennan, 2010: 52) that this could have impacted on the development of sight vocabulary, and general vocabulary, which in turn could have influenced knowledge required for reading comprehension in terms of the intensive reading component of the course.

Figure 16 shows that the majority of students were either on level 3 (42.5%) or level 4 (30.1%) in terms of the graded readers on the programme (the highest level being level 6).

**Figure 16: Frequency of graded reader levels**



The fact that most students fell into these two levels could perhaps account for the unavailability of graded readers. It should also be noted that, if students had not taken their graded reader books back to the library on time, there would have been a further shortage of books and other students would not have been able to take out books on their respective levels. Facilitator journal entries reflected that there were

problems regarding the availability of graded readers, which resulted in poor preparation by students or students reading whatever books were available. This, in turn, could have influenced students' performance on their reading reactions. Considering that reading reactions formed an integral part of the overall academic score, this could have accounted for a drop in students' academic performance from the first semester to the second semester, since this problem only became apparent towards the end of the first semester and extended into the second semester.

Furthermore, facilitators commented in the second facilitator meeting that "[students] don't read the books...what they do is, they read the blurb or they tell each other the story...quickly...quietly and quickly". One facilitator mentioned that they had "seen people typing up the...summary of the story on a cell phone for his friend to use, quickly, and then you'll see four in a row sitting next to each other...they're all doing reading reactions on exactly the same book...and they all have the same content". One student in the first focus group mentioned that "[s]ometimes for us who don't enjoy reading, it may be difficult to finish a book within a week because we have a test or maybe two tests within a week so you can't cover up all the work". Another student added that "the books...at the library...they're not interesting for me...I don't know...it's like American books and sometimes they're irrelevant to my interests...so I am not really inspired to take a book out of this library". Grabe (1986: 35) argues that students' reading proficiency plays a pivotal role in their obtaining tertiary access, as it is "the critical skill needed by second language students for academic success". Therefore, if the students do not read the books required it would affect their reading skills, as well as the content of their reading reaction responses. This could possibly account for the drop in academic performance from semester one to semester two and for the insignificant improvement on the reading level test.

Several facilitators also mentioned that the format of the reading reactions was a problem, particularly in the second semester. One facilitator stated that she did not "like these formats at all because they focus far more on what a letter should look like than what should be in the letter...what's *in* the letter is important because that is where you prove to me that you've read the book...". It could be assumed that in such cases the students may focus more on the format of the reading reaction and not so

much on the content, which could possibly have influenced the marking and scoring of the reading reactions.

#### **4.2.2 Assessing student performance on the NBTs**

The finding that students fared worse on the NBT post-test, for both the academic literacy and quantitative literacy sections, than on the pre-test was rather disappointing. An investigation into this finding revealed that students seemed reluctant to do anything that was not regularly assessed or moderated and which did not count for marks. Students were made aware that the NBT post-test was for research purposes and thus they could easily have drawn the conclusion that it would not affect their course results, as it would not be assessed as part of the course. This was not the case, however, for the pre-test, as the NBT served as a measure for placing students in certain programmes. Thus, if students performed poorly on the NBT pre-test, this would have affected their future in terms of their studies and possible access to university. The qualitative data was consulted in the hope that it would offer a possible explanation for this finding. The student focus groups elicited the following responses regarding journaling as part of the course that essentially did not count towards their continuous assessment. Instead, the purpose of journaling was to develop students' authentic voice. Note that the following reflects students' unedited verbal responses:

##### Focus group 1

Student response: "In our class most students think that it's [journaling] useless or maybe it's a waste of time cos like we don't get it back, we don't get feedback on it. We just hand it in; we just keep handing it in. So, some of them don't even do it"

Student response: "Well, personally, I don't like it [journaling] and I don't remember...I haven't sent it in a single time and I don't know if anyone in class was handing in journals. She [the facilitator] only told us about the journals in the beginning of the year, that was it...and we didn't inquire about the journals cos we didn't want to do it...so we just let it slip"

### Focus group 2

- Student response: “Can I be honest? I’ve never done journaling!”
- Student response: “Waste of time”
- Student response: “I don’t know the focus of it”
- Student response: “It’s not for marks so...”
- Student response: “...I think everything boils down to if you do it and how often it gets assessed or if it gets moderated. Personally, I haven’t done a journal since I’ve been in ALC”
- Student response: “I’ve never done a journal cos I don’t know about the purpose of doing a journal if it’s not going to be assessed cos it’s so much work to do the journal; it’s just a waste of time in terms of what you have to do for other modules. So I reckon, if it’s beneficial, then yes...but the point is, it’s not being assessed or checked, so what’s the point of doing it?”
- Student responses: “If it was being assessed or moderated, then ja! Then it’s about time that I should do my journals”

This perspective of journaling, as work that was not assessed, was confirmed by the following responses in the two facilitator meetings:

### Facilitator meeting 1

- Facilitator response: “I take mine in every week because I never trust a student...they take their chances...”
- Facilitator response: “It [journaling] will be useful until next semester when they realise we didn’t mark it...”

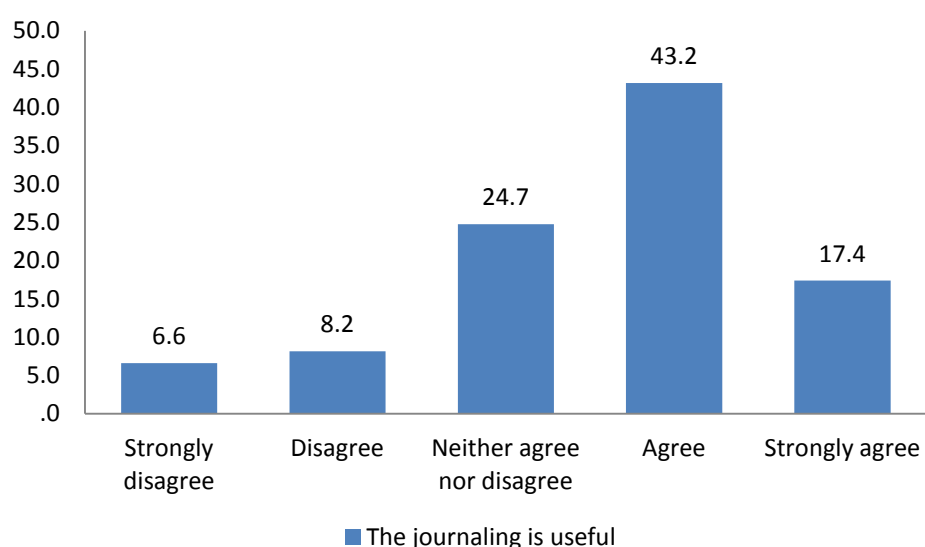
### Facilitator meeting 2

- Facilitator response: “If it’s not for marks, they’re not interested”  
(To which two other facilitators responded)
- “But even then...”
- “Ja, exactly, even then...”
- Facilitator response: “It just makes them write more and they don’t like that”

Facilitator response: “I’ve asked them, they all hate it. I haven’t had a single person who said to me, ‘ja, this is nice and useful’. I’ve asked the classes.”

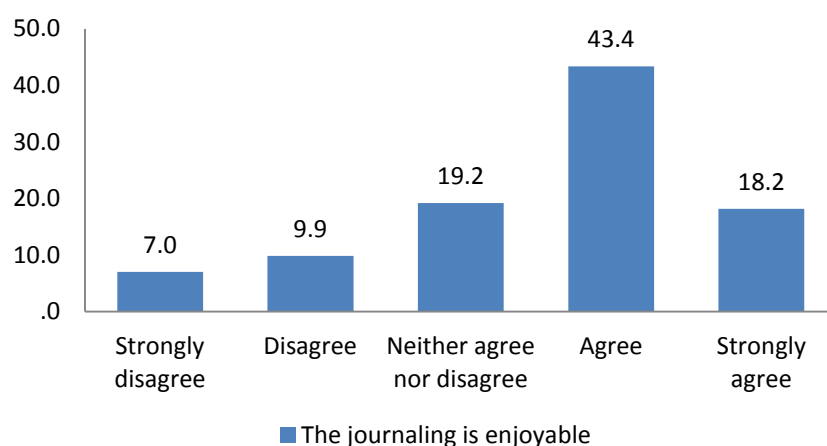
The students’ response to the usefulness of journaling on the student questionnaire reveals that 230 students, roughly 60%, either agreed or strongly agreed that journaling was useful. However, it should be noted that 150 students, approximately 40%, either strongly disagreed, disagreed, or neither agreed nor disagreed that journaling was useful.

**Figure 17: Frequency of the usefulness of journaling**



When facilitators were informed of students’ favourable responses concerning the journaling in the multiple-choice section of the questionnaire, facilitators responded in the second facilitator meeting that “sometimes they answer these things what they think is the right answer, when you ask them something like that”. “They think what is the right answer and they fill that in...”, “...because in some cultures it is rude to say exactly what you think”. “They don’t want to be rude...”. Perhaps this could account for 60.6% of students responding that they either agreed (43.2%) or strongly agree (17.4%) that journaling is useful, when in fact the open-ended responses on the questionnaire and the remarks made in the focus groups indicate otherwise. What is interesting is that the percentage of students who agreed (43.4%) and strongly agreed (18.2) that journaling was enjoyable were very similar to those of the previous question. This can be seen in Figure 18.

**Figure 18: Frequency of journaling as enjoyable experience**



The data also showed that the correlation between the NBT pre- and post-tests was much lower for the second post-test than for the first. It was found that the first post-test testing was, for both the academic literacy and quantitative literacy tests, the occasion on which the highest positive change from pre- to post-test was obtained, and the second post-test testing was, for both the academic literacy and quantitative literacy tests, the occasion on which the largest decline from pre- to post-test was recorded. It should be noted that there was one facilitator (Facilitator X) who was unwilling to participate in the study. For this reason, X's students' reading-level test scores, as well as their academic performance, were not included in the study. Furthermore, these students did not have to write the NBT post-test, as they were essentially not part of the study. As mentioned earlier in the methodology section, students were divided into two groups based on when they had their ALC 108 classes. Students had to sign an attendance form on both days to ensure that they wrote the NBT on the day they were meant to. On the first day of testing, however, a number of students, who were not supposed to write the first opportunity test, arrived, and a few of X's students were among them. In order to avoid too much delay in getting students seated and having them complete the necessary paperwork before the NBT commenced, an announcement was made that only certain facilitators' students were writing the first opportunity test, that the others should return the following day to write the second opportunity. It was also announced that X's students were not writing the NBT at all and should thus report back to class. If they had written the test the legitimacy of the NBT post-test could have been jeopardised. Students' perspective of the importance of their performance on the test could have been affected, and the students who wrote the first opportunity could thus have influenced

those who wrote the second opportunity, since fewer students than expected arrived for the second opportunity test. This may be the explanation for the fact that the second test opportunity showed the largest decline from pre- to post-test. However, this is mere speculation as the qualitative data does not include any feedback on the NBT itself.

The data also showed that the decline from pre- to post-test was largest with the basic to intermediate students. However, it has also been mentioned that these classifications could be somewhat coarse, since a difference of one point could result in a student falling from an intermediate to a basic performance level. For example, if a student scored 42 out of 100 on the pre-test, this would have placed them in the intermediate level. Then, if they had scored 1 point lower on the post-test, 41 out of 100, they would have dropped to the basic performance level (see Table 21 for performance level scores). According to the specifications of these performance categories, the intermediate level stipulates that the academic progress of students scoring on this level will be adversely affected, and those scoring on the basic level reveal serious learning challenges. If these limitations on academic performance indicated by these specifications are taken into account, together with the potential effects mentioned before in terms of the possible influence students' attitudes towards reading reactions could have had on their academic performance, perhaps this could explain the decline predominantly across these two performance categories.

With regard to the higher correlation between AL and reading and academic performance than QL, this is likely as a result of the content of the SFCW English literacy course. The following number of points will look at what the NBT in academic literacy aims to assess in terms of students' abilities, followed by how this relates to the content of the SFCW English literacy course. The AL test assesses students' ability to:

- *Read carefully and make meaning from texts that are typical of the kinds that they will encounter in their studies.* The SFCW English literacy course materials incorporate relevant, theme-based academic texts that are pitched specifically for the target group.

- *Understand vocabulary, including vocabulary related to academic study, in their contexts.* Each theme-based academic text in the SFCW course materials is accompanied by a list of vocabulary words derived from each text, whose purpose is to develop students' vocabulary and to ensure that they know the meanings of the words they encounter in the various texts. The extensive reading component of the course is also geared towards improving students' sight vocabulary, general knowledge, and, in turn, their text comprehension.
- *Understand and evaluate the evidence that is used to support claims made by writers of texts.* The SFCW course materials include several while-reading comprehension-based activities, where students are required to access and engage with the texts in order to complete the various questions posed for the respective passages.
- *Extrapolate and draw inferences and conclusions from what is stated or given in a text.* The SFCW literacy course materials deal with language functions such as defining words and concepts, describing events and processes, paraphrasing, arguing a case, substantiating claims, summarising and expressing an opinion. Such activities facilitate students' ability to extrapolate and draw conclusion based on what they have read.
- *Identify main from supporting ideas in the overall and specific organisation of a text.* The course materials require that students identify main ideas in texts and paraphrase these, so as to facilitate the internalisation of meaning and text comprehension. Furthermore, students are instructed to write paragraphs (in the first semester) and essays (in the second semester), which fosters the familiarisation in terms of the organisation of academic writing.
- *Identify and understand the different types and purposes of communication in texts.* This too is facilitated by the different kinds of theme-based articles selected to comprise the content of the materials. Students are also exposed to this in terms of the reading reactions they need to submit on a weekly basis. Each reading reaction submission is based on a format provided by the facilitators, such as a letter to the author, a diary entry by one of the characters and a dialogue between two characters in the story.



