

**Pedagogic Practices in an Academic Writing Module for
Undergraduate Education Students: a Phenomenological Case
Study**

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(By full thesis)

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing has been described both internationally and nationally as a major challenge the higher institution entrant students are faced with. In the South African context, many studies have indicated that the Black South African students who constitute the larger part of the student population in the (Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who are affected the most; the reason being that they are second language users of English, the language of instruction. However, recent studies have revealed that academic writing problem is not only limited to the L2 users, but that the L1 users also have problem writing academically. Scholars the world over have found that students' inability to write academically has been the major contributor to their underperformances at the HEIs. Thus, academic writing, arguably, goes beyond a mere acquisition of writing skills, but the acquisition of academic discourse. The Academic Literacy for Undergraduate Students (ALUGS) module, formerly referred to as Academic Literacy in English (ALE), was introduced at the university under study to cater for this writing challenge. Surprisingly, students have been experiencing a high rate of failure even within the module itself- good intentions going wobbly! It is against this background that this study was conducted to explore the effectiveness of the pedagogy at use in the teaching of the ALUGS module. Hence, the purpose of the study was to explore how writing was being taught within the ALUGS module; why was it taught the way it was taught, and; what impact does the way writing was taught have on students' writing practices within the module.

The study was located within an interpretive paradigm, and employed a qualitative approach in the analysis of the research data. Semi-structured interviews, observations and documentary evidences were the research instruments used in generating the research data. Theoretically, drawing from the social theories of learning, this study was framed by the New Literacy Studies (NLS), dwelling largely on Gee's discourse theory and Street's autonomous and ideological models of literacy. Findings from the study revealed that the approach being used focus more on the teaching of writing skills rather than the acquisition of academic discourses. It was also found that there was no training for tutors before they were engaged in the teaching of the module, and as a result, they ended up teaching different things in their tutorials. Findings further revealed that what students learned in the ALUGS module have little or no relevance to what they were taught in their various disciplines. Consequently, it was found that both students and lecturers are looking forward to having an academic writing module designed to be discipline-specific rather than a generic one. Thus, it was recommended that the academic writing module should be housed within each discipline to cater for the disciplinary writing needs of the students, and that the curriculum and the course materials should be redesigned.

DECLARATION

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the works contained in this study is my original work and has not been previously submitted to any other institution for research, assessment or any other purpose. Moreover, all sources used in this study have been acknowledged and cited in the reference pages.

Signature of researcher:

Date:

Supervisor:

Date:

Co-supervisor: 

Date: 11 DECEMBER 2014

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



26 June 2014

Mr Peter Dluwason Merel (212558045)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0232/0146
Project title: On examining an academic writing module for undergraduate education students: A phenomenological case study

Dear Mr Merel,

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application dated 18 March 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the aforementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr. Shreenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

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Chapter One

Background and context of the study

Because if you are writing an essay even though you write wrongly, they understand that you are too young, but in the university, I can't explain it; you can't just write anything. You need to think first before you write. But in high school most of the things you write, they don't penalize me. But here, they penalize me.

Introduction

The inability to manipulate academic language has been described both internationally and nationally as the major challenge of the entrant students in the Higher Education Institutions (Fraser and Killen, 2005; McKenna, 2010), and this has been linked to the recent increase in the enrollment number of students in the HEIs. This increase in the enrollment numbers of students in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of learning is a world-wide phenomenon, and the South African context is not an exception. According to Ramaley, Leskes and associates (2002), a university degree is nothing more than what a high school diploma was hundred years ago. In the South African context, the post-apartheid massification of higher education is nothing but "a deliberate attempt to broaden participation in higher education as one means of reducing the

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Gratitude is when memory is stored in the heart and not in the mind.

~ Lionel Hampton.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AL	Academic Literacy
ALE	Academic Literacy in English
ALUGS	Academic Literacy for Under-Graduate Students
B.Ed	Bachelor of Education
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
DOE	Department of Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
UKZN	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

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Chapter One

Background and context of the study

“Because if you are writing an essay even though you write wrongly, they understand that you are too young, but in the university, I can’t explain it; you can’t just write anything. You need to think first before you write. But in high school most of the things you write, they don’t penalize me. But here, they penalize me” (Intvs / Stu. 3).

1.0 Introduction

The inability to manipulate academic language has been described both internationally and nationally as one of the major challenges facing entrant students in the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) (Fraser and Killen, 2005; McKenna, 2010), and this has been linked to the recent increase in the enrollment number of students in the HEIs. According to Ramaley, Leskes and associates (2002), a university degree is nothing more than what a high school diploma was hundred years ago. This increase in the enrollment numbers of students in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of learning is a world-wide phenomenon, and the South African context is not an exception. In the South African context, the post-apartheid massification of higher education is nothing but “a deliberate attempt to broaden participation in higher education as one means of reducing the highly stratified race and class structure of the country” (Fraser & Killen 2005,p. 26). It is this increase in the student population in recent years that has been described as being more diverse culturally, linguistically, and socially (Theresa, 2001) and this is not without implication.

The implication of the foregoing is that the present academic writing challenges among the entrant students in the HEIs of learning is patently a result of such massification, where university access is granted to students with extreme differences in academic capacities, in addition to the social, economic and cultural differences it aims to eradicate. Consequently, this has undoubtedly contributed to the proliferation in the number of students „at-risk“ (King, 2004), as well as the difficulties most students experience with academic performance. However, students’ poor performances in HEIs have always been appended to their under-preparedness for

the academic challenges. In line with this, Fraser and Killen (2005) report that many high school graduates struggle to enter gain access to tertiary education due to low literacy levels at the time that the universities emphasize a rigorous assessment and standardized curriculum. This therefore indicates that tertiary literacy is different from high school learning. Borrowing from the theory of Gee (1996), the latter is described as primary discourse while the former is the students' secondary discourse. Bourdieu (1995) describes this secondary discourse (academic discourse) to be no one's mother tongue. Understood in this way, the acquisition of secondary discourse seems problematic at HE level, particularly for students whose mother tongue is different from the language in which academic discourse is being taught. Thus, these students continue to experience frustration and academic failure. In an attempt to assuage this present dilemma in the system, South African universities, including the university under study, have embarked on introducing diverse interventions, among which are modules intended to address challenges that hinder epistemological access (Mgqwashu, 2011).

In most South African universities, academic literacy modules were introduced to address students' academic challenges. However, the focus of such modules differs from one institution to another. Some institutions employ it to address students' language difficulties, while others use it to address the students' challenges with epistemological access (academic discourse), thus rendering the nature as well as the teaching of academic literacy modules a contested field in academia. . In the context of this study, the module under consideration is known as the "Academic Literacy for Undergraduate Students" (ALUGS, 2014 edition). Findings from this study revealed that the module was focused on students' language challenges. The reason was that the majority of the entrant students, particularly those from the rural areas, are second language speakers of English the language of instruction at the institution under study. McKenna (2010) argues that the challenges that university entrant students have manifest in two ways; difficulty with the language of instruction and difficulty with academic discourse. Cast in this way, academic literacy challenges were argued in this study to go beyond language acquisition, involving the acquisition of academic discourse itself.

1.1 Rationale and context of the study

The teaching of academic literacy, both internationally and within the South African context, has been a contested phenomenon. In the South African context, academic literacy, particular

writing, has been taught as independent, skills-oriented and generic modules usually coordinated and taught by the language specialists (sometimes described in this study as Academic Literacy practitioners). As a result, the focus of the module, along with other factors, has been language-oriented, embracing the teaching of academic language skills, grammar, essay structure, sentence construction and other superficial features of language. Arguably, institutions where this approach to the teaching of academic writing is adopted (as it is the case with the university under study) believe that students' poor performances are a result of their lack of language proficiency (Mckenna, 2004a; Collett, 2002). Hence, language skills are being taught in a bid to curb such challenges. As a tutor of this module, I realized that the acquisition of these skills seemed challenging to students, particularly those who have been labeled under-prepared or deficient (students from rural areas in particular). It was in this context of learning difficulties that this study evolved.

The present study emerged from the findings of my B.Ed Honours semi-empirical research, where it was found that the ALUGS module was viewed negatively by second language students of English at the university under study. The findings revealed that the fear of failure instigated by the difficulty of the module had already created a sense of negativity among the students even before registering for the module. Most students learned this information about the module from those who had failed the module in the past and consequently these new students entered into the ALUGS class with the perception that the module was introduced to fail students, especially those from the rural areas (see chapter 4). Consequently, the module has recorded a high number of student failures over the years. What was confusing at the time of the semi-empirical study was that the module was introduced to minimize the students' academic challenges by providing them with the necessary support needed for academic success. However, the converse was the case as students continued to fear failure even within this module. Borrowing the words of Jansen (2011) it was a case of good intentions going bad.

Another finding that emerged from that study was the example of the entrant student who was pleased to have passed the module with outstanding marks, but at the same time revealed that although he had passed the module, he was unable to write academically. Thus, the first finding about the majority of the students failing in the module, coupled with this instance of success

without the ability to prove it, compelled me to ask some questions about how the module was being taught. It was against this rationale that this study emerged.

1.2 The objectives of the study

This study aimed to explore how students are taught academic writing within the ALUGS module. The main concern was to investigate the pedagogy used in teaching the module as well as the rationale behind the choice of such pedagogy. Moreover, it also sought to examine the impact of the choice of pedagogy on students' writing practices within the ALUGS module. In essence, the purpose of the study was to explore how writing was being taught in the module, why it was taught in that way including the influence of such teaching practices on students' writing.

Questions to be answered in the research

The research questions that frame this study are the following.

1. How is writing taught within the Academic Literacy for the Undergraduate Students' (ALUGS) module?
2. Why is writing taught the way it is being taught within the ALUGS module?
3. What impact does the way writing is taught have on students' writing practices within the ALUGS module?

1.3 Significance of the study

It is hoped that this research will enable the practitioners within the ALUGS module at the university under study to improve on their teaching practices. The findings of this study have revealed that the way in which writing is being taught within the module has not been entirely beneficial to students, and suggestions on how to improve the module to be of more benefit to students were discussed. It is hoped that these findings will contribute to urge practitioners to revisit the curriculum as well as the pedagogy at play within the ALUGS teaching environment in order to bring about desirable teaching and learning outcomes. In this way, it is hoped that the ALUGS module will become a worthwhile module as was initially intended.

1.4. The structure of the thesis

The first chapter has attempted to provide the background to and the context within which the study is located. This chapter has also discussed the rationale for as well as the objectives and purpose of the study. Moreover, the three critical questions to be answered in the study, which form the basis for the analysis of data in chapters 4, have also been presented in this chapter.

Chapter two emphasizes on the debate about the nature and practice of the term academic literacy, particularly within the HEIs. Drawing from the works of scholars such as Lea and Street (2006), Lillis (2003), Gee (1996), Jacobs (2005), among others, the three perspectives in which academic literacy is being perceived are discussed in this chapter. These perspectives, also known as academic literacy models are; the study skills model, the academic socialization model, and the academic „literacies“ model. The chapter further elaborates on how scholars and institutions of learning have conceptualized academic literacy according to the privileged model(s). Moreover, the chapter introduces the academic literacies model as the privileged model within the context of this study. Furthermore, the chapter narrows the term academic literacy to academic writing, being the focus of the module under consideration. Thus, issues of first year South African students“ academic writing challenges are discussed in the chapter. Drawing from this, it is argued that students“ academic writing challenges in the South African context differ both in types and in kind. Some students“ difficulties manifest in their limited knowledge of the language of instruction, while others are faced with the challenge of mastering academic discourse. In addition, the chapter further elaborates on the concept of academic language proficiency in developing students“ academic literacy practices. Furthermore, issues with student writing and AL practitioners“ feedback comments are discussed in this chapter.

Moreover, this chapter continues to discuss the theories that frame this study. Drawing on the social theories of learning, this study is framed by the New Literacy Studies (NLS). The NLS has been argued to have emerged as a response to the dissatisfaction in the traditional teaching and learning of academic literacy in the HEIs (Bharuthram, 2006). Thus, the NLS conceptualizes academic writing as a social practice as opposed to the traditional views. It is against this ideological perspective that the framing draws on the works of theorists such as Street (1999), Gee (1990, 1993, 2001a, 2003), and Barton and Hamilton (2000), among others. Consequently, Street“s „autonomous“, and „ideological“ models of literacy, and Gee“s (1990) „d/Discourse“, and

„apprenticeship/enculturation“ theories are the four constructs that inform the way in which academic writing is framed and understood within the context of this study. Moreover, it is discussed in the chapter that the autonomous model ignores and underestimates the cultural and social realities within which literacy is embedded, thus focusing on the acquisition of skills (Street, 2003). From this perspective, writing is perceived to be detached from, and neutral towards the cultural and ideological realities that underpin it. Instead, it is taught as a set of mental skills which Street (2003) labels as the „technology of the mind“. Inherent in Street’s description of the autonomous model, the ability to write academically is regarded as technology of the mind– the view that reading and writing are what people do in their heads.

However, in this chapter, the study disagrees with the autonomous model in that it discountenances the social realities in which literacy is embedded. Consequently, it embraces the ideological model where literacy is perceived to be cultural, social and contextual. Accordingly, the chapter further elaborates on the ideological stance of academic literacy by employing Gee’s discourse and apprenticeship constructs. Using these constructs, the chapter further elaborates that academic writing can only be acquired when it is taught by an insider-member of the discourse community. Furthermore, the chapter also adds that academic writing programmes cannot be worthwhile when taught as a standalone and discipline-detached programmes.

Chapter three discusses the research design, methodology, research paradigm, sampling, and research instruments used in the study. The study employs the phenomenological case study for a research design. The case under consideration in this study are the entrant students who were registered for the ALUGS module in semester two of 2014, while the phenomenon being investigated is the pedagogy at play in the teaching of the ALUGS module. Moreover, the study is located within the qualitative research method the reason being that it will provide the researcher with the opportunity to have direct contact and interaction with the research participants, thus, allowing for the generation of rich and first hand data. In addition, the study locates itself within the interpretive paradigm as it is concerned with the world of lived experiences. This paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals (Cohen and Manion and Morrison, 2007). Hence, the interpretive paradigm frames this study in that it seeks to understand, describe, and interpret the „emic lived“ experiences of the university entrant students who are registered for the Academic Literacy for

Undergraduate Students module. The purposive sampling technique was used for the purpose of gathering in-depth data from students' own perceptions. The researcher intentionally selected participants with rich information about the phenomenon under study (Cohen and Manion and Morrison, 2007). Thus, two lecturers, two tutors and three students were used as study participants. This small sample was used with the intention to yield rich, in-depth and first hand data. Accordingly, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and documentary evidences were the research instruments employed to generate data for analysis. Consequently, these three instruments, for the purpose of triangulating research instruments, were used to enhance the reliability and trustworthiness of the research.

Chapter 4 presents and interprets the data generated in the study. As previously discussed, the data were generated from the research instruments above and were analysed according to the three critical questions discussed above. Cast in this way, chapter 4 presents data that concern with the three research questions accordingly.

Furthermore, chapter five presents the research findings, implications and conclusions from the study. Among these findings was the need for transformational agenda where academic writing can be housed in each discipline of study as well as the need to review the curriculum and the course materials as correlative measures for the imbalances therein. It was recommended that future studies should address the specificity of the pedagogy that can be used in the effective teaching of the module in the nearest future as well as the personnel to be involved in the transformational agenda (from standalone to discipline specific module).

1.5 Limitations to the study

The time constraint was one of the limitations of this study. The fact that the study was not a real representation of all the institutions of higher learning in South Africa to some extent limited this study. Thus, the study cannot be said to have included all the cases that concern the teaching of academic writing in all these institutions. Moreover, it is also hoped that during the interviews there may have been fallacious responses where participants may have tried to entertain the interviewer and also that the sample selected may not have been a true representation of all the registered students that make up the participants of the study. Thus, some with rich

information might have been left out. Apart from this, the selected sample may not have fully represented the wider population of the students whose writing practices may or may not have improved during the course of the module, thus, omitting some students with rich information. Not only these, the fact that researcher was also involved in the teaching of the module has also contributed to the limitations of the study (see chapter 5).

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of this study. It was argued that academic literacy means different things to different people and that the way in which it is being taught differs from one institution to the other. Furthermore, the theories that framed the study, drawn from the New Literacies Studies where literacy is not conceived as a set of technical skills, but a social, interactional, and contextual phenomenon, was presented. Finally, issues about the research design, ethics, and limitations of the study were also discussed. The next chapter will contain a discussion on the literature reviewed during the course of this study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

“I was taught (while in high school) that in essay you must write introduction, body and conclusion. But when I was writing the body I often missed the information, but ALE let me know that in the body of the essay, paragraph must have their own information and another paragraph must begin with another thing which were the things I did not know before; I learnt it in ALE, and it helped me” (Intvs/ Stu. 3).

2.0. Introduction

Globally, students’ writing practices, especially for English Second Language (ESL) English Additional Language (EAL) students, have been described as problematic (Lillis and Scott, 2007; Lea, 2004; Munro, 2003). The literacy practices that these students bring into the HEIs have been described to be different and inferior to those which are valued in the HEIs, and consequently, the academic staff complain that students cannot write properly and appropriately (Lea and Street, 1998). Thus, students’ poor academic writing practices, as well as their literacy difficulties constitute the major challenge that HEIs the world over contend with. As a result, the HEIs across the globe (including South Africa) have designed different strategies to help students acquire academic literacy. Unfortunately, the teaching of academic literacy in these institutions has not been without challenges, especially considering that the term ‘academic literacy’ has different connotations in different contexts. Thus, this chapter discusses the three different perspectives through which the term ‘academic literacy’ is being conceptualized. Academic literacy as a social practice, the students’ academic writing challenges as well as the impact of feedback on students’ writing development will also be discussed in this chapter.

Academic literacy is a vague term that is constantly under debate and its definition under constant re-evaluation. However, it is arguably the kind of literacy that determines the students’ academic success at the institutions of higher learning; it is crucial to students’ academic performances and success in the HEIs (Bengesai, 2010; Bharuthram, 2006; Greene, 2008). As indicated earlier, the term ‘academic literacy’ means different things to different people. But since its acquisition plays a vital role in students’ academic performance in the HEIs, the first

section of this review of literature explores some definitions of academic literacy. Then it will go further to explore the three different but continuum perspectives in which institutions and individuals have continued to perceive academic literacy. These perspectives are the study skills, academic socialization, and academic „literacies“ perspectives (Lee and Street, 2006).

2.1 The Study Skills Perspective of Academic Literacy

The study skills, also known as the traditional skills perspective emanates from a deficit or remedial perspective (Green, Hammer and Stephens, 2005; Huijser, Kimmins and Galligan, 2008) where students are viewed to be relatively passive and knowledge is perceived to be transparent and stable. In this perspective (the study skills approach), all teaching activities are tailored towards the commonly held „features and norms“, with skills taught in generic workshop or skills classes. This approach views writing as a set of technical skills and therefore decontextualizes writing from disciplinary discourse, thereby promoting surface learning and a generic kind of literacy. Furthermore, the approach focuses on the mechanical aspect of language as a priority in developing student writing. Within this framework, it is assumed that mastering the correct rules of grammar and syntax as well as the knowledge of punctuation and spelling brings about competence in students“ academic writing (Lee and Street, 2006). The implication of the foregoing is that the study skill approach to the teaching of academic literacy is a technical skill believed to be residual in the human brain and any student that fails to effectively manipulate them in the required manner is termed „deficit“. Although the term „deficit“ is no longer used to describe students who are deficient in mastering these skills at institutions of higher learning, nonetheless, they are not without a new appellation. Literature both internationally and nationally refer to such students as „under-prepared students“ (Hirst, 2004; Moutlana, 2007; Niven, 2005).

Apart from the above, institutions adopting this approach in the teaching of academic literacy, and more importantly, writing, are capable of decontextualizing it from disciplinary discourse; thereby making it a generic program centered on the acquisition of technical skills that can be transferred from one context to another when they have been fully mastered. This kind of decontextualized writing modules cannot boast of any discipline or discourse to call their own, but can only create “pseudo-discourses of their own” (Gee, 1990, in Jacobs, 2005, p. 475). In addition to this, such a

deficit approach tends to focus on the „how“ rather than the „why“ of writing, thereby resulting in rote-learning. With reference to plagiarism for instance, students often do not know why identifying sources is crucial in academic writing. Most students believe that the purpose of referencing is to avoid plagiarism (Jacobs, 2005). Hence it appears that students are only taught how to reference, but the why of referencing is silent.

Following on from the foregoing, scholars within the study skills framework of academic literacy define academic literacy as a set of generic skills that are essential for students“ success in the HEIs. For example, Yeld (2003) defines academic literacy as the students“ ability to paraphrase, to represent information visually, to summarize, to describe, to write expository prose (e.g. argument, comparison and contrast), to develop and signal an own voice, to acknowledge sources, and to form basic numerical manipulations. Furthermore, Maloney (2003) and College (2006) add that academic literacy should primarily serve the „at risk“ students who enter university with insufficient academic skills and in need of remediation for successful academic performances. From the latter description of the purpose of academic literacy in the HEIs, it is noteworthy that both Maloney and College view the academic literacy module as a remedial course, meant to equip the „under-prepared“ student with the necessary technical and grammatical skills to make up for their „deficiencies“. Unsurprisingly, this view has been criticized for its limited focus on surface language features (Bourdieu, 1994) rather than the content and context (Mgqwashu, 2009; Lea and Street, 2006; Ivanic and Lea, 2006; Zhu, 2004).

Criticisms have been leveled against this model for overemphasis on the surface grammatical structure of language. According to Lea and Street (2006) the skills model views literacy primarily as an individual and cognitive skill with the focus on the surface features of the written language discountenancing the context and other factors that can contribute to individual student writing. Arguably, it is clear that apart from the external features of the text, there are other determining factors that can be influential to student writing development at the HEIs. Going beyond the over- emphasis on the linguistic features of the text, another shortcoming of the study skills model is its perception that those „technical skills“ can be easily and quickly acquired. A number of institutions, including the university under study, set the timeframe for the acquisition of these skills within a single semester, but Carhill, Suarez-Orosco, &Puez (2008, p. 1156) contend that those “skills are a complex set of practices that take years to develop”.

However, the place of the linguistic features of text such as grammar rules, punctuation, and spelling cannot be compromised or underestimated in student writing development in HEIs. Consequently, the academic socialization model emerges to build on the weaknesses of the former.

2.2.2 The Academic Socialization Perspective of Academic Literacy

The academic socialization model, also known as the institutional default model emanated from the social constructivist approach to education and understandings of culture (Creaton, 2009) where the acquisition of academic writing is perceived to be through implicit induction (Ganobcsik-Williams, 1996). The focus of this model is on students' acculturation into the disciplinary and subject-specific discourses and genres (Lea and Street, 2006). This model is concerned with students' daily engagement with the subject-discourse alongside with the role played by the institutional habitus. Scholars within this framework are of the opinion that students can acquire disciplinary knowledge and skills by being immersed into the culture of the higher education. Hence, emphasis is on context and culture in the academic development of students rather than on mere technical skills where literacy is „individual“. Accordingly, becoming literate in the institutions of higher learning requires "...learning to read the culture, learning to come to terms with its distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behavior" (Ballard and Clancy, 1988, p. 8).

Furthermore, Lillis (2003) affirms that the academic socialization model is of two strands; the implicit and explicit strands. According to her, the implicit strand or approach views literacy as a gradual process through which students can acquire academic writing practices via interactions with peers, tutors and texts. The implication is thus that students will develop the necessary academic writing skills unconsciously through immersion into the culture of the disciplinary discourse without any explicit teaching of these skills. However, Creaton (2009) argues that such an approach only works in situations where students' primary discourse is similar to the new discourse or where all students have a homogeneous background. She adds that the recent inclusion of the non-traditional students into the system (particularly in the South African context) has led to the inefficiencies of the implicit approach. Hence, institutions that use this approach resort to a more explicit approach in inducting students into academic practices, by employing study skills courses

and guides and the use of explicit assessment criteria in marking assessments (Creaton, 2009). Lillis (2006, p. 32) uses the type of guidance offered on writing in feedback comments on students' written work" to justify the explicit strand. However, Creaton (2009) contends that this approach results in the "Pygmalion syndrome", equipping students with the surface aspects of the disciplinary discourse knowledge, but denying them the deep conceptual understandings underpinning these concepts.

Consequently, the academic socialization model is not without some criticisms. Firstly, it presumes that norms and practices of academic writing can be explicitly taught, whereas the rules guiding such norms and practices are governed by discourses which are deeply embedded in the disciplinary culture. Hence, the rules for the production of academic discourse remain implicit (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). In relation to this, research reveals that tutors and lecturers themselves struggle to explain what they mean by terms such as "critically analyze", "critically discuss", "evaluate", words which are part of the assessment criteria and student feedbacks (Creaton, 2009).

Secondly, the academic socialization model also views academic discourse as uncontested, such as in situations where students are taught to use the third person, the passive voice and avoid the subjective languages in their writing practices. Lillis and Turner (2001) and Creaton (2009), however, contend that all these features are characteristics of a specific form of „essayist literacy“ that is socially constructed, culturally and historically situated. Arguably, adherence to these conventions will result in the reproduction of existing knowledge and power structure in HE, as well as the marginalization of students' own voices and experience (Kramer-Dahl, 1995; Creaton, 2009).

The final criticism is that issues of power, identity and inequality in academic writing are often ignored in the academic socialization approach. The academics, according to Lillis (2001), through their hegemonic power, have been described to be favouring a particular form of privileged discourse in the field of knowledge production, thereby establishing such discourse as the natural discourse of the communication of ideas within the academic environment. In relation to this, Starfield (2004) adds that the student writers are passive in their own production of individual pieces of work in that it is the tutor who sets the assessment tasks and explicitly judges what is relevant to write and how it should be written. The academic socialization model views writing in higher education as an acculturation process whereby students are socialized into academic norms

and conventions without any form of explicit teaching of such norms. The shortcomings of the model are that it tends to ignore issues of identity, power and inequality in student literacy practices in HE. As a result, recent literature has privileged an „academic literacies approach“ where writing is located within institutional contexts, practices and discourses (Creaton, 2009).

2.2.3 The ‘Academic Literacies’ Perspective of Academic Literacy

Although the academic literacies model draws on both the skills and academic socialization models, it nevertheless transcends the socialization model, in that it does not view literacy practices as residing entirely in disciplinary and subject-based communities. But it examines how literacy practices from other institutions (e.g., government, business, university, and bureaucracy) are implicated in what students need to learn and do. To begin with, the academic literacies approach, like the name suggests, discountenances the view that there is only one literacy- what you have or do not have, but propagates the multiplicities or plurality of „literacies“. Hence, it contrasts the deficit perspective, where the students“ inability to write appropriately reduces them to be „under-prepared or deficit“. This notion of multiple literacies will be discussed presently.

According to Street(2009, p. 4), the academic literacy model evolves to take “account of the nature of student writing in relation to institutional practices, power relations and identities,...to consider the complexity of meaning making which the other two models fail to provide” Thus, recent studies in the field of academic writing have been focusing on the ethnographic accounts and small scale case studies, and the purpose of such research has been on understanding the personal intricacies and cultural issues raised by students and staff in relation to students“ academic writing practices. Therefore, the model intrinsically links academic writing with personal identity, accentuating how a “student“s personal identity...may be challenged by the forms of writing required in the different disciplines” (Lea and Street, 2000, p. 35). Consequently, issues of identity and student writing in relation to class, race, and gender (Francis, 2001; Lillis, 1999), which are the effects of massification policy in the field of higher education, have become an important area of examination in recent research, particularly within the South African HE context where such traits are pervasive and historically omniscient.

Accordingly, this model views students' backgrounds as critical and core in the teaching and development of students' academic writing within HE, and also examines institutional culture in which writing takes place and how these develop or hinder student writing practices. Therefore, Lillis (1999) found that despite students' awareness of the correct styles and technicalities of academic writing, they feel marginalized in that their writing practices are not a true reflection of their personal style. Hence, these findings challenge the skills and socialization models, thereby acknowledging a more holistic model that can examine the culture and contexts in which writing takes place.

The academic literacies model, as discussed earlier, is a response to the autonomous belief that there is only one literacy- something you either have or do not have. The academic literacies model opposes the view that literacy is an entity, AND advocates for the „multiple literacies“ in that literacy is neither “homogeneous, uniform, discrete, nor stable in character, but a constantly shifting set of unstable, internally various, fluid, and heterogeneous practices- social practices”, (and also socio-historical) (Lea and Street, 2006). Hence, the line of difference between the academic socialization model and academic literacies model's strands on situated literacy is that the latter is of the opinion that literacy, although a social practice, is also historical, highlighting how students' background can contribute to the success or failure of literacy acquisition in HE. It maintains that factors such as power relations, class structure, and identity are also crucial to the acquisition of academic literacy. Furthermore, on the plurality of literacy, the academic literacies model is of the opinion that literacy means different things to different cultural groups. Different cultural groups induct their children into literacy in different ways. Thus, since university students, specifically in the South African context, are heterogeneous (Mgqwashu, 2000), and they all come into the university with different literacies (oral, reading, writing literacy backgrounds), the academic literacies model argues that none of these aspects of literacy should be scorned.

Like other approaches, the academic literacies approach also has its own shortcomings. The major challenge with this approach is that it tends to focus more on theory and research, but unable to define and institutionalize own approach in developing student writing practices (Street, 2009). Although this approach has been criticized for not developing own approaches, Lea (2004) proposes that the principles that emerge from the academic literacies' research can be applied in

different institutional contexts. Also, Lillis (2006) adds that there is need to develop an academic literacies pedagogy that emphasizes on the nature of dialogue and that in particular, the institutions should consider how alternative spaces for writing and meaning making in the academy can both be developed and validated.

The present study privileges the academic literacies approach, since it does not disregard the usefulness of other approaches, but rather, builds on their weaknesses. Thus, the academic literacies approach, being a socially situated approach to the teaching of writing is favoured in the present study. Not only this, this study employs the academic literacies approach due to its high level of relevance to the present study. In the South African situation where this study is located, issues of power, identity, race, class, and inequalities are historically pervasive and prevalent, thus, making the „academic literacies“ model more appropriate for the study.

2.3.0 Academic Literacy: a socially situated practice

Traditionally, literacy has been viewed as neutral and as a set of technical skills where emphasis is on remediation in situations where reading and writing are deficient. This perspective, as earlier discussed, views literacy as a singular entity- what someone has or does not have. However, for the purpose of locating academic literacy as a social practice, it is important that the linguistic nature of the term is carefully examined. Thus, academic literacy is defined as being complex, and this complexity is embedded in the nature of its two-worded name- „academic literacy“ (Schalkwyk, 2008). Due to this complexity, defining the term may be difficult it is then expedient that the term is deconstructed for the purpose of making meaning of its definition. To begin with, the adjective “academic” relates to “education, especially at college or university level” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2004, p.7), while the term “literacy” is referred to as “a student’s capacity to use written language to perform those functions required by the culture in ways and at a level judged to be acceptable by the reader” (Schalkwyk, 2008). In application, academic literacy is a practice among a community of people, known as academics. As follows from this definition, the term „academic literacy“ is embedded in the academic discourse community. However, Schalkwyk’s definition of literacy may be inappropriate in that it limits literacy within the framework of writing. One may then ask that is writing the only practice in the academy?

In relation to this critique, Gee (2003) defines literacy as reading and writing. However, Abu-Asba, Azman, and Mustaffa (2014) argue that literacy involves practices that include reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking skills that students need for academic success. Thus, the implication from the foregoing is that it may be unwise to limit literacy to writing practices at the expense of other components. However, in defining academic literacy as a “Discourse”-medium through which another “Discourse” is mediated, Bengesai (2012, p. 26) argues that although literacy consists of all other areas, nonetheless, the “knowledge produced in the academy is primarily cast in written language”. This therefore justifies Schalkwyk’s definition of (academic) literacy as students’ capacity to use written language in performing certain functions as required by the members of the discourse community. Nevertheless, this should not be an attempt to underestimate the place of reading, most importantly in writing development. According to Haste (2003, p. 9), “no one can write from nowhere”. Thus, if reading is the bedrock for effective and appropriate writing, it should as well be addressed as significant in the academy. Having established what academic literacy is, according to its two-term nature, this term as a social practice is discussed.

In situating literacy as a social practice, Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic argue that literacy is a set of social practices and use the following six assertions to elaborate on this view. According to them:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts;
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life;
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others;
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices;
- Literacy is historically situated; and,
- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, 2000, p. 8).

It can be inferred from the above assertion that (academic) literacy is an asocial practice rather than being a set of skills residual in humans, however, it is usually mediated through the written

language. This assertion emphatically emphasizes the role played by the written text in students' literacy development. Thus, students' engagement with the disciplinary written texts (reading) is fundamental to literacy development (Bharuthram, 2006). The assertion also includes the plurality of literacies. That is, literacy means different things to different people. What is deemed to be literacy in a particular discourse community may differ from what another community may refer to as literacy. For example, the way literacy is constructed in the field of Biology is different from how the Mathematics practitioners view as literacy. Thus, literacy is not a singular entity as emphasized in the deficit perspective. Moreover, it is also noticeable from this assertion that academic literacy is embedded in issues of identity and power-relations, where some literacies are privileged over the other. In the academic setting, for instance, the essayist-type literacy is dominant and recognized at the expense of the type of literacies students might have brought from their respective homes.

In addition, literacy practices are described to be culturally and historically situated. Thus, the term "academic literacies" relate to the diverse and multiple literacies embedded in different academic contexts such as different genres and styles associated with specific disciplines and subject matter courses. The implication is that emphasis on the plurality of literacies will immensely aid in recognizing the existence in diversity of reading and writing practices for different purposes and within different cultural values and practices (Ivanic et al., 2009; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000).). In other words, the emphasis on the plurality of literacies is also significant in that it signals a departure from the traditional singular „literacy“ that is connected with people's ability to read and write in a particular language and mostly situated within a print dominated culture (Ivanic et al., 2009).

In response to this, Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000) argue that academic literacies involves more than the observable units of literacy embedded in the written texts, but also the unobservable units-what people do with literacy. Consequently they employ two terms, "literacy practices" and "literacy events" to further illustrate this assertion. These two terms will be discussed shortly. According to Gee, academic literacy as a social practice within a community of discourse is a "Discourse" with a capital "D" whereas the observable units of literacy- the "connected stretches of language that make sense, or language in use" (2005, p. 7),

are described as the discourse with small letter “d”. He maintains that the acquisition of Discourse-academic literacy in this context will remain intricate and implausible if the observable units of literacy as well as the unobservable units are not integrated into such process. According to Gee (2005), although the mastery of disciplinary languages, knowledge about text convention and construction are a necessity in the acquisition of disciplinary discourse, however, such acquisition will remain incomplete if the unobservable aspects are ignored. Hence, academic literacy –“Discourse” entails:

A socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network' or to signal that one is playing a socially meaningful 'role' (Gee, 1990, p. 143).

From this definition above, academic literacy as a social practice goes beyond language use or competence, but rather what people do with language, as well as beliefs, attitudes, and other activities that can be used in identifying the belongingness of an individual to a particular discourse community or specific disciplines. As an “identity kit”, Gee (2005) emphasizes on the completeness of the kit without which the new member cannot be judged an acceptable member of such discipline or discourse community. Thus, it is the entirety of this identity kit that equips one with the ability to perform certain roles that makes one recognizable as a member of a particular community of practice. Then, the acquisition of Discourse (academic literacy) does not lend itself to the formal classroom practices where skills are explicitly taught and acquired, but rather it is embedded in the principles of apprenticeship where there is interaction between the trainee and the trainer (Gee, 2004). This is allusion to the assertion that academic literacy, being a social practice can be effectively acquired in a situation where there is interaction between the students and the lecturer/tutors, the kind relation which Vygotsky (1978) describes as the one between a novice and a “More Knowledgeable Other”- an expert within the discipline.

Returning to Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic’s (2000) use of “literacy practice” and “literacy events, the term “literacy practice” is employed to refer to ways in which people use written

language in their everyday lives. They are general cultural ways through which people use written language to draw upon on their daily lives. Thus, “literacy practices” is viewed by these scholars as what people do with literacy. Also, for the fact that practices involve values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships, Street (1993) maintains that they are not observable units of behavior. Barton and Hamilton (2000) add that these unobservable units of behaviour are both processes and practices determined by the individualistic and generalistic nature. Individuallistic in that they are processes that are internal to the individual. They indicate that the processes include” people’s awareness of literacy, discourses of literacy, how people talk about literacy and make sense of literacy” (p. 7). As a practice, they add that these are the social processes that connect people with one another, comprising shared cognitions that manifest in ideologies and social identities. Thus, literacy practice is believed to exist in the relationship between people within groups and communities, not as a set of properties residing in individuals. Then, academic literacy can best be acquired when there is interaction among the community members- discipline practitioners and students. This interaction is what Mqquashu (2000) refers to as one of the major principles of reflexive pedagogy.

As it follows from the above, literacy practices are cultural ways of using literacy; cultural in that they are abstract and cannot be wholly contained in observable activities and tasks (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, 2000, p. 8). Hence, they cannot be explicitly taught (Gee, 2005).

Literacy events, on the other hand, are activities where reading and writing is crucial. In such activities, there is always a written text; the text is usually central to such activities, and every talk is tailored towards the texts. According to Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000), literacy events are observable episodes that arise from literacy practices and are shaped by them. The notion of literacy events, according to these scholars, emphasizes the situated nature of literacy in that it is context embedded. Quoting Barkin’s assertion, Lemke (1995) proposes that a successful analysis of spoken language (written language inclusive) must begin with the social event of verbal interaction instead of the formal linguistic properties of texts in isolation.

Literacy events, according to these writers, are activities where reading and writing play an indispensable role and such activities are usually mediated through the written texts. Written texts, their process of production, as well as their use are integral part of literacy events. Thus, the terms practices, events and texts are three components used in establishing the social view of

literacy as “a set of social practices; these are observable in events which are mediated by written texts” (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, 2000, p. 9).

The notion, “Literacy events” is essential to the present study in that it focuses more on an observable unit of literacy, the written text, and knowledge in the academia is said to be cast in writing, and student performances are usually judged through their writing practices. However, Gee has warned that writing (language/discourse) is just one of the components of the entire “identity-kit” or “Discourse”, the way in which academic literacy is being taught then has to incorporate the unobservable units of literacy. The teaching of academic literacy then must lend itself to the principles of apprenticeship and enculturation (Gee, 2005).

Accordingly, Ballard and Clanchy (1988, in Bharuthram, 2006, p. 39) define academic literacy as “...a student’s capacity to use written language to perform those functions required by the culture in ways and at a level judged acceptable by the reader”. From this definition, it is fathomed that academic literacy provides students with the “identity kit” that enables them to perform certain linguistic functions and to also meet up with the expectations of the discourse community to which they belong; thereby being judged „acceptable by the readers“. It is understood from the concluding part of this definition that it is the „ability to perform“ those functions that are “required by the community” including language knowledge, that makes students acceptable to the discourse community. The performance of such functions may remain intricate, most especially if the students are from another culture due to the “unfamiliar code”- or medium of instruction (Mgqwashu, 2009). Academic literacy, according to these scholars, includes learning to read the culture of the university, and learning to be acculturated into its „distinctive rituals, values, norms, styles of language and behaviour“. If the discourse community (the university in this case) has its own culture embedded with its „distinctive rituals, values, norms, styles of language and behaviour“, and academic literacy is learning to read the culture of the university, becoming acculturated into such culture (cognition) is then the key to being judged worthy and acceptable by the university or disciplines.

