

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**Teaching academic writing in a South African context:
An evaluation of the drafting-responding process used to develop the
academic writing of students in a first year Media course at the
University of KwaZulu-Natal**

Submitted by: Alison Crouch
Student Number: 872877550
Submitted to: Prof J.A. Clarence-Fincham

Submitted in fulfilment of the Degree of Masters of Arts (Applied Linguistics)
University of KwaZulu-Natal
December 2006

Declaration of Originality

This thesis, unless indicated otherwise, is my own work and has not been submitted at any other time for another degree.

**Alison Margaret Crouch
12 December 2006**

Abstract

The provision of written lecturer feedback at the draft stage of a draft-response-redraft process is an extensively used tool in the process genre approach to teaching academic writing. It is also regarded as an important vehicle for mediating access to the academic discourse community for students. This study has as its foundation the view that knowledge and learning is socially constructed and therefore, it is believed that the process of learning academic writing is closely related to a process of acculturation into the world of academic discourse (Quinn, 2000). There is a need to be aware that while students need these skills to succeed in the academic context, we need to be critical of the process of apprenticeship that takes place. Research has shown that although the process genre approach is widely used, the effectiveness of the intervention and the precise impact of this on the students and their essay writing skills have yet to be fully explored.

This study uses a case study methodology, including an analysis of usable feedback points (Hyland, 1998) to evaluate the effectiveness of the draft-response-redraft process in facilitating the acquisition of academic writing skills and mediating access to the academic discourse community. The effectiveness of written lecturer feedback on student essays at the draft stage for twelve students doing a first year level tertiary Media Course (with the teaching of academic writing skills as a stated outcome) is explored. A survey of the responses of ninety students doing the course and a focus group discussion with nine students provide a context for a more detailed case study of the essays and responses of twelve students. These students were selected in order to obtain a range of age, gender, mother tongue, schooling background and marking lecturer in the data.

The findings show that written feedback is perceived by the students to be valuable and most feel positive about participating in a draft-feedback-response process. However, the relationship between feedback points and improvement is not clear. Individual student factors and the dynamic interaction that takes place make every case unique. The evidence in this study supports the theory that re-writing facilitates improvement (Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Polio et al 1998 and Robb et al 1998) and shows that even brief or sketchy feedback does stimulate revision and can result in writing improvement, although whether this process assists in the long-term development of academic writing skills is the subject for another study. This study supports research which indicates that

the dynamic interaction between lecturer and student in the draft-response-redraft process can facilitate the acquisition of academic literacy and mediate access to the academic discourse community. The data did, however, highlight aspects of the process that need to be implemented in order for the positive potential of the learning experience to be fully realised.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank several colleagues and mentors for their support of this thesis and their constructive criticism, which has challenged me to explore new areas:

My supervisor, Prof. Jenny Clarence-Fincham, for her meticulous feedback, penetrating knowledge and unfailing support.

Dr Tracy Hilterman and the students and lecturers of the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course, 2004 UKZN, who gave so willingly of their time and energy to the research.

Colleagues Mike Hart and Fiona Jackson at UKZN for valuable discussions on the subject of the draft-response-redraft process.

Colleagues Lucia Thesen and Moragh Paxton at UCT for their insights into academic development and their willingness to share their resources with me and to give of their time.

Contents

Declaration of Originality	2
Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements	5
Chapter One: Introduction	8
1.1 Aims of the research	8
1.2 Socio-Political and institutional context	8
1.3 A brief overview of Academic Development	11
1.4 Context for this study: the Media 130: Writing and the Media course	16
Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework.....	18
2.1 Academic literacy	18
2.1.1 Definition	18
2.1.2 Academic discourse and discourse communities.....	21
2.1.3 The rhetorical foundation for academic discourse.....	30
2.1.4 The relationship between discourse and context	31
2.1.5 Academic discourse and writer identity.....	33
2.1.6 Difficulties faced by African students	34
2.1.7 Plagiarism	38
2.1.8 Referencing.....	40
2.1.9 The role of written feedback	41
2.2 Approaches to the teaching of writing	43
2.2.1 The product approach	44
2.2.2 The process approach.....	44
2.2.3 The genre approach.....	48
2.2.4 The reader dominated approaches	50
2.2.5 The process genre approach and methodological pluralism	52
2.2.6 Critical language awareness.....	52
2.2.7 Problems with methodological pluralism	54
2.3 Research into feedback in academic writing	57
2.3.1 Introduction.....	57
2.3.2 Developments in the teaching of writing	60
2.3.3 The form/content debate	61
2.3.4 The praise/criticism debate	64
2.3.5 The role of the writing teacher.....	65
2.3.6 The impact of the process approach on feedback	66
2.3.7 Individual student factors.....	68
2.3.8 Recent trends.....	71
2.3.9 Effective feedback	72
2.3.10 The role of re-writing.....	73
2.3.11 The South African Context	74
2.4 Research into reading.....	75
Chapter Three: Research Theory and Methods	77
3.1 Central Research Question.....	77
3.2 Research paradigm.....	78
3.2.1 The positivist paradigm.....	78
3.2.2 The naturalistic paradigm	78
3.3 Principles for research that emerge from the naturalistic paradigm	80
3.3.1 Grounded theory	80
3.3.2 Research context	81

3.3.3	The role of the researcher	81
3.3.4	Qualitative methods	81
3.3.5	Purposive sampling.....	82
3.3.6	Data analysis	82
3.3.7	Methods to enhance reliability.....	83
3.3.8	Case study reporting mode.....	84
3.3.9	Tentative application.....	84
3.4	Research design	85
3.5	Case studies.....	85
3.6	The sample	86
3.7	Collection of data.....	87
3.7.1	Questionnaires.....	87
3.7.2	Focus group.....	87
3.7.3	The writing sample	88
3.7.4	Interviews.....	88
3.8	Problems encountered.....	88
3.8.1	Interviewing	88
3.8.2	Subjectivity	89
3.9	Analysis of data.....	89
3.9.1	Overview	89
3.9.2	Analysis of the written data	90
3.9.3	Analysis of the data from the interviews	91
Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion of findings.....		92
4.1	Introduction.....	92
4.2	Questionnaire findings	93
4.3	Focus group findings.....	101
4.3.1	The Participants	101
4.3.2	Themes	104
4.4	Case studies.....	122
4.4.1	Analysis of usable feedback points: method.....	122
4.4.2	Analysis of usable feedback points: findings.....	123
4.4.3	Lecturer feedback patterns	128
4.4.4	The relationship between feedback and revision	136
4.4.5	Usable feedback points and improvement	147
4.4.6	Problematic drafts	150
4.4.7	Summary	152
Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research.....		154
5.1	Conclusions.....	154
5.2	Recommendations for further research.....	159
5.3	Concluding comments	163
References		165
Appendix 1: Questionnaire		176
Appendix 2: Questionnaire Results		179
Appendix 3: Editing Checklist for Argumentative Essays		189
Appendix 4: Essay Topic		190
Appendix 5: Essay Marking Sheet.....		191
Appendix 6: Focus Group Questions.....		192
Appendix 7: Questionnaire for lecturers on academic writing feedback.....		193
Appendix 8: Sample of Analysis		198

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Aims of the research

This study aims to explore how students respond to lecturers' written feedback in a draft-response-redraft process and to investigate the complex social interaction that takes place in this process. The research evaluates whether or not lecturer or tutor feedback on a student's draft essay results in an improvement in the quality of writing produced in a final essay and, more broadly, whether the interaction of this process has a role to play in the development of academic literacy, enabling students to acquire the "cultural capital" (Bordieu, 1977, cited in Fairclough, 1992: 14) they need to succeed in an academic context.

1.2 Socio-Political and institutional context

South African tertiary institutions are in a process of transformation, aimed at reconstructing the previously inequitable education system of the apartheid era and adapting to global changes in the academic community. Clarence-Fincham argues that the changes that are taking place

have fundamentally displaced past political and social injustices which were based largely on notions of homogeneity within ethnic groups and apparently unassailable Afrikaner dominance in favour of an emphasis on pluralities, diversity and difference (1998: 1).

The seventeen separate education departments of the apartheid era were designed to perpetuate apartheid ideology. The system has been described as:

Fragmented, unequal and undemocratic . . . It has resulted in the destruction, distortion or neglect of the human potential of our country, with devastating consequences for social and economic development (ANC, 1994)

Transformative processes require the dismantling of these old structures and the creation of new structures, initiatives and new language. Central to this transformation is the concept of what it means to be African in the educational context (Clarence-Fincham, 1998; Ngara, 1998). The University of KwaZulu-Natal has positioned itself as the

“Premier Institution of African Scholarship” (Ingedej.ukzn.ac.za), which foregrounds this concept as a cornerstone of transformation at UKZN. However, this frame of reference is itself, the subject for ongoing debate, transformation and development.

While the South African context provides significant challenges, South African institutions are also required to respond to broader trends. Globalisation is one example. This trend towards “intensification of world-wide social relations and changes in the economy, culture and communications of advanced economies” (South Africa: Draft white paper on Higher Education, 1997:10) and the impact of this on developing economies is one factor. Another consideration centres on international educational trends, which recognise the need for quality assurance systems and the provision of life-long learning for all (Ngara, 1998).

The Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal is, historically, an English medium liberal institution which now attracts students from diverse South African linguistic and educational backgrounds as well as international students. The demographic profile of the University has changed significantly in the last 15 years shifting a predominantly white student population to one which more closely reflects the population as a whole. The merger of the University of Natal with the historically “black” University of Durban-Westville in 2004 has further changed the demographics. In KwaZulu-Natal, the three main languages spoken are Zulu, English and Afrikaans, in that order.

The fact that the University of KwaZulu-Natal is historically an English medium institution is significant because many students “regard English as a means of achieving personal and economic growth . . . an empowering world language . . . and a means of unifying language in a country that recognises eleven official languages” (van Wyk, 2003: 29). However, although many students choose English as a medium of instruction, it is not their mother tongue and this has significant implications for the learning process. Language policy which has provided for mother tongue instruction up until age nine and English as a medium of instruction from age nine onwards has meant that crucial cognitive and conceptual development has not always taken place. In addition, the English spoken by many teachers in disadvantaged schools is not proficient. As a result, learners have been exposed to “a distorted kind of bilingualism” (van Wyk 2003: 29).

These factors make it difficult for learners to easily adapt to the academic literacy requirements traditionally demanded at a first year level in an English medium institution. Kapp, working at the University of Cape Town, found that students, on the whole, did not object to English as a medium of instruction, but to “the way in which English acts as a social marker and gatekeeper which effectively excludes those for whom it is an additional language from full participation in the institution” (1998: 21). Kapp argues that the conflation of language and culture in many South African universities can lead to a sense of alienation for students. For example, one of the students in Kapp’s study says:

The University of Cape Town recognises the English way of life as the only custodian to civilisation (1998: 23).

Another student talks of the loss of confidence that can result from this sense of alienation:

White people are in control of resources. For Africans to gain access to these resources they have to learn white people’s language . . . It makes one feel inferior at the end and one can lose confidence. . . this is a situation that one is facing at this institution. One is always careful at making mistakes in a language. As soon as one does, one feels ashamed of oneself, then start to ask questions to white people who always seem to express themselves so articulate in their language and always know ‘everything’. Even intellectual lecturers get so excited with their English accents they forget that this is Africa (1998: 23).

In addition to language and cultural problems experienced, students from the ex-DET¹ schools are also often at an educational disadvantage because they have seldom been exposed to “academic” or argumentative essays at a school level. Essays tend to take the form of ‘regurgitation’ of the text book or rote memorisation. One of Quinn’s students, Kgaogelo, talking of her school History essay, says, “The ideas were the ones which we were being taught.” Another student, Zamo, says: “We didn’t have to do much research on it. It’s like you had to write it from your head” (2000: 130). Quinn notes that the students are required to use “knowledge telling” strategies at school but are expected to use “knowledge transforming” strategies at University (Quinn, 2000: 130). These socio-political and institutional factors are key to understanding the context for this particular study: the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course.

¹ The Department of Education and Training (DET) was the authority which administered schools for “Black” learners in the apartheid era.

1.3 A brief overview of Academic Development

The development of Academic Development programmes at UKZN needs to be seen in the broader South African context. Investment in access and foundation programmes across the country over the past twenty five years has made significant progress in providing students from historically underdeveloped and discriminatory educational backgrounds the opportunities to develop the skills required to achieve at tertiary level. The importance of providing this support is highlighted in the following extract from a department of education document:

Ensuring equity of access must be complemented by a concern for equity of outcomes. Increased access must not lead to a “revolving door” syndrome for students, with high failure and drop-out rates. In this respect, the Ministry is committed to ensuring that public funds earmarked for achieving redress and equity must be linked to measurable progress towards improving quality and reducing the high drop-out and repetition rates (South African Government, Department of Education, 1997:22; cited in van Wyk, 2003: 29).

Angelil-Carter and Thesen elaborate on the specific problems faced by “underprepared” students:

In South Africa, the underprepared are those who for multiple reasons have not acquired the ‘literacy’ of the university: the literacies that they do have are not congruent with that of the academic culture. In other words, ‘the problem’ is not going to go away: acquiring the ‘social practice’ of the university can only happen within it and this is more of a struggle if one’s other discourses are different from that of the university (1993:3).

Masenya, 1994 (cited in Clarence-Fincham, 1998: 5), points out that it is the institutions rather than the students who are underprepared. Clarence-Fincham argues that “the problem” lies with institutions that are ill-equipped to deal with students experiencing problems rooted in inferior schooling. It also became clear in the 1990s that the difficulties experienced by students entering Academic Development programmes were very complex. Inferior schooling was only one factor. Socio-political factors embedded in the economic injustice and structural violence of apartheid also impacted on students in areas such as funding, transport, housing and extra-curricular activities. She also highlights the ways in which “students are positioned in language within the institution . .

. first as traditional versus non-traditional, then as prepared versus underprepared” (1998: 5).

A first phase of academic interventions at South African tertiary institutions, beginning in the early 1980s was characterised by “add-on”, non-credit bearing courses. Some of these focussed on grammar and language use for students identified as ‘weak’ (predominantly black students), while others aimed to develop generic academic skills which included note-taking, reading strategies and writing skills. The language-related courses relied primarily on generic language material with little transfer to mainstream courses. McKenna, working at the Durban Institute of Technology, found that students experienced difficulty with applying these language skills in context-reduced, cognitively demanding situations (McKenna, 2003: 61). Students were often resistant to these courses, feeling that they were “stigmatised” by association. Underpinning the conception of the add-on courses is the assumption that the problem lay with a “lack” on the part of the students that required remediation. Over time it became evident that while students could complete a worksheet on an aspect of grammar in class, this knowledge was seldom transferred to mainstream assignments (McKenna 2003: 61).

Courses in generic academic skills or the “English for Academic Purposes” stage (McKenna 2003: 63), are typical of the early work of the Anglo-funded English Language Development Scheme (ELDS), established at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 1981. This was one of the earliest initiatives specifically aimed at developing ways in which to respond to the educational needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Initial courses offered by the ELDS were short, intensive modules offered on a voluntary basis to students from the Faculties of Humanities, Commerce and Science and Agriculture. It was found, however, that because these courses were *in addition* to the normal workload, the students who might have most benefited from them, did not in fact have the time or the capacity to attend the classes. Ironically, they came to be viewed at best as “band-aid” interventions, and at worst, as courses that in fact perpetuated student failure further. (Clarence-Fincham, 2006, personal communication). Other similar courses were offered at Rhodes, The University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand.

It was in the light of these challenges that credit-bearing courses were developed and introduced. The first of these was *Learning, Language and Logic* which was introduced at the then University of Natal, with similar courses introduced soon after at UCT (1985), The University of the Witwatersrand and Rhodes University. Increasing diversity in the student population became a particular focus (Quinn, 2000) as well as attempts to make closer links with the other disciplines in which students were studying. Despite these changes, however, the courses remained problematic. While they were now a part of the credit bearing curriculum, they nevertheless remained “add on” in the sense that they focussed on generic academic skills and, despite the efforts of the lecturers, were not integrated in any significant way with the discursive requirements of particular disciplines. It was found that students still had difficulty transferring the skills developed in the class to their mainstream assignments. In addition, both the lecturers teaching these courses and the students identified as in need of assistance felt isolated from mainstream academia (Clarence-Fincham, 1998).

Quinn (2000) argues that “many academics do not recognise the close connection between discipline content and rhetorical processes. They tend to believe that it is their responsibility to “teach” the former and that the latter will be gained through a process of “osmosis” (118). The term “academic literacy” (see chapter 2.1), however, encompasses not only the textual “rules and conventions” (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988: 8) required of students but also the understandings of what constitutes knowledge and how knowledge is defined and built in various academic disciplines. Many students come to South African universities without the “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1977 cited in Fairclough, 1992: 14) that they need to function and succeed in this highly structured environment. However, many mainstream lecturers expect students to come to university with this frame of reference and these rhetorical skills in place.

McKenna argues that the attitudes of these lecturers, who tend to regard the development of academic literacy in their students as “someone else’s problem”, are underpinned by powerful social forces:

Hegemony, the dominance of one social class over others, is achieved by the ability of the socially powerful group to project their way of seeing the world as ‘common sense’ or ‘natural’. Discourses are used to reinforce the position of the

socially dominant group and to identify the problems experienced by less powerful groups as ‘unnatural’ (Gramski, 1971, cited in McKenna, 2003: 61).

However, as academics begin to question these practices, and recognise the difficulties faced by students from diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds, notions about academic development are changing. McKenna argues that:

The broadening understanding of academic literacy as a social practice has resulted in the questioning of add-on language courses aimed at improving mechanical skills – particularly where such courses are taught in isolation of the mainstream programme (2003: 60).

A new focus has emerged, concerned with fostering long-term academic success in all students. This focus on building academic literacy is thus no longer only the concern of access programmes alone and the responsibility for attaining academic literacy is no longer only the concern of the student. South African institutions have, on the whole, recognised the need to integrate academic literacy components into mainstream programmes. At UCT, for example, this has resulted in a shift from the notion of academic support or “minority” support to an infusion model of Academic Development, which “aims to facilitate changes in the University’s mainstream degree programmes so that courses and curricula take account of students’ prior learning experiences and cater to increasing diversity in the student population” (Scott, 1993, cited in Paxton, 1994:4).

Clarence-Fincham argues that:

One of the fundamental questions facing Academic Development Programmes is the extent to which they are part of the transformative process or whether they help to perpetuate traditional educational hegemony, even unconsciously. . . . Academic Development Programmes should categorically reject the deficit models of the past, where the students are constructed as being in need of remediation. They should not concentrate on changing students to fit the institution but instead, as one of their primary purposes, should critique and question the educational assumptions underpinning it (1998: 14).

In order for this to happen, Academic development initiatives should not be a peripheral functions in the institution but central activities in the transformative process. Clarence-Fincham argues that “the development of an interrogative relationship between the student and the university is a prerequisite for fundamental institutional change and should be one of the primary aims of Academic Development” (1998: 16).

It has become clear that “foundation courses need to be embedded into the mainstream programme with a focus on developing ‘the ways of thinking and knowing in the discipline’” (McKenna, 2003: 65). The *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course that is the context for this study is an example of a course that integrates Academic Literacy into a mainstream Media programme.

There is a growing awareness across disciplines, that in order for students to succeed at tertiary level, the conventions of discourse, particularly those of academic writing, need to be made explicit, so that students can realistically master and productively use these conventions (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988: 8-14). Research has shown that this “demystifying” of academic discourse is of benefit to all students, but particularly for those whose mother tongue is not English and who are working in a culturally alien environment (Paxton, 1994, Quinn, 2000). However, Bond warns of the “danger of reducing the second-language factor to irrelevance, in our attempts to understand the cognitive and epistemic demands of academic literacy” (1993: 150). To this end, institutions such as the University of the Western Cape are finding that although the infusion model of mainstream curricular development is important, there is still a need for special English courses. As Bond points out, there is “a warning of the need to adopt a very broad-based approach to developing academic literacy in the South African context” (1993: 150) as a means of responding to diversity.

It has become apparent that academic literacy should be integrated into mainstream courses and requires “overt instruction in the norms and expectations of a discipline” (McKenna, 2003: 61). Academic development lecturers have understood that academic literacy is as much about “ways of using language” as it is about “the beliefs, values and attitudes of the group” (Gee, 1990: 122). Mainstream lecturers therefore have a crucial role to play in making these discipline-specific tenets more explicit. In the humanities, genre and process approaches to academic literacy, which provide developmental feedback and integrated assessments, are being employed to this end in courses such as *Media 130: Writing and the Media* but further research into the efficacy of these methods is required. This study aims to make a contribution to this growing area of research.

The concepts of academic literacy and academic discourse will be further discussed in chapter two.

1.4 Context for this study: the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course

Media 130: Writing and the Media, which is now five years old, is one of the courses developed at UKZN which attempts to *integrate* academic literacy into a mainstream Media Studies course rather than to locate the interventions in a separate, generic skills course. By doing this, it aims to address the specific discursive practices of Media Studies, especially those of the news story and also the generic academic writing skills relevant to the discipline. This study examines the effectiveness of written feedback on student draft essays in the context of *Media 130: Writing and the Media* in 2004.

It is a first year, one semester credit-bearing course and “a core module for all students who hope to continue in Media and Communication, but it is also open to all students who wish to improve writing skills, particularly those interested in pursuing a career in print media” (Media and Communication 2004 Handbook; School of Language, Culture and Communication; University of KwaZulu-Natal; Pietermaritzburg). Students are required to attend four classes a week (two lectures and one practical). A comprehensive reader is provided to students, which includes input on academic writing theory.

The students are assessed on the basis of 50% course work and 50% exam results. Several smaller assignments build up to the core research essay written in the eighth week of the ten week course. A process genre approach is used for the writing of the essay (see chapter 2.2.5). The essay topic is discussed in class, a draft is written on which written lecturer feedback is provided and then the final essay is written. The provision of a mark on the draft is optional and was a decision left to individual lecturers. On the whole it was found that a mark was not given to the first (rough) draft and this is in line with research, for example, at the University of the Western Cape, which has shown that providing a mark at this stage can be counter productive. This research has shown that some students say that if there is a mark on the script they do not bother to read the comments. Others may feel satisfied with the mark and do no further work on the essay. In the case of a failing mark, it can lead to students feeling too despondent to improve (Parkerson, 2000: 128). Further feedback is provided on the final draft as well as a mark. Students are able to approach lecturers for individual interviews on a voluntary basis.

Media 130: Writing and the Media is grounded in genre theory (see chapter 2.2.4) as can be seen in the course description from the student handbook:

This is a course about writing. The focus is on developing your skills as a writer, both in the context of print media and in the academic context. Each of these environments place particular demands on writers and this course aims to give you the insight and skill necessary to understand the conventions of the genres (different types of writing) used in these two contexts, and to write effectively in these genres (Media and Communication 2004 Handbook; School of Language, Culture and Communication; University of KwaZulu-Natal; Pietermaritzburg campus).

The designers of the course emphasise the learning of particular conventions appropriate to the genres being learned. It is believed that this is the best approach for empowering students to participate in the academic community as it gives explicit information about what is required. Initially the course included a significant amount of technical applied language theory, which students found difficult to integrate and apply to their essay writing. A change in lecturer brought a reduction in the genre theory content and the introduction of more Media content. The designers of the course also used a process writing approach (see chapter 2.2.3) to facilitate the essay writing. It could be said that they were informed by both the process and genre approaches to writing, using a process genre approach (Badger and White, 2000:157). Chapter 2.2.5 will discuss this approach.

The course description also highlights text construction, writer choices and critical reading and writing skills:

The module emphasises the idea that all texts are constructed by human writers who make many different choices as they select (and omit) ideas and words, and put these together with their audience and purpose in mind. Awareness of these writing processes can make us more skilled, and critical, readers and writers. (Media and Communication 2004 Handbook; School of Language, Culture and Communication; University of KwaZulu-Natal; Pietermaritzburg)

The course designers find that their challenge is to make these ideas accessible to students in such a way that they can integrate the skills into their essay writing repertoire. Intervention with feedback at the draft stage of essay writing is perceived to be a means of doing this.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research draws on sources from a range of fields, most particularly South African studies of academic development (McKenna, 2004; Starfield, 2000; Paxton, 1994, Clarence-Fincham, 1998; Angelil-Carter, 2000), the work of the new literacy theorists (Talyor, 1988; Ballard and Clanchy, 1988), the social-semiotic perspective of Halliday and Hasan, (1989); Discourse studies (Gee, 1990; Kress, 1985); ethnographic research (Delpit, 1995); sociolinguistic theories (Bernstein, 1977); studies in identity (Ivanic, 1998, Norton, 1995); theories of media and orality (Ong, 1988), theories of rhetoric (Berlin, 1988) and research into the socio-cultural orientations of academic discourse (Ramanathan and Kaplan, 2000). The framework also draws on the various approaches to the teaching of writing, including the product approach, the process approach (Raimes, 1991; Zamel, 1985); the genre approach (Swales, 1990; Cope and Kalantzis, 1993) and the process genre approach (Badger and White, 2000). The chapter also outlines the research that has already been done in the area of teacher written feedback. It is important that these are read and understood through the lens of the social and institutional context outlined in chapter one.

2.1 Academic literacy

2.1.1 Definition

Reading and writing are core activities in academic life. As Mason and Washington point out,

. . . Writing dominates work in the humanities. . . It is on the analysis of printed texts, on the production of essays, and (above all) on written tests, that progress (however measured) largely depends (1992:1, cited in Paxton, 1994: 2).

Literacy, therefore, is a key concept or skill for students working in academia, particularly in the humanities. When examined, a definition of literacy at first seems an obvious concept. The Collins concise dictionary defines literacy as:

Literacy *n* **1** the ability to read and write. **2** the ability to use language proficiently (Collins Concise Dictionary, 21st century edition)

A reductionist view of literacy would build on this to define literacy in a “narrow fashion to mean freedom from error in syntax and word structure, punctuation and spelling”. However, this would not take into account “referential meaning” or “a student’s understanding or intention” (Taylor, 1988:1). In a reductionist frame of reference, lecturers could examine students’ language (and provide feedback) purely on the basis of grammatical correctness (elements of this were evident in the early academic development courses discussed in chapter 1, which focused on discrete grammatical exercises). Product approaches to the teaching of writing arose from this paradigm (see chapter 2.2.1). If these concepts are examined in more detail, however, the implications are very complex, for these abilities “to read and write” or “to use language proficiently” are acquired and developed in specific contexts. For example, Halliday and Hasan (1989) developed the social-semiotic perspective which argues that language and meaning can only be understood in the contexts in which it is produced, for example the context of situation and the context of culture. Literacies are shaped by cultures and sub-cultures. Becoming literate in an academic institution requires the development of the ability to participate in particular discourses, taking into account the values and norms of that discourse community as well as “dialects” that emerge within the different disciplines.

Ballard and Clanchy point out that a student’s literacy is assessed not only in terms of how they read and write but in terms of how appropriate it is to the ‘culture’ of the academic institution and the sub-culture of the particular discipline that they are working in. Students therefore need to learn to “read the culture, learning to come to terms with its distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behaviour” (1988:8). Furthermore, Ballard and Clanchy argue that “in learning to ‘read’ the culture, the student is also acquiring a set of values, learning to respect those rules and conventions which define how language and thinking may proceed” (1988: 11).

Fairclough challenges the notion of appropriateness, arguing that when notions of appropriateness are used to justify the teaching of “standard” English in a particular context, in a non-critical way, the discourses that the students bring to the classroom are inevitably marginalised (1992: 35). He asks the question: “Is it possible to teach pupils a variety of English so much more prestigious and powerful than their own dialects or languages, without detriment to the latter?” Often the dialects and languages of the

students are only deemed “appropriate” in those contexts which have least social prestige. Fairclough argues that appropriateness models are based on presuppositions which misrepresent sociolinguistic variation; and have an ideological basis, “portraying a political objective as a sociolinguistic reality” (1992: 43). He argues that:

The sociolinguistic order is a domain of hegemonic struggle, and that one dimension of the struggle of a group to establish its hegemony over a domain or institution is a struggle for sociolinguistic hegemony (1992: 49).

Notions of appropriacy need to be challenged if speech communities are to be transformed. Critical language awareness (see chapter 2.2.6) provides a vehicle for encouraging students to assess the ideological assumptions underpinning language use and notions of appropriateness. Fairclough cautions, however, that:

Critical language awareness should not push learners into oppositional practices which condemn them to disadvantage and marginalisation; it should equip them with the capacities and understanding which are preconditions for meaningful choice and effective citizenship in the domain of language (1992: 54).