- *Be aware of and identify text differences that relate to writers' different purposes, audiences, and kinds of communication.* The pre-reading activities in the course materials focus specifically on making students aware of purpose and audience. So too do the reading reaction formats described above facilitate students' abilities in this regard.
- *Understand and interpret information that is presented visually (e.g. in graphs, tables, flow charts).* The course materials were predominantly text based and contained very few, if any, graphs, tables or flow charts. This could potentially have influenced students' performance on such questions in the NBT AL test.
- *Understand basic numerical concepts and information used in text, and be able to do basic numerical manipulations.* The course materials did include some questions that required students to perform basic numerical calculations, but such questions were in the minority. This too could have influenced students' performance on the AL test in this regard.

Based on the information above, it could be assumed that the content of the SFCW English literacy course materials could have resulted in the correlation between students' AL scores and their reading-level test and academic performance scores respectively.

#### **4.2.3 Assessing student perceptions of their learning on the course and whether they enjoyed the content**

The qualitative data that will be addressed in this regard includes the student questionnaire and the two student focus groups in order to determine how students perceived their learning on the course and whether they enjoyed the content.

#### 4.2.3.1 Overall experience of and interest in the course materials

Figure 19 illustrates that a large percentage of students' responses (81.5%) fell between 4 and 6 on the rating scale, 6 indicating that the course was 'very enjoyable'. Most students' responses fell between 4 and 5 (63.7%), with the highest percentage (32.5%) for 4, indicating a generally positive overall experience of the course.

**Figure 19: Frequency of overall experience of the ALC 108 English literacy course**

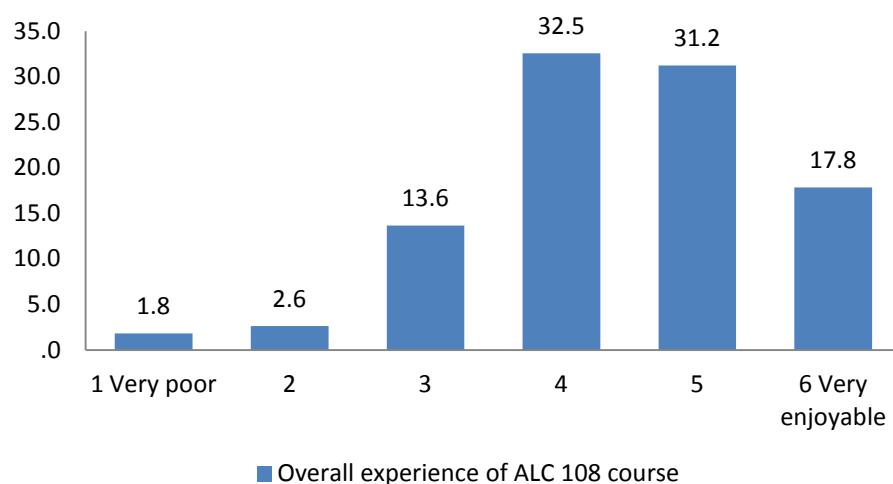
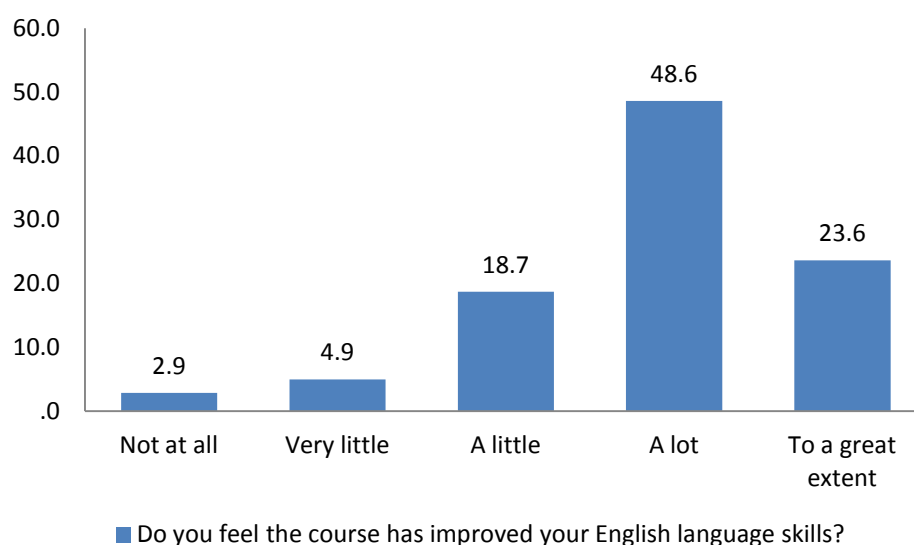


Figure 20 illustrates that students predominantly felt (72.2%) that the SFCW English literacy course improved their English language skills, 48.6% of whom felt the course did so 'a lot' and 23.6% 'to a great extent'.

**Figure 20: Frequency of degree to which the course improved English language skills**



The selected open-ended questions (see methodology section for details) in the questionnaire elicited the following student responses with regard to the overall experience of the course and degree to which the course improved their language skills, which seems to support the data above indicating that 81.5% of students found the course rather enjoyable and that 72.2% felt that the course improved their English language skills:

- Student A: “ALC 108 is a very useful course in regards with having to better your English in speaking or in writing it.”  
“The ALC academic course has turned out to be something that I didn’t expect and it has helped me to better my writing and reading skills.
- Student C: “This program/course will help many students in regard to how they use language.”
- Student E: “It [the course] help me a lot. My English has improved. When I first got here, I did not know or understand many things. ALC has polished my English. I am now able to write clear and understandable essays. It is a skill of a life time. I am going to use it for the rest of my life. It is useful.”  
“I love ALC. I enjoy it very much. It teaches me on how to work. ALC is very useful, it is like business course. You learn how to read and write.”

#### **4.2.3.2 Themes/ topics of the course**

As can be seen in Figure 21, the majority (82.1%) of students’ responses fell between ‘a little’ and ‘a lot’ in terms of how interesting they found the course materials, with the highest percentage (47.7%) for ‘a lot’. A very small percentage (7.3%) of students indicated that they did not find the course material interesting.

**Figure 21: Frequency of interest in the course materials**

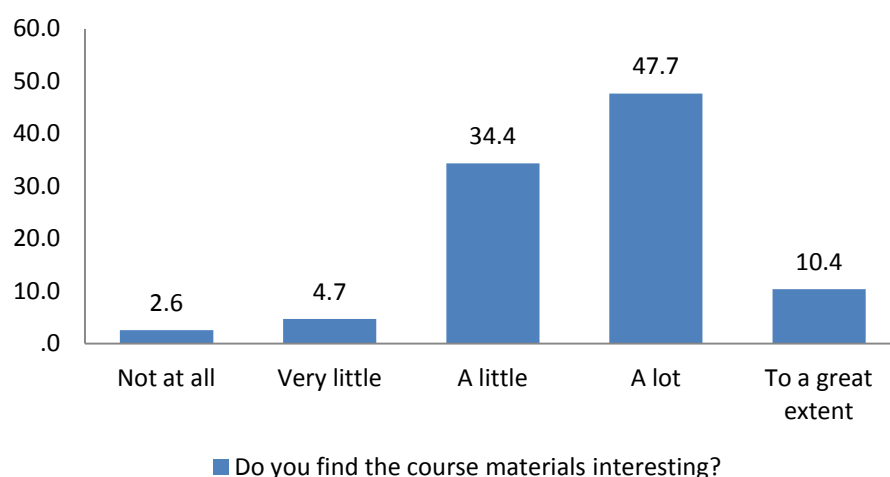
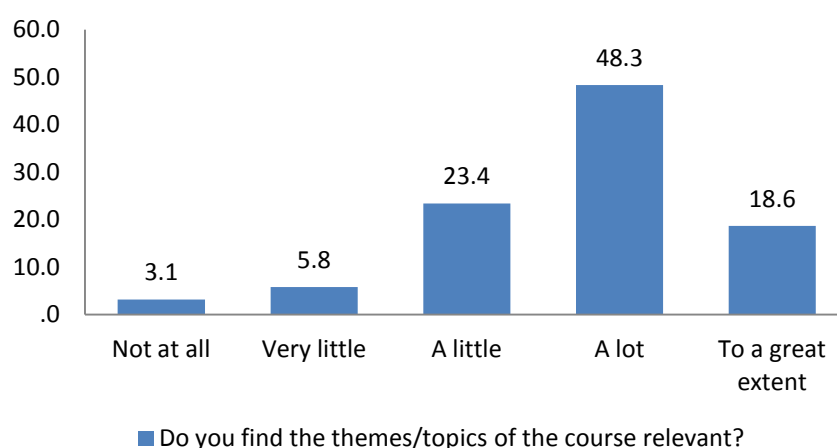


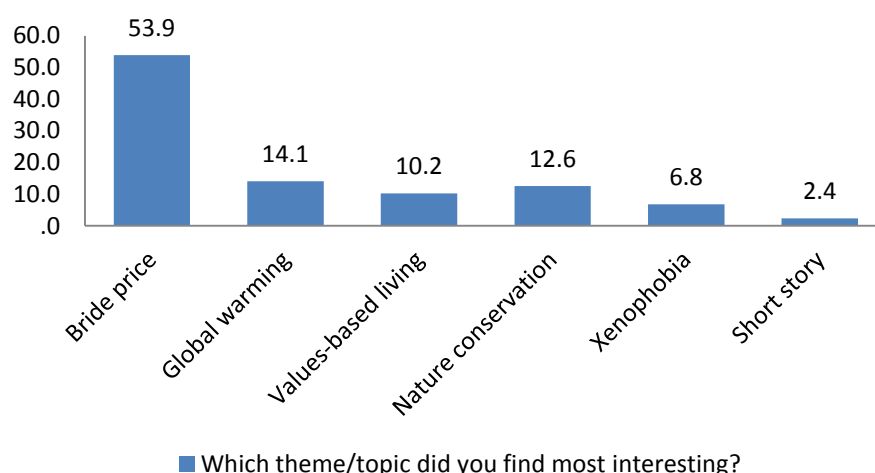
Figure 22 shows that 66.9% of students found the themes/topics of the course relevant, with the highest percentage (48.3%) allotted to 'a lot'. Only 23.4% of students indicated that they only found the themes/topics 'a little' relevant and a minimal percentage (8.9%) indicated that these were not particularly relevant or not at all.

**Figure 22: Frequency of the relevance of themes/topics of the course**

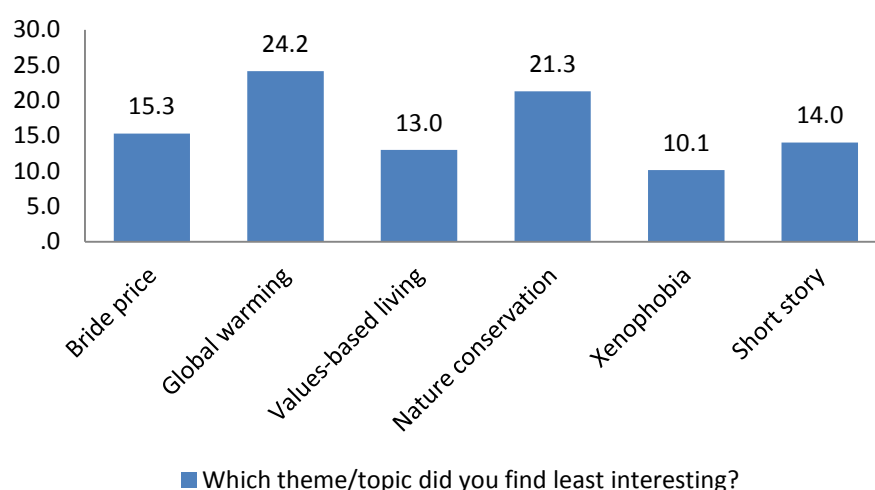


It would appear from Figure 23 that many students (53.9%) found *bride price* most interesting in terms of the topics presented in the materials. The remaining responses reflect rather small percentages scattered across the other 5 themes of the materials. What is interesting, though, is that Figure 24 shows that 15.3% of students selected the same theme, *bride price*, as the least interesting topic in the materials. The two topics that reflect the highest percentages (24.2% and 21.3%) for being least interesting are *global warming* and *nature conservation*.

**Figure 23: Frequency of which topic was most interesting**



**Figure 24: Frequency of which topic was least interesting**



Students made the following remarks about the course topics/themes in their open-ended questionnaire responses:

Student F: “I think it would have been better if the themes focused more on the youth rather than being global. I’d like to read about interesting stuff like e.g. Aids, Drugs, alcohol, Sugar Dadies/Momies and Money.”