For this reason, academic literacy should be defined as the student’s ability to become acculturated into a particular discourse community, with the intent of understanding the culture, and performing such functions that are deemed necessary in order to be recognized as acceptable

members of the particular discourse community. This process of acculturation (cognition) thus provides students with familiarity with, and knowledge of the behavior, norms, rules of engagement, conventions, and discourse practices of such community. In this regard, failures to become acculturated into such community renders the students outsiders to the rules of engagement within the culture, and are thereby judged unworthy and unacceptable members of the community. Thus, emphasis should be placed on the acculturation process in the acquisition of academic literacy.

Hence, academic literacy is described as belonging to a particular discourse community, with the intent of acquiring the necessary skills that make one fit into its culture through practical engagement with its norms and conventions. Consequently, Johns (1997, p. 47) defines academic literacy as something that “encompasses ways of knowing particular content and refers to strategies for understanding, discussing, organizing, and producing texts...” It is therefore imperative to emphasize the important role of epistemology or epistemic cognition in the acquisition and definition of academic literacy than a mere supply of general guidelines on writing techniques. The latter, Lea and Street (1994) argue, makes students experience difficulties as they end up struggling with the application within the level of writing a particular text in a “specific disciplinary context”. These scholars further contend that a situation where there is a wide gap between students’ and tutor’s / lecturers’ perceptions of writing leads to the exclusion and disadvantage of students who did not come into the university with the “essayist literacy” from the high schools. Also, the homogeneous view that all students ought to have entered the HEIs with the essayist type literacy is challenged by Mgqwashu (2009), who proposes an alternative approach (reflexive pedagogy) that projects students as being heterogeneous, both historically and in academic capacities, emphasizing diversity in the literacies that these students have acquired in their high schools.

Therefore, if academic literacy is to bridge the literacy gaps brought into the university (HE), then epistemological access must be a major concern among the academic discourse practitioners. In addition to this, John suggests that in order for students to write texts that meet the standard and expectations of their disciplines, they must be trained as researchers who are empowered with the knowledge and skills that are crucial to belonging to their particular

academic community. Writing on the importance of empowerment in the successful acquisition of academic literacy, Bartholomae (1985, in GC 2006) adds that these new students have:

to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community.” Our students, he says, “have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse . . . they have to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language (p. 530).

From Bartholomae’s view, it is obvious that academic language, selecting, reporting, concluding, and arguments which are essential components of academic literacy are part of the process of empowerment. More so, mimicking the language of the university in meeting up with its standards and expectations places emphasis on the role of socialization in the students’ acquisition of academic literacy skills.

Thus, these skills cannot be autonomously acquired without familiarity with its discourse community. Bartholomae expatiates on the underlining principles in the acquisition of the new culture by comparing it with the case of a traveler who has newly arrived in a strange country with an unknown language and unfamiliar behaviours. He maintains that for a successful interaction to take place, the traveler must learn the language and the acceptable behavioural practices of that community. He therefore adds that when language is learned, then the proper pattern of behaviour is also learned, resulting in success. However, he maintains that failure to adjust is equivalent to failure to succeed.

Thus, the acquisition of the language of the institution (the discourse community’s code/ “discourse”) is a precursor to the new students’ academic success in the higher institutions of learning. Therefore, familiarity with the discourse community is crucial and imperative for effective teaching and learning to take place, most especially in the higher institutions of learning. To buttress on the subject of familiarity, Mgqwashu (2000, p. 65) adds that the present “divorce between the language of the family and the language of learning (at the university) only serves to reinforce students’ feelings that university education belongs to another world, and that what lecturers have to say...is spoken in a language which makes it unreal and unfamiliar”. He

further argues that the university community has a homogeneous assumption that these students ought to have come into the university with adequate level of academic skills, and are thus expected to manipulate the language academically. This, Mgqwashu (2000) contends will be a mere paper fantasy if the door of epistemological access remains shut.

The opening of the epistemological access door to students, Mgqwashu (2000) argues, is directly allied to the “medium and mode of instruction” at the university. Both the medium and mode of instruction in the higher education institutions should therefore lend themselves to the principles of reflexive pedagogy; thereby allowing students’ familiarization with the norms, culture, language, and ritual practices of the institutions’ disciplinary discourses. This familiarization, according to Mgqwashu (2000) will undoubtedly accelerate students’ academic success. To further accentuate this point, Bizzell (1982, in GC, 2006) identifies students’ “unfamiliarity with the academic discourse community, combined, perhaps, with such limited experience outside their native discourse communities that they are unaware that there is such a thing as a discourse community with conventions to be mastered” (p. 230). Thus, this serves as a reminder that before students can effectively be apprenticed into their specific disciplinary discourse community, familiarity with the social practices within such communities are therefore essential.

Bizzell goes further that “what is underdeveloped is their knowledge both of the ways experience is constituted and interpreted in the academic discourse community and of the fact that all discourse communities constitute and interpret experience” differently. (p. 230). Thus, academic literacy programmes should be designed in such a way that it will inform students of the plurality of “literacies” and that literacy is defined differently by each discipline. Academic literacy should be discipline-embedded and not generic. For instance, academic literacy can be in the form of a laboratory report for those in Biological sciences, while poetic analysis is what counts as academic literacy for the Literature students. Thus, the teaching of writing in the academic literacy programme should be discipline-oriented rather than serving a generic purpose of essayist literacy.

Writing, an essential element in academic literacy, is a key assessment tool that determines students’ success or failure in any module (across disciplines) according to the ways in which they respond to, engage in any writing task. If writing plays such a crucial role in students’ academic literacy development, it is thus expedient that much attention is given to: (i) how it is

taught, (ii) why it is being taught this way, and (iii) what impact does the way it is taught have on students' academic writing practices in the module.

2.4 What then is Academic Writing?

The act of writing, most especially in a tertiary context, has gone beyond routine practices or mere engagement. . Writing at this level of education can be described as any piece of work written by a scholar for another scholar in a sophisticated manner, i.e., a piece of any sophisticated work scripted by an academic for another academic (ALUGS, 2014); hence, the term „academic writing“. The implication of the foregoing is that academic writing has inherent standard contents, guided by rules at various levels of application and usage. Thus, academic writing is defined as the ability to write effectively and appropriately in terms dictated by a specific discipline (Mgqwashu, 2002) and not just correctly (Pratt-Johnson, 2008).

For this reason, it is expedient that university students possess adequate language tools such as grammar and vocabulary to be able to produce academic texts and organize coherent written academic discourse (Hinkel, 2002). In Russell's view, (In Baker *et al.*, 1996, p.118), academic writing is not an isolated phenomenon, but an integration of literacy practices that are being constructed by the epistemologies and practices (including the use of power) of particular disciplines and other institutional formations. It is observed from Russell's definition above that academic writing is not a ghettoization, but emanates from the normal routine writing /basic literacy, and characterized by its distinguished conventionality. In addition to this, Bourdieu, in (Bengesai, 2012), clearly points out that academic writing differs from the „common“, i.e. the „ordinary“, in that its conventions add value to specific literacy practices, particularly those related with, and concomitant to, the academy.

Deriving from the foregoing, academic writing is engrafted in „well chosen“, „elevated“, „lofty“, „dignified“, and „distinguished“ language characterized by a negative disposition to „common“, „everyday“, „colloquial“, and „familiar“ language (1991, pp. 60-61). According to Cummins(2001), academic language differs from basic communicative skills in that it is cognitively demanding and context-reduced since understanding autonomously relies on the text itself and this poses a linguistic challenge to (most especially) students who speak the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) as an additional language. However, this is not to assume that

students who speak the LoLT as a Home Language have no challenges in their academic writing practices; both present with challenges.

The extrapolation from the above is that academic writing is fathomed to be different from (and often regarded as being unconditionally superior to) the routine, ordinary, everyday language (basic interpersonal communicative skills), making it a „specialist variety of language rather than a vernacular variety of language“. In other words, it is seen as an „amalgam of practices, and that the content of what is taught cannot be separated from the variety of the language in which it is taught (Gee, 2004, p.19). This therefore emphasizes the importance of language knowledge in any academic writing practices. Accordingly, it becomes necessary that language knowledge is emphasized in our pedagogical approach to teaching writing, for a meaningful epistemological access to take place. With this knowledge of language, students are well informed about various text types, and which languages could be used in different writing contexts, as well as the purpose for which they are constructed.

Apart from language knowledge, academic writing is a much desired skill by tertiary students, however, the non-native speakers perceive it as onerous and problematic, owing to their low level of grammatical and vocabulary proficiency (Olivas and Li, 2006). In the South African context, most students, specifically those from historically disadvantaged schools, have not engaged in academic discourse in their formal writing courses at high school level, and are introduced to academic writing at university(Hintel, 2004), which has led to their inability to manipulate (the written) language academically. Researchers such as Hintel (2004), Myles (2002) and Giridharan, (2012) have argued that poor academic writing skills, in spite of the level of L1 students“ language grammatical proficiency and productive vocabulary knowledge, is a shared factor among both the L1 and L2 university students, and this is apparent in their writing practices. This alludes to Bourdieu“s (1990) argument that academic discourse (language) is no one“s (including L1 and L2 students) mother tongue. Writing within the academic context demands students“ ability to advance their ideas within the framework of the domain or discipline knowledge, as well as engaging the readers in academic discourse (Giridharan, 2012).

Therefore, it is essential to note that academic writing is discipline-embedded, as well as cognitively demanding. However, research has shown that academic success in the higher education level is directly dependent on effective academic writing (Kelley, 2008), and the latter

(academic writing) has been described as the language of scholarship and a proof of eligibility of higher education. Giridharan further argues that the quality of a student's written work is a key factor in determining his or her scholarship and acceptance within the academy. Thus, when an individual fails to demonstrate this qualitative skill of producing an acceptable written work, he /she is judged to be under-prepared and therefore a non-member of the academic community.

To further emphasize this subject, Bacha (2002) and Zhu (2004) also add that the major factor contributing to the ESL students' failure to meet up with the expectation of the university is their poor academic writing standard. Thus, academic writing should be seen as playing an important role in either the success or failure of the university's entrant students. Hence, attention must be given to how it is taught to the students and how it is learned.

2.5 Academic Writing Challenges of First Year HEI Students

Research, both internationally and nationally, has revealed the existence of problems in the academic writing skills among HEs students, especially the first year students (Rochford, 2003; Holtzhausen, 2005; Hugo 2001). Paxton (2007) describes first year students' writing practices as "interim literacies" in that the "students make meaning by reworking past discourses, appropriating and adapting new discourses to make their own" (p. 47). This, she describes to be manifesting when these students find it difficult to master the new academic discourse, thereby greatly relying on a variety of spoken discourses and oral tradition. This situation is what Gee (1996) describes as the failure to master a particular discourse. Researchers have referred to this period as the greatest transition (Leibowitz, et al, 2009), and if not monitored may endanger the writing practices in the HEIs, as these students will largely depend on the „interim literacies“. Thus, for an academic writing module to be efficient and realistic, the focus must be on identifying factors that constitute the academic writing challenges of the first year students, as will be provided below, as well as providing effective ways or approaches in dealing with such factors.

This challenge of mastering discourse is said to be pertinent to countries where English is a second or additional language. In the South African context, it is reported that many students who enter university are under prepared to face the academic literacy challenges in their modules and disciplines (Mbirimi, 2012). Mbirimi describes the transition from secondary education to

tertiary institutions as the most difficult of all educational transitions in that learners are moving from the traditional form of literacy to tertiary (essayist) literacy. According to him, Black South African students are the most affected by this challenge because English, which is the medium of instructions in most tertiary institutions, is not their L1. The definition of literacy, according to Mbirimi, is similar to Gee's description of discourse in lower case. This definition is limited in that it confines academic literacy to the mere mastery of language.

In this same regard, Naidoo and Tshivhase (2003) also contend that lack of proficiency in English language, which is the language of classroom instruction in the majority of the higher education institutions, is the main reason for students' struggle within the academic framework. While emphasizing the reasons for the academic literacy challenges in the HEIs in South Africa, Mbirimi (2012) adds that Black students, whose mother tongue is not English, constitute 63% of the enrolment figure, and almost 50% of these students drop out of the university, while only one-third graduate within the specified years of completion. Following on from the above report, it is note-worthy that the South African Black students now constitute the larger part of the student population in the HEIs. Yet, these students are being faced with the challenge of being taught in an unfamiliar language. Accordingly, the academic writing challenges in the South African tertiary institutions can be said to have been underpinned by the lack of proficiency in the language of instruction. Moreover, Naidoo and Tshivhase (2003) add that this problem is evident among the second language users of English language in that, they are less fluent (using fewer words), less accurate (making mistakes), and less effective (achieving lower holistic scores); all these manifest in their academic writing practices within their specific disciplines. As a result, the ability to use appropriate academic language within a particular context and in an academic way becomes difficult for these students (Holtzhausen, 2005).

In addition to this, Mkhabela and Malan (2004) concur that lack of proficiency in the language of instruction in most HEIs in South Africa is the major reason for the increase in the number of dropout rate. However, they specifically add that there is not only an increase in the percentage of first year students' drop out, but that 40% of the historically disadvantaged students drop out. This finding, however, fails to include other factors (financial, emotional, psychological, etc) that may be responsible for such a high rate in the number of students who drop out.

This they describe as the situation in the first year of studies, but, the status quo becomes worse in the ensuing years of study as students are likely to encounter more and critical learning challenges. It can therefore be argued from the above that lack of proficiency in the language of instruction (academic language) is one of the factors contributing to the low level of academic competence that defines the state of the majority of the first year students in South African HEIs, including the university under study.

Studies have, however, revealed that the major reason for students' challenges in academic or tertiary literacy (resulting in low participation, and poor graduation), is their under-preparedness for higher education (Scott et al, 2007). Thus, limiting the subject of students' under-preparedness to only the second language users of the English language portends that the challenge with academic literacy or writing in the higher education institutions is students' inability to write correctly. That is, a student's ability to write correctly is an indicator that such a student has acquired the academic writing skills. But Mgqwashu (2002) contends that academic writing goes beyond the level of grammar knowledge, but the ability to write effectively and appropriately in terms dictated by a specific discipline, and not just correctly (Pratt-Johnson, 2008). Thus, under-preparedness for tertiary literacy goes beyond inability to write correct sentences and grammar.

Consequently, academic writing challenges cannot be said to be problematic to the L2 speakers of the language alone, but the L1 inclusive. This is not an attempt to ignore the fact that the former in particular are experiencing greater proportion of the challenges. However, the native speakers also can be described as under-prepared particularly in situation where their grammatical correctness does not conform to the expectation and requirements of the discourse community. Under-preparedness within the context and for the purpose of this study shall henceforth be addressed as an umbrella topic describing students' lack of adequate sophisticated skills in tackling the challenges of tertiary literacy, especially writing (Fouche, 2007). Thus, academic writing problems may not be said to be the challenges of the second users of the language alone, but the mother tongue speakers inclusive. Furthermore, Van Dyk and Weideman (2004) describe under-prepared students as those who are "generally" underprepared and specifically underprepared for academic reading and writing. From these authors' views, under-preparedness is a generic attribute for all students (first year students in this case) who are less

empowered with necessary cultural norms and language tools in cracking the code of tertiary literacy.

While elaborating on students' under-preparedness, Maher (2011) argues that the L2 students are not only taught in English, but are also assessed in it, and thus consequently struggle with learning new and sophisticated subject matter in an unfamiliar non-mother-tongue (language). Therefore, language knowledge, a core element of tertiary or academic literacy is inevitable for this group of students. Nonetheless, Greenbaum and Mbali (2002) contends that beside the challenge with language knowledge, another greater challenge faced by both the L1 and L2 users of English among South African HEIs students is with the acquisition of Discourse, that is, the acquisition of skills (identity kits) that enable them to perform certain roles according to the standard and dictates of the discourse community to which they are seeking entrance. Thus, lack of adequate language knowledge and access into the tertiary discourse community are indicators of students' under-preparedness for appropriate and effective writing practices at the tertiary institutions. Still on this, van Dyk, Zybrands, Cillie, and Coetzee (2009) argue that most tertiary entrant students are "inadequately equipped to engage successfully in the academic discourse" (p. 334), at the same time that the HEIs have already set a standardized curriculum, as well as high expectation for them. Consequently, students' written texts have been the focus of performance assessments at the HEIs. The question on how students' under-preparedness is being assessed in the HEIs then arises.

At tertiary level writing is a tool through which an individual is expected to display his/her knowledge, and such knowledge in the academia is cast in writing (Bengesai, 2012). This encompasses the knowledge of language of instruction (ability to correctly construct sentences in an acceptable way), as well as knowledge of the subject content. Hence, for students to succeed in HEIs, an unequivocal manipulation of the academic writing discourse is undoubtedly imperative (Leibowitz, 2000). Talking about the importance of writing in the academy and the struggling students' need thereof, Smith (1984, in Maher, 2011, p. 11) maintains that "writing has a utility to all individuals, that everyone who does not write loses both power and potential, comparable to losing a limb or sight or hearing". If writing is being compared with a limb in human body, and writing skills are what students need to be successful in their academic

endeavour, it is therefore important that students are taught the necessary academic writing skills that will foster their success in their specific disciplines.

Accordingly, Leibowitz (2000) argues that we need to pay attention not only to students' writing practices, but the lecturers' / tutors' as well. This, she said to confirm the saying that no one can give what he does not have. However, the focus of the present study is on students' writing practices, not the lecturers' or tutors'. Nevertheless, for the purpose of not ignoring the fact that no one can give what he does not have, and that the way lecturers or tutors write influences students' writing practices (Maher, 2011), we need to pay attention not only to the way students write, but also to how they are being taught in their academic writing modules. While writing on students' lack of necessary skills to effectively engage with and attain to the academic discourse's expectation, Leibowitz maintains that students' understanding of what constitute writing matters. He insists that students' failure to view writing as a process rather than a final product may relegate them as "under-prepared". Thus, the teaching of writing, according to him, should focus on the process of writing and not only on the end product.

Leibowitz, quoting Hannon (1995, p. 195), asserts that at tertiary level, "writing has become more than just putting ideas on paper; it includes playing with ideas, re-working ideas, revising, editing etc." From this assertion, it is observed that for students to effectively and appropriately write according to the expectation and demands of the academic discourse community, it is essential for them to follow the "path" of writing as a process, and in doing this, Maher (2011) opines that the nature (linguistic features) of academic texts needs to be taught, and in a way that students will be aware that academic writing is a process, leading to the final product. In collaboration with this argument, Connor (1996, in Maher, 2011) adds that writing is a process that comprises writing, re-writing, composing, revising and editing until the stage of the final product. However, he maintains that achieving this requires the complementary support of teachers, peers and other readers.

The implication from Hannon's stance for students' need of seeing writing as a process is that emphasis is placed on the avoidance of a mere putting of ideas on paper. Thus, it can be said that one of the challenges students are faced with is their recognition of writing as a final draft, yet, it is a process encompassing pre-writing, writing, re-writing, editing, and publication. This chain-process in writing is what Neville (1996) describes as the nature and complexity of academic

writing. However, this scholar maintains that for students to realise the necessity of writing more than one draft, exposure to the nature and characteristics of academic writing is indispensable. From his observation of students' writing practices, Neville notes that student practices of writing as a draft for academic essays is an impediment to crossing over to tertiary literacy. He illustrates that "an average academic working on an item to be published is likely to produce three or four drafts and often asks colleagues to comment on what has been written" (Neville, 1996, p.40). Thus, the academics themselves have to write more than one draft for any item to be published, and that item passes through different stages for necessary corrections, opinions, observations, and justifications before publishing, it becomes significant that all academic writings undergo the stages of the writing process, or else, such a practice becomes non-academic or unacceptable. One can argue that the inability to write more than a draft for academic essays is an academic challenge most tertiary students are faced with. However, the possibility that a student may continue producing what is to him academic in nature, but is unacceptable to the discipline, raises the question for intra-disciplinary interaction and support.

Mgqwashu's argument on the principles that underpin reflexive pedagogy in this case, may serve as a tool to overcoming this challenge. He states in his work titled, "University Learning: Medium and Mode of Instruction", that students will continue to struggle with writing difficulties if there is not a good relationship between students and lecturers or tutors. This relationship can be described as what gives *carte blanche* to students to access lecturers and discuss their academic challenges with them with the hope of accessing the code of university learning. Nonetheless, since this relationship has the ability to make students write the way lecturers or tutors do (Maher, 2011), it is therefore crucial that the lecturers themselves are equipped with the necessary skills. Not only this, but that they have good writing skills. That is, they must demonstrate a good attitude towards writing specifically within the context of the academic discourse community.

It is thus argued that "[T]he faculty is the dominant influence on the mode and quality of education at a university and that, consequently, their attitudes and practices have direct bearing on student writing and thinking." (Fulwiler, Gorman and Gorman, 1986, in Leibowitz, 2000, p. 17). Fulwiler and others therefore place emphasis on the role of the faculty, including lecturers, tutors, and other academic personnel, in the type of education and learning received by the

students. They believe that the faculty's attitude towards writing and publications directly or indirectly constructs what constitutes students' writing practices. Thus, self-development on the part of the lecturers and other academics within a particular discipline has an influencing ability to build the academic writing development of students. Still on the influential role of lecturers' writing practices on students' writings, in the report of a workshop conducted for lecturers in 1997, entitled "Writing Techniques for Lecturers", Leibowitz (2000) reports that most participants at the workshop attest to the fact that there is an interrelationship between the lecturers' writing practices and the way their students write. The report further states that they all agreed that lecturers were once students themselves and that their present writing practices were formed by the way they learned to write.

The relevance of the "Writing Techniques for Lecturers" 1997 workshop to this present study is that the first year students who are the participants in the study will be awarded their teaching degree in the next three years and be appointed as teachers in the nearest future. However, if care is not taken regarding the way they are taught writing in their writing module (ALUGS), the teaching of writing will unquestionably continue in the same vein. Still on the difficulties experienced by the first year students, and the importance of academic writing skills to their successful performance in their specific modules and disciplines, Winch, et al (2001, p. 158) in Hanis, et al (2003, p. 12), affirm that "Writing ... is not merely a tool for learning. Writing is or can be learning itself." Thus, this assertion justifies the reason why writing is privileged over other forms of literacy at the HE. If writing at the HE is learning itself, it is therefore important that maximum attention is given to the way it is being taught. The implication therefore is that the key to the epistemological knowledge at the HE is cast in appropriate writing (Bengesai, 2012; Hanis, et al, 2003). Consequently, gaining access to the epistemological knowledge at the HE is a function of the attitude of the faculty not only towards students' writing practices, but also towards the way writing is being taught, particularly to the entrant students. In other words, for a successful engagement with tertiary learning, it is important that the faculty (the academia) pays maximum attention to students' writing practices, as well as the way writing is being taught to them.

Beside students' process- related difficulty in their writing practices, Neville (1996) in Mbirimi (2012), adds that students also experience a product- related difficulty, especially when they

produce essays that do not have the academic readers (audience) in mind. Knowledge of the audience, IT has been argued, IS an essential part of academic writing in that it is this that determines the structure, style, level of formality, tone, and language of such a piece of writing (ALUGS, 2014). Mahalski (1992, in Mbirimi, 2012) also adds that many students in their writing of academic essays often ignore the importance of an introduction. Drawing from personal undergraduate experience, the researcher had no knowledge of the role of introduction in essay writing. Not only this, he was also ignorant of what constitutes a good introduction to an academic essay. It was during first year in the post- graduate programme in 2012 that he was introduced to the importance of an introduction, and the features of an academic writing introduction. From this experience, it could be argued that there are students, especially those from the historically disadvantaged high schools or poor educational background (Mgqwashu, 2009) that also are sharing the same experience, and have never learned the features of an academic writing introduction, but only know that writing begins with an introduction. However, it is expected that the introduction to an academic essay should contain A clear statement of the position (thesis statement) to be argued in answering the question posed in the essay topic, as well as an outline of the argument (plan of development) and the definition of key terms (background information) (Mbirimi, 2012).

Thus, in preparing students to be academic writers, it is essential that the features of a good introduction, body and conclusion to academic essay are taught, and not only taught, but emphasized. This leads to the fact that in the assessment of students' academic writing practices, lecturers should not only concentrate on the linguistic or grammatical aspects of the essays, but the assessment should bear the structure and nature of academic writing in mind.

2.6 Understanding the concept and context of Academic Language Proficiency

Bearing in mind that academic literacy within the context of this study is conceptualized as being a socially situated phenomenon, it may therefore be tempting to ignore the concept of language proficiency in its acquisition. This is because focus on language proficiency has pervasively influenced the teaching of skills (deficit model) in academic literacy development programmes. Nonetheless, language proficiency in this context may not necessarily be confined to the English L2 users; this is because proficiency in L1 does not automatically lead to proficiency in

academic literacy (Cummins, 2008). All entrant students (both L1 and L2) have been described as having academic writing challenges which vary in type and kind. However, within the South African HE context African students have been described to have a two-pronged challenge- the acquisition of language (discourse) and the acquisition of Discourse. This McKenna (2010) argues is a result of the political nature of language in South Africa. Hence, ignoring such a concept in the acquisition of academic literacy in South African context is a way of underplaying past political injustice. Therefore, the concept of language proficiency is not only about language issue, but it is cultural, political, and about social justice.

The term language proficiency traditionally means one's knowledge of, competence and ability to use a language accurately and appropriately in its oral or written form (Cloude et al, 2000). In Scholtz and Allen-Ile (2007), communicative competence, communicative language ability, as well as communicative proficiency all refer to language proficiency. However, in their description of communicative ability, these authors argue that communicative ability transcends a mere transfer of information, but must be characterized by a "dynamic interaction between the situation, the language user, and the discourse" (p. 923). In other words, university learning goes beyond the ability to communicate in the language of instruction whether in the written or oral form, but it is that which "involves adapting to new ways of knowing: new ways of understanding, interpreting and organizing knowledge" (Lea and Street 1998, 157).

From this perspective, it could be said that tertiary students are said to be academic language competent when they are able to infer, express personal opinion, think critically, form personal arguments and establish own view points. At this level of competence, students are expected to engage with deeper meanings of texts, not just making meanings from a surface level. This proficiency in language is what Manyike (2007, in Ramcharan, 2009) argues that varies depending on the purpose, function, and context of communication. In other words, academic language proficiency centers on the "new ways of knowing"; an exigency placed on all tertiary institution students. It is therefore obvious from the foregoing that language proficiency at the tertiary institution of learning emphasizes new ways of knowing and devaluates the old. In agreement with Scholtz and Allen-Ile's view as mentioned above, academic language proficiency denotes students' ability to demonstrate competence in language use beyond the general or basic literacy level, but in line with the dictates and demands of the disciplinary discourse.

The situation of the ESL first year students at the university under study who at the moment forms the larger percentage of the student population poses a challenge to the teaching and learning process. Apart from the fact that the majority of first year students are L2 users of the university language of instruction, research has also revealed that the L1 speakers of the English language do not possess academic language proficiency since it is embedded in the new ways of knowing (Lea and Street, 1998). Thus, academic language proficiency surpasses a mere communicative competence in one's mother tongue and is cognitively demanding (Cummins, 2008). According to Weidman and Van Rens Berg (2002, p. 36), "language proficiency among young South Africans is low". Stressing on this, Ramcharan, (2009) also contributes that this is not only the situation among the non-mother tongue speakers of English, but of the native speakers as well.

In a nutshell, it can be deduced that one of the problems common to most tertiary institution students specifically in the South African context relates to low levels of language proficiency. This has consequently been described as being crucial to learning in the university in that there is a nexus between proficiency in the language of instruction and academic performance (Ramcharan, 2009). Archer (2010) states that South African universities need to consider certain factors in designing intervention programmes as well as methods of assessments. These, according to him include:

Firstly, most students need to write in English, a language other than their mother tongue. Secondly, the academic under-preparedness of all students, but particularly those from previously disadvantaged communities. Thirdly, all students need to learn the academic discourses of different disciplines.

And finally, the fact that students come to tertiary institutions with different literacies [sic] and cultural conventions (p. 496).

From Archer's (2010) perspective, learning in the university most especially in the South African context requires "most" (the larger percentage of) students to learn in an unfamiliar language that is different from their mother tongue. This, Dampier (2012, in Merisi 2013) argues that hinders access to global markets as well as epistemological access. Dampier contends that immersing children (learners) in English from a younger age rather than the present practice where learners are immersed in English at Grade Four, is one of the keys to unlock the code of tertiary learning. To this, Fleisch (2008) adds that:

shifting from mother-tongue instruction in reading, writing and numeracy in the first two to three years of schooling to a second language (L2) in Grade 4, where the learner is expected to be proficient in reading across the curriculum, is problematic. These learners had a limited vocabulary of about 500 words and could read only simple 3-7 word sentences in the present tense". (pp. 105-112,130).

Thus, this argument is pertinent to the problem of low level language proficiency at tertiary institutions of learning. Archer (2010) further adds that under-preparedness for tertiary literacy, though commonly ascribed to the L2 users of English, is still a common factor among all tertiary first year students. Acquiring a native competence in English language is not within the ambit of academic performance. Thus, learning a new way of knowing is pertinent to learning in the university, and all students need to learn the academic discourse of different disciplines in order to acquire their „specified“ language competence.

Archer (2010) also notes that the fact that students come to the university with different literacies and cultural conventions is another factor underpinning students“ low level of academic language proficiency. Ramcharan (2009, p. 16) laments that the recent decline in the language proficiency level, is permeating the “tertiary entrant students”. Since a low level of language proficiency, rather academic language competence poses a challenge to the teaching and learning at tertiary level in South Africa, specifically at the university under study, it is therefore imperative that the academic literacy module (ALUG in this context) must lend itself to principles underpinning reflexive pedagogy (Mgqwashu, 2000), where epistemological access is feasible. Not only this, the method of assessment too is another cogent area that needs serious intervention.

2.7 Student Writing and Feedback

Several studies have recently emphasized the impact of effective feedback on student academic writing development (Li, 2007; Weaver, 2006; and Tavares, 2007). Arguing on the nature of feedback in the HE, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) posit that the HE has experienced a paradigm shift on the student learning process over two decades. This, they describe as a move from viewing student learning as acquisition of skills being transmitted from teachers, to a social process where students are actively engaged in constructing their own knowledge. However, they

add that such shift seems not to have had an impact on our current assessment and feedback processes at the HE. Teachers, according to them, have continued to “„transmit“ feedback messages to students about what is right or wrong in their academic work, about its strengths and weaknesses, and students use this information to make subsequent improvements” (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick , 2006, p. 200)

In this regard, scholars such as Weaver (2007) and Ferris (2008) add that students are likely to improve on their future writings if they are shown their strengths and weaknesses in the previous ones. Nonetheless, there have been complaints too by the academics that students do not bother about what is written on their papers as they are only concerned with the grades they received from the assignments or tests (Duncan, 2007). Weaver (2006) on the other hand strongly maintains that constructive feedbacks usually motivate students to improve, thus, she urges lecturers and tutors to provide appropriate guidance and motivation through their comments rather than diagnosing problems and justifying the marks.

However, the present study is concerned with exploring issues about feedback in relation to students“ writing practices within the ALUGS module. Findings have revealed that one of the reasons why students do not read lecturers“ feedback comments is that both lecturers and students isolate feedbacks from other aspects of the teaching and learning process (Duncan, 2007). Taras (2003) adds that feedback in such situation is primarily regarded as a teacher-owned endeavour. Accordingly, Spiller (2012) argues that there cannot be effective feedback in the teaching of writing until all the protagonists such as lecturers, tutors and students actively participate in the process. Feedback is not one-way directional; both lecturers/tutors and students have a role to play in making feedback comments count. In this regard, Duncan (2007) adds that students do not pay attention to comments written on their returned scripts because such comments do not make sense to them. The implication from this is that until tutors“ comments are written in such a way that they are meaningful to the students, students may continue to undermine the importance of feedback in their writing practices.

In addition, Duncan (2007) further posits that not only do t the comments not make sense to students, but another challenge is that these students do not understand the purpose of the feedback process. According to him, students only see feedback as the marking of what is right

and wrong. In this regard, Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that feedback should not be only correctional, but should also be instructional. Following Duncan's and Hattie and Timperley's arguments, lecturers/tutors should not just employ feedbacks as corrective tool, but the instructional aspects of it are of great importance to the process of teaching, particularly in teaching academic writing. Implied from this is that feedback serves a dual purposes in the teaching of writing; a tool for correction, and as well a tool for instruction. Thus, feedback comments should not only focus on incorrect spelling, grammar, paragraph structure, and other linguistic features, particularly in the teaching of writing. However, it should also include statements or comments that can help the students to feed forward through the kind of instructions being given on their returned scripts.

Consequently, Spiller (2012) suggests that feedback comments can be used for students to feed forward on how they can better improve in their writing practices in subsequent tasks. However, he suggests that such comments can only make students feed forward when they are instructional. Thus, suggesting that it is the instruction embedded in feedback comments that is capable of transforming feedbacks to „feed-forward“, hence promoting future learning. Admittedly, Spiller (2012) emphasizes the importance of timing in such transformation process. He argues that feedback must be given to students soon after the completion of tasks and that the comments should “show students how feed-forward comments can be incorporated into subsequent performance” (Spiller, 2012, p. 7).

Despite the new trend on improving student writing through feedback, Lea and Street (1998) discover that tutors usually give vague comments that are not comprehensible and useful for the students. Such comments, Spiller (2012) agrees, are understandable and make sense to the lecturers and tutors, but are not accessible to the students. This they contend will make feedback a one- way transmission from the tutors, thus having little or no usefulness in students' future performances. Taking a study by Duncan (2007) as an example, he found that lecturers use statements like “use a more academic style” in his comments on students' written works; “a comment which the lecture obviously understood, but which the student in the study reported as difficult to interpret” (Spiller, 2012, p. 8). Other examples of vague comments used by tutors or lecturers according to Duncan include; “deepen analysis of key issues, sharp critique, identify

and develop implications, link theory and practice” (Duncan, 2007, p. 274). To these scholars (Duncan, Lea and Street), such comments are corrective measure used in feedback which do not make sense to students because they are not instructive. However, Lea and Street (1998) add that certain factors are responsible for this.

One of the reasons for lack of effective feedback on students’ written works is the time factor. Bailey (2009) affirms that lack of adequate time to write comments on students’ work is one of the reasons why tutors do not provide for effective feedback to the students. This manifests particularly in situations where one tutor is teaching a large number of students. Bailey goes further to add that less opportunity for tutorial interaction is yet another factor. Consequently, these tutors hurriedly give vague comments as feedback on students’ written works. The consequence of this is that students will keep performing the same way. It can therefore be argued that one of the reasons why students seem not to improve in their writing practices is due to the poor feedback they received on their written works. Hattie and Timperly (2007) refer to such feedback as passive feedback.

Another factor impeding students’ academic writing development in the context of feedback is overconcentration on the mechanical aspect of language which Gee (2001) refers to as discourse in lower case. Saito (1995) maintains that students seem happy when feedback focus on grammatical errors in that they assume that such feedback will help them improve grammatically. Radecki and Swales (1988, p. 363) observe that “learners expect error correction from their teachers and if they (learners) do not get that, they (teachers) may lose their credibility”. Saito however, disputes that feedback that focuses on correction is less effective in assisting students to revise but that the most effective feedback is one that gives students clues (talkback). Hence, the talkback type of feedback is encouraged as the best way of communicating with students on their writing practices.

Accordingly, Lillis (2006) proposes that there should be a shift feedback to “talkback” while dealing with student writing in that the latter is considered as student-centered. Lillis further criticizes feedback due to its over-concentration of the surface features of students’ written text, and always characterized with closed commentary with evaluative language (good or weak) (Lillis, 2006). Thus, she proposes the talkback approach in that it focuses on students’ written work as a process, thereby acknowledging the partial nature of any text- an attempt to open up

space for the student writer to say what she likes or does not like “about what she is expected to make meaning within”(p. 42). Bharuthram and McKenna (2006) are also of the opinion that feedback should be explicitly provided instead of being written in an understandable language or through a mere tick for good or weak writing practices.

The implication from this is that until comments provided on students’ written work are made explicit enough to guide students in understanding their strengths and weaknesses, feedback will not serve its purpose of improving student writing practices. More importantly, feedback should be valued as a teaching strategy that is capable of providing the AL practitioners with the approach to easily and effectively apprentice their students within their discourse communities. In addition, feedback from the foregoing can be efficient in developing students’ writing practices only when they are not one way transmission process; only being used as a corrective tool. However, adding the instructional aspects is the only way of turning feedback comments to „feed-wards“ (Duncan, 2007; Lea and Street, 1998; Spiller, 2012).

In conclusion, this chapter has defined academic literacy according to the three different models of literacy, and the academic literacies model was justified as the privileged model for this study. Within this model, academic literacy has been defined as a social practice that is both historically and culturally embedded rather than a mere set of technical skills that reside in the human brain. Thus, academic literacy was defined as an “identity kit” that its acquisition requires the principles of apprenticeship where interaction among the members of the discourse community is emphasized. Furthermore, the chapter discussed academic writing as the focus of the study; the reason being that knowledge in the HE is cast in written language. Consequently, the study emphasizes the importance of reading to the development of writing. This is because effective writing was described in the chapter as a product of meaningful engagement with written text (reading). In addition, the chapter also distinguishes academic language proficiency from a mere proficiency in one’s mother tongue because academic language is no one’s mother tongue (Bourdieu, 1995). Finally, the modes of feedback comments given on students’ written works were also discussed in the chapter. The following chapter, being the theoretical framework chapter shall be discussing how academic literacy has been theorized.

2.8.0 Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Having discussed the different perspective in which academic literacy has been defined, this section discusses the theories that frame the study. Drawing from the social theories of learning, this study is framed by the New Literacy Studies (NLS). This framing draws on the works of theorists like Street (1999), Gee (1990, 1993, 2001a, 2003), and Barton and Hamilton (2000), among others. The discussion commences with the New Literacy Studies (NLS) being the meta-theory used in framing this study. This study will be drawing on four theoretical constructs emerging from works of Street and Gee. These are Street's „autonomous“, and „ideological“ models of literacy, and Gee's (1990) „Discourse“, and „apprenticeship/enculturation“ theories. These four constructs therefore will inform the way in which academic writing is framed and understood within the context of this study.

2.8.1 The New Literacy Studies: a socio-cultural perspective of literacy

The recent dissatisfaction in the teaching of reading and writing has been a major concern of researchers and scholars in the last two decades. This dissatisfaction has been argued to be pervasive particularly in places where students are unfamiliar with the dominant culture of classroom teaching and learning (Bharuthram, 2006). It was such dissatisfaction that incited some interdisciplinary scholars such as Gee, Street, Barton and others to found the New Literacy Study in 1995. In response to this dissatisfaction, the new group (NLS) began to apply social theories of learning in the teaching and learning of literacy (writing in this context); viewing literacy as a social practice with emphasis on multiple literacies (Street, 2003). What is really “new” in the New Literacy Studies is not only the focus on literacy as a social practice rather than a set of technical skills, but also the emphasis on multiple literacies (Street, 2003).