These issues are discussed further in section 2.1.4, where the relationship between discourse and context is explored.

Pragmatically, first year university students need to grapple with the discourse practices of the academic community. Bartholomae describes the difficulties that this process poses for the student when he says:

Every time a student sits down to write for us he has to invent the university for the occasion – invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Economics, or Anthropology or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the particular ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding or arguing that define the discourse of our community, since . . . a student . . . must work within fields where the rules governing the presentation of examples or the development of an argument are both distinct, even to the professional, mysterious (Bartholomae, 1985:134).

It is interesting to note the use of the pronouns “our” and “we” in the above quotation, positioning academic participants as “insiders” and “outsiders” to privileged discourse practices. It is important that in studying how students respond to written feedback, or “formative assessment” (Starfield, 2000:109), on their academic essays, we understand

the context in which this process takes place, which is the context of academic discourse and academic discourse communities.

2.1.2 Academic discourse and discourse communities

Gee defines Discourse with a capital 'D' as

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' (1990:143).

Gee distinguishes between "discourse" ("connected stretches of language that make sense") and "Discourse" ("saying-writing-doing-being-valuing-believing") (1990:142). He argues that primary discourse is acquired through home and secondary discourses are acquired through education, church, and profession. Discourses are informed by ideologies, and access to secondary discourse is a means of access to powerful social structures. Students take on secondary discourses through unconscious "acquisition" and conscious "learning". The second requires a process of "scaffolded apprenticeship" that inducts an individual into the discourse (1990:145-154).

For a student arriving in a first year academic context, acquiring academic discourse and learning to function in an academic community may not be a straightforward process. As Moore points out,

Academic literacy 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 (1994:37).

McKenna (2003) also highlights the fact that discourse is not about language alone but also about how knowledge and social practices are constructed by patterns of communication. Quoting Kress, she argues that discourses "organise and give structure to the manner in which a topic, object or process is to be talked about" (Kress, 1989:7).

An investigation of the discourses of academic literacy, the beliefs, attitudes, values and norms necessary for “epistemological access to higher education” (Morrow, 1993, cited in McKenna, 2004) hinges on the teleological view that discourses evolve over time, “emerging out of complex historical conditions . . . re-forged and remade in the equally complex present” (Boughey, 1999:30).

2.1.2.1 The apprenticeship/acculturation debate

Given that students need to acquire academic discourse in order to succeed in an academic context, we then need to ask how this can best be achieved. Gee (1990) argues that discourses cannot be learned but have to be acquired through a kind of apprenticeship. He suggests that:

you learn the discourse by becoming a member of the group: you start as a ‘beginner’, watch what’s done, go along with the group as if you know what you’re doing when you don’t and eventually you can do it on your own . . . By the time you’re an expert, however, you often can’t say what you do, how you do it, or why. Though you could *show* someone (1990: xv/xvi).

Paxton argues that providing written feedback on essays is an important tool for facilitating this apprenticeship:

Feedback on essays is one of the ways in which this guiding takes place. In a social constructivist view of writing and of knowledge, the discourse of the discipline will shape the type of feedback that is given, but at the same time feedback must be one of the ways in which the discourse continues to be shaped and changed (1994:8).

However, the experience of apprenticeship entails particular difficulties for students, especially those in first year. Reynolds and de Klerk explain that students who in the process of acquiring academic discourse, “are expected to be part of three or four subject discourses without really knowing what they are about.” They are required to “act as though they know what they are doing and how they should be writing and speaking even when they don’t” (1998:45). Taylor points out that students are required to make academic judgements, but will feel inexperienced in the discipline. They will need to find ways to express a “personal voice” while not offending disciplinary conventions (1988:64). These skills are difficult to acquire, even for students who have had exposure

to similar discourses at school or at home (hence the move towards mainstream academic development programmes in South Africa; see chapter 1.4).

These difficulties are compounded for many South African students who are not working in their mother tongue and whose primary discourse does not share features with school and university discourse. Reynolds and de Klerk argue that “the acquisition of school discourses is usually easier for children whose primary discourse shares some features with the school discourses” (1998:48). In South Africa, the school and home discourses of most ex-DET students are at some distance from those of the university (1998: 48). In addition, academic literacy is about more than language; it also embodies ways of knowing and ways of doing things, but these expectations are seldom made overt and “frequently act as the gatekeeper for success in higher education” (McKenna, 2004: 279).

Delpit raises a concern about Gee’s argument that people not born into positions of power, or without access to “apprenticeships” into a dominant discourse will find it exceedingly difficult to acquire that discourse. She also questions the argument that “an individual who is born into a discourse with one set of values may experience major conflicts when attempting to acquire another discourse with another set of values” (Delpit, 1995: 154). These ideas are questioned because they might lead teachers to conclude that teaching a dominant discourse may oppress students further by denying the value of their primary identity. It also discourages teachers by suggesting that it is difficult, if not impossible to teach a dominant discourse to students not born into that social group. Delpit argues that teachers can teach both the “superficial features” of middle-class discourse as well as the more subtle aspects values and norms expected in a specific context. More significantly, teacher’s beliefs about the ability of students to succeed are a very important factor.

Gee argues that for those who have been barred from the access to many mainstream discourses, the act of acquiring a discourse “involves active complicity with the values that conflict with one’s home and community-based discourses” (cited in Delpit, 1995: 160). Delpit argues, however, that students can acquire dominant discourses without rejecting home identity and values and that students can both master and transform dominant discourses. “The point must not be to eliminate students’ home languages, but rather to add other voices and discourses to their repertoires” (Delpit, 1995: 163). To do

this, teachers need to acknowledge and discuss the values and ways of knowing and thinking embedded in the dominant discourse. Delpit argues that “teachers must allow discussions of oppression to become a part of language and literature instruction” (1995, 165).

Whereas many lecturers still assume that the problems faced by students are language issues, the students are in fact struggling to acquire discipline-specific academic literacies; ways of knowing and thinking and doing things. Students need to understand how “language embodies and structures the discipline’s norms, philosophies and values” as well as ways in which language creates meaning (McKenna, 2004:282).

In South Africa, curriculum changes need to be made that are designed to make explicit the literacy norms of each discipline, thus giving students access to these discourses. The problem with this, however, lies in the fact that many lecturers adopt the beliefs, values and attitudes underpinning their epistemologies to the extent that they are unconscious. As Winberg writes, “we are not very good at teaching the discourse of our discipline. We are often unable to unpack the academic literacy norms that we have acquired” (2002).

A further problem lies with the fact that even if lecturers were conscious of their own practices and willing and able to make these explicit to students, there is always the danger that in providing an apprenticeship for students, we are running the risk of brainwashing them into discipline-specific norms and values. Hugo (2003) argues that

There is a fine line between enabling students to respond to the informational and organisational demands of various settings and indoctrinating students into the dominant discourse of academic literacy (46).

McKenna (2003) highlights the same danger, when she writes: “Within the objective of improving students’ educational success by making academic literacy overt, is the risk of acculturation” (65). As Raimes (1991) points out, “the demands of the academic discourse community are seen to provide a set of standards that readers of academic prose, teachers in academic settings, expect” (416). In this context, students are initiated into a powerful community. Raimes questions whether we should direct our students towards assimilation or find ways to give them “critical distance” on academic cultural literacy so that this discourse may evolve over time to become more inclusive of elements

from students' native discourse communities. Raimes also argues that the notion of academic writing as a fixed concept is problematic (1991: 416).

In South Africa, Moore (1994) argues that "liberating literacies derive from acquiring a variety of secondary discourses that we can use to critique other discourses and develop the meta-linguistic resources of reflective, independent social agents" (39). He goes on to say that the goal should be to "appropriate the traditional institutions of power and transform the practices they sustain to more democratic ends" (1994: 42). He supports the concept of a "pedagogy of possibility" (Simon, 1992) which works towards a new form of academic social practice. Human dignity is a core concept in this model. Simon argues that:

Educational practice should participate in a social transformation that is aimed at securing fundamental dignity and radically reducing the limits on expression and achievement imposed by physical and symbolic violence (1992: 17)

Another important development is the emergence of the concept of a "pedagogy of access" (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993; The New London Group, 1996), which is a response to diversity and fragmentation in society and the "multiliteracies" which are emerging in the context of complex communication technology. In this context, diversity is regarded as a crucial resource for learning.

Moore argues that academic "dialects of access" would:

Reflect a tertiary pedagogy that would . . . make explicit the cognitive operations and epistemological underpinnings of academic tasks, that would clearly articulate the criteria of assessment, that would assist to expose the power arrangements that flow through language, knowledge and institutions, that would allow the construction of more enabling learner subject positions, that would insist that academic prose be more accessible to wider constituencies and that would permit a review of the purpose and interests of academic pursuit (Moore: 1994: 45).

Clarence-Fincham points out that commitment to a pedagogy of access "necessarily entails equal attention to the *explicit* teaching of various institutional discourses and the

related genres²” (1998: 60). Ideally, students who have acquired the discourse of the discipline they are studying, while retaining their personal and home ethos, discipline and values, are in a good position to begin to critique and transform that discourse. However, as McKenna points out, “Unless they have mastered the discourse with which to do so, it is unlikely that their critique will be valued” (McKenna, 2003:65). There is also a tension around the time that this takes to accomplish; students need to develop the confidence necessary to critique a new discourse and this takes time.

2.1.2.2 Discourse communities and society

Academic discourse communities are part of a larger society. Gee argues that literacy is about much more than reading and writing, but rather that it is part of a larger political entity (1996: 22). We learn to read and write in the context of larger discourses, hence within larger sets of values and beliefs. All discourses are not equal in status; some are socially dominant, carrying with them social power and access to economic success and some are non-dominant (Delpit, 1995: 153). Those who are not fluent in a dominant discourse are excluded from positions of power. Fairclough (1989) argues that discourses acquire the power to construct the “rules of the possible” by assuming “commonsense” or “natural” status. Academic literacy is perceived to hold an elevated status in society and access to this discourse is therefore access to power. The hierarchical structure of the classroom maintains the dominance of the discourse and its unquestionable status. As McKenna explains

When students fail to read and write in ways that have been made “commonsense” by the dominant discourses of the lecturers (and their disciplines), these students are problematised. The expectations we have of our students to use our discipline-specific literacy norms often function in hegemonic ways, to maintain a social order based on differences of home literacy and access to elevated secondary literacies. This is exacerbated by racial issues in a country like South Africa, where access to elevated literacies was previously controlled by law (2004: 279).

Ivanic defines the abstract elements of “discourse community” as relating to “the context of culture, the socio-historically produced norms conventions of a particular group of

² Kress (1985) distinguishes between discourses and genres, explaining that while discourses express the values and meanings of large social institutions, genres are “conventionalized forms . . . of texts (which) have specific forms and meanings deriving from and encoding the functions, purposes and meanings of social occasions” (19).

people who define themselves by, among other things, their discourse practices” (1989: 78). However, she cautions against “monolithic” conceptions of “discourse community” which do not take into account the power relations implicit in the “discourse practices of statusful communities” (1989: 79). There is a growing understanding that the “academic discourse community” is not a homogenous concept. As Herzberg points out:

Use of the term ‘discourse community’ testifies to the increasingly common assumption that discourse operates within conventions defined by communities, be they academic disciplines or social groups. The pedagogies associated with writing across the curriculum and academic English now use the notion of ‘discourse communities’ to signify a cluster of ideas: that language use in a group is a form of social behaviour, that discourse is a means of extending the group’s knowledge and of initiating new members into the group, and that discourse is epistemic or constitutive of the group’s knowledge (1986:1 cited in Swales, 1990).

Swales, who first defined the concept of “discourse community”, amended it in 1990 by saying that discourse communities “can, over a period of time, lose as well as gain consensus” (32). Discourse communities “can merge, overlap and split along new lines” (Ivanic, 1998:80). Ivanic prefers a definition which “brings to the fore the power relations, the struggles and the possibility of change within and among them” (1998:83). She refers to Bizzell’s idea that:

Healthy discourse communities, like healthy human beings, are also a mass of contradictions . . . we should accustom ourselves to dealing with contradictions, instead of seeking a theory that appears to abrogate them (Bizzell, 1987:18 -19 cited in Ivanic, 1998: 83).

Fairclough (1989) highlights the political dimension, arguing that discourse is “the whole process of interaction” which serves to reproduce the structures of society.” It may function to sustain the status quo or to transform society (73). He argues that power and discourse are inextricably linked because “power is exercised and enacted in discourse and there are relations of power behind discourse” (1989: 73).

Fairclough emphasises that language is a part of society and not external to it. He argues that language and society are inextricably linked: “linguistic phenomena are social in the sense that whenever people speak or listen or write or read, they do so in ways which are determined socially and have social effects” (1989:23). Social conditions affect the

conditions of production and interpretation of a text. We need to analyse relationships between texts/ processes or interactions and contexts/social conditions.

Educational institutions provide a particularly interesting example of how discourse is linked with power in society. Fairclough argues that:

Any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry and what is striking is the extent to which, despite the claims of education to differentiate only on the grounds of merit, differentiation follows class lines: the higher one goes in the educational system, the greater the predominance of people from capitalist, 'middle-class', and professional backgrounds (65).

In South Africa, class and race were conflated under the apartheid system and tertiary institutions are still living with that legacy. Redressing the balance is a complex task and providing access to discourses of power through courses such as *Media 130: Writing and the Media* is seen as a means of doing this.

2.1.2.3 Formality

Fairclough highlights formality, a notable feature of academic discourse, as a means of restricting access to powerful forms of discourse. Formality makes demands on participants that are difficult to meet. The ability to meet those demands is not evenly distributed and those that don't have access to those codes feel intimidated by them (1989: 65). He argues that in formal language we find "levels of structuring of language above and beyond what is required in non-formal discourse" (1989: 66). There are restrictions placed on vocabulary in terms of what is regarded as politeness and 'correctness' of grammar. There are features marking authority, status, deference, degrees of social distance as well as conventions around pace, volume and turn-taking. These constraints on language form are difficult to learn and this restricted knowledge denies access to those who have not been exposed to these discourses.

Ironically the contemporary trend, for example in Britain, is against overt marking of power in discourse but this only means that power relations are effectively hidden and made even less accessible (1989:72). Teachers often fall into this trap by, for example, being on first name terms with students or masking orders as requests. The teacher is still

in a position of power, but this is not reflected in the language used in the classroom. Delpit (1995) highlights the difficulties faced by African American students when faced with the indirect use of language favoured by middle class teachers. For example, a teacher might say “would you like to sit down?” thereby masking an instruction as a question and confusing students who are not accustomed to this indirect use of language to mask power relations in the classroom.

Bernstein’s sociolinguistic code theory (1977) examined the social class differences in the communication codes of working class and middle class children, which reflected class and power relations in the division of labour. Bernstein distinguished between the restricted codes of the working class, which are context dependent and particularistic, and the elaborated codes of the middle class, which are context independent and universalistic. Bernstein has been criticised for implying that language used by the working class was deficient, but he rejected this interpretation. Sadovnik (2001) explains this:

Bernstein argued that restricted codes are not deficient, but rather are functionally related to the social division of labour, where context dependent language is necessary in the context of production. Likewise, the elaborated code of the middle classes represents functional changes necessitated by changes in the division of labour and the middle classes’ new position in reproduction rather than production. That schools require an elaborated code for success means that working class children are disadvantaged by the dominant code of schooling, not that their language is deficient (688).

Academic discourse uses middle class codes, which are elaborated and universalistic. These codes present particular difficulties for students from working class backgrounds.

The conventions of tertiary academic discourses need to be made explicit so that students can access and use these language codes. Teachers need to approach this subject with an awareness of the power relations and views of knowledge reflected in academic discourses as well as a sensitivity to and appreciation for the socio-cultural values and knowledge that students bring to the classroom. Parkerson, working at the University of the Western Cape, has found that “providing effective feedback on students’ writing, both in the written and in the verbal context of a one-to-one consultation, has proved to be an indispensable way of making this culture (academic discourse) explicit to students”

(2000:119). The feedback process can also provide a forum where dialogue between teacher and student around the issues of discourse acquisition can take place.

2.1.3 The rhetorical foundation for academic discourse

The dominant rhetorical discourse of the University is positivist and the genre-based approaches (see chapter 2.2.4) argue that by teaching the students the rules of this genre and helping them to master its discourse, the students will be empowered (Cope and Kalantzis: 1993). There is a pragmatic need to give the students (particularly those from historically disadvantaged school backgrounds) the tools that they need to function in this Current-Traditional frame of reference (Berlin, 1988: 51). At the same time there is an awareness of the need to highlight new ideas about writing as a means of generating meaning and new understandings of discourse. As Berlin points out:

In teaching writing, we are not simply offering training in a useful technical skill that is meant as a simple complement to the more important studies of other areas. We are teaching a way of experiencing the world, a way of ordering and making sense of it . . . subtly informing our statements about invention, arrangement and even style are assumptions about the nature of reality (Berlin, 1988:58).

He points to the fact that writing teachers might have different ideas about how the elements that make up the process – writer, reality, audience and language – are envisioned, based on pedagogical theory, which is ultimately based in rhetorical theory (Berlin, 1988:47). Berlin would agree with Raimes (1991) that Current-Traditional Rhetoric or the Positivist group dominates thinking about writing instruction today. It is a view that is closely linked with the positivistic position of modern science. In this paradigm,

Knowledge is founded on the simple correspondence between sense impressions and the faculties of the mind and truth is discovered through induction alone. The world is rational and its system is to be discovered through the experimental method (1988: 51).

This view of the world forms the basis for positivist research (see chapter 3.2.1). Berlin argues that university rhetoric is largely concerned with the communication of truth that is certain and empirically verifiable and that the writer efface himself, focusing on

experience to highlight information that is empirical and rational, often at the expense of social and psychological concerns (1988: 58).

In contrast, Berlin introduces the pedagogical approach of the New Rhetoricians as an alternative. In this paradigm, knowledge is not simply a static entity available for retrieval. Truth is dynamic and dialectical, the result of a process involving the interaction of opposing elements. It is a relation that is created by human beings with their own frames of reference rather than a pre-existent “truth”, waiting to be discovered. The basic elements of the dialectic are the elements that make up the communication process – writer (speaker), audience, reality and language. “Communication is always basic to the epistemology underlying the New Rhetoric because truth is always truth for someone standing in relation to others in a linguistically circumscribed situation” (1988: 56). In this view, language is at the centre of the dialectical interplay between the individual and the world and so truth is impossible without language because it is language that embodies and generates truth.

It could be argued that such an approach to language, writing and knowledge is less comfortable for students because this rhetorical approach generates fewer certainties. Writers like Sommers, however, argue that this is a positive state. “Dissonance, the incongruities between intention and execution, governs both writing and meaning . . . good writing disturbs: it creates dissonance” (Sommers, 1988:127).

2.1.4 The relationship between discourse and context

The relationship between context and discourse is a contested one. There is a tension between those who argue that certain discourse conventions can be predicted for certain contexts and those who argue that there is no fixed relationship between discourse and context. Fairclough argues that “the matching of language to context is characterised by indeterminacy, heterogeneity and struggle” (1992: 42). Genre theorists (for example Swales, 1990 and Martin, 1989) tend to argue that within a particular context, participants will draw on certain language conventions and that these should be explicitly taught to students (see chapter 2.2.4). Halliday proposes the concept of “register” which links

certain linguistic choices with particular socio-cultural contexts. Ivanic argues for a middle ground, saying:

Particular discourse characteristics *are* shaped by the current interests, values, beliefs and practices of particular social groups, and so position the writers as participating in these interests, values, beliefs and practices. This means that, when a writer words something in a particular way, by a particular choice of words and structures, they are aligning themselves with others who use such words and structures, and hence making a statement of identity about themselves (1989:45).

In the context of written discourse in a University, it can be argued that there is a relatively predictable range of language conventions and registers that is approved by those in powerful positions, that is, those who mark scripts and assign grades. Given that there are variations between different disciplines and between different institutions, there are nevertheless recognisable features of academic discourse. Ivanic argues that some discourses are judged more 'appropriate' than others according to the dominant conventions of the institution (1989:53). Students only have choices within this prescribed range of linguistic options. We are reminded here of the idea of intertextuality (see chapter 2.1.6) which argues that we draw on a limited range of previously experienced linguistic choices when writing. Ivanic argues that

Learner writers are not so much learning to be creative as learning to use discourses which already exist . . . a writer's identity is determined not completely by other discourses, but rather by the unique way in which she draws on and combines them (1989: 86).

These 'appropriate' choices are privileged and students know that they are associated with the greater power of the dominant group. However, Ivanic also found that students are also often resistant to them (see chapter 1.2).

The access that students have to a repertoire of linguistic options is dependent on the exposure that they have had to texts (spoken and written) that they have previously experienced. These encounters contribute to the repertoire of writing choices they have available to them at the moment of writing. This access is not equally distributed and is dependent on their socio-economic circumstances. Academic literacy and intervention programmes have a role to play in providing students with access to these resources and

linguistic choices and building student awareness of the relationship between discourse and context.

2.1.5 Academic discourse and writer identity

There is a close relationship between language and identity. Ivanic, in her book *Writing and Identity: the discoursal construction of identity in academic writing* (1998) examines the issue of discoursal construction of writer identity for students working in tertiary institutions. She argues that a desire to identify with a group determines our phonetic, lexical and syntactic choices in spoken and written language, both consciously and subconsciously. Drawing on Halliday and Hasan's social-semiotic perspective (1989), she supports the view that language is bound up with meaning and that meaning is dependent on what they term the "context of situation" and the "context of culture"(Halliday and Hasan 1989: 6-7). We understand words in the context of social activities in which they are used. These social activities and the linguistic choices available to us are dependent on previous activities of the same nature and the ways in which language was used in the past. In this way, the language system is "socio-culturally constructed". Ivanic develops these ideas further by saying:

I am suggesting that social identity consists firstly of a person's set of values and beliefs about reality and these affect the ideational meaning which they convey through language. Social identity consists secondly of a person's sense of their relative status in relation to others with whom they are communicating, and this affects the interpersonal meaning which they convey through language. A third component of social identity is a person's orientation to language use, and this will affect the way they construct their message. Looked at from the other direction, the ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings conveyed by language all contribute towards constructing the participant's identities (1998:40).

Ivanic argues that:

Individuals have to negotiate an identity within the range of possibilities for selfhood which are supported or at least tolerated by a community and inscribed in that community's communicative practices. . . Student writers are trying to establish identities within such communities while bringing with them complex identities from their social life outside the academic community (1998: 82).

Norton, studying the questions of identity and motivation, argues that a theory of social identity needs to integrate the language learner and the language learning context. She

argues that it is important that we understand “how relations of power in the social world affect social interaction” (1995: 12). She questions notions evident in Second Language Acquisition Theory which assume that:

Learners can be defined unproblematically as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual (1995: 12).

Norton argues that we “need to develop a conception of the language learner as having a complex social identity that must be understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction” (1995: 13).

The students in the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* class have a range of different values and beliefs about reality based on their socio-cultural and educational backgrounds. All share a relatively low status in the context of the higher education institution as they are all first year students (although some may have greater confidence within this context depending on previous educational experiences). The students have very different orientations to language use as some are mother tongue speakers of the medium of instruction whereas some use English as a second or third language. Other socio-cultural orientations to language use also have to be taken into account for example, home discourse and exposure to other discourses, for example in religious and political contexts. For this reason a case study methodology has been chosen to explore the variations that occur in this group in terms of academic writer identity (see 3.5).

2.1.6 Difficulties faced by African students

The Current-Traditional paradigm which currently forms the basis for most university scholarship is rooted in essentially Western traditions. This is problematic for teachers and students working in an African context. Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) have pointed to the cultural values implicit in L1-oriented writing pedagogy and the difficulties this represents for L2 learners in the American context. This has relevance to our South African context, where the dominant pedagogical paradigm is also essentially Western.

They highlight four principles and practices of L1 oriented writing classes which appear to tacitly incorporate a U.S. mainstream (or essentially Western) ideology of individualism: voice, peer review, critical thinking and textual ownership (45). They argue that these practices assume culturally specific norms of thought and expression which non-mainstream writers of English may have little social training in and thus real difficulty accessing:

Research indicates that a broad range of the world's peoples conventionally adopt models and norms of communication that are almost diametrically opposed to (US norms) in that they foreground the *subtle, interpretive, interdependent, non-assertive*, and even *nonverbal* character of communicative interaction . . . many non-Western cultures insist . . . on the fundamental connectedness of human beings to each other. A normative imperative of these cultures is to maintain this interdependence among individuals (1999: 51).

They found that university writing programs often place a strong emphasis on critical thinking skills, encouraging students to take one side on issues such as gun control, animal rights or TV violence, and to argue strongly and assertively for their position. Students are expected to analyse the situation critically, convincingly support their opinions, anticipate and defend against counter-arguments, and judiciously weigh various kinds of evidence that may strengthen their positions. All these points, it will be noticed, have direct implications for developing and asserting one's individuality. Such approaches have frequently been found to be problematic for L2 writers from more interdependently oriented cultural backgrounds (1999: 61).

The described approach is very similar to the approach adopted in the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course that is the context for this study. It can be very difficult for students who have come from schools where rote memorisation has been valued (see 1.2) and individual opinion discouraged. It is also important to acknowledge that imitation and memorisation are often highly valued in non-western cultures as an indication of knowing tradition and valuing group relations highly. These are important concepts to bear in mind as UKZN strives to be the "Premier University of African Scholarship" (see 1.2). It is important that scholars establish what African scholarship is in terms of its interface with the fundamentally western concepts of academia that are currently dominant.

The process writing approach (see 2.2.3) is also problematic. Non-directive teacher behaviour, inductive learning, and assertion of self are all concepts that “advantage those who have been socialised into these practices from an early age according to a highly child-centred, middle-class form of socialisation” (Ramanathan and Atkinson 1999: 64). It could be argued that both these rhetorical conventions and these teaching methods disadvantage students from non-western backgrounds.

Our approaches to the teaching of writing should also be informed by the recognition that students moving from cultures and schools where written argument is not emphasised (as is the case for many South African students from the ex-DET school system) to the world of written rhetoric of the University setting, face particular problems. Walter J. Ong, in his article, *Literacy and Orality in our Times*, argues that writing is artificial and is necessary for analytically sequential, linear organisation of thought (Ong, 1988: 39). Writing is, itself, a technology (1988: 46). In contrast, oral genres are not tightly organised but loose-knit and episodic. Whereas speech is structured through the entire fabric of the human person, writing depends on consciously contrived rules. One of the problems students face in moving from orality into the world of writing is that students have difficulty with anticipating the objections and questions of an imaginary audience. This can be problematic. For example, students might make assertions which are unsupported by reasons, or they make a series of statements which lack connections. Substantiation of argument and cohesion of the written text are important features of academic discourse. Students have difficulty because, as Ong explains, the “noetic processes of primary orality are formulaic and rhapsodic rather than analytic” (1988: 41). Ong suggests that writing can lead to the loss of much that was good and beautiful in the old primary oral culture, for example, the citing of proverbs to justify a legal decision. Ong argues that this should be taken into account in the classroom:

Once we know about the psychodynamics of the oral mind, we can recognise that primary orality, at least in residual form, is still a factor in the thought habits of many of those to whom we are called upon to teach writing. Such recognition does not automatically solve our problems but it at least enables us better to identify them. Our students from oral or residually oral cultures come not from an unorganised world, but from a world which is differently organised, in ways which can now be at least partly understood (1988:44).

Ong argues that the media-conscious world that we operate in is a world of secondary orality, where media like radio and television are presented in an oral form but are totally dependent on writing and print. “In fact a residual primary orality, literacy and secondary orality are interacting vigorously with one another in confusing, complex patterns in our secondarily oral world” (1988: 45). All of this needs to be taken into account in a Media class of this nature in contemporary South Africa. Ong argues that students need to be sensitised to “what oral speech is and what writing is by contrast” in our media-conscious environment (1988: 46).