Student K: “I personally believe that I haven’t benefited in anyway what so ever. In a sense that everything is confusing, things aren’t systematic. Because Bride Price stretches over a course of 6 to 8 pages, which I feel is unnecessary.”

When students were questioned about the topics/themes of the material in the focus groups, they gave the following responses:

Student response: “I like that one [Bride Price]”

Student response: “We got to know different types of prices, cultures, different cultures...and...how to compare how we do bride price in our culture.”

Student response: “It [Xenophobia] was also relevant because that’s what happened in South Africa.”

Student response: “It [Xenophobia] was very easy to understand because like we’ve seen the actual thing happening right in front of our eyes, so it was very easy to answer the questions and to relate to the stories there.”

Student response: “...I think that the way they compiled the research or any material that they put into the topic was very relevant...”

Student response: “Cos like students or maybe anyone would enjoy something that they can relate to...if they come up with more topics that relate to use so that we can understand them.”

Student response: “...I’m going to make a perfect example about Bride Price. It stretches over I don’t know how many pages, which I keep trying to understand. Why should one piece stretch over so many pages?”

Student response: “...I’d say it’s sheer laziness from the side of the creators of the book...in a sense that they should have spent more time in searching for articles to put in.”

Student response: “We don’t need three pieces to tell us what is Bride Price.”

Student response: “They should make it more interesting, Bride Price, you know? Add a bit of fund and flavour to it, you know, they must make us want to read...we don’t want to sit and scan through, just answer the questions.”

Student response: “...and the one thing again, cliché...you see it too many times: global warming, lobola, understand? Bring something that we’ve never come across or something that we don’t often

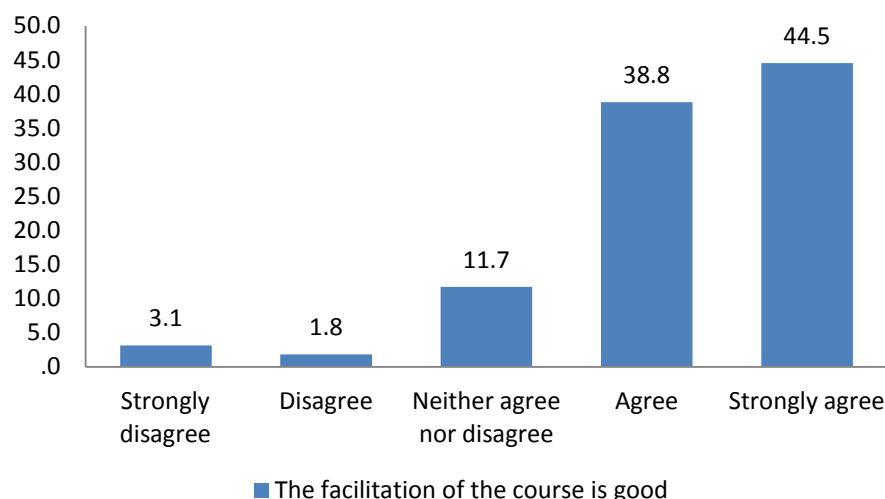
come across...we've been through it so many times, when we get there, we're just like...the same thing again. That's why...we're not improving academically from the course because the stuff we're doing...we've already done it..."

Generally, it appears as though students wanted to read about issues that were relevant to them. They considered relevant issues interesting and easy to understand, since they would have background knowledge about such topics. This finding can be supported by Gee's (2001: 715) reference to a library of videotapes of experience, where experiences are retained in the mind in the form of images that are related to views of the world and that such perceptual stimulation is central to comprehension. However, there was also an indication that the course materials contained too many articles on one particular topic at a time – students did not want to read several articles based on the same theme. This resulted in a decreased interest in the texts, as well as a decrease in motivation to read.

#### 4.2.3.3 Facilitation of the course

In terms of the facilitation of the course, Figure 25 indicates that 83.3% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that the facilitation was good. The highest percentage (44.5%) strongly agreed, which appears to be a very positive reflection in this regard.

**Figure 25: Frequency of rating of course facilitation**



The open-ended questionnaire responses revealed the following about student perspectives of the facilitation of the course, which seems to contradict the data findings of Figure 25:

Student C: “Other facilitators should be more responsive, some students find it difficult to participate if facilitators only give orders or instructions and do not explain.”

Student D: “Students must be given more chances to participate in the work done in class...”

Student K: [What was least enjoyable about the course] “The fact that I have had three different facilitators. Each term I had a different one. Their teaching techniques differed.”

When students were questioned about the facilitation of the course, they responded as follows:

Student response: “And it’s also having to participate, not having to listen to the facilitator all the time. In the class as students, we have to participate and then we understand better like if we hear from another student, unlike from the lecturers.”

Student response: “...our facilitator is good, like she knows the material and she’s always prepared and she’s clear with what she’s saying and ja, she’s just fine...like the majority of the class is like, we find that English a bit simple, but when she facilitates, she caters for someone is like ranking the lowest in class, she doesn’t overlook the ones who don’t know anything...”

Student response: “...it was hectic. We had three facilitators.”

Student response: “...we got a second facilitator...she always insulted us.”  
“Telling us about...how she’s educated and how she doesn’t care about us...”  
“And every sentence...every sentence you say, she’s gonna correct you...she always wanted to be right.”



- Student response: "...the class should be more silent when he speak, cos he's not a guy to revoke people a lot...so the class should quieten down a bit, he should be more assertive..."
- Student response: "...often it happens ...that people don't listen, they manage to keep quiet for two minutes but after another minute they go crazy..."
- Student response: "And it's irritating"
- Student response: "...I love her, but I think that she should be a bit more assertive at time because I think that some of the children take advantage of her and stuff..."
- Student response: "I think we all have a problem with our fellow classmates at times"
- Student response: "...some students have told some facilitators that they cannot tell them anything"
- Student response: "They don't respect...I think they're still in this high school state of impressing"
- Question: "Does this happen in your other classes too?"
- Student response: "Not really, I think in the English class because the English class is so....easy."
- Student response: "Because the English class is so easy and there's a lot of students in class. I think they take it for granted and they don't think they need it so they just stay there and hang around."
- Student response: "...we don't value ALC, that's why we go there and make ruckus..."
- Student response: "And you don't always have to pinpoint that we're in the bridging course, we know that, and that we're not in main campus. So stuff like that really irritates students."
- Student response: "...I don't know why people are like 'ah, you're in Vista [South Campus]..."
- Student response: "They say it's [South Campus] is for slow students..."

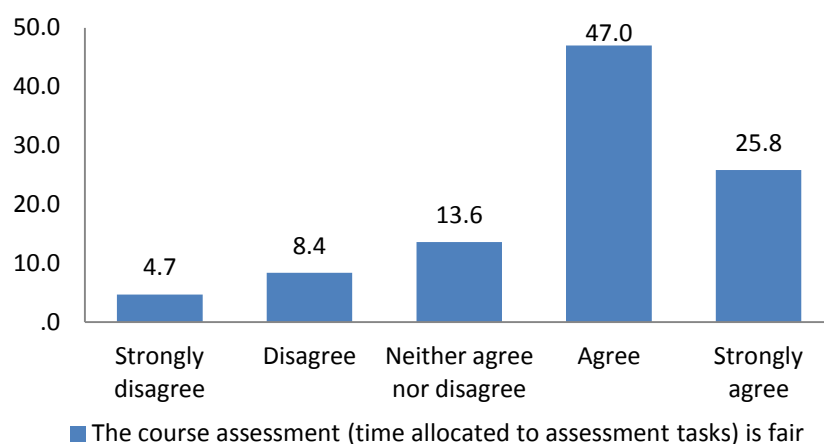
The data in Figure 25 indicates that students generally had a positive perspective of the course facilitation. However, the open-ended questionnaire responses and focus group remarks indicated a number of important issues. Firstly, students seemed to

appreciate the opportunity to work in groups, as they learned a lot from one another. Secondly, there appears to be an issue regarding the manner in which some facilitators treat their students. Students did not respond positively to being belittled and reminded of the fact that they were on South Campus, they seemed to view this in a particularly negative light, as though it were indicative of their lack of potential. Another issue appears to be a lack of respect for facilitators and undervaluing of the ALC course, which results in an unruly classroom environment. There also appears to be a need for facilitators to be more 'assertive' in such cases. These findings are indicative of the need for further training for facilitators on the course.

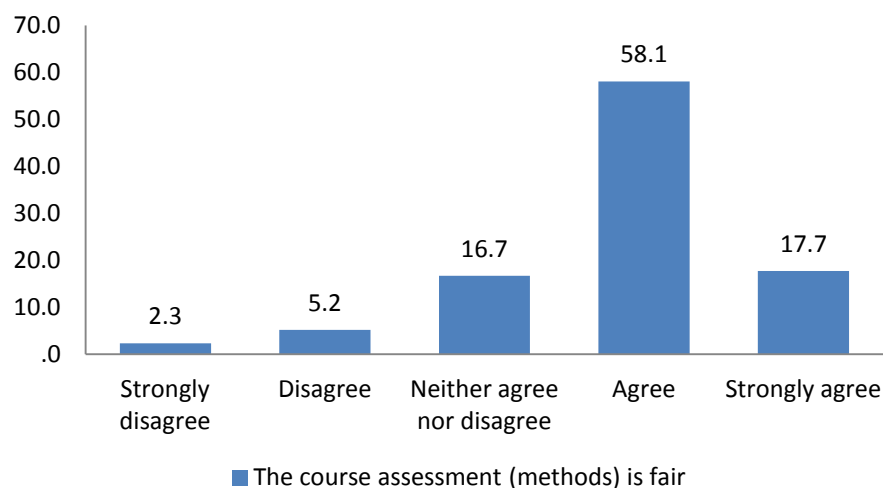
#### 4.2.3.4 Course assessment

Figures 26, 27 and 28 illustrate student perspectives of the course assessment with regard to time allocated to assessment tasks in the first figure, assessment methods in the second figure and sufficient opportunities to perform to the best of their ability in the third. Figure 26 shows that 72.8% of students indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment of the course, in terms of time allocated to assessment tasks, was fair - the majority (47%) indicated that they agreed. In Figure 27, 75.8% of students either agreed (58.1%) or strongly agreed (17.7%) that the various assessment methods on the course were fair. However, 16.7% of students indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed. 74% of students in Figure 28 felt that the course assessment awarded them sufficient opportunities to perform to the best of their ability. Overall, the students appeared to reflect positively on the various aspects of the course assessment.

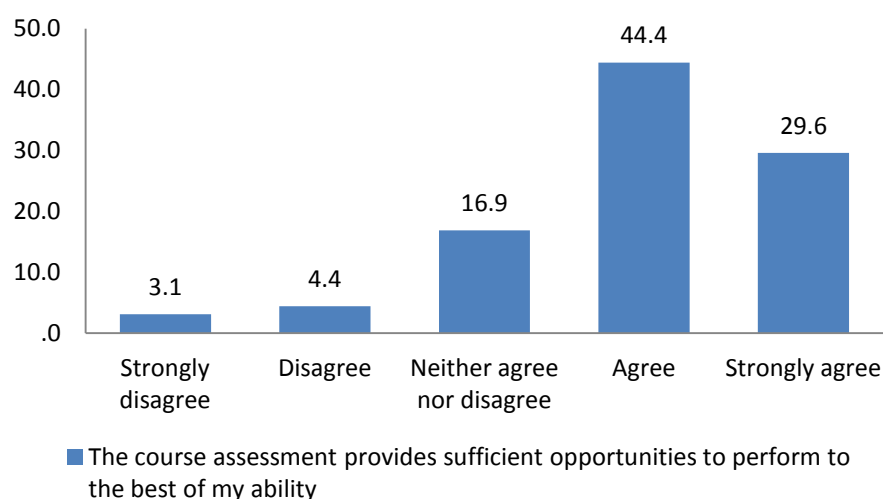
**Figure 26: Frequency of rating of course assessment (time allocation) as fair**



**Figure 27: Frequency of rating of course assessment methods as fair**



**Figure 28: Frequency of rating of course assessment regarding performance opportunities**



The student responses on the open-ended questions in the questionnaire regarding assessment were as follows:

Student D: "...Tests also need to be written more often in order to help students with the assessment of the work they have been doing & learning."

Student M: [What is least enjoyable about the course] "It is sometimes frustrating in terms of less word requirements for essays. I sometimes have to limit myself"

Student N: [What is least enjoyable about the course] "Not knowing how exactly my reading reactions are assessed. I never know what is really expected of me, and that makes me anxious."

“It needs to be made clear to us what is expected of us in the various forms of assessemnt and how we are graded on them, there is too much uncertainty.”

Student P: [What is least enjoyable about the course] “That we don’t write tests often and that we are always writing.”

The focus group sessions elicited the following responses with regard to assessment:

Student response: “I think...having to write a test more often, it would be better cos...Maybe if we’d write more tests or maybe three tests a term, it would be better because we’d know that we divided...the work we’d studied...unlike having to write a test on the whole thing.”

Student response: “...it’s only the time that they make you write the test in, it’s not okay for me...I feel that we are given too little time with too much work to do.”