To begin with, in contrary to the traditional view about literacy, the NLS conceptualises literacy as a complex phenomenon that goes beyond a mere acquisition of literacy skills and the ability to read and write (Colombi & Schleppegrell, 2002; Street, 1995). The NLS scholars therefore posit that literacy is a social process rather than a static set of technical skills residing in human brain. Although they give cognizance to the role of „decoding skills“ particularly in the acquisition of writing and other forms of literacy, the NLS proponents however argue that these skills alone are incapable of describing the scope and power of being (academically) literate.

The question that comes to mind then is what is it that is capable of describing the scope and power of being (academically) literate? The NLS posits that understanding what literacy is will be difficult if one does not look at how literacy practices are “embedded within specific social practices” (Gee, 2003, p. 159). In this regard, reading, writing and meaning making (literacy practices) are therefore situated within specific social practices (Gee, 1998). Being academically literate therefore is a product of one’s engagement and interaction with other members of the community of practice (Bharuthram, 2006). In essence, the NLS places emphasis on purposeful interaction among people within a group or communities of people in the acquisition of literacy (writing), rather than viewing literacy as an independent entity or static set of individual skills (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gutiérrez, Hunter, & Arzubíaga, 2009). Thus, literacy whether writing or whatever form cannot be abstracted from or taught in isolation of the social persons within a specific community of practice. Bearing in mind that this study is concerned with students’ writing practices at the HE, the interpretation of literacy will be confined to academic writing, mainly because literacy “in the academy is primarily cast in written language” (Bazerman, 1988 p. 18). The implication therefore is that being academically literate or becoming an academic writer is a social process that involves interaction among the members of that community of practice.

Consequently, the NLS challenges the traditional model of teaching writing. Writing strategies within the traditional model are taught as skills and in isolation, devoid of ideological and cultural meaning (Street, 2003). The NLS researchers argue that the acquisition and development of writing cannot be isolated from the social persons and the culture of the writer (Street, 1993). Implied from this notion is that there must be an interaction between social persons in the acquisition of discourse in the teaching of academic writing particularly within the ALUGS module, being the module under study. Academic writing cannot be separated from institutional cultures, power relations and social practices of the community of practice (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1996, 1998, 2002). Thus, the concept of meaning making within the NLS view of literacy only becomes a reality when there is purposeful negotiation and interaction between the tutors and the students in the acquisition of academic writing. Hence, the NLS emphasizes the importance of the interaction between the lecturers/tutors and the students. Nevertheless, such interaction must be the one that promotes participation in the course of literacy acquisition.

In this regard, the NLS contrasts the notion that views literacy as a set of neutral skills that can be transferred from one context to another without changing meaning; generalizing and universalizing meaning. Owing to this view, the scholars within this school of thought (NLS) are of the opinion that meaning is socially situated and unstable (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 2002). In this way, they hold that the meaning of any kind of communication of whatever form it takes, depends on the context in which it is being used (Eagleton, 1997). As a result, Street (1984) posits that literacy should not be viewed as a skill devoid of ideological and cultural meaning. Furthermore, Gee (1996) and Street (1984) maintain that it was the non-acceptance of literacy as an ideological practice embroiled in power relations and situated in specific cultural meanings and practices that made the formerly dominant view of literacy (as a technical skill) ineffective. Thus, meaning making within the context of the present study is contextual. Therefore what counts as literacy in a particular discipline may not be for another discipline.

This reminds me of an event that took place in Nigeria some few years ago. A college student went home with his school mate to visit his parents. On getting home that day, the boy in the bid to introduce his friend to his parents said: “Ota mi tide, ada mi da?” Having said this statement, his visiting friend fled and travelled back to school, thinking to have been in danger.

To the Egbira tribe in Nigeria, the statement implies: “my friend of whom I had told you has come, where is my father? On the contrary, the same statement holds a contradictory meaning for the Yoruba tribe, implying: “my enemy (“Ota mi”) of whom I had told you before is here, where is my cutlass (ada mi da)?” The visiting friend, being a Yoruba person, had no choice than to run for his life; thinking his friend wanted to kill him.

This illustration is an allusion to the fact that meaning is contextual and unstable. The same statement meant two contrasting/ different things to the two tribes; though within the same community. Hence, literacy (meaning making) is dynamic and could mean different things to different people. Consequently, the NLS theorists are of the opinion that there are many literacies, thus, emphasizing the notion of multiple literacies (Lea and Street, 2006).

The notion about the plurality of literacies or multiple literacies is of extreme importance to the NLS researchers as well as this study as literacy goes beyond an entity, but a constantly shifting set of unstable, internally various, fluid, and heterogeneous practices/ social practices (Lea and

Street, 2006). The plurality of literacy as posited in the NLS is therefore of immense importance to the present study, the reason being the historical background of literacy development in South Africa. In this study double emphasis is placed on the term „multiple literacies“. To start with, the term is perceived as what counts as literacy across various disciplines-i.e. ie “disciplinary literacies”. In this view, each discipline has its own way of using language and making meaning.

Thus, academic writing in Biological Sciences differs from what Mathematics discipline accepts as academic writing. Writing in the sciences for example requires students to write in active voice, but passive voice is seldom used. However, for students in Humanities (the institution under study for instance), the passive voice is mostly used in writing. The implication of this therefore is that what counts as academic writing within each discipline differs at HE. Furthermore, most writings in the sciences do not lend themselves to the conventions of the essayist literacy type, but focus on experimental reports. The format mostly used in the sciences is the **IMRAD** format; **I**ntroduction, **M**ethods, **R**esults, **A**nd **D**iscussion, whereas students in the Humanities are required to use the introduction, body and conclusion format in their essay writing. Admittedly, literacy still differs across disciplines within the same faculty, taking Humanities for example. What counts as academic writing for the History students is not the same for the students of Literature. Thus, academic writing as a social practice, is context-embedded and as well discipline-specific (Gee, 2006).

The second stance on multiple literacies conceptualizes literacy as being culturally and historically situated (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, 2000). This, I refer to as „cultural literacies“. In contrast to the deficit model of literacy where literacy is regarded as a skill one either has or does not have, literacy in the NLS is described to be culturally and historically embedded. What this means is that literacy is inseparable from the culture of the user, and that one’s literacy practice is a function of his or her cultural backgrounds (McKenna, 2010). Following on from the foregoing, the implication for the present study is that HE students in South Africa have heterogeneous backgrounds that are defined by the past political history of the country (Strydom, Mentz, and Kuh, 2010). Consequently, these students have brought different forms of literacies (such as oral, reading and writing) to the system. The question that then comes to mind is whose literacy is equivalent to that of, or appropriate for the academia?

As regards this situation, the NLS posits that none of these literacies is to be relegated to the background; consequently, this group discountenances the inferiority/superiority complex of literacies (Bharuthram, 2006). However, since knowledge in HE was earlier described to be cast in writing (Bazerman, 1988), the written form of literacy has been the privileged literacy in the academia (Bengesai, 2012). This, alludes to the notion that literacy is dependent upon the given power structure in which it is being used (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1996, 1998, 2002; Street, 1995) This therefore justifies the academic community's choice of privileging the written language. The implication then is that if literacy in HE privileges the „writing culture“, academia therefore is obliged to give maximum attention to how academic writing is being taught to students who are coming from other „cultural literacies“ backgrounds. Otherwise, these students may be marginalized, thereby losing their voice and identity in the teaching-learning process. Admittedly, for better understanding of the nature of the teaching of academic writing as a social and situated practice, Street (2003) employs two terms. These terms are; the autonomous model and the ideological model to teaching academic writing. These terms are therefore used as constructs in understanding the nature of the teaching of academic writing within the ALUGS module.

2.8.2 Street's Autonomous and Ideological Models of teaching Literacy

Street (2003) posits that the autonomous model ignores and underestimates the cultural and social realities within which literacy is embedded, thus focusing on the acquisition of skills. From this perspective of literacy, writing is perceived to be detached from, and neutral towards the cultural and ideological realities that underpin it. Instead, it is taught as a set of mental skills which Street (2003) labels as the „technology of the mind“. Implied from Street's description of the autonomous model, the ability to write academically is the view that reading and writing are what people do in their heads. The implication of this in the acquisition of academic writing is that learning within such construct is perceived to be abstracted from social practices, but dependent on the individual intelligence (Donnelly, 2010). In this way, the ability to write academically and appropriately is something that one either has or does not have; people are either literate or illiterate, and those who are illiterate are therefore labeled as deficient (students). Recently, the term under-preparedness has been used in literature both nationally and internationally as a replacement for the term deficiency (Cliff and Hanslo 2009:274; Granville and Dison 2009; Hirst, Henderson, Allan, Bode and Kocatepe 2004; Schwartz 2004; Maloney

2003; Boughey 2000). In such situation, literacy is viewed as remediation for achieving academic success in the HE.

Consequently, literacy is viewed as a tool that is capable of developing people's cognitive skills, especially when introduced to the under-prepared students (Street, 1999). The implication of this is that this approach views academic writing as „mental slates“ (Street, 2003) used in developing students' cognitive skills to meet up with the required standard of the HE. Regrettably, this model often ignores the social, cultural and economic conditions which factors were responsible for the so called under-preparedness (Streets, 1996). As a result students are assumed to “autonomously actualize their potential by making the most use of the opportunities offered them” in such modules (Lange, 2010, p. iv). To the practitioners of such model, academic writing course packs alone are capable of making students acquire the necessary skills deemed appropriate in academic writing. In this manner, academic writing is regarded as a set of skills that once acquired are capable of making students academic writers.

Ensuing from the above, Street (2003) further describes the autonomous model as „asocial“ as it conceptualizes literacy (academic writing) as a set of unitary skills that can easily be acquired in a universal way. In this regard, the practice of academic writing modules as a decontextualized phenomenon tends to ignore the social factors underpinning the process of effective teaching and learning. Consequentially, students are assumed to acquire academic discourse without any form of assistance from or interaction with their lecturers and tutors (the social persons). If this is the case with this model, what then is the fate of the „deficient students“ given that academic discourse is a set of skills that can easily be acquired by the „prepared“ students? Besides, the autonomous view also holds that acquiring academic writing in a particular discipline automatically qualifies one as an academic writer in other disciplines. In essence, the autonomous model positions the acquisition of academic literacy as devoid of social and cultural practices of the context in which it takes place. In this manner, it disregards the role of the society as well as the members of a particular disciplinary community (including tutors, lecturers and even peers) in the acquisition of literacy and disciplinary discourse. It is against this perspective that Street (2003) introduces the ideological model of literacy.

In contrast to the autonomous view of literacy, the ideological model conceptualizes literacy as a social practice, “that is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles” (Street, 2003, p. 77). Implied from this view is that literacy is a dynamic phenomenon differing from one context to another, and also from one culture to another (Street, 2003). In the ideological model, acquiring academic writing is embedded in and a product of socio-cultural practices. Hence, literacy is seen as a social practice among the members of a particular community of practice. It follows thus that academic writing cannot be acquired without a productive engagement and interaction with members of the academic world (discipline). Underpinned in this way, literacy is conceptualized within the ideological model as being contested both in meaning and practices. Consequently, “particular versions of it are always ideological; they are rooted in a particular world-view” (specific discipline) (Street, 2001, p. 8). Implied from this argument is that the ability to define what an acceptable academic writing within a particular disciplinary community is, resides among its expert members.

Hence, the acquisition of literacy within a given community of practice/specific subject discipline does not necessarily make one an expert in the literacy practices of another community/discipline. The reason being that literacy in this model is socially situated. Literacy therefore in this model means different things to different communities of practices (disciplines), and each community inducts their members in their own way. Barton and Hamilton (2000) therefore argue that literacy is a social practice. Thus, if literacy is viewed as a social practice, literacy practices then “are what people do with literacy” (Barton and Hamilton, 2000, p.7). In this way, academic writing is fathomed to be what people do with literacy (writing). Irrefutably, if academic writing is what people do with literacy- the literacy practice of the social persons in disciplines, these scholars then place emphasis on their involvement (disciplinary experts”) in the acquisition of the disciplinary discourses (Ibid). The implication therefore is that academic writing according to this model lends the acquisition of its discourse within disciplines to the involvement of the masters and experts of such disciplinary communities.

The present study privileges the ideological perspective of literacy where literacy is conceptualized to be socio-culturally situated. The following are the factors behind such choice. First, academic literacy is viewed as a social practice emerging from contextual expectations

(Kern, 2000; Lea and Street, 2000). In this regard, academic literacy, academic writing in the context of this study, can be acquired in specific socio-cultural contexts, and not in a universal or generic way (Bengesai, 2012). Secondly, at the epistemological stance, the teaching of academic writing as technical skills such as the teaching of grammar, sentence structure, and spelling has been argued to only equip students with the superficial features of academic writing (Johns, 2005; Hyland, 2002a; Bengesai, 2012); but incapable of inducting them into the disciplinary discourses. The argument here is that the ability to write accurately does not necessarily make one an academic writer as what makes an academic writer goes beyond writing correctly, but writing appropriately according to the expectations of the disciplines (Johnson, 1997). Gee's (1996) description of secondary Discourse such as academic literacy constitutes my third choice of privileging the ideological model in this study. Understood in this way, the acquisition of academic literacy or Discourse goes beyond linguistic features of literacy but includes the non-language features such as voice, identity, and others (Bengesai, 2010).

2.8.3 Academic Literacy and Gee's Discourse Theory

Gee's (1996) introduction of the discourse theory has had a remarkable impact in the field of academic literacy as well as in the socio-cultural nature of literacy. He introduces the term discourse and distinguishes between discourse with small letter "d" (**d**iscourse) and the one with the capital letter "D" (**D**iscourse). In this distinction, Gee acknowledges the relationships that exist between social relations, social identities, contexts, and specific situations of language use (Gee, 1989, 1993, 1996). Thus, he posits that the "**D**iscourse" with the capital case is

...a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artifacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network" (Gee, 1996, p. 131).

Inferred from this definition is the fact that Discourse is the assemblage of language use (writing in the context of this study) –"doing-valuing-believing..." the constellation of the "ways of being in the world" (Gee, 1996, p. 481). Language use in this sense comprises the way of talking, listening, writing and reading. On the other hand, the non-language feature includes acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and feeling into patterns associated with a recognizable social

network or affinity group (Gee, 2001a). Thus, **D**iscourse is viewed as a social practice involving interaction with the members of a particular social network. On the other hand, **d**iscourse with the small case is described as the “connected stretches of language that make sense, or language in use” (Gee, 1996). Thus, **d**iscourse (language use- be it written or spoken) is embedded and situated within the “ways of being in the world” (**D**iscourse).

Furthermore, Gee (2001a) describes Discourses to be innumerable. These embrace the family, the church, the schools, a profession, a research team, an ethnic group, a subject discipline, etc. Moreover, he further posits that Discourses can be found within another Discourse, making the former sub-Discourses. In this regard, Gee describes the university community as a Discourse, and the various subject disciplines inside it as sub-Discourses. Being a member of a particular Discourse therefore “requires rites of passage to enter the group, the maintenance of certain behaviors (ways of talking, valuing, thinking) to continue to be accepted as an insider, and continued tests of membership applied by others” (Gee, 1990, p. 143). In this regard, Gee describes Discourse as a set of “identity kits” or “forms of life” through which people share everyday „theories“ of the world (Gee, 1996). It is these „theories“ that D’Andrade and Strauss (1992) describe as what inform people about the “common sense” and the appropriate norms of a particular Discourse (community of people). It is the manifestation of this identity kits or norms (ways of talking –writing, valuing, and thinking) that defines a person as an accepted member of that particular Discourse community, thus recognizing him as an insider. However, the lack thereof positions such a person as an “outsider” or a “pretender”.

In application, academic literacy from the ideological perspective has been described as a social practice involving interaction among the members of a particular social group, and literacy practice on the other hand was also described as what people do with literacy (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). In the same vein, Gee also has described academic literacy as a Discourse- “a way of being in the world”. He posits that academic literacy goes beyond ordinary discourse or a set of technical reading and writing skills. The acquisition of these skills, according to him, are incapable of making one a member of the academic community. Thus, he argues that language use (discourse) must be embedded in „the way of being in the world“ of a particular Discourse community (Gee, 2001a).

It can be inferred from the foregoing that Gee's (1996) distinction between D/discourse was a deliberate effort to elaborate on the NLS' socio-cultural situatedness of literacy. As discussed from the ideological perspective of literacy, academic literacy is socially constructed and context-embedded, but this „contextuality“ is undefined, indefinite and unspecific in Street's ideological model. Arguably, Gee introduced the term „Discourse“ to embrace language use and other socio-cultural dimensions of literacy; these he labels as the “...saying-doing-valuing-believing”. These are the identity kits that make one a recognizable member of a particular social group (Gee, 2001a). Thus, academic literacy cannot be described as a social practice until it embraces the identity kits of the members of the academic community.

Particularly, Gee expatiates on the notion of multiple literacies by positing that Discourses are innumerable. As earlier discussed, Gee (1990) posits that there are multiple Discourses and what counts as literacy in a particular Discourse may be unacceptable in another. Thus, the acceptable way of using language in a particular Discourse (discipline in the context of this study) may be unacceptable in another Discourse (discipline) as language use is discursive and Discourse embedded (Gee, 2001a; Bengesai, 2012). Consequently, Gee (1990) maintains that acquiring academic literacy goes beyond mere linguistic skills acquisition. However, since discourse (language) is embedded in Discourse (culture), language use (writing in this case) in academic literacy module must lend itself to the underpinning principles of specific academic Discourse communities. The question that one must ask at this point is, in which Discourse must such skills be embedded, given that there are multiple Discourses in academia? In response to this question, Gee seems to negate the notions of solitary, unitary, universal and generic practice of academic writing. Academic writing, when practiced as a generic course, is regarded as a set of technical skills that can be successfully transferred from one disciplinary Discourse to another. Implied from this argument is the notion that academic writing must be discipline specific since what counts as academic writing in the HE differs from one discipline to another (Donnelly, 2010).

Following this argument on multiple Discourses, Gee further categorizes D/discourses as primary, secondary, and borderland D/discourses (Gee, 2001; Bengesai, 2012). Primary Discourses are the ways of knowing in which students are socialized by their family institution (Bengesai, 2012, p. 81). Secondary Discourses on the other hand, are those ways of knowing in which students are socialized by public institutions such as universities and churches, professions

(Gee, 1996). Borderland Discourse, on the other hand, is acquired through interaction with others whose primary or secondary Discourses differ from one's Discourses. Congruently, primary discourses are acquired through the home environment, while secondary discourse can only be acquired through education, church and one's profession (Gee, 1990). Emphasizing the role of primary Discourse, Gee, further describes the primary Discourse as a constellation of one's original and home-based sense of identity, which can be recognized during social interactions.

Admittedly, Gee posits that it is the home-based sense of identity, recognizable through one's interaction with other community members that makes one an insider within such community. This therefore places emphasis on the place of social interaction in the acquisition of academic Discourse. If academic literacy is therefore to be acquired as a social practice, according to Gee, then there must be a positive interaction between the students and the academic practitioners; thus lending itself to the principles underpinning reflexive pedagogy (Mgqwashu, 2000). Introducing the use of reflexive pedagogy as a model for teaching at the HE, Mgqwashu suggests that there must be a meaningful interaction among the protagonists involved in the teaching-learning process. In line with Gee's argument, Mgqwashu disputes that until the pedagogical practices in E (universities) begin to imbibe take cognizance of the principles of reflexive pedagogy (among which meaningful interaction between students and lecturers/tutors is central), the so-called deficit students may continue to experience failure.

Gee (1996) suggests that the identity kit is the key that permits one to participate in such social interaction. Hence, the acquisition of academic literacy cannot be abstracted from issues of identity. As discussed in the previous chapter, issues of identity are part of the factors behind the choice of the ideological perspective of literacy as well as why this study privileges the academic literacies model. This is because issues of identity are pertinent to the South African HE context. As a result, most research on academic writing in South Africa has focused on the link between identity and language (McKinney and Norton, 2008), as well as the relationship between identity and the acquisition of Discourse (Kapp and Bangeni, 2009; Archer, 2008; Leibowitz and Witz, 1994). The significance of identity in the present study is notable in Boughey's (2009) description of South African universities as „alien social spaces“. The universities are being described as social spaces given that all disciplinary literacy practices therein are socially

constructed. Moreover, the adjective „alien“ signifies students“ (particularly the historically disadvantaged students“) unfamiliarity with the literacy practices within these disciplines. Consequently, learning to acquire the Discourses of such spaces (disciplines) impacts negatively on students“ identities (McKenna, 2004b).

Thus, since identity is Discourse embedded, it may be impossible for students to manipulate academic language of their disciplines without being fully integrated into the Discourses of such disciplines. Consequently, failure to fully identify with the Discourse practices of that academic community results in students being labeled „the other“, an „outsider“ or a pretender or rather (under-prepared) (Gee, 1996). Gee therefore posits that such a situation will continue until the acquisition of such secondary Discourse (academic writing in this sense) yields itself to the same principles of acquiring the primary Discourse. He then adds that the process of acquiring the primary Discourse has nothing to do with overt instruction, but is a result of interaction with other members of the Discourse community. Emphatically, he avows that the acquisition of secondary Discourse is also similar to the primary in that it is acquired through “unconscious acquisition” and conscious “learning” that requires a process of “scaffolded apprenticeship” through which an individual is inducted into the Discourse (Gee, 1990). It is against this position that this study intends to examine how writing is being taught in the ALUGS module.

At this point, considering the definition of academic literacy in socially constructed way may be helpful in understanding how it can be acquired as a Discourse. Thus, Academic literacy, according to Moore (1994, p. 37):

...is cultural, contextual and involves the acquisition of sets of rules and conventions that are seldom made explicit. Competence involves the acquisition of the disciplinary dialect and the forms of knowing embedded therein. The rules and conventions of academic discourse vary between disciplines and are seldom similar to other literacies familiar to the student.

From Moore“s point of view, academic discourse goes beyond language alone, but includes how knowledge and social practices are constructed by patterns of communication (McKenna, 2003). It can be argued from this definition that being academically competent (the ability to write appropriately in a manner prescribed by a particular disciplinary community) requires the

acquisition of the disciplinary dialect (language skills) and the ways of knowing embedded therein. Hence, acquiring academic literacy involves the acquisition of the disciplinary dialect. However, Moore adds that this dialect alone is incapable of describing one as being academically competent, but only does when it is engraved in the disciplinary ways of knowing, making academic literacy a social practice- what people do with literacy.

From the foregoing, it can be added that academic literacy is not a set of neutral and technical skills. The acquisition of academic writing lends itself to the rules of social interaction which Gee (2001a) describes as a necessity in the acquisition of secondary Discourse. As a result, Gee argues that the process of acquiring academic literacy does not in any way follow the normal classroom setting, but through “enculturation (“apprenticeship”) into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse” (Gee, 1990, p. 484). He therefore opines that it is impossible to acquire Discourse when there is no access to its social practice. It is this access that brings participation in social interactions. Hence, social practice according to Gee is an indispensable factor in the acquisition of secondary Discourse. The question then is how can academic Discourse be acquired?

2.8.4 Apprenticeship: a pedagogical model of teaching academic writing at HE

It was indicated at the beginning of this chapter that there was dissatisfaction in the classroom teaching of writing (and reading), particularly at the HE. Prompted by this situation, Gee and other interdisciplinary colleagues began to apply the social theories to the teaching of (academic) writing at the HE. It is against this that Gee (1990) introduced the concept of apprenticeship into the teaching of academic writing (literacy). Arguably, this concept is introduced to answer the „how and who“ questions in the teaching of disciplinary Discourse (academic writing). These questions pertain to who teaches academic writing, and how is Discourse within such modules acquired? Such understanding is informative and essential to the present study because the second core question aims to explore how academic writing is being taught in the ALUGS module.

The acquisition of academic Discourse was described in the previous chapter as a must for students’ academic success in the HEIs (Bengesai, 2012), the module under study inclusive.

Since successful acquisition of Discourse is a precursor to success in the HE, the onus then is on the academic practitioners to pay attention to how academic Discourse is being acquired. Burdened with this concern, Gee (1990) argues that it is impossible to learn Discourses in a normal classroom setting (overtly), but suggests that Discourses can only be acquired through the process of apprenticeship. In relation to the first critical question, „how is writing taught in the ALUGS module?“, Gee is of the notion that academic writing as a discourse cannot be acquired through overt instruction as in the teaching of disciplinary subjects; he maintains that it can only be acquired through the process of apprenticeship. Thus, the discourse theory disapproves of the explicit teaching of writing as a set of skills. He further adds that no one can learn Discourse but by becoming a member of the Discourse community. The implication for the module under study then is that its Discourse, in agreement with Gee, cannot be learnt as a stand-alone set of technical skills, but can only be acquired through immersion into and participation in its social practices. In this regard, Gee (1990, p. xv –xvi) suggests that acquiring academic Discourse requires that:

you start as a „beginner“, watch what’s 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...By the time you are an expert, however, you often can’t say what you do, how you do it, or why. Though, you could show someone.

Following Gee’s description of the process of acquiring academic Discourses, it is evident that its acquisition goes beyond a mere formal classroom setting dominated by overt instruction. Hence, it is imperative that a person seeking membership into the discourse of a particular community is first and foremost a beginner or an „outsider“; not an „insider“ member of the group. Hence, the present manifestation of the entrant students’ under-preparedness for tertiary Discourses, according to Gee (1990), is not a problem, but rather a signal that these students are newcomers who are seeking membership into such Discourses. More importantly, Gee (1990) maintains that there is need for the students to “watch” and observe what is being done, thus emphasizing the role of observation in the induction of a new member into a discourse community.

From the foregoing, observation (the how of teaching) is core to Gee's notion of apprenticeship in Discourse acquisition, and that serves a significant purpose in acquiring Discourse within the module under study. Notably, it is important to note that Gee (1990) describes experts within a particular Discourse as those who have the mastery of the Discourse. However, he maintains that these experts can apprentice newcomers into the Discourse only by showing them the „what, how and why“ of Discourse's social practices. It must be emphasized here that Gee is of the opinion that apprenticing newcomers does not require overt instruction (the telling) (Gee, 2001a), but by showing. Hence, apprenticeship into the academic literacy Discourse requires showing someone what you do, how you do it, as well as why you do it. Consequently, Bengesai describes “teaching as the act of telling someone what to do and how to do it through overt instruction” (Personal communication, November 2, 2014). The implication for the present study is that according to Gee, the only way to ensure a successful acquisition of Discourse in the academic literacy modules such as the one under study is when such practices are embedded within the principle of observation. This therefore substantiates Gee's (2001a) assertion that academic writing cannot be acquired through overt instruction. However, its acquisition is only possible through the „showing“ principle of observation (Cambourne, 2002).

Furthermore, Gee (1990) posits that such acquisition needs to lend itself to collaborative activities, where a more knowledgeable member is actively involved in the performance of certain functions, as the new members also improve with practice. This is in relation to the role of scaffolding in Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD,) where new members are encouraged to perform certain functions through the process called “assisted performance” (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). Implied from the notion of assisted performance in the acquisition of academic Discourse (academic writing in this case) is Tharp and Gallimore's belief that there must be scaffolded or supported interaction (Cambourne, 2002; Cazden, 1988; Heath, 1983; Vygotsky, 1987) with those who already have the mastery of the Discourse. One may assume that these authors are of the opinion that it is when students are given necessary support by AL experts that they can easily traverse through their under-prepared state to that of an expert.

However, Gee's notion of supported interaction opposes this, and advocates for a situation where learners can actively engage in the performance of certain social practices within their academic

Discourse. Thus, Gee is not of the opinion that learners should be provided with supported activities such as skills that can make them overcome such problems as discourse language barrier for making them experts in the discourse language. Accordingly, Gee (2003) maintains that practice makes for perfection and it is when ample opportunities are available for the “newcomers” that they will be able to manifest their ability. Although, Gee adds that they may not be able to express the exact time of their expertise, yet they can manifest their expertise when required. The implication for the present study is that Gee is of the notion that there will be no acquisition of Discourse in academic writing modules such as the one under study, if students are not given sufficient time to actively participate in the meaning making process. In addition to this, is the need for social interaction between tutors and students for successful apprenticing to take place.

Thus, important for the present study are the following;

First, Gee (1990) views students’ under-preparedness for the „essayist type literacy“, the privileged literacy at the tertiary institutions as a sign that informs the academic community of the need to receive such entrant students as newcomers who are seeking to belonging. This is because joining a new tribe (Mckenna, 2010) (the academic Discourse) begins with being an outsider, a novice, or rather an “under-prepared” individual, not an insider or an expert (Gee, 2001a). Thus, Gee (1990) suggests that the notion of under-preparedness should be regarded as a form of willingness to belonging to academia, and not a kind of insurmountable challenge.

Furthermore, Gee also posits that it is adequate exposure to the disciplinary social practices that facilitates the acquisition of academic Discourse, and thus, it must be made available to the students. Since knowledge in academia is based on written texts (Bazerman, 1988), academic writing is then a product of effective engagement with the written texts. It thus can be argued that no- one can write from nowhere (Harste, 2003). The concept of academic writing as a social practice may remain abstract to the new community members if ample opportunities are not available for them to participate in such practice. Thus, making writing accessible to the students entails encouraging them to actively engage with the written text, and consequently modeling their writing practices on those of the experts in the field.

Moreover, Gee (1990) postulates that becoming an expert is time-consuming. Thus, time-challenged modules according to Gee may hinder a complete apprenticeship into the Discourse of such modules. Arguably, modules embedded in the responsibility of inducting students into disciplinary Discourses such as the ALUGS modules should be designed within the time-frame that will facilitate such acquisition. Acquiring Discourse, particularly in the academia may be limited if such modules are time-challenged. For example, assuming that students will successfully acquire Academic Discourse, particularly when such Discourse is unfamiliar with the students' primary Discourses within a single semester, may be time-challenging. Consequently, Gee (1990) suggests that it is when sufficient time is given to students that they will be able to show their expertise in such Discourse. Giving students enough time to practice writing is indispensable to the acquisition of Discourse within the ALUGS module.

Informative to the acquisition of Discourse within the module under study is Gee's stance on the nature of apprenticeship. Gee (1990, p. 174) posits that acquiring Discourse in an apprenticeship manner "requires masters to apprentice apprentices", and that "teachers must be masters of the Discourses they teach". Implied from this position is that true apprenticeship only takes place when the mentoring is being done by an insider- an expert or a master of that particular Discourse community. The implication is that students' challenges with the acquisition of academic discourse may be interpreted as the impact of the way it is being taught. That is, when an inexperienced or a novice practitioner is saddled with the responsibility of teaching academic discourse, there will always be challenges in its acquisition. Thus, Gee in his argument, is of the opinion that it does not only suffice to agree that Discourse cannot be acquired through overt instruction, but also, the apprenticeship should be done by an insider member of such Discourse community. In application, there are two stances to this position. One, Gee (1990) is of the position that academic Discourse should be discipline-specific. Jacobs (2006) argues that when such modules are decontextualized, they serve a generic purpose of induction into the tertiary Discourse. Hence, all that is being taught in such modules has little or no relevance (usefulness) to students' writing practices within their chosen fields of study (Ibid). The implication for the present study thus is that emphasis is placed on making modules such as ALUGS discipline-specific.

On the other hand, Gee (1990) proposes that it is the responsibility of the insider member of the affinity group to induct new members to the Discourse. The Academic literacy module, being a Discourse, therefore requires the service of an expert member for a successful induction into its social practices. However, since Gee (1990) and Jacobs (2006) oppose the tradition of teaching academic literacy as a generic programme, and suggest a discipline-specific approach, induction into such Discourses therefore requires the service of the disciplinary content specialist. Gee therefore maintains that at tertiary level, it is the duty of Discourses such as linguistics, philosophy, or religion to teach their students to write, think, talk, value and act like linguists, philosophers, or as the people in religion do. Accordingly, the teaching of writing outside these Discourses, to Gee, is meaningless in that reading, writing or thinking do not exist outside any Discourse as well as the community that controls it (Jacobs, 2006).

Consequently, Geisler (1994b, in Jacobs, 2006) maintains that acquiring disciplinary knowledge (Discourse) involves the acquisition of both the „domain content“ and its „rhetorical process“. He describes Discourse as a constellation of the disciplinary Discourse community of disciplinary specialists, disciplinary content knowledge, including the field of study and internal and external design grammar. Both the internal and external grammars are the principles and patterns through which complex meanings in the disciplinary contents are being communicated (Gee, 2003, in Jacobs, 2006). However, for the purpose of this study, the „internal design grammar“ is viewed as the way in which each discipline presents (teaches) their content- disciplinary language use. On the other hand, the external design grammar is an approach to the teaching of academic writing where the principles and patterns through which the disciplines communicate meanings are being taught by outsiders, specifically the language experts. The latter is often a situation where academic writing is being taught as a decontextualized, generic and neutral module.

Disciplinary knowledge at tertiary level includes the mastery of the disciplinary content knowledge itself, as well as the principles and patterns (the linguistic features) which determine how complex meanings are communicated within the various disciplines. Geisler however, laments over the tradition in the HEIs where students demonstrate expertise of the content knowledge but are unable to do so in the invisible rhetorical process through which the disciplines communicate meaning. Thus, a mere yearning for the disciplinary-context literacy at

the expense of the rhetorical process through which meaning is communicated, according to Geisler (1994), may be ineffective. As a result, he maintains that there should be an integrated approach to apprenticing students into Discourse.

Thus, Geisler (1994a) is of the opinion that the disciplinary specialists should be engaged in the teaching of the content knowledge of their various disciplines, while the language specialists, on the other hand, should continue with the teaching of the rhetorical process. According to Geisler this is due to the claim that the discipline specialists only have the ability to “see” the rhetorical process used in communicating meaning in their disciplines. The language specialists, on the other hand, are those who have the “knowledge of the rhetorical process” in that they treat language as being opaque (Geisler, 1994), which makes no difference from the present practice.

The researcher disagrees with this notion in two ways. First, Gee (2001a) has earlier postulated that disciplinary language use, „discourse“ is embedded in the Discourse (social practices) of an academic community. The acquisition of such discourse according to him is only possible when it involves an insider member to apprentice the newcomers. Leaving the teaching of the rhetorical process in the care of an „outsider“ AL practitioner discountenances Gee’s theory. Moreover, since discourse is language use encompassing reading, writing, talking, listening, , limiting the teaching of discourse to a rhetorical process (of writing) may be inappropriate. This is because knowledge in HE is said to be cast in the written text. If students are therefore to write appropriately it requires they are provided with written texts (readings) from their disciplines after which they are required to model their writing practices (Hyland, 1992). It may be inappropriate for such modeling to take place outside the students’ specific disciplinary Discourse; otherwise, they may end up acquiring a general-serving discourse such as the use of English and spelling.

However, Jacobs (2006, pp. 243, 244) suggests that it is the responsibility of both language and disciplinary specialists to “own the burden of rhetorical persuasion and redefine their respective roles in making the invisible process explicit for students at tertiary level”; hence, anticipating a “collaborative partnership”. Although this position on collaborative partnership is sound, it is argued that if Discourses (as argued earlier) according to Gee, cannot be acquired outside any

Discourse (disciplines), then extending its acquisition to a “non-affinity group” member (language specialist) should be disregarded. Furthermore, Gee has also postulated that "any Discourse requires masters to apprentice apprentices" and that "teachers must be masters of the Discourses (language use inclusive) they teach" (1990, p. 174). Therefore, the researcher will agree with Jacobs' (2006) suggestion for collaborative partnership only when it is done in a form of in-training service for the disciplinary content experts, because the disciplinary content specialists only lack the knowledge of the rhetorical process (Jacobs, 2006).

Hence, an in-service training is suggested where the language specialists have ample opportunity to equip their disciplinary content „specialist“ colleagues with what is lacking. Thus, each discipline specialist has the need to strive to acquire the mastery of the rhetorical aspect of their Discourse if the students are to be successfully apprenticed into such Discourses. It is therefore argued that such a partnership should be maintained with the intention of apprenticing the content specialists themselves into the rhetorical process of language. However, such partnership should not directly involve the language specialists in the teaching-learning process. Hence, the language specialists need to concentrate on apprenticing their own disciplinary students. This therefore leads to the notion of community of practice by Lave and Wenger (1991).

2.9 Conclusion

The chapter served to introduce the theories used in this study. The NLS was described as the meta-theory from which the concept of academic literacy, having being described as an indeterminate phenomenon (See chapter two), was understood as a socio-culturally situated phenomenon. Street's autonomous and ideological models as well as Gee's concepts of d/Discourse and apprenticeship were the four constructs used to substantiate the meta-theory (NLS). In essence, the last three constructs were used as the basis for foregrounding academic writing within the ideological perspective of literacy, thereby privileging academic writing as a social practice rather than a set of skills waiting to be acquired.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology and Design

“You have been selected as a participant in this research because of your rich experience in lecturing this module..., you have the right to withdraw during the process of participation...” (intvs/ researcher).

3.0 Introduction

There are underlying philosophical assumptions that always determine what constitutes the validity of a research and which methods are appropriate for the development of knowledge in a particular study. Exploring what these assumptions are will unquestionably assist in conducting and evaluating this research. Hence, certain philosophical assumptions will be reviewed along with the design strategies employed in this study. Consequently, the research paradigm, the research methodology as well as the design employed in the study, including the instruments, data collection and also the data analysis methods employed at various stages of the study, are discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The term “paradigm” emanated from the Greek word, “paradeigma”, meaning pattern, and was first used by Thomas Kuhn in 1962 (Kuhn, 1962, p. 8). Kuhn (1977) views paradigm as a research culture with a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions commonly shared among a community of researchers regarding the nature and conduct of research. Gephart (1999) ascertained that research paradigms are classified into three philosophically distinct sets; the positivism, interpretivism, and the critical postmodernism. However, this study elected to employ the interpretive paradigm. The purpose of research within this paradigm is to „understand“ and „interpret“ a specific context “as it is”, rather than generalizing or replicating the study (Quinn 1999, p. 41). Since this study is not aiming at generalizing the findings of the research, but seeks to understand how writing is taught in a particular context (within the ALUGS module), it therefore falls within the interpretive paradigm. Moreover, Reeves and Hedberg (2003, p. 32) also note that the “interpretive paradigm stresses the need to put analysis

in context.” Consequently, researchers within this paradigm stress the importance of interpretation as crucial to knowledge and meaning making.

Hence, the interpretive paradigm frames this study in that it seeks to understand, describe, and interpret the „emic lived“ experiences of the university entrant students who are registered for the ALUGS module. The purpose of which is to understand and describe the nature and impact of the pedagogical practices that are being used in the module so as to provide possible and useful suggestions for further studies. Besides, on the nature of the paradigm, the interpretive paradigm is subjective in that it is concerned with understanding the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals. The implication of this for the present study is that this paradigm encourages a subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants. This is possible through the use of meaning-oriented methodologies such as interviews and participant observations; paving the way for rich and in-depth data as well as reliable findings.