In the South African context, students’ academic literacy “problems” have tended to be framed in terms of language difficulties and a lack of English instruction. McKenna argues that this idea functions to “absolve the academy from dealing with politically-sensitive issues of culture” (2004: 283). She points out that access to elevated literacies parallel socio-economic and cultural divisions as well as language divisions and argues that these discourses are expedient:

By linking success in higher education primarily to language proficiency rather than the acquisition of concealed practices and values, these discourses normalise the discipline-specific norms of knowledge construction. That access to these concealed practices and values is more readily available to certain socio-economic groups than others is not the subject of reflection. The academy is absolved of such reflection by the normalising effect of these discourses (2004:284).

It has been established that the genre of expository writing is a highly structured form, governed by strict conventions, which presents particular problems for students who are not from an essentially Western cultural background. Pragmatically, however, students need to master this genre in order to succeed in the University context as it currently exists and to begin to transform these conventions. Lecturers in various disciplines will need to examine the “commonsense” and subconscious nature of their discipline-specific literacies in order to articulate and teach how language functions to express knowledge, ideas and values within their disciplines.

2.1.7 Plagiarism

Plagiarism, in the University context, “consists of representing the words or ideas of another person as one’s own” (www.medill.northwestern.edu “Policy of Academic Integrity”). It is understood by most academic institutions to be the stealing of others’ intellectual property and as such is treated in a very serious light. However, researchers such as Angelil-Carter, working at UCT, argue that:

Plagiarism is a complex, contested concept, and in student academic writing it may be the surface manifestation of complex learning difficulties which relate to the educational environment, the nature of academic discourse and the nature of language (2000: 154).

Research has shown that cases in which the student’s intention is to deceive or to steal, are rare (Angelil-Carter, 2000: 154) but that problems arise as students attempt to develop an authorial voice in an academic context. Imitation is an important part of this learning process and Angelil-Carter argues that “plagiarism criminalises imitation” (156). Students are required to show evidence of original thinking, while supporting their arguments with references to other authors, but often lack the skills to do this effectively. Experienced academics have learned these subtle skills over time but it is an often overwhelming task for beginners.

Ivanic (1998) draws our attention to the work of Scollon (1994), Sterling (1991), and Pennycook (1993), on intertextuality, arguing that “there is no such thing as originality in discourse: writing can only be a redeployment of available resources for meaning-making” (86) and that we draw on our previous experiences of written and oral texts when making linguistic choices. Pennycook questions the notion of private ownership of discourse, pointing out that the high value placed on originality and authorship in Western scholarship is not only “ideologically and culturally loaded” but “neither historically or culturally constant” (cited in Ivanic: 88).

Acquiring a new discourse requires us to work with “voices”, at times appropriating the ideas and voices of others, to make them our own. Bakhtin highlights the difficulty of this process when he argues that:

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process (1981:294, cited in Paxton, 1994:20).

Paxton argues that plagiarism is often an indication of “the tension between a demand for originality on the one hand and a need to adhere to the academic code on the other” (1994:19). Womack highlights the paradoxical demands that this complex genre of writing makes of students:

The practical form of these contradictions is a perpetual mixed message to the student writer about how much autonomy she is expected to show. On the one hand, we want her own thoughts and responses: independent thought, freshness, originality, are not only permitted, but tirelessly demanded in examiners' reports. On the other hand, there's an equal insistence that every assertion be supported by evidence of intensive and extensive reading, that the language of the essay be 'appropriate', that the handling of contentious issues be balanced – in short, that the expression of independence of mind be thoroughly permeated by signs of conformity to an academic code of practice. The inevitable stress signal of this tension is plagiarism. Bewildered or exhausted by the requirement that she should be herself and simultaneously approximate to a model outside herself, the candidate produces the contradiction in the form of deception – she literally adopts the voice of another as her own. The difference between this prohibited form of pretence and the pretence which is essential to the genre is tiny; the boundary between them is policed with predictable anxiety (1993:46, cited in Paxton, 1994: 19).

Even within academia, what constitutes plagiarism varies across disciplines and across genres. In the media field, for example, the news story (the other genre learned by students in the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course), “neither requires nor permits citations, endnotes, bibliographies, or other textual indicators” (Jameson, 1993:23, cited in Angelil-Carter, 2000: 158).

Angelim-Carter argues that students, especially those for whom English is a second language are alienated by the foreign discourse of academic language from which they are conceptually and socially extremely removed. In this case “the writer's alienation is so profound that the voices of the sources used are not animated by the authorial voice. The writer is not present in the writing” (2000: 160). Further, Angelil-Carter argues that one of the most effective ways to learn this discourse is to “try it on” or learn by imitation. This may appear to be plagiarism. Further, the degree of authority that students perceive

in academic texts is intimidating. Angelil-Carter argues that “because of their own distance from these authoritative discourses, students are not able to manipulate, transform or make them their own” (2000: 162).

Academic discourse is often very different to discourses that have been previously valued in students’ experience (see 2.1.4). Many students have roots in an oral culture where faithful imitation is highly valued, or in highly religious cultures where texts may not be changed. Students who were schooled in the ex-DET system are accustomed to rote memorisation of texts rather than analysis, synthesis or argument. A study by Angelil-Carter found that:

The students whom I interviewed had had very little previous experience in writing from multiple sources. Their dominant experience was in descriptive or narrative composition, and where ‘factual’ writing was required; it seemed to be simply a matter of composing from one source, the textbook. Only those who achieved high marks in their essays reported any experience of writing from multiple sources (2000: 165).

The synthesis of material from different sources is understandably very difficult for students who have had no exposure to these ideas or skills in their schooling. Angelil-Carter argues that there needs to be a clear understanding of plagiarism and referencing requirements within a university department and that this needs to be effectively negotiated with students.

2.1.8 Referencing

The previous section on plagiarism has highlighted the difficulties that many students experience with writing from multiple sources. Referencing these sources is thus also a difficult skill to acquire. Failure to reference often leads to plagiarism as students borrow words or ideas from another writer without acknowledgment.

In tracing the origins of the tradition of referencing in Western academia, Swales argues that references may be given for ethical reasons, to acknowledge the ideas of another writer or as a persuasive tool, to lend weight to an argument or as a way of demonstrating

familiarity with the texts of a particular academic field, hence signalling membership to that discourse community (Swales, 1990).

Formative assessment or feedback comments on student essays often focus on the conventions of referencing, partly because these signal, to some extent, the extent to which the student is becoming “acculturated” (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988) into the discourse community. Angelil-Carter argues that this can be a key area for discussion when teaching academic writing:

Focusing on referencing is a powerful way of helping to disestablish notions of received, absolute knowledge, and of developing a critical voice in students. When the curriculum challenges students to reflect on referencing and its functions, and they begin to use it effectively, their understanding of the overall context of the discipline in which they are writing is enhanced (Angelil-Carter, 2000: 174).

2.1.9 The role of written feedback

Feedback, or formative assessment (Starfield, 2000:109), can be a channel of communication through which students can learn the conventions and expectations of academic literacy. However, students need to understand enough of the discourse for the feedback comments to be comprehensible. Students and teachers need to share a common frame of reference for talking about writing (Paxton, 1994: 80).

Many of the South African academic literacy programmes and courses, for example *Media 130* and *English 113 (English for Commerce Students)* at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, *Academic Communication Studies* at UKZN, and the *ELAP* course at Rhodes, use a process genre approach to writing, particularly the draft-response-redraft method. Students are required to submit a draft essay on which they receive constructive and formative feedback which is used to revise their essays before a final version is submitted. It is believed that this provides an opportunity for dialogue between student and teacher outside of classroom interaction and enables the teacher to respond to students individually. It facilitates the student’s apprenticeship into the discourse community (Gee, 1996: 139).

Elbow (1997: 10) argues that a teacher's responses to a final version of an essay often function as an "autopsy" whereas comments made at the draft stage of the essay writing process serve to encourage revision and make students more aware of a reader's response. In this way, teachers are "responding to" rather than "marking", encouraging students to think more about how the text has been organised, where there might be gaps in the argument or inconsistencies, where the wording might be changed for greater impact and where the "rules and conventions" (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988: 8) of academic literacy have not been applied.

It is believed that this opportunity for dialogue provides a site where the student can engage with the process of acquiring "academic literacy". This process is a widespread pedagogical practice in South African tertiary institutions. However, as Quinn points out, "no one really 'knows' how drafting-responding works in developing academic literacy" (2000:119).

Assumptions about both ways of knowing and ways of expressing ideas are embedded in decisions lecturers make about how to provide feedback, what features of an essay to focus on and in the comments that are made. However, the decisions and attitudes underlying comments that are made are often unconscious. Studies on feedback have noted that the comments made on essays are often not explicit. They frequently note comments written in informal language, appealing to formal criteria and requests to students to be specific that are themselves vague (Sommers, 1982: 150). It is often the case that academics find it difficult to objectify their own practices as they have become internalised (Winberg, 2002). In addition, "it is often the case that some of the underlying assumptions of disciplines, are themselves the site of contestation between academics; hence the avoidance of explicit statements in introductory courses. The result is often the "obfuscating vagueness which reinforces the challenge facing new learners" (Bond, 1993: 144). The challenge to mainstream lecturers and teachers is that they become more conscious of their own practices and more mindful of the need to make their epistemological values and practices explicit for students.

The work of the "new literacy" theorists such as Taylor, Ballard, Beasley, Bock, Clanchy and Nightingale (1998), has shown that "academic literacy is developmentally derived

through participation within the learning culture of a university; hence it is the goal rather than a prerequisite of university study” (Bond, 1993: 140). Written feedback on academic essays, mindfully applied, has a key role to play in this development of academic literacy.

This study intends to add to our understanding of how this role is played out by examining the dynamics that emerge in one group of essays.

2.2 Approaches to the teaching of writing

The teaching of writing over the past four decades has been largely characterised by the use of three approaches, namely the product (and reader-dominated), process and genre approaches. Each of these has particular theoretical underpinnings, pedagogical beliefs and approaches to key factors such as linguistic knowledge, the nature of writing and the writer, audience, purpose, the knowledge and skills learners bring to the process and, key to this study, feedback. Each approach has different implications for students in terms of its social, cultural, psychological and philosophical impact.

In recent years, researchers have questioned the conception and use of these approaches as mutually exclusive. James A. Berlin points out, for example, that “the numerous recommendations of the “process” centred approaches to writing instruction as superior to the “product” centred approaches are not very useful. Everyone teaches the process of writing, but everyone does not teach the same process” (1988:59). Badger and White note that, “the three approaches are largely complementary, as becomes more apparent if we examine their weaknesses and strengths” (2000:157). Ideas have been emerging in the literature for using these approaches in combination, or drawing on aspects of each, depending on contextual factors in the classroom and an individual teacher’s sense of “plausibility” (Prabhu, 1987: 104). This has led to the emergence of the “process genre” approach (Badger and White, 2000: 153), for example, which draws on all three models for inspiration. The *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course at the University of KwaZulu- Natal, Pietermaritzburg, has tended to adopt this technique, drawing on aspects of all three approaches as they are perceived to be useful in this particular context. It

should be noted, however, that although this approach is a pragmatic one, it does lead to some theoretical inconsistencies, which will be discussed.

2.2.1 The product approach

The first of these approaches, the product approach, has its roots in the audio-lingual method of language teaching. This was the dominant mode of instruction in the 1960s and was characterised by a concern with linguistic form, grammar and error correction (Raimes, 1991: 408). It lent itself to empirical research design and the students' mother tongue and cultural background tended to be viewed as an impediment to language learning. The focus in this approach is primarily on form.

This model describes the composing process as a linear series of stages, separated in time, and characterised by the gradual development of the written product, for example the Pre-Write/Write/Re-Write model of Rohman and the Conception/Incubation/Production model of Britton (Flower and Hayes, 1981: 367). Product approaches emphasise linguistic knowledge and writing development as primarily the result of the imitation of input. In this approach, learning to write has four stages: familiarisation; controlled writing; guided writing and free writing (Pincas, 1983, cited in Badger and White, 2000:153).

2.2.2 The process approach

The process approach questions the product model which describes the composing process as a linear series of stages, separated in time, and characterised by the gradual development of the written product (Flower and Hayes, 1981). The process approach argues that writing is "complex, recursive and nonlinear" (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1983:466 and Zamel, 1987: 698) and that "writing is not a matter of recording an unchanging reality which is independent of the writer and which all writers are expected to describe in the same way regardless of the rhetorical situation" (Hairston, cited in Zamel: 702).

As White explains, “proponents of writing as a process began articulating their views at the same time as post-structuralist literary critics began arguing that reading was a process, a creative (rather than passive) interaction between reader and text” (White, 1988: 287) (see chapter 2.4). This paradigm developed in opposition to the belief that meaning resides in the text, believing rather that:

the act of invention, the discovery of what we have to say, goes on throughout the writing process; we learn as we write, and successive drafts bring us closer and closer not to some predetermined coding of the known, but to an understanding of the previously unknown. . . . We seek in our students’ texts that sense of original vision (White, 1988: 289).

This has implications for teacher feedback. White argues that “we see traces of possibilities in student texts – we ask students to pursue and refine these traces in revision” (1988: 289). This is in contrast to earlier views of feedback as error correction.

The process approach advocates that writing be done in stages or cycles, with opportunities for assessment, intervention and feedback within the process. The stages of writing are identified as: prewriting; drafting; revising and editing. These stages are part of a cyclical rather than a linear process. Proponents of this approach argue that writing is a complex intellectual and social activity to which learners bring prior knowledge, experience, beliefs and attitudes. In contrast with earlier, product-based approaches to writing, the process approach is concerned primarily with linguistic skills such as planning and drafting, rather than linguistic knowledge (Badger and White, 2000: 154). Assessment is usually continuous, regarding the entire process of the generation of a piece of writing to be as important as the end product. Writing development is understood as a largely unconscious process which can be facilitated by a teacher and as a result teacher input is not emphasised. As Paulus explains,

Teaching writing as a process of discovery aims to raise student awareness of the recursive nature of the composing process while allowing teacher and peer collaboration and intervention during the process as they negotiate meaning (1999:265).

The process approach places a new focus on the writer and how students learn to write. In this approach, the writer is understood to be the creator of text, who makes meaning in the process of writing. It foregrounds the idea of writing as a means of communication.

The purpose of feedback changes from the need to address linguistic accuracy that was the focus of the product approaches to the necessity of intervening primarily at the level of ideas and organisation.

Sondra Perl, in her 1988 article, “Understanding Composing” elaborates on this. She highlights the recursive nature of the writing process:

There is a forward-moving action that exists by virtue of a backward-moving action. Recursive elements include rereading what has already been written. . . going back to key words or topics to generate further ideas (118).

Perl argues that writers match words to a “felt sense” and use re-reading to determine how what is “right” or “wrong” in a piece corresponds to the writer’s sense of intention and the imagined position of the reader. She calls this “a process of retrospective restructuring” (118).

Flower and Hayes (1981) also argue that revision is not a distinct stage, but that it “happens constantly during composition” and that learning happens through the act of writing:

Writers and teachers of writing have long argued that one learns through the act of writing itself, but it has been difficult to support the claim in other ways. However, if one studies the process by which a writer uses a goal to generate ideas, then consolidates those ideas and uses them to revise or regenerate new, more complex goals, one can see this learning process in action. . . through setting these new goals the fruits of discovery come back to inform the continuing process of writing (386).

These ideas have significant implications for how writing classrooms should be organised. Zamel argues that the research has shown the effectiveness of classrooms where students are

acknowledged, given numerous opportunities to write, and become participants in a community of writers. In classrooms in which risk taking is encouraged, trust is established, choice and authority are shared, and writing is viewed as a meaning-making event, students change as writers, adopt positive attitudes toward written work and demonstrate real growth in writing performance (Zamel, 1987:707).

Her argument is that this writing environment enables students to take the risks that enable them to develop writing skills.

A further problem, however, is found in the power relations implicit in the classroom environment. It can be argued that the context of teaching the genre of academic writing is a threatening one for communication. It is a high risk environment for students, whose academic progress is always at stake. At the same time there is a marked difference in power between lecturer and student. This can also make it difficult for a lecturer to provide the type of support and encouragement that the process approach advocates.

Delpit (1988) provides further insight into the power differences in the classroom when she argues that the codes for participating in the culture of power in the classroom are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have the power. She argues that learners who are not already participants in the culture of power need explicit instruction in the rules of the culture. She maintains that unless one has a lifetime of “immersion in the culture of power, explicit presentation makes learning immeasurably easier” (1988: 87).

Delpit warns of the dangers of the process approach on ideological grounds, arguing that the approach does not make writing conventions explicit to students who have not had previous experience of this type of discourse. The elements of the genre remain “invisible” to these students (see chapter 2.1.4). In other words, educational institutions must provide these students with the content that other families from a different class and cultural orientation provide at home. Her criticism of the process approach is that it does not provide this type of explicit instruction:

In some instances, adherents of process approaches to writing create situations in which students ultimately find themselves held accountable for knowing a set of rules about which no one has ever directly informed them. Teachers do students no service to suggest, even implicitly, that “product” is not important. In this country (the USA), students will be judged on their product regardless of the process they utilised to achieve it. And that product, based as it is on the specific codes of a particular culture, is more readily produced when the directives of how to produce it are made explicit (1988: 91).

Delpit argues in favour of using direct instruction where needed as well as writing for real audiences and purposes. She advocates the use of both skills and process approaches,

where appropriate, but cautions us to be aware of the power dynamics inherent in the classroom and the danger of perpetuating disadvantage through using the process approach uncritically.

A further disadvantage of the process approach to writing is that it gives insufficient attention to the contexts in which writing is produced (such as purpose and audience) and offers students insufficient input in terms of linguistic knowledge (Badger and White, 2000: 157). This can be particularly disadvantageous to students whose mother tongue is not English and those who have not been taught to use these genres at a secondary school level.

Ivanic (1998) also highlights the notion of “voice”, which is central to this approach, as a problematic concept. She argues that the principle of writers finding and using their own voice can too easily be associated with “simplistic, romantic ideas of the creative individual” helping writers “express their own ideas” and “find their own language” (95). This does not take social context into account and the act of writing cannot be separated from the social context in which it takes place. The concept of voice is embedded in individualistic western cultural precepts. (see chapter 2.1.4).

The process approach often neglects to take into account the purpose and contexts for pieces of writing, and this led to the development of the genre approach, which puts emphasis on the purpose of any piece of writing.

2.2.3 The genre approach

The genre approach takes into account the communicative purpose of a piece of writing as well as other features such as audience, the subject matter, the relationship between writer and audience and the patterns of organisation (Swales, 1990). Texts are analysed in terms of constituent parts or “move structures” and these are explicitly taught to students. Students work with a model of a genre, analysing constituent moves, engaging in exercises which manipulate relevant language forms and then producing their own texts. It is argued that this approach makes the conventions and expectations of a genre more

explicit for students, thus empowering them with understanding of how to use powerful forms of writing (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993).

Swales offers the following definition of genre:

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style (1990).

Genre approaches, like product approaches, regard writing as predominantly linguistic but, unlike product approaches, they emphasise the notion that writing varies with the social context in which it is produced. A range of genres is defined and analysed according to different situations in which they might be produced. The development of writing is understood to be a process of analysing and imitating input. The teacher's role is therefore to provide suitable texts and to facilitate this analysis and imitation (Badger and White, 2000:156).

The approach does not recommend that generic structures should be regarded as rigidly prescriptive. Rather, "the concept of genre should allow for variations in the prototypical structure, as well as linguistic forms, due to cultural and ideological factors, and the communicative purpose of the discourse community in which it is embedded" (Flowerdew, 2000: 370). Flowerdew also argues that it is important to examine how a text has been shaped and influenced by other texts and the writing culture of the discourse community (2000: 370).

A cautionary note has been sounded by those who remind us that "norms and conventions, however powerful, are not static and not universal" (Ivanic, 1989: 81). The danger in treating these conventions as if they were natural is that we don't take into account the fact that conventions are a product of power relations (McKenna, 2004: 279). A critical awareness of these dynamics is proposed by the critical language awareness approach (see 2.2.6).

The importance of acknowledging the variation within a genre and the variation in linguistic realisations of move structures is also highlighted (Flowerdew, 2000: 375). Flowerdew maintains that knowledge of a genre is not an end in itself, but is a starting point for enabling students to acquire competence in a genre. As Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998) caution, “it is desirable to combine this product-based knowledge with a process approach to writing in which students plan, draft, revise and edit their work” (cited in Flowerdew, 2000: 375). A further problem with the approach is that time constraints seldom allow for the rigorous approach to genre that is suggested in the theory.

While the product approach recognises that learners require linguistic input and that imitation is a learning strategy, this tends to be a weakness in the process approach. Correspondingly, the product approach does not give cognisance to the process aspects of writing or the knowledge and skills that learners bring to the process. In the same way, the genre approach highlights the social contexts and purposes of a piece of writing, which is a weakness in the process approach, but the process approach gives learners a more active role whereas the genre approach tends to place learners in a more passive position (Badger and White, 2000: 157).

2.2.4 The reader dominated approaches

The product approach was superseded by the process approach in the 1970s but the 1980s saw a swing back to product-based approaches, with a focus on academic content and the demands of academic genres. (Raimes (1991) classifies these separately as the reader-dominated approaches, but they are closely related to product approaches). This led further to the development of English for Academic Purposes, which highlights the expectations of academic readers. Language teaching in this context is perceived as “socialisation into the academic community” (Horowitz, 1986, cited in Raimes, 412). The context of the academic discourse community becomes the primary factor in the development of methods and materials, with a focus on rhetorical form.

One of the proponents of the product approach, Reither (1988), argues that the emphasis on process does not take into account the issue of where the impulse to write comes from and how to initiate students into the discourse community. It is claimed that writing and

inquiry are often (if not always) “socially collaborative” and that invention, discovery and inquiry are closely tied to institutional relationships and strategies. Interpersonal and institutional contexts are key factors (Odell, cited in Reither: 1988, 141). Reither argues that by simply teaching the conventions of rhetoric, we put students into situations where they can only write out of ignorance. They have to “hunt more after words than matter” (Bacon, cited in Reither, 1988:146). In this context, students are viewed as initiates not insiders. Reither advocates a teaching method which gives more consideration to social knowing. Students use what they can know by bringing curiosity to productive inquiry and teachers “find ways to immerse writing students in academic knowledge/discourse communities so they can write from within those communities” (Reither, 1988:144). It is suggested that a writing course should be “organised as a collaborative investigation of a scholarly field rather than the delivery of a body of knowledge” (Reither, 1988:145).

Due to the emphasis on reader/audience awareness, there is a greater emphasis on the role of teacher feedback. White argues that:

The best composition teachers help their students improve their writing by making them conscious of readers and of the ways readers interact with their texts. . . (teachers should) establish themselves as live and sympathetic readers, willing to participate in the quest for meaning that is writing (White, 1988:290).

Writing teachers are, in turn, part of an interpretive community which “has a set of coherent and powerful assumptions and strategies for approaching student texts” (White, 1988: 290).

The strengths of the product approaches include the recognition that learners require input on linguistic knowledge and the principle of using imitation as a learning strategy. The approach gives students who do not have access to powerful genres due to socio-cultural factors, explicit knowledge of these genres and how they function in society (Delpit, 1995). The weaknesses would be the small role given to writing processes and the fact that the knowledge and skills that learners bring to the process are not acknowledged (Badger and White, 2000: 156). Another of the problems with this approach is that the stages “model the growth of the written product rather than the inner process of the person producing it” (Flower and Hayes: 1981: 367). Time constraints in the average classroom are also a concern with this approach.

2.2.5 The process genre approach and methodological pluralism

As practitioners are finding themselves using “methodological pluralism” in the classroom, researchers are exploring similar ideas. Badger and White find that when the weaknesses and strengths are examined, the approaches are not mutually exclusive but “largely complementary” (Badger and White, 2000: 157). Ideas for using the approaches in combination are beginning to emerge. An example of this is the process genre approach, developed by Badger and White, which advocates a combination of these approaches which recognises that:

Writing involves knowledge about language (as in product and genre approaches), knowledge of the context in which writing happens and especially the purpose for the writing (as in genre approaches), and skills in using language (as in process approaches). Writing development happens by drawing out the learners’ potential (as in process approaches) and by providing input to which the learners respond (as in product and genre approaches) (Badger and White, 2000:158).

It is largely this approach which informs the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course which is being observed for the purposes of this study.

2.2.6 Critical language awareness

The process genre approach also includes a critical language awareness component, which encourages awareness of how genres remain stable or evolve over time, and serve the needs of specific discourse communities. It moves beyond the notion of language as communication to language as social practice, examining the power relations embedded in language use. Fairclough argues that:

Critical language study highlights how language conventions and language practices are invested with power relations and ideological processes which people are often unaware of. It criticises mainstream language study for taking conventions and practices at face value, as objects to be described, in a way which obscures their political and ideological investment (1992: 7)

The language practices of those in positions of power “tend to take on the common sense, natural and background properties” (1992: 6), which mask the true power relations in

situations. Contemporary trends in language use are towards more informal, conversational conventions of language being used, even in professional settings, as well as greater apparent acceptance of minority languages and non-standard varieties of English in institutional contexts. However, Fairclough points out that these shifts in style “provide a strategy for exercising power in more subtle and implicit ways” (1992:5). There is an even greater need for critical language awareness in these circumstances.

Researchers such as Ramanathan and Kaplan (2000:178) argue that as genres are socially produced within discourse communities, the authors’ consciousness is also socially formed. “The shared goals of a community constrain not just the content of what is disseminated but the forms through which dissemination occurs as well” (Ramanathan and Kaplan, 2000: 178). They argue that sensitisation to socio-textual conventions will give teachers and students a “better sense of the relative power associated with mastery of certain genres and the larger disciplinary goals such mastery is able to achieve” (185). Furthermore, they argue that “making instruction at least partially genre-sensitive is one way of ensuring that all learners at all levels of schooling, regardless of background, have relatively equal access to school-based literacy” (185).

The conventions of academic discourse are associated with powerful, middle class interests. Fairclough notes that the “overwhelming prestige” associated with the ‘impersonal’, ‘objective’ academic style of writing makes it very difficult for students to develop their own identities as academic writers. He argues that a critical awareness of standardised conventions of academic writing, and its effect upon identity can enable students to develop a personal style of academic writing (1992: 21).

Janks and Ivanic argue that a critical awareness of the dynamics of power in language should go further to develop “emancipatory discourse”. They argue that “raised awareness” needs to be translated into action which contests the practices used to disempower people. This approach enables students to question ways in which language is used to disempower people through subject positioning and to explore ways in which language can be used to contribute to “greater freedom and respect for all people” (1992: 305). Janks and Ivanic argue that:

CLA can show learners how the weight of conventional usage and the prevailing orders of discourse pressure people into speaking, writing, interacting and comprehending in particular ways. Learners need to understand that the rules of accuracy and appropriacy are not fixed, but subject to social forces. Moving beyond passive awareness to action means learning when to conform to the conventions as they are, or to challenge them, and so help to break new ground (1992: 317).

In an academic context, CLA can give students greater awareness of how language functions to maintain or resist existing power relations. With this knowledge, students are able to make choices about when to conform to existing discourse conventions and when to challenge these practices.

2.2.7 Problems with methodological pluralism

The *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course at the University of KwaZulu-Natal is essentially a theme-based English for Academic Purposes course, designed to prepare students to cope with writing assignments in academic courses. It is, in this sense, a “service course”. The teachers of the course have resolved upon an approach of “methodological pluralism” as a means of addressing some of the unique factors in the teaching context. This is a pragmatic decision, which has the advantage of capitalising on the ‘best’ aspects of several approaches, but it remains problematic.

One of the consequences of combining approaches is that conceptual inconsistencies can arise. In this course, for example, we find that while aspects of process methodology are being applied, such as multiple drafting and provision of feedback on drafts, the model of composition used is still essentially linear. According to this conception of writing, “revision is understood as a separate stage at the end of a process – a stage that comes after the completion of a first or second draft and one that is temporarily distinct from the prewriting and writing stages of the process” (Sommers, 1988:119).

Another example of a key concept used in the course which emerges from a linear model is that of the thesis statement. Students are encouraged to use a thesis statement as a controlling device in the introductory paragraphs. This is problematic, however, because as Sommers points out:

since they write their introductions and thesis statements even before they have really discovered what they want to say, their early close attention to the thesis statement, and more generally, the linear model, function to restrict and circumscribe not only the development of their ideas, but also their ability to change the direction of these ideas (1988:123).