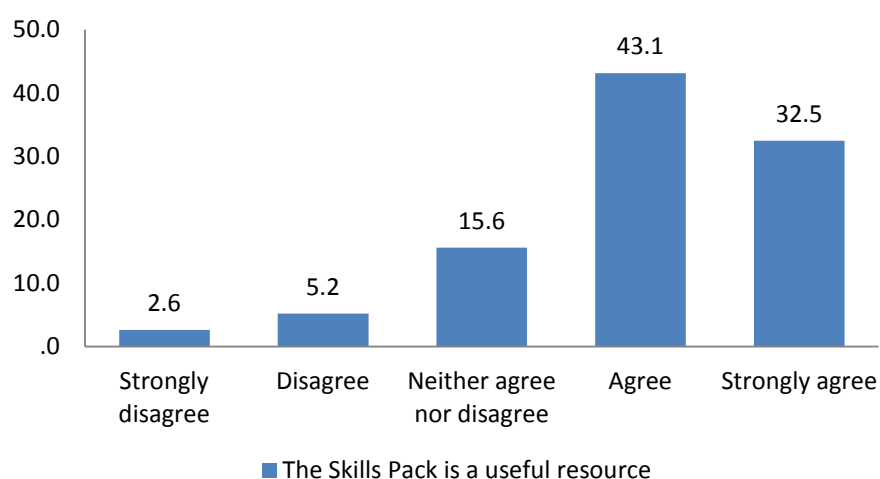
Student response: “I personally think, from a lecturer’s point of view...there is too much work and when there’s too much work [in terms of marking], you can’t be clinical and help the student...in terms of where he must improve.”

Although the students generally responded positively in terms of the course assessment in the multiple-choice section of the questionnaire, the open-ended questionnaire responses and focus group comments seem to suggest that students felt that there should be more test opportunities and that more time should be given to students in tests. This could suggest that students struggled to complete the tests in the time allocated, which could account for their performance in this regard. Moreover, some students seemed to feel unsure about what was expected of them in terms of the way their writing responses were marked.

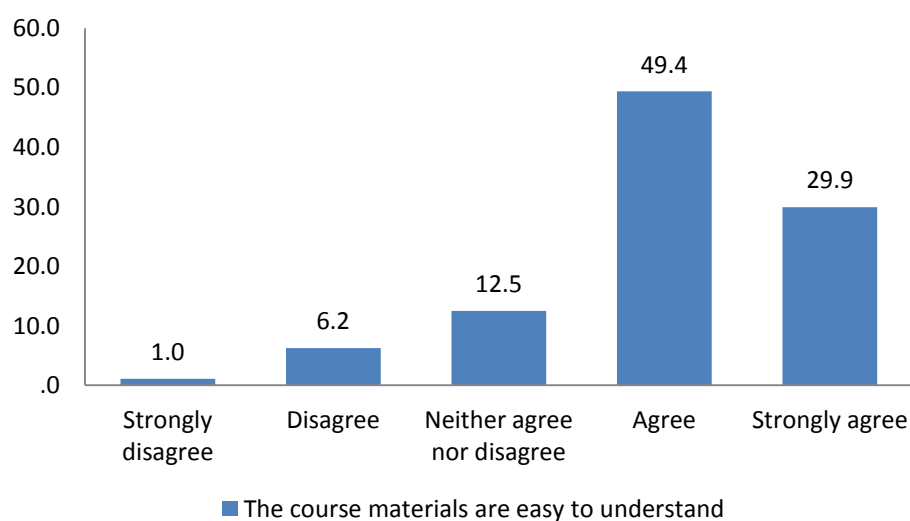
#### 4.2.3.5 Course content and resources

With regard to various aspects of the course materials, Figures 29, 30 and 31 illustrate the degree to which students considered the Skills Pack a useful resource, the degree to which students found the course materials easy to understand, and whether students were always clear about what was expected of them. In Figure 29, students predominantly agreed (43.1%) or strongly agreed (32.5%) that the Skills Pack was a useful resource. Figure 30 shows that the students generally felt (79.3%) that the course materials were easy to understand. However, Figure 31 illustrates that only 28.5% of students were always clear about what was expected of them. A large percentage of students were either only ‘often’ (42.9%) or ‘sometimes’ (26.2%) clear about what was expected of them in terms of the course materials.

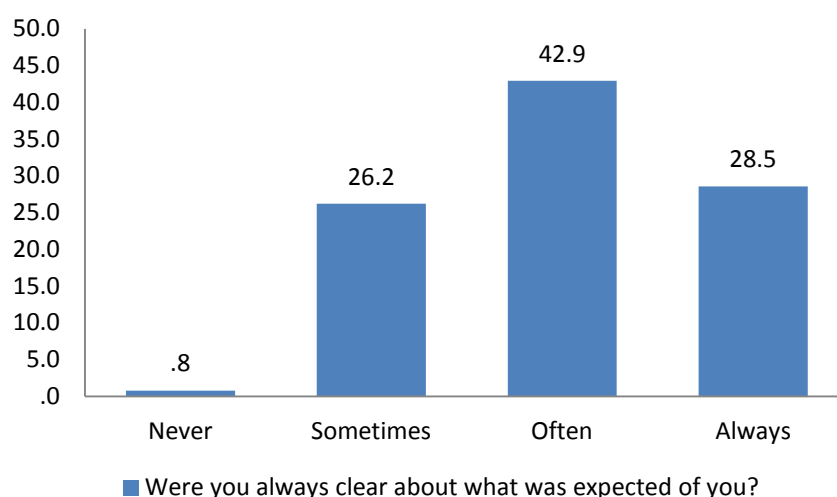
**Figure 29: Frequency of the usefulness of the Skills Pack**



**Figure 30: Frequency of the course materials as easy to understand**



**Figure 31: Frequency of clarity of expectation on the course**



Regarding the course content and the various resources, students made the following remarks in their open-ended responses:

Student D: "...the level of difficulty or challenge in the work should increase in order to help us use our minds unlike always refering to the essays for answers."

Student I: "I do not know much about the skills pack because as far as my memory extends, we haven't used it or used it a little."

Student J: "Some of the instruction in the course guide where not clear."

Student K: "... the resources should be student-friendly, in-order for student to have easy excess to the information. I think that in compiling these resources, student should be there to help."

Student L: "The skills pack, it's a beneficial tool which evokes the need to constantly increase your vocabulary and English literature."  
"They should increase the difficulty of the course because it will encourage student to make an effort to pass and excel. At this current level of difficulty I could pass the course with a distinciton without studying."

Student M: "Some material mostly in the module and the dictionary work can sometimes be vague and unclear."

In several instances, it appears that some students considered the materials too easy and that they were uncertain about what was expected of them. This is supported by the data in Figure 30 and 31, which indicates that 79.3% of students felt the course materials were easy to understand and that only 28.5% were always clear about what was expected of them. However, student responses do indicate that they considered the Skills Pack a useful resource, which is furthermore illustrated by the data in Figure 29, where 75.6% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that the Skills Pack was useful. The focus group responses were then consulted to see if students perhaps elaborated on these issues. The responses were as follows:

Student response: “We were mostly surprised to see how the Skills Pack was very...like...most of us we think that we know English, you know we, we, we could write about anything but with the Skills Pack you see that you actually need to focus on some aspects of the language and it’s very useful.”

Student response: “Well, it was quite nice to finally get to know English better because at school we were taught English sometimes in SeSotho, our first languages, so we got to know English better than at high school.”

*Question:* “What do you think of the level of difficulty of the course materials?”

Student response: “...too easy”

Student response: “...the questions that are allocated to the essays [the texts in the course materials], they’re too easy...”

Student response: “Personally, I think it’s easy but if you look like at everyone that’s taking the course, it’s very difficult because some people actually don’t have a good background of English...and like the majority here so I think it’s fairly difficult if you look at it from that perspective, but personally I think it’s too easy”

Student response: “...because sometimes you’re not really driven to go to class sometimes because you’re gonna get something very simple but for some learners it’s right for them”

- Student response: “I come from the township and the English there is not okay. The way they teach it...it’s not okay...Their English is so poor, it’s very poor...”
- Student response: “Because, by that way [if the materials are more challenging] we learn more, you want to learn. You want to strive to succeed...”
- Student response: “The Skills Pack, yes, I love that because...there are so many types of speeches or whatever that you can use to improve your English. That’s the only thing that I think is useful in terms of ALC...the Skills Pack is a fundamental think...it really sort of helps your English.”
- Student response: “...the Skills Pack...I didn’t know that there was something as a topic sentence...I knew the structure of the essay looked like but I didn’t know all the other things like topic sentence and a thesis statement...so that helped me to better the construction of my essays and how to write them...”
- Student response: “I think we’re laidback in our English class, we’re very laidback. When we think of English, we’re like ag I’m just gonna go do that...you don’t really even go, if they tell us we’re gonna write a dictionary test, you don’t really go through the dictionary...you don’t really make time to like concentrate on English.”

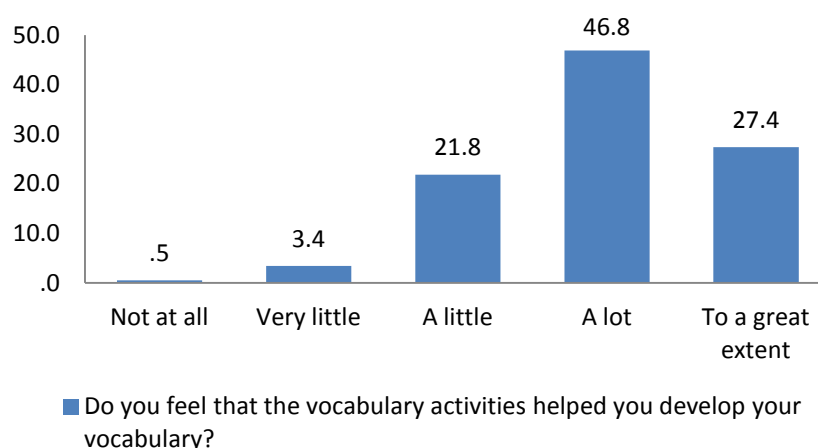
The responses, in general, seem to suggest that students found the Skills Pack valuable, since it provided them with the fundamental basics of English. However, in terms of the content of the course itself, there appear to be two schools of thought. The first is that the course was too easy and students did not see the value of doing it. The other school of thought is that the course was rather challenging, given students’ background and their ‘poor’ English skills. One student even mentioned that they were taught English in SeSotho at school. This could perhaps account for the fact that students were not always clear about what was expected of them. If their English language skills were so ‘poor’, as some students seemed to suggest, this could impact on their understanding of both verbal and written instructions in English.



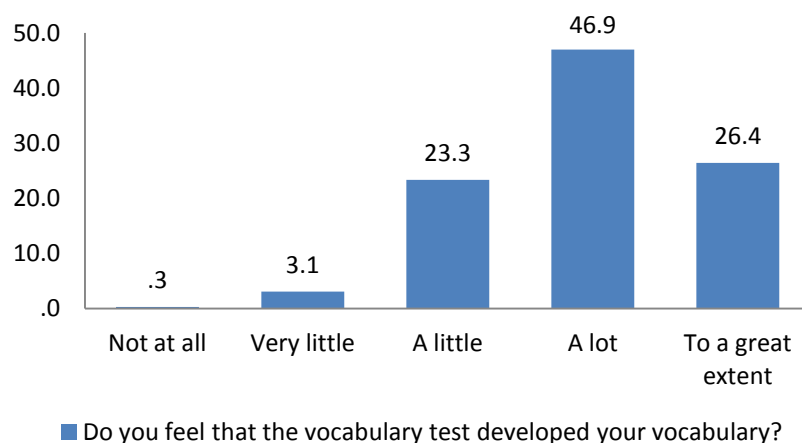
#### 4.2.3.6 Vocabulary component of the course

Students' responses to questions pertaining to the vocabulary component of the course were very similar. Figure 32 represents to what extent students felt the vocabulary activities helped developed their vocabulary. 46.8% of student indicated that the activities helped them 'a lot' and 27.4% indicated that the activities helped to 'to a great extent'. Similarly, in Figure 33, it can be seen that 46.9% of students felt the vocabulary tests developed their vocabulary 'a lot', and 26.4% indicated that the tests facilitated their vocabulary development 'to a great extent'. 23.3% of students, however, indicated that the vocabulary tests developed their vocabulary 'a little', which is slightly higher than the results in Figure 32, where 21.8% of students felt the vocabulary activities helped develop their vocabulary 'a little'. Perhaps this could be interpreted as students having perceived the vocabulary tests as slightly less successful than the vocabulary activities in developing their vocabulary.

**Figure 32: Frequency degree to which vocabulary activities helped to develop vocabulary**



**Figure 33: Frequency of degree to which vocabulary tests developed vocabulary**



The open-ended responses on the questionnaire revealed the following about student perspectives of the vocabulary component of the course:

Student C: “Vocabulary activities and the skills pack are useful resources that even in higher learning, provide us with knowledge of things we might not have been aware of and help us understand language better than we have been.”

Student D: “The vocabulary or dictionary work, it helps me understand more on how to use English words.”

Student N: “The vocabulary work as well as the hidden lessons behind the topics that we deal with” [is what is considered most beneficial about the course].