3.2 Research Methodology

The research method is a system of research enquiry that is usually influenced by the underlying assumptions, research designs and data collection (Myers, 2009), and often classified into three distinctive modes; the qualitative, quantitative, and the mixed methods. It has been argued over and over again that there is no such thing as a superiority and inferiority debate between these methods in that none is better than the other, but the suitability is determined by the context, purpose and nature of the research under study (Bryman and Burgess, 1999).

The present study employed the qualitative research since it aims at understanding the emic lived experiences (students writing practices) within the ALUGS module. According to Nkwi, Nyamongo, and Ryan (2001, p. 1), “Qualitative research involves any research that uses data that do not indicate ordinal values.” It is a non-scientific, naturalistic way of researching the emic lived experiences through direct interaction with the local population; using methods such as participant observation or case studies which produce a narrative or descriptive account of a particular setting or practice (Parkinson & Drislane, 2011). This research method is a non-numerical oriented research design and focuses on understanding the meaning people have constructed. That is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2009). This method is employed in this study because it will provide the

researcher with the opportunity of having direct contact and interaction with the research population.

As a naturalistic method of enquiry, the qualitative research method “aims to explore and to discover issues about the problem on hand, because very little is known about the problem. There is usually uncertainty about dimensions and characteristics of problem. It uses „soft“ data, and gets „rich“ data” (Domegan and Fleming, 2007, p. 24). By „soft data“, it means that the method employs the uncomplicated form of research instruments in the process of data generation. In this method, data is generated through direct observation of behavior, interviews, written opinions, or from public documents (Sprinthall, Schmutte, and Surois, 1991; Myers, 2009). Moreover, this method helps researchers to understand people and the social, as well as cultural contexts within which they live (Myers, 2009); allowing the “complexities and differences of worlds-under-study to be explored and represented” (Philip, 1998, p.267). Hence, employing the qualitative research method will to a great extent help in gathering rich and in-depth data about students writing practices within the ALUGS module.

3.3 Research Design

Research design is the research master plan which explains how the major parts of the study work together in attempting to answer the research questions. Yin (2003, p. 19) defines a research design as an “action plan for getting from **here to there**, where ‘**here**’ may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered and ‘**there**’ some set of (conclusion) answers.”

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological case study approach. Creswell (1994, p. 12, cited in Cohen et al, 2011), asserts that a case study design is a „single instance of a bounded system, such as a child..., a class, a school, and a community“. Gerring (2004, p. 341) defines a case study as an “in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena”. Yin (2009) adds that a case study is a research method that aims to describe „what it is like“ to be in a particular situation, as well as describing the participants’ lived experience of, thoughts about, and feelings for, a situation. It is noteworthy that a case study focuses on and answers the „how“ and „why“ type of questions. Yin (2009) further adds that the specific („how“ and „why“) questioning

method in case studies strengthens the likelihood of the research (and researcher) staying on track and within limits.

Thus, since this study aims to understand how and why writing is taught in the ALUGS module the way it is taught, the case study method is considered the most suitable for this research. Another reason which makes the case study approach suitable is its employment of multiple methods of data collection such as interviews, documented evidence, and participant observations (Yin, 2003). The advantage of using the case study is that it allows events and situations to speak for themselves, rather than to be interpreted, evaluated, or judged by the researcher. Hence, the researcher deliberately chose this method in order to gather the required data needed in this study from students' emic lived experiences; where students' written work and their voices speak for them.

Stake (1995, in West and Illinois, 2011) affirms that the purpose of the case study design is for a detailed study of the case as a self-contained entity. He adds that:

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to know how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is an emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (p. 8).

Since particularization, uniqueness and the understanding of a phenomenon are deemed to be the essential qualities of the case study, the present study chose to employ the phenomenological case study for the purpose of understanding the lived experiences of the study participants. According to West and Illinois (2011), a phenomenological approach seeks to understand the phenomena in their own terms through an in-depth description of human experience as experienced by the individual. Furthermore, researchers using the phenomenological case study seek to report the lived experiences of a group of people by capturing and describing their perceived realities in a particular context (Gauweiler, 2005; Patton, 2002). Given that „meaning“ is central to the qualitative research as well as the phenomenological cases (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003), the participants' own perception of their own writing practices will be the focus of the

present study. Consequently, findings will be discussed in relation to existing knowledge with the intent to reveal how the present study has contributed to the body of knowledge in the field of academic literacy, academic writing in particular.

3.4 Research Instruments:

For the purpose of gathering in-depth data for this study, the following research instruments will be employed: these include documentary evidence, observations and interviews.

3.4.1 Documentary evidence

Documentary evidence is a research tool in which documents, in a variety of forms, written or visual, are produced and examined for the purpose of interpreting certain human phenomena (Lunenburg and Irby, 2008). As discussed in the previous chapters of this study, the focus placed on dominant discourses within the HEIs created a further impetus to analyze certain curricular documents within the ALUGS module. These documents include the course outline, course packs and students' written texts (tests and assignments). Among these documents, the Faculty handbooks and the module course pack will be considered as the source of empirical knowledge about institutional perspectives of academic literacy at the institution under study. Hence, these two documents will serve the purpose of revealing the Faculty's views on academic literacy practices, how it should be taught, to whom it should be taught as well as the strategies envisaged by the Faculty towards making such practices accessible to the students. Accordingly, these documents will be representing the Faculty's values and beliefs regarding the module.

On the other hand, nothing else reveals the situation of students' writing practices than their own written work. Thus, students' written texts comprising their assignments and tests within the module were analyzed to reveal their knowledge and understanding of academic writing. Consequently, their major written assignment, an academic essay and the two written tests in the second semester of the 2014 academic session were analyzed. All these documents- comprising the institutional perspective of literacy and the students' understanding of literacy were analyzed to assist in uncovering "underlying causal mechanisms that produce events (in the classroom) and influence students' experiences of academic literacy" (Bengesai, 2012, pp. 109-110) at the university under study.

The table below shows the document analysis schedule:

Figure 3.1 Document analysis schedule

Text type	Number of texts	Year
Faculty handbook	1	2014
ALUGS course pack	1	2014
Students' written assignments	4	2014

The document analysis schedule shown in Figure 4.1 was employed to reveal the number of documents used in carrying out this study. Thus, the 2014 Faculty handbook and the 2014, second semester's ALUGS course pack will be used to examine the institutional perspective on the module. The major assignment written by students on Hyland's (1992) argument for the genre approach to the teaching of writing was used in examining their writing practices within the module. Thus, six documents were used as documentary evidence in the present study to corroborate what was said during the interviews. However, irrespective of how effective such documents are, they may be confusing and may even lose their effectiveness if the researcher does not have a specific purpose for using them. Consequently, the rationale for examining the Faculty handbook was to reveal the nature, audience, purpose and objectives as well as the history of the ALUGS module. Apart from this, the module course pack was examined for the purpose of analyzing the privileged D/discourse; content, purpose, pedagogy, outline, and outcome of the module. This was used to assist in the understanding of why writing is taught the way it is being taught within the module; that it is the contents of the course pack that dictate what is to be taught and how it should be taught.. The students' written work was used to examine their writing practices in relation to D/discourses, issues of social identity, voice, feedback on written texts, as well as student's knowledge and beliefs about academic writing. The implication of this is that the documentary evidence was employed to assist the researcher in answering the second research question: "Why is writing taught the way it is being taught?"

3.4.3 Observation

According to Simpson and Tuson (2003) observation goes beyond mere looking, but is a systematic looking and noting of people, events, behaviours, settings, artifacts, routines and so on. This technique is distinctive in that it offers the researcher (observer) the privilege of gathering live data from naturally occurring social situations. In addition to this, Robson (2002,

p. 310) adds that „what people do may differ from what they say they do“. Apart from this, it is obvious that observational data helps in enabling the researcher to „enter“ and understand the situation that is being described. In order to be part of (enter) the situation under study and for the purpose of understanding it, the researcher has chosen to be a participant observer. A participant observer becomes an empathic, sympathetic member of a group in order to gain access into the insiders“ behaviour and activities, while still acting as a researcher with a degree of detachment (Simpson and Tuson, 2003). This technique was selected with the knowledge that it would provide the opportunity to gather descriptive and in-depth data from the students. They will in time consider the researcher as a supporter of their learning, and will begin to feel at ease with him. Thus, the choice of this technique will enable the gathering of rich data for the study.

Due to the fact that the researcher is also presently teaching the module, a total number of six tutorials and one lecture were observed, the reason being that most of the tutorials in the second semester of 2014 were held at the same hours; they are all double-period tutorials and lectures. Two of the tutorial sections were audio recorded and the remaining two were observed using field-notes. The lectures also were audio recorded and the field-notes were used as well. Furthermore, the researcher took pictures of some of the events happening in these classes. The first research question, how writing is taught within the ALUGS module, prompted the researcher to focus on the way lecturers and tutors teach in the classroom. The privileged perspective of academic literacy, as discussed in chapters two and three of this study, also necessitated the inclusion of issues of power, identities, as well as interaction. Within this perspective, knowledge is said accessible only when there is a level of interaction between the apprentices and the expert (Gee, 2006). Consequently, addressing these limited issues assisted in understanding how lecturers and tutors teach writing and why they teach it the way they do. The contents of the observation schedule are shown in figure 4-3 below.

Figure 3.2 Classroom observation schedule

Focus	Notes
Teaching method	
Level of interaction	

Teaching objectives	
Classroom situation	
Student motivation	

3.4.4 Interviews

Interviews are methods of gathering data via oral questioning through the use of a set of pre-planned questions. This technique is advantageous in that only a few participants are needed to gather rich and in-depth data. Moreover, it allows for direct interaction between the participants and the interviewer. Scholars such as Genise (2002) and Shneiderman and Plaistant (2005), describe the main merits of the interview method in data generation as follows:

- i) it involves direct contact between the interviewer and the participant resulting in specific and constructive suggestions;
- ii) it is essential in gathering detailed information;
- iii) it requires only a few participants to generate in-depth and detailed data.

In line with the needs, purpose and design of the research, interviews can be structured, unstructured and semi-structured. However, for the purpose of this study, **semi-structured face-to-face type interviews**, with open-ended questions will be used to gather descriptive data in the participants' own words. Semi-structured interviews are commonly used to obtain open-ended responses from research participants by asking them open-ended questions rather than observing them, (Tuckman & Harper, 2012, p. 246). Moreover, for the purpose of consistency, a set of pre-planned questions are used by the interviewer in order to cover the same areas of interest with each participant in the course of the interview. This research technique also gives the participant the privilege of detailing and providing more relevant information as the interview progresses. This technique will assist in the gathering of information about students' writing experiences within the module in students' own voices. Below is the interview schedule for the study.

Figure 3.3 Interview schedule

Interview schedule

- How do you find the ALUGS module?
- Is there any difference or similarity between the teaching of writing in the ALUGS module and the way you were taught in high schools? If yes, explain.
- Did you receive any training before you started tutoring the ALUGS module? If yes, explain.
- If not, what is your opinion about providing in-service training for tutors, especially those outside the field of language studies?
- Are you restricted to a particular way of teaching in the ALUGS module, or you are allowed to make choices in your approach?

3.5 Data Analysis

The qualitative case study is concerned with making sense of the data obtained from the direct interpretation of the phenomenon of interest as well as the reported subjective experiences of the research participants. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) state that the qualitative researchers use ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, content analysis and others as approaches in analyzing qualitative data. A qualitative data analysis entails “working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns” (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003). Moreover, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) argue that content analysis is an effective method of analysing data. However, they maintain that although content analysis was initially used in analysing quantitative research, its flexibility has recently compelled qualitative researchers to employ this analysis in analyzing their research data; hence the name qualitative content analysis.

A qualitative content analysis is a “research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). These text data, according to these scholars, include oral, print or electronic forms of communication generated via narrative responses, interviews, focus groups, observations or print materials such as books or articles.

Since the instruments used in gathering data for the present study were interviews, observations and print documents, the research consequently employed the qualitative content analysis. The qualitative content analysis thus assisted in “providing knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314).

The use of semi-structured interviews, document evidence and observation in this study resulted in the generation of large quantities of data, resulting in the difficulty to make sense of this data both to the readers and the researcher. Consequently, the collated data in this study were analyzed using the following stages in content analysis (Mertler, 2006). The first stage was the transcription of all the data collated through the semi-structured interviews and recorded observations. Having transcribed the data, it was read and re-read to ensure familiarization with items noted; this was the second stage. This stage was followed by open source coding. Open source coding is a process of data reduction whereby the volume of information collated is reduced for the purpose of identifying and organizing “data into important patterns and themes” (Lee, 2007, p. 3; Mertler, 2006). These patterns were ideas and expressions that were found similar in the data, while the themes consisted of the participants’ knowledge, beliefs, experiences as well as their opinions in response to the research questions.

Having coded the data into various patterns and themes, the fourth stage in this analysis process was a careful examination of various categories identified in order to determine the links and relationships that existed among them. These four stages informed the data that answered research questions one and two. In the final stage of the analysis process, the theoretical framework was used to make sense of the collated data.

3.6 Sampling Method

The present study employed the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling focuses on those variables that are of interest to the investigation. According to Oliver (2008), purposive sampling is a deliberate selection of specified participants to represent a larger group. This sampling technique is deliberately used to access „knowledgeable people“, i.e. those who have in-depth knowledge on particular issues, perhaps by virtue of their professional role, power, and expertise or experience (Cohen, et al, 2011, p. 157). The purpose is to gather in-depth data from

those who are in a position to give it, rather than randomly selecting a sample that may be largely ignorant of the issues under consideration.

As indicated in the introductory chapter of the thesis, this research study was located in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Hence, the sampling for the present study is categorized into broad and sub- samples. The module itself constituted the broad sample, while the interview participants, classroom observations (lectures and tutorials) and the analysed documents constituted the sub- samples. Although it is clear that students practice writing in all modules at the university under study, the present study only attempted to explore student writing practices within the ALUGS module, thus making the ALUGS module the broad sample for the study. Moreover, for the purpose of collating quality data, two lecturers, two tutors, and four students participated in the interview. However, the criteria for the selection of the interview participants are that they are registered first year students at the university under study, who also are currently registered for the Academic Literacy for Undergraduate Students module. Also, these students have indicated their interest to participate in the study. Not only this, the selection is a purposeful representation of races, a class structure identified in South African classroom situations; this was possible because the researcher was a participant observer as well as an insider throughout the research process.

Furthermore, the remaining non-student participants consisted of four practitioners; two lecturers who are actively involved in the teaching of the module and two tutors in the module. Thus, the implication of the above is that the study participants consisted of two lecturers (White and Black South Africans), two tutors, (a South African, and a Foreigner), and four students (multicultural and multilingual). It is worth noting that the students are currently registered for the module, and not those who have had experience in their previous years of study, but those who are being faced with present challenges and classroom experiences. Two tutorial groups were observed during five contact sessions. The module course pack, the students' written texts- including assignments and tests, were the documents analysed in this study. Thus, the six interview participants, the observed classroom events and the documents analyzed constituted the sub- samples for the present study.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the research

Validity is not always measurable in qualitative research, instead, the term „trustworthiness“ is said to be the apposite term to describe the authenticity and genuineness of a qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1998). The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative research is to support the argument that the research findings are “worth paying attention to”. According to these scholars four issues of trustworthiness are imperative in any qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

To ensure credibility, the interview questions were deliberately rephrased to verify the consistency of interviewees“ responses. This is what Fetterman in Bharuthram (2006) describes as „self-contained triangulation“, a suitable measure of internal consistency. Apart from this, questions posed by the supervisor throughout the various stages of the research also served as a tool in determining the credibility of the study. Also, the data collected, analyses and results were subjected to further criticisms from other researcher(s) in the research field of the study. In addition to this, students“ written works were also used to compare what was said in the interviews with what was observed in the classroom.

With regards to transferability, the researcher ensured that the study provided for rich and detailed descriptions of the participants and the context of the research. This would serve as a guide for conducting similar studies, ensuring transferability. To address the issues of dependability and confirmability, the researcher relied on the independent audit of the research methods of the supervisor and competent peers (Patton, 1990), who thoroughly scrutinized the audit trail which comprised the original transcripts, data analysis documents, field journal, and the text of the dissertation itself. The three data collection tools (observation, documentary evidence, and interviews) used in the study also provided for triangulation, hence, validity for the study and the avoidance of personal bias (Denzin, 1989), in consequence, facilitating the process of trustworthiness.

The term triangulation is used in qualitative research and it involves the use of multiple sources of data collection in an empirical phenomenon to „overcome problems of bias and validity“ (Blaikie, 2000). Creswell (2003) as well as Patton (2002) describe triangulation as a useful research method in comparing data to determine if it collaborates so as to validate research

findings. Hence, it is an essential element in the process of improving the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations have increasingly become a consistent and a crucial rule of engagement in any research study, be it a case study, a phenomenological research or an action research, and its importance is being continuously stressed by researchers. According to Christians (2005), four areas of ethical issues are pivotal to any research. These comprise access and acceptance, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and avoidance of deception. For the purpose of gaining access, letters requesting access, as well as the project brief detailing the nature and purpose of the research, were sent to the Dean of Education, also to the cluster leader of the departments from where the participants were drawn. The participants were also allowed to give their informed consent about whether or not to participate in the study, and were informed that they were free to withdraw at any time without any consequence. On the issue of confidentiality and privacy, the participants were reminded that they would remain anonymous throughout the course of the study.

3.8 Summary

An outline of the research methodologies used in this study was presented in this Chapter. The chapter began with the research paradigm used in the study, followed by the research method, the research design as well as the instruments used in gathering data for the study. The sampling method, issues pertaining to the validity of the research, and research ethics were discussed. This study was described to best fit the interpretive paradigm, and a qualitative research method was employed. Since the study focuses on a particular module and aims to explore students' writing experiences within the module, the study therefore chose the phenomenological case study as its research design. Semi-structured interviews, participant observation and documentary evidence were the instruments used to gather rich data from the eight participants, comprising two lecturers, two tutors, and four students. The qualitative content analysis method was used to analyse the data. Chapter Four now turns to a description of the analysis process and the interpretation of the data.

Chapter Four

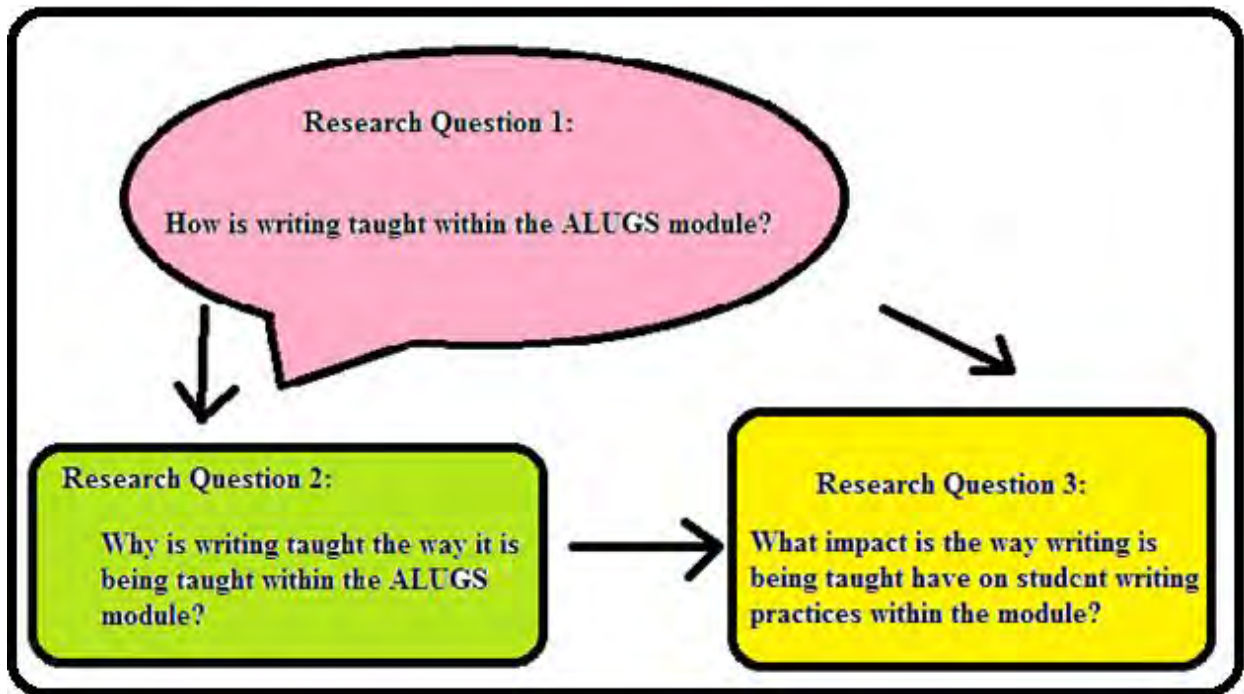
Data analysis - conceptualizing academic writing

“...It depends on the lecturer of that module. If I tried to apply (it) to that specific module, you will find that the lecturer is not satisfied. So what I learnt in ALE did not apply. My lecturer for example, wants me to write the way that he asked me to write not according to what I have been taught during ALE (ALUGS)” (Intvs. / Stu. 1).

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter has provided the background knowledge on how the data for this study were generated. It was said that the study employed semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and documentary evidence to generate data. These three qualitative research instruments were used for the purpose of triangulation in determining the trustworthiness of the research findings. Accordingly, chapter five is the first data analysis chapter for this study. However, for the purpose of coherence and cohesion in analysing the data, the data analysis section has been broken down into three chapters according to the three critical questions underpinning this study. Chapter five will be dealing with the first critical question: how is writing taught within the ALUGS module? Chapter six will revolve round the second critical question: why is writing taught the way it is being taught within the ALUGS module? And finally, Chapter seven will address the third critical question: what impact is the way writing is being taught have on students’ writing practices within the ALUGS module? Figure 4.1 below shows the three broad critical questions that frame this data analysis section.

Figure 4.1 Critical questions used to organise data for analysis



According to the above, Chapter 4 provides a descriptive analysis of all the data that addresses the first critical question: ‘**How is writing taught within the ALUGS module?**’ In this regard, this chapter contains the analysis of data generated through interviews and classroom observations which seek to understand how writing is being taught in the ALUGS module. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two lecturers, two tutors and three students who were actively involved in the teaching and learning of the ALUGS module. As indicated in the methodological chapter, pseudonyms were used in the place of the actual names of the interview participants. This was done to ensure anonymity in the research. Seven tutorials and one lecture were observed. These classes were taught by the same tutor participants who were interviewed, except for the two lecturers - one was not fully involved in the teaching of the module at the time this study was conducted. However, the participant was directly involved in the day-to-day administration of the module. The lecturer whose class was observed was not available for an interview as her contract had ended before the commencement of the interviews. The third lecturer was not observed in class but was interviewed. With regard to the tutors, only one tutor was not interviewed but was observed, given that she only taught the module in semester one.

She was not teaching the module in semester two due to the limited number of students who registered for the module in semester two.

Consequently, Jets, Blacks, and Tina were the lecturer participants, while Zombu, Rak, and Ren were the tutor participants, and Simple, Florey and Pint constituted the student participants who were either interviewed or observed during the course of this study. The distinction between those who were observed and interviewed will be shown later in the observation schedule.

Given that this chapter seeks to understand how writing is being taught within the ALUGS module, it was decided to employ data generated through the interviews and classroom observations. These interviews were used for understanding AL practitioners' ontological orientations that influence the socio-constructedness of their teaching of writing within the ALUGS module. They were also used to understand how students conceptualized and perceived the ALUGS module particularly in relation to academic writing. Following this understanding, the analysis will begin with the interviews. This is followed by the analysis of classroom observations to corroborate the interview section

Thus, the first section will be a discussion on how the study participants have conceptualized the ALUGS module.

4.1 Conceptualizing the ALUGS module: an autonomous perspective

With regards to the first critical question, the first concept that emerged across all interviews, observations and documentary evidences used in this study was how individual participant conceptualized the notion of academic literacy, and academic writing in particular. The understanding that each individual protagonist (students, lecturers and tutors) brought into this social process (ALUGS as a social practice) framed how they conceptualized the notion of academic literacy.

4.2 Students' perception of the ALUGS module: a conduit for academic literacy development

This part of the analysis will be a discussion on how students conceptualized the ALUGS module and what they understood the module to be. In this regard, findings from interviews with students will be used for the purpose of the analysis. Two of the student participants, when asked

about their understanding of the ALUGS module, felt that the module was interesting. Simple, the first student participant, stated that the “*module is quite interesting because it teaches us how to write academically and the way we use academic language*”. A close examination of what makes the module interesting to Simple is her claim that she learnt how to write academically and the use of academic language in the module. Arguably, this statement is an eye-opener that students feel fulfilled when they are able to manipulate academic discourse (language), a discourse which Bourdieu (1994) describes to be no one’s mother tongue. Thus, it seems that the student finds the module interesting because it is within the ALUGS module that issues about the use of academic language and the acquisition of academic discourse are discussed and taught.

The student may have enjoyed this module given that it was the only module that addressed academic writing. She confirmed this by saying: “*...I find this very effective because it helps us because we are always writing in this university*”. From this student’s perception, it seems that writing is the privileged literacy at the university under study. Thus, this agrees with Bazerman’s (1988) assertion that knowledge in HE is cast in written language. In essence, this student perceived writing, particularly academic writing, to be the heart of the teaching-learning activities at the HEIs. Arguably, the reason for this student’s perception of the module as being effective is the fact that every student is required to write at HE, no matter the discipline they belong to. Thus, Simple created a link between the module under study and her writing. Following on from the foregoing, given that university learning is all about writing (Bazerman, 1988) and the ALUGS module is teaching the students how to write academically, Simple therefore concluded that the ALUGS module was effective.

Closely related to this is a response from Florey, the second student. Florey added that the module was “*interesting*” and said it has taught her “*a lot on how to write academic text. It depends on how you see it. To me it’s not that difficult*”. Following these two responses, it seems that these two students find the module interesting and effective because it taught them “*a lot on how to write academic texts*” (Florey).

However, Pint, the third student, described the module as being difficult. She stated: “*it is difficult*” even though she later added that the module taught her how to write essays. She claimed to have found it “*to be (about) how we write essays*”. In contrast to the first two students, Pint’s perceptions about the nature and purpose of the module might have been

responsible for the conclusion that the module is difficult. Her understanding of the module as a module on how to write an essay might be the main reason why she believed that the module is difficult, given that she is a Technology student. She confirmed this by saying that Technology is not about writing, but about machines. She stated that: “*it (technology) talks about machines... and not about writing*”. This therefore alludes to the notion that the generic teaching of writing always decontextualizes literacy practices from the students’ own disciplinary discourses (see chapter 2, section 2.2.1) and renders literacy practices asocial. Pint’s position is informative in that the module has nothing to do with her disciplinary discourse. Such modules cannot boast of any discipline or discourse to call their own, but can only create pseudo discourses of their own (Gee, 1990; Jacobs, 2005). The implication then is that the pseudo-discourses embedded in such a generic programme may have been responsible for Pint’s conclusion that the ALUGS module was difficult.

Admittedly, Lea and Street (2006) have also stated that when an academic literacy module is being taught in a generic manner it is likely to view literacy as an entity and a technology of the mind (see chapter 2, section 2.8.2), where learning is perceived to be uniform, discrete, homogeneous and stable. These characteristics of a generic literacy programme seems to have manifested in Pint’s response in that she declared that what is being taught in the ALUGS module differs from what she is expected to do in her discipline. Hence, it seems that the kind of learning that takes place within the ALUGS tutorials is divorced from students’ disciplinary discourses. One can hence describe the ALUGS module as a module that creates pseudo-discourses of its own. Such a practice obliges students to learn within a social space that is unfamiliar to their affinity group (disciplines) (see Jacobs, 2006, chapter two).

Surprisingly, it appears that the three students were of the opinion that the module was useful. Although Pint earlier disagreed with the other two students because she found the module as being difficult, nonetheless, she later agreed that she had learnt much from the module. This therefore is an indication that the module was perceived as being useful to the students. Pint stated:

“...I learnt how to write an introduction and conclusion and to also write something you understand” (Pint).

Contrary to Pint's earlier disagreement with her colleagues, it seems they all agreed that the module taught them how to write essays. However, it appears that the students were of the opinion that the focus of the ALUGS module was on writing, as there was no reference to reading or any other form of literacy in their responses. The module also privileges writing over other forms of literacy such as reading, and more importantly, the findings also revealed that the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module was on the structure of writing (text-structure). Thus, the students described the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module structure-oriented. These responses therefore revealed that the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module revolved around the essay type of literacy (academic essay writing) and nothing more. This approach to the teaching of writing seems to lend itself to the deficit model where writing is being taught as a set of skills such as the teaching of linguistic features of text, spelling, grammar and organization of texts (Lea and Street, 2006).

If writing is being taught this way, it therefore appears that the approach being used within the ALUGS module is the study skills approach. This then reveals that the ALUGS module privileges the autonomous model of literacy. As discussed in chapter two, this approach holds a deficit or remedial view about the teaching and learning of writing. Green, Hammer and Stephens (2005) describe the deficit approach as the one that positions students to be relatively passive in the teaching-learning process, and on the other hand, views knowledge to be transparent and stable. Thus, such approach offers a kind of generic form of literacy. In this view, whatever is learnt from such a generic platform is taken to be relevant to every discipline within the university.

4.3 Students' Perceptions of Lecturers and Tutors

Nothing can better reveal students' perceptions about their lecturers and tutors within the ALUGS module than their own spoken words. In this regard, I chose to understand how students perceived the AL practitioners by using the audio-recorded interviews with each of the students. In the first place, it appears that these students all admired their tutors and lecturers within the ALUGS module and described them as being great and knowledgeable. Simple (the first student) responded that there was no lecturer or tutor whom she preferred to another as they were all competent. She stated:

“I’m quite comfortable with the ones I have; both lecturer and tutor, they are great” (Simple).

When asked about what she meant by referring to them as being great, she added that:

“I mean we ask questions and they answer you. If you don’t understand something, they explain it. Sometimes language is a barrier, so they actually stick to a simple language” (Simple).

The implication of these statements by the first student participant, Simple, is that these practitioners to this student seemed competent and masters of what they were teaching. This agrees with Gee’s position about who teaches academic literacy as being the master of the Discourse they teach, although Gee’s description of Discourse at this point was more of a discipline rather than a generic module (see chapter three, under section 3.4). As for the second student, Florey, given that she was tutored and lectured by the same person she was indifferent to the question on whom she preferred among the tutors/ lecturers. She stated

“That is a very hard one (question). Okay, I have been tutored by only one tutor and lecturer. I have not experienced being tutored by another tutor, so I’m not sure about that one (question)” (Florey).

Going by this response, one may be tempted to conclude that the student was indifferent; however, she later described her perceptions of the lecturer/ tutor in relation to being tutored and as well lectured by the same person. She added:

“To be honest, I don’t see any difference because when we are in the lectures, the lecturer engaged us and in the lesson he made sure that we participated. The same activities usually take place in the tutorials except that in the tutorials; the tutors are only summarizing what the lecturer has taught us... they go on that that has been already taught. They don’t go deep” (Florey).

The implication from this statement is that this student saw no difference between the lectures and tutorials as the practitioners teach in the e same way. What is interesting from her statement is the fact that the tutorials seem to be repetitions of the lectures as no in-depth teaching took place during the tutorials. Lillis (2003) (see chapter two) however, asserts that a mere surface teaching of academic literacy modules is incapable of making students acquire disciplinary

discourses as these discourses can only be acquired through in-depth teaching because they are culture-embedded. The third student preferred her tutor to other practitioners due to the manner in which the tutor approached her students. She stated:

“Yeah, Ms (...), when she is teaching me something she is always smiling. She is good” (Pint).

Pint’s perception of this tutor as being good because of her approach to the students seems to reinforce Gee’s description of academic literacy as a Discourse with capital „D“. In this description, Gee (1996, p. 131) posits that Discourse goes beyond language use, but...*a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artifacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used...(in a) social network*”. In this regard, Pint seemed to understand that the teaching of the academic literacy module goes beyond the mere use of either spoken or written language, but includes other non-linguistic features of the module. Hence, she appears to have valued the significance of a smile during the teaching of the module. Understood in this way, it can be said that teaching may be more attractive and interesting to students when lecturers and tutors develop positive attitudes towards students. It seems that the three students acknowledged that their tutors and lecturer were good; nonetheless, they had other comments about these practitioners.

Apart from describing the AL practitioners as being good it appears that students experienced some level of confusion in their interaction with tutors and lecturers both in tutorials and during lectures. The first level of confusion seems to manifest in the instructions and explanations given to students during lectures and tutorials. The first student, Simple, suggested that there should be some improvements in the teaching of the module. She stated:

“The information given to us during the lecture is sometimes not the same as the information we get at the tutorial. So we end up not knowing which information to take. Having different lecturers and tutors sticking to one thing; even if we are studying with other students from other groups, lecturers must have the same information” (Simple).

It appears that this student noticed that tutors as well as lecturers were providing them with differing information when teaching the same topics, including explanations as well as answers while solving tutorial questions. This situation was also evident during the classroom observations in Zumbo's, Rak's, and Ren's tutorial classes. It was observed that all the tutors gave different answers to tutorial questions on reading strategies in semester one; details about this will be provided later under the observation section of this chapter. Relevant to this study is the student's advice that all lecturers and tutors should keep to the same answers. This begs the question, which of these differing information or instructions are appropriate or correct? This lack of agreement in teaching seems to be due to a lack of mastery of the module or under-preparedness on the part of the practitioners. Admittedly, acquiring academic discourse under these circumstances may be onerous as partial acquisition of discourse is not an option. (Gee, 2001a). As a result, Gee posits that if academic literacy is to be successfully acquired, then the practitioners must be masters of what they teach. It is not until the tutors have full mastery of the ALUGS module, that the acquisition of discourse within the module will be feasible.

Apart from the confusion at instructional level, students also seemed not to understand the comments of the tutors on their written work. Despite recent debates on the role of effective feedback in developing students' future writing practices and progress (see Weaver, 2007; Ferris, 2008; and Duncan, 2007), the students still complained that they were confused by the nature of the feedback their tutors gave them. One of the students (Simple) described the comments she received on her assignment script as incomprehensible. She insisted that:

“Well, with my tutor, the first essay that we wrote, she just took the essays and marked them. She didn't correct us in terms of for example with the introduction, she was not specific if we included or excluded. The essays that we wrote, it wasn't a draft; it was the actual essay because she gave us marks. So we made a lot of errors because we didn't know. Like other tutors, they actually allow you to bring in your essay, they will make corrections and then you will bring the final draft, the one that they will mark. Our tutor didn't do all that; she just marked the first draft and gave us marks based on it (Simple).

From this statement two important issues become evident, particularly for this study, firstly, this student was of the opinion that her own tutor, unlike other tutors, did not allow her students to produce initial drafts where they could be guided on their errors and omissions and how to improve the essay as a final draft. Notably, this student made reference to other tutorial groups where tutors resolved students' problems in the first draft and have the assignments handed in as the second draft. This reinforces the notion of chain-process in writing development. Neville (1996) states that one of the challenges that students face in relation to writing is their understanding of writing as a final draft. He argues that teaching students the process of writing exposes them to the nature and complexity of academic writing. In this regard he illustrates that "an average academic working on an item to be published is likely to produce three or four drafts and often asks colleagues to comment on what has been written" (Neville, 1996, p.40). Contrary to Neville's view that the process of writing should be taught, Gee (1996) is of the opinion that academic writing cannot be taught explicitly (through overt instruction), but can only be learnt through the process of apprenticeship (see chapter two, section 2.8.4). The reason being that apprenticeship allows students to see for themselves the processes involved in writing development.

Summarily, it appears that the student participants all perceived that their tutors and lecturers are competent, but that they are not united in the kind of instruction they gave students in the tutorials and lectures. Consequently, students were taught differently in the tutorials and are expected to write the same during assessments. Closely related to these differences in lesson delivery, students have also described tutors' written feedback within the ALUGS module as incomprehensible as they are written in language not understood by students. AL practitioners also have their own perceptions about the ALUGS module to that of the students.

4.4 Tutors'/ Lecturers' Perceptions about ALUGS Students

It was revealed in the above discussion that students found the ALUGS module difficult due to the kind of pseudo-discourse that it created, (Gee, 1996) and mostly unfamiliar to students' disciplinary discourses. The type of teaching that took place in the tutorials also has been

described by these students as confusing and unsatisfactory due to tutors' inability to teach the same thing in their tutorials. The discussions thus far have revolved around the students' perceptions of the module, tutors and lecturers. Tutors and lecturers were interviewed to establish a balance in the individual participant's perception of the module and other social members in the teaching and learning of the module. According to one of the tutors, Mrs Zumbo, students seemed to have developed a fear for the ALUGS module due the impression they might have received from other students who probably might have experienced certain difficulty in their engagement with the module. The tutor stated that:

"...in terms of AL, I think my students were under the impression that AL is a very difficult module. So as they were coming to class most of them didn't even want to participate because they assume that the moment they put their hands up I'm just gonna say that the answer is wrong or something of that. As a result they were not willing to participate; they were just shy and they were ready to receive whatever knowledge I was giving them which means there was a myth that needed to be banked or to be clarified in terms of AL (Mrs Zumbo).

It is revealed in this statement that students are afraid to contribute anything in the tutorials because of the type of information they received even before registering for the module. In the university under study, every student believes that the ALUGS module is difficult to pass. This was one of the rationales for embarking on this research to explore how the module is being taught, and the impact that the teaching practices have on the students' writing practices.

It appears that the way writing is being taught within the module, positioned the students to be at a disadvantage, and consequently they see themselves to be passive in the teaching-learning process, that is, students were constructed as passive recipients of knowledge. The tutor said that *"they were ready to receive whatever knowledge I was giving them"*. This therefore reinforces the notion that students should be viewed as tabula rasa or empty beings (Bengesai, 2012), who only wait to be filled with academic writing skills. From this perspective, there is a flawed notion that a student's mind is empty and that it is the duty of lecturers and tutors to fill that emptiness with writing skills (Freire, 2008; Bengesai, 2012). In agreement with this, another tutor, Mrs Rak, while describing her own students, stated that: *"...some of them came without knowing how to write"* (Mrs Rak).

It seems that students have been constructed as being ignorant of the knowledge of writing, particularly academic writing. In this way, the AL practitioners seem to have constructed students within the ALUGS module as being under-prepared for academic writing. However, Mrs Rak emphasized that it is only some of them who came into the system without knowing how to write. This therefore reveals that students come into the system with differences; some have mastered writing as a literacy practice, while the others have not. The question then, is how are these differences attended to within the ALUGS module? A lecturer participant, Mrs Sets, added that despite the differences among these students, they were randomly placed in tutorial groups. She emphasized that there was no provision for diagnostic tests to determine the type of provision each student needs for academic development. She stated: “*It is completely random*”. To reinforce why it was randomly being done, Mr Tina, another lecturer participant stated that:

“ they are just grouped together- there is no placement... in terms of (eeh) placing them in terms of their abilities; in relation to their abilities and their... you know also that for me placing them into different abilities would also create a gap that would not, would never be filled. You know, in the sense that those who are perceived as not able you know you will be always in that position and those who are perceived as able in other words there would be always this difference, you know among students...”(Mr Tina).