It could be argued that students do not learn strategies for handling the essay as a whole and that “revision strategies are teacher-based, directed towards a teacher-reader who expects compliance with the rules” (Sommers, 1988: 124). Sommers contrasts the revision strategies of these students with the revision strategies of experienced writers (for example, journalists and academics) who use revision for the conception and generation of ideas and the development of an argument. It is argued that good writing “develops like a seed, not a line” (Barthes, cited in Sommers, 1988:125). However, creating the kind of classroom that would facilitate this kind of growth is difficult when the teachers are faced with a class of nearly one hundred learners and time constraints.

Another of the challenges facing the designers of this course is the wide range of students found in the class. At one end of the spectrum are the native English speakers in the class, who have often had exposure to academic genres and rhetorical thinking at secondary school. This group often do not perceive a course of this nature to be necessary and can feel resentful. At the other end are the students who are English Second Language learners whose needs are far more complex because they are not working in their mother tongue. Additionally, many L2 students are also from disadvantaged schooling backgrounds and have not been exposed to the academic genres at a secondary school level. The classrooms in these schools tend to rely on lock-step methods, requiring primarily oral rote learning and memorisation skills rather than individual opinions and rhetoric (see chapter 1.2). An approach such as Critical Language Awareness requires a relatively high level of functional basic literacy before it has any impact on students (personal correspondence, Clarence-Fincham, 2006). This can be problematic for students not yet fluent in the medium of instruction.

There is also a danger in assuming that all L2 learners have the same needs. Raimes argues that it is an error to regard L2 students as homogenous group. She goes on to say that:

We need to take contextual factors and student needs into account and to draw on traditions, with a recognition of complexity of composing, balancing considerations of form, writer, content and reader and the interaction of these factors. There needs to be a recognition of student diversity; a recognition of learner's processes; a recognition of the politics of pedagogy; and a recognition of the value of practice (1991: 422).

Raimes, drawing on Prabhu (1987:104), argues for the primacy of a “teacher’s sense of plausibility about teaching” in shaping a writing pedagogy to meet the needs of a particular group of learners. Prabhu developed this term to describe “the conceptualisation of intentions and effects” that teachers engage in to validate and reflect on their classroom practice (Maley, www.tttjournal.co.uk). It is a teacher’s subjective schema for understanding of “how their teaching leads to desired learning – with a notion of causation that has a measure of credibility to them [the teachers]” (1990: 172). This is not a static notion. Prabhu argues that a process of professional development keeps a sense of plausibility alive and open to the influence of ongoing teaching experience and interaction with other teachers. (Maley, www.tttjournal.co.uk) It can be argued that the teacher’s sense of plausibility should be informed by recognition that students moving from cultures and schools where written argument is not emphasised to the world of written rhetoric of the University setting face particular problems.

A further problem that students face when learning the skills of academic writing is cognitive overload. Cleary examined several literate life histories with learners of English as a second language and found that cognitive overload was a problem for these students. In writing, students need to simultaneously attend to the generation of ideas, knowledge, word choice, organisation, motor control, spelling, syntax, textual convention, clarity, voice, audience and purpose (Cleary, 1991:125). Ann Berthoff refers to this as ‘allatonce-ness’. “In composing everything happens at once or nothing happens at all” (1987:15).

Feedback allows teachers as many responses to student writing as there are approaches to teaching. In this sense, written feedback is a strategy for dealing with diversity. However, the wide range of choices available can be confusing for teachers and the research has not provided any definitive answers. At the same time, feedback can be one of the most important tasks of the writing teacher. Raimes notes that “since a response on

a students' paper is potentially one of the most influential texts in a writing class, teachers are always concerned about the best approach" (1991:418). The teacher's sense of plausibility is what ultimately determines the approach taken to feedback within the larger approach to writing that has been adopted.

A degree of methodological pluralism would seem to allow teachers to adapt available approaches to their particular contexts. In the context of the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, writing is seen to be a process which happens in stages, takes place in a particular context, is governed by certain conventions and can be facilitated by a teacher who enables students' progress by providing appropriate input of knowledge and skills, builds on students' existing knowledge and explores the power relations inherent in academic writing. The opportunity for students to receive feedback on their essay drafts is seen to be a vital point at which this facilitation can take place. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of that intervention.

2.3 Research into feedback in academic writing

2.3.1 Introduction

The provision of written feedback from teachers on student essays or draft essays is a widespread practice in contemporary writing³ classrooms. As Leki (1990) points out, "writing teachers and students alike do intuit that written responses can have a great effect on student writing and attitudes to writing" (57). The practice is widely regarded as a vital means of communication between teacher and student despite the fact that the task can be frustrating, time-consuming, and teachers often feel unsure of how to go about providing effective feedback. Ferris et al (1997) highlight the importance of this practice, noting that:

Providing written feedback on student papers is . . . arguably the teacher's most crucial task: It allows for a level of individualised attention and one-on-one communication that is rarely possible in the day-to-day operations of a class, and it plays an important role in motivating and encouraging students" (155).

³ Literature from the USA refers to composition classrooms.

However, despite the fact that providing written feedback on essay drafts is intuitively used in writing classes around the world, there is little certainty in classroom practice or in research, that this is an effective method. There is surprisingly little research on this process and where research has been done, the results are often inconclusive. Sommers (1982) writes:

It seems, paradoxically enough, that although commenting on student writing is the most widely used method for responding to student writing, it is the least understood (148).

2.3.1.1 The draft-response-redraft process

One of the central problems with the research in this field is the considerable complexity of the process and the many factors that need to be considered. Different studies have focussed on aspects of the phenomenon in order to better understand the process. Researchers have examined ways in which feedback is given, for example, whether praise or criticism is more effective (Connors and Lunsford, 1993; Knoblauch and Brannnon, 1983) or whether to comment on errors or content (Polio, Fleck and Leder, 1998; Leki, 1990; Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Raimes, 1983). The presentation of feedback has also been examined, for example frequency and location of comments (Connors and Lunsford, 1993) or form of comments (Ferris et al, 1997). Researchers have also looked at the teacher's understanding of their own role and the writing process as factors (Leki, 1990). The marker's attitude towards the process, his/her beliefs regarding the purpose of feedback and his/her ability to engage constructively with the process as well as his/her empathy and enthusiasm are also factors (Paxton, 1994; Quinn, 1999).

Individual student factors such as students' goals, abilities, self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation and identity (Hyland, 1998) should be taken into account as well as the issues pertaining to students writing in their second language⁴ (Conrad and Goldstein, 1999; Leki, 1990; Ferris et al, 1997; Starfield, 2000; Parkerson, 2000). Institutional and socio-cultural contexts, course goals and marking procedures (Quinn, 1999) are also key factors. Other aspects of the process affecting the research include: the assumptions

⁴ Hereafter referred to in this paper as L1 for first language and L2 for second language speakers of English. These terms have been called into question as L2 has a derogatory connotation, but they are still widely used in the literature.

underpinning the research itself (see chapter 3.2 research paradigm) and assumptions about the teaching of writing (Paxton, 1994). Tentative links have been made between certain aspects of improvement and particular factors and these will be outlined in this chapter, but the findings remain largely inconclusive.

2.3.1.2 A definition of improvement

Another of the central research problems in the field is that what constitutes improvement has not been clearly defined. Leki (1990) points out that “written commentary on student papers is, of course, intended to produce improvement, but what constitutes improvement is not so clear” (58). Does technical accuracy or grammatical correctness (particularly with L2 writers, whose own purposes in learning to write in a second language may vary) constitute improvement or are we also looking for grasp of ideas, integration of source materials, sophistication of arguments, cohesion, coherence, originality of concepts, and development of style? Many of these skills, such as writing style and originality are perceived subjectively by different readers and are difficult to quantify. Furthermore, developing these skills requires a degree of risk-taking that is unrealistic to expect of students in a highly competitive academic environment. Onore argues that it is inappropriate to expect that risk-taking and improvement can occur simultaneously (cited in Leki, 1990: 59). It could be argued that measuring improvement is counter-productive in a learning environment.

The problem of how to quantify or measure improvement receives different treatment by different researchers. It is also important to consider whether we are examining improvement in one piece of writing or the long-term development of writing skills. Knoblauch and Brannon (1994) point out that “whether or not a second draft represents improvement over a first in some objective sense is not only extremely difficult to determine but is also irrelevant to the value of the process itself” (cited in Leki, 1990: 59). This paper deals with the question of what constitutes improvement contextually, using the outcomes designed for the particular writing class.

2.3.2 Developments in the teaching of writing

It is useful at this point to trace developments in the teaching of writing in recent history. Early in the nineteenth century, rhetoric was taught with little or no attention to grammatical correctness but from the beginning of the twentieth century interest in grammatical correctness grew and before the 1950s, the assumption was that teacher's role was to correct, and grade student papers (Connors and Lunsford, 1993:201). By the end of the 1950s the idea that students should receive rhetorical comments in the margins and at the end of papers was developing and between the 1960s and 1970s interest in the subject of teacher response grew. However, Connors and Lunsford note that the discussions tended to be "prescriptive, idealistic or theoretical" (204).

The idea that errors might be viewed as "powerful diagnostic tools" rather than "pathologies" (Kroll, cited in Griffin, 1982: 298) began to emerge as well as interactive theories of reading in which the reader is perceived as an active agent, making meaning rather than passively receiving a message (see 2.4). These ideas lead to studies of how teachers read and interpret students' texts. Walter Lamberg first coined the concept of "feedback", suggesting that our comments should direct students' attention to aspects of the text which need revision rather than simply correcting papers (1980: 66). Further, our comments should respond to the ideas and the meaning in the writing. Teachers began to recognise that attention should be focussed in particular areas rather than providing random comments and discussion emerged on what should be focussed on.

2.3.2.1 Findings in the 1980s

Research during the 1980s was based on the growing awareness of the importance of feedback and enthusiasm for the idea. A number of papers attempted to look at the process rigorously, but the findings were generally disappointing. Knoblauch and Brannon found that "no kind of written comment from teachers did much good or harm or had much attention paid to it" (1982: 158) and Nancy Sommers concluded in 1982 that "the news from the classroom is not good" (148). Her first observation was that teachers' comments take students' attention away from their own purposes in writing and focus attention on the teachers' purpose in commenting. The teacher "appropriates the text from the student" in this way (1982: 148). In general, teachers did not indicate which

concerns were more important and commented simultaneously on editing and development issues.

She noticed that whereas experienced writers tended to see revision as discovery of meaning and as an opportunity to shape their argument, many students tend to use revision to clean up texts by substituting and deleting at the level of individual words. They tend not to make changes at a conceptual level because they do not have strategies for dealing with the essay as a whole (1988:123). She argues that their perceptions of revision are “based on a linear conception of the writing process in which revision is understood as a separate stage at the end of a writing process” (1988: 123). Sommers advocates that teachers develop appropriate responses for student drafts:

The challenge we face as teachers is to develop comments which will provide an inherent reason for students to revise; it is a sense of revision as discovery. . . show them, through our comments why new choices would positively change their texts and thus to show them the potential for development implicit in their own writing” (156).

2.3.3 The form/content debate

One of the reasons proposed for the perceived ineffectiveness of feedback was the tendency of teachers to focus on form rather than meaning when commenting on students’ work (Zamel, 1985, Cohen, 1987). In a 1985 study, Zamel found that students tended to respond to comments on form and ignored those on content (cited in Fathman and Whalley 1990: 180). Researchers argued that this focus on error correction resulted in negative student attitudes toward and inattention to feedback (Robb, 1986; Semke, 1984). Polio, Fleck and Leder (1998) found that linguistic accuracy improved from draft to revised essay, with extra time, but that additional editing instruction and feedback did not help students to improve. They conclude that “this study can be added to a list of studies that have failed to show improvement in students’ linguistic accuracy in writing as the result of feedback or additional grammar instruction” (60).

At the same time, however, researchers were finding that L2 students often desired feedback on grammatical errors. Leki (1991) surveyed L2 students to discover their attitudes to error correction. She discovered that because having error-free work was a

major concern for these students, they wished to have their errors corrected by their teachers. Leki pointed out that this might lead to a tension between the students' perceived needs and the teachers' beliefs that development of ideas was more important (cited in Hyland, 1998:256). Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) found a similar mismatch between the choice on the teacher's part not to deal with errors and a clear desire on the students' part to have such feedback" (173). Hedgcock and Lefkowitz also found in 1996 that ESL students do value form-focussed feedback and expected to improve their writing and learn more when teachers highlighted their grammatical errors (cited in Hyland, 1998:256). Leki (1990) found that the L2 students in a study showed a lack of interest in teacher response to content but frequently wanted every error corrected.

South African research in this field has indicated that a focus on correctness on form is very pronounced in many South African schools. Lindfors (1986) highlights the absence of real writing to be read and responded to in many South African schools. The isolated and meaningless writing tasks set by the teachers she studied did not require communication. The teachers concentrated primarily on form and correctness and this inhibited students' writing and discouraged them from taking risks. As one student put it, "I only write easy words that I can spell" (Lindfors, 1986:2).

A study of a dialogue journal writing process undertaken with six grade twelve students for my B. Ed dissertation (Crouch, 1994) supported this. The students became frustrated when I didn't correct the errors in their dialogue journals. They wanted me to correct their grammar in the hope that this would improve their English and satisfy the obsession with correctness instilled by their schooling. At the same time, it was found that the students dreaded the "red pen" and the discouragement that many corrections to their work brought. The focus in schooling on correctness of form did not encourage risk taking. The students in this study felt inhibited by the fact that they believed their English was "not good enough."

This fear of making mistakes is often transferred to the tertiary context. Mugoya (1991) found that fewer black students take notes in lectures and fewer participate in class because they are afraid to make mistakes in English (Mugoya, cited in Kapp, 1998: 29).

Paxton also found that a significant degree of emphasis is placed on the correction of errors in feedback (Paxton, 1993: 63). She speculates that it is often the case that “the tutor is unable to identify the problem in the writing and offer a solution to it. Commenting on the referencing and grammar is easier” (Paxton, 1993: 65). Parkerson also suggests that good grammar usage is often associated with good writing; therefore lecturers often place an emphasis on grammatical feedback. Students often expect this type of feedback too (2000: 125).

Bond argues that “A breakdown in surface language conventions does not necessarily signify a language incompetency to be remedied; it could be a symptom of that struggle both to make meaning and to articulate it within an unfamiliar discourse” (1993: 141). It is sometimes the case that students know the correct forms but “the complexity and the difficulties of dealing with subject content may result in failure to produce the correct language” (Paxton, 1993: 56). Paxton points out that many academics believe that the source of the “literacy problems” lies elsewhere – with the teaching in high schools or the students’ families” (1993: 57). Institutions such as the University of the Western Cape, while committed to the infusion model of academic development, find that English courses, focusing on academic language development, are necessary for a number of students (Bond, 1993: 150).

Raimes (1983) suggests that teachers should look at content as well as errors in structure and focus on linguistic features after ideas have been fully developed. Current textbooks encourage teachers to focus on content in the drafting stages and finally on form in the editing stage (Hyland, 1998:181). For a time this “common sense” approach became a convention until further research called it into question.

Ashwell (2000) found that the recommended pattern of providing content-focussed feedback followed by form-focussed feedback (Zamel, 1985) did not produce significantly different results from other feedback patterns. This supports Fathman and Whalley’s (1990) finding that giving content and form feedback simultaneously is just as effective as giving these types of feedback separately. Ferris et al (1997) reached a similar conclusion. Ashwell also found that “students may have relied heavily on form feedback and that content feedback had only a moderate effect on revision” (227). Ashwell concludes by highlighting the need for teachers to assist learners to understand

the purpose of the feedback and how the teacher intends it to be used. Fathman and Whalley concluded that attention should be paid to content and form and that feedback can positively affect rewriting (185). Ultimately the feedback process is too complex to be considered in terms of a simple meaning/form dichotomy.

2.3.4 The praise/criticism debate

The ineffectiveness of teacher response documented in the research has also been attributed to a lack of positive, encouraging comments in teacher feedback. There is general agreement that comments of praise or encouragement are important to developing writers (Connors and Lunsford, 1993; Ferris et al, 1995) but researchers found that positive comments are scarce (Connors and Lunsford, 1993).

Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) found that the teachers used very little praise in their feedback “but the data suggested that students – especially weak ones – are quite anxious to receive at least some feedback as to what they are doing right” (1990:175). Hyland points out that: “writing is an intensely personal activity, and students’ motivation and confidence in themselves as writers may be adversely affected by the feedback they receive” (1998: 279). She argues that a negative response may encourage high writing apprehension and lock the student into a cycle of failure, lack of motivation and further failure. Research at the University of the Witwatersrand has found that “wholly negative feedback seems to discourage students who tend to ignore the feedback and feel that their work is worthless” (Starfield, 2000:111).

Nevertheless, some studies found that praise is not more effective than criticism in facilitating student improvement (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1981) and that too much praise can confuse, mislead or demotivate students (Cardello and Corno, 1981 cited in Ferris et al, 1997:166). Nelson and Carson (1998) even found that some students preferred negative comments which reveal problem areas more clearly (cited in Ferris et al, 1997:167).

Positive reinforcement did not necessarily help the students in Hyland’s study as it was often perceived as insincere, unhelpful or condescending (1998:280). Hyland suggests

that fuller dialogue between teacher and students on feedback issues is needed, as individual students may have very different perceptions of what constitutes useful feedback. Hyland concludes by saying that:

Written feedback from teachers can play a significant, if complex, role in students' writing development. A better understanding of both the positive and negative aspects of teacher written feedback is necessary if writing teachers are to exploit its potential most effectively (1998:281).

The praise/criticism dichotomy also does not provide the answers as to why feedback is often ineffective.

2.3.5 The role of the writing teacher

Another key aspect of research in the field of teacher written feedback is in the area of the teacher's perceived role in the classroom and the persona of the writing teacher. In 1982, Knoblauch and Brannon highlighted ways in which writer/reader relationships are inverted in the classroom and how this diminishes both student choice and authority over his/her text and motivation to write. They explain that:

Usually, when we read a text, we assume that its author intended to convey some meaning and made the choices most likely to convey the meaning effectively . . . We read with interest and attention because we assume that the writer has authority. When we consider how writing is taught, however, this normal and dynamic connection between a writer's authority and the quality of a reader's attention is altered because of the peculiar relationship between teacher and student (1982:158).

In the classroom, the teacher assumes primary control of the choices, in this way "appropriating the text" (Zamel, 1985: 81). Moreover, the teacher usually decides what the writing will be about, what form it will take, and the criteria for assessment. This often results in a diminishing of students' commitment to communicate their ideas and a reduction of interest and motivation. Muncie (2000) argues that because teachers occupy the roles of 'expert' and 'evaluator', learners have a much reduced level of choice in deciding whether or not to use that feedback. The subsequent lack of critical involvement with the feedback by the student means that there is less chance of it becoming

internalised and having an effect beyond the immediate piece of work (47). Knoblauch and Brannon argue that the motivation to write is created when students have the opportunity to accomplish their own goals and control their own choices (1982:159). For this reason, work is being done on methods to facilitate self-monitoring and learner autonomy (see 2.3.9).

Leki (1990) proposes that the role of the writing teacher is “schizophrenic, split into three incompatible personas: teacher as real reader (i.e. audience), teacher as coach, and teacher as evaluator” (59). These roles conflict with one another and the unequal power relations in the classroom, together with the expectations of the students, often make the “teacher as audience” role untenable. In addition, there is the awkward fact that having collaborated with a student on a text in a process writing classroom, teachers are in most cases required to judge that text, regarding it as a product, and assign it a grade.

Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) found that teachers often have a mindset that certain students have certain types of problems that need to be commented on and that a certain bias creeps into teachers’ decisions about how to comment and what to comment on (172). Connors and Lunsford (1988) also found that teachers tend to return to particular well-worn phrases, focusing primarily on the two areas of supporting details and overall paper organisation. They found that few teachers discussed issues of purpose or audience. Only 8% of comments in their study “dealt with writer’s work as a developing system” (213) and there was a lack of longitudinal commentary. There was a related tendency to isolate errors and problems and correct individually rather than analyse error patterns. The tone of comments tended to be “predominantly formalist and implicitly authoritarian” (215) and the commentary tended to be grade driven. These findings support those of Sommers (1988) who suggests that the teacher’s purpose should be to provide comments that will facilitate revision of the whole text at the level of ideas and meaning rather than a mechanical error correction procedure.

2.3.6 The impact of the process approach on feedback

Changing ideas about the purpose of teacher commentary had their roots in a new focus on the communicative aspects of writing and an emphasis on the writing process, using a

multiple draft approach in writing classrooms (see 2.2.3). The classroom context and the way writing is taught affect how students perceive the purpose of revising. As Conrad and Goldstein point out, a classroom focused on sentence-level concerns reinforces students' traditional view of revising and leads to sentence-level revisions (1999: 150). Knoblauch and Brannon (1983) suggest that feedback should focus not on how a student text measures up to some ideal text but on how what the writer intended to say measures up to what has actually been communicated by the text. The focus should therefore be on a writer's choices and communicative goals and how these have been realised in the text. Multiple-draft tasks provide the opportunity for this type of discussion. The focus is on revision, so the writer has more control. The teacher's role is to serve as a sounding-board. Writers and readers need to exchange information about intention and effect in order to negotiate ways of realising their intentions. Students are then evaluated in terms of "communicative effectiveness" rather than with fixed preconceptions about form and content.

Researchers began to discover that teacher intervention in a process writing paradigm could be positive. Ziv's 1984 research shows that when the teacher intervenes as the student is writing and revising, the final product shows improvement over the intermediate drafts (cited in Leki, 1990: 64). Researchers suggested methods which would support the approach, such as sequencing writing so that each assignment in a term is related to an ongoing project or engaging students in dialogue on their intentions. Knoblauch and Brannon suggested that students write an analysis of their work as a basis for discussion (1983: 164). Students might alternatively answer questions on their work and intentions. A new approach to the teaching of writing necessitates new thinking about feedback and assessment practices. Portfolio assessment is a natural progression of these ideas.

Portfolios contain samples of a variety of pieces of work done by a student over a period of time, often selected by the student. It is representative of student progress over time. This practice "encourages students to take greater responsibility for their writing and encourages discussion between teachers and learners over assessment criteria for the portfolio" (Starfield, 2000: 115).

By the 1990s, the process approach, in various guises, was being practised in many writing classrooms but had not eliminated the problems. The difficulty of providing feedback remains an issue as writing instructors are often uncertain of the best way to provide feedback (Leki, 1990, Paulus, 1999). In contrast to the findings of the 1980s, researchers in the 1990s found more positive student attitudes to teacher feedback (Ferris et al, 1995; Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1996). Conrad and Goldstein (1999) conclude that “students overwhelmingly report valuing teacher comments and finding them helpful for improving their writing” (148). A possible explanation for this is that as teachers begin to more clearly justify and explain the rationale behind the process-approach, students are able to better understand and respond to feedback. This change in ethos is possibly also facilitated by changes in educational contexts as a whole and more egalitarian power relations in the classroom (Paulus, 1999).

Paulus found that meaningful teacher feedback in a multiple-draft process did result in improvements in students essays in a L2 classroom and that students prioritised instructor feedback over other forms of feedback. However, as Hyland points out, “although students themselves are so positive about written feedback and appear to value comments and corrections on all aspects of their texts, the contribution of such feedback to students’ development is still unclear” (1998:257).

2.3.7 Individual student factors

Given the positive attitudes to feedback that had been discovered, researchers began to explore individual student factors and student responses to feedback. Researchers have found different individual responses. Leki found that many L1 students may not read the feedback, merely looking at the grade and discarding the rest. Often students do not understand the comments, or if they do, they do not know how to respond. Additionally, students may correct work without understanding the underlying principles. Some evidence of hostility was also perceived. Leki found that students may not want to submit papers to scrutiny and resent teacher’s intervention. Some students expressed “hostility at the idea that someone else had the right to put a grade on their thoughts” (1990: 62).

Student expectations are a key area of research. Researchers frequently find a “mismatch” between the type of feedback that students expect and the type of feedback that they are actually given (Leki, 1991, Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990). The reason for this is often rooted in classroom practice, because teacher and learner often do not share a frame of reference for understanding the nature of the writing process or the purpose of the feedback (Sperling and Freedman, 1987 and Paxton, 1994). Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) found that both L1 and L2 students seem to be limited in their range of strategies for dealing with teacher feedback, even in situations where the feedback is understood by the students (156). This points to the necessity of establishing a “contextual framework” with the students in a writing class and referring back to it frequently.

Hyland (1998) highlights the student perspective. Her study found that the use of teacher written feedback “varies due to individual differences in needs and student approaches to writing. Attitudes also appear to be affected by the different experiences students bring with them to the classroom setting” (255). In general, she found the students tried to use most of the usable feedback when revising their drafts. The students not only said that they valued feedback, but demonstrated this through their actions in response to it. She found that teacher feedback still remained an important influence on student revision. However, the extent of that role varied from student to student. Hyland found striking differences in the usable feedback received by the two students in her study.

Students’ self-image, motivation and abilities as writers are key individual factors to take into account. MacDonald found that poor writers tend to discredit teacher’s critical comments in order to maintain a more positive self-image (1991, cited in Conrad and Goldstein, 1999:150) and Sitko found that more able writers were more accepting of teachers’ feedback. (1989, cited in Conrad and Goldstein, 1999). Ferris et al also noted differences in students’ responses to feedback according to their ability levels (1997).

Norton Peirce argues in favour of a concept of investment rather than motivation, which “conceives of the learner not as ahistorical and unidimensional, but as having a complex social history and multiple desires” (1995: 9). She points out that learners are often constrained by inequitable power relations in the environment in which they find themselves. Individual identity and investment in a learning process must be understood in the context of the larger social structure in which they live.

Topic knowledge is another individual student factor which can influence student response to teacher feedback. Conrad and Goldstein cite studies by Ackerman, 1990; Cheskie and Hiebert, 1987; Kearns, 1990; Scardamalia& Bereiter, 1987; Tedick, 1990, which found that writers produce better papers when they have greater knowledge of content regardless of level, age, draft or revision (Conrad and Goldstein, 1999:150).

Another crucial variable can be the type of problem that students are asked to revise.

Conrad and Goldstein (1999) found that

The crucial variable that influenced the effectiveness of revisions was the type of problem students were asked to revise. . . If the problem to be revised focused on explanation, explicitness or analysis, the resulting revisions were almost never successful (160).

Their study also advocates moving beyond the characteristics of the feedback and considering the individual student writers and the contextual factors that might account for their responses to the feedback. Misinterpretation of teacher comments, amount of content knowledge, effect of strongly-held beliefs, influence of classroom instruction, level of self-motivation and pressures of other commitments are identified as key individual factors. Conrad and Goldstein conclude that their “data paints a complicated picture of many variables that interact as students respond to teacher feedback and revise their papers” (1999:172).

Another set of key issues in the field concerns whether the students studied are mother-tongue (L1) or non-mother-tongue speakers of English (L2). As Leki points out, “most would agree that the expectations, goals and past writing experiences of L2 students are different from those of native speakers, yet unfortunately, most of the research on responding to student writing deals with native speakers (1990:58). She argues that L2 students require more intervention, because their experience with the English language is more limited (59).

Conrad and Goldstein’s research reveals the following patterns: ESL students revise most successfully after comments that are phrased as requests, regardless of their syntactic form but are less successful when responding to comments in question form. Comments

that request specific information are effective. ESL students' revisions are less successful when the teacher's comment asks students to deal with problems in logic or argument or when the teacher asks for further information (Ferris et al 1997, cited in Conrad and Goldstein, 1999:149). Native speakers, on the other hand, are more successful in revising when explicit cues and strategies for revision are given (Ziv, 1982, 1984; cited in Conrad and Goldstein, 1999: 149).

In the L2 classroom, researchers have found that despite a move away from focus on error to content and communication, feedback on writing is still characterised by a focus on form rather than content. Despite this, the errors tend to persist (Robb et al, 1986). However, it has been found that specific feedback on grammatical error has a greater effect on the improvement of grammatical accuracy than general feedback on content has on the improvement of content" (Fathman and Whalley, 1990:186). Fathman and Whalley also conclude in their 1990 study that "general prescription by the teacher may be especially helpful for L2 learners if it gives encouragement, but allows the student flexibility in determining where and how revisions in content should be made" (1990: 186).