The open-ended responses to the questionnaire also highlighted other potential issues, such as the time allocated to the ALC 108 classes. This was introduced as an item on the agenda for the first student focus group. The open-ended responses will be addressed first, followed by the responses given by students in the focus group.

The open-ended responses on the questionnaire in terms of time allocation for classes were as follows:

Student D: “The time allocation for class is not good, as it is too late during the day.”

Student E: “I do not like the time I feel it is not enough. We only have ALC classes 2 times a week. It is not enough. We should maybe have it three or four times a week that will be very helpful.”

Student G: “Because the class is  $\pm$  2 hours long, I begin to lose interest doing the same thing for such a long period.”

Student N: “The allocated time of the classes for the course is too long.”

Student P: “It must have more time, at least 3 times a week.”

These responses appear to reflect opposing views, which is why this particular point was selected for both focus groups. This question of time elicited a few interesting responses, which shed some light on issues that were raised earlier by other questions. The responses were as follows:

- Student response: "...there are some students...that wish...the ALC classes were earlier in the morning and not later when they're tired and have to write essays and all."
- Student response: "...I think the time is, well during the day I'm very tired so if it could be earlier I think it will be better cos then my brain can really function at that time..."
- Student response: "...if it was in the morning it would be better for me."
- Student response: "...I think for those who need more help, I think the two hours is perfect...But for those who, cos for some people it's a waste of time, they don't even come to class because why do they need this subject? They see it as too easy..."
- Student response: "I...think that the timetable should first be adjusted, they should put the classes all together. Like some of them have class 8:00 and they have to wait for class of 14:30...this place is in a way abandoned..."
- Student response: "...I'm coming for English and coming down to Vista [South Campus] and I'm think there's nothing to do there...most of the computers are not working there. There is not really much you can do on this campus"
- Student response: "...we find it as a waste of money because coming down here, the classes are gonna take like maybe twenty minutes or so and then they tell us to leave. You see and some others waited for like hours, four hours to go to their 14:30 class."
- Student response: "...we have to balance so many modules...so we're not likely to put more effort into it [ALC 108] so if they could shorten the gap between and let's say, put it all into one module or into one...timetable...they could accommodate everyone there"
- Student response: "...there shouldn't be such a big gap because it's really like, sometimes impossible 14:30 in the afternoon you had Accounting and you had Economics, your brain is not functioning and you have to go to English and then write an essay and reading reaction and do a quiz. So I just think that mentally it's a bit...I don't mind the workload, but mentally..."

These focus group responses suggest that students did not really value the English literacy course to a great extent, but saw it as ‘a waste of time’. Furthermore, it appears that students had to wait around on the campus, which they considered ‘abandoned’, for their classes to start and that they were tired after their morning classes after which they had to wait to get to their ALC classes. There is also an indication that some facilitators did not teach for the full two hours, but instead let their students go early. Given that some students’ open-ended questionnaire responses indicated that two hours was not sufficient time for the classes, such facilitators would be doing their students an injustice, as they would not be able to cover the work in a mere 20 minutes. For those students who commented that the two-hours classes were too long, their prior learning experiences most likely impacted on their answers, as they were not used to classes lasting more than one hour.

It appears that in several cases, the multiple-choice questionnaire responses tended to indicate a positive response, while the open-ended questionnaire responses and focus group comments were often indicative of the contrary. One possible explanation for this could be that, as pointed out in the facilitator meetings, there may be a tendency amongst students to select the answer that they “think is most right” in terms of the multiple-choice questions.

#### **4.2.4 Assessing facilitator experiences of teaching the materials**

The qualitative data that will be dealt with in this regard includes the facilitator journal entries and the agendas and transcriptions of the two facilitator meetings. The data will be addressed in terms of general issues, student writing, course materials and classroom issues. These were the principle issues that were identified across the journal entries and discussed and elaborated on in the facilitator meeting sessions.

#### 4.2.4.1 General issues

The facilitator journal entries revealed a general lack of participation amongst students in class. Student discipline was also raised as an issue in terms of poor attendance, late arrivals, failure to submit work and to do homework, general bad behaviour, total disregard for authority, failure to bring course materials to class, cheating during tests, and students' general lack of commitment to their studies. Another issue that was raised was classroom layout and that this is not conducive to language teaching. These issues were addressed in the meetings, which elicited the following facilitator responses:

Facilitator response: "...my two classes, I've experienced such a great difference. The one lot was interested right up to the end...the other class was disinterested, right from the beginning and they were supposedly to be my stronger class. The weaker ones, there was an atmosphere of participation, interest..."

Facilitator response: "I think classroom layout does play a big part...because if I look at my class...there's good participation in front and along the side where I can walk...and then as it gets towards the back corner which no one can get to, the snores get louder as you get closer to the back corner..."

Facilitator response: "The moment they go sit in the back you know that they're not going to be interested, from the first day...it's hard for me to keep monitoring what they're doing back there...the ten in front, they try and work because they want to be there and they want to participate and half of them believe that they shouldn't be there..."

Facilitator response: "Interestingly, I've noticed my marks also work from the front to the back. The highest ones are in the front..."

Facilitator response: "...I also find that if you give them time to discuss and because of the seating arrangements, you can't move...so I don't know what they are discussing."

Coordinator response: "It is absolutely the truth that you cannot teach language in a classroom where the seats are bolted down to the ground, you

need to be able to put students in cooperative groups and get them processing the reading and writing in the groups where you can walk and this really is a big disadvantage we've got..."

Facilitator response: "...You can say to them 'be quiet', you can say to them, 'do your work, do your homework', 'read the article', but they just don't care. If they feel like talking, they will talk. It doesn't matter what you do..."

Facilitator response: "...I think this is very much part of a general attitude; we have it at the college too. The students feel that why do they have to learn a language?"

Facilitator response: "...What I find is a lack of commitment...If you give them work to do, some of them will work, half of the class, and the rest will fall asleep on their arms, so that's my greatest problem..."

Facilitator response: "I have maybe ten people in a class of forty odd who come regularly. The rest come as they please..."

Facilitator response: "...you can see the students that don't attend class frequently, their marks are lower..."

Facilitator response: "...I struggle with the two hour class. I struggle to keep them motivated..."

Facilitator response: "My utmost level of concentration is an hour and a half, I can't push them beyond that and I really struggle to do it..."

Some facilitators suggested that students be placed in classes based at their reading levels. Some facilitators had a mixture of students ranging from level 1 to level 5 in the same class. Students are placed at reading levels, based on their performance on the reading level test that they write at the beginning of the year. For example, if a student scores 15 out of 27 on the test, this would place them at reading level 3. Students then read graded readers on their respective levels in fulfilment of the extensive reading component of the course. Facilitators found it particularly challenging to bridge the 'gap' between these students, since those at the lower levels would take much longer to complete activities than those at the higher levels, who would then finish quickly, get bored and disrupt the class. One facilitator remarked that "...I think you need a different kind of facilitator to deal with level 1 people...almost a remedial type person...because that's more what I think the level one

people will need, but the problem...is, if you sit with level 1s and level 5s, with quite a lot of level 5s in your class, the level 5s tend to carry the level 1s, and not in a good way. They're in a group together and the level 5s do all the work and the level 1s know that they don't understand anyway, so they don't even bother..."

The facilitator responses seem to correlate with some of the issues identified in the student open-ended questionnaire responses and focus group comments. The facilitator responses seem to suggest that there is a problem with regard to students' participation in class, as many of them seem disinterested or tired. This correlates with what students said in the focus groups – they are tired at that time in the afternoon after all their other classes and they are disgruntled about having to wait for so long on campus for their ALC classes to start. Lack of participation could also perhaps be due to the layout of the classrooms, which, as indicated in the facilitator responses, is not conducive to language teaching, as it makes group work very difficult. Much the same can be said for class attendance – facilitators identified this as an issue that affects students' marks, and students admitted not attending classes in their focus group responses. Furthermore, the facilitator responses seem to support students' remarks that the ALC classes do not always run for the full two hours. However, another issue that is identifiable in terms of the facilitator responses, particularly with regard to the comment on graded reader levels, is that some facilitators seem to take a deficit view of the students' English language abilities, which is addressed in the following section, under student writing. This was also raised as an issue in the focus groups sessions, where students were aware that some facilitators had such an attitude, which offended a number of students.

#### **4.2.4.2 Student writing**

In the journal entries, several facilitators commented on students' rudimentary knowledge of paragraph writing and sentence structure. Some facilitators suggested that additional support be included in the Skills Pack in this regard. It was also mentioned that students seemed to struggle in terms of skills transfer. One facilitator mentioned that students merely practised writing mistakes in the writing tasks assigned to them. These issues were addressed in the facilitator meetings; facilitators commented as follows:

- Facilitator response: "...A skill can only be taught with repetition, so the repetition, I think, is an essential part of the learning process here."
- Facilitator response: "...it might be possible to restructure a bit so they have more...focused paragraphs to write...One that actually worked quite well...I had them describe how you make a cup of coffee – I was trying to teach connecting words at the time..."
- Facilitator response: "I felt that's where the Skills Pack was quite useful because there were these little exercises and sentences...that were...highlighted in the Skills Pack...the Skills Pack showed that [certain] reasons [pertaining to a particular activity] are relevant, these ones are irrelevant...and then I could see a light going on for some of them...it's really...very useful there."
- Facilitator response: "...I would just include a few more exercise activities in that Skills Pack..."
- Facilitator response: "...I've gone through basically the whole Skills Pack now they've known everything. They were very bored because it wasn't new to them...but then if you look at the writing, it doesn't reflect the so-called knowledge of theirs."
- Facilitator response: "...another point...I...find difficult is if you're marking their work, you must just access their work, you mustn't go through their work with the red pen and fix all their mistakes, because that sort of...you're re-writing it for them then but what I would like to do is mark the work and then give it back to them and then they must look at that and then they must fix where they went wrong."
- Facilitator response: "I just underline the error, they must figure out what the error is...I refuse to fix their errors because I feel at least this is still varsity...I won't rewrite stuff for them."
- Facilitator response: "...perhaps a better approach would be to have them write maybe three or four essays over an entire term and they submit a first draft, you mark that draft and you had it back and they must rewrite it with the corrections..."



Facilitator response: "...one of the things I would have liked in the course is if we were to give them less writing work, maybe even more focused, but less writing work, because I could actually give better feedback on the stuff."

Facilitator response: "But the marking load is so heavy that there's no time..."

Facilitator response: "I feel that we have to then, if we want to give good feedback, we have to have a lighter marking load..."

It appears that the facilitator responses and the student comments support one another concerning the usefulness of the Skills Pack. The fact that students found the resource very useful and they found it helped them, perhaps the inclusion of additional writing-based activities in the Skills Pack would prove beneficial for the development of student writing. Furthermore, there were a number of critical issues that were highlighted by the facilitator responses. There is a need for more focused writing activities, perhaps in the form of formative assessment as opposed to the current summative assessment approach taken by the course. This would also address student concerns pertaining to what is expected of them in terms of their writing, particularly since one facilitator mentioned merely underlining errors in students' writing, without providing any information pertaining to the nature of the error. Yorke (2003: 483) points out that "without informative feedback on what they do, students will have relatively little by which to chart their development". A formative assessment approach would also minimise the marking load of the facilitators, which could then result in better quality feedback and student engagement with their writing. This would better foster the development of their writing skills. The facilitator responses may be evidence of a lack of training in terms of ESL composition. Dixon (1996) points out that teachers should be very clear about what they are evaluating and give their students this information before they attempt to draft a response. He states that "[t]oo often we give assignments with uncertain objectives in mind and thus are unable to respond in a helpful manner to our students' efforts...we pick out surface errors and circle them in red...to justify the mark at the bottom of the paper. This...is time-consuming and accomplishes little else than discouraging the students, who see nothing but what they have done wrong..." (Dixon, 1996: 20). Instead, Dixon supports the notion of formative assessment and suggests that teachers help their students see that revision is not punishment for having submitted a response that is not

perfect. Also, teachers should ensure that the comments they make on students' submissions are as helpful as possible to them, drawing "their attention to their errors and strengths, using a combination of praise and criticism" (Dixon, 1996: 25).

#### **4.2.4.3 Course materials**

In terms of the course materials, facilitator journal entries indicated that the course materials should contain a wider variety of topics and articles to choose from, as the various parts are too long and students get bored. Certain topics, namely Values-based Living and Nature Conservation, elicited poor student response. Facilitators commented as follows in the facilitator meetings:

Facilitator response: "I don't feel that they [the articles in the course materials] are too long, but to have more than two actually on the same topic more or less, after the second one, the students lose interest..."

Facilitator response: "...I was tired and they were tired and we didn't want to anymore and to speak about eh lobola thing again and they felt 'ugh', they don't want to, they didn't want to anymore..."

Facilitator response: "...they quickly look for the answer instead of reading the article...they lose interest if it's long. If it's a page and a half, they seem to be far more interested in what's going on...a lot of them tell me, 'Ma'am, it's too long, I can't focus...', 'we can't focus for this long', 'we're not interested in it'...."

Facilitator response: "...pre-reading activities are good, but I find for a lot of them, they don't have enough background knowledge to be able to discuss anything...it ends up that I'm telling the background knowledge rather than getting any contributions from the class."