The excerpt above informs the present study that AL practitioners were aware that students had differences in academic performances, but the notion that placing students into tutorial groups according to their abilities may serve as a means to naturalize such differences in the classroom. Mrs Sets then added that the majority of the students lack the necessary skills that ought to make them cope with the demands of academic life. She stated that:

“We just found that people did not have those skills in order to the critical thinking, critical reading and critical writing skills in order to cope with the demands of academic life and academic literacy was introduced and became compulsory” (Mrs Sets).

This yet again reinforces the fact that students were perceived as being under-prepared for tertiary literacy. However, this under-preparedness seems to be associated with the lack of

necessary skills such as critical thinking, critical reading and critical writing skills deemed important in coping with academic demands. Mrs Sets further confirmed that this lack is linked to the second language users of English. She states that:

“We were having a lot of second language people coming through the system and the schools were changing, it was a tough change and the nature of schooling in South Africa was changing” (Mrs. Sets).

From this lecturer’s perspective, the ALUGS module seems to have been designed primarily for the second language students because of their lack of those skills that are deemed indispensable for academic success at the university. This therefore reveals that the focus of the module was on equipping students, particularly ESL students, with writing skills. It appears that students who do not have such skills within the ALUGS module are constructed as deficit, thus placing the module to follow after the autonomous model of literacy. Within this model, emphasis is on skill acquisition rather than learning through social interaction (see Street, 2003, chapter two, section 2.8.2).

This therefore reveals that academic writing within this module is taught and perceived as a technology of the mind (Street, 2003), an entity that rests solely within an individual’s brain devoid of cultural and social realities in which learning is embedded. In essence, it is what you either have in your brain or you do not have. It is the fear of not having such skills as described by the tutor that made students perceive academic literacy as being difficult, thus rendering them inactive and non-participatory in tutorials.

4.5 Tutors’/ Lecturers’ Perceptions of the ALUGS module

In line with the above understanding, one of the tutors, while describing the role of the module in student writing practices, stated that the purpose of the module was to teach the structure, vocabulary, and organisation of academic texts. She stated that:

I think AL plays a very important role because we all need to know how to write academically. Firstly we all are coming from different schools; some of us are coming from disadvantaged schools and some are coming from well – advantaged

schools. So when students come in they have all come with those different experiences and some of them don't even know how to construct a simple sentence whereby you have a subject, verb and an object. So, I think AL is very important because that's where we learn how to write academically; because sometimes you know how to write but we don't know how to write academically. We don't even know how to structure an essay. So we really need to be taught such modules at the beginning in our first year so that this can and this should also be reiterated, emphasized in every other module not just in AL. We must be taught how to write, to structure an essay- how to structure an intro because we don't know what to include in the rest of the essay if we don't even know what to write in an intro" (Mrs Zumbo).

This response from a practitioner of AL revealed that the tutor conceptualized AL as a module that should teach students English proficiency, such as syntax, grammar, spelling, structure and formulaic language (Lea and Street, 2000). The purpose of the academic literacy module to this tutor is to teach students what should be included in the introduction as this is what determines what should be included in the body of the essay. Understanding the purpose of the ALUGS module in this way, it reveals that tutor conceptualizes the ALUGS module as that which will equip students with the necessary skills for structuring of academic essays. The question that comes to mind is that if this tutor understood the module to be focusing on the structure of essays and the characteristics of an introduction, what then is academic essay or writing? In a bid to obtain more clarification on how the tutor conceptualized the ALUGS module in line with her understanding of academic writing, the researcher further requested her to clarify what she meant by teaching students how to write an academic essay. In a response to this question, she stated:

I think in my opinion academic writing means that you are writing in a formal language; you use a formal language when you are writing whatever you are writing. You know you don't use word that you don't even know the meaning of. You don't use word that you normally use when you are socializing with your friends, so academic writing for me or academic language for me means that you know the audience who you are writing for. You know the purpose of writing. Why

you are writing a specific text that you are writing. So, it's all about knowing who you are writing for and also the context where are you writing who are you writing where are you writing because if you are writing for your friend to your friends. It's a different place you are in different place you use a different language you use different vocabs (emm). Then when you come to university now that where academic comes we need to know you need to be able to emm what do we call this now? You need to be able to express yourself academically whereby you use the academic jargon. You need to know what is used in the-the vocabs that are used in the university so that it makes whatever you are writing sense to the person that you are writing to (Mrs Zumbo).

From the above excerpt it is clear that this tutor's conception is that academic writing is all about the use of formal language. Her teaching experience of the module a, can be said to have lent itself to the teaching of academic language. Therefore if academic writing is conceived to be all about academic language usage, its focus on the linguistic features of texts might therefore be expected. In essence, this tutor perceived academic writing as the ability to write correctly, whereas Pratt-Johnson (2008) contends that academic writing goes beyond the ability to write correctly, but writing appropriately. A similar response from lecturer 1 also revealed that the teaching of academic writing within the ALUGS module is language focused. She said that the module might have been designed for the ESL students who gained access into the university after 1994. She said: "...we were having a lot of second language people coming through the system... (who) do not have critical thinking, critical reading and critical writing skills in order to cope with the demands of academic life" (Mrs Sets). This therefore is a confirmation that the module is understood to equip students with the skills necessary for coping with the demands of the academic life. However, this lecturer added that the approach used in the teaching of the module follows the principles of the genre approach to the teaching of writing.

What we try to encourage, If you are asking how in terms of methodology that we use when teaching. What we are trying to do is to scaffold the learners and to really follow the genre approach to writing. You know we are trying to practice what we preach and walk and talk. So it is definitely scaffolding. That is the intension (Mrs. Sets).

This lecturer viewed the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module in terms of scaffolded learning. Given that students lack the critical skills necessary for success in the academia, the module therefore focuses on the acquisition of skills. In doing this, Mrs Sets described the methodology used as a scaffolding approach underpinned by the principles of the genre approach. This link between the teaching of writing in the module and the genre approach raises the question about the processes involved in the teaching of writing. In this regard, it is necessary to understand the notion about genre approach to the teaching of writing. Hyland (1992) defined genre analysis as the study of how language is used within a particular context. He further clarified that genres differ according to their goals, and these goals also influence the differences in their structures.

A genre, according to Hyland (1992), is characterized with a particular schematic structure: distinctive beginning, middle, and end. Hammond (1987) adds that this approach aims at making explicit to teachers and students the knowledge about how genres differ according to purpose, topic, audience, and channel of communication. It is in line with these differences that Hyland (1992) posits that modeling is core to the mastery of or control over a particular genre. This therefore highlights the importance of written texts as models in the acquisition and development of writing skills. This is because no one can write from nowhere. If effective teaching of writing, particularly within the academic literacy module, is dependent on the readings that serve as models for writing development, how then is writing taught in relation to reading within the module?

In response to the above question Mrs Sets stated:

“The way that it is addressed? I must confess that with the new academic literacy course, we do not address it enough but the way that it should be is that they (students) should be exposed to many different genres and then to respond, to have questions where they have to respond to the writings that they have read. So I think it should be encouraging more reading but also the students must realize that they have to read outside the classroom. You know that one thing of notional hours, they don’t...somaybe we should have a list of

recommended reading and then they could go and read for themselves (Mrs. Sets).

Although this lecturer was initially of the opinion that the module employed the genre approach to the teaching of writing and in developing students' writing skills she later consented that the present module does not address reading the way it should. The adjective "new", serves as a reminder that the module has undergone a number of changes since its inception. This participant stated earlier when responding to the question on when the module was introduced into the B.Ed curriculum, that: *"I think it has always been probably there before, but not as a compulsory module. But honestly I don't know the history"* (Mrs Sets).

She is of the notion that the module is supposed to expose students to different genres and not to confine them to a particular type of genre, the essayist type for example, which the ALUGS module is currently teaching. Exposing students to different genres in this way creates ample opportunities for students to model their writing against the conventions of such genres, and thereby developing their writing skills. Although this participant was of the opinion that the module should encourage more readings, she argued that *"the students must realize that they have to read outside the classroom"* (Mrs Sets). It seems that this lecturer participant is of the view that students should also share part of the blame. She emphasized that *"students should know"*. Thus, it is the responsibility of the students to start reading from home, and they should not wait for a module or tutors to instruct them to read. This statement revealed that the module gives no attention to reading, in that if students cannot be expected to start writing without guidance, the assumption that students are supposed to know „that they should also read“ makes this notion to be flawed. This therefore signified the level of attention given to reading to write, an approach in developing students' writing practices.

In response to the same question, lecturer 2 (Mr Tina) said:

"The attention that is given to reading is ehh... you know, equipping students with skills to know the purpose of reading. Alright? As I said that reading and writing are intertwined (you know?), so of course you need to know the purpose of writing- what is your purpose of writing? Is it to inform to persuade and so on and so forth? Just like writing you need to know a purpose of reading. That

purpose will determine how you read whether you read for details whether you read for skimming or scanning you know so If you are not introduced to academic literacy you won't know about the skills alright ehm you would read something for details which does not need you to read for details ehm and would read something not for details which requires you to read for details ehm but so those are some of the skills you know that students are introduced to you know and when it comes to reading knowing the purpose of reading., there is kind of imbalance of reading and of course it goes back to the question of ehm...designers of the, the curriculum and the designers of the material” (Mr. Tina).

The male lecturer's perception of reading seems to be different from the way the female lecturer perceived it as the latter argued that reading was not well addressed in the module. On the contrary, this lecturer believed that the way reading was addressed in the module was equipping students with necessary skills to know the purpose of reading. This statement revealed that the focus of reading within the module was to teach students different purposes of reading such as scanning, skimming, extensive and intensive readings. He further posited that if students are not introduced to academic literacy they will not know anything about these skills. He added that *“reading and writing are intertwined...you need to know the purpose of writing...Just like writing you need to know the purpose of reading”*. Knowing these purposes according to him requires the acquisition of both writing and reading skills. The implication from this is that both the teaching of writing and reading within the ALUGS module was about the teaching of skills which the first lecturer described as being inappropriate in that the focus also was on a single genre. However, when asked about the application of how reading was addressed in the ALUGS tutorials and lectures, the male lecturer later added that there were some imbalances between the time allocated to the teaching of writing and reading. These imbalances he ascribed to the question of who designed the curriculum as well as the course materials.

On this same note, one of the tutors (Mrs Zumbo) also described how reading was addressed in her tutorial groups. She stated:

“... I would speak about my own experiences in my own class. In my class what you are saying is true- how can you be able to write when you have got no time to

read or you are not given time to read? So in my class I would take the course packs, I would break it down into little parts. I would ask each and every student to read – ask him to read; don't be shy just tell me the first word that comes to your head- to your mind as you are reading. Don't even think about it just read and try and engage them. As one person is reading everybody else is trying to interpret what is being read, so at the end everybody gets to participate as I would go around. Well, besides the person who has been reading everybody else would be contributing” (Mrs. Zumbo).

In her response to the link between reading and writing, this tutor acceded that it is impossible to fully acquire writing skills when there is no exposure to reading. She maintained that enough time should be accorded to reading in the same manner it is given to writing. However, while talking about her own classroom practices on the subject of reading it seemed the way she believed that reading should be taught is by breaking whatever topic was to be taught into little parts and allocating them to students. Doing this, in her view would lead to students’ acquisition of reading skills. Since this tutor was of the opinion that tutorial topics were usually broken into bits for students to exercise their reading practices, one may be tempted to conclude that the module did not refer about reading. To avoid such a premature conclusion, the researcher went further to ask questions about the number of reading related topics in the course pack. In a response to this question, this tutor revealed that there was only one topic about reading and it was always taught towards the end of tutorials. She said:

“Ok since you’ve touched on that aspect of reading and writing, reading being at the end of the course pack; not many people actually spend more time. At the end, everybody is just trying to rush because we have got so many activities to do. We have got so much to cover at such little time, so I don’t think much attention is being placed on reading it’s all about writing. That’s why I think it’s called academic writing. Most students don’t even call it academic literacy; they think it’s academic writing because the emphasis is on writing not reading, which is true. So, not many people are able to cover that aspect- the reading aspect of the module” (Mrs Zumbo).

The excerpt above indicates that little or no attention was given to the aspect of reading in the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module. This tutor stated that because reading was placed towards the end of the course pack most tutors did not spend much time in teaching their students all that was supposed to be covered in the topic. Due to the limited time given to reading, in that it was supposed to be treated in a single tutorial, many tutors try to rush because there was much to be done within that limited period of time. The institution sidelined the reading strategies in the development of writing within the ALUGS module. Thus, it appears that the institution under study sees no link between reading and student writing. One of the main reasons for saying this was the fact that in semester one reading was only treated once, while it was completely neglected in semester 2. However, Bharuthram (2006, p. iii) opposes such a disposition given that “reading and writing are complementary processes whereby the enhancement of the one has a positive effect on the other”.

It may seem premature at this point to conclude that the institution under study did not give attention to reading in developing student writing practices, given that the first lecturer participant had earlier said that it was the present module did not address reading properly. One may assume then that the subject might have been properly addressed in the older versions of the module. Knowledge of the history of the present ALUGS module can at this point help in understanding how writing was being taught in the older versions of the module. In other words, it is the history of the current module that can serve as an eye-opener in understanding how writing or reading was being taught in the older versions of the module. When asked about the history of the ALUGS module, it seems that the AL practitioners have no record of, or knowledge about the history of the ALUGS module.

In a response to the question on the history of the module, Mrs Sets stated:

“I honestly don’t know. I do not know when, I know that it’s got the...the why is that emm, it would have been introduced after the merger; after 1994 when South Africa became a democratic country. Then 5 years later, we were having a lot of second language people coming through into the system and the schools were changing. it was a tough change and the nature of schooling in South Africa was changing... I think it has always been probably there before but not as a compulsory module. But honestly I don’t know the history” (Mrs. Sets).

In alignment with the response above, Mr Tina said:

“The question of when it was introduced I am not very sure. I only joined the university in 2011 and the module was already there. Okay! Why it was introduced I might not get a full answer as well but my understanding is that when students entered university especially the first year students as much as it is important to know English as a language of learning... Everyone is to, is to learn it. So, why it was introduced, it was introduced because in an environment of academia one has to know how to operate within the environment and to operate within that environment we need academic language” (Mr. Tina).

The two excerpts above indicated that none of the two AL practitioners has knowledge about the history of the module or about the contents of the older versions. When a request was made to view the module template for the current ALUGS module for the purpose of analysis, it was discovered that the current module has no template; instead the table of contents for an older version was used as a replacement. The lack of proper documentation can be described as a major challenge evident in the present teaching of writing within the module. Although the older versions of the module are not the focus of the present study, nonetheless, their inclusion here is relevant to understanding both how and why the module is taught the way it is at the moment. Fairclough (1995, p. 11) suggests that in teaching discourses need to focus on the “historicity of discursive events by showing both their continuity with the past and involvement in making history”. According to Fairclough, the historical background of any module can serve as a key to understanding the inner workings of current discourses (Bengesai, 2012). Thus, the knowledge of the older versions of the ALUGS module in the School of Education at UKZN can provide both the present practitioners and researchers within the module with an understanding of the purpose of the module serves within the school. Figure 4-3 below shows the summary of the interviews in relation to the first research question.

Figure 4.2 Participants' conceptualizations of the ALUGS module

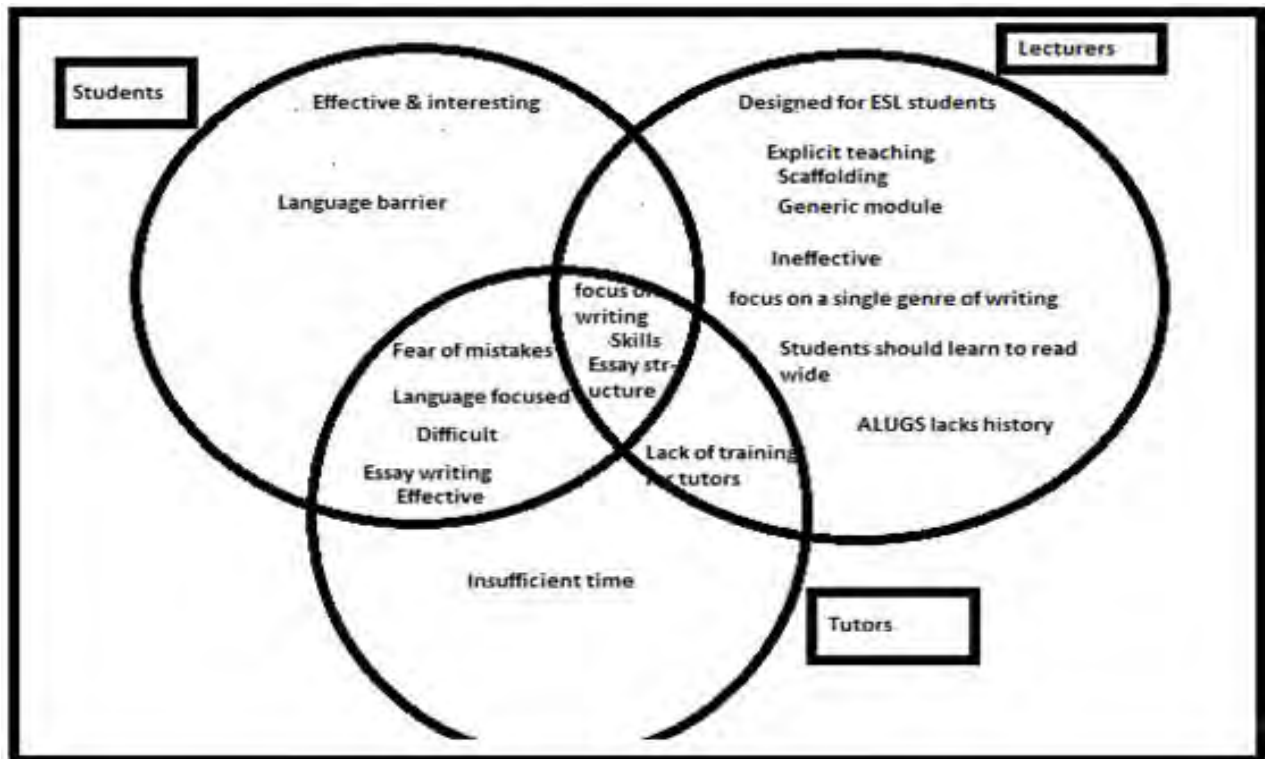


Figure 4.2 above reveals the participants' views about the ALUGS module and academic literacy as a phenomenon. It was discovered that these participants had one thing in common; they all perceived the ALUGS module to be writing oriented, particularly essay writing. It appears that the AL practitioners all viewed the module to have been designed for the ESL students with the assumption that these students have entered the system with a lack of linguistic skills. Moreover, it also revealed that the aspect of writing that was being emphasized in the module was academic essays, being the privileged form of writing at the institution under study. However, two of the student participants, a lecturer and one tutor argued that such practice was not necessarily relevant and useful in students' writing practices outside the ALUGS class, most especially in their various disciplines. The final point of intersection from participants' responses was that the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module followed after the study skills approach. This was evident from the emphases placed on skills that manifested in the responses of all the interviewees.

4.6 Classroom Observations

As discussed earlier, the analysis of the interviews thus far has been used to understand the underlying belief of the AL practitioners' ontological orientations that influence the socio-cultural features of their teaching and students' learning within the ALUGS module. The subsequent section discusses classroom observations. The importance of this to the present study is to reveal the reality of the teaching-learning process within the ALUGS module. Accordingly, seven tutorial contact sections and one lecture were observed during the course of this study. These tutorial classes were taught by the same tutors who were interviewed, however, the lecture was taught by another lecturer who was not available for interviews.

The purpose of these observations was to ascertain the accuracy of what AL practitioners said they did during the empirical stage of this chapter (during the interviews) and what they actually do in the classrooms (the reality of their teaching practices). This was employed in this study because „what people do may differ from what they say they do“ (Robson, 2002, p. 310). Apart from this, it is obvious that observational data help in enabling the researcher to „enter“ and understand the situation that is being described. Since this study was located within the interpretivist paradigm, written comments on each classroom observation were recorded as per the observation schedule illustrated in Figure 5.2 below.

Figure 4.3 Observation Schedule

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE	
Academic Literacy for Under-Graduate Students lecture/ tutorials	
• ting arrangement:	Sea
• ching approach:	Tea
• ssroom interaction:	Cla
• ssroom atmosphere:	Cla
•	Ma

terials used:

The purpose of this classroom observation schedule as to validate the data collated through the audio-recorded interviews. In essence, the observation schedule was used as part of the instrument through which data can be collected for the purpose of understanding how writing was being taught in the ALUGS module in relation to:

- the topics being taught in the ALUGS module
- tutorial/lecture worksheet and what is purported to be learned.
- pedagogy and classroom participation
- the nature of the assignment and tests

The Lecture

The only lecture that was observed was in the first semester; on Tuesday, the 13th of May, 2014. The lecture venue was too small for students in that almost half of the class was sitting outside the hall. Although there were about four lectures held on different days and times, many students preferred the Monday and Tuesday lectures. The reason was that the Monday and Tuesday lectures were always held in the morning, while the others occurred in the afternoon. One major reason for this preference was that many of these students were staying in off-campus residences; places where buses only go to pick and drop students in the morning, at one o'clock, and at four o'clock. Beginning with the pedagogy in use, the lecture followed the traditional lecture method in that the lecturer dominated the discussion and only allowed students to contribute when they were to respond to some tasks in their course packs. Furthermore, the lecturer stood in one place reading out and explaining notes on the power point presentation. In this way, students were just sitting and listening to what was being said but were not actively involved in the process of learning. Although, listening could be argued to also be a form of active participation, nonetheless, developing students' writing practices is a function of their active engagement in the writing process itself. But the situation at hand seems not to give room for the involvement of all the protagonists in the process of learning. This approach is lecturer-centered given that all learning activities are teacher-centered. One of the students in a similar

study by Kershnee (2011, p. 107) described such an approach as ineffective, and self-dominated. She further commented that the lecturer followed “*the teacher centered approach....and I think we have to be like the centre of our learning, we have to say more than what the lecturer is saying*”. This student described such a scenario as unfair in that students’ voices are silenced but instead, it was the lecturers that do the talking while students are placed at the receiving side. This corroborates with what one of the tutors earlier said that students were only waiting to receive what the tutors will give them in the tutorials and lectures. This seems to contradict what social learning theorists described as ideal learning environment where students are to be provided with opportunity to engage with the literacy practices within the community of practice (see Gee, 2001a; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Street, 2006).

One can argue that two things might be responsible for such a situation; one, the large number of students, and two, the stand-by nature of the podium in the lecture room. However, despite the large number of students in the lecture, the lecturer was able to mention students’ names to answer questions from the course packs. This revealed some level of relationship or interaction that existed between this lecturer and her students. Nevertheless, she was only able to mention the names of those who were sitting in the front as she could not move around the class particularly towards the back to notice those who were sitting there. The implication was that it was only the front students who participated in answering questions from the course packs. Furthermore, the slides used contained too much information and were lengthy; resulting in the lecturer speaking very fast in a bid to cover the lecture slides.

It was clear from this observation that the large class (particularly, their attitudes and responsibilities towards their studies) was an impediment to the teaching and learning of the module. Some students appeared to have lost concentration and thereby became passive due to the nature of this venue as well as the pedagogy at play. Consequently, those that sat at the back became noisy and disruptive. Some were chatting; others were playing games on their laptops and other social network devices, while some were sleeping. In a reaction to the situation at the back, the lecturer threatened to leave the class like she did during the previous lecture. The actual classroom scenario is shown in figure 4-4 below:

Figure 4.4 The actual classroom scenario (lecture and tutorials)



The tutorials, on the other hand, were somehow similar to the lectures. As indicated earlier, the ALUGS module, like other modules at the university under study, is being taught in, traditional lecture classes and also in small tutorial groups. Three tutorials were observed towards the close of first semester, and four were observed during semester two. Due to the decrease in the number of students who registered for the module in semester two, there were only four tutors on the module, against the nine tutors who were teaching it in semester one. Each tutor had two tutorial groups being taught concurrently, except for one of the tutors who was also lecturing the module; he only had one group. The biological data of the tutors that were observed are shown in figure 4-4 below.

Figure 4.5 Biological data of tutors whose classes were observed.

Tutor	Qualifications	Experience	Observed/interview	Semester
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			ed	
Mrs. Zumbo	Master's student in Social Justice	Two years tutoring on the module	Both	Semesters 1 & 2
Mrs. Rak	Master's student in Social Justice	One and half years on tutoring the module	Both	Semester 2
Ren	Master's student	One semester on tutoring the module	Observed	Semester 1

As indicated in figure 5.4 above, it is clear that the three tutors interviewed and /or observed were all from Social Justice in the School of Education and thus could be described as non-language specialists. The implication from this biological data schedule is that the ALUGS module has been described by all participants as a module whose focus was to develop students' writing skills, particularly the teaching of linguistic features of essay writing such as spelling, grammar, syntax, paragraphing, etc. It was revealed that this language-embedded module was being taught by non-language specialists whereas Gee (1996) maintains that it is the duty of disciplinary specialist to teach disciplinary discourses.

However, since the purpose of the tutorials was to reinforce what had been learnt in the lectures and also to create more opportunities for students to acquire academic literacy, particularly through interactive activities, the ways in which academic writing was being taught in the module was observed and how such opportunities were created. From this observation of all the tutorials, it was clear that the module was conceptualized as a remedial module and tutors were to remedy the students' linguistic deficits. All the tutorials focused on writing, particularly academic writing. From the tutorials that were observed in semester one, the tutorial topic was the only topic on reading strategies. The first class taught by the first tutor, Mrs Zumbo, had a large number of students, the reason being that one of the tutors was absent and two classes were merged together.

Arguably, the situation described above disrupted the normal tutorial structure in that the seating arrangement followed that of the lecture. This did not have much impact on the teaching and learning of the module, nonetheless, it did not provide the students with the opportunity to discuss in groups. The topic of the tutorial that day was on reading strategies. Being the first and the only topic on reading, the tutor introduced the topic to students and immediately mentioned the four different kinds of reading. In explaining these strategies to the students, it was obvious that the tutor was not fully prepared for the class as she was reading from the course packs after which she would explain. This lack of preparation was also observed in another class as the tutor relied on the researcher to help distinguish between the four strategies of reading. Moreover, it seemed that these tutors only limited their preparation to the definition given in the course packs. For example, the four strategies of reading were outlined and explained in the course packs as follows:

- **Skimming**– running the eyes over quickly, to get the gist
- **Scanning**– looking for a particular piece of information
- **Extensive reading** – longer texts for pleasure and needing global understanding
- **Intensive reading** – shorter texts, extracting specific information, accurate reading for detail.

It was discovered that none of the tutors had researched these strategies before coming to the class. This situation was further supported by a lecturer's response to tutors' performances in the teaching of the module. Mrs Sets said:

“...to be honest with you we find that some of the tutors don't have those academic literacy skills” (Mrs Sets).

It was revealed through the excerpt above that some of the tutors who were given the responsibility of teaching the skills of writing within the ALUGS module themselves lacked those skills they were to teach. The module cannot be effectively taught when the tutors are not masters of what they teach. This reveals the aptness of students' description of their tutors who came to the class to give different information and instructions to students. One of the lecturers, on answering the question on who teaches academic literacy within the module, stated that:

“They should be (language specialists) but I don’t know...That is a an honest answer because I don’t deal with the hiring of tutors and I don’t...I’m just given tutors- I’m just told that these are the tutors you have for academic literacy and so on and so forth...with an understanding that someone who hired them...knows what is it that they were looking for from them” (Mr. Tina).

This lecturer seems to be of the notion that academic literacy within the ALUGS module should be the job of a language specialist, the reason being that the focus was on essay writing. ONE would have assumed that this situation ought to have prompted these non-specialist tutors to be adequately prepared for their classes. On the contrary, Mrs Sets further stated:

“Some of the tutors don’t tread much and are not always prepared properly and sometimes there is also a little bit of confusion around what has to be taught in the tutorials” (Mrs Sets).

This lack of preparation manifested in Mrs Zumbo’s tutorial group, as she was not sure of the correct answers to the multiple choice questions when students encountered difficulty in ticking the correct answers to some questions. An example of such question was ticking the right strategy for reading a text in class. Some students chose skimming while others selected intensive reading. The tutor ignored the questions and moved on to others, but sometimes she could not give students the correct answer. Although, this situation, coupled with the seating arrangements, made the tutorial non-participatory from the start, the class became participatory when the tutor asked each student to contribute something to the tutorial. This was in agreement with what this tutor said about engaging students with the readings in the course packs when interviewed. She stated:

“Ok in my class, I will speak about my own experiences in my own class. In my class what you are saying is true; how can you be able to write when you have got no time to read or you are not given time to read? So in my class I would take the course packs, I would break it down into little parts; I would ask each and every student to read – ask him to read. Don’t be shy, just tell me the first word that comes to your head- to your mind as you are reading. Don’t even think about it just read and try and engage them. As one person is reading

everybody else is trying to interpret what is being read. So, at the end everybody gets to participate as I would go round. Well, besides the person who has been reading everybody else would be contributing” (Mrs Zumbo).

It was evident during this observation that the most effective technique Mrs Zumbo used in making students participate and contribute in the tutorial activities was involving and engaging students with the readings provided in the course packs. She demonstrated this by breaking down the texts to be read into four paragraphs and assigned some students to do the reading. Four students were chosen to read the four paragraphs. It was observed that as these students read the texts aloud to the whole class and students were following at the same pace. As for the third tutor, Ren, despite the fact that the classroom setting followed that of a lecture hall, which in most cases is a hindrance to effective teaching and learning, her class was interactive. The reason was that she involved every student in the reading as was the case with Mrs Zumbo.

In addition, the lesson (in tutorial three) was logically presented and the tutor was able to demonstrate mastery of the topic in answering the students’ questions. . This justifies Mrs Sets’ view that some of the tutors did not prepare very well for the tutorials. This revealed that it is not all tutors who did not prepare well before they entered into the classroom to teach. Nonetheless, the tutor was not able to take full control of the tutorial as some students were playing games on their cell phones, chatting, and others seemed to have lost concentration.

The findings based on the observations of these two tutorial groups show that students tend to listen when opportunities are provided for engagement with tasks, but remain passive when it is the tutor or lecturer that does the talking. This therefore justifies the ideological perspective of literacy that literacy is a social practice involving the participation of the social persons within the community of practice (See chapter three). Literacy practice then can be fathomed to be what people do with literacy (see Barton and Hamilton, 2000). Cast in this way, literacy can never be a practice when students are not given ample opportunities to interact with other social members and participate in the process of making meaning (see Gee, 2001a).

It was observed that it was only a small number of students who participated and contributed in all the classes while most of the other students remained passive. This observation points to the fact that students are different and these differences manifested in their academic abilities which

varied in type and kind (see chapter two, section 2.6). Mckenna (2010) classified these differences as a two-pronged challenge; difficulty with discourse (language of instruction) and difficulty with Discourse. At the discourse (language) level many of the students seemed to be intimidated by English as being the language of instruction within the ALUGS module, and as a result they were silent in class for fear of being mocked or being laughed at by their colleagues. Simple (student 1) testified to this when she said: *“Sometimes language is a barrier...they (the tutors) actually stick to a simple language”*. Mrs Zumbo’s description of the challenges faced by her students confirmed this situation. She stated:

“I think my students were under the impression that AL is a very difficult module. So, as they were coming to class most of them didn’t even want to participate because they assume that the moment they put their hand up I’m just gonna say that the answer is wrong or something of that. So... as a result they were not willing to participate. They were just shy and they were ready to receive whatever knowledge that I was giving them” (Mrs Zumbo).

Consequently, in a bid to employ a simpler form of language, it was observed that tutor 1 (Mrs. Zumbo) often code-switched into isizulu, being the first language of the majority of the students. Through this medium she was able to explain certain concepts to the students. Boughey (2005) explains this situation as the ability (of a tutor) to integrate prior knowledge into the process of meaning making for the purpose of internalizing the knowledge through the medium of a (first) language. However, the situation changed as students began to participate in their groups, particularly in providing answers to the tutorial questions. This therefore counters the debate on the limited proficiency notion, but indicates that students can improve on their acquisition of a new discourse by falling back on their primary discourses (Gee, 1996).

However, the situation was not the same with tutor 2’s class. Students seemed to have been constructed as receivers of knowledge since all that the tutor asked her students to do was to read certain paragraphs and ascertained if they had understood what they had read. There was no wrong or right answer. The only time that students seemed to be engaged with learning within the module was when the tutor asked them to read certain paragraphs or when they were asked to provide answers to certain tutorial questions. Unsurprisingly, coupled with the language challenge, this led into many students’ unwillingness to contribute during the tutorials. In

comparison with Tutor 1's group, it appeared that students participated in tutorials when ample opportunities were made available to them. It was also observed that students felt nervous when restricted to the language of instruction, as they were not able to negotiate knowledge through their primary discourse. Admittedly, Mqgwashu (2009), in agreement with Gee's notion that the acquisition of a secondary Discourse can be aided through the primary Discourses, gave an autobiographical narrative of how ideas first conceptualized in L1 and then translated in L2 can lead to an increased understanding of concepts within the new Discourse.

In essence, reading strategies were addressed only once during the semester. The observation revealed that the deficit approach was used in both tutorials as students were provided with types of reading as well as multiple choice questions, all being core characteristics of the deficit or study skills model of literacy.

As indicated earlier, four tutorial classes were observed in the second semester, and the only difference in terms of the approaches that were used and the contents of the module in both semesters was that reading strategies were hurriedly taught in semester one, but was not taught in semester two. The four tutorial groups that were observed were taught by tutors 1 and 2 (Mrs Zumbo and Mrs Rak). Mrs Zumbo (tutor 1) began the tutorial on critical thinking and argumentation by asking the students to describe what they saw in a transparent sheet. It was observed that the tutor had the intention of using the overhead projector to illustrate what critical thinking was about. Unfortunately, it was discovered that the projector had been faulty; this led the tutor into improvising materials for teaching the topic. She made copies of the transparencies containing four images on visual literacy from the front page of a Language and Literacy module course pack and passed them round for students to critically describe what they saw.

It appeared that this exercise allowed students to discuss in groups which also led to debate among the students before they eventually agreed on the same answers. Some students argued that they could only see a face in image 1, while others added that they saw buildings and a tree as well as a man walking away from the tree. The same thing happened with other images. Having realized the purpose of using these images, the tutor then linked this understanding with the topic of the tutorial, "critical thinking and argumentation". She told her students that critical thinking involves the ability to go the extra mile with the information given in texts. That it has to do with:

“evaluating, analyzing and confirming the credibility of such information. So guys, critical thinking is a kind of thinking you...when you are given information you need to evaluate, you need to analyze...” (Mrs Zumbo).

From this excerpt, it was clear that the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module in Mrs Zumbo’s tutorial group (tutorial 1) everything revolved around the acquisition of skills, be it critical thinking skills, reading skills or writing skills; the reason being that she emphasized the acquisition of skills both in the actual classroom teaching and as well as in the interviews.

The second tutorial group, on the other hand, did not create much opportunity for students to participate during the lessons as the tutor was more of a lecturer in her teaching method than a tutor. Mrs, Rak usually came into the class, introduced the topic, wrote it on the board, and demanded that students should begin the reading from their course packs after which she took charge of the talking. This approach seems to only dispose students as receivers of knowledge and not actively involved in the production of knowledge. The only opportunity given to students to participate in her classes was when they were asked to answer certain tutorial questions. Although there seemed to be many similarities between the two tutorial groups, students seemed to participate more in group 1, in that they sometimes received the motivation to use their L1 during discussions in their small groups.

The understanding gained from the observations of these tutorial groups indicated that these classes were tutor-centered while students only contributed at the request of the tutor. More so, tutorials were to serve as a place of interaction for students where each student is provided with opportunities not only to be involved in the production of knowledge, but to be joint producers of knowledge. The tutor-centered approach can be said to have only constructed students to be passively involved in the process of learning. In the same manner, it was also noticed that students only participated to provide answers to tutorial questions. In this regard, the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module particularly in these tutorials seems to have shifted from the purpose that small tutorial groups ought to serve. Tutorials differ from traditional lecture method in that they ought to create opportunities for students to negotiate their understanding of certain concepts through interaction with other members of the groups for the joint construction of knowledge.

From the analysis thus far, it has been indicated that the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module, particularly within the classes that were observed, focused on academic skills discourse (Lea and Street, 2000). This was evident in the tutors' and lecturer's perception of the purpose of the ALUGS module as they emphasized that the module ought to improve students' language skills. Consequently, their teaching practices centered on the structure of essay, referencing, academic language use and grammar. Student 3 found the module to be about "*how we write wan introduction and conclusion*". From this comment, it is noteworthy that the ALUGS module privileged the structure of the essay at the expense of students' disciplinary discourses contents. As a consequence, the students who were interviewed viewed the ALUGS module as useful in terms of essay writing, but irrelevant when it comes to their disciplinary discourses.

This chapter has presented evidence that show how students, tutors and lecturers within the ALUGS module have conceptualized academic literacy, and particularly how writing was being taught within the module. The findings revealed that academic literacy was perceived as an academic skills discourse where emphasis was placed on the acquisition of skills and other external linguistic features. It was also revealed that AL practitioners focused on the explicit teaching of essay writing such as grammar, academic language, spelling, referencing, and text structure. These topics have also been the focus of feedback on students' written works across the tutorial groups. The findings further revealed that there was no uniformity in the teaching of the module among various tutorial groups. The main question that arises from such an „unprofessional stance or practice“ informs the next chapter; why is writing taught the way it is being taught within the ALUGS module?

4.7.0 Data Analysis II – On Rationalizing the Pedagogical Choice

The argument contained in the previous section was that the teaching of academic writing in the ALUGS module followed the academic skills discourse; thus privileging literacy as a set of skills

residing in the human brain rather than as a social practice where emphasis is placed on participation of all members of a particular community of practice (Gee, 1996; 2001a; Lave and Wenger, 1991). It was evident from the previous section that the Faculty prioritizes the explicit teaching and learning of writing skills in a way that positioned those skills as transferable from one context to another. This manifested in the responses received during the interview section and \ during the classroom observations, where tutors and lecturers often emphasized the acquisition of skills. This chapter focuses on the rationale for the choice of the pedagogy used in the ALUGS module. Thus, this chapter contains a discussion on data collated from two of the research instruments to discover the reason for the choice of the pedagogy used in the ALUGS module. These instruments include documents and interviews. Data collated from the documentary evidence were mainly through the Faculty handbook and the ALUGS module course packs. All the documentary evidence represents what the Faculty deems to be worthwhile knowledge, while the interviews reveal the verbal account of the participants' understanding of their context (Bengesai, 2012).