2.3.8 Recent trends

2.3.8.1 Pre-text and real-time feedback

More recent studies tend to focus on facilitating long-term improvement in learners' writing and development. Ana Frankenberg-Garcia's 1999 study grows out of the concern that while there is evidence that feedback on student drafts may help them to improve successive drafts, there is little evidence of long-term improvement in writing skills. She argues that providing students with pre-text feedback helps to overcome some of the limitations of written feedback on drafts. She suggests providing help at moment of decisions and avoiding the problem of students using reduction strategies to avoid problems in writing. Students often abandon ideas because they cannot put them down in writing. She also addresses the time-delay problem with feedback and proposes that "the best moment for responding to student writing is before any draft is completed; 'real-time' feedback at the moment when they are struggling to put ideas down (101). The

practical implementation of this takes the form of writing workshops with teacher as facilitator. Problems of time and class size are practical concerns which need to be considered when implementing this approach

2.3.8.2 Self-monitoring and learner autonomy

Recent developments highlight the need to work towards long-term writing improvement, the acquisition of academic literacy and giving students more autonomy when working with their own texts (Cresswell, 2000 and Muncie, 2000). Muncie argues that the use of feedback to improve drafts is problematic because this often leads to a lack of critical processing and evaluation of the feedback. He suggests that “feedback can only be truly effective in the development of writing skills if the learners are encouraged and able to analyse and evaluate it themselves” (52). This method for giving learners control over the initiation of feedback includes encouraging students to annotate their own texts with doubts and questions and then interacting with the students to discuss these. This allows learners more autonomy in working with their own texts and enables teachers to be more aware of and responsive to the needs of individual students. Learners might also be offered a range of feedback options and peer review can also be used.

There are problems in self-monitoring: for example, students may not have developed the ability to articulate their concerns, and they may choose to focus overwhelmingly on language issues at the expense of the more global issues of argument and organisation. However, through raising awareness of the writing process, demonstrating methods for annotation of texts, and evaluating annotations with students, the writing process can be made more interactive. Ashwell (2000) also concludes that future efforts should focus on enabling students to “provide feedback for themselves” (240).

2.3.9 Effective feedback

There is agreement in the research that certain types of feedback are useful. Paulus notes that specific, idea-based, meaning-level feedback in multiple-draft context can be effective in promoting student revision. It would seem that longer, text-specific comments and cues rather than correction can lead to improvement (Paulus, 1999: 283).

Conrad and Goldstein (1999) found that students overwhelmingly report valuing teacher comments and finding them valuable for improving their writing, preferring longer comments, especially those that explain specific problems and make specific suggestions. (175). Students report finding short, general comments and comments questioning content more difficult to use. Ferris et al (1997) noted that most revisions which could be linked to written teacher feedback resulted in text improvement. Her results also suggested that notes in the margin, requests for clarification, and comments on grammar led to the most substantive revision. Hyland points out that the study by Ferris et al (1997) did not, however, consider the impact of student differences in terms of personality, culture or ability (1998:257).

2.3.10 The role of re-writing

Several key studies have found that re-writing facilitates improvement but teacher intervention does not play an important role (Fathman & Whalley 1990; Polio et al, 1998; Robb et al 1986). Fathman and Whalley gave different kinds of feedback to different groups of students and found that all groups significantly improved the content of their rewrites irrespective of the kind of feedback given by the teacher. A majority of students receiving no feedback from the teacher increased their scores in grammar and content just by rewriting their compositions (1990:183). “This suggests that rewriting is worthwhile and teacher intervention is not always necessary” (1990: 186).

Current research is unanimous in advocating greater choices for students, greater learner autonomy, the teaching of techniques for responding to feedback and greater transparency about the aims of the writing classroom. Methods for achieving these goals are now being explored. Feedback is still seen to be important, as is research into feedback because, as Ferris et al point out:

Teacher response to student writing is important at all levels and in all contexts of instruction. However, responding effectively to student writing is a skill which, according to previous research, can elude even experienced teachers (1997:179).

2.3.11 The South African Context

There has been significant research carried out in the South African context which is relevant to this study. The first of these to be discussed in this paper, conducted by Greenbaum (2001), comprises an analysis and evaluation of the feedback comments on first year legal writing assignments by fourth year tutors at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The study assesses the extent to which the feedback comments assist the students in developing their academic writing skills. The number, type and accuracy of the comments is analysed and the tone and quality of responses evaluated. Descriptive, qualitative interpretation is applied and the conclusion is that the provision of feedback on written assignments is a worthwhile practice but that modifications to tutor training and closer supervision/monitoring procedures would enhance the tutors' understanding of the process.

Another study by Paxton (1994) looks at feedback in a multi-faceted way. The written feedback that postgraduate tutors provide on the essays of first year anthropology students is examined. Paxton finds that although written feedback can be a valuable tool in the teaching of academic discourse, "communication often breaks down because tutors and students do not share a common language for talking about academic discourse and because students may not have understood the requirements of the task" (80). Responses to the students in the lowest mark category and written by L2 students were often inadequate. Tutors were not well equipped to respond to these essays. Paxton also advocates tutor training that would enable them to engage meaningfully with the students' essays. Students also need to be better prepared to understand the requirements of the task, the criteria for assessment and the purpose of the feedback.

Quinn (1999), working with the English Language for Academic Purposes (ELAP) course at Rhodes University, uses Halliday's (1985) definitions of both context of culture and context of situation to examine the feedback on the essays of seven first year students. Her qualitative case study uses these definitions of context to examine how the drafting-responding process contributes to the acquisition of academic literacy for these students. She finds that the drafting-responding process can help students to learn to "speak our language" but that the task of acquiring academic literacy is a very difficult one, with which students need more help. It became clear that lecturers expect a lot from students

but often do not respond to student writing in ways that would make the “rules and conventions” of academic writing more explicit (Quinn, 2000: 132).

2.4 Research into reading

In the same way that the process approach to writing has transformed our understanding of how texts are created, schema theories (Carrell, 1998; Gagne and Glaser, 1987) and interactive theories (Rumelhart, 1985; Goodman, 1981) of reading have changed our understanding of reading. Our concept of reading has changed from the idea of a static, mechanical process of decoding messages that have been encoded in a symbolic form to that of a dynamic process in which a reader creates meaning by interacting with a text, bringing his or her own frame of reference to bear on the reading process. The reader is not passive, but an active participant in a process, constructing meaning according to his or her schema.

As a result of these insights, our understanding of what it means for a lecturer to “read” a student’s text has changed significantly. Different teachers may respond very differently to the same student text, because they have constructed meaning differently based on their different personal knowledge and experience. It is important that teachers are aware of this process when reading texts:

Once we accept the necessity of “misreading”, as the post-structuralists use the term, we tend to be less sure of the objectivity of our reading and more ready to grant to the student possible intentions or insights not yet present on the page. Even more important, we respond with questions rather than with judgement (or invective!), since our aim is to urge the student back into the ‘chaotic process of textuality’ (that is the flux of ideas behind the writing), where revision occurs (White, 1984: 191).

Paxton argues that teachers, belonging to a particular “interpretive community”, tend to approach student texts with certain preconceived notions and assumptions, often looking for errors in student work rather than reading for meaning (Paxton, 1994:17). For this reason, teachers need to be more aware of the social and cultural contexts (Halliday, 1989, Kress, 1992) in which student texts are produced when reading and responding to student texts.

Ivanic, writing about the linguistic choices students make, draws our attention to the impact that exposure to different discourses in social and cultural contexts will have on student writing:

In terms of written communication, writers' discursial choices – and hence, self-representation – will be constrained partly by the discourses to which they have had access and partly by what they anticipate will create a good impression in the mind of the reader, especially if the readers exert any power over the writer, as they do over students writing academic assignments (1998: 99).

The power differential between the student writer and the lecturer reader in academic contexts is a factor that, according to Ivanic, constrains student writing to a significant degree. She explains that:

Students writing academic essays have to constantly bear in mind the interpretive practices of the reader. . . . Writers construct an image of themselves in the light of their estimates of their expected reader's interpretive practices, and of the various power asymmetries between them (1988: 102).

An awareness of the dynamic process of reading, the impact of the reader's own frame of reference on the process and the impact of the power differential in the relationship, would all help the reader of student texts to move away from what Paxton, (1994:80) quoting Dr Stephen North, refers to as "English teacher reading", where teachers read student writing superficially, correcting errors, to a deeper level of reading, focusing on the meaning of the text and what the student is struggling to say.

Chapter Three: Research Theory and Methods

3.1 Central Research Question

The central research question for this study is:

How effective is the drafting-responding process used in the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in developing the academic literacy of first year students?

Further questions emerging from the central question include:

- a) What were the students' attitudes towards the feedback in the draft-response-redraft process used to write this essay?
- b) What were the students' expectations about the purpose and value of the feedback?
- c) Were there individual differences in the way that students responded to and used the written feedback and, if so, what might have accounted for these?
- d) What types of revisions were made to their writing by the students, and which of these revisions could be linked to the written feedback?
(based on a system developed by Hyland, 1998)
- e) To what extent did the draft-response-redraft process contribute to the development of academic literacy for this group of students?

Ultimately, it would be interesting to know to what extent students were able to integrate changes made in this essay into their long term development of academic writing skills, but that question is beyond the scope of this study.

3.2 Research paradigm

Paradigms are “systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions” (Durrheim, 1999:36) The researcher’s philosophy of the nature of reality and understanding of the nature of knowledge result in principles that fundamentally influence the purpose of the research, how it is framed, how data is gathered and how the findings are interpreted. This study is located within a naturalistic or post-positivist paradigm. However, the positivist paradigm will be briefly discussed as a counterpoint to this.

3.2.1 The positivist paradigm

Much of the current-traditional Western academic tradition is based on a scientific frame of reference (see also the current-traditional paradigm discussed in chapter 2.1.3) in which reality is seen to exist “out there” to be empirically discovered, quantified, measured, analysed and understood by research. In this paradigm, research is regarded as neutral and objectivity is highly prized. The object of research is to prove the validity of theories or observations by isolating variables and replicating studies so that generalisations can be made. Research techniques are used to control the research context and rival hypotheses are eliminated. Knowledge is understood to be “absolute, predictable and generalisable” (Quinn, 1999:40) and truth something which exists external to human beings to be “discovered”. It is a paradigm seeking “accurate description and causal explanation” (Durrheim, 1999:35). It is assumed that value-free research is possible and questions are seldom asked about the research process; the focus is rather on methods and outcomes (Usher, 1995, cited in Quinn, 1999: 41).

3.2.2 The naturalistic paradigm

In the naturalistic paradigm, the research process is central and is framed by the assumptions about knowledge, reality and values found in this frame of reference. Van Manen argues that:

. . . It is the paradigm or tradition within which the research question is framed and which guides the selection of research objectives, and consequent data-gathering and

analysis techniques. It thus comprises “the fundamental assumptions” about “the general orientation to life, the view of knowledge, and the sense of what it means to be human” that direct the particular mode or method of inquiry in a study (cited in Quinn, 1999: 39).

Proponents of the naturalistic paradigm, into which category this study falls, argue that reality is not a single tangible entity which exists “out there” but that it is a construction by individuals who perceive it in particular ways. In this way, multiple realities exist. In research, the study is always influenced by the researcher, because the “knower and the known are interactive and inseparable” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 37). In this paradigm, generalisations are not possible, because what is “known” is based on time- and context-bound hypotheses. The notion of what is “factual” is questioned at a fundamental level, as is the notion of objectivity. It is argued that objectivity is never truly possible. Lincoln and Guba, for example, argue that “all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects” (1985: 37). The paradigm argues that all inquiry is value-bound, influenced by, among other things, the role of the researcher, the choice of paradigm that guides the inquiry, the substantive theory used to design the research, and the context of the research. Emphasis is placed on “processes and meanings” rather than the focus on “measurement” found in positivist research (Quinn, 1999: 44). The naturalistic paradigm gives rise to an interpretivist orientation to research.

3.2.2.1 The interpretivist (hermeneutic, constructivist) orientation to research

This orientation allows for multiple versions of reality. Knowledge is seen to be socially constructed, by people with individual perceptions of reality. For this reason, findings from research need to be understood in the context in which they emerge and the values and beliefs of the researcher need to be made explicit. “Researchers in this orientation are not concerned with generalisation, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination” (Usher, 1996, cited in Quinn, 1999: 41). The aim of research is to understand the rich complexity of a particular phenomenon in a specific context and the meanings attributed to it by the participants rather than being able to generalise from or replicate research.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985: 39-43), this orientation has significant implications for research because specific principles emerge from it. The techniques of sampling, data collection, interpretation and the context for the study outlined below result in a coherent research design because they fit with the logic of the interpretive paradigm and the purpose of the research.

3.3 Principles for research that emerge from the naturalistic paradigm

3.3.1 Grounded theory

Lincoln and Guba argue that grounded theory should inform the research: the guiding theory should “emerge from (be grounded in) the data because no a priori theory could possibly encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered . . . and because grounded theory is more likely to be responsive to contextual values” (1985: 41). There is some debate on this point because while Lincoln and Guba would advocate a case study method for reporting, some case study theorists, for example, Yin would argue in favour of constructing a preliminary theory prior to the collection of data as means of enhancing the external validity of the study and to provide guidance for the research design (Yin, 2003:28).

It would seem that both approaches are valid within the post-positivist paradigm and the key factor seems to be to allow a degree of flexibility in the study, responding to the data while always referring back to research questions (section 3.1) and theoretical foundations of the study (see chapter two).

It follows that an inductive approach is most appropriate in this methodological paradigm, “beginning with an immersion in the natural setting, describing events as accurately as possible, as they occur or have occurred, and slowly but surely building . . . a hypothesis and ultimately a theory that will make sense of the observations” (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 273). Section 3.4 describes how this theory is interpreted in a research design.

3.3.2 Research context

The research is carried out in its natural setting, in order to understand the phenomenon within its context. “Naturalistic ontology suggests that realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, nor can they be fragmented for separate study of the parts” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 39). Babbie and Mouton use the metaphor of the stage to explain that “research is conducted in the natural setting of social actors” (2001:270). In this study, the written feedback given to students on their essays is studied as it occurs in the context of the academic course. The researcher does not intervene in the process in any way.

3.3.3 The role of the researcher

In the context of this paradigm, the researcher is regarded as the primary data-gathering instrument, with the awareness that “the very act of observation influences what is seen” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:39). The actor’s perspective (the “insider” or “emic” view) is emphasised (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 270). Further to this, the utilisation of tacit (intuitive, felt) knowledge is encouraged because it is argued that the nuances of multiple realities can only be fully appreciated using this information.

3.3.4 Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods are preferred in this paradigm. It is believed that they are more adaptable to dealing with multiple realities because

such methods expose more directly the nature of the transaction between investigator and respondent (or object) and hence make easier an assessment of the extent to which the phenomenon is described in terms of (is biased by) the investigator’s own posture; and because qualitative methods are more sensitive to and adaptable to the many mutually shaping influences and value patterns that may be encountered (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 40).

Qualitative methods allow researchers to study things in their natural context, taking into account the meanings ascribed to events by the participants. Berg (1998) says that qualitative research “refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics,

metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things” whereas quantitative research “refers to counts and measures of things” (cited in Quinn, 1999:44).

According to the qualitative view, research is an iterative process, which allows for a flexible, non-sequential approach (Durrheim, 1999:31). Practical considerations may require the researcher to adapt the research plan as the process unfolds and as new data emerges. In this way the research can be truly exploratory. It does require, however, that the researcher “continually reflect on the research process, making decisions that will refine and develop the research design to ensure valid conclusions” (1999: 33).

3.3.5 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is usually chosen in order to increase the range of data. “Purposive sampling can be pursued in ways that will maximise the investigator’s ability to devise grounded theory that takes adequate account of local conditions, local mutual shapings and local values” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:40). Naturalistic research tends to use focus-determined boundaries which are based on factors which emerge from the research rather than those pre-determined by the researcher. Section 3.6 discusses the sample used for this study.

3.3.6 Data analysis

When the findings of a naturalistic study are analysed, inductive data analysis is preferred because “it is more likely to identify multiple realities and to make the investigator-respondent interaction more explicit” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 40). Ideographic interpretations, based on the particulars of a case are appropriate, rather than generalisation and the primary aim is to provide “thick description”, in order to understand events in terms of the actors’ beliefs, history and context (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:272). The application of these principles to this study is discussed in section 3.8.

3.3.7 Methods to enhance reliability

3.3.7.1 Negotiated outcomes

In naturalistic research, meanings and interpretations placed on a study are often negotiated with the respondents because the inquiry outcomes “depend on the interaction between the knower and the known” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 41). Where possible in this study, the findings are discussed with the respondents. For example, the findings of the questionnaire were discussed with the focus group.

3.3.7.2 Peer review

The research undertaken for this study has been discussed with and reviewed by colleagues at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the University of Cape Town.

3.3.7.3 Triangulation

Triangulation occurs when data from multiple sources of evidence converges in a triangulating fashion. The advantage of the development of converging lines of enquiry is that a finding can be said to be more accurate when based on several sources (Yin, 2003: 97). A researcher may choose triangulation of data sources, of findings of different evaluators, of perspectives to the same data or of methods. In this case, the combination of different methods in the same study will be used to provide as many different perspectives on the data as possible. The data will be collected through a focus group, interviews, questionnaires, collection and analysis of texts and observation. The teachers, the students, and the researcher provide different sources of data and different perspectives.

3.3.7.4 The development of a database

Detailed records are kept of all interactions, interviews and documents. This would enable a colleague or interested party to follow an audit trail and verify the findings of the study.

3.3.7.5 Criteria for trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define good qualitative research in terms of the notion of trustworthiness. In addition, a study should demonstrate credibility and a degree of transferability: the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents (Lincoln and Guba, cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 277). The “rich, detailed description of specifics” provided by the researcher should be sufficiently detailed and precise to allow the reader to assess transferability and trustworthiness. At the same time, it is necessary to control for sources of error in the study. Babbie and Mouton explain that “ultimately, objectivity (in a qualitative study) consists less of ‘controlling for extraneous variables’ and more of generating truthful and credible intersubjectivity” (2001:273). To this end, gaining trust and building rapport with the subjects of the study are important elements.

3.3.8 Case study reporting mode

A case study reporting mode is often preferred in this paradigm because it is more adapted to a description of multiple realities encountered at a given site and it is able to include aspects such as the contextual factors that are found and interactions that occur. (Lincoln and Guba: 40) This mode lends itself well to the full description required in a naturalistic study. The use of this reporting mode and methodology is discussed in more detail in section 3.5.

3.3.9 Tentative application

Naturalistic enquiry is likely to be tentative about making broad application of the findings because they tend to be context specific. The main concern is to understand social action in terms of its specific context rather than trying to generalise to some theoretical population (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 272).

3.4 Research design

It can be seen that these principles are interdependent and work together to create a coherent research design. This study clearly falls into a naturalistic, qualitative category of research as the design contains the above key features and aims to better understand the drafting-responding process and the written feedback in its natural context, with as little intervention in the process as possible.

The research design for this study takes into account the complex nature of the draft-response-redraft process used to teach academic writing and the multifaceted interactions between student, lecturer, and text. To this end, a qualitative methodology, based on multiple-case studies has been selected.

3.5 Case studies

A case study methodology will be used, given the context specific nature of the data and the fact that the study is “an intensive investigation of a single unit” (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 281). Yin (2003) explains that:

In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. This allows for a descriptive and interpretive approach (1).

Case study methodology recognises the “complexity and embeddedness of social truths” (Adelman, 1980, cited in Quinn, 199:45) and enables us to understand what occurs in a particular educational, social and cultural context. It is usually not possible to generalise from a case study but case studies contribute to our understanding of the complexity of phenomena and add to the body of research on a particular subject. It is useful to compare the findings of case studies in order to build knowledge in an area. The case study method allows for the inclusion of a variety of evidence as well as the identification and inclusion of contextual variables. As Yin explains,

The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points (2003:14).


He further notes that case studies can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence (2003:15). This study, although primarily a qualitative one, working within an interpretive paradigm, will include certain quantitative methods within this context. In this study, the tools and techniques of case study allow the researcher to explore the responses of the students to the drafting-responding process in a detailed way. This information can have an application in the particular context of this course at this university and may shed light on the experiences of students in similar courses in other South African Universities.

3.6 The sample

Purposive sampling has been used in this study. As Babbie and Mouton explain:

In contrast to random sampling that is used in quantitative studies, qualitative research seeks to maximise the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about that context, by purposely selecting locations and informants that differ from one another (2001: 277).

In this study, a group of twelve student texts are studied in the context of the information gained from the questionnaire administered to the whole class and the more specific information gathered from the focus group. The intention is to observe a smaller group of cases in detail and to build up an understanding of the themes that emerge in context.

 The participants are first year students in the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Many are also students in the media programme, for whom *Media 130: Writing and the Media* is a compulsory module. There are some students, however, who use this course to “make up” the necessary number of modules in their degree. The students include both native speakers of English and speakers of English as a second or third language. Some come from highly privileged educational backgrounds and others from historically disadvantaged, township or rural schools.

In order to obtain a range of students and a sample from each lecturer (four lecturer/tutors marked essays for the course), the researcher requested that each lecturer provide one essay with a high mark, one with an average mark (in the 50 – 65% range) and one with a

low mark (fail or close to fail). Each lecturer also provided at least one essay from a student who spoke English as a second or third language. In this way a pseudo-random sample was obtained.

3.7 Collection of data

3.7.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were administered to the students and lecturers in the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course. The student questionnaire uses a forced-response format that can be quickly and easily analysed for trends in the class as a whole. The lecturer questionnaire is more open-ended. It is important that the students regard the researcher as a neutral observer, not someone connected to the course. If the students feel that their course results could be affected by their responses, it could affect the level of honesty that they are prepared to risk. For this reason, the researcher was introduced to the class as a masters student. The questionnaire was formulated in consultation with the Quality Promotion Unit at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. A closed response format was used for ease of analysis and the results computed. Questions were designed to cross-check student responses for inconsistencies.

3.7.2 Focus group

An initial focus group was used as an exploratory study to provide more detail on the overview obtained by means of the questionnaire. This group consisted primarily of a group of volunteers although the researcher was careful to include a cross-section of age, gender and mother tongue in the group. The questions asked were similar to those in the questionnaire and included a discussion of the findings from the questionnaire. This information lays the foundation for the later case study interviews, which are more detailed and specific. The focus group was used to determine the focus points for the case study interviews.

3.7.3 The writing sample

With the permission of lecturers and the twelve students selected for the study, copies were collected of their essay drafts, final essays and all written feedback from the lecturers, including scoring sheets, written comments and any marks/grades that were available. There was a noted inconsistency in the approach of the teaching staff, with some providing a mark for the draft and others not doing so. The drafts contained handwritten feedback including marginal comments, end notes and a scoring sheet. All the feedback obtained was generated by the course; none was designed specifically for this study and no interventions were made by the researcher. Feedback varied according to the individual teacher. All four used the standard marking criteria sheet provided for the course (see appendix 5) but were also free to devise their own feedback methods. The students and lecturers were aware of the researcher's general interest in the essays but had no detailed information that might have influenced the written interaction that was observed in the texts. In fact, the researcher had previously taught on this course but this had the advantage of providing an insider's perspective on some of the issues.

3.7.4 Interviews

Once a content analysis of the essays, drafts and feedback had been carried out, the twelve students studied were interviewed and their perceptions of specific instances of feedback and responses within the essay writing process were obtained and assessed.

3.8 Problems encountered

3.8.1 Interviewing

Interviewing is a problematic research methodology as the interviewer's approach, questions, assumptions and physical presence may influence the data in powerful ways, introducing bias into the research. The respondent's perceptions of the interviewer's race, gender, class and social status may also influence the responses. The interviews reflect a complex human interaction and there will be a degree of bias as a result. The naturalistic research paradigm adopted for this study regards these dynamics as unavoidable aspects

of the research, and includes these in the description of the data in a holistic way, wherever possible.

3.8.2 Subjectivity

In case study research, the researcher “is always in a powerful position to shape meaning and values” (Paxton, 1994: 40). It is important that wherever possible, the attitudes and beliefs of the researcher are made explicit so that their possible influence on the data may be assessed. In general, I was aware that I was in favour of using written feedback comments on students’ drafts and tending to look for positive evidence to support this. I was, however, also aware that my class, race, age and gender may have been a barrier to me fully understanding the student responses to feedback of those students from a different background to my own. It is also important to take into account the fact that the interviews were conducted in English, which is the second, or third language of many of the participants. This may also have hindered communication.

3.9 Analysis of data

3.9.1 Overview

Given that this study falls within the paradigm of naturalistic research, where context is seen to be important, qualitative data analysis has been employed to identify and categorise themes and relationships between themes. To this end, analysis is exploratory and inductive. This is especially true for the students’ and lecturers’ comments on questionnaires as well as the data from the interviews and essays. The forced-response aspect of the questionnaire, has however, been tabulated to provide an overview of trends and attitudes in the class as a whole. This provides a context for the more detailed responses in the focus group; the analysis of feedback on the texts and the case study interviews. A limited content analysis approach has also been used to classify the lecturers’ interventions and comments. The quantity, quality and nature of the feedback comments has been analysed in order to assess the extent to which the comments are understood and used by students to effect improvements. An attempt has been made to establish whether links can be made between improvements effected in the final essays

and the feedback provided. The analysis of the written data is then linked with the information emerging from the interviews.

3.9.2 Analysis of the written data

The analysis of the written data (drafts and final versions and related feedback) follows the system developed by Hyland (1998) in which the essays and drafts are compared and individual feedback points are identified and analysed. These are then linked to other data, such as interviews and observations to determine to what extent students have used the feedback and how effectively they have been able to do so.

Using this system, the written feedback provided is divided into feedback points. A “feedback point” is defined in the following way:

Each written intervention that focused on a different aspect of the text was considered as a separate “feedback point” (Hyland, 1998: 261).

Hyland points out that although some researchers consider error corrections separately from meaning related issues (Ferris et al, 1997), students in her study considered all interventions on their texts as feedback. The teachers also dealt with meaning and grammar issues at the same time when responding to student texts. These findings correspond with the information from both teachers and students for this study. I have therefore followed Hyland’s method, considering all feedback as feedback points, including “symbols and marks in the margins, underlining of problems and complete corrections, as well as more detailed comments and suggestions” (Hyland, 1998: 261).

There are a number of studies which distinguish between text based and surface level changes. Faigley and Witte (1981) developed a taxonomy to distinguish between the two types of changes. This was further developed by Paulus (1999), who found that the most common type of revision students made to their essays were meaning-preserving or surface level changes. However, students were able to make meaning-level changes as a result of peer and teacher feedback (281). Hyland explains that these systems

Suggest that worthwhile revision is that which focuses, like ‘good feedback,’ on the meaning aspects of texts, since the more revision focuses on meaning, the

greater the potential for the development of the writer. Surface level operations are seen as less valuable for the development of the writer and also less likely to result in a better text (261).

Hyland argues that Faigley and Witte's study is limited in terms of what it can tell us about the relationship between feedback and revision, the effects or purpose of revision or the importance of context. Hyland's research addresses these issues by looking at the nature and extent of the feedback and linking revisions to other forms of data such as interviews and observation.

In her study, teacher written feedback is classified as 'usable' feedback (that which has the potential to promote revision) or not usable (more general comments such as "good work"). The student revisions are also identified and usable feedback points are then cross-linked to the revisions to see the extent to which they were used by the students and the percentage of usable feedback points utilised by the students is calculated. This study will follow Hyland's method.

In this analysis, global comments and in-text comments are treated in the same way. Each new topic is regarded as a separate feedback point. Questions are also treated as feedback. Each question is a feedback point.

3.9.3 Analysis of the data from the interviews

The analysis of the data from the interviews is exploratory and inductive. This requires an immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important categories, themes and interrelationships. The extent to which this data follows the pattern of Hyland's study is assessed and points of convergence are discussed. Emerging themes which are specific to this study and which deviate from Hyland's findings are discussed as well as more detailed aspects of particularly interesting cases.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion of findings

4.1 Introduction

The use of a draft-response-redraft process to teach academic writing is a complex human interaction. An evaluation of this process requires an awareness of the many factors involved. These include contextual factors such as the socio-political context of the country as well as the institutional and classroom contexts. Within the classroom context, the amount of instructional input the students have received about process writing and the purpose and value of feedback are factors as well as the extent to which the lecturer input and relationship has facilitated an “apprenticeship” (Gee, 1990) into the academic discourse community. The extent to which the lecturer has provided scaffolding for academic writing skills, analysis of the essay topic and content mediation are also factors as well as the ability of individual lecturers to provide appropriate feedback; There are also a plethora of factors relating to individual students such as socio-political constraints, mother tongue, age, gender, school background, academic ability, relationship with the teacher, personality, motivation, previous experiences of writing drafts and receiving written feedback; individual essay interviews, the extent of peer feedback, reading ability; ability to make inferences; ability to apply information, individual need for feedback, assumptions about authority; attitudes to the English language and levels of confidence regarding the use of English to negotiate meaning in an academic context are all variables that need to be taken into account.