Facilitator response: "...they like the Bride Price the most"

Facilitator response: "...anything that they can just relate to would help a lot..."

Facilitator response: "...they didn't know anything about nature conservation..."

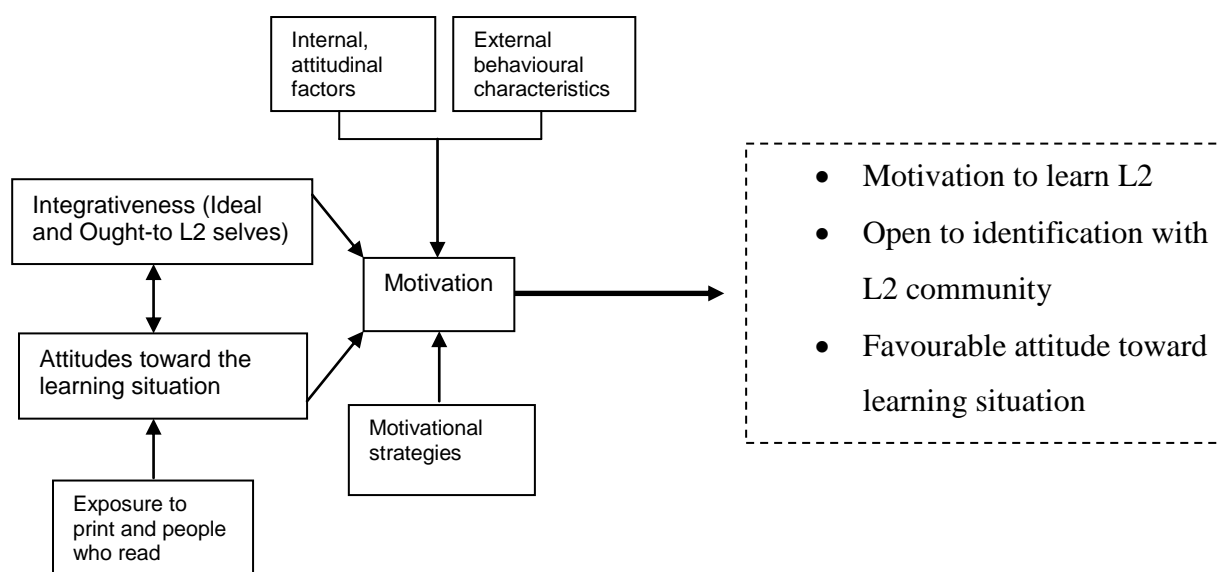
These responses seem to support what students said in their open-ended response and focus group comments about the themes/topics of the materials. Students are not

interested in materials that they consider irrelevant, and they consider reading several articles on the same topic boring. Facilitator responses seem to indicate that if students are not interested in the content of the articles, they do not engage with the texts, as they do not read them properly. This will ultimately affect their text comprehension, which could possibly account for their poor academic performance.

#### 4.2.5 Assessing student and facilitator experiences in terms of the collaborative model of motivation

Various student and facilitator perspectives have been identified and discussed in the sections above. However, these should now be analysed in terms of the collaborative model of motivation with regard to how they might impact on L2 learning, as this could serve as a possible justification for the rather disappointing results found for students' overall academic performance and NBT results. Figure 34 below represents the collaborative model that will be used in this analysis.

**Figure 34: A collaborative model of motivational theories and perspectives**



*Integrativeness*, according to the most recent theory on L2 motivation, refers to openness and respect for the L2-speaking community or interest in becoming a member of a global English-speaking community in this case (Campbell and Storch, 2011: 167). Students' open-ended responses on the questionnaire (under 5.3.1 - overall experience of the course) do reflect a desire to improve their English language

skills. However, the following remarks were made in the second facilitator meeting with regard to students' pronunciation of English words:

Facilitator response: "...I tried certain words and they mispronounced them all the time, then one came up to me later and she said, 'you know...we are not supposed to pronounce these words correctly, because then they scold us and they say that we are *whiteys*'."

Facilitator response: "Yes, they talk about Model C; they say you have Model C pronunciation."

Facilitator response: "But she said they say we are 'whiteys', we try to be like 'whiteys', that's why we pronounce the words incorrectly. So, it's not that they can't...but they don't want to."

Facilitator response: "But the thing is...wrong pronunciation leads to wrong spelling...I 'leave' in Bloemfontein...can you see that pronunciation is relevant?...the dogs are 'bucking' and I'm looking for 'pucking' space"

Should this be the case, this could be indicative of an unwillingness to identify fully with the global English-speaking community, particularly with regard to the adoption of word sounds and pronunciations. This is consistent with the concept of identity in Lea and Street's academic literacies model (2006). This furthermore serves as evidence of the discrepancy that exists between the Ideal and Ought-to L2 selves proposed by Dörnyei (2006). As one facilitator pointed out, this could possibly affect particular features of the English language. Gardner and Masgoret (2003: 171) postulate that individuals who are unwilling to identify are less motivated to learn the target language. This could ultimately affect students' L2 acquisition, and could perhaps account for the findings for their academic performance on the SFCW course.

*Attitudes toward the learning situation* refers to "an individual's reaction to anything associated with the immediate context in which language is being taught, relative to others in class" (Gardner & Masgoret, 2003: 171). Evaluation of the course and the facilitator are also contributing factors in this regard. In terms of students' evaluation of the course, it appeared as though students were not interested in reading and engaging with texts that they considered irrelevant. Students also indicated that there

were too many articles on one particular topic at a time, which was supported by the comments made by facilitators in the facilitator meetings. Some students even suggested that the course materials were too easy, and thus not challenging enough. Furthermore, some students also remarked that students did not listen to their facilitators and disrupted classes, to which some students responded that these facilitators should be more assertive in this regard. Facilitators also remarked on students' bad behaviour and disrespect in class and their disinterest and falling asleep in class. Such issues are indicative of a rather negative attitude toward the learning situation, which would impede openness and, in turn, influence students' motivation to learn the target language. Again, this too could have had a negative influence on students' academic performance.

In terms of *exposure to print and people who read*, the students on the SFCW English literacy programme have a poor print background. Furthermore, students' focus group responses and facilitator's comments during facilitator meetings seem to suggest that students did not engage fully in the extensive reading component of the course. Students did not read the graded readers, they often only read the blurb on the back of the book, copied one another's work, or briefly summarised the story line for their friends. This would then affect their development of the vocabulary and ultimately their text comprehension. Students provided a number 'reasons' for not reading the graded reader books (see 5.1), but it might be possible that they were reluctant to do so as a result of poor exposure to a culture of reading, both at school and at home. Grabe and Stoller (2002: 242) argue that students' attitudes and motivations are related to their "previous experiences of reading, exposure to print and people who read, and to perceptions about the usefulness of reading".

Further factors impacting on motivation are *internal, attitudinal factors* and *external behavioural characteristics*. The former constitutes the following: an interest in L2 based on existing attitudes, experience and background knowledge; relevance, involving perception that personal need such as achievement, affiliation and power are being met by learning the L2; expectancy of success or failure; and outcomes in terms of the extrinsic rewards felt by the learner (Oxford & Shearin, 1994: 14). In terms of these internal, attitudinal factors, the qualitative data indicates a number of issues that could possibly have impacted negatively on student motivation. Firstly, the majority

of the students on the course, as mentioned in the section above regarding *exposure to print and people who read*, came from a print-poor background, the implications of which have already been discussed. Furthermore, the qualitative data also suggests that several students had a rather negative attitude towards the ALC 108 course and did not value it, and did not see the need in doing the course. Secondly, in terms of relevance, the qualitative data indicates that some students felt that the materials did not contain enough topics/themes that were relevant, and that the materials were not challenging enough. The data suggests that if students did not regard the texts as relevant, they were not interested in reading the content, which ultimately influenced the development of their reading skills and, in turn, their text comprehension. Moreover, it was suggested that the topics/themes, even those that were regarded as relevant, such as Bride Price, extended across too many pages and students lost interest as a result. With regard to expectancy of success or failure, the qualitative data shows that in some cases, students were uncertain of what was expected of them, which would have impacted negatively in terms of their expectancy of success. Furthermore, the data also highlighted the issue pertaining to the manner in which facilitators mark students' written work. If students' errors were not clearly illustrated and proper feedback given, this would most certainly impact negatively on the students' expectancy of success. However, the data also showed that some students, particularly with regard to the reading of graded readers and writing of reading reaction, were not too concerned about the impact of their not reading the graded readers had on their reading reaction scores, and ultimately their overall academic performance. This disregard for possible failure was further illustrated by their unwillingness to do anything that did not count for marks, particularly with regard to the journaling component of the course, and possibly the NBT post-test. These issues would also have impacted negatively on outcomes, in terms of the extrinsic rewards felt by the learner. Should a learner not see the value in doing a course, there would be no extrinsic reward for this student. However, even if a student did value the course and their performance, factors such as the manner in which they were assessed and clarity about what was expected of them would also have played a role in their perceptions of the outcomes of the course.

*External behavioural characteristics* involves the decision to choose, pay attention to and engage in L2 learning; persistence in L2 learning over an extended period of time and return to it after interruptions; and maintenance of high activity level (Oxford &

Shearin, 1994: 14). Firstly, participating students were not given the choice to do the SFCW English literacy course, the course was compulsory. Secondly, the data shows that attention in class, interest in the topics/themes, as well as class participation was often an issue in several classes. Furthermore, class attendance was also raised as an issue by facilitators, particularly towards the middle and end of the year. All these factors reflect negatively in terms of external behavioural characteristics, and could thus have impacted negatively on student motivation.

Finally, Dörnyei's (2000: 533) motivational strategies require some elaboration. These strategies include creating the basic motivational conditions; generating initial motivation; maintaining and protecting motivation; and rounding off the learner experience in terms of encouraging positive self-evaluation.

*Creating the basic motivational conditions* involves appropriate teacher behaviour and good relationships with students, pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere, as well as cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms. The qualitative data seems to suggest a number of issues in this regard. Firstly, some students indicated that certain facilitators belittled and insulted students. The data also shows that students tended to disrupt classes and not listen to their facilitators. Students recommended that facilitators be more assertive in this regard, as some students found this type of peer behaviour 'irritating'. Facilitator responses also suggest a problem with regard to general student behaviour and discipline in classrooms. These findings seem to suggest, in some cases, inappropriate teacher behaviour, unfavourable relationships with students, an unpleasant and unsupportive classroom atmosphere, as well as an incohesive student group with inappropriate group norms.

In terms of *generating initial motivation*, Dörnyei (2000: 533) identifies the following factors: enhancing learners' subject-matter-related values and attitudes; increasing learners' goal-orientedness; increasing learners' expectancy of success; making the curriculum relevant for the learners; and creating realistic learner beliefs. The data seems to indicate that some students did not value the SFCW English literacy course, as they failed to see why they should do the course. A further problem lies in the fact that several students seemed to indicate a disinterest in the course materials with regard to the themes/topics that had been selected. Many students felt that some of the

topics were irrelevant, and thus uninteresting and not worth reading. This could impact of learners' goal-orientedness and their expectancy of success. Should they fail to engage with the texts, their reading skills, text comprehension skills and writing skills would be adversely affected, which would impact on their overall academic performance, given that this affected their fluency in terms of their secondary Discourse. A possible solution to this problem might lie in making the curriculum more relevant in terms of enhancing learners' subject-matter-related values and attitudes. This could possibly be achieved by means of CBI, where reading instruction is based on associations in texts to "engagement in and simulations of actions, activities, and interactions – to real and imagined material and social worlds" (Gee, 2001: 176). Such an approach might prove beneficial in terms of *maintaining and protecting motivation*, which involves setting proximal subgoals; presenting and administering tasks in a motivating way; increasing the quality of the learning experience; increasing the learners' self-confidence; allowing learners to maintain a positive self and social image; creating learner autonomy; and promoting self-motivating learner strategies. According to Leki and Carson (1994: 93), a focus on intellectually stimulating and demanding subject matter could better prepare students for writing across the curriculum, since they would be writing on "topics more central to their academic and intellectual lives". This will be discussed further under the recommendations of the study.

With regard to *rounding off the learner experience by means of encouraging positive self-evaluation*, Dörnyei (2000: 533) proposes the following:

- promoting attributions to effort rather than to ability;
- providing motivational feedback;
- increasing learners' satisfaction; and
- addressing the issue of rewards in terms of grades and punishments.

Students mentioned in their responses that they were not always sure of what was expected of them in terms of their writing assignments. Furthermore, facilitators stated that marking was an issue in terms of providing quality feedback, given the marking load of the course. It was suggested that a more formative approach be taken for assessment, rather than the current summative assessment approach of the course. This would promote attributions to effort rather than to ability, as students would be encouraged to engage with their written texts based on feedback and turn in



potentially improved drafts. This would serve as motivational feedback, as such a draft system would allow for students to improve their marks, thus improving learner satisfaction. Students would thus be clear about what was expected of them and facilitators would feel that they were providing quality feedback that could result in the improvement of students' writing skills. This approach too would in turn address the issue of rewards in terms of grades, since students would be given the opportunity to improve their marks, as well as improve their skills. Also, should students fail to engage with feedback and not hand in improved drafts, they could be penalised accordingly, which would serve as punishment. Such a transition from summative to formative assessment would furthermore be in accordance with the literacy studies approach, which calls for a shift to be made away from the conventional ways of thinking about meaning-making in academia. A formative assessment approach would allow for students' perspectives to be valued and facilitate an effort to support their meaning-making, rather than control it (Lillis, 2003: 196-197).