The findings emanating from the first critical question which dealt with how writing was being taught within the ALUGS module constituted the preliminary data used in analyzing the second critical question: why is writing taught the way it is being taught within the ALUGS module? The AL practitioners' responses to interview questions on how writing was taught within the module were employed in the first phase of the analysis. Accordingly, the second section of this chapter discusses data collated from the Faculty handbook and ALUGS module course pack for semester two of 2014. This section then presents a descriptive analysis of both the content of the module, and in line with the second critical question, it also discussed why writing is taught the way it is being taught within the ALUGS module. This is critical to the study because it provides the reader with the background from which the causal mechanisms that contributed to the choice of the existing pedagogy within the module.

4.7.1 On exploring the choice of the pedagogy at play: an analysis of consequential data

As indicated earlier, the findings emanating from the first critical question on how writing was taught within the ALUGS module are grouped into three major categories, which are a lack of uniformity in teaching; tutors' unpreparedness for teaching, and the teaching of skills.

It was revealed that there was no uniformity in the teaching of ALUGS across various tutorial groups, but the students were assessed in the same way. It is therefore imperative that one asks why the module was being taught this way. In answering this question, one of the practitioners explained that it was because some of the tutors themselves did not possess the necessary skills to equip students. She said:

"...to be honest with you, we found that some of the tutors don't have those academic literacy skills. Some of the tutors don't read much and not always prepared properly and sometimes there is also a little bit of confusion around what has to be taught on the tutorials" (Mrs. Sets).

From the above response, it is evident that one of the reasons why writing was taught the way it was taught was because some of the tutors themselves have not acquired the academic skills they were expected to transmit to their students. Such practice contradicts what Gee (1990) suggests is essential in the effective teaching of academic literacy. Gee argues that it is only the insider member (an expert) of a particular discipline that ought to be charged with the responsibility of apprenticing newcomers (entrant students) and inducting them into such Discourses. He proposes that "any Discourse requires masters to apprentice apprentices" and that "teachers must be masters of the Discourses (language use inclusive) they teach" (Gee, 1990, p. 174). It appears these tutors were teaching differently in their tutorials because some could not be described as masters of the academic writing discourse due to the lack of identity kits which make one a recognizable member of the Discourse.

Moreover, apart from tutors' lack of academic literacy skills as indicated above, the excerpt also revealed that tutors taught the way they taught because they did not read (much). If effective writing is a product of consistent engagement with written texts, the onus therefore is on the teachers (tutors) of academic writing to engage themselves with written texts in order to master what they are to teach. As earlier stated, making writing accessible to students entails

encouraging them to actively engage with the written text. Consequently, they are to model their writing practices on those of the experts in the field. These experts must strive to master such discourse through effective engagement with readings around the discourse. Arguably, failure to engage with written texts, appears to be one of the reasons why tutors taught the way they did. They seemed to have continued teaching the module the way they do due to their limited exposure to different genres of writing as well as various ways of teaching academic writing. Although, one can argue that these tutors may not be used as a benchmark in this study the reason being that they are not experienced lecturers of the module, nevertheless, they are conceptualised as a benchmark in that they are more involved in the teaching and assessments of the module.

Not only did some of the tutors do not read much, but they also seemed to be inadequately prepared before class. Universally, the term under-preparedness has historically been associated with students as if they are the only protagonist in the production of knowledge. Engstrom (2008) argues that tutors and lecturers should also see themselves as active participants and be fully prepared to assist students with their writing challenges. Thus, the tutors' inability to fully prepare for their teaching might be one of the reasons Mrs Sets, the first lecturer participant challenged the way writing was being taught within the module. In agreement with this argument, one of the tutors during an informal conversation confirmed that she usually does not prepare before the class, the reason being that she has been teaching the module for two years now. She further said, *"I love AL, I don't even need to prepare before I teach it"* (Mrs Zumbo). Hence, the lack of adequate preparation appears to be the reason why this tutor continued to teach the module the way she has done

This inadequate preparation was described to be as a result of the tutors' lack of commitment to teaching within the module. Mrs Sets further added that:

"Another problem is that our tutors are also students, we don't have them full time; some are coming and going. Lots of them are doing it because they need money. So there is no commitment to it" (Mrs Sets).

From this excerpt, what motivated some of these tutors to take up the teaching of the ALUGS module was the monetary benefit. This implied that tutors applied for the teaching of the module, not because they had any interest in teaching or in developing students' writing skills, but what the module offered as a reward. If money was the motivator for engagement with the teaching of academic writing within this module, it begs the question why these tutors are employed to teach the module.

In response to this question, the second lecturer, Mr Tina stated:

"You...have to swim against the tide... tutors are put in a situation of eh... you either swim or sink...so when you sink you sink with your sinking students, yeah! No one is there-there to rescue you" (Mr Tina).

From Mr Tina's perspective, tutors were not just teaching the way they did, but there were other factors that necessitated such a practice as well as their attitude towards the teaching of the module. This practitioner, using his past experience as a tutor within the module, explained that tutors had no choice than to teach the way they do in that they were hired without proper guidance on what to teach and how to teach it. Consequently, they either swim or sink- teaching accordingly or confusing the students. This therefore can be linked to lecturer 1's position that "...sometimes there is also a little bit of confusion around what has to be taught on the tutorials" (Mrs Sets). In relation to this, Mr Tina was of the opinion that since academic writing within the ALUGS module focuses on skills acquisition, particularly language specific, he conceded that "*they (tutors) should be (language specialists) but I don't know*". This statement reveals that this practitioner had no knowledge about how these tutors were being hired, particularly, the prerequisites for teaching academic writing. He said:

"...that is an honest answer because I don't deal with the hiring of tutors and I don't you know. I'm just given tutors; I'm just told that these are the tutors you have for academic literacy and so on and so forth eh...with an understanding that someone who hired them (you know) knows what is it that they were looking for from them" (Mr Tina).

The excerpt revealed that the speaker knew nothing about the hiring of tutors within the module, although they were to eventually work with him. However, he also indicated that it is the responsibility of the people who hired them to determine their efficacy.

In relation to how tutors' under-preparedness as well as their lack of commitment to teaching has influenced how writing was being taught within the module, Mrs Sets added that another reason for teaching writing the way it was taught was the lack of pre- and in-service trainings. She affirmed that there has never been any kind of training to serve as guidance for what and how to teach writing within the ALUGS module. The lack of training is not a new idea to tertiary institutions in that "there are instances where members of the teaching staff are not trained to teach the subjects they are teaching" (Chukwe, 2011, p. 46). Chukwe further argued that the fact that lecturers or tutors are qualified to teach specific courses (based on their degree qualification) does not mean they should not be trained before they teach the course. In some cases, a lecturer or a tutor may be asked to teach a module that was never part of his training. This in one way or the other might have impacted on the way writing is being taught within the ALUGS module. When asked about the kind of training that was provided for the teaching of ALUGS module, one of the tutors said:

"Not that I remember. I don't recall...I don't know but I know this year nothing; definitely this year no- I don't remember; I remember us having meetings but meeting based on marking - how do you go about marking? But not how do you go about teaching the module" (Mrs. Zumbo).

The excerpt above revealed that tutors received no training on how to teach writing in the ALUGS module before they started teaching it, and there was no training during the course of the module. Hence, if academic writing is more sophisticated than mere writing practices, then the teaching of academic writing cannot be the same as in an ordinary writing class. In this regard, lack of both pre-service and in-service training might have been one of the reasons for teaching academic writing the way it was taught in the ALUGS module. Notably, it was revealed that the only meeting with the tutors was on criteria for assessments, not even training. This therefore alludes to the fact the tutors were teaching differently as a result of having had no training on what to teach and how to teach it. The meeting for assessment on the other hand

implies that all students are to be assessed the same way though taught in different ways (possibly different things). This tutor further confirmed this by saying that:

“Due to the lack of training whether its pre-service or in-service or post-service ... there is no standardization so everybody is just trying to do as much as they can in that double period...some of us are struggling; some of us know what to do, but we have never had an opportunity to come as a group, maybe ask those...who were teaching before us...come back and say you know what guys? I taught this module maybe two years ago and I understand it”s frustrating because there is no guideline there is no guideline...you”re just given...a course pack- please go and teach this module for me. What do you teach and how do you teach it does not matter. They are just assuming because you have got your Masters (degree) in that particular field wherever you are you would have done the module. So you would be able to teach it well. So they are under that assumption not realising (that) we are different people coming with different teaching methods and pedagogies so it`s not. We don”teven know if we are really really doing justice to the module and to the students” (Mrs Zumbo).

The excerpt above indicates that there was no specific standard for the teaching of the module as a result of the lack of training for tutors. This confirms the first student”s observation, that the information given to students at the tutorials differ from the one they had received, which confused the students regarding which information to take. It is this lack of standardization that led to tutors teaching differently. The excerpt further revealed that some of the tutors also struggled with teaching the module. It also seemed that each tutor was teaching independently because there was never a time when could meet to deliberate what to teach in class. Another reason for the way writing was being taught was the lack of a model or an expert who could show the tutors what to do and how to do it.

In addition, one of the lecturers was of the view that writing was taught the way it was taught within the ALUGS module because of the curriculum planner. He stated that:

“...why it’s taught the way it is taught right now I think it is because of how the curriculum is designed. Then you have to ask the question who designed the curriculum and what is it they wanted to achieve. Because for me, designing a curriculum would mean there is a problem or there is a phenomenon that I want to address; that is why you design a curriculum in that fashion. So, the question in this case which we cannot answer right now is why the curriculum for academic literacy is designed in the way it is designed because the way it is designed it is only responding...to academic writing in terms of essays and so on and so forth...” (Mr Tina).

From the above excerpt, it appears that lecturer 2 linked the reason for the way writing was being taught within the ALUGS Module to the nature of the curriculum. He revealed that tutors and lecturers taught the module the way they did because they have been positioned that way by the curriculum planners. He also added that the curriculum for the academic literacy module was designed for a particular purpose, which at present seems to be addressing academic writing in relation to essay writing. However, this purpose remains unknown to the practitioners themselves as they were not there at the time the curriculum was being planned. Thus, answering the question on why the approach in use was privileged is all about assumptions as none of them actually know why the curriculum privileged the pedagogy use.

Moreover, one of the major reasons the module was taught the way it was being taught was the Faculty’s assumption that these tutors should know what to teach and how to teach it. Such an assumption could be described as one of the causal mechanisms for teaching writing the way it was being taught. These kinds of assumptions may have also been responsible for the lack of training for the tutors, since they were assumed to have had their own pedagogy to bring about successful teaching and learning. Thus, it was assumed that they needed no training. All these factors may have been a result of the belief that every post-graduate student should know how to teach, particularly academic writing. In this regard, the Faculty appears to place unreasonable expectations on the tutors in delivering quality and sound teaching without proper training. Chukwe (2011) argues that these expectations can never be justified.

Although the above- mentioned factors relate to tutors’ teaching practices, an important aspect of the module that requires an explanation for the way it is, is the structure of the module. As

discussed earlier, it was indicated that the ALUGS module has a two-dimensional outlook: it is being taught by way of a traditional lecture, as well as in small tutorial groups. When asked about the shape that the module takes, one of the lecturers explained that the purpose the tutorials served for the module was to follow on the genre approach to the teaching of writing. She stated that:

“What we try to encourage...What we are trying to do is to scaffold the learners (students) and to really follow the genre approach to writing. You know we are trying to practice what we preach and walk and talk. So it’s definitely scaffolding. That is the intension” (Mrs Sets).

According to this lecturer, the main reason for placing students into small tutorial groups for the ALUGS module was so that they could be scaffolded. She further stated that the approach used within the module was modeled on the genre approach to teaching writing. Here, emphasis seems to be on scaffolding students through the principles of genre theory. One may ask then, does the way writing was taught in the module (particularly during observation) really follow on the genre theory or does it scaffold students? Hyland, one of the pioneers of the genre approach, was consulted in this respect.

Hyland (1992) defines genre analysis as the study of how language is being used in different contexts. Here the emphasis although on the use of language, is also on different contexts of writing, but not on a single context. In some of his work, Hyland (2003, p. 25) argues that writing, from a genre-based approach, is not

...an abstract activity, but a social practice. What is considered good writing, appropriate engagement, convincing argument, effective persuasion, and creative expression does not depend on mastery of universal processes, but varies from one community context to the next.

The genre approach contradicts teaching writing as a generic programme, as in the cases with the ALUGS module. In the first place, the genre approach views writing as a social practice rather than an abstract activity, where writing is perceived to be asocial (mere technical skills). It is also emphasized that writing effectively from a genre perspective goes beyond the mastery of

universal processes where skills acquired in one discipline can be transferred to the others successfully. He further added that the theoretical cornerstone of the genre approach is based on Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis on collaborative learning, where there is interactive collaboration between students and tutors. In this interaction the teacher takes the authoritative role of scaffolding students until they have attained their level of potential development. A critical look at how writing was taught within the ALUGS module revealed that the tutorials did not follow the genre approach to writing, in that they were tutor-dominated.

Apart from the dominance of tutors in the tutorials, Hyland further emphasized that the genre approach can be effectively used in the classroom when the following are considered:

- Modeling- the emphasis here is that students should be provided with enough written texts so as to expose them to the structure of the text and why it is structured that way. These texts are to serve as models for students to imitate.
- Joint Negotiation- having shown the students the conventions of a particular genre, both tutor and students are to actively become involved in the construction of texts in relation to the example given to students.
- Independent Construction- it is at this stage that tutors begin to withdraw their assistance, support and scaffolding, allowing students to independently construct their own texts.

Following on from the foregoing, it is clear that although the tutorials were created for the purpose to enhance interaction between students and tutors, nonetheless, it was revealed that during the classroom observations, such interaction was limited. Hence, the module did not really take after the genre approach to writing. Table 4.1 below illustrates the summary of consequential analysis of the rationale for the pedagogy used.

Table 4.1 A summary of the practitioners' view on their choice of pedagogy.

Practitioners' names	Notes on why the module was taught this way
Mrs Sets (Lecturer 1)	Lack of training for tutors Lack of monitoring Tutors' inadequate preparations for lessons Lack of commitment to the module Tutors' lack of skills
Mr Tina (Lecturer 2)	Lack of training Insensitivity in appointing tutors The curriculum planners Lack of monitoring
Mrs Zumbo (Tutor 1)	Lack of training Inadequate preparations for lessons Poor monitoring Generalized assumptions

Having established the preliminary data for analyzing why the module was taught the way it was being taught, the next section seeks to explore the contents of the module course pack as well as what the Faculty handbook provided as knowledge within the ALUGS module.

4.7.2 On exploring literacy at play: a descriptive analysis of the module contents.

The ALUGS module course pack is critically explored in order to achieve two objectives. Firstly, the course pack is explored to ascertain if what was taught in the classes observed counts as knowledge within the module. Secondly, the knowledge of the module content will also aid in answering the second critical question on why the module is taught the way it is being taught. In doing this, the content of the course pack will be analysed. Thus, the following constitute the critical questions:

- What is being studied?
- Why is it taught that way?

The table below contains the description of the contents of the ALUGS module course packs which will later be used to analyze the second critical question.

Table 4.2 Table illustrating the contents of the ALUGS module

Weeks	Topics	Notes
Weeks 1 & 2	- Orientation and Genre - Referencing	- Introduction to types of writing, e.g. descriptive, narrative, argumentative, etc. - Introduction to features of common text types; e.g. language features such as nouns, tenses, conjunctions, verbs, etc. - Introduction to Hylands' article: " <i>Genre analysis: Just Another Fad?</i> " - In-text and end-text referencing - Paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing - Plagiarism - APA referencing style. - Remarks: DONE
Week 3	Planning and structuring an academic text (introduction)	- Features of good introductions, e.g. thesis statement, background knowledge, plan of development, etc. - Remarks: DONE
Week 4	Planning and structuring an academic text (body and conclusion).	- Internal structure, e.g. linking devices, paragraphing, - External structure, e.g. introduction, argument claims and conclusion - Remarks: DONE
Weeks 5 & 6	Academic language usage	- Level of language formality, e.g. formal, informal, intimate, etc. - Nominalization, passive voice, accuracy and clarity, cohesion and coherence, etc. - Remarks: DONE
Week 7	Star Approach to Writing	- The rhetorical star; subject, audience, purpose, strategy, and designs. - Remarks: DONE
Week 8	Reading strategies	- Types of reading; skimming, scanning, extensive and intensive readings. - Remarks: NOT DONE (semester 2)
Week 9	Critical thinking and argumentation	- Definition of academic argument, vocabulary, construction of basic arguments, etc. - Remarks: DONE

The above table reflects the activities which form the core of the tutorials. In weeks one and two, the module introduced students to different types of writing, also called genres of writing. The module taught students that there are different types of writing such as narrative, explanatory, expository, argumentative, and others, however, it did not provide students with examples of such writing to serve as models for students as recommended in the genre approach

to writing. Furthermore, it was indicated in the course pack that the focus of the module is on the argumentative essay, the reason being that it is this type of writing that HE deals with (see ALUGS-EDLE100, 2014, p. 9). In this regard, Hyland's (1992) article, "genre analysis: just another fad?" was introduced to the students who were expected to read it on their own before the following tutorial. One would have gladly accepted that the intention for using this article was to make it a kind of model for the argumentative essay, but tutors only summarised the article, the reason being that there were many other concepts to attend to. This situation therefore corresponds with what one of the tutors said about the issue of timing. She said that because of time constraints, most tutors, including herself, ended up not teaching all that ought to be taught, and as a result were in a hurry to cover the contents of the topic. Consequently, she said: "*We don't even know if we are really, really doing justice to the module and to the students*" (Mrs Zumbo). An understanding from this statement was the tutor's concern about justice. She was concerned whether justice had been done to the module (teaching every detail) or to the students (if they really understood what was being taught in such a hurry).

In a bid to cover the contents of the tutorial schedule, students were expected to learn referencing in the same tutorial. Thus, the tutors were required to teach both in-text referencing and end-text referencing in relation to the APA 6th edition. Students were also expected to learn how to paraphrase, summarize, and quote from original texts. They were also required to learn how to reference a book, book chapters, journal articles, web documents, electronic journal articles and so forth. It seems that students are bombarded with a plethora of information without due consideration to their differences. Arguably, some students may have the ability to cope in such situations; however others may not, due to their differences McKenna (2010) refers to in the literature review (see chapter two). Consequently, in a bid to keep up with the tutors, students may turn to memorizing information that is not understood. More so, it must be noted that topics like referencing were rarely taught in the high schools (Ellis 2005; Gambell 1991), therefore, it does not relate to students' primary discourses. The acquisition of such lesson may be difficult due to the discrepancy between students' primary and secondary discourses (see Gee, 2001a).

Accordingly, it appears that the contents of the module course pack were based on the academic skills model. This is because students were required to learn these topics within a limited and insufficient time, thus encouraging memorizing and rote-learning. All other topics discussed

thereafter are language -oriented topics with the focus on the structure of essay, language use, and the construction of argumentative essays. All these point to the fact that the module was designed to privilege essay writing skills. Understood in this way, it can be added that the reason why tutors tended to employ the study skills approach in the teaching of writing within the module was because the module was designed that way; they either swim or sink with their sinking students. This therefore is in line with what Mr. Tina said about the curriculum planner. He argued that the module was taught the way it was taught because the curriculum designers planned the course pack and positioned the practitioners that way. In essence, the module was taught through the study skills pedagogies because the curriculum has positioned both the module and the practitioners that way.

Moreover, reading strategies were supposed to be taught in week 8, but instead the topic on critical thinking and argumentation was taught. One may conclude that reading strategies were not taught in semester two due to the attention accorded in the curriculum. The understanding from the foregoing is that the ALUGS module seemed not to give more attention to writing because the curriculum also did not deem it necessary in students' writing development. It was noticed that the new edition of the academic literacy module (now called the ALUGS module) lacked certain features such as the purpose of the course, the learning outcomes and the focus area. Surprisingly, it was revealed that an older version, from whence the new module derived its appellation „ALE“ (then known as Academic Literacy in English) possessed those characteristics.

ALE, from where ALUGS module emanated aimed to teach first year students the pattern, structures and communicative purpose of the genre of academic argument. In achieving this, the module intended to introduce students to a process of academic reading and writing. Thus the outcomes of the module are the following:

- Read and understand a range of academic texts;
- Analyze and synthesize a range of text sources in order to construct an argument;
- Identify their own and others' positions;
- Construct and develop themes;
- Analyze and debate, orally and in writing, key issues in typical university type texts;
- Construct an academic argument in writing, according to academic conventions;
- Understand and reflect critically on the reading and writing processes;

- Produce coherent and cohesive texts working under time constraints and;
- Offer evaluations of their own and others' writing through comments on, and editing of, draft materials, oral presentations and small group interactions.

With this knowledge of the module outcomes, practitioners were obliged to teach the module according to the following focus areas:

- Learning and teaching in a university: mode of instruction;
- Reading and writing academically;
- Understanding the nature of academic texts;
- Referencing;
- Reading in order to write;
- Taking notes during the reading process;
- Turning read knowledge into spoken and written arguments.

It is evident from the above that there seems to be a shift in the way academic writing is taught within the ALUGS module from the way it had been taught in the ALE version. Having originated from the ALE version, one may assume that they had similar teaching goals. However, it is imperative to note that the teaching of writing in the new module was divorced from the reading processes, while the older version seemed to emphasize reading, as the intention was for the students to translate reading knowledge into written arguments. Such emphasis cannot be mistakenly taken for granted in developing student writing practices. This approach therefore foregrounds Bazerman's (1988, p. 18) position, that the kind of "knowledge produced in the academy is primarily cast in written language". The argument is that the ALUGS module lent itself to teach writing at the expense of reading as a result of the shift from the original version of the module. The lack of learning outcomes might also be described as one such factor responsible for the way writing was being taught in the module. Since the purpose and the learning outcomes were not specified in the ALUGS module, the researcher elected to explore how the Faculty handbook (2014 edition) has constructed knowledge within the ALUGS module, as well as the objectives that the module intended to achieve.

Figure 4.6 Document analysis schedule critiquing the purpose of ALUGS module

Type of document: Faculty Handbook (2014).

- a. For what purpose was the module included in the B.Ed. curriculum?**
- b. *“Academic Literacy in English aims to teach first year students the patterns, structures and communicative purpose of the genre of academic argument – one of the genres most commonly found in an academic context”.***
- c. What exactly did the module intend to teach students?**
- d. *“This will be achieved by introducing students, in an explicit way, to the process of academic reading and writing, and by developing their capacity to produce coherent, cohesive and logical texts (orally and in writing) within the context of an intellectually challenging examination of themes which are of contemporary academic interest in education”.***

(DASHBK, p. 99)

From the document analysis schedule above, it appears that the name of the module has not been changed from the former name, and consequently the new module still retained the aims and purpose of the former version.

Type of document: Tutorial worksheet 1

- Complete the following activities:**
 - 1.1 Quote what Hyland says about the merits/value of genre analysis.**
 - 1.2 Summarize what Hyland says about the merits/value of genre analysis.**
 - 1.3 Paraphrase what Hyland says about writing in the classroom.**

Tutorial worksheet 2

- 2.1 Read only the title of the article. What do you expect it will be about?**
 - 2.2 Read the first paragraph and write down the main idea in your own words.**
-

2.3 Identify and write down the topic sentence from paragraph 2.

Tutorial worksheet 3

3.1 Now write a basic argument beginning with two claims, followed by a thesis statement/ conclusion, on the following topic: Euthanasia is murder

3.2 now write an argument starting with a thesis statement/conclusion, followed by two claims, on: The South African education system is failing in its tasks

The argument thus far has been that the ALUGS module positioned students as the receivers of information. It has constructed students as listeners in the process of learning, except when students were asked to answer questions from the tutorial worksheets. It is the answering of these questions that gave room for students to participate in the process of knowledge production in the tutorials. One may ask the question regarding the impact of this approach as well as the way the curriculum was planned, on students' writing practices within the module. This leads to the third critical question of this research: what impact does the way writing is taught have on the students' writing practices within the module?

The causal mechanism for the choice of the pedagogy used in the teaching of the ALUGS module from the discussion thus far has been appended to certain factors. It was argued that writing was taught the way it was taught because of the way the curriculum was designed and the content of the module course pack. It was also discovered that the lack of pre- and in-service training for tutors was another factor that resulted in writing taught the way it was being taught within the module. Following from this understanding, it is argued that there can be little or no difference in the teaching of the ALUGS module, until the curriculum is revisited and provision is made for training tutors the way they should be trained. The last section of this analysis seeks to answer the third critical question: „what impact does the way writing was taught in ALUGS module have on students' writing practices within the module?‘

4.8.0 Data Analysis III -On Exploring the Impact of the Pedagogical Practice on Students' Writing Practices

“...I don't think we should have lectures. We must have only the tutorials with very very small groups and I think then it will be a worthwhile programme. I have

tabled that and it comes down to financial implications and the answer is that, it is too expensive to have tutorials. So we are forced to do this module; it is not beneficial to students” (Intvs/ Lect. 1)

4.8.1 The impact of the pedagogy at play on students’ writing practices within the ALUGS module

Nothing can reveal students’ writing practices than their own written scripts. The impact of the way writing was taught on students’ writing practices within the ALUGS module was explored through a critical analysis of their written assignment scripts. Thus, the students’ written scripts constitute the primary data in answering the third critical question. Furthermore, the students’ perceptions of the impact of the module on their writing practices as well as the AL practitioners’ perceptions constitute the supporting evidence to corroborate the findings from the written scripts. The following excerpts were taken from the students’ written assignments:

*“During the past few years different approaches had been used to implement the way writing is taught. Genre analysis has a pattern that underpins affective communication and it can be used to inform materials production and teaching said **Ken Hyland** (1992)” (ASS.SCRT 1).*

The above excerpt revealed that this student was struggling with referencing. The sentence structure seemed accurate, except for the incorrectly spelled/used “affective”. A number of factors might have been responsible for this slight error. For instance, the mistake might have occurred as a typographical error, or the inability to proofread the work before submission. But the fact that the tutor circled the mistake corroborated with what students, practitioners and documentary evidence revealed about the focus of the module– that it is focused on language. On the other hand, this student seemed to be confused about appropriate referencing, as she could not reference correctly. In addition to this, another sentence from the same script revealed that this student still struggled with writing appropriately. The student wrote:

“Being implicitly writing results in both ways it either good or bad”.

Given that the focus of the module as well as that of the pedagogy at play was on sentence construction and the like, the above sentence revealed that this student has not been able to acquire the expected discourse. The argument here is that if the module was focusing on the

construction of accurate sentences and all the teaching practices tended towards the same direction, why then is this student still writing in an unacceptable manner? There seems to be a link between this and what student 1 said in chapter five, that in spite of the tutors' efforts to teach them the skills of writing they still continued to make mistakes. Drawing on Mrs Sets' earlier statement and the findings from this analysis, it can be argued that the module did not develop the students' writing practices.

Admittedly, it appears from the above discussion that there seems to be no record of any form of improvement in the students' writing practices as they still struggled with sentence construction and referencing. Arguably, one may be tempted to conclude that the same happened to the other students as well. However, such a conclusion may seem premature, incomplete and biased in the absence of evidence to support such an argument. Accordingly, the following excerpts from another student's written assignment script are included. The first sentence in the introduction to the assignment reads: "*Genre analysis is the study of the usage of a language in a certain phrase*". Being a tutor within the module, the researcher assumed that this student wanted to paraphrase Hyland's (1992) definition of the term "genre analysis". Hyland's original version of the definition was that "*genre analysis is the study of how language is used within a specific context*" (Hyland, 1992, p. 15). It is evident that this student misappropriated what she was taught in the class. The sentence became meaningless as the student attempted to paraphrase the sentence in her own words. The implication is that whenever writing is taught as a set of skills, it is likely that students either learn through memorization or by acquiring an incomplete discourse. This therefore is in line with what Gee (2001a) states says about the teaching of literacy as a generic, skills-based and universal module. To him, such modules cannot produce students who have fully acquired the expected discourse, but can only lead to the creation of a pseudo-discourse. The aftermath of such a pedagogical practice can only produce students who will depend on writing consultants and editors for the rest of their future writings.

Another excerpt from the same script also indicated that the student was still making mistakes in her writing practices. The student wrote:

"It is important for learners to create their own work to express their opinions and develop more strategies this is referred to as the guided practice" (ASS.SCRT 2).

From the above excerpt it is clear that the omission of the punctuation marks rendered the expression faulty. In his comment on that script, the tutor indicated that something was missing, however, he did not point out what was missing. There are two concerns here. First, it is doubtful that students will understand such a vague comment, as it did not specify what was wrong with the sentence. Was it a comma, a full stop, or a colon that was missing in that expression? Secondly, this confirms what student 1 stated during the interview about her tutor's lack of interest in the submission of drafts for corrections and comments before the final draft. If that is the case here, it is then argued that students will continue to repeat the mistakes since there seems to be no provision for talkback from the tutors.

The next section discusses an excerpt from one student's conclusion to the same assignment question; the reason being that this forms part of the focus of the module as stipulated in the course pack. In her conclusion to the same assignment, one student wrote:

"The genre analysis approach requires educators and learners to have a positive attitude towards literacy and academic writing. Writing is the skill that none was born with was born with but it something a person acquires. Vocabulary development within the learning institutes enables a person to improve literacy rate which will boost the self confidence as it will contributes to the writing. Communication also include teachers" conversations and collaboration. Genre is useful to every individual as it guides a person through language usage and writing academical." (ASS.SCRT 3).

The ideas that this student included in this concluding part of her essay were not cohesive, and it is an indication that she has not understood the writing of a good conclusion. However, the tutor's comment is of concern, as he merely wrote: *"Not a good conclusion"*. This kind of comment does not and cannot lead students into the knowledge or understanding of how to write a good conclusion. The student may be forced to ask herself, what then is a good conclusion and how should I have written it? Students seemed not to have significantly improved in their writing practice due to the kind of feedback comments tutors gave them as well as the approach used in teaching them.

Moving on to the end-text referencing, having being taught the characteristics of end-text referencing, it was expected that students should be able to do proper referencing. The following is the reference page of one of the students:

- “Ken Hyland 1990, Genre analysis just another fad
- Klos and Mauren, Journal of language teaching, 2013, vol 47
- Klos and Mauren, journal of language teaching, 2011, vol 45,”

A critical look at these references proved that this student has not succeeded in mastering the necessary skills as she was expected to. Thus, it can be argued that this student has acquired little in relation to referencing - little, in the sense that she might not have known anything about referencing before her encounter with the ALUGS module. Thus, she might have only succeeded in acquiring part of the discourse. This type of discourse acquisition is what Gee (2001a) refers to as impartial acquisition. Following Gee’s argument, since there is nothing like impartial acquisition of discourse, such a student can only be described as either an „outsider or a pretender“. To further explore the impact of the module on students’ writing practices, the next section considers the students’ own perspectives of their writing practices.

5.8.2 Students’ perceptions of the impact of the module on their writing practices

From the interviews with students it appears that the module has both a positive and a negative impact on their writing practices. While addressing the positive impact, one of the student participants seemed to be of the notion that the module was useful in developing her writing skills. She said:

*“The module is quiet interesting because it teaches us how to write academically and the way we use academic language. So I find this very effective because it helps us because we are always writing in this university”
(Simple)*

From the excerpt above it appears that Simple (student 1) found the module effective because it was through engagement with the module that she learned how to write academically. The use of the plural pronoun “we” in this statement reveals that she was of the opinion that the module was helpful to other students too. . She went further to prove the fact that the module taught her how to write academically and said she had learnt how to:

“...acknowledge the sources; because if you just write without citing, then it shows that you don’t acknowledge the author or book or script” (Simple).

Admittedly, since there can be no academic text without citation, the fact that this student has learnt how to acknowledge sources through the ALUGS module revealed that the module has been helpful in students’ writing development. Similarly, the second student described the ALUGS module to be helpful in that it has helped her in writing her essays:

“It’s very useful. It helps me a lot when I am to write essays. Now, I know how to structure my essay. When I came to the university I didn’t know how to write my essays, now I know how the introduction should be; all the thesis statement stuff. So when in the other modules I am told to write essays, now I know what to do” (Florey).

The above excerpt reveals that no content of the module was useless; it also revealed that the module certainly had helped the student in terms of essay writing. This student further added that what she learnt how to structure her essay. She said she did not know how to write essays until she came into contact with the module. She does not only use the knowledge within the ALUGS module, but she claimed that the skills were useful when writing essays in other modules. When asked about her writing practices before her encounter with the module, she said her writing experience:

“...was bad, but there are many things that I have learnt in academic literacy. If I were to be asked about critical discussion before, I didn’t know what it meant” (Florey).

The above statement is a clear indicator that this student has significantly benefitted and had improved in her writing practices in relation to structuring an academic essay. The third student

(Pint) also agreed to the fact the module was useful, in that she had learnt how to structure essays through the module. She stated: *“I learnt how to write an introduction and conclusion, and to also write something you understand. So it helps me”*. Pint further pointed out that:

“...but ALE let me know that in the body of the essay, paragraph must have their own information and another paragraph must begin with another thing which were the things I did not know before; I learnt it in ALE, and it helped me” (Pint).

It is evident from the excerpt above that Pint had learnt how to structure her paragraphs when writing essays in the ALUGS module. Hence, the module was found to be useful to these students, but was not without some negative effects too.

Although all the student participants revealed that the ALUGS module was helpful to them, particularly in relation to structuring an essay, they later added that there were shortcomings too. The first student addressed the subject of tutor comments, and stated that:

“Well, with my tutor, the first essay that we wrote, she just took the essays and marked them. She didn’t correct us in terms...for example with the introduction; she was not specific if we...included or excluded. The essays that we wrote, it wasn’t a draft; it was the actual essay because she gave us marks. So we made a lot of errors because we didn’t know (what to write)” (Simple).

This student seems to be complaining that the tutor did not assist them in the process of writing their essay. There seems to be no scaffolding and no comments on what to include or to avoid in academic essays. As a result, students continue to make errors since there was no effective guidance (see line 5). She stated that with other groups, the tutors allowed students to submit first drafts, and re-submit the final drafts after submission.

“Well she taught us but then again we all make mistakes. Like other tutors, they actually allow you to bring in your essay, they will make corrections and then you will bring the final draft, the one that they will mark. Our tutor didn’t do all that. She just marked the first draft and gave us marks based on it” (Simple).

This student noticed the lack of a standardized method in assessing students' written work. These problems seem to be a result of the lack of training the tutors, as discussed previously. Another problem was that most of the comments on the returned scripts were incomprehensible and as a result did not contribute to the student's writing development. She said:

"Well, some of them (feedback comments) I didn't understand. The one I remember is that I have to structure my introduction correctly... Well I wrote everything correctly, I think the way I structured it or wrote it was the problem... No, the correction just didn't (tell me what went wrong). The comment was basically telling me that I should learn how to structure my essay" (Simple).

This excerpt indicated that some of the comments tutors gave on students' written works were vague and of no value to the students since they were incomprehensible. Students in such situation may continue writing in the same way as feedback in this situation did not serve as feed forward for students. Spiller (2012) contends that such comments, although they are understandable and make sense to the lecturers and tutors, they are not accessible to the students. Consequently, this situation will make feedback a one-way transmission from the tutors; having little or no impact on the students' future performances (see chapter 2, section 2.7). The excerpt revealed the state of confusion of this student as she believed she had written the essay correctly, only to be told to revisit the structure of the introduction. Another student commented on the kind of feedback comments she received from her tutor as follows:

"I can't remember well, but there were some notes there as to what I should stick to when writing academic essay...No, if they were clear enough I would have remembered them...well, one thing that I remember that was written there is that I should stick to the topic in discussion. I can't remember well, but there was something about that... I don't know (what went wrong)" (Florey).

This student also complained about the feedback comments, as the focus was only on the aspects that were incorrect. She stated that:

“Although we have not yet received our test scripts but they comment on the assignment. Their comments were on things that went wrong” (Pint).

All these perceptions indicate that the kind of feedback comments students received on their written texts were vague, incomprehensible, and did not point the students to what was right, what they did wrong, and how to avoid similar errors in their future writing practices. It is noteworthy that most of the comments thus far have focused only on the error content. . Saito (1995) condemns this approach, but posits that feedback that focus on correction do not assist students to revise but the ones that talkback to students and provide clues is the most effective type of feedback. He therefore suggests that every feedback should talk back to students (see chapter 2). Lillis (2006) added that there should be a shift from feedback to talkback, as the latter is student-centered. In essence, the kind of feedback students received in the ALUGS module did not contribute much to their writing development.

Furthermore, apart from the ineffectiveness of the feedback comments in the development of students’ writing practices, the lack of a standardized form of teaching has also contributed to the negative impact of the module on students’ writing practices. Simple stated:

“The information given to us during the lecture is sometimes not the same as the information we get at the tutorial. So we end up not knowing which information to take...Having different lecturers and tutors sticking to one thing. Even if we are studying with other students from other groups, lecturers must have the same information”.

As discussed earlier, tutors and lecturers gave students different information on the same subject in the tutorials, which has an enormous impact on students’ writing practices. The extract confirmed that this practice is confusing to the students, not knowing which information was right or wrong. In such cases, if students decided to follow all the information they received during the lecture they may end up failing, as the information may be different to that the tutors were expecting in the students’ responses to assignments questions.

In addition, it was also revealed that most of the content students learnt in the ALUGS classes were irrelevant to their various subject disciplines. It appears that the ALUGS module is fixated on essay writing as if all they do at HE is writing essays. One of the students said that technology

(her discipline) is about the use of machines and as such...“*there is no a thing like essay (writing)...it talks about machines...and not about writing*”. Similarly, the first student, Simple, added that what she was taught in the ALUGS module differs from what her disciplinary lecturers or tutors expected from her and as such, whatever she may have learnt from the ALUGS module, seemed irrelevant. She stated:

“...It depends on the lecturer of that module (disciplinary). If I tried to apply to that specific module, you will find that the lecturer is not satisfied. So what I learnt in ALE (ALUGS) did not apply. My lecturer for example, wants me to write the way that he asked me to write not according to what I have been taught during ALE (ALUGS)” (Simple).

It appears from the students’ own perception of the module that the ALUGS module did not prepare them for writing practices in other modules. Being taught in a generic manner, the ALUGS module cannot lead students to the successful acquisition of discourses in their various disciplines, but can only make students acquire pseudo-discourses that are not relevant to their affinity groups (see Gee, 2001a; Jacobs, 2006). Geisler (1994) argues that the knowledge of the rhetorical process alone (which the ALUGS module in our case intended to teach) is insufficient in leading students to the acquisition of complete discourse. Thus, he posits the need for content knowledge. Since the ALUGS module is intended to teach the former at the expense of the latter, Gee (1996) maintains that the acquisition of Discourse may remain implausible as there can never be such a thing as partial acquisition; you are either an insider or a pretender. In this way it is clear that the ALUGS module did not adequately prepare the students for full mastery of both the content knowledge (non-linguistic features of Discourse) and the rhetorical knowledge (linguistic features). Hence, students continue to struggle within the social space of learning (Jacobs, 2006).

Moreover, students, despite all efforts by AL practitioners seemed to be struggling with understanding what was being taught within the ALUGS module. One of the student participants (simple) insisted that although “...*she (the tutor) taught us but then again we all make mistakes*”. This is in support of Gee’s (1996; 2001a; 2003) argument that academic literacy cannot be explicitly taught through overt instruction, but can only be acquired through the method of apprenticeship or enculturation. Within the apprenticeship pedagogy, students are only shown

the process of knowledge production (writing inclusive), as against the traditional pedagogy where the emphasis is on telling. One may add that students continue to make mistakes because they were not shown what to do and how to do it through exposure to different models, but are only told about the processes.