It is clear that there are too many variables to begin isolating any particular ones (as one might do in a quantitative study). The approach is therefore to use a naturalistic paradigm and qualitative methods to explore the richness and complexity of the data in this study, highlighting themes that emerge from the data. (see chapter three).

The draft-response-redraft process that is the focus of this study takes place in the context of the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* class of 2004, which is an academic development course with a Media focus. The course aims to develop the academic literacy skills of the students within the context of a media course (see chapter 1.4 for a discussion of the infusion model of academic development). The draft-response-redraft

process used for the core essay is seen as an important means of facilitating the development of academic writing skills. The feedback process is an opportunity for mediation of academic discourse to take place (see chapter 1.3).

The core research essay that is the subject of this study is written in the eighth week of the ten week course. A process genre approach is used (see chapter 2.2.6). The class receive input on the conventions of academic writing, the guidelines for assessment and the specific essay topic (see appendix 4). The students received an “editing checklist” (see appendix 3) to help them to understand the assessment criteria. The students write a draft on which they receive written feedback from the lecturers. Some lecturers provided a mark at this stage but this was not consistently practised. Students were able to arrange an individual essay conference if they required further feedback, on a voluntary basis. The students then write their final essay on which they receive further feedback and a mark.

The topic for this essay is censorship and requires students to consider whether individual liberty is more important than public good when discussing censorship (see appendix 4 for the full essay title). The students were required to do individual research on the topic and write 1200 words, using at least two case studies to support their argument.

The first step of this study was to use a questionnaire to obtain an overview of the students’ attitudes to the feedback-response process and their expectations about the purpose and value of the feedback.

4.2 Questionnaire findings

An initial questionnaire (see appendix 1 for the questionnaire and appendix 2 for the results of the questionnaire) was administered to the whole *Media 130: Writing and the Media* class with the aim of providing an overview of student attitudes towards the use of drafts for developing academic writing skills and to provide a context for the more detailed cases studies.

The questionnaire was drawn up in conjunction with the Quality Promotion Unit at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It was administered to the class after they had received their drafts back and made changes to their essays but before they had received their final essay results. The process of working on a draft was fresh in their minds but their responses were not influenced by their emotions about a final mark. A total of 93 students were registered for the course, 62 (67%) of whom answered this questionnaire.⁵

In the questionnaire, students were presented with positively phrased statements (with one or two exceptions) to which they could respond on a five-point scale. They could either **A. strongly disagree, B. disagree, C. be neutral, D. agree, or E. strongly agree**. For the purposes of analysis, and to gauge a mean response, each category was awarded a numerical value, i.e. 1 for strongly disagree, 5 for strongly agree. Categories A and B were considered to be negative responses, D and E positive ones.

The students were generally positive about the process of writing a draft essay and receiving feedback, with 82% responding positively to the statement “I found that the process of writing a draft essay and receiving feedback on it was helpful”. This is supported by a 90% negative response to the statement “I would have preferred not to have an opportunity to write a draft”. 75% of respondents believed that the comments received on their drafts were helpful and 61% felt that they could understand the comments made on the draft. In a similar vein, 69% felt that the comments made on the draft were valid. No students felt that the comments were threatening and only 5% felt that the comments were unfair. 5% admitted to not reading the comments at all and 10% felt overwhelmed by the feedback. Most students (64%) felt that they knew how to use the feedback they had received.

This clearly positive result on the subject of student attitudes to and feelings about feedback contradicts findings in the 1980s (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1983; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1983) which suggested that students did not feel positive about feedback. These findings support studies of the 1990s (Ferris et al, 1995; Conrad and Goldstein; Paulus 1999; Leki, 1990) which found that students generally respond well to the

⁵ The respondents are not individually numbered as the purpose of the survey was to obtain an overview of the attitudes within the class. The responses are anonymous, to encourage frank responses, so individual responses cannot be cross-referenced to the focus group or case studies at this stage of the study.

opportunity to receive feedback. This change in attitude may be linked to changes in educational approaches and power relations in the classroom, specifically the widespread implementation of the process approach to writing (see chapter 2.3.6). This change in student attitudes is a clearly documented trend (supported by this study) but it does not shed any light on how effective the drafting and responding process actually is in the development of academic writing skills or the acquisition of academic discourse.

The next section of the questionnaire deals with difficulties students experienced with writing their essay drafts. Students generally experienced difficulty with topic analysis, providing a coherent argument and providing support for the argument. About half the respondents experienced difficulty with introductions and conclusions. Students seemed to experience fewer difficulties with spelling, punctuation, grammar and academic vocabulary. This is interesting because lecturers tend to give feedback on the latter category of errors, because it is the easiest type of feedback to provide (Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Zamel, 1983). Assistance with topic analysis and argument is more difficult to provide.

Following on from this, the questionnaire asks students whether they felt that the feedback helped them with difficulties experienced. 45% of the students felt that the feedback had helped with topic analysis and developing an argument. Only 26% believed that the comments had helped them to substantiate their argument, with 51% feeling that this had not been achieved. Beliefs about feedback assistance with the writing of introductions and conclusions was also split with only 34% believing that the feedback had helped them with writing an introduction and 31% feeling that the comments had helped them to write a conclusion. Nevertheless, 60% believed that the feedback comments had enabled them to make structural changes to the essay (reorganisation of ideas, changes in argument or changes in content). About 30% of the students felt that the feedback had helped with spelling, grammar and punctuation and 54% believed that changes had been made to drafts in these areas as a result of feedback. It is impossible to draw any definite conclusions from these results but it is significant that 60% of the students believed that structural changes had been made as a result of the feedback, because research indicates that these are the more difficult changes to make when redrafting (Sommers, 1982; Fathman and Whalley, 1990).

The section of the questionnaire dealing with the students' opinions of the lecturers' comments provides clear results. 66% believed that the lecturers' comments provided a good balance of positive encouragement and critical comments. 62% believed that the comments were clear and could easily be understood. 58% believed that the comments helped them to understand what was expected. 65% believed that the comments were constructive. The corresponding questions, which check for consistency, have low figures. For example 10% felt the comments were confusing, and 5% felt that the comments were difficult to understand.

In terms of students' general perceptions of the process, 70% of the students felt that a positive relationship with the lecturer providing feedback on the essay was essential for the process to work effectively and only 25% felt that this relationship was not an important factor. When asked to choose one word to describe how they felt about the process, the majority chose positive descriptions. 32% chose "constructive", 42% chose "a positive learning experience" and 11% chose "worthwhile". Only 2% felt that it was "a waste of time" and 2% felt that the process was something they would rather not engage with. These results clearly support research findings that students perceive the draft-response-redraft process to be a positive one (Hyland, 1998; Paulus 1999, Conrad and Goldstein, 1999).

When asked to write about what aspects of the process were positive, several students commented on the opportunity to "see where I had gone wrong" and having the opportunity to re-consider the essay. Others talk about being given a "second chance" and "correcting mistakes". These comments seem to highlight the highly competitive nature of the academic discourse community and the fear that students experience about "going wrong". It would appear that the students believe that there is a "right" way to write an essay, which they need to discern and master. These comments indicate that the students felt anxious about errors. There was less concern expressed in these comments about developing their ideas and learning to express these effectively. This supports the arguments of Ivancic (1998) who suggests that the pressure of the academic environment does not allow students the opportunity to fully develop their ideas:

In the current climate of higher education, academic life is unremittingly competitive and discriminatory, in the sense of needing to discriminate among students by giving them different grades and ultimately dividing them into

different degree classes. In such a setting “protective practices” or “tact” on the part of tutors is probably rare. I think it is common for tutors to approach the task of reading students’ work with a sense that it is their duty to notice what they regard as inadequacies, however unconscious that sense may be. Tutors reading essays do not, on the whole, help students to give a good impression of themselves by overlooking slips in their “performance” (89).

At the same time, there were some students who appreciated the reader’s response and felt that the process helped them to understand what was expected of them in the context of an academic essay. For example, one student wrote: “being able to anticipate how the lecturer will respond to the final draft is useful.” Another student said: “the time when I was forced to rewrite it to hand it in I had to analyse the lecturer’s comments and reconsider and juggle aspects of my argument.” In a similar vein: “It helped me to understand what was expected of me. It helped me restructure my essay”. One student wrote about the effectiveness of the process in helping her to develop confidence in her academic voice. She wrote: “learning to construct my academic argument in a clear and precise manner. To be more forward and confident in my academic argument – rather than being tentative and unsure.”

One student wrote that when she went to see the lecturer, there was a problem with communication. She writes: “the lecturer was helpful but often assumed that I know too much.” This supports Paxton’s (1994: 80) argument that students and lecturers often do not share a common language for talking about academic discourse.

The last question asks the students how the write-response-rewrite process could be improved. A number of students felt that the process needed more time. One student simply said, “slower pace, more writing”, while others elaborated further, saying: “giving a larger period of time for lecturers to give more feedback. Give more than a few days to correct our draft before handing in the final essay.”

A related comment from a student asked for a greater focus on the process as well as more time. He said: “try not to be so rushed and pressured into getting it perfect – rather focus on the learning experience.” This also links to the previous section where it was noted that the concern with correctness often seems to overshadow the learning process.

A number of students highlighted the need for face-to-face interaction. One student wrote: “the process works well at the moment but maybe face-to-face feedback would be more constructive.” Another student requested “a tutorial whereby the marker and student can interact to make sure of what is what.” It should be noted that students were able to set up appointments to see lecturers on a voluntary basis. The logistics of providing individual essay interviews or conferences for every student, with class sizes of nearly one hundred and limited time in the semester are very complicated and would make this practice very difficult to implement. It became evident in the focus group that the students were aware of these practical problems (see chapter 4.3.2.5).

Several students highlighted the need for greater clarity on the requirements for academic essay writing, the need for further class time spent on essay preparation and the need for topic clarity:

- Elaboration of the comments and setting appointments with the lecturers if you are confused. Maybe a hand out on how to write an academic essay would help us understand exactly what is expected of us.
- I think that the topic could have been explained more clearly
- an example of an academic essay must be presented to the students
- The lecturers could explain in more detail before exactly what is expected of us.
- I think the topic should have been more thoroughly discussed and the lecturers should have clarified on how to go about writing the essay.
- It could be improved by giving a course on how to construct and formulate argumentative essay not just reading notes as we are first years and need to be taught constructively.
- more information should be given on the topic
- I think the topic should have been more thoroughly discussed and the lecturers should have clarified on how to go about writing the essay.

It needs to be noted here that the lecturers felt that they had covered this material in the class. Lecturer Y, when asked what aspects of the draft essays concerned her the most, said:

It was mostly second language speakers of English who completely missed the whole style of academic discourse as well as failing to develop their argument. Much time is spent on the basic criteria of academic style and discourse.

There is a difference in perception evident here, with a Lecturer feeling that a lot of time had been devoted to discussing the requirements and conventions of academic discourse and students feeling that they had not received sufficient input on these issues (this was a theme that emerged in the questionnaires, the focus group and the interviews). Chapter 2.3.7 highlights mismatch between student expectations and lecturer delivery where feedback is concerned. This data points to a mismatch in expectations around the area of input on academic discourse. A possible explanation for this disparity is that teachers and learners often do not share a common frame of reference for understanding the nature of academic discourse or the purpose of the draft-response-redraft process (Paxton, 1994). It is essential that a contractual framework is established with a class and that there is an ongoing dialogue around the extent to which students are understanding the academic frame of reference, with appropriate modifications to the class input made to meet the needs of a particular class. Paxton argues that without a shared language for talking about essays and feedback, the draft-response-redraft process will be compromised (1994: 80).

Researchers also point to the difficulties that lecturers experience with making the skills and processes of academic writing explicit. It is difficult to work out how to teach these skills because, for many lecturers, the beliefs, attitudes, epistemologies underlying their practices, as well as their own perceptions of academic conventions, are unconscious. Winberg (2002) points to the difficulties lecturers experience when trying to analyse their own, unconscious academic literacy practices which have often been acquired through immersion in academic discourse rather than explicit teaching on the subject. Contemporary lecturers are pioneering this new area of academic teaching (see chapter 2.1.2).

A number of student comments indicated that the lecturer's comments were too brief and needed elaboration. One student wrote that she needed "more detailed commentary with direct examples of where I went wrong. This general language becomes blurry and possibly can be interpreted wrongly, for example, I got a criticism to strengthen my argument but where, how and in what way would they prefer?" Another student wrote: "by being more specific about comments. If a lecturer wants to comment then they should have time to explain." Yet another comment said: "I think they could elaborate more in what they say and maybe give us examples." This supports the findings of

Conrad and Goldstein (1999) that students prefer more detailed and elaborated comments and explanations. Research points to the danger of lecturers providing generic comments that can be “rubber stamped” from essay to essay (Sommers, 1982: 152) or teachers returning to “well-worn phrases” (Connors and Lunsford, 1988:213) rather than providing individualised, detailed feedback.

On the whole, the students had a positive response to the process, with very few students indicating that the process had not been helpful for them. Some of the positive responses included:

- There is nothing to improve on. I had an excellent experience and it helped me considerably
- The marker’s comments were constructive, critical and also carefully balanced with praise. I appreciated that.
- It really helped having a second party comment on my essay. Sometimes it seems like what is written makes sense to the writer but will have a different meaning for the reader.
- I fully approve of writing a draft because it allows me the opportunity to learn from one’s mistakes and improve.

One the whole, the questionnaire revealed that the students felt positive about the feedback-response process and that many believed it had helped them to write this essay. This supports the findings of Conrad and Goldstein (1999), Paulus (1999) and Hyland (1998) who found that students report valuing written feedback comments and finding them helpful for improving their writing.

The information from the questionnaire provides a context for the more detailed case studies of twelve students from the group to explore how the positive attitudes expressed in the questionnaire translated into the essay writing process and to gain a better understanding of how individuals responded to the opportunity. The focus group also adds to this contextual understanding of the group as a whole.

4.3 Focus group findings

A discussion session with a focus group was used as an exploratory study to gain more insight into the overview that the questionnaire had provided. It was important to gain further insight into student attitudes to, expectations and feelings about the draft-response-redraft process. Attendance at the focus group discussion was voluntary although the researcher had requested certain individuals to attend, based on an overview of the essays, in order to include a cross-section of age, gender, mother tongue and marking lecturer in the group. The questions asked were similar to those in the questionnaire but allowed the students to elaborate on areas that they felt to be important. (see appendix 6) This information lays the foundation for the later case study interviews, which are more detailed and specific. The focus group was used to determine the focus points for the case study interviews.

4.3.1 The Participants

Initially my intention was to analyse the focus discussion group only in terms of the emerging themes relating to the draft-response-redraft process. I had not intended to look at the individual cases in any depth. However, it soon became apparent that the individual student factors in the group were important, to the extent that each person had his or her own themes relating to the process. Each student returned to his or her own theme in the discussion, regardless of the questions I had asked (see appendix 6). It seems important, therefore, to briefly outline these themes.

Respondent one:

This student is a mother tongue speaker of English who had attended a model C school. She was very vocal in the group and expressed her ideas confidently. However, her struggles with dyslexia meant that she often felt that her ideas were not sufficiently valued because she struggled to express them in writing. As a result, she often felt misunderstood. She wished for the language (grammar, construction and spelling) component of an essay mark to be fixed at 15% and for more attention to be paid to the content of her ideas. The feedback she had received on her essay was brief and unelaborated. As a result, she felt very frustrated with the process.

Respondent two:

A male, Zambian student with more than one African mother tongue, this very vocal and vivacious student also struggled with a feeling of being often misunderstood. He was frustrated with his experience of the South African education system and trying to work out a frame of reference for dealing with this. He felt that the experience he brought to the classroom was often undervalued and wished for the lecturers to have more understanding of and respect for the different backgrounds of the students. He had knowledge of academic writing conventions and vocabulary for discussing this discourse from ACS (Academic Communication Studies; a first year academic development course) but struggled to use this knowledge to effect improvements in his academic writing.

Respondent three:

A quietly spoken woman for whom English is a second language, respondent three was positive about the feedback process but went to the lecturer for further assistance. She felt strongly that she needed face-to-face interaction in order to understand the written feedback and for the process to be effective.

Respondent four:

Respondent four was a slightly older, English speaking student who had been to a model C school. A highly motivated student, she was concerned with consistency of marking and being able to track her own progress. She wanted more help with preparation of the essay and the provision of criteria and guidelines for the essay. She received detailed written feedback which she was able to use effectively. She wanted more credit for her class participation.

Respondent five:

A speaker of English as a second language who had been to a township school, respondent five was a young woman who was very concerned with the correction of errors and linguistic accuracy in her work. She perceived the purpose of the draft-response-redraft process to be the correction of her mistakes. She wanted more help in class with analysing the essay topic and felt the need for positive encouragement. She often struggled to understand what the lecturers were saying in class.

Respondent six:

A very competent, English speaking, male student from a model C school, respondent 6 was diffident in his responses. He had received very detailed feedback and was positive about the process. He was also concerned with the issue of marker consistency.

Respondent seven:

Respondent seven was a Zulu speaking male student from a rural school. He experienced difficulties with understanding both the written feedback he had received and the English used by lecturers in the class context. He felt that he was often misunderstood and that marking of essays tended to be unfair. He felt underestimated and had been unfairly accused of copying from the internet when he handed in work of a high standard. He felt that not enough was being done to meet the needs of students from disadvantaged circumstances.

Respondent eight:

An international female student from Ghana, respondent eight spoke English as a second language. She was very concerned with exam performance and expressed palpable anxiety on this topic several times in the discussion. She was also concerned about lecturer consistency as she felt that this was a factor in exam preparation.

Respondent nine:

This male, English speaking student arrived ten minutes before the end of the discussion and nearly disrupted the group with his quasi-comical “laid back” approach.

It is evident that this group was made up of people from varied socio-economic and political backgrounds. This diversity accurately reflects the diversity in the institution as a whole (see chapter 1.2). It can be seen that within the larger theme of how students responded to the draft-response-feedback process, each student had his or her own difficulties and concerns which became sub-themes in the discussion.

4.3.2 Themes

The first general response of the students to the question of how they felt about the draft-response-redraft process was very positive. Students perceived the opportunity to receive feedback on their drafts positively and were enthusiastic about the benefits. This confirms the findings of the questionnaire and other research into feedback (Paulus, 1999; Conrad and Goldstein, 1999; Hyland 1998), which indicates that students, generally, feel positive about feedback and believe that the draft-response-redraft process is worthwhile.

Four specific reasons were offered by the students for why the process was considered worthwhile. Respondent one said that she appreciated:

The opportunity to know what they want from you 'cos you don't always know just offhand what they want. After you've got your draft back, you know exactly what they want.

This theme of needing to work out the expectations of the lecturers and decipher the "rules of engagement" is one that the students returned to frequently in the discussion (see chapter 4.3.2.5). It became clear that the students required more input before the essay draft was written on how to write an academic essay, the conventions of academic discourse and the criteria for assessment. This would have provided the students with a clearer sense of direction and a vocabulary with which to discuss academic discourse. This reason offered for appreciating the feedback process actually highlighted a problem inherent in the way in which this process was initiated with this class.

A second reason offered has a similar dynamic in that it also points to a lack of class-time preparation for writing the essay. The feedback-response process was seen to compensate for the lack of topic preparation in class. Respondent four says:

The topic was quite broad; you didn't know what to focus on. So when you got it back, you knew more where to specifically focus your argument.

Later in the discussion, the students returned to this theme, respondent five suggesting that:

We need a whole class dedicated to analysing the essay topic. Not just reading through the notes. We needed simpler explanations and the opportunity to ask questions.

This question of preparation and scaffolding will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.3.2.5.

A third reason offered for why a student found the process positive was that it gave the student insight into his own essay. Respondent six says:

You can see your weaknesses in your argument . . . where they are exactly so you can alter them.

This belief that the draft-response-redraft process enabled the students to gain a more objective perspective on their own work was widely held. One of the aims of using this approach in the classroom is to give students an opportunity to evaluate their own texts, to see how a reader interacts with their text and to make adjustments accordingly (see chapter 2.2.3). These student comments indicate that the process is, to some extent, and for some students, achieving what it set out to achieve.

Even more persistent, however, was a concern expressed by the students with the correction of errors. This is evident in the following comment from respondent nine:

You write your first draft and when they return it you can see that maybe I did not understand the question well and see where you went wrong and you try to correct those mistakes.

This theme emerged strongly in the questionnaire too (see 4.2) and gives us an insight into how students view the process of drafting and essay writing. It would appear that at times there is less concern with expression of ideas and more concern with correction of errors and exam performance. Respondent eight, in particular, was very concerned about this. When talking about the need for consistent marking, she says:

It's not right. When it comes to exams, you have no idea of if you are an average student or a good student.

Later on, when asked about whether students felt that a course in academic writing was necessary, she again returns to her anxiety about exam performance:

. . . because come to the exam it's too much requirement. Come to the exam, you're panicking, you're writing. You can't remember do this . . .

Berthoff (1987:15) refers to this problem as “allatonce-ness”. This is the difficulty that students experience while trying to attend to a number of aspects of an essay simultaneously. When asked whether the draft-response-redraft process enabled students to develop academic skills, respondent eight returned to the exam theme again:

This academic thing really prepared me personally towards writing a good essay and stuff but now I am thinking about the exam. I can't relate how this will help me, this “Insider” thing. How am I going to discuss this issue in the exam? Academic writing has so many requirements.

For the most part, student concerns were centred on anxieties around grading systems, exam results and performance. Their thinking, shaped by the socio-academic environment in which they find themselves, is much more concerned with the end product (the final essay and the mark it received) than with the process that they had experienced.

The initial positive responses to the question of how they felt about the process (seen repeatedly in the questionnaire responses and in the discussion group) are somewhat puzzling, given that the students were unhappy with important aspects of the process. As the discussion deepened and students became more honest in their reflections, certain themes emerged as problems that they had experienced with the process. The following points outline the concerns expressed by the students.

4.3.2.1 Inconsistency

A topic that the students returned to repeatedly was a perception that there was inconsistency in the marking of essays and essay drafts. This led to a sense of insecurity, because students felt that it was difficult to assess their own progress. There was also a sense of injustice because students did not appear to trust the fairness of the marks awarded or the consistency of the feedback received by different students. These emotions are expressed in the following extract:

Respondent 8: The number of lecturers marking our work is too many. Say today you mark my work . . . you are not marking the same way as the other person marking the work, so at the end of it all . . . To give you an example, back at

home, no matter how large the course is, we have a maximum of two lecturers so that you can get to know how you are performing because another lecturer might mark on another ground, saying this point has importance. It's not right. When it comes to exams, you have not idea of if you are an average student or a good student.

Respondent 4: You can't tell where your strengths are.

Respondent 8: You can't pin it down and say I am weak here . . . or . . .

Interviewer: Did the lecturers provide the same criteria mark sheet for everybody?

All: Yes.

Respondent 6: Yes, but everyone has an individual style of marking but they don't seem to have any . . .

Respondent 4: It's not a constant marking strategy from one person, so one person has higher standards than another so you can't go by your marks . . . where your strengths and weaknesses are.

This extract clearly shows that the students perceived a lack of consistency in the lecturers' approaches to providing feedback and awarding marks. This led to a sense of injustice for some students and a feeling of insecurity for others. The conversation wheeled around to this topic a few times in the hour that the interviewer spent with the students.

Another aspect of perceived inconsistency related to the quality of the feedback that students received on their drafts. For example, respondent one said:

In mine she just said "strengthen your argument". She didn't have any where or how or when or to what degree or anything like that so I complained a lot that I didn't have enough detail in my comments as well as I didn't have enough examples of how . . . you see they just expected me to understand what she wanted me to do but she didn't go into any depth at all.

Later in the conversation, the same student said: "I didn't know what to do. It was such a general comment that I eventually pretty much restructured it." The student perceived the comments to be vague and unspecific. She did not understand the comments or what to do with them. In contrast, respondent four felt that the feedback she had received was very detailed:

For mine, she went through each paragraph and had a written comment there so it was as if I had one-on-one contact with her because I had detailed comments.

It was interesting to see that the students had a good sense of the comparative differences between the different lecturers. This is evident in the following extract:

Respondent 6: X's comments were a lot more indepth than Y's because I noticed. I looked at (respondent one's) draft and I had a lot more commentary than that.

Respondent 1: I was so jealous!

A careful analysis of the feedback the students received did reveal inconsistencies in style, approach and attention to detail (see 4.4.3). What is clear from the focus group discussion is that these inconsistencies were of significance to the students. They felt strongly that the lack of consistency was unfair. A related topic which emerged from some of the students was a perception of prejudice on the part of some of the lecturers.

4.3.2.2 Lecturer prejudice

One of the themes that emerged was a belief held by several of the speakers of English as a second language, based on their experiences, that lecturers made negative assumptions based on their names. This is evident in the following extract from the discussion:

Respondent 7: There is a tendency . . . like many lecturers think that if you are a person who did English as a second language and if you have written something very well, making an example of a review, it's a shame that I got zero. I wrote something very good but the tutor just said "you copied from the internet" whereas I didn't copy from the internet. I think she looked at my name and saw it was written by (I don't like to say so) written by a black so she thought it must be from the internet. I don't think we should write our names on top, just use student numbers.

All: General agreement.

Respondent 1: I think there are stereotypes based on names.

Respondent 8: I had this thing where a lecturer called me in and said what school did you go to? When I told him, he just said "oh, ok". I think maybe it was because I had the top mark maybe he thought I copied. I thought that maybe it was because I am black that's why he said that.

Respondent 7: I think they underestimate us.

The personal experiences of these two students indicate that they had encountered what they perceived to be lecturer prejudice based on racial assumptions. This led to a sense that there was injustice in lecturer attitudes and it led to a feeling of frustration. This was not the only reason presented for students feeling frustrated and misunderstood.

4.3.2.3 Misunderstandings

The profile of the participants represented in chapter 4.3.1 indicates that several students felt misunderstood for other reasons, for example dyslexia. However, the perceptions of racial prejudice and stereotyping presented above were particularly heartfelt. Related to these feelings was the desire expressed by several students, at various points in the discussion, to be given the benefit of the doubt and to have the lecturers see beyond their struggles to express themselves to the underlying ideas:

Respondent 2: Even if your construction of English is bad it still doesn't mean that you don't have the answer . . . you are trying to say something.

Respondent 4: Everyone has their individual way of expressing themselves. There is not one way that is right.

This theme was returned to later in the discussion:

Respondent 1: Going back to the marking process. Why can't the stuff like sentence structure, grammar, etc total up to 15% so that all the people who do badly have their 15% taken off and then mark the rest of it as a whole thing. I am dyslexic so I have the same problem with my written work. Your whole mark is bad. . . I have a valid point but I can't communicate it properly.

Respondent 2: Yes, they must say, OK acknowledge this person isn't good at structuring the English language but there's still gold in this essay, so let me look for that.

Respondent 4: The focus needs to be more on the content not on the construction.

Respondent 6: There is a lot of emphasis on the academic writing.

Several students: Too much.

This theme of feeling misunderstood, for various reasons, was recycled several times in the discussion:

Respondent 2: The lecturer has given a certain topic. How you elaborate is bound to be different from others. . . there is no set marking key . . . when you are writing something like an essay, they should take time, not looking for the answers, but the way you structure your answers. Like my background is different from everyone else's. Like the way you explain. She might give a brief one . . . you like depth. You always like giving lots of examples, making sure the person understands, whereas you just say $1+1=2$ and that's it. They might look at this whole paragraph and say "no, that's not necessary, I was looking for this

There is evidence in this discussion that the foundations for current-traditional rhetoric and academic conventions have not been understood. Some of this student's frustration might be alleviated if he better understood the rationale for this style of rhetoric, for example why reasons, examples and explanations are required in this discourse. This points again to the need for dialogue and explicit input on the nature and requirements of academic discourse (see chapter 2.1.3).