If these various issues discussed above are taken into consideration, it is possible that students' motivation was adversely affected, which would have impacted on their motivation to learn the target language, their openness to identify with the L2 community, as well as their attitude toward the learning situation, as far as the collaborative model motivation is concerned. If this is the case, it could account for the decrease in performance in terms of the reading-level test scores, students' overall academic performance, as well as their performance on the NBT post-test. However, this is merely a speculation based on some responses in the qualitative data.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **5. Conclusion, implications and recommendations**

The findings for the quantitative data were rather disappointing. The pilot study showed a slight improvement in students' reading skills and a slight decline in semester results than results evidenced by the control group. However, the SFCW literacy course materials did not significantly improve either students' reading scores or their academic performance. Furthermore, the students also seemed to fare worse on the NBT post-test than on the pre-test. However, the post-test was done in two sessions, whereas the pre-test was done in one session. The second post-test session, the occasion on which the largest decline from pre- to post-test was noted, could potentially have been compromised when one facilitators' students arrived for the first post-test session and because this particular facilitator was not part of the study, her students were not meant to write the NBT post-test and were asked to leave the testing centre. This could have influenced students' perception of the importance of the test, which could account for the findings in this regard. Also, the results did seem to indicate some degree of incompatibility with regard to the two post-tests, which could possibly also be a reason for the findings regarding the drop in student performance from pre- to post-test. The qualitative data also seemed to indicate that students were unwilling to do anything that was not assessed or moderated, as in the case with the student journaling on the course. Should this be the case, given that students were aware that the NBT post-test did not have any bearing on their marks, this could have influenced their performance on the post-test, for both the post-test sessions.

With regard to the results for the NBT post-test across the various performance levels, the decline from pre- to post-test was largest with the basic to intermediate students. However, it should also be noted that very few students reached the proficient level. The results also showed a strong correlation between the AL test and academic performance and reading level test scores, which could be attributed to the content of the SFCW English literacy course materials.

The findings of the qualitative data proved very informative. With regard to the extensive reading component of the materials there appeared to be a shortage of

graded readers on the course, which resulted in poor preparation by the students. Also, facilitator responses showed that many students did not read the graded readers and simply summarised the stories for one another or read the blurb on the back of the cover. The format of the reading reactions was also an issue, since students seemed to concentrate more on the format than on the content of the reading reactions. All these factors could have affected the development of students' reading proficiency, as well as the content of their reading reaction responses, which could have influenced their overall academic performance, as well as their performance on the reading-level test.

The student questionnaire and focus group responses seemed to indicate that students found some of the topics/themes in the course material irrelevant and uninteresting. This was supported by facilitator responses, where it was mentioned that students found certain themes/topics boring and they were thus unmotivated to participate in class. Further aggravating factors were that students reported being very tired in the late afternoon, which was the time at which they had ALC 108 classes and that in some cases they had to wait around on campus for hours in order to attend the classes, which affects student attendance as well. Facilitators furthermore complained about classroom layout, which proved not to be conducive to language teaching.

Students generally indicated that the facilitation of the course was good, except for instances where students were treated in a manner indicative of their lack of potential. There also appeared to be an issue concerning respect for facilitators, where some facilitators claimed that the classroom environment was on occasion unruly, and student responses seem to suggest that this was as a result of lack of respect for the facilitator.

A related issue proved to be assessment on the course, as students reported that they were not always sure of what was expected of them in terms of their writing assignments. Facilitator responses in this regard indicated that some facilitators took a deficit view of the students' abilities. Their responses also suggest that they were not providing students with helpful, quality feedback in some cases, which is evidence of facilitators' lack in training in terms of ESL composition.

In light of the above-mentioned findings, the following table illustrates a summary of the possible influence these various factors could have had on student motivation, in terms of the collaborative model of motivation.

**Table 26: Factors affecting student motivation**

Component of collaborative model	Factor affecting student motivation
Integrativeness	Students are unwilling to pronounce certain English words correctly for fear of being labelled ‘whiteys’.
Attitudes toward the learning situation	Students are not interested in engaging with texts they consider irrelevant, and thus uninteresting. Some students consider the materials too easy and they feel they are not challenged enough by the content. Some students do not listen to their facilitator and disrupt class out of disrespect for the facilitator.
Exposure to print and people who read	Most students are from a poor print background. Students do not fully engage with the extensive reading component of the course.
Internal, attitudinal factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>existing attitudes, experience and background knowledge</i></li> <li>• <i>relevance</i></li> <li>• <i>expectancy of success of failure</i></li> <li>• <i>Outcomes in terms of extrinsic rewards</i></li> </ul>	Most students are from poor print backgrounds (see exposure to print and people who read). Some students fail to see the value in doing the course. Some of the topics/themes in the materials are considered irrelevant and thus uninteresting The topics/themes that are considered interesting are too lengthy and students lose interest after a while Some students are uncertain of what is expected of them in terms of assessment. Students are not always provided with helpful and proper feedback. Students are unwilling to do anything that does not count for marks. Some students do not see the value of doing the course.
External behavioural characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• decision to choose, pay</li> </ul>	The course is mandatory for students.

<p>attention to and engage in L2 learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• persistence in L2 learning</li> <li>• maintenance of high activity level</li> </ul>	<p>Attendance, interest in topics/themes of materials, and student participation in class proves to be an issue.</p>
<p>Creating the basic motivational conditions</p>	<p>Certain facilitators belittle and insult students.</p> <p>Some students disrupt classes and fail to listen to their facilitator.</p> <p>Students suggest that facilitators be more assertive in this regard.</p> <p>Problems pertaining to general student behaviour.</p>

The findings in the table seem to suggest that there are numerous factors that could potentially have influenced student motivation, which could have affected their performance on the course. If motivation is a potential contributing factor to the rather disappointing findings of the study, then *generating initial motivation* and *rounding off learner experience by means of encouraging positive self-evaluation* are important motivational factors in this regard.

A possible recommendation for the future of the SFCW English literacy course would be to adopt a more content-based approach regarding the materials. If the materials are geared more towards learners' subject-matter-related values and attitudes, they may consider the content more relevant and thus more interesting. Such a focus on intellectually stimulating and demanding subject matter could potentially better prepare students for writing across the curriculum. By exposing students to topics more central to their academic and intellectual lives, their secondary Discourse skills could be fostered. Hyland (2007) also stresses that ESL courses should be grounded in texts that learners will need to write in relevant contexts, as this will guide them to participate effectively in the world outside the ELS classroom. Reference is made specifically to a focus on socially recognised ways of using language, which has the following advantages (Hyland, 2007: 150). Such an approach is:

- Explicit, since it makes clear what is to be learnt to facilitate the acquisition of writing skills;
- Systematic, since it provides a coherent framework for focusing on both language and contexts;

- Needs-based, since it ensures that course objectives and content are derived from students' needs;
- Supportive, in that it gives teachers a central role in scaffolding students' learning and creativity;
- Empowering, given that it provides access to the patterns and possibilities of variation in valued texts;
- Critical, since it provides the resources for students to understand and challenge valued [academic] discourses; and
- Consciousness-raising, in that it increases teachers' awareness of texts to confidently advise students on writing.

Hyland (2007: 152) furthermore maintains that the key principles underpinning genre-based teaching include the following: *writing is a social activity*, where communication always has a purpose, a context, and an intended audience; *learning to write is needs-oriented*, where effective teaching recognises the wants, prior learning, and current proficiencies of students and learners simulate the kinds of writing required by their target situations; *learning to write requires explicit outcomes and expectations*, where students are clear about what is being studied, why they are studying it, and what is required of them at the end of the course; *learning to write is a social activity*, where the writing process is supported within familiar routines of cycles of activity, and a number of scaffolded developmental steps in which teachers and peers play an important role. Scaffolding essentially refers to the modelling and discussion of texts, explicit instruction, and teacher input. An example of this would be the use of 'writing frames' that serve as skeletal outlines used to scaffold and prompt students' writing so that they can "start, connect, and develop their texts appropriately while concentrating on what they want to say" (Hyland, 2007: 158). The notion of scaffolding is emphasised, since it stresses "the role of interaction with peers and experienced others in moving learners from their existing level of performance, what they can do now, to a level of 'potential performance', what they can do without assistance" (Hyland, 2007: 158), which is synonymous with the movement towards learner autonomy in terms of their secondary Discourse.

A further recommendation would be to adopt a more formative approach regarding assessment on the course. This could potentially address issues pertaining to students

not being entirely sure about what is expected of them, and also promote attributions to effort rather than ability. Students would be encouraged to engage with feedback and improve their marks, and thus encourage learner satisfaction. Such an approach would furthermore be in accordance with the literacy studies approach of moving away from what Lillis (2003) refers to as conventional ways of thinking about meaning-making in academia. In other words, learners' perspectives need to be valued and their meaning-making supported.

A final recommendation, which is possibly also a shortcoming of this study, would be to track student attendance. Considering this was raised as an issue in the qualitative data, collecting this data and correlating it with student performance could potentially produce informative findings. Also, if a content-based approach is adopted, with a focus on formative feedback, student attendance would be a very important factor in terms of academic performance. If students do not attend class to receive instruction on content-based material, which would form the focus of their academic writing tasks, their development of skills pertaining to secondary Discourse would be adversely affected.

In terms of the significance of the study, given that the government has a vested interest in foundation support programmes, it would be in accordance with good teaching and learning practice to highlight possible areas for improvement regarding the materials, so that the course could potentially serve as a useful tool at tertiary level to assist low-proficiency high-school graduates in university access programmes. One suggestion would be for students to be exposed to more than one year of academic literacy. Perhaps they would benefit from being enrolled in an academic literacy programme for as long as they are studying at university, particularly with regard to postgraduate students who are required to write dissertations that have stringent requirements in terms of secondary Discourse. Secondly, the students could benefit from a more content-based course - one which deals specifically with subject-matter related values and attitudes, texts that students would regard interesting and would possibly be more motivated to engage with. A third suggestion is to adopt a more formative approach to assessment that promotes attributions to effort rather than ability. Finally, it is also clear from the study that the programme needs to provide training for facilitators with regard to ESL. The researcher worked with a large cohort

in this study. Possible future research could perhaps focus on a micro-ethnographic approach, where a few students are closely observed for the intertextual connections they make from one text-type to the next in the course material. The importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of such programmes cannot be stressed enough, given the potential access route they provide for students who would be denied the opportunity to further their education at a tertiary institution.



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### **Cover design:**

Cover design by LM Drennan, 2009, for the *Skills for a Changing World Programme* at the University of the Free State



**STUDENT  
NUMBER:**

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Before you complete the following questionnaire, please take **note of the following important information and sign at the bottom:**

1. Nothing you write or report in this questionnaire will affect your course grades;
2. Only one researcher will have access to the responses of these questionnaires, nobody else;
3. The information gathered from these questionnaires will help inform course developers about potential flaws in the course, as well as about what has been successful;
4. Certain questionnaires will be used to inform further focus groups in the 4<sup>th</sup> term;
5. Your honest responses are very valuable and will be greatly appreciated.
6. Please complete the multiple-choice answer sheet as follows:

VAN / SURNAME															VRL INIT	
B	A	C	E												A	B
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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
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3	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> 8
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**Student signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## INVESTIGATING THE EFFICACY OF THE ALC 108 ENGLISH LITERACY PROGRAMME AT BLOEMFONTEIN SOUTH CAMPUS

The ALC 108 English Literacy materials were developed as part of the *Skills for a Changing World* Programme in response to the need to develop students' English proficiency skills. It complies with good teaching practice to evaluate courses and learning materials as a basis for ongoing improvements. This short questionnaire has been designed to help us understand what you, the student, think about this course and the learning materials used. We will use your responses to inform course and material improvements.