Apart from this, it was also discovered that a particular area students often struggled with in relation to writing both within and outside the ALUGS module, was referencing. The module seemed to have given students different information about referencing. What was taught at the lectures and in tutorials was the APA style, however, the course pack seems to be giving students contradictory information that are opposite to what they were told (see ALUGS course pack, 2014, pp. 67-71). All these seem to have contributed to students' writing challenges both within and outside the ALUGS module. Having established that students have different perceptions about the impact of the module on their writing practices, the next section will turn to the AL practitioners' perceptions of the impact of the ALUGS module on students' writing practices. This also will be substantiated by tutors' comments on students' marked scripts.

4.8.3 Practitioners' perceptions of the impact of the ALUGS module on students' writing practices

It is not sufficient to state that students have different notions about the impact of the ALUGS module on their writing practices, but it must be emphasized also that both tutors and lecturers have their own perceptions too. Thus, this section begins with the practitioners' positive perceptions of the impact of the module on students' writing practices. One of the tutors, Mrs Zumbo stated that the module has improved students' writing practices and that the improvement is evident in other modules. She said:

"I promise you students have their writing and reading ok I'm not sure about the reading ability but the writing ability does improve"(Mrs Zumbo).

The concern here is with the reading aspect of the module. It seems from this statement that both the module and its practitioners have little or no regard for academic reading, whereas written works arise from read works. Thus, it may be inappropriate or unsuitable to overlook the importance of reading in the development of student writing. Furthermore the tutor maintained that students improved on their writing practices and gave examples of such situation in other generic modules.

“...for example, I’m in for Professional studies and Education studies. I was given third years students so these students have gone through AL; so you can see it- like eighty percent of them you can see that they know how to structure an essay and those two modules are basically looking at students writing essays...”

Still referring to the importance of the ALUGS module in student writing practices in other modules, the tutor stated that she encourages students to always revisit their ALUGS packs as the information contained therein are not for the AL classes alone, but useful up to post-graduate level.

“I always say guys whenever you are writing an essay or any academic work go back to you course packs, AL course packs refer to that; that’s gonna help you. It will guide you...they end up getting the good marks because you’ve guided them even though AL was just a module that came and gone but for me it hasn’t because I still utilize it in my class whether it’s AL, Professional Studies or Diversity and Learning. I teach them all of that...I’m doing my Masters but I still have my books because sometimes then you refer to that very special book, because that’s where I learnt to write academically or that’s where I think I learnt how to structure an essay and write in a manner that is acceptable in the university” (Mrs. Zumbo).

The above excerpt indicated that students’ writing practices improved as a result of what they learnt in the ALUGS module. The tutor later added that the improvement also reflected in students’ writings in other modules, particularly in structuring their essays. Moreover, the tutor included that *she* even learnt how to structure essays through the teaching of the module. Nevertheless, it seems that this tutor notices an improvement with the third year students alone, and not with those who were registered for the module at the time of this research. In addition, the two modules that this tutor made reference to are also co-generic modules as the ALUGS module itself. These two modules have nothing to do with students’ disciplinary discourses. The second lecturer, Mr Tina, answering the same question on the impact of the module on students’ writing practices, stated:

“It does (improve students’ writing) because when you give the assignments some of them do produce good writing, but you can also feel that there is still more that needs to be done.” (Mr. Tina).

From the above excerpt, it is informative that the module was able to improve some students’ writing practices as they were able to produce good texts. Nonetheless, the lecturer indicated the need for improvement. In this same manner the second tutor, Mrs Rak, was of the opinion that the module was able to impact positively on students’ writing practices as:

“(Their) writing improves as the weeks unfold because (emmm) some of them like came without knowing how to write. As the weeks unfold and how you like explain to them and give them work to do, they tend to like improve on the way in which they write. So you came to see that a majority of them actually improve in the way in which they write.

From Mrs Rak’s statement above, it is clear that she perceived students’ writing to have improved due to their engagement with the activities in ALUGS class as well as a result of the explanations and instructions given by the practitioners. Nonetheless, she was of the opinion that not all of them could improve in their writing, and this she described as the result of the nature of differences that these students came into the system with. She stated:

“...while others, because all of them are not the same. Others are very slow...it takes time for them to come to that stage of writing (Mrs. Rak).

In the same vein, Mr Tina added that:

“...it is not at the point where one would want it (talking about students’ writing practice). You also find students even at forth year level still producing poor writing...so then it means there is room for improvement” (Mr. Tina).

From the statements of these practitioners, it becomes clear that the module has not been able to improve the writing practices of all students, and Mrs Sets, lecturer 1, is of the opinion that that the module does not benefit the students :

“No I don’t (think it is improving students’ writing)...I don’t think we should have lectures. We must have only the tutorials with very very small groups and I think then it will be a worthwhile programme...we are forced to do (it in this) this model (generic), it is not beneficial to students” (Mrs Sets).

The above excerpt indicated this practitioner’s dissatisfaction with how writing was being taught within the ALUGS module. The lecture-tutorial model, in agreement with students’ own observation, has created much confusion, and as a result Mrs Sets feels that the module was not beneficial to the students. She insisted that running the module as a generic programme will not empower students to properly acquire academic discourse, because according to her, academic literacy cannot be asocial but is embedded in the disciplinary Discourses of the students. She therefore suggested that if acceptable, academic writing is:

“...quite difficult to answer (define) that one...(in a generic model). Because every discipline really has its own academic writing conventions. So, I think in terms of acceptable academic writing, it will have to be academic writing that conforms to the demands of a particular discipline” (Mrs. Sets).

Following on from the above statement, it appears that this practitioner was not pleased with the way writing was being taught in the ALUGS module because what counts as academic writing in ALUGS module may be inappropriate to other disciplines. She thus posits that the module will continue to have a negative impact (the acquisition of inappropriate discourse) if academic writing modules are not housed within each discipline.

“Yes...particular discipline and then it will be acceptable to that discipline. But what’s acceptable to English and to History is not necessarily accepted to the Science world. They write differently...I would basically say that I do feel that academic literacy should be housed in every discipline and I do feel that the lecture-tut model does not work within our context” (Mrs Sets).

The above statement revealed the students’ confusion in relation to the acquisition of appropriate academic writing. This lecturer argued that the module ought to be discipline-embedded, as

acceptable academic writing at HE differs from one discipline to the other. This therefore alludes to the ideological perspective about the notion of multiple literacies, (see Gee, 1996, 1998, 2002; Street, 1995, 2003) and what counts as literacy within a particular context (discipline) may be unacceptable in another context (discipline). (See chapter 2). This therefore confirms the lecturer's position that the kind of literacy that students acquired in the ALUGS module may have nothing to do with their writing practices outside the module and even within the module; she argued earlier that the module has failed to expose students to a range of written texts which ought to serve as models for students to imitate in the process of developing their writing practices.

Beside the students' and practitioners' views about the impact of the ALUGS module on students' writing practices, students' marked scripts also serve as documentary evidences to such impacts. Tutors' comments on students' returned scripts constitute the object of analysis within this section. Table 7-1 below shows the types of feedback students received on their assignments.

Table 4.3 Types of feedback comments

Type of document: assignment scripts	Content	Structure	Referencing	Questions	Others	Total	Notes
Script 1	5	4	3	7	10	29	52%
Script 2	1	7	3	2	11	24	52%
Script 3	-	6	3	-	17	26	62%
Script 4	6	-	-	2	10	18	48%
Script 5	-	-	2	-	17	19	72%
Total	12	17	11	11	65	116	1 failed; 4 passed.
%	10.3%	14.7%	9.5%	9.5%	56%		

The marked assignment scripts of five students, containing tutors' feedback comments were used to analyse the impact of tutors' comments on students' writing practices. These comments were classified and focused on five areas; content, structure, referencing, question, and others. Comments classified under content were those which focused on the objectives of the assignment or the information expected in the assignment. Those on structure focused on paragraphing, sentence construction, punctuation, lexis and tenses, while referencing focused on those comments that related to both in-text and end-text referencing, for example, citation and paraphrasing. Comments that pertained to questions were instances where tutors questioned an error in the students' scripts. The category labeled „others“ contained ticking, circling and underlining used as measures to evaluate student writing. Of the 116 total comments as shown in table 6.3 above, 12 (10.3%) were concerned with the contents of the assignment, while 17 (14%) focused on language features and structure of an academic essay. 11 (9.5%) focused on referencing, while 11 (9.5%) of the comments also focused on questioning. It is notable that the comments grouped as „others“ contained the remaining 65 comments - 56%.

It was discovered that most of the comments focused on correcting students' errors none except for the ticks commended students on their correct answers. Lea and Street (1998, p. 167) describes such comments as those that point out errors in students' work with "little (or no) mitigation or qualification". The majority of the comments were vague or ambiguous and gave students no opportunity to learn from, for example; „fragment, problematic sentence, confirming“, etc. One of the comments was in total disagreement with the content, for example; „No!“, however, this comment did not assist in pointing out what should have been done or do in subsequent writings. It is evident from the above table that only few of the comments focused on content. This is an indication that the assessment was not focusing on content knowledge, but rather on other technical or academic skills such as grammar, sentence construction, referencing (see Street, 2000; 1998).

In essence, the majority of the comments by the tutors in the ALUGS module focused on error corrections. In his position against the danger of error correction in assessing students' writing practices, Truscott (1996, p. 328) contended that error correction is ineffective as it is incapable of producing "better writers, and harmful because students do not learn for themselves. In the same way, Bengesai (2012) also disagrees with this approach, the reason being that it does not

lead to further learning, but rather produces students who can only depend on writing consultants and editors for the rest of their future writings. Data from this study also reveals that although students effected the corrections of their errors as indicated by their tutors, they still made the same errors in their subsequent writing. For example, Simple, the first students confirmed that despite all efforts by the tutor “...*but then again we all make mistakes*”.

In summary, it was revealed from the foregoing that most comments on students’ written works (assignment) focused on features of language and academic or technical skills, and pointing out the students’ errors. Such comments are counterproductive, as they imitate what Sutton (2009, p. 3) refers to as “transmission model of learning which supposes that tutors transmit feedback messages concerning the strengths and weaknesses of assessment which students then receive and put into practice”. Rose (1995) also refers to this as a „myth of transience“, where the fixing of errors in student writing is believed to be tantamount to solving their problems. Such superficial feedback, having being described as ambiguous, does not lead to student writing development. Feedback can only feed forward only if they are perceived to be “part of a dialogue or conversation between students” and their tutors (Bengesai, 2012, p. 182), where the two parties are believed to be co-protagonists in the process of writing development.

Chapter Five

5.0 Discussion of Findings, Implications of the Study and Future Research, and Conclusions

5.1 Discussion of Findings

“...I would basically say that I do feel that academic literacy should be housed in every discipline and I do feel that the lecture-tut model does not work within our context. I do feel that the tutors will need to be selected carefully and trained and monitored, if we are serious about academic literacy. As I have said we need a writing centre for this compulsory module” (Intvs/ Lect. 1).

This study sought to explore how writing was taught in the academic writing module known as the ALUGS module in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The purpose of the research was to investigate the pedagogical practices at play within the context of the module; explore the reasons for the choice of such pedagogy; and investigate the impact of the pedagogy on the students’ writing practices within the module. This section will briefly be discussed according to the three critical questions that guided this study.

5.1.1 How is writing taught within the ALUGS module?

The findings from the data analysis chapter revealed that academic writing was perceived within the context of the ALUGS module as a set of technical skills, and thus followed after the lecture-tutorial model of teaching writing. The literature review chapter as well as the theoretical frameworks chapters also corroborated this finding that such an approach to the teaching of academic writing always tends itself to a generic programme. In this way, it was understood that the ALUGS module was run as a generic module where teaching practice yielded to the study skills approach. Consequently, the contents of the module course pack, classroom observations, and the responses from participants emphasized the need for skill acquisition in the development of student writing at the HE. Furthermore, the pedagogy at play lent itself to the autonomous model of literacy where learning is perceived to be asocial and divorced from the context in which learning takes place (see Street, 1995, 2003). Being located within the autonomous model of literacy, both the lecture and tutorial sections were lecturer/tutor-orientated and the students

were constructed as *tabula rasa*- empty vessels waiting to be filled. This therefore negates the notion of socio-cultural nature of literacy where literacy is seen as a function of social interaction. In reaction to the foregoing, taking the ideological perspective of literacy, it is argued that academic writing cannot be successfully acquired as a set of skills devoid of the culture and context in which learning takes place (see Street, 1995). It is against this that Barton and Hamilton (2000) contend that literacy is not an entity but a social practice. These scholars describe academic writing and reading as literacy practices. Hence, it is argued that academic writing within the context of this study (having being described as a social practice) should be conceived as what people do with literacy, and not an isolated entity. From the foregoing, positioning students as receivers of information did not provide them with opportunities to practice writing both in the lectures and during the tutorials.

Similarly, the findings also show that the ALUGS module was taught as a generic programme where skills that are acquired within a particular context, such as a discipline, are believed to be transferable to other contexts. This study sides with Gee's (1996) position, that literacy is not singular, but multiple, and what counts as literacy for a particular context may be unacceptable in another context. Understood in this way, if all students who were registered for the ALUGS module, who also were participants of this study, all came from different disciplines, it is argued that the ALUGS module, run in a generic way, would not lead to a successful acquisition of disciplinary discourses, since a generic module cannot offer something more than pseudo-discourses (Jacobs, 2006; Gee, 2001a). In this regard, it has been argued that the ALUGS module focus on essay structure is not beneficial to the students' writing practices, particularly in situations where their disciplines have no need for essay writing.

Hence, until the Faculty as well as AL practitioners undergo a paradigm shift away from viewing academic writing as a technology of the mind (Street, 2003) to viewing it as a practice, the acquisition of academic discourse may remain an impossible task. Findings on why the module is taught the way it is currently taught, will be discussed in the next section.

5.1.2 Why is writing taught the way it is being taught within the ALUGS module?

The rationale for teaching the module the way it is currently being taught is twofold; the tutors and the contents (course pack and the curriculum). Firstly, it was found that the practitioners' state of preparedness is a determinant factor impacting on how the module was being taught. The findings showed that some of the tutors were not well prepared for their lessons and as a result they taught differently to what students had been given during lectures. In agreement with one of the students' view about this situation, it is argued that there should be proper monitoring of what tutors are teaching in their tutorials to avoid confusion amongst the students. In relation to the tutors, another finding that emanated from the study revealed that some tutors were under-qualified for the teaching of academic writing. One of the lecturer participants confirmed this and said that some of the tutors did not have the necessary skills to teach students. As argued in the review of the literature, no one can give what he or she does not have. If this is the case, then the process through which tutors are being selected should be done carefully as this will determine the quality of what is being taught to the students.

It was also found that the lack of tutors' training was one of the reasons for the way writing was taught in the ALUGS module. The findings revealed that the Faculty has never organized any form of training, either pre-service or in-service training for those appointed as tutors. Chokwe (2011) argued that there are instances where some tutors are not trained to teach the modules they were to teach. Indeed, the lack of training evident in the running of the ALUGS module has contributed to the way writing was taught in the module. In line with this argument, one of the tutor participants stated that some tutors taught whatever they wished due to the lack of training and monitoring. Unfortunately, it seems that until provision is made for training tutors before their engagement with the teaching of writing within the module, the trend of teaching differently from the lecturers will remain unchanged.

The curriculum as well as the content of the course packs, on the other hand, has been found to be part of the reasons for teaching writing the way it is currently taught in the ALUGS module. In the first place, the present version of the course pack was found to lack learning outcomes and objective. It was argued that this might have contributed to how writing was being taught, as tutors themselves were not informed of the objective; they may end up teaching without any

outcome in mind. With the information received from one of the lecturer participants that the present ALUGS module originated from the former ALE module, the researcher consulted the module template of the latter. Findings showed that the focus of the latter was language oriented, and as such it was revealed that the new module has adopted the learning outcome of the old version. However, it is argued that such outcomes should have been included in the new course pack, since every tutor did not have access to such a document. Nonetheless, it was also argued that the teaching of writing within the module focused on the acquisition of skills because the module contents positioned it that way.

Finally, findings revealed that there were some inconsistencies with the content of the module. It was found that the referencing style students were taught both in the tutorials and during lectures, was contradictory to what students found in their course packs, thus leading to confusion. Not only that, it was also revealed that reading was not well addressed in the new academic module (ALUGS) and as a result, students lacked exposure to different genres of writing which ought to serve them as models in their writing development. The findings also revealed that tutors were fond of providing students with vague feedback comments which did not provide talkback to students on how they were to improve on their future writing.

5.1.3 What impact does the way writing is taught have on students' writing practices within the ALUGS module?

The findings of this study showed that the way writing was taught within the ALUGS module has both a positive and a negative impact on students' writing practices, both within and outside the ALUGS module. Starting with the positive findings, it was found that many students have improved on their writing practices particularly in structuring their essays. A tutor participant admitted that students have been able to transfer this knowledge of structuring essays into other generic programmes, such as Educational Studies and Professional Studies. Moreover, two of the student participants also acknowledged that the module has equipped them with the skills for writing essays, particularly in areas like paragraph structuring, writing a good academic introduction and conclusion. They added that the essential components of introduction such as thesis statement, background information, and plan of development were not taught in their high schools. Thus, the module, to these students, has had a positive impact on their writing practices.

Surprisingly, the respond from another student participant contradicted what the others said about the module. From this student's perception of the module, it was revealed that students still struggle with structuring their essays despite all they were taught in the tutorials. This student participant insisted that they still continue making mistakes despite the tutors' efforts to fix their problems during assessments. To corroborate this, the findings from the analysis of students' assignment scripts also confirmed that students continue to make mistakes, particularly in areas like essay structure and referencing. Another factor found to be responsible for these unending mistakes has to do with the inconsistencies in information given in the classroom with those found in the course materials. For instance, students were taught APA 6th edition style of referencing, while the referencing in the course packs follow after the MLA style.

This, arguably, alongside with other mistakes of students, persisted due to the kind of approach through which academic writing was taught within the ALUGS module. In other words, students seemed to have continued making mistakes because they were not shown the processes involved in writing development, but were only told (through overt instruction). It is against this notion that Gee (2001) argues that academic writing (discourse) cannot be acquired through overt instruction, but through the process of apprenticeship. Findings further revealed that students were positioned at the receiving end of learning, thus defining the tutors as repertoire of knowledge. Cast in this way, the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module was through overt instruction which is tantamount to seeing writing as a product rather than a process. One way of teaching students the process of writing is by exposing them to a wide range of genres of writing. These will serve as models for them to imitate. The foregoing are the findings that emanated from the analysis of data for this study.

5.2 Implications of the study and future research

The findings from the analysis have been able to respond to the study's research questions, and have thereby assisted in achieving the study's objectives which are to explore how writing was being taught within the ALUGS module; the rationale for the choice of the pedagogy at use, and; the impact of the teaching of writing on students' writing practices. The findings have significant implications for the teaching of writing within the module, most importantly, for the purposes of improving course materials, curriculum planning and the training of tutors.

Lack of in/pre-service training for tutors may continue to obstruct effectiveness in the teaching of academic writing, and as such the faculty must ensure that there is provision for training tutors to enhance enabling environment for the teaching of the module. Secondly, the need for tutors to adequately prepare before classes was also identified as important if the ALUGS module is to be a worthwhile module. In this regard, tutors must adequately prepare for classes to enhance effectiveness not only in the teaching, but also in the acquisition of academic discourse.

In agreement with Bengesai (2012), the findings of this study points to the fact that the Faculty of Education at UKZN should review the curriculum for the ALUGS module, as well as the content of the module in a way that will allow for a collaborative pedagogy. This is because the content of the course materials have positioned the present approach not to create much opportunity for interaction between tutors and students. Hence, it is recommended that there is need for a more collaborative and participatory approach to the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module. In this way, students will feel free to participate in the process of classroom teaching and learning and also in the development of their own writing practices.

Furthermore, through the findings, it is suggested that the Faculty should implement pre-service training for prospective tutors who will be charged with the responsibility of teaching academic writing within the ALUGS module. There is also need for in-service monitoring of tutors in order to ascertain some of the challenges they face as well as guide the tutoring process. In addition, it is also recommended that the earlier version of the module should be revisited in order to address reading more effectively, since academic writing involves the students' ability to transform read knowledge into written texts.

The findings from this study have revealed that the module was being taught within the framework of a generic approach which consequently has created pseudo-discourses that were irrelevant to the students' disciplinary discourses. This is supported by students' responses that what they were being taught in the ALUGS class most of the time is not relevant to their individual disciplines. Thus, it is recommended that this academic writing (ALUGS) module should be redesigned to be discipline-specific as well as contained within each discipline (see Gee, 1996). This can be done by revisiting the curriculum and making the contents discipline-specific. Trainings could also be provided for disciplinary content specialists when necessary (see chapter two, under section 2.8.4).

As the case is with many studies, the present study raises many more questions than it answers, and a number of these questions emerged throughout the study. Implication for future research is the quest for seeking answers to these questions. One of such questions concerns the teaching of academic literacy at the HE. Among such questions that the present study failed to answer concerns the strategies that can be used to teach academic writing more adequately. All through the study, it was found that the pedagogy at use in the teaching of the ALUGS module was not inclusive, that is, it placed students at the receiving end of the teaching/learning process. However, there was no reference to a specific approach through which the module can be taught more adequately. Thus, it is recommended that future research should focus on specific approaches that can aid the effective teaching of the module in the nearest future. Moreover, a running argument all through the chapters of this study is a quest for a discipline-embedded teaching of academic writing. However, there was no recommendation on how this transformation can successfully be implemented. It is therefore recommended that future studies should explore the possible ways of implementing the transformational agenda on the discipline-specific teaching of academic writing.

Furthermore, this study has revealed that the module course materials as well as the curriculum be revised, yet there was no articulation on who is fit for such a huge task. The question then is, should the language practitioners or specific discipline practitioners be involved in the revision process, or must it be a combined effort?

5.3 Conclusion

It was stated earlier in the study that academic literacy, being a vague term, means different things to different people, including the AL practitioners themselves. Even institutions of higher learning have different notions about the phenomenon. Theoretically, this study privileged the socio-cultural perceptive where literacy, particularly academic writing, is regarded as a social practice and the participation (of students) is perceived to be the center of all teaching-learning processes. However, at the empirical level, it was found that the module under consideration privileged the academic skills model where academic writing is regarded as a set of technical skills, or what Street (1995) refers to as the technology of the mind, and their acquisition is

believed to be independent of the members of the community of practice. Hence, academic writing was being taught in the ALUGS module with less emphasis on students' participation and interaction with tutors in the process of developing their writing skills.

It must be emphasized here that the present study does not intend to condemn the module under consideration or to criticize the practitioners that were involved in the teaching of the module. However, it sought only to critique and explore the approach used in teaching the module and the impact that such an approach has on students' writing practices within the module. Findings from the study revealed that the module focused on skills acquisition rather than apprenticing students into the academic writing discourse. Furthermore, it was found that tutors' lack of adequate preparation for classes and lack of both pre and in-service training for tutors have since been impeding effectiveness in the teaching of writing within the ALUGS module. Not only these, imbalances in the contents of the course materials such as referencing style, lesser focus on reading and different genres of written texts have also contributed to the failure of the module. The latter, with other findings in the study, have incited the need for a transformational agenda, where AL can be housed in every discipline of study.

Finally, the findings further revealed the need for the revision of the curriculum to cater for both the pedagogy and the module contents that can best serve the purpose of writing and teaching within the ALUGS module. Although a specific pedagogy was not recommended in this study, yet, it is argued that there is need to employ a more collaborative or interactive method in teaching the module if the module is to benefit the students. It must be said here that among the limitations of the study as indicated in chapter one, is the fact the researcher was also a lecturer and a tutor of the module under study. The fact that most of the tutorials held at the same time really had negative impact on the study in that the researcher could not do enough classroom observations as there were clashes in the tutorial (contact sessions). This has without any doubt added to the limitations of this study.

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APPENDIX A

SUPERVISOR: DR. E.M. MGQWASHU

Tel no: 0312603549

Cell no: 0735609955

E-mail: Mgqwashue@ukzn.ac.za

RESEARCHER: P.O. MERISI

Cell no: 0747314086

E-mail: pmerisi@yahoo.com

Consent to participate in research study and publication of results.

Dear Student,

Please read the following information before participating in this research project.

1. I am aware that Mr P. O. Merisi is conducting research in writing. He is interested in how writing is being taught to students in the Academic Literacy for Undergraduate Students. He is also interested in the students' understanding of the approach to the teaching of writing in the module.
2. I have been invited to participate in the research study. I understand that I will be interviewed twice and the interviews will be tape-recorded.
3. I accept that the results of this study will be used for the completion of a Masters' degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Also, the result may be used for scholarly presentations at conferences or for publication in academic journals.
4. I am aware that my real name will not be mentioned in the results of the research study.
5. I am also aware that there are no financial benefits or rewards attached to my participation, but that the results will be used to address any gaps in the teaching of writing in the module.
6. I agree to participate in the study, and am aware that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without any consequence if I so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

SUPERVISOR: DR. E.M. MGQWASHU

Tel no: 0312603549

Cell no: 0735609955

E-mail: Mgqwashue@ukzn.ac.za

RESEARCHER: P.O. MERISI

Cell no: 0747314086

E-mail: pmerisi@yahoo.com

Declaration of Consent

I..... (full names of the participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of the letter and the nature of the research project, and I consent to voluntarily participate in the research project.

I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....
.....

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

Information Sheet for Participants

University of KwaZulu-Natal,

Edgewood Campus,

Rosewood, Flat 2

Room 70.

Dear Participant

Information for research participants

I am a Masters student specializing in English language at the above- mentioned University. I am embarking on a study titled: **On examining an academic writing module for undergraduate education students: a phenomenological case study.** The study is to be conducted within the university premises in that I will observe and interview students of this university. I therefore kindly request your permission to participate in this study.

I intend to examine the teaching methods employed in the teaching of writing in the academic literacy module for undergraduate students, as well as investigating the reasons it is taught this way. Thus, the objectives of the study are:

- ✓ To understand how writing is taught;
- ✓ To investigate the reasons for the teaching of writing the way in is taught and;

My intention is to conduct individual in-depth semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, as well as analyse students' written work, the School of Humanities handbook and the AL module pack.

The following is a list of ethical issues that will be taken into consideration during the course of this study.

Participants should take note of the following issues:

1. The researcher will use individual semi-structured interviews
2. The participants are required to answer the questions to the best of their knowledge
3. All the interviews will be tape-recorded with prior consultation and permission
4. Participants' identity will not be revealed under any circumstances
5. There will be no right or wrong answers
6. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality
7. The data will not be used for any purposes other than for this study

8. Participation is voluntary
9. The participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences
10. The participants will not receive any financial benefits for their participation in this study
11. Data stored on the University premises in a locked cupboard will be destroyed after five years

Ethics of the interview and Feedback

Upon writing up the data, I would like to discuss it with you to see if reflects your viewpoints. If you are willing, I would like to tape the interview and erase the tape after it has been transcribed. Moreover, the interview data will be treated with strict confidentiality. The data will be used for research purposes only and neither the lecturers, nor the tutors and the students will be named.

Format of the interview

The interview will take about 20 minutes. Prior to the interview, I will arrange a time and place for the interview that is convenient to you. In addition, during the course of the interview, I will ask questions and make notes on your responses. With your permission, I would like to tape (record) the interview for the purpose of transcribing what you have said. Thank you for your willingness to assist me and I am grateful for your time and effort.

Peter O. Merisi

Cell no: 0747314086

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SUPERVISOR: DR. E.M. MGQWASHU

Tel no: 0312603549

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RESEARCHER: P.O. MERISI

Cell no: 0747314086

E-mail: pmerisi@yahoo.com

Consent to participate in research study (ALUGS lecturers)

Dear Lecturer,

Please read the following information before you indicate your interest in participating in this research project.

1. I am aware that Mr. P. O. Merisi is conducting a research on writing. He is trying to find out how writing is being taught to students in the Academic Literacy for Under-Graduate Students. He is also interested in students' understanding of the approach to the teaching of writing in the module.
2. I have been requested to participate in the research study, and understand that I will be interviewed two times, and that the interviews will be tape-recorded.
3. I accept that the result of this study will be used for the completion of a Masters' degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Also, the result can (in future) be used for writing papers for presentations at conferences or publication in academic journals.
4. I am aware that my real name will not be mentioned in the results of the research study.
5. I am also aware that there are no monetary benefits attached to my participation, but that the results will be used to address any lapses in how writing is being taught to the module.
6. I agree to participate in the study, and am also aware that I have the right to withdraw my agreement to participate in the study at any time without any consequence if I so desire.

Name: _____ PLEASE CORRECT AS ABOVE

Signature: _____ Date: _____

SUPERVISOR: DR. E.M. MGQWASHU

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RESEARCHER: P.O. MERISI

Cell no: 0747314086

E-mail: pmerisi@yahoo.com

Consent to participate in research study ALUGS tutors

Dear Tutor,

Please read the following information before you indicate your interest of participating in this research project.

1. I am aware that Mr. P. O. Merisi is conducting a research on writing. He is trying to find out how writing is being taught to students in the Academic Literacy for Under-Graduate Students. He is also interested in students' understanding of the approach to the teaching of writing in the module.
2. I have been requested to participate in the research study, and understand that I will be interviewed two times, and that the interviews will be tape-recorded.
3. I accept that the result of this study will be used for the completion of a Masters' degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Also, the result can (in future) be used for writing papers for presentations at conferences or publication in academic journals.
4. I am aware that my real name will not be mentioned in the results of the research study.
5. I am also aware that there are no monetary benefits attached to my participation, but that the results will be used to address any lapses in how writing is being taught to the module.
6. I agree to participate in the study, and am also aware that I have the right to withdraw my agreement to participate in the study at any time without any consequence if I so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Letter requesting permission

Dean and Head of School

Dear Dean and Head of School of Education,

I, the undersigned request your permission to conduct a research on the academic literacy module, a compulsory module for all first year undergraduate students. This research is part of my studies towards the Master of Education degree. The title of the study is:

On exploring the role of an academic literacy module in students writing practices in the School of Education.

I I subscribe to all research ethics of the University, and would like you to note that:

- ✓ Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants are at liberty to withdraw from participating in the research at any time if they so wish.
- ✓ The participants are informed that there is no monetary or any other form of material gain attached to their participation, however, the findings will contribute to the body of knowledge as well as the field of academic literacy and teaching.
- ✓ The research will not involve any form of physical contact, but relies on sharing knowledge and experiences.

Thanks in anticipation.

Signed _____

P.O. Merisi (Researcher)

212558045

pmerisi@yahoo.com

Prof. E.M. Mgqwashu (Supervisor)

Mgqwashue@ukzn.ac.za

Letter Requesting Permission

The Gatekeeper

The Cluster Leader,

School of Languages and Media Studies.

Dear Sir

Name of Dean and Head of School

Signature & Date: _____

Sign & Date: _____

Request for permission to conduct a study

I, the undersigned request your permission to conduct a research on the academic literacy module, a compulsory module for all first year undergraduate students in your school. This research is part of my studies towards the Master of Education degree. The title of the study is:

On exploring the role of an academic literacy module in students writing practices in a school of education.

I wish to state that I subscribe to all research ethics of the University, and would like you to

note that:

- ✓ Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants are at liberty to withdraw from participating in the research at any time if they so wish.
- ✓ The participants are informed that there is no monetary or any other form of material gain attached to participation, however, the findings will to a large extent contribute to the body of knowledge as well as the field of academic literacy and teaching.
- ✓ The research will not involve any form of physical contact, but relies on sharing knowledge and experiences.

Thanks in anticipation.

Signed _____

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Interview Schedule

Students

1. How do you find the ALUGS module?
2. What difference do you see between ALUGS lectures and tutorials? If there is, what do you think is responsible for this difference?

3. Is there a lecturer/ tutor you prefer over another? Why?
4. Is there any difference or similarity between the teaching of writing in the ALUGS module and the way you were taught in high schools? If yes, explain.
5. Which of these teaching methods do you enjoy best? Why?
6. Are there things, for example, readings or articles you do not understand in the module? If yes, what are these things?
7. Do you ask questions in the tutorials and lectures? If yes, what are the responses of your tutor/ lecturers?
8. What do you think are characteristics of an academic writing?
9. How is your writing experience after your engagement with the module?
10. When given writing tasks by your tutors/lecturers, do they give you clear guidelines on the requirements of the tasks, for example, how to write up the introduction, the focus of the tasks, etc.?
11. Are you informed by your tutors about how your writing will be assessed; the marking rubric?
12. Do you think that writing should continually be taught this way?
13. Do your tutors create time for you to practice writing in the tutorials? If yes, how often?
14. Do you meet with your tutors and lecturers outside classes for clarification of tasks? If yes, how do they respond?
15. What was your writing experience before you engaged with the ALUGS module?
16. Has the ALUGS module helped you improve on your writing practices? If yes, how?
17. In your opinion, what impact does the ALUGS module have in developing student writing skills?

18. Any other comment about the ALUGS module?

Tutors

1. What are your classroom experiences with students' writing practices within the ALUGS module?
2. What, in your opinion, is the role of ALUGS module in students' writing practices?
3. How do you describe students as writers when they came into the ALUGS classes?
4. What can you say about their writing practices when they complete the ALUGS module?
5. What are the most important areas in academic writing?
6. What, in your own view are the main focus of the ALUGS module?
7. In your opinion, what influences academic writing?
8. Do you think the ALUGS module is effectively improving students' writing practices? Explain.
9. How do you teach writing within the ALUGS module?
10. Did you receive any training before you started tutoring the ALUGS module? If yes, explain.
11. Is there provision for in-service training for tutors during the course of the module? If yes, explain.
12. If not, what is your opinion about providing in-service training for tutors, especially those outside the field of language studies?
13. What can you say about the way writing is taught in the ALUGS module?

14. Are you restricted to a particular way of teaching in the ALUGS module, or you are allowed to make choices in your approach?
15. Any other comments on the ALUGS module?
16. Any other comments in general?

Lecturers

1. When was the ALUGS module introduced to the B. Ed curriculum?
2. Why was it introduced?
3. From your own professional experience, what are the factors leading to students' success or failure in the ALUGS module?
4. What is acceptable academic writing?
5. How can you describe students as writers when they came into the ALUGS classes?
6. How can you describe students as writers when they complete the ALUGS module?
7. In your opinion, what is the lecturers' role in developing student academic writing?
8. In your own view, is the ALUGS module developing student writing skills? If yes, explain?
9. How is writing taught in the ALUGS module?
10. Why is it taught this way?
11. Do you think the ALUGS module is effectively improving students' writing practices? Explain.
12. Is there provision for pre- and in-service trainings for tutors in the ALUGS module? If yes, what trainings?

13. If not, what impact, in your opinion does the lack of training have on tutors' teaching practices?
14. In your own view, what makes the tutorial groups different from the lectures?
15. Are the tutorial groups achieving their purpose? Explain your answer.
16. Any other comments on the ALUGS module?

Interview Transcripts

Interview with student 1

Interviewer: How do you find the Academic Literacy module?

Interviewee: The module is quite interesting because it teaches us how to write academically and the way we use academic language. So I find this very effective because it helps us because we are always writing in this university.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. So it teaches you how to use academic language. What do you think is the difference between academic literacy lectures and the tutorials? Is there a difference?

Interviewee: Yes there is a difference. During tutorials the, the tutors pay more attention because the number of students is limited or smaller than during lectures. So if you don't understand something, you're able to ask the tutor rather than being in a lecture. It is always full.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. Is there a lecturer or tutor that you prefer more than the other?

Interviewee: I'm quite comfortable with the ones I have, both lecturer and tutor, they are great.

Interviewer: Ok. What do you mean by "great?"

Interviewee: I mean we ask questions and they answer you. If you don't understand something, they explain it. Sometimes language is a barrier, so they actually stick to a simple language.

Interviewer: Thanks so much. If I may ask again, do you ask questions in the tutorials and lectures?

Interviewee: Yes I do

Interviewer: How does the lecturer respond?

Interviewee: They answer what I have asked, basically.

Interviewer: How do your tutors assess your essay writing when you write?

Interviewee: Well, with my tutor. the first essay that we wrote, she just took the essays and marked them. She didn't correct us in terms for example with the introduction, she was not specific if we included or excluded. The essays that we wrote, it

wasn't a draft; it was the actual essay because she gave us marks. So we made a lot of errors because we didn't know

Interviewer: So you were not told what was expected of you for the essay, like in your introduction you are expected to write this or write this or include this in your writing?

Interviewee: Well she taught us but then again we all make mistakes. Like other tutors, they actually allow you to bring in your essay, they will make corrections and then you will bring the final draft, the one that they will mark. Our tutor didn't do all that; she just marked the first draft and gave us marks based on it.

Interviewer: Based on that, do your tutors comment on your essay. Maybe because you were wrong somewhere and they gave comments?

Interviewee: Yes they gave comments.

Interviewer: Did you understand such comments?

Interviewee: Well, some of them I didn't understand. The one I remember is that I have to structure my introduction correctly

Interviewer: How do you structure the introduction correctly?

Interviewee: Well I wrote everything correctly, I think the way I structured it or wrote it was the problem.

Interviewer: After reading that correction, comment. Do you now know how to structure it?

Interviewee: Well not really.

Interviewer: Was the comment able to tell you how to structure it?

Interviewee: No the correction just didn't. The comment was basically telling me that I should learn how to structure my essay.

Interviewer: Do you always meet with your lecturers or tutors outside the classes for clarification of things?

Interviewee: No

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee: Well, during lectures I just feel like I understand everything. If I don't understand, on Wednesday I attend the tutorial so the tutor will explain.

Interviewer: What was your writing experience before you engaged with academic writing?

Interviewee: I just wrote anything. I couldn't just write orderly. I just whatever came to mind at first, although I knew the structure of a essay but what needed to be included I was not sure off and that's why I got unsatisfactory marks but now its better as I have improved.

Interviewer: Now there is some improvement, I want to ask the way writing is judged, the way you were taught to write in academic literacy. Has that had an impact on your writing purposes?

Interviewee: Yes, partially. It depends on the lecturer of that module. If I tried to apply to that specific module, you will find that the lecturer is not satisfied. So what I learnt in ALE did not apply. My lecturer for example, wants me to write the way that he asked me to write not according to what I have been taught during Ale-

Interviewer: When it comes to writing very well, what is the importance that you were taught to referencing?

Interviewee: To acknowledge the sources because if you just write without site, then it shows that you don't acknowledge the author or book or script.

Interviewer: When you were taught referencing, everything was just focusing on acknowledging your resources? That was the main focus?

Interviewee: Yes

Interviewer: In the academic literacy module, are there readings or articles that you find difficult to understand?

Interviewee: Yes, infact all of them. Especially Hyland, I used the dictionary more often to understand the words in the text.

Interviewee: If reading is important in writing development, how is it addressed in the academic literacy module?