Respondent seven, a male Zulu speaking student from a rural KwaZulu-Natal school, also expressed frustration, explaining that he felt that there was not enough allowance made for the individual way in which people might express their ideas, based on their personal backgrounds:

There is a personal element . . . the examples you give, how you write . . . they should take time out to see how relevant are a person's points in comparison to others.

Several students had more to say on this topic:

Respondent 2: Even if your construction of English is bad it still doesn't mean that you don't have the answer . . . you are trying to say something.

Respondent 4: Everyone has their individual way of expressing themselves. There is not one way that is right.

It is clear from these discussions that students found it difficult to understand why the conventions for academic writing are so strictly applied and why the content of their ideas did not count for a greater percentage of the marks they received. They felt that their ideas were "worth more" but struggled to express these ideas in the academic context, due to difficulties with acquiring the discourse, difficulties with the English language, difficulties with understanding the academic frame of reference and often not having a

clear idea of what was expected of them or how to meet those expectations. Ballard and Clanchy point to the difficulties that students experience with

Learning to read the culture, learning to come to terms with its distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behaviour (1988:8).

Further to this, in learning to “read” the culture, the student is acquiring a set of values and learning how to function with the “rules and conventions which define how language and thinking may proceed” (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988:11). The focus group discussion illustrates the extent to which the students find this process a struggle. There is a sense in which they feel that fully adopting these conventions would involve the loss of authenticity or individuality of their own ideas.

It is important to remember that all of these students are first year students, many of whom would not have encountered the academic genre at school level (although respondents one, four and six had been taught the genre at a school level and still expressed frustration with the limitations imposed on the expression of ideas by the academic essay genre). As a result, the students feel unable to express their ideas comfortably using the genre and consequently feel misunderstood; that their ideas are overlooked because they are not yet comfortable with using the conventions of the academic genre.

What the students are also expressing here is the difficulty of taking on an academic identity and speaking with a “voice” which both expresses their own identity as well as their authority to speak in the academic context. Ivanic quotes Bartholomae on the subject of the difficulty of developing this academic voice:

To speak with authority [student writers] have to speak not only in another’s voice but through another’s code; and they not only have to do this, they have to speak in the voice and through the codes of those with power and wisdom; and they not only have to do this, they have to do it before they know what they are doing . . . Their initial progress will be marked by their abilities to take on the role of privilege, by their abilities to establish authority (1998:156).

Ivanic argues that “a writer, when writing with the discourses of a community, takes on the identity of a member of that community. In the case of writing within the university, that is the identity of a person with authority” (1998: 156). She found that many of the tertiary students she interviewed expressed

A sense of *inferiority*, a lack of confidence in themselves, a sense of powerlessness, a view of themselves as people without knowledge, and hence without authority. For some it was the legacy of a working-class background. For others it was associated with age or gender; for all it was associated with previous failure in the education system and an uncertainty as to whether they had the right to be members of the academic community at all. On the other hand, there are some who bring authority of different types into the academic institution from different domains, such as business, politics or parenthood: authority which often goes unrecognised by the academic community (1998: 156).

The members of this focus group expressed the struggle that students experience with developing an academic identity and with learning to express the ideas, experience, authority and knowledge that they bring to the classroom within the constraints of the conventions for academic discourse. Research points to the need for institutions to value the resources and knowledge that learners bring to the classroom and to integrate this into the classroom content and power dynamics. Chase (1988) exhorts teachers to:

Encourage students to affirm and analyse their own experiences and histories, not without question, but as starting points for connecting with the wider culture and society [and to] exercise the courage to act in the interests of improving the quality of human life (cited in Ivanic, 1998: 92).

Ivanic argues that

Resistance is not resistance for its own sake but is motivated by a commitment to represent the world in a way which accords with the writer’s values, by a refusal to be colonised by the privileged world views and discourses of privileged others, and by a desire to open up membership of the academic discourse community (1998: 92).

In the context of UKZN, which, as its new logo asserts, is striving to be “The Premier University of African Scholarship (see chapter 1.2), it is very important that students are encouraged to integrate their own frames of reference with an academic identity and to question and begin to transform the academic discourse community.

It emerged in this focus group discussion that the students in this class did not believe that they had received sufficient input on the conventions of the academic genre. This belief was also expressed in the questionnaire responses. Respondent two was able to discuss some of the concepts of academic literacy, such as thesis statement, due to his knowledge gained from his *Academic Communication Studies* Class. The other students did not have the vocabulary or concepts with which to engage him at this level. This lack of input might be a partial explanation for the levels of frustration expressed in these extracts. This will be further discussed (see 4.3.2.5 and chapter 5). The students did not seem to know how to go about expressing their ideas using the conventions of academic writing. Learning these conventions was experienced as a process of trial and error which was proving very frustrating and during which time they felt unable to express their ideas effectively.

4.3.2.4 Student prejudice

It is evident from these discussions that the students believed that the lecturers at times made assumptions about students based on prejudice. It also became clear in the discussions that students had their own preconceptions about certain lecturers. I was interested to see whether these sometimes negative attitudes interfered with the draft-response-redraft process in any way. I asked the students this:

Interviewer: Do you think that the kind of relationship that the class has with the lecturer impacts on the effectiveness of this drafting process?

(several students agree)

Respondent 1: I don't know, because I hate Z but she marked one of my other things and the feedback she gave me was overwhelmingly great and I really enjoyed it. It was indepth. She told me what was good, what was bad, how to strengthen it and everything. I hate her personally.

Interviewer: So, it doesn't always follow, because you didn't like her personally but the feedback she gave you was effective.

It was clear that for this student, the quality of the feedback was a much more important factor than the relationship with the lecturer.

4.3.2.5 Preparation and scaffolding

In the course of this focus group discussion, it became clear that the students did not feel that they had enough preparation for writing the essay in terms of input on the conventions of academic writing, topic analysis, how to structure an essay, the marking criteria or the expectations of the lecturers. This becomes evident in the following extract:

Respondent 4: When we were given the essays I didn't know what I had to do. W put it up on the overhead and we were given a sheet I couldn't hear what she was saying, what she was explaining I had to work out myself what I had to do. She hadn't elaborated. So that wasn't a good start to it right at the beginning. So when I got my draft back I had to do a lot of work on it. So that's where the drafts are very useful, getting the feedback. Surely if right in the beginning we got very clear instructions . . .

Interviewer: Did you get input on academic essays and what was expected and what the conventions are?

Some students: not really.

Respondent 6: very basic information.

Respondent one also indicated that the students had not received the marking criteria before writing their drafts:

Respondent 1: We needed the marking criteria before we wrote the draft so that we knew what they expect.

The students all had the same marking criteria sheet returned with the feedback on their drafts. They felt, however, that it would have been useful to have seen these guidelines before writing the essay. A further inconsistency emerged when it became clear that the lecturer who introduced the essay topic was not one of the markers of the essays:

Respondent 1: W didn't explain properly in class. You ask her questions and she rattles off an answer.

Interviewer: W didn't do the marking but she explained the essay so there's an inconsistency there.

Respondent 2: The way it is explained should reflect how it is going to be marked.

Respondent 4: For individuals, to assess our progress, we need the same person to introduce the essay, do the first draft and do the final marking. I would have found it better to have the same marker for my assignments in the course.

Interviewer: So consistency is very important.

The two themes of consistency of marking and sufficient preparation in class soon emerged as important issues from the point of view of the students.

4.3.2.6 Written feedback

Some of the students experienced difficulties with understanding the written feedback they had received on their drafts. Respondent seven was one example:

Respondent 7: As I said before, I am from the rural school. I found their comments . . . the comments using difficult words so I found that I didn't know what they required to me. So they should consider that there are those students for whom English is not their first language.

Interviewer: OK. Do you think there are other students who would feel the same as you do?

Respondent 7: Of course.

Other students also expressed difficulty with reading and understanding the written feedback:

Respondent 2: You might understand it but you have misinterpreted what she means. Like you have clearly read the sentence. Maybe the sentence says "your argument has lost its focus." Now when you are arguing, you always have the positive, negative and neutral part. Now which part does she mean? You understand that it's lost focus but is that on the positive side or the negative side? What are we looking for? For me to say . . . seeking clarification it's ok, it's useful but most of the time we just tend to think "Oh I have done the wrong thing".

Respondent 1: But I felt the comments she gave me - I didn't know what to do. It was such a general comment that eventually I pretty much restructured it. . .

Respondent 4: But in your essay, did she just do the top sheet? Did she just make the comments there?

Respondent 1: All I had on my actual draft was ticks, two spelling errors and then on my front sheet it said "you have confronted the language expertly" and then it just said "you must strengthen your argument" and I didn't understand where or how or what.

Respondent three had also experienced difficulties with understanding the written comments but felt that going to see the lecturer had solved her problems:

Respondent 3: I had a similar problem but I decided to go to see her because in my essay it said if I needed further clarification I must go to her so I went to her and she explained everything step by step so it's easy for me.

Interviewer: So did you find that speaking to her face to face was easier than understanding the comments?

Respondent 3: Ja, because maybe she write something that you don't understand then you go to her. You need clarification.

This student felt that face-to-face interaction with the lecturer enabled her to understand the feedback and use it effectively. It is interesting that the students showed an awareness of the logistical difficulties posed by the large class size, which meant that an essay interview with each student would be very difficult to arrange:

Respondent 4: It's also quite hard. Our lectures are very large. There are so many of us . . . For each of us to try to get the time with a marker to get their personal feedback, it's . . . I mean I know I didn't make the effort . . . it's so hard I just thought I will do the best I can with the comments she gave me.

Some students felt reluctant to "impose" on the lecturers by going to see them:

Respondent 4: I don't want to put the lecturer out by going and bugging them with questions.

This aversion was also expressed in the interview with Xoliswa (see chapter 4.4.4.7) where she indicated that she felt that going to ask the lecturer questions would be tantamount to questioning the lecturer's authority.

4.3.2.7 Academic writing conventions

Another theme that emerged from the discussion was the struggles experienced by the students as they grappled with trying to understand and use conventions of academic writing. One of the aspects found difficult was the use of instruction words:

Respondent 2: Like when they say compare and contrast, you have to first of all look at the opposition and contrast it for and against and I think it's similar to this word "discuss". Discussion also has positive and negative. It's the same as compare and contrast. I don't know what's what. It's very difficult. In my own language if somebody says something, I will just get it like that (clicks fingers) . . . with English I have to learn it . . . I have been learning it the whole of my life.

Respondent two had more to say on the subject of academic writing conventions later in the discussion:

You have to write the introduction and the thesis and the main body and you elaborate and conclude, you know like . . . there are so many . . . sometimes you are writing the introduction and then a point for the main body comes into your head. . . you can forget it.

Several people: Yes!

It is important to note that respondent two was also doing *Academic Communication Studies*, and it seems that he had more ability to discuss the conventions of academic writing; a shared language for talking about academic discourse (Paxton, 1994: 80). It would seem that the other students had less vocabulary for discussing these concepts. He was able to articulate the struggles he was experiencing more effectively as a result of having access to this discourse through the explicit teaching of these concepts in ACS.

A specific aspect of this struggle with academic writing, which emerges in the next section, seems to be the difficulty that students experience with finding their own “voice” in an academic context (see also 4.3.2.3):

Respondent 2: In ACS in class I can go more indepth. I can ask if I don't understand. In this essay you get the question, the text and you have to marry the two.

Respondent 4: You get the list of instructions but it's hard to put your own ideas and opinions and information to fit into the structure.

Respondent 2: There is also a restriction on your own opinion. You can't use your own ideas, you have to reference and you can't use 'I'. You can't use strong language that indicates your personal view

Respondent 1: But then they say to you “what is your argument? How do you give your argument without giving your personal opinion?

Respondent 2: You see! It's hard!

The students indicate that they wish to retain their personal identity, values and ideas while learning the conventions of academic discourse. This desire to retain their personal identity is important because it will ultimately enable the discourse to be more dynamic. Ivanic argues that

Writers align themselves with one or more of the discursal possibilities for self-hood which are available within the academic community thereby contributing to reproduction or change in the patterns of privileging among those discourses in the whole order of academic discourse (1998: 92).

To some extent the struggle expressed by the students in the focus group to use academic conventions while retaining their own “voice” is a necessary one for forging a new identity. However, this process is more productive when students have the language with which to articulate their struggles. It is evident that respondent two has this language and he is better able to grapple with the issues.

4.3.2.8 Classroom dynamics

Several students who are not mother tongue speakers of English used the discussion as a forum to talk about the difficulties experienced with understanding the English lecturers in class (the fact that this topic was not strictly relevant to the feedback discussion indicates that this was a topic of some importance to them). The following was said on the topic:

Respondent 3: We the students from the disadvantaged schools have a problem when it comes to the lecturer’s accent. Some lecturers are very English-like. You find it so difficult just to grab any word he or she says. My political science lecturer is very English. I can’t even grab a word. But it’s now better because my present lecturer is Indian and I can understand what she says.

Respondent 9: I am sorry to say this but sometimes it seems that they cater more for first language speakers because they are so fast and they use those words that I can’t understand and they don’t stop when they have started talking.

Respondent 2: In ACS the other day the lecturer said “you know about antibiotics, don’t you?” assuming that everyone knows these words. She should have said “Have you heard of this?” rather than assuming. Then I look like I am not learned if I ask. Then I feel uncomfortable asking questions.

Once again, the struggle to find a place in the academic frame of reference was articulated by the students. Their difficulty with understanding the lecturer’s input impacts on their ability to benefit from any “apprenticeship” in the academic discourse community (Gee, 1990: 139) which might enable them to acquire and use that discourse. There is a sense in these extracts that the students experience the environment as a hostile one in which it is difficult for apprenticeship to take place. It would appear that further mediation is required in order for these students to make academic discourse “their own”.

4.3.2.9 The praise/criticism debate

The praise/criticism debate is one that has long interested researchers in the field of feedback (see 2.3.4). It was interesting to explore the thoughts of this group of students on the subject:

Interviewer: On a scale of one to ten, with one being not important and ten being very important, how important is it to get encouraging comments on your draft?

Respondent 1: eight.

Respondent 4: nine.

Respondent 5: ten

Respondent 2: Depends. Sometimes it's bad because you become too relaxed if you are praised.

Respondent 4: No, constructive commentary where they say this is wrong but you have done this well

Respondent 2: Now I understand.

The need for praise in the feedback comments varied between students but several felt that praise was important. The idea expressed by respondent two that praise is not a good thing because it makes one complacent and less likely to improve, is mentioned in the literature (Hyland, 1998:280). It seems to be a more common belief among students from non-Western backgrounds (Ferris et al, 1997:166). In this case, respondent two is from Zambia. This tends to support research findings. Respondent one (the student struggling with dyslexia) also expressed a preference for constructive criticism rather than praise.

Respondent 1: Oh, yes, I did get one (encouraging comment) but it didn't help.

Interviewer: Was it important, even if it didn't help?

Respondent 1: No. I personally find good, detailed, constructive criticism is encouraging. It's encouraging me to behave myself; to do better.

Elbow (1997) argues that constructive feedback could be described as “descriptive” or “observational” responses (10). This type of feedback helps students by developing a “metacognitive understanding of the writing and thinking processes they have used” (Quinn, 2000:130). This group of students seemed to value what they called constructive criticism above all else when receiving feedback.

4.3.2.10 Possible solutions

Towards the end of the discussion, the students discussed possible solutions to their most pressing concern, which was the issue of consistency. The solutions preferred by them emerged in the following interaction:

Interviewer: Is this drafting and feedback the best way of helping students with their essay writing?

Respondent 4: It should be used in conjunction with something else, like tutorials.

Interviewer: Would a weekly tutorial with a lecturer, who marked your work, help?

Respondent 4: Smaller groups would be more beneficial but it's still inconsistent.

Respondent 4: We need a compulsory Q and A session when we develop a relationship with a lecturer. Not a student.

Respondent 5: We are such a big class.

Interviewer: Would it help if one person marked your work through the semester?

General agreement.

Interviewer: Would it be fair if that lecturer was stricter than others?

Respondent 8: That would help you build a relationship with the lecturer and a breakdown of your performance rate. That's better than changing and changing.

Interviewer: Do students have a sense of who is strict and who isn't?

Respondent 2: You pick it up from their lecturing style. If they are flexible in class you assume they will mark more flexible.

Interviewer: In the questionnaires it seemed that many students wanted a one-on-one interview. Do people generally want this?

Respondent 5: I think you should, especially if your mark is low.

Interviewer: Is it harder to go voluntarily than it would be if everybody had to go?

Respondent 2: Yes. There should be a group session organised for people that want more help.

Respondent 4: I don't want to put the lecturer out by going and bugging them with questions. As a general proposal, to get consistency, have the same lecturer marking the same group. The portfolio shows your progress at the end and that can be moderated.

Respondent 6: there must be consistency between the lecturers during the term.

The discussion returned again to the theme of consistency, with the students emphasising the need to have a longitudinal sense of their own progress in the course of a semester. They felt that this continuity was important for the development of writing skills and that this would be achieved by having the same lecturer mark an individual's work through a semester, thus providing more sense of relationship and a better sense of progress. The students recognised that the big class size did not allow for individual attention but suggested small group question and answer sessions with the lecturer who had marked the work of that group to provide more personal interaction.

4.3.2.11 Concluding comments

It became clear in chapter 4.3.1 that the individual students in this focus group each had their own concerns around the issue of feedback and academic writing. However, certain themes did emerge from the discussion, the most dominant of these being consistency. The students felt the need for more individualised attention, from a single lecturer, which would give them a better sense of relationship and a better sense of their own progress over a semester. Another recurring theme was that of feeling misunderstood. The students were all, to varying degrees, struggling to use the genre of academic writing to express their ideas. As a result, they often felt that their ideas had been misunderstood. Each person had individual factors which compounded this sense of alienation. It was clear that the students required a more planned mediation into the academic discourse

community and more preparation and scaffolding for the particular essay process which is the focus of this study.

4.4 Case studies

4.4.1 Analysis of usable feedback points: method

Having gained an understanding of the overall attitudes to the draft-feedback-redraft process from the questionnaires and the focus group, this study goes on to analyse the work of twelve individual cases in more detail. Purposive sampling was used to select a range of students for analysis (see 3.6). This ensured that there were examples of work from each marker and a range of age, gender, mother tongue and ability factors was taken into account. This study uses the system developed by Hyland (1998) (see 3.9.2).

Hyland's system does not distinguish between surface level and meaning-based interventions, but divides the written feedback from the teacher into feedback points. Each written intervention that focused on a different aspect of the text, including underlining, marginal comments, global comments and questions, is considered a separate feedback point (261). The written feedback is then examined to assess whether it can be classified as "usable" feedback or not, in terms of its potential for facilitating revision of a draft (262). For example, a comment like "good work" can not be used to make a revision but an underlined word might trigger a revision.

The revisions made by the students to their drafts are also identified. The usable feedback points are then cross-linked to the revisions to assess the extent to which they are used by the students, and the percentage of usable feedback points utilised by the students in their revisions is calculated (1998: 262). This enables the researcher to determine to what extent students have used the feedback and how effectively they have been able to do so. Further contextual understanding of the students' responses to the feedback is gained from the interviews with individual students.

4.4.2 Analysis of usable feedback points: findings

This section will consider the relationship between the teacher written feedback and the student revisions. Firstly, the extent to which the students have utilised the feedback will be analysed and discussed. The feedback patterns of the lecturers will also be examined. The study will then discuss individual cases which shed light on ways in which the students have responded to and incorporated the written feedback into their revisions. These cases reveal trends in patterns of student response and also highlight the problems encountered with the draft-response-redraft process.

4.4.2.1 Extent of use of feedback

This section analyses the extent to which students were able to use the feedback. As can be seen from the table below, the students, with the exception of Shanel⁶ (who only acted on 23% of the usable feedback points), tried to utilise most of the usable feedback when revising their drafts. All of the others act on 50% or more of the usable feedback points. For many students, the percentage is significantly higher than 50%.

TABLE 1: Extent of Use of Written Teacher feedback

Student	Usable Feedback Points	FB Points Acted On	% Acted On	FB Points Not Acted On	% Not Acted On
Mpho	8	7	88%	1	13%
Xoliswa	47	37	79%	10	21%
Lebo	24	15	63%	9	38%
Samantha	25	15	60%	10	40%
John	33	27	82%	6	18%
Sipho	33	29	88%	4	12%
Thulani	35	20	57%	15	43%
Bongi	35	21	60%	14	40%
Garth	12	6	50%	6	50%
Tracy	23	13	57%	10	43%
Shanel	13	3	23%	10	77%
Phumzile	9	7	78%	2	22%

This confirms the findings of the questionnaire and focus group, in which students said that they valued the feedback. The extent to which they have attempted to use the

⁶ Names have been changed to protect the identity of the participants

feedback further demonstrates the value placed on the feedback by most of the students. This mirrors Hyland's 1998 study to a significant extent. She found that "the students not only said they valued feedback, but demonstrated this through their actions in response to it" (1998:262). She found that most students only had a percentage of 15% or less feedback points not acted on.

The table also shows that the amount of usable feedback offered to students varies. For example, Mpho, Garth, Shanel and Phumzile all received 13 or less usable feedback points on their drafts. Section 4.4.2.1 explores a possible explanation for this pattern.

Possible explanations

It is interesting to note that in each of these cases, the lecturer perceived significant structural problems in the essays. It was also, with the exception of Mpho, whose case will be discussed in detail in 4.4.4.2), a pattern particular to Lecturer Y, as is evident in table 2.

Table 2: Student Profiles

Student	M/F	Home Language	School	Degree	Essay Mark	Class Mark	Marker	Lecturer consultation	Draft Length (no. of wds)	Essay Length (no. of wds)	Global comment on draft (no. of wds)
Mpho	F	isiZulu	T/Ship	BA (Media)	52%	58%	X	Y	763	1204	154
Xoliswa	F	Xhosa	T/Ship	BA (Media)	48%	52%	X	N	1410	1526	121
Lebo	F	Sotho	Model C	B.Soc Sci	45%	52%	X	Y	360	1190	125
Samantha	F	English	Model C	B.Soc Sci (Media)	68%	70%	X	N	814	1806	108
John	M	English	Model C	B.Soc Sci (Media)	80%	76%	X	N	2142	2422	80
Sipho	M	isiZulu	Rural	BA	57%	56%	Z	Y	800	1008	85
Thulani	M	isiZulu	T/Ship	BA (Media)	62%	68%	V	N	1414	1232	23
Bongi	F	isiZulu	Model C	BA	68%	54%	V	N	990	1204	11
Garth	M	English	Pvt	B.Soc Sci	54%	52%	Y	N	872	1708	41
Tracy	F	English	Pvt	BA	62%	63%	Y	N	1470	1288	28
Shanel	F	English	Model C	B.Soc Sci	66%	57%	Y	N	812	1414	37
Phumzile	F	isiZulu	T/Ship	BA (Media)	55%	48%	Y	Y	728	1148	49

Lecturer Y tended to rely on very brief global comments to convey her thoughts. Shanel is a student whose pattern of responding to usable feedback does not correspond to the others. She received 13 usable feedback points but only responded to 3 of them (see table

1). In her case, there are few feedback points in the text. The global comment reads as follows:

What you say is all very well and good, but is much like Denuto in “The Castle” who said it was “the vibe!” Where is your RESEARCH and EVIDENCE? You needed to use AT LEAST FIVE sources.

The capitalisation in the comment indicates a level of frustration on the part of the lecturer. However, the student has heeded the advice given. Her final essay differs significantly from the draft which indicates that a real attempt at improvement has been made. 402 words are added, including a definition of censorship, a statement of intent, a paragraph on racism, a paragraph on sexism and a case study. In general the language used in the final essay can be described as more formal than that used for the draft. For example, her original introduction reads:

The understanding of censorship has become very mixed between the public and people have very different feelings towards it.

In her second draft the ideas are more clearly explained and the language more formal:

The individual is certainly not more important than what is deemed, by some sectors of society, to be the public good. What the public thinks of an advertisement should always decide the fate of the media article, as some media articles may be offensive to some people of minority groups.

Her final conclusion is more structured and her use of references and bibliography is improved. Her final comment reads: “Your argument is quite strong and systematically developed” and there is a 10% improvement in her mark.⁷ It can be seen that although Shanel has not responded to individual feedback points, the feedback has been a stimulus for revision.

Garth’s case is similar to Shanel’s in that his draft does not refer to the readings and his argument is based largely on personal opinion. The same marker responded to his essay and the response is similar. There are few in-text feedback points and the global comment is very similar to that on Shanel’s essay:

⁷ The awarding of marks to the draft is an individual strategy of Lecturer Y. These marks are not moderated in any way but give us Lecturer Y’s perception of the amount of improvement demonstrated by the students in her group.

Your discussion is all very interesting but is entirely ungrounded in research and evidence. You sound much like Denuto in “The Castle” – “It’s just the vibe!” You need to do some serious work for your final draft.

He also manages to raise his mark from 40% on the draft to 54% on the final essay. When asked about the comments in the interview, he admits that he had done the draft in a rush and expected a comment of this nature. He says:

I sort of expected it. I remember being pretty rushed to get this draft in and I actually didn’t have a lot of references and I found it quite hard to get my head around this topic. I couldn’t really come up with a thesis, so I was expecting a comment like that, so . . . I think it did help me quite a lot.

He receives the following comment on his final essay: “An improvement on the first draft – you have developed a slightly stronger argument with better evidential support.”

In Phumzile’s case, the feedback is also very brief. The lecturer begins by providing detailed grammatical corrections (first paragraph only). The lecturer then seems to give up that approach and resorts to a global comment:

Your arguments are fine, your case examples good. But your grammar makes it difficult to understand what you are trying to say. Try to get a friend to read through this and correct your grammar. Also, you need to write a conclusion which clarifies the main arguments you make.

Phumzile’s essay improves from a mark of 50% for her draft to a mark of 55% for her final essay. The comment on her final essay says “I can see that you have tried hard to improve your grammar. You also have developed a good argument which you state clearly in your conclusion.” The comments on Phumzile’s essay prompted her to consult the lecturer for further help.

In the lecturer questionnaire, Lecturer Y said the following:

Sometimes the students had so MANY errors, and were so far off track that it was hard to know where to start (or stop!) commenting.

She also indicated in the questionnaire that when giving written feedback, she tended to focus first on the argument, then on the academic style and lastly on grammatical errors.

This strategy of focusing on the argument rather than correcting surface errors is congruent with research findings. Paxton argues that:

Surface errors are often connected to deeper problems of structure and understanding. It is often not that students do not know the correct forms, but that the complexity and difficulty of dealing with subject content may result in language breakdown (1994: 7).

Bond agrees with Paxton, saying:

A breakdown in surface language conventions does not necessarily signify a language incompetency to be remedied; it could be a symptom of that struggle both to make meaning and to articulate it within an unfamiliar discourse (Bond, 1993: 141).

Lecturer Y intuitively knew that correcting every error would not help this student. At the same time, however, it must be noted that the global comments provided did not help significantly with the content either. In some cases, lecturers tend to comment on or correct grammar or referencing errors because it is too difficult to know how to help students with the content. In a 1993 study, Paxton found that 34% of essays had no comments on the content of essays.

At times this is an indication that the student's language is not proficient enough for the tutor to be able to interpret what the student is saying. Or it may be that the tutor is unable to identify the problem in the writing and offer a solution to it. Commenting on referencing and grammar is an easier solution than trying to deal with misunderstandings in the content or suggesting ways of restructuring an essay for better coherence (65).

It is interesting that Shanel, Garth and Phumzile were all marked by Lecturer Y. She followed a pattern of using global comments rather than micro corrections to deal with essays where problems at the level of meaning or structure were perceived. These global comments tend to be brief (an average of 39 words) and unelaborated.

A different pattern can be perceived in the case of Mpho (see table 1) where although the Lecturer X only provided 8 usable feedback points overall, there seems to be some compensation in a detailed global comment of 154 words, which explains the problems in the essay:

This is not a research essay! The point of this assignment is for you to read the reader, then get information from other sources to help you decide where you stand on the debate on censorship – “individual liberty vs public good”. Then you plan your essay – according to the guidelines you were given. Follow these and you’ll produce a much better essay. If you are having difficulty, come and see me.

The strategy of using global comments rather than surface error correction has also been used here where a problem with the structure of the essay is perceived. The difference to Lecturer Y is in the detail and level of explanation that is provided in the global comment. As a result, Mpho made significant changes to her essay. The written feedback alerted the student to the serious problems in the essay and she consulted the teacher as she had been invited to do. She reports valuing the honesty of the feedback, saying:

When I read the comments it was what I was expecting I would get. I didn’t understand the question or the topic. It was encouraging feedback. It told me the truth about the essay.