**Please fill in your STUDENT NUMBER and 02 under TASK NO. on the multiple-choice answer sheet provided. Use a pencil and colour in ONE option ONLY for each question. Also, fill in your STUDENT NUMBER on page 4 of this questionnaire.**

### SECTION 1: Demographic Information

**Answer these questions on the multiple-choice answer sheet provided (Questions 1 to 7)**

#### 1. Gender

- |         |           |
|---------|-----------|
| A. Male | B. Female |
|---------|-----------|

#### 2. Race

- |             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| A. Asian    | D. Indian |
| B. Black    | E. Other  |
| C. Coloured | F. White  |

#### 3. Age

- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| A. Younger than 18 years | D. 20 years            |
| B. 18 years              | E. 21 years            |
| C. 19 years              | F. Older than 21 years |

#### 4. Faculty

- A. Economic and Management Sciences
- B. Human and Social Sciences
- C. Natural and Agricultural Sciences

#### 5. Home language (skip this question and answer question 6 if your home language does not appear below)

- |              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| A. English   | E. IsiNdebele  |
| B. Afrikaans | F. North Sotho |
| C. IsiXhosa  | G. SeSotho     |
| D. IsiZulu   | H. Setswana    |

**6. Home language (continued)**

- |              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| A. Tshivenda | D. Other |
| B. SisSwati  |          |
| C. Xitsonga  |          |

**7. Graded reader level**

- |            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| A. Level 1 | E. Level 5     |
| B. Level 2 | F. Do not know |
| C. Level 3 |                |
| D. Level 4 |                |

**SECTION 2: Student experiences of the ALC 108 course**

Answer these questions on the multiple-choice answer sheet provided (Questions 8 to 24)

**8. How would you rate your overall experience of the ALC 108 course?**

Very poor	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	Very enjoyable
	A	B	C	D	E	F	

**9. Do you find the course materials interesting?**

- |   |             |   |          |   |                   |
|---|-------------|---|----------|---|-------------------|
| A | Not at all  | C | A little | E | To a great extent |
| B | Very little | D | A lot    |   |                   |

**10. Do you find the themes/topics of the course relevant?**

- |   |             |   |          |   |                   |
|---|-------------|---|----------|---|-------------------|
| A | Not at all  | C | A little | E | To a great extent |
| B | Very little | D | A lot    |   |                   |

**11. Which theme/topic did you find MOST interesting?**

- |                   |                        |                |
|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| A. Bride price    | C. Values-based living | E. Xenophobia  |
| B. Global warming | D. Nature conservation | F. Short story |

**12. Which theme/topic did you find LEAST interesting?**

- |                   |                        |                |
|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| A. Bride price    | C. Values-based living | E. Xenophobia  |
| B. Global warming | D. Nature conservation | F. Short story |

**13. Do you feel that the course has improved your English language skills?**

- |   |             |   |          |   |                   |
|---|-------------|---|----------|---|-------------------|
| A | Not at all  | C | A little | E | To a great extent |
| B | Very little | D | A lot    |   |                   |

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?						
No.	Question	A	B	C	D	E
14	The facilitation (teaching) of the course is good.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
15	The course assessment is fair in terms of the time allocated to assessment tasks.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
16	The course assessment is fair in terms of the different methods of assessment.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
17	The course assessment provides sufficient opportunities to perform to the best of my ability.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
18	Journaling is useful.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
19	Journaling is enjoyable.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
20	The Skills Pack is a useful resource.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
21	The course materials are easy to understand.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

**22. Were you always clear about what was expected of you?**

- |   |           |   |        |
|---|-----------|---|--------|
| A | Never     | C | Often  |
| B | Sometimes | D | Always |

**23. Do you feel that the vocabulary *activities* have helped you to develop your vocabulary?**

- |   |             |   |          |   |                   |
|---|-------------|---|----------|---|-------------------|
| A | Not at all  | C | A little | E | To a great extent |
| B | Very little | D | A lot    |   |                   |

**24. Do you feel that the vocabulary *tests* have helped you to develop your vocabulary?**

- |   |             |   |                   |
|---|-------------|---|-------------------|
| A | Not at all  | D | A lot             |
| B | Very little | E | To a great extent |
| C | A little    |   |                   |

**STUDENT NUMBER:**

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**SECTION 3: Answer the following questions in the spaces provided below (Questions 25 to 27).**

**25. What do you find most beneficial about the course?**

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**26. What do you enjoy least about the course?**

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**27. Other comments (optional)**

**(a) Please provide additional information that may be helpful to us about any previous questions you have already responded to in this questionnaire.**

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**(b) Please comment on anything about the ALC 108 English Literacy course and your experience of it, which you feel we need to know and which we may not have asked you about in this questionnaire.**

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Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

## UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

**Agenda for the ALC 108 Facilitator Meeting on Friday, 26 March 2010, in FGG201 at 14:15**

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Explanation for implementation of new materials at Vista**
- 3. Matters arising from journal entries:**
  - *Vocabulary quizzes*
  - *Length of articles*: it was mentioned that some are too long, which results in weaker students losing interest and falling behind. How do other facilitators feel about this?
  - A suggestion was made to include *fewer discussion questions*, as they take up too much time. Why do you feel this way, and does everyone agree that this is an issue?
  - Rudimentary knowledge of *paragraph writing and sentence structure* – some facilitators requested that additional support be included in the Skills Pack. One facilitator also mentioned that writing tasks potentially just practice mistakes.
  - *Journal entries*: some feel that this reinforces bad writing skills, and others feel that very interesting topics for further paragraph writing are generated from journaling.
  - Regarding students' *lack of participation* in class, why do you think this is? It was mentioned that classroom atmosphere and discipline determine students' interest in content.
  - A recommendation was made that students be sorted according to their *graded reader levels*. How do other facilitators feel about this?
  - One facilitator felt that the *work load* is too much for two two-hour classes. How do others feel about this?
  - One facilitator found the *materials very confusing* and criticised the de-contextualised vocabulary and pre-reading activities preceding the reading passages. Another facilitator mentioned that students got bored with the lobola topic. How do others feel about these criticisms of the materials?

## UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE



**Agenda for the ALC 108 Facilitator Meeting on Friday, 8 October 2010, in  
FGG201 at 14:15**

1. Welcome
2. Brief discussion of questionnaire analysis and follow-up focus groups on 11 and 13 October
3. Matters arising from journal entries:
  - General:
    - discipline seems to be an issue with regard to attendance, late arrivals, failure to submit work and do homework, bad behaviour and total disregard for authority, failure to bring course materials to class, cheating during tests, and students' general lack of commitment to their studies. **Is this an issue in all classes?**
    - graded reader availability still an issue – students end up reading books that are either too advanced or too easy. **How do you think this affects their reading skills?**
  - Writing:
    - Paragraphs: Problems include basic sentence construction, spelling, punctuation, formulation of topic and supporting sentences; writing activities too numerous and superficial – students should be allowed to correct their mistakes and re-submit work; content shows that students' lack insight and general knowledge. **It was suggested that we need to go back to basics, how do facilitators feel about this?**
    - Essays: Students cannot apply what they have learned from essay packs; they cannot distinguish between brainstorming and mind mapping; students cannot summarise; they seem to have forgotten everything they learnt about paragraph writing when writing essays. **If there is a focus on the more basic skills in terms of paragraph writing in the first semester, do you think this will filter through to the essay writing in the second semester?**
    - Reading reactions: Students cannot distinguish between written and spoken language; reading reactions generally better than in essays. **Do you think**

**that the dialogue format allows for better writing because it represents spoken language?**

- Essay packs and new rubric: Some content in the essay pack is irrelevant to our students; new rubric is unsatisfactory – takes longer to mark students' work. **How do other facilitators feel about the relevance of the essay pack and the functionality of the new rubric?**
- Course materials: It was mentioned that the course materials should contain a wider variety of topics and articles to choose from, as the various Parts are too long and students get bored. The topics of Values-based Living and Nature Conservation elicited poor student response, but it was suggested that the Part on Values is desperately needed by students, as they are seriously lacking in this area; Xenophobia was too advanced; Dictionary work is very important for this calibre of student; and the numbering of course materials is confusing and inappropriate. **The open-ended questionnaire responses indicated that students want topics that are relevant to them, but do you think students need to be exposed to the types of topics in the course materials, even though not all are as interesting?**
- Journaling: Students seem to consider journaling a waste of time since they are not awarded marks for this. What do you think?
- Classrooms: It appears that some facilitators feel the classroom layout is not conducive to language learning. What is the general feeling about this?
- **NBTs (National Benchmark Tests)**: These have been scheduled for **19 and 20 October**. The students have to be at the **Arena** on South campus at **2:00**. They will write the 3-hour exam from 2:30 to 5:30, so there will be no class on Tuesday and Wednesday.
- **A word of thanks**



## Summary

The academic performance of students entering higher education in South Africa has been high on the agenda of universities, organisations working in this sector, the Department of Education, and the media. The reason for this is that many students do not meet the admission requirements for higher education institutions. The low level of academic language proficiency of first-year students in particular is evidenced by entry-level proficiency testing. In response to this problem, new English literacy materials were generated at the University of the Free State to target such students and provide a potential access route to higher education institutions.

The investigation of the efficacy of the *Skills for a Changing World* English literacy course employed a two-part study. The first, a pilot study, encompassed a non-equivalent quasi-experimental research approach which focussed on the performance of a non-equivalent control and experimental group in two different English literacy programmes. The results showed that the new English literacy course neither significantly improved the reading scores nor the academic performance of the students. Further qualitative research was required to investigate issues such as student motivation, students' perceptions of learning, and facilitators' perceptions of teaching. These are addressed in the current Master's study, which adopts a mixed-method approach, where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected simultaneously in the form of pre- and post-test scores, facilitator journal entries, student focus groups, transcriptions of facilitator meetings, and a student questionnaire. The research methodology encompassed an ethnographic study, which involved working with students and facilitators who had been exposed to the *Skills for a Changing World* English literacy materials for one academic year. The goal of the Master's study is to determine whether the course changed students' performance on the National Benchmark Tests (NBT); what students' perceptions were of their learning on the course; how facilitators experienced teaching the course materials; and whether students enjoyed the course content. The results unfortunately showed a drop in student performance on the NBT post-test, which could possibly be explained by lack of motivation to perform in a test that does not count for marks. Furthermore, the qualitative data seemed to indicate that some students failed to see the value of the course, and that some of the materials were irrelevant and uninteresting. It is

postulated that this could have impacted on student motivation, and thus their performance on the course. The lack of facilitator training in English Second Language (ESL) composition also became apparent in the assessment of students' work. Content-based instruction (CBI) is discussed as a potential solution to these issues, with a particular focus on formative assessment as an integral part thereof.

## Opsomming

Die akademiese prestasie van studente wat die Suid-Afrikaanse hoër-onderwyssektor betree is reeds geruime tyd hoog op die agenda van universiteite, organisasies wat in die sektor werksaam is, die Onderwysdepartement en die media. Die rede hiervoor is dat vele studente nie aan die toelatingsvereistes van hoër-onderwysinstellings voldoen nie. Die lae vlak van Engelse akademiese taalvaardigheid by eerstejaarstudente in besonder word bewys deur intreevlakvaardigheidstoetsing. Uit reaksie op hierdie probleem is nuwe Engelse-geletterdheidsmateriaal aan die Universiteit van die Vrystaat ontwikkel te einde sulke studente te teiken en 'n moontlike toegangsroete tot hoër-onderwysinstellings vir hulle te ontsluit.

Ten einde die doeltreffendheid van die *Skills for a Changing World* - Engelse Geletterdheidskursus te ondersoek, is 'n tweeledige studie gedoen. Die eerste, 'n loodsstudie, het 'n nie-ekwivalente quasi-eksperimentele navorsingsbenadering gevolg wat gefokus het op die prestasie van twee nie-ekwivalente groepe, 'n kontrolegroep en 'n eksperimentgroep, in twee verskillende Engelse-geletterdheidsprogramme. Die resultate het getoon dat die nuwe Engelse-geletterdheidskursus nóg die studente se leestellings nóg hul akademiese prestasie noemenswaardig help verbeter het. Verdere kwalitatiewe navorsing is benodig ten einde kwessies soos studente se motivering en persepsies van leer, sowel as fasiliteerders se persepsies van onderrig te ondersoek. Dié kwessies word in hierdie Meesterstudie aangespreek. Hierdie studie verteenwoordig 'n gemengde-metode benadering, waartydens beide kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe data gelyktydig versamel is in die vorm van pre- en posttoetsuitslae, fasiliteerders se dagboekinskrywings, studentefokusgroepe, transkripsies van fasiliteerdervergaderings en 'n studentevraelys. Die navorsingsmetodologie het die vorm van 'n etnografiese studie aangeneem en was gemoeid met studente en fasiliteerders wat vir een akademiese jaar lank aan die *Skills*

*for a Changing World* geletterdheidsmateriaal blootgestel is. Die doel van die Meesterstudie was om vas te stel of die kursus studente se prestasie op die *National benchmark Tests* (NBT) verander het al dan nie; wat studente se persepsies was in terme van dit wat hulle in die kursus geleer het; hoe fasiliteerders hul aanbieding van die kursus ervaar het; en of die studente die kursusinhoud geniet het, al dan nie. Ongelukkig het die resultate getoon dat die studente se NBT-prestasie in 'n posttoetsing gedaal het, wat moontlik verduidelik kan word aan die hand van 'n gebrek aan motivering om goed te doen in 'n toets wat nie vir punte tel nie. Daarby het die kwalitatiewe data klaarblyklik getoon dat sommige studente nie die waarde van die kursus kon insien nie en dat van die kursusinhoud irrelevant en oninteressant was. Hierdie sieninge kon moontlik 'n impak gemaak het op studentemotivering en gevolglik hul prestasie op die kursus. Die gebrek aan opleiding van fasiliteerders in *English second Language* (ESL) –komposisie het ook duidelik geword aan die hand van die assessering van studente se werk. *Content-based Instruction* (CBI) word as 'n moontlike oplossing vir hierdie kwessies bespreek, met 'n besondere fokus op formatiewe assessering as 'n integrale deel daarvan.

## **Key terms**

Academic literacy

First-year literacy course

Second language learning

Tertiary language development