Interviewer: The usage of language can be included there.

Interviewee: So there was nothing on reading but everything was on writing, writing, writing?

Interviewer: Any further comments you would like to add, maybe any improvements?

Interviewee: Uhm..there can be improvements but I can't think of one now. The information given to us during the lecture is sometimes not the same as the information we get at the tutorial. So we end up not knowing which information to take. Having different lecturers and tutors sticking to one thing. Even if we are studying with other students from other groups, lecturers must have the same information.

Interview with student 2

Interviewer: How do you find the academic literacy module?

Interviewee: Interesting. It has taught me a lot on how to write academic text.

Interviewer: So you find it interesting, so its not difficult?

Interviewee: It depends on how you see it. To me its not that difficult.

Interviewer: What difference do you see between academic literacy lectures and the tutorials?
Is there any difference?

Interviewee: To be honest, I don't see any difference because when we are in the lectures, the lecturer engaged us and in the lesson he made sure that we participated. The same activities usually take place in the tutorials except that in the tutorials the tutors are only summarizing what the lecturer has taught us.

Interviewer: so the tutors just summarized what lecturers said?

Interviewee: yes, they go on that that has been already taught. They don't go deep.

Interviewer: is there a lecturer or a tutor that you prefer?

Interviewee: that is a very hard one. Okay, I have been tutored by only one tutor and lecturer. I have no experienced being tutored by another tutor, so I'm not sure about that one.

Interviewer: does the way academic literacy is being taught have impact on the way you write in your discipline or other modules?

Interviewee: yes.

Interviewer: what impact does it have?

Interviewee: its very useful. It helps me a lot when I am to write essays. Now, I know how to structure my essay. When I came to the university I didn't know how to write my essays, now I know how the introduction should be; all the thesis statement stuff. So when in the other modules I am told to write essays, now I know what to do.

Interviewer: when you are given tasks like essay writing, do your tutors provide you with feedbacks and comments?

Interviewee: the only assignment that we did was about essay writing; the one about Hyland. The feedback that I received was on the script at the back of the essay. They were not on what I did wrong or what I should improve on.

Interviewer: so, whenever you missed anything, were you told where you went wrong and what to do? Were those comments there?

Interviewee: no, they were not.

Interviewer: then how did they correct you, is it by ticking?

Interviewee: I can't remember well, but there were some notes there as to what I should stick to when writing academic essay.

Interviewer: okay. Are those comments clear enough?

Interviewee: no, if they were clear enough I would have remembered them.

Interviewer: what I am just trying to say is that if a tutor gives comments such as "what do you mean? What are you saying? That is a comment, is the tutor telling you what went wrong, and how to do it?"

Interviewee: well, one thing that I remember that was written there is that I should stick to the topic in discussion. I can't remember well, but there was something about that.

Interviewer: okay, with that comment what do you think is wrong?

Interviewee: I don't know.

Interviewer: so, it was not clear enough?

Interviewee: yes.

Interviewer: what was your writing experience before your engagement with the module?

Interviewee: okay, mmmm, I'm not sure about the question. Okay, it was bad, but there are many things that I have learnt in academic literacy. If I were to be asked about critical discussion before, I didn't know what it meant.

Interviewer: you didn't know what it meant, but you know what it means now.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: so, when you are to critically discuss, what does it mean?

Interviewee: Smiles...! It's like you discuss something...you consider some factors, emmm...Yeah!

Interviewer: If effective writing is a product of product of reading, how is reading addressed/taught in the AL module?

Interviewee: in the tutorials we were asked to read from the course packs. I think that is how they are preparing us. They can just read everything by themselves, but they just tell us to read.

Interviewer: if you don't understand something during the tutorials or lectures, do you always meet with your tutors or lecturers to ask for verification outside the classroom?

Interview with student 3

Interviewer: How do you find the academic literacy module?

Interviewee: It's...I find it to be how we write essay. Firstly I will talk about critical discussion. I learnt how to write an introduction and conclusion, and to also write something you understand. So it helps me.

Interviewer: So, you don't find it difficult?

Interviewee: it is difficult, but in tutorials, Ms... tries to make things clear to us

Interviewer: Is there any difference between the academic literacy lectures and the tutorials?

Interviewee: Yea, there is.

Interviewer: what is this difference?

Interviewee: in lectures, there is a lot of people and sometimes you are afraid to raise your hand if there are things that are not clear. But in tutorials, it is easy to speak. Yeah!

Interviewer: So, you always speak in tutorials.

Interviewee: Yeah. I always ask questions and feel free in tutorials because there is no many people. So I do anything I feel like doing.

Interviewer: do you always ask questions in the lectures?

Interviewee: in lectures, I don't.

Interviewer: why?

Interviewee: I'm scared because there are a lot of people.

Interviewer: what makes you to be scared?

Interviewee: I'm very shy

Interviewer: is there any lecturer or tutor you prefer to the other?

Interviewee: Yeah. Ms..., when she is teaching me something she is always smiling. She is good.

Interviewer: is there any difference between how academic literacy module is being taught and how you were taught writing in the high school?

Interviewee: Yes, there is.

Interviewer: what is the difference?

Interviewee: even it's difficult to explain, but there is. I don't know how I can explain this, but there is.

Interviewer: which of them do you enjoy?

Interviewee: high school learning?

Interviewer: why?

Interviewee: Because if you writing an essay even though you write wrong, they understand that you are too young, but in the university, I can't explain it; you can't just write anything. You need to think first before you write. But in high school most of the things you write, they don't penalize me. But here, they penalize me.

Interviewer: are there readings or articles in the ALUGS module that you find difficult to understand?

Interviewee: Yes, uhhh...Hyland's "genre analysis just another fad?" but when I read for myself the first time I read it, it was difficult, but Ms... explained it explained it deeply.

Interviewer: how was your writing experience before your engagement with the module?

Interviewee: I was taught that in essay you must write introduction, body and conclusion. But when I was writing the body I often missed the information, but ALE let me know that in the body of the essay, paragraph must have their own information and

another paragraph must begin with another thing which were the things I did not know before; I learnt it in ALE, and it helped me.

Interviewer: did your tutors or lecturers brief you about the guidelines on what you are required to include in your tasks or essays?

Interviewee: yes, yes.

Interviewer: Apart from the classroom time, how often do you meet with your tutors or lecturers for clarifications about things you didn't understand in the tutorials or lectures?

Interviewee: If there are things I didn't understand, they allow me to meet with them, even though I didn't do it.

Interviewer: Ok. Why didn't you do it?

Interviewee: Laugh! If I understand something there is no need to go back again to ask because they explain deeply and I keep on doing it.

Interviewer: How do your tutors comment on your written tasks or essays?

Interviewee: Although we have not yet received our test scripts but they comment on the assignment. Their comments were on things that went wrong

Interviewer: which specialization are you from?

Interviewee: me? Zulu and Technology.

Interviewer: is the way writing is being taught in the module relevant to what you do in Technology?

Interviewee: No...in technology, there in no a lot of things like essay. But when you are writing an essay in Zulu there is connection. They are like the same even though the languages are not the same.

Interviewer: what about technology?

Interviewee: it talks about machines... and not about writing.

Interviewer: all these things, are they important in your technology?

Interviewee: Academic literacy? Yeah! I can say yes because it helps me with how to write things, a lot of things and in academic literacy they'll make you know it's important to understand something that you learn about or that if you want to write something like I said before you have to think and understand so that the people who can read the thing that you write, they will get the message, then the aim; why you are writing what you write.

Interviewer: Can you say that academic literacy module has helped you to improve in your writing practices?

Interviewee: Ooh! Because of academic literacy, I have improved.

Interviewer: any general comment about academic literacy module?

Interviewer: laugh! Academic literacy, it helps the learners to understand how to write because in high school our teachers didn't deeply explain how to write an essay. They will just tell us there is introduction, body and conclusion. They didn't tell us why it is important that the paragraph must have a message. Don't mix the information; like if you speak about teenagers' pregnancy in the first paragraph, and the second one you speak about drugs. You have to set up your information...academic literacy teach us how to write a good essay to make someone understand the essay. Good.

Interview with tutor 1

What are your classroom experiences with students writing practices within the academic literacy module... your classroom experiences with students writing practices?

Ok...are you talking about AL (yes) ok in terms of AL I think my students were under the impression that AL is a very difficult module so as they were coming to class most of the didn't even want to participate because they assume that the moment they put their hand ups I'm just gonna say that the answer is wrong or something of the that so what so the as a result they were not willing to participate. They were just shy and they were ready to receive whatever knowledge that I was giving them(hmmm!) which means there was a myth that needed to be banked or to be clarified it terms of AL (hmmm!),yah!

Thank you so much ma so like that shows that the student they arelike the fear is already in them (yes) when they hear about academic literacy (yes) as the result when they even get into the class they are always passive (mmm! exactly) making the class not to be so participatory, ok thank you so much ma.

.....
Then what in your opinion is the role of AL (**emhu**) in students writing development?

Ok, I think AL plays a very important role because we all need to know how to write academically firstly we all coming from different schools some of us are coming from disadvantaged schools and some are coming from well – advantaged school so when student come in they are all come with those different experiences and some of them don't even know how to construct a simple sentence whereby you have a subject , verb and an object so I think al is very important because that's where we learn how to write academically because sometimes you know how to write but we don't know how to write academically we don't even know how to structure an essay so we really need to be taught such modules at the beginning in our first years so that these can and this should be also be reiterated, emphasized in every module other module not just in AL we must be taught how to write, to structure an essay how to structure an intro because we don't know what to include in the rest of the essay if we don't even know what to write in an intro.

Ok thank you so much ma

In your own opinion what does academic writing - what does it entail? What is academic-academic writing or academic literacy?

I think in my opinion academic writing means that you are writing in a formal – formal, you use a formal language when you are writing whatever you are writing you know you don't use word that you don't even know the meaning of, you don't use word that you normally use when you are socializing with your friends, so academic writing for me or academic language for me means that you know the audience who you are writing for you know the purpose of writing why are you writing a specific text that you are writing some it's all about knowing who you are writing for and also the context where are you writing who are you writing where are you writing because if you are writing for you friend to your friends it's a different place you are in different place you use a different language you use different vocabs (emm) then when you come to university now that where academic comes we need to know you need to be able to emm what do we call these now you need to be able to express yourself academically whereby you use the academic jargon you need to know what is used in the-the vocab that are used in the university so that it makes whatever you are writing sense to the person that you are writing to.**Ok thank you so much ma if I may ask again like gee says that each discipline is like a discourse now in the university we have biology as a discourse ee those studying mathematics as discourse those doing eng language as a discourse (emh). Then academic literacy according to Gee should be I mean when we teach them we should be able to equip student with how to respond to a particular discourse (emh) now ma how is academic literacy or academic writing how is taught in the academic literacy module? How do they teach it?**

Ok in the academic emh in this module, academic literacy or writing or language or whatever is being taught not in a sense not – not specifically in that sense (not discipline specific) yes not discipline specific (ok) it just a general way of teaching it so we assuming that everybody will know the vocab in languages everybody will know the vocab so whether you come from social justice you come fro...m which other disciplines (from sciences) sciences

We are assuming that you should all know..... how it is written in the discipline of languages but I think that at the way it was taught maybe it was good in a sense that I'm coming from social justice but I can relate what learnt in English to social justice but I also think it should be also helpful to teach it maybe start with in general form and then bring in the specifications bring it in somewhere it should reflect because students won't know when to use it how to use it they will know it but when it comes the own specifications or specialisations they will be just confused because for them they are just assuming it's for English and are not majoring in English so I don't think I'll ever use it (mm)that's what in their mind (mm) but for me it was really helpful because what I learnt in AL is what I'm using to social justice (mm) thank you so much ma.

Then what in your own opinion is the main focus of the academic literacy- the main focus; the areas it covers?

Ok I think ... essays the structure of an essay that is very important because in the university we are taught about essays it mostly essays please write in terms of assignments whether you are in professional studies or you are in educational studies which are core modules all that we are looking for is can you write can you structure an essay so academic writing is able to cover the format of an essay it covers a whole allot of different areas but the main I would think is the structure of an essay which is relevant in each and every discipline each and every specialisation

ok thank you so much ma, then if writing is the focus of the module then it is always said that effective writing is the product of reading (emh) then what – how is the matter of reading how is it addressed in the module?

Ok...I would speak about my own experiences in my own class in my class what you are saying is true how can you be able to write when you have got no time to read or you are not given time to read so in my class I would take the course packs I would break it down into little parts (mm) I would ask each and every student to read – ask him to read don't be shy just tell me the first word that comes to your head to your mind as you are reading don't even think about it just read and try and engage them as one person is reading everybody else is trying to interpret what is being read (mm) so at the end everybody gets to participate as I would go around well besides the person who has been reading everybody else would be contributing

Thank you ma... looking at a course pack as the tutor in the module I discovered that it is the last chapter in the course pack that addresses reading (emhh) that talks about reading skills all those things that are – that are needed for effective reading and like we said earlier if we want our students to start writing very well then they must start practicing writing from reading (emh) from those who have written. I mean some things have been written before now students should be able to start from what have been written before so that they would be able to build up a model to follow now...how do you think reading is being addressed in that in the module?

Ok since you've touched on that aspect of reading and writing reading being at the end of the course pack (yes) not many people actually spend more time at the and everybody is just trying rush because we have got so many activities to do (emh) we have got so much to cover at such little time so I don't think much attention is being placed on reading it's all about writing (emh) that's why I think its called academic writing most students don't even call it academic literacy they think it's academic writing because the emphasis is one writing not reading which is true so not many people are able to cover that aspect (emh) the reading aspect of the module. **Thank you so much ma**

Please as the tutor did you receive any training before teaching academic writing? Was there any-any form of training form of before you started teaching?

Emh, I'm not gonna lie I've never had any.

Was there any in-service training like you know we have pre-service training that is to prepare someone for the service or in-service while you were teaching (during) is there any time you were called together as tutors and they gave you training on what to do how to do it taining just to on how to teach whatever was there any training like that?

Not that I remember I don't recall (ok)but maybe last year when we I don't know but I know this year nothing (ok) definitely this year no I don't remember I remember us having meetings but meeting based on marking how do you go about marking but not how do you go about teaching the module (emh) now if there is no pre-service or in-service for-for the tutors what impact do think this lack of training have on tutors teaching practices due to the lack of training (yes)whether its pre-service or in-service or post-service (yes) I don't think that firstly we all end

up doing ... there is no standardization so everybody is just trying to do as much as they can in that double period so you are some of us are struggling some of us know what to do (emh) but we have never had an opportunity to come as a group maybe ask those who came who were teaching before us come back and say you know what guys (emh) I taught this module maybe two years ago (emh) and I understand it's frustrating because there is no guideline there is no guidelines so whatever you get you just given ehmm what do you call this? a course pack please go and teach this module for me what do you teach hope how do you teach it does not matter there are just assuming because you have got your Masters(emh) in that particular field wherever you are you be and you have done the module so you would be able to teach it well (emh) so they are under that assumption not realising we are different people coming with different teaching methods and pedagogies so it's not we don't even know if we are really really doing justice to the module and to the students

Thank you so much ma...I've got two more questions before we round up the session I would like to ask what do you think is the importance of assessment and feedback in students writing development (emh) the importance of assessment just the way we comment on their what is the importance?

I think that is very important because when students write something they put their minds in it I don't think student just goes if it's due if an assignment is due in two week's time I don't think they do it in a day before (emh) they make their efforts they send like with me I would tell my students please send me an introduction of your essay if it's an essay so that I can see that you would be covering whatever needs to be covered in the rest of your essay send it to me email it to me and I promise you-you would get it back and I've been doing that whatever even with the assignment I ask it email and I will give you feedback so I think it's very important to guide students. Assessment is like guiding students as tutor you need to go to the front teach students tell them in your assignment I will be looking for abc and d do you understand (emh)so if you know students will know how to structure an assignment if you would just go and teach them or give them the assignment go and do your assignment it's not gonna help them because they don't know how to go about it. they don't even know what is expected of them so emh in terms of assessment its very important to write in the actual assignment tell me my mistakes what where have I gone wrong tell me the good that I've done; encourage me so tell me why I got the filthy

percent or why I got that seventy two percent I need to know why so write the comments where I have done well put a tick and say good argument or whatever and If haven't done well or I don't know what is I don't achieve well then tell me where I went wrong so assessment is very important and feedback is the most important part of it thank you so much ma thank you for the time you've given to me

I would like to ask this final question- do you think that the academic literacy module is really influencing students writing practices and development? What influence does it have? Does it have impact students' writing practices? Or how can you describe (students') writing practices after the module ...?

I promise you students have their writing and reading ok I'm not sure about the reading ability but the writing ability does improve when you like for example when because I'm in for Professional studies and Education studies I was give third years students so these students have gone through AL so you can see it (emh) like eighty percent of them you can see that they know how to structure an essay and those two modules are basically looking at students writing essays and giving back to us or ya so when like for example when you say critically discuss I like that in our course packs for AL page one has got task words so students are able to go back because I always say guys whenever you are writing an essay or any academic work go back to you course packs AL course packs refer to that that's gonna help you it will guide you so when they come to me and we give them a question like critically discuss corporal punishment in schools some of them, don't know what critically discuss is (emh) they take out the critical part of it and they leave the discussion so they just go and discuss but we want they to go back and try and incorporate what you learnt in AL into you classrooms them it becomes so much easier to them and that is where they end up getting the good marks because you've guided them even though AL was just a module that came and gone but for me it hasn't (emh) because I still utilise it in my class whether it's AL Professional Studies or Diversity and Learning I teach them all of that remind them I still I even tell them I'm doing my Masters but I still have my books because sometimes then you refer to that very special book because that's where I learnt to write academically or that's where I think I learnt how to structure an essay and write in a manner that is emmh acceptable in the university. **Thank you so much ma**

And finally emmh we teach students about referencing so what and how do we define referencing to them?What I mean is what kind of definitiondo we give - what importance do we give to referencing to them? I know students saying refereneing saying ehhh I want to reference because I don't want to plagiarise(emm) is that the definition of referencing in the module how is referencing defined in the module?

I know most students do believe I just don't want to plagiarise so I need referencing

I mean how do we teach them in the module oh how do we teach them is it?do we teach students because we need to avoid plagiarism that is why you need to reference or what other definition do we give them to reference?

I think that the main... students are just so scared of the word plagiarism so they try to avoid it by all means and they will even come to you to class before you reach the reference section in the module they will ask you "mum what is this thing called plagiarism why do we need to know all of these why do we have to acknowledge the sources" and I always tell them you have to acknowledge sources because something does not belong to you and you take from another person that mean you have stolen it so it's a crime so you need to do that but also equate the referencing to-to I also link it to postgrad studies for me I want them to know not only end up in B Ed I want them to go forward (emh) to do their Honors do their Masters but you need to master referencing in academic writing or in that module (emh)for you to be able to use it everywhere for you to reach the destination of being a Dr or a Professor or whatever they want to be wherever they want to be in life

Thank you so much ma on that your referencing we discover that we teach students to use the APA style (yes) which is sixth edition is it?(emhh)

Emhh,in the module in the course pack itself do we have APA style in the course pack itself I don't think is the sixth style of (ok) ya but I have seen it but it's not the latest let me put it that waythat is what we teach them is not what is the course (yes)

So,what impact do you think that has on their referencing?

Eey I don't think they even remember that what we teach them because some because I tell them refer to your books so when they go back they remember the style that is used in the book

whereas each and every year or each and every second year but the style is advancing but yet in the book the style remains the same there is no advancement in terms of the style and when I look at the book to me I would show you three different books that I've used because we've got AL in the first and second semester so let's say I'll show you four different books of AL (emmh) I can tell you one thing nothing has changed (emmh) in the book no..thing has changed what changes normally is the first part which is the first section first page of the book which is all about assessment and guidelines of what to teach and when to teach it so that's all that changes nothing else the book hasn't been emended it hasn't been edited it hasn't been ..updated (emh) it's a same book but with a different cover so today this semester it's gonna be an orange colour the next semester it's gonna be a red the following year it's gonna be a green so it's just changing covers but nothing changes (the content) the content stills remain the same its not being updated thank you so much ma and also in terms of the coordinators it depends on the who is the coordinator is and what they ideology is (emh) so if they've got a certain ideology that's what we as tutors are gonna be teaching to students (emh) and if that is differs to that of a next coordinator so next semester because it's a different coordinator there is different ideology so students are learning something else (emh) and also in terms of testing assessments students are tested differently because for once students assume aaa Al is all about essays it has been always about essays so last semester when somebody else came in when a new coordinator came in everything we covered in class was in test they were bit confused now as to how – how is this coordinator testing us because we are so used (emh) to other methods of testing so what is really going on and I bet you this semester it was different from how it was taught (yes before) before so it depends on the ideology of the and the beliefs of that particular coordinator so we must just go and implement (emh) it in the classroom **Thank you so much ma.**

Do you have other comment regarding AL? Yes I love AL yo I love Al I wish everybody could just teach I meant everybody could choose to do AL I wish AL was a compulsory module for everybody as it is compulsory for everybody yes for first year students somehow try and incorporate it to other modules remind them in their second year go back to AL remind them in the third year go back to AL remind them in their fourth year that there is something called AL (emh) so somehow do not just end it in first year because it for them its something because of this mentality of it being difficult the (emh) moment they are done with AL in that particular semester they are resting life for them is just awesome because they managed to pass AL (emh)

so I want al as something that is part oftheir lives part of their writing reading and part of literacy (emh) make it part of literacy anything that involves it in university make it part of because its academic writing and we need to know how to write academically because once we leave this place we are going out there to work(emh) and you can't use you need to know the jargon of that particular workplace that you are going to (emh)so yah somehow make AL very importantvery important

Thank you so much ma thank you for giving me your time and I think if I call you another time for such an interview like this I think you are going to give me at least a opportunity emh thank you so much ma thank you

Interview with lecturer 1

Interviewer: When and why was the academic literacy module introduced to the Bed curriculum?

Interviewee: Honestly, I do not know when I know that it got the wide, is that, it would have been introduced up a major, after 1994 when South Africa became a democratic country. And then 5 years later, we were having a lot of second language people coming through the system and the schools were changing, it was a tough change in the nature of changing of schooling of South Africa was changing. We just found that people did not have those skills in order to the critical thinking, critical reading and critical writing skills in order to cope with the demands of academic life and academic literacy was introduced and became compulsory. I think it has always been probably there before but not as a compulsory module. But honestly I don't know the history.

Interviewer: Okay thank you so much Ma

Interviewer: Based on the noting that some other students are not prepared for higher education, and that we have different levels of capacity for academic writing. How are students placed into various academic tutorial classes? Based on their level of preparation, is there any placement test?

Interviewee: In terms of academic literacy?, It is completely random

Interviewer: So it is randomly done, students with different capacities are selected

Interviewer: Thank you so much mah

Interviewer: According to your own view, based on your experience of teaching academic literacy module here. What is acceptable academic writing?

Interviewee: It quite difficult to answer that one, because every discipline really has its own academic writing conventions. So, I think in terms of acceptable academic writing it will have to be academic writing that conforms to the demands of a particular discipline

Interviewer: Particular discipline?

Interviewee: yes...particular discipline and then it will be acceptable to that discipline. But what acceptable to English and to history is not necessarily accepted to science world. They write differently.

Interviewer: okay, Now that academic literacy is being offered as a kind of generic programme that is to bring students together. No mah.....how is writing taught in the academic literacy module?

Interviewee; what we try to encourage, If you are asking how in terms of methodology that we use when teaching. What we are trying to do is to scaffold the learners and to really follow the genre approach to writing. You know we are trying to practice what we preach and walk and talk. So it defiantly scaffolding. That is the intension.

Interviewer; okay mah thank you so much, then if it is taught that way...why is it taught that way? Why do we use that particular approach? Is there any reason why do we use that particular approach to teach?

Interviewee: Well the reason why we try to use the genre approach is in order to scaffold the students because we realize that we first need to know what is known then to build on the known, so it is all about scaffolding at the end of the day

Interviewer: Thank you mah, so if effective writing is the product of reading, then how is the concept of reading addressed in the module?

Interviewee; The way that it is addressed< I must confess that with the new academic literacy course, we do not address it enough but they way that it should be is that they should be exposed to many different genres and then to respond, to have questions where they have to respond. To the writing that they have read. So I think it should be encouraging more reading but also the students must realise that they have to read outside the classroom. You know that one thing of notional hours, they don't...so maybe we should have a list of recommended reading and then they could go and read for themselves.

Interviewer; Thank you so much ma. Another question is asking something that is rhetorical or practical, Can academic literacy be explicitly taught?

Interviewer: your own view mah

Interviewee: I think the teaching is explicitly you need to have academic literacy within every single discipline and then you explain in the academic literacy that is relevant for that discipline. In terms of a generic compulsory academic module, I gotta say yes it can be taught explicitly cause we do. So is that successful? I think it would be more successful. Every discipline can be explicit about what they want.

Interviewer: okay mah ,I would like to ask you another question, is there any provision for pre service training for tutors in the academic literacy module/

Interviewee: NO

Interviewer: What impact in your opinion does the lack of training have on tutors teaching practices?

Interviewee; It has a huge impact, because to be honest with you we find that some of the tutors don't have those academic literacy skills. Some of the tutors don't read much and not always prepared properly and sometimes there is also a little bit of confusion around what has to be taught on the tutorials. So it has enigmas impact on the programme. Another problem is that our tutors are also students, we don't have them full time, some are coming and going. Lot of them are doing it because they need money. So there is no commitment to it. There isn't really short staffed and it isn't really anybody who can take charge of academic literacy as it should be. We need a centre, a writing centre for it to be done properly.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for that

Interviewer: the way academic literacy is taught both in the tutorials and the lectures, do you think it is improving students writing skills?

Interviewee: No I don't...I don't think we should have lectures, we must have only the tutorials with very very small groups and I think then it will be a worthwhile programme. I have table that and it comes down to financial implications and the answer is that, it is too expensive to have tutorials. So we are forced to do this model, it is not beneficial to students.

Interviewer: I have got more two questions. This question is asking about how you can describe students writing practices before they enter to the module, registering for the module? And what can you say about their writing practices after they have completed the module?

Interviewee: the thing that you are asking me is very difficult to answer because there will be individuals who come in and their writing practices are excellent and the other individuals come in and they very haphazard and then there will be some individuals who we see the progress and other individuals who don't progress at all. So it is a difficult one to answer, I think from my personal experience for what I have seen is the only time we see progress is students who take responsibilities for their own learning and for those students who do extra work and those students who speak to the lecturers and work with their tutors and then we see some sort of progression. Other than that, it is very haphazard I would say

Interviewer: the final question, Do you have any other comments?

Interviewee: No I would basically say that I do feel that academic literacy should be housed in every discipline and I do feel that the lecture-tut model does not work within our context. I do feel that the tutors will need to be selected carefully and trained and monitored, if we are serious about academic literacy. As I have said we need a writing centre for this compulsory module.

Interview with Lecturer 2

Interviewer: when and why was the ALUGS module introduced to the B.Ed programme?

Interviewee: The question of when it was introduced I am not very sure. I only joined the university in 2011 and the module was already there. Okay! Why it was introduced I might not get a full answer as well but my understanding is that when students entered university especially the first year students as much as it is important to know English as a language of learning, you know? as a language of instruction, but academic language, you need to acquire it, you need to learn it. So, whether you are a student whose mother tongue is English, you are at the advantage in the fact that the language of instruction is English, but you won't get the advantage because academic language is nobody's mother tongue. Everyone is to, is to learn it. So, why it was introduced, it was introduced because in an environment of academia one has to know how to

operate within the environment and to operate within that environment we need academic language.

An acceptable academic writing I am speaking or responding from the position of a lecturer, you know, teaching the module, in other words I respond from what the module I am teaching says. Eeehn, I did not design the module. I found the module already there, but what the module says is that the acceptable academic writing is the kind of writing that is formal, does not have colloquialism; you don't use slangs, alright? You...are very cautious of how you use contraction when you write; otherwise, they are not necessary you know in academic writing. And of cause, writing from an academic point of view, it means you need to know why you write the way you write, alright? Why you say what you say? Because what you say in an academic writing is informed by whom are you saying it to. In other words, who is your audience that you are writing to and your audience will automatically influence your degree of formality or informality when you are writing. So, whether your writing is to become complex, kind of a complex writing or simple writing will depend upon your audience and the context in which you write; the surrounding in which you write. Let me make an example, if for example you are writing to junior primary students, your writing won't be the same as when you are writing to a first year university student. So the audience has determined how you approach your writing. So as someone who has been introduced into academic literacy, those are the things one needs to know; that academic literacy...you need to think about your audience when you write and you need to think about the context in which you write in. so all those things put together will give you a style of writing.

How is it taught in the module?

Writing is taught in the sense that you don't only look at writing per se in isolation, alright? You look at writing in relation to reading, alright? So, how you read and how you write are like two sides of the same coin. Alright? So now, writing involves, I will say, from the initial stages, students are introduced to academic writing; are introduced for example to how you construct the introduction to academic writing. How you construct an introduction, but what is important is not only to know that when you write academic essays for example you need an introduction. What is more important is what goes into that introduction. Alright? What are the aspects that you need to put in that introduction? You need for an introduction to have a background to the topic that

you are writing about. You need to have, to indicate the purpose to the reader why you write what you write. What is it you want to achieve out of your writing? What is the purpose of writing? Which will term it thesis. You need to give the reader the mind map in terms of how you are going to proof the point you want to proof. What are the points you need to consider. You teach it again, again, and again until you are certain that now they can't confuse an academic introduction before you move to the next level of constructing the body and paragraphs, and all that. What is important is what goes into this aspect

If you want to prove a point or how you how you are going to develop the argument that your want to develop what are the points that need to consider so you sort of to that skill drill them sort off to that skill you know you teach it again and again and again until you are certain that now they can produce an academic introduction before you move to the next level of construction the body and paragraph on all that what is important is what goes in to this aspects because from secondary school the... indication when they come here is that they might have been taught .. that for an academic for-for an essay you need introduction body and conclusion but was shortage in terms of what goes into the body how does the body should look like right there should be links **ehm** into paragraphs but it's not just about links the link should indicate whether the next paragraph supports what the previous paragraph was saying or the link is about you know arguing another point or developing another point **ehm**they should be aware of those things and that I'm putting this paragraph not because I want to argue or develop another point or I'm putting this paragraph because I'm developing the same argument from the previous paragraph **ehm** you know so that how we teach it **thank you so much sir**

So eehlooking at eeh what ehm the distinction of ... discourse with capital D and discourse with small d like Gee says that academic literacy is a discourse ehmand that ehh discourse is like we have- we have different disciplines and this disciplines they are discourses on their own ehmnnow sir appears academic literacy here is being taught as a kind of generic-genericprogrammeehmthat is just teaching students a kind of essays type of literacy so sir why is it taught that way? Why is it that it is not discipline specific?

Ehm well eeh that it is good question that you are raising in fact. . . is the question that I myself you know battling with is the question that myself I want answers to right because I believe that as a teacher of English . . . I should be able to equip students with the knowledge of how to

engage with another subject for an example right I should be able to teach a student and to-to have the lang-language of dealing with accounting if they dealing with accounting to have a knowledge of dealing with economics if they dealing with economics right **ehm**so . . . academic language should talk to other disciplines rather that to be in isolation like looking at writing of essays lets write an essay from an accounting point of view **ehm-ehm** . . how did they construct that is your duty as a teacher of English alright so why it taught the way the way it is taught right now I think it is because of how the curriculum is designed then you have to ask the question who designed the curriculum and what it is they wanted to archive **ehm**because for me designing a curriculum would mean there is a problem or there is a phenomenon that I want to address that is why you design a curriculum in that fashion **ehm** so the question in this case which we cannot answers right now is why the curriculum for academic literacy is designed in a way it is designed because the way it is designed it is only responding you know to academic writing in terms of essays and so on and so forth not what eh you question you know eh aspirates to **thank you so much sir**

Sir eh looking at that way one may want to eh what you have just said now is that the problem is with the designers of the curriculum that eh that they have a particular purpose they have a particular agenda when they wanted to do when they were designing this curriculum since the mystification programmer in the higher education we discover that students come with . . . diverse capacities and abilities eh some were referred to as underprepared and some were referred as being prepared for university learning eh so sir if we have this kind diversity among our students eh then . . . how are these students placed into various academic tutorial classes based on their level of preparation eh how what do we do is there any placement so that we – so that we determine their ability on where to place them or we just group them together no they are just grouped together there is no.... placement as thing and .. in terms of .. eh placing them .. in terms of their abilities **ok sir** in relation to their abilities and there.. ... you know also that for me placing them into different abilities would also create eh.... a gap eh... that would not would never be filled you know in the the sense that those who are perceived as not able you know you will be always in that position and those who are perceived as able in other words there would be always this difference. . you know among students **uhm** so for me I think challenge would be to try to maybe in use to try what roles you know .. highlight in terms of a eh...eh... creating democratic

classroom **uhm** you know whereby you are able to narrow the gap **umh** of different abilities **ok** because these abilities are not naturally given **umh** you know ehh as a result of one's social orientation you know **thank you so much sir**

Ehh sir if effective writing is a product of reading then reading is addressed in the module? What attention do we give to reading?

The attention that is given to reading is ehh... you know equipping students skills to know the purpose of reading alright as I said that reading and writing are intertwined you know so of course you need to know the purpose of writing what is your purpose of writing is to inform to persuade and so on and so forth just like reading you need to know a purpose reading that purposed will determined how you read whether you read for details whether you read for skimming or scanning you know so If you are not introduced to academic literacy you would know about the skills alright **ehm** you would read something for details which does not need you to read for details **ehm** and would read something not for details which requires you to read for details **ehm** but so those are some of the skills you know that students are introduced to you know and when it comes to reading **ok sir** knowing the purpose of reading **ehm sorry sir ehm** **looking at the course pack we discover that most of the topics talk about writing and there is only one topic talks about reading so why is it designed that way ehm we say that writing is the product of reading emh** that means there is kind of imbalance .. **yes** of reading and of cause it goes back to the question of ehm.. designers of the.. the curriculum and the designers of the material **ok sir ... thank you so much sir**

Sir I want to ask again can academic literacy be explicitly taught?

What do you mean...?

I mean the normal teaching classroom the way we teach the way we teach English the way we teach biology and can academic literacy be explicitly taught that way?

Yah I'M not sure about normal but it can in fact it should be taught explicitly it should be taught in such a way that students know exactly what they are dealing with alright ehh it most cases you would find that The expectation we know what to expect students to produce but then ... we don't teach it exactly the way we-we expect them to produce it you know in that sense it is not

we don't teach explicitly at times you know so I-I we need to teach clearly and in details you know **ehm** I think the time of ehh just referring students to books is good but at the same time teaching must take place you know so there is a difference between teaching and enabling learning **ehm** right so for me it should not be just about transferring knowledge **ehm** but is to enable one to learn you know to be in a position to access knowledge as it were (**thank you so much sir**)

Sir do you think that academic literacy module is improving students writing practices?

It does because when you give the assignments some of the do produce you know good ehh writing but you can also feel that there is still more that needs to be done **yes sir** so it is not at the point where one would want it you also find students even at fourth year level still producing poor writing **ehm** you know so then it means there is room for improvement **thank you so much sir**

Ehh I got two more questions; is there provision for in-service training for tutors in the academic literacy module?

No.

If not sir, what impact in your opinion does the lack of training have on tutors' teaching practices?

Ehh.. although I might not give ehh a certain answer I myself haven't done any investigation you know regarding that but at first value if I can talk at first value it might have an impact you know a negative impact you know as you do it because you ehhh.. ... I think that orientation you know in terms of what are the expectations from you and how ..you can get assisted you know dealing with such issues .. you know it might have a good impact you know to so in other words what happens is ... you.. have to swim **ehm** against the time you know ... tutors are put in a situation of ehhh you either swim or sink **ehm** you know so when you sink you sink with your sink with students **ehm** yah no one is there-there to rescuer you

Since academic literacy is kind of job given to the language practitioners, are these tutors language practitioners themselves?

Yah! they should be but I don't know (you know) that is a an honest answer because I don't deal with the hiring of tutors and I don't you know I'm just given tutors I'm just told that these are the tutors you have for academic literacy and so on and so forth ehh...with an understanding that someone who hired them you know knows what is it that they were looking for from them.

Sir do you have any other comment based on the interview

Yah! I would say it's a very good study and I wish you well in all your endeavors and ehh It's something that we need alright all over the country if I may say so traditional universities and universities of technologies academic literacy is the issue all over the world in fact alright because as I said earlier it no bodies mother tongue everyone has to acquire it whether English is your first language the question is how do we enable students to acquire this academic language **yes sir** I think your study will in a way will respond to some of these issues **thank you so much sir and in case if I discover gaps there are gaos that are going to be cover in the interview this is a semi structured interview ok I still have ehh I still want to inform you that I can still come to you just for further interview no problem thank you so much sir** no problem

Interview with tutor 2

How is writing taught in the al module?

What we normally do is first to first explain the steps to the learners or the students. so you explain what is expected of them or what they are supposed to do. so you like give them an example of how to write. At times you refer them to their course packs in order to see some of the steps which are there that they can use to follow to write. maybe before the end of the class at times you tell that ok this is the topic, use it to practice...firstly we start from the introduction, how they can structure their introduction because the introduction will help them in order to like write a complete essay. This is how to write the introduction. so we tell them how to like...go and write the introduction on this topic so that when we come to class we will get some samples and discuss them.

What is appropriate academic writing?

An appropriate academic writing normally is like structuring parts like the introduction the body and the conclusion. It depends on how you want to structure the body.

The main purpose of referencing is for them not to like plagiarize actually. not to just to because if you don't tell them to reference they will just go and copy whatever and put it to their essay, but when you tell them to reference they won't actually plagiarize. so it will help them and so on.

How is reading addressed within the ALUGS module?

Hmmm it's been addressed in the way in which the students like write because if you don't read you won't be able to write because what will you be writing if you have not read?...the kind of attention it gives to reading? Hmmm, very few; if I can remember because a lot is more on writing than actually on reading. but what I can say is because they have texts in the books and those texts are to be read as well.

What is your perception about students' writing practices?

Hmmmm, the writing improves as the weeks unfold because emmm some of them like came without knowing how to write. as the weeks unfold and how you like explain to them and give them work to do. They tend to like improve on the way in which they write. So you came to see that a majority of them actually improve in the way in which they write. While others, because all of them are not the same. others are very slow...it takes time for them to come to that stage of writing.

What impact does the way in which writing is taught within the ALUGS module have on students' writing practices?

Hey! It has a lot of impacts because it, it, it, emmm how can i explain this? i don't even know how to describe this. it has a lot of impacts because the students actually at times some of them come and say mum, what i wrote before and what I am writing now, i can see a change and a difference. so, it's impacting on them positively than the way in which it was before. yeah, because at times you may want to compare what maybe...what they write in the first semester with what they are writing now. Infact you will see that there is a lot of improvement and a lot of changes.

Examples of comments that you give?you like emmm for example you tell them. at times you like read and make comments such as poor grammar, poor structuring of the sentence, very long sentences- maybe your sentence is very long; hmmm you didn't ...correctly, emmmm, no reference. emm i think that is all.