Conrad and Goldstein (1999) found that students prefer longer comments which offer more explanation. To some extent, this may be related to the skill and experience of lecturer X compared to the relative inexperience of lecturer Y. This will be further explored in the following section. Mpho’s case is discussed in more detail in section 4.4.4.2 which deals with revision episodes.

4.4.3 Lecturer feedback patterns

When analysing lecturer feedback patterns further, it becomes apparent that Lecturer Y not only uses fewer in-text feedback points, relying more on global comments, but the global comments also tend to be brief (an average of 39 words, compared to Lecturers X and Z, whose comments averaged 118 and 85 words respectively) (see table 3). Lecturer Y’s global comments were also similar in wording for three the four cases examined for this study. There is an element of “rubber stamping” of comments evident here (Zamel: 1982: 152). Connors and Lunsford (1993) noted this pattern of lecturers “returning to well-worn phrases” when unsure of how best to provide feedback (213).

Table 3: Patterns in lecturer feedback

Lecturer	Average number of feedback points	Average length of global comments
X	27	118 words
Z	33	85 words
V	35	17 words
Y	14	39 words

Lecturer V also provides very brief global comments (an average of 17 words per global comment). The number of usable feedback points she offers averages 35 per essay, but the numbers do not reveal the whole picture. An assessment of these shows that they are largely concerned with surface errors and could be described as sketchy. For example, the global comment on Bongi's draft essay reads as follows:

So, when should censorship be used, if ever? Bibliography? You must reference all sources in the text.

The comment is brief and unelaborated. There is no explanation or discussion, for example of when censorship should be used and there is no comment on the quality of the work overall. The presentation of the feedback is also of interest because the writing tends to be untidy, with comments scrawled on the text. The tone of the comments could be described as abrupt. For example, lecturer V says: "Come to a conclusion in your conclusion." When asked how he felt about this, Thulani says:

Well, there was this sentence, the one that I call it harsh. That sentence, that's it. . (" . . Expression clumsy. ..") I mean, she could have said something about my Sentence but she chose to use those words. It sounded harsh. I'm not happy with that.

To sum up, the written feedback originating from lecturers Y and V is brief and sketchy. The global comments are generally unelaborated. Corrections have been made but with few explanations. Neither uses the essay marking sheet other than to tick columns. (One student, Tracy, did find this useful and this will be discussed). It is interesting to note that both Lecturer Y and V are junior, contract staff. It is possible that they lack the skills to provide feedback in the way that more experienced lecturers do. It is possible that further training and working with the more experience lecturers would have helped them to acquire these skills. Greenbaum (1991), Paxton (1994) and Quinn (1999) all reached

similar conclusions about the need to provide essay markers with more training in the skills of providing written feedback. Greenbaum (1991), in her study of tutor's comments on first year legal writing at the Durban campus of UKZN found that "the ability of the tutors to give effective feedback depends to a large extent on their own understandings of the purposes and goals of the task" (77).

One of the specific areas in which less experienced lecturers can benefit from training is in the area of deal with student errors as a system. Taylor argues that

Most student errors are not random. They reflect the student's attempts to grapple with and articulate meaning. They are therefore open to a systematic approach, which can reveal problems with conceptual and epistemic meaning or with student misconception of task. . . . (cited in Bond, 146).

Working with an experienced teacher and engaging in dialogue around the purpose of feedback and its potential to facilitate academic development of the students might enable the junior lecturers to use the process more effectively.

It is noteworthy that despite receiving feedback that is brief, sketchy or unelaborated, students were able to effect improvements between the drafts and the final essays. This is evidenced in features of academic discourse such as improved modality, thesis statements, statements of intent, better coherence, better use of linking words and appropriate vocabulary. The length of the essays is also an indication of effort, if not always of improvement. (see table 2 for this information). This supports the research finding that the act of re-writing facilitates improvement (Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Polio et al, 1998; Robb et al 1998) and further indicates that even brief or sketchy feedback gives students clues that stimulate revision.

Tracy's case illustrates this pattern well. Her draft was also marked by Lecturer Y. She received 23 feedback points, to which she responded to 13. Her mark improved from 56% for the draft to 62% for the essay. The feedback from Lecturer Y is characteristically brief and there is an element of rubber stamping in the global comment, which says:

Good case study examples. Strong, assertive standpoint, but you need to ground these in research and evidence. Your argument sounds more like Denuto in "The Castle" than the judge.

However, this student perceived from the ticked columns on the marking sheet that the essay was average. She had been unaware of this before receiving the feedback. This is evident in the following extract from her interview:

- I: Would it be correct to say that if you hadn't had the feedback, you wouldn't have known that you needed to go and do more work?
- T: Yes.
- I: It's interesting, because the lecturer didn't write a lot.
- T: but just by looking at the ticks, you could see, because nothing was excellent. It was either good or average. Some of the things were good, which was fine, but some of the things were average. I think that she did it quite strictly on purpose so that we did raise our standards for the final. In some ways she gave us a bit of a fright.

Tracy felt positive about the opportunity to participate in the draft-response-redraft process and felt that it was a worthwhile experience. She also believed it had added to her development of academic literacy, as is evident in the following extract:

- I: Did you find that by actually taking the essay and working with it, did you then learn academic writing skills in that process?
- T: I think so, ja. I think I picked up a few actual writing skills, so I do.
- I: Will you be able to use those, like in other courses?
- T: Ja, I think not consciously, but subconsciously you do.

Tracy's case illustrates that even brief feedback can give students valuable information about how to improve individual essays and perhaps, ultimately, develop their academic discourse repertoire.

4.4.3.1 Detailed feedback

The feedback provided by Lecturers X and Z is characterised by meticulous use of the marking criteria sheet (see appendix 5). Both tick the relevant columns and provide detailed responses next to relevant sections of the marking sheet. Both explain to the

students what needs to be done to improve the essay. Both invite the students to come and see them if further explanation is required. Clear patterns of improvement are evident except in the case of Mpho, which has already been discussed.

Case Study: Sipho

Sipho's case demonstrates the effectiveness of the feedback provided by Lecturer Z⁸. Sipho, is a Zulu-speaking male student from a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal. He received 33 feedback points on his essay. He meticulously worked through these, visibly responding to 29. The length of his essay increased from 800 words in the draft to 1008 words in the final essay. There is also evidence of improved use of modality between his draft and his final essay. For example, in his draft, he says:

The results would be devastating to society such as conflict between the races, children would openly use bad language . . . and basically the morals amongst society would drop.

In the final essay “would” is modified to “could”. This change in modality expresses a more appropriate degree of certainty for an academic essay. Other constructive changes to the essay include better development of his argument, better substantiation of his points and better referencing.

The feedback given to the student, particularly in the global comment, is encouraging, recognising the intelligence of the student's argument despite the language problems in the essay:

You have made a serious attempt to develop an argument that is a full response to the issues raised by the topic. I get the feeling that your struggles with clear expression in English really hamper your full, clear expression of your level of insight. So you need to continue giving conscious attention to improving your mastery of expression in English.

⁸ Only one sample of an essay marked by Lecturer Z was collected. This was due to the fact that she had mostly marked work by L1 students. Several essays marked by her were unsuitable for this study.

This recognition of his ability was not perceived by the student, however. In his interview he says:

I know that I am struggling in terms of expressing. In the second instance she has to understand that we are from the different background and we are working in a second language. . . She might have some adjustment about that . . .

It would seem, from the student's point of view, despite the recognition of his difficulties expressed in the global comment, the lecturer still did not fully understand his situation. Nevertheless, he did find the comments encouraging:

I felt encouraged . . . there were a few comments on the first draft. Then I went to her. She told me where I have to improve it and then. . . ya.

I asked Sipho if he felt that he would have been able to improve his essay based on the written comments alone. His answer was the following:

S: No. I needed to see her to understand.

I: If you just had the written comments, would it still have helped you?

S: No. She gave me a number of ideas around the question. Some of the comments were not clear. I need her personal help as such . . . clarification.

This is similar to the view of respondent three in the focus group, who felt that she needed an interview with the lecturer in order to fully benefit from the feedback. This belief, expressed by several of the L2 students, that the written feedback alone was not sufficient to enable them to write the essays, casts doubt on the effectiveness of written feedback alone to mediate academic discourse. It could be argued, once again, that the written feedback is an initial stimulus which gives the students the information that they need to plan their next step. For some students, for example respondents 4 and 6 in the focus group, and Tracy, Thulani, and Bongzi from the case study group, the written feedback was sufficient and they were able to work on their own revisions. For other students, such as Sipho, Lebo and Mpho, the next step is to request an interview with the lecturer. In Lebo's case, the written feedback on her draft provided an incentive to go and see the lecturer, do further research and make significant changes to her essay.

I asked Sipho if he felt that the written feedback had helped him:

I: Does getting the written feedback on the essay help you? Especially if your home language isn't English?

S: It does help. It gives you your position . . . is it good or not.

I: Ok, so were you happy to have the opportunity to do the draft first.

S: Yes, I was very happy. It gives me a chance to correct my mistakes.

Again, the theme of error correction emerges in the discussion. It seemed to be a very dominant concern for all the students, regardless of their background. It would be impossible to change the legacy of the education that all these students have received, but it could be argued that a greater emphasis on the expression of ideas could have been fostered within this class, in terms of the criteria for assessment and the way in which the essay task was presented to the class.

Case Study: Samantha

Samantha's case study demonstrates the effectiveness of the feedback provided by Lecturer X. Twenty-five usable feedback points have been provided and a global comment of fifty-seven words. Samantha has responded to 60% of the feedback points. Samantha is respondent four in the focus group. She is a mature, English speaking student who went to a model C school. She experienced an unusual situation in that Lecturer X was also her English teacher for grade 12. The feedback on her essay is written in a personal, conversational style. This may have been facilitated by the long-standing, positive relationship between this lecturer and student. Samantha found the feedback clear and easy to respond to. She appreciated the honesty of the comments, saying:

I appreciate that. There's not point in trying to be subtle. If it's very blunt, then you know what to do.

There is a noticeable improvement in Samantha's second draft. The length extends from 814 words in the draft to 1806 in the final essay. She has strengthened her argument,

used more logical connectors and made the links between her argument and her substantiating examples more explicit. For example, after a quotation about censorship, she writes the concluding sentence:

This further highlights the sacrifice of “freedom of expression” and “individual liberty” over the need to maintain what is decided to be the “public good.”

This sentence reinforces her argument and links back to the essay topic. The primary theme of the feedback on Samantha’s essay is the issue of developing an academic voice. Lecturer X encourages her to speak with more authority:

Keep in mind that this is your argument and you need to state it, develop it and then restate it – with authority and confidence. Your essay is rather tentative – you make a statement then give quotations without relating them. So this and your argument will carry more weight – you’ll see!

When asked how she felt about this challenge from the lecturer, Samantha said:

When I read that it made me scared. . . It made me realise that I’ve got to give my opinion and stand by it no matter what. For me I just always do the general, easy road. Now I have to say what I thought and back it up.

Again, we see the theme of academic identity and academic voice emerging from the discussion. This is also discussed on p 116, where the focus group express their difficulties with expressing appropriate degrees of authority in their writing and with the difficulty of using the genre of academic writing without loss of individual style or originality. Shay argues that the descriptor “a stranger in strange lands” seems apt for students wrestling with the multi-layered complexity of academic tasks (McCarthy, 1987:233, cited in Shay, 1994:23). She argues that:

We are asking students to stand in a position of judgement . . . they must exert authority that they do not yet have. This requires a high degree of risk taking, especially for an ‘outsider’ (1994: 28).

Samantha reiterated the concerns expressed in the focus group about the need for more class preparation and input on writing the essay:

Before we write, in future, to maybe in class to have more time in class explaining how to, for example, not just to use quotes but to link them to the argument. What we did was very rushed. As part of a tutorial, practice using the quotes and so on.

This case study is a model example of how a draft-response-redraft process can work. In this case, many of the factors that contribute to a positive process are in place: a good student-teacher relationship, honest, detailed feedback, a motivated student and enough shared language to facilitate good communication about academic discourse. There is also evidence of a lecturer responding to the individual needs of a student, in this case the need to develop a stronger academic voice, using the feedback flexibly to respond appropriately to different students. The missing factor, in this case is sufficient class input on the academic genre and on the specific content of this essay.

4.4.4 The relationship between feedback and revision

Hyland (1998) found that student revisions could be related to the feedback in three different ways:

1. Revisions often closely followed corrections or suggestions made by the feedback (at times with no understanding)
2. Feedback could act as an initial stimulus and trigger a number of revisions which went beyond the issues addressed by the initial feedback. These are termed 'revision episodes'.
3. A third response was to avoid the issues raised in the feedback; to delete problematic feature without substituting anything else. (263)

There were also some revisions not related to feedback. The impetus for these came from students themselves or other forms of feedback.

In this section, the data in this study is examined to determine if the same patterns that emerged from Hyland's data are evident here and if there are any other patterns that can be discerned.

4.4.4.1 Revisions that closely followed corrections

Hyland found that in many cases, the students' revisions closely followed the corrections or suggestions in the feedback, sometimes with no understanding. An example of this in Sipho's case is evident in the interview:

- I: One thing puzzled me. You had a good sentence in your conclusion of your draft. You said: "Government has a responsibility to use censorship in such a way that those groups are not harmed while the public's right to know is not disregarded." That was a good sentence but you left it out. Do you remember why?
- S: Maybe, I'm not quite sure. Here the comment asks for simplification . . . that's why.

In this case, Sipho made a change that detracted from his essay by leaving out a sentence that would have enhanced his argument. His level of understanding of his own work and of the feedback did not enable him to discern that this was an important sentence from the draft that should have been retained.

Parkerson points out that it is sometimes tempting for lecturers to "take over" in correcting mistakes and shaping arguments when providing feedback. The essay might improve in these circumstances, but the learner will not necessarily develop as a writer (2000: 124). It is for this reason that recent research is advocating methods of providing feedback that promote greater learner autonomy and self-assessment (see 2.3.8).

4.4.4.2 Revision Episodes

Hyland found a pattern of responding where the feedback acts as an initial stimulus and triggers a number of revisions which went beyond the issues addressed by the initial feedback. Hyland terms these 'revision episodes'.

A good example of someone who used the feedback as a stimulus for a number of revision episodes is Mpho (see also page 121). Her essay was extensively reorganised based on the feedback comments and she received a comment saying "a tremendous effort" on her final essay. The essay was transformed from a fail to a mark of 52%, with the addition of a thesis statement, a statement of intent, a new case study and a

conclusion. Her academic language is noticeably improved, with markers such as “I am going to argue that” . . . and “to conclude my argument” more evident as well as linking words such as “moreover”. In the re-draft she has linked her quotations to her ideas, for example, “in accordance with Karam’s opinion . . . “These features as well as her mark indicate a significant improvement.

The student received a total of eight usable feedback points, of which she responded to seven (the eighth one was a grammatical error which she omitted in the re-draft). The lecturer (lecturer X) provided few in-text comments, following her already noted approach of using global comments to deal with extensive problems in an essay (see 4.4.2). Although the lecturer’s comments might be described as harsh, saying for example, “This is not a research essay . . . there is no evidence of a structured argument”, Mpho felt that the feedback was honest. She says, “It was encouraging feedback. It told me the truth about the essay.” When asked how she found the courage to make the extensive changes to the essay, Mpho says: “What encouraged me was the fact that it was harsh. I thought I had no choice. I had to face the lecturer. By going to the lecturer it helped me even more. That’s how I got confidence. I convinced myself that it would help me at the end.” This supports other research which finds that students value honest feedback, for example Hyland (1998) and Ferris et al (1997).

The lecturer wrote “Come and see me if you need help” at the end of the feedback. Mpho did have an interview with the lecturer, because, as she explained, her schooling did not prepare her for this type of essay. “At school we didn’t have our own creative essays. In History we had to just read and memorise. We were not taught about the structure. We only had what was in the books.” This supports the findings of Quinn (2000) and Kapp (1998) who point to the problems students experience when their schooling has prepared them for rote memorisation tasks and tertiary studies require higher order skills such as analysis, synthesis and critical thinking (see 1.2).

When asked if she would have been able to use the comments or understand the feedback if she had not been to see the lecturer, Mpho answered: “Maybe I wouldn’t because I didn’t know about the thesis statement. I wouldn’t be able to structure it correctly.” She felt that the comments were clear but that she didn’t understand the topic or the input she had received in class on how to structure the essay: “They did explain the topic but they

didn't describe the structure. They did explain but it wasn't clear. They did explain how to go about researching the essay but not how to structure." This echoes the comments of the focus group (see 4.3.2.5), and the questionnaire (see 4.2), where students felt that the input they had received in class was insufficient.

Mpho felt that she was able to transfer the skills she had learned in writing this essay to other essays. She says:

This will help me even in future. My other subjects are *Media 110*, *English 112* and *Drama*. I always remember this essay when I write others and it has helped me. I am passing now. . . It helps me with other essays. I can use the same system.

If students feel that the skills learned through using the draft-response-redraft process can be transferred to other essays and other subjects by using "the same system", then this process can contribute to a broader process of academic development.

It is clear that Mpho is a highly motivated individual. She says, "When I see I was failing then I go and ask, or I go to the library to look for information. . . I don't give up . . . I didn't want to fail. . . I knew that if I ignored the feedback I would fail." Her high degree of determination and motivation is an individual factor (see 2.3.7) which is significant in her academic development.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the written feedback on the draft-response-redraft process engaged in by Mpho because the face-to-face interview with the lecturer helped her significantly. She says: "That was more useful for me. Lecturer X went step by step explain thesis statement, structure, the body, how to make a conclusion." Nevertheless, it is clear the written feedback provided a stimulus that led to extensive changes and encouraged the student to seek the further help that she needed.

4.4.4.3 Avoidance of feedback

Hyland found that a common response to feedback was to avoid it or to delete problematic features without substituting anything else. This did not appear to be a very common pattern in this study. The analysis of usable feedback points that have been

acted on (see table 1) indicates that, in general, students did try to use the feedback. There was evidence of this strategy at times, in individual cases (see the discussion of John's work, below) but this could not be described as a key feature of response to feedback in this group.

John is an example of a very good student (his class mark is 76% and he received 80% for this essay) who felt positive about the draft-response-redraft process. He received 33 usable feedback points and responded to 27 of them. There are five feedback points where he avoided responding and did not substitute anything else. The following extract from John's interview highlights the nature of this pattern:

I: There are a couple of things you have glossed over, like here X has said . . .
"individuals more important than public good . . ." she asks "To whom?" and you've never actually answered that question. You've said "everybody deserves freedom of expression and a completely governed society doesn't allow for it. ." but you've glossed over her challenge here. Any comments on that?

J: Some of it I struggled a bit to get what she wanted, like I kind of knew what she wanted but I didn't know how to go about doing it, so I glossed over some stuff.

I: Ja. It's not easy to know how to change something. . .

J: especially when you have already got the whole thing written . . . it's difficult to go back . . .

I: yes this would require a lot of revision . . . as you say, working backwards. And this here . . . D asks "Do you see freedom of expression and freedom of access to information as the same thing?"

J: I also glossed over that. . .

I: It would require a good paragraph or two, just to deal with that . . . but I think it's nice that she's challenging you at the level of thinking . . .

J: It is good.

What is noticeable is that the feedback points that John has not been able to respond to easily are extending questions, challenging him at a subtle level of thought and argument. A response to these questions would possibly require extensive revision, which the student felt unable to do. Conrad and Goldstein (1999) found that revisions were seldom

successful if the feedback focused on “explanation, explicitness or analysis” (160). John’s case study seems to support this finding to some extent.

It is interesting that lecturer X does not provide feedback at this level of higher order thinking to students like Xoliswa and Mpho, in her group. This is evidence that teachers adapt the feedback provided to the needs of the student (Ferris et al, 1997). The tone of the comments could also be described as more collegial (compared to the more teacherly tone used with ‘weaker’ students). For example, “be encouraged to confidently state your case” on John’s draft compared to “What was your argument? You explored issues but didn’t actually structure your own take on the debate. Please ensure you do it” on Xoliswa’s essay.

Ferris et al (1997) found that the “weak” group received the most comments on grammar, while the “strong” group was addressed with the fewest imperatives. This confirms reports from several studies (Freedman & Sperling, 1985; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris et al, 1997; Walker & Elias, 1987) that teachers “take a more collegial, less directive stance when responding to stronger students, while focusing more on surface-level problems with weaker students” (cited in Ferris et al 1997; 174).

It is also noticeable that John’s essay received a very high number of feedback points (33) but this could be explained by the fact that his draft was long (2142 words) and therefore the lecturer had more to respond to. It is also noticeable that John added important examples to his essay that are unrelated to the usable feedback points.

It was John’s perception that the draft-response-redraft process was useful for this essay and for the development of academic discourse. The following extract from the interview highlights this:

I: Did you feel that going back to your essay and working with it again helped you to develop your writing skills?

J: Ja.

I: Have you been able to transfer those skills to other essays?

J: It has helped. My writing has improved as a result of the feedback process.

It is interesting that John felt that the process of working on the essay helped him, not only with this essay but also with his writing skills and the development of academic discourse. This belief is also evident in the following extract:

I: Then, just some small things . . . you have changed some wording, for example, “abate to diminish” “portrayed to cited”, um do you think that kind of feedback is also useful?

J: That’s helping the writing . . . the quality of the writing, because content is only half of it . . . it’s how you put things across. I think it is important to pick up little grammatical errors as well.

To sum up, the pattern of avoiding feedback in this essay can be explained by the fact that the feedback was offering a challenge at the level of higher order thinking, a response to feedback which would have required extensive changes. The changes that could more easily be made have been responded to by the student.

The students in this study generally did try to respond to feedback points rather than ignoring them or deleting without substitution. There are individual cases where this happens in the essays but they do not amount to overall strategies for any of the students.

4.4.4.4 Revisions unrelated to feedback

Hyland found a fourth pattern in her data, which was that some revisions in student essays did not seem to be related to the written feedback at all (265). She suggests that the impetus for such revisions might have come from the students themselves, or they might have been influenced by oral feedback from the teacher or peer feedback. Hyland concludes that “despite the importance of these alternative sources, teacher feedback was an important influence on student revision. However, the extent of that role varied from student to student” (1998: 265).

Case Study: Thulani

Thulani is a male, Zulu speaking student from a historically disadvantaged township school. There are a total of 35 usable feedback points on his draft. He has responded to 20 of these points. He did not go to speak to the lecturer, and worked with the written feedback only. What is significant is that his essay is very different to his draft. He has written extensive notes and changed the essay significantly. There were at least 10 points in the essay where appropriate new information has been added to the essay, 6 places where the wording is more academic and 16 points at which references have been added. Many of these changes can not be traced to specific feedback points. This evidence of improvement occurred despite the fact that the feedback received was problematic (as will be discussed in further detail) and may support the argument that revision, in itself, results in improvement (Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Polio et al, 1998; Robb et al, 1986; see 2.3.10). It may well be the case here that feedback is merely the stimulus for such revision.

The written feedback that Thulani received from lecturer V was scrawled in pencil in the margins of his work. The cover sheet had used the grading system with a series of ticks but contained no global comments. There were no encouraging comments and the tone tended to be abrupt and impersonal. For example, where Thulani had written, “The BCCSA found nothing wrong with the drama, rightfully so indeed”, the comment in the margin was: “we don’t want to know your opinion” (underlining lecturer’s).

When asked how he felt about the comments he had received, Thulani said the following:

- T: Well, most of them are straightforward, ja. Like this one. Like I should have written . . . that was a bit negative and basically, you know referencing, there are not quotations in text. I only used that my bibliography but I did not call anything in text, so it’s OK, the comments upon that. They were straightforward and truthful.
- I: How did you feel when she said “come to a conclusion in your conclusion”?
- T: Well, there was this sentence, the one I call it harsh. That sentence, that’s it. . . “clumsy expression” . . . I mean, she could have said something about my sentence but she chose to use those words. It sounded harsh. I am not happy with that.

Later in the interview, the researcher asked if he had hoped for encouraging comments. Thulani's reply was:

T: Yes, it would be nice; I mean you expect that from them. We expect that she might not (inaudible) she saw the mistake I had made but at least she should have said, OK you know you put more effort but ja, what . . . was a little more appreciative and I know it's my duty to work hard. We need that.

Despite this element of disappointment, Thulani still found the comments useful, saying

T: Well, I think that my essay was bad and it really helped me, here comments because most of them were straightforward and were not like so I just knew OK my work is not good I should do something to change that.

There is an indication that students do have a need for praise or at least recognition of their efforts. Parkerson has the following to say on this subject:

As much as students need to know what it is that they are doing that is wrong, they also need to know what they are doing that is right. Contrary to what one expects, students do not always know why they get good marks, or when they are doing something particularly well. Students need to know what to repeat the next time they write an essay (2000:127).

Although Thulani perceived himself as having average motivation, there is evidence of a lot of hard work in his essay. Did the feedback encourage him to do this work? It appears from the analysis that it did, because although some of the comments were perceived as harsh, he was able to take them and use them to his advantage. The feedback was a stimulus for further revision.

There is evidence here that students value honest feedback. This confirms the findings of other studies (Conrad and Goldstein, 1990; Patthey-Chavez and Ferris et al, 1997) which find that L2 students, particularly, distrust feedback that is too positive, perceiving it as dishonest. Ferris et al note that misunderstandings of this nature may:

result from a mismatch of cultural expectations: a student, for instance, may misinterpret a teacher's praise or questions as signs of incompetence, as

abdications of authority (Goldstein and Conrad, 1990; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris et al, 1997), or as indications that there is nothing wrong with the paper (1997: 176).

Delpit (1988) found that African American students valued directness in their teacher's responses, taking this as a sign of authority. The same students found the indirect comments of Caucasian teachers very confusing. For example, a command such as "Sit down!" might be phrased as "Would you like to sit down?" Delpit found that this masking of authority through indirect language led to a lack of respect. African American students expected figures of authority to act and speak with authority, using direct language. There is evidence in this study that the L2 students value very direct communication for its honesty.

4.4.4.5 Potential miscommunication

Case Study: Lebo

Lebo is a L2 speaker of English who has a good relationship with lecturer X. She says that "she (the lecturer) talks freely and the whole class is entitled . . ." Lebo felt confident, on this basis, to request an interview about the written feedback she had received on her draft. She received very detailed feedback on her draft and acted on 9 of the 15 usable feedback points. The length of her essay increases from 384 words in the draft to 1190 in the final essay. An analysis of her essay reveals that she has significantly improved her work, adding two case studies, a statement of intent, a key quotation, a bibliography and a discernable effort to argue her case. This would appear to be a clear example of successful feedback at work, but the interview with Lebo revealed that two important misunderstandings arose.

The first misunderstanding related to the use of a thesis statement. When asked if the feedback experience had been a positive or a negative one for her, Lebo answered by saying:

L: Well, there are probably a couple of things that I didn't agree with.

I: For example?

- L: The thesis statement that I am supposed to have . . . I actually thought that I had it . . . but probably I didn't put it in the right words that she wanted . . . and probably because I didn't like talk . . . it's informal . . . I just write down things as they come . . . That's my downfall . . . informal language . . . so that's the problem that I had.

A lack of mutual understanding between lecturer and student is evident here, because Lebo believed that she had written a thesis statement but the lecturer still commented that the essay lacked a thesis statement and structure. The written feedback provided Lebo with an incentive to go and see the lecturer to clarify these issues.

The second area of misunderstanding around the written feedback relates to the use of the course reader. In three separate places on the draft, the lecturer exhorts Lebo to use the readings in the course reader. An analysis of Lebo's final essay reveals that she still has not used the course reader. When asked about this, the following interaction takes place:

- I: You have added a lot . . . you have added the bibliography. You haven't referred in the essay to your essential readings . . . so did the lecturer discuss that with you?
- L: I don't think we talked about it. I didn't actually use the text book.

It is clear from this that Lebo took no notice of the advice in the written feedback to use the course reader and continued to ignore it, possibly because it was not discussed in the face-to-face interaction with the lecturer. This is an example of the written feedback being misunderstood or ignored.

Despite the misunderstandings that arose, Lebo still felt that the draft-response-redraft process was helpful. When talking about her first draft, she says:

- L: I didn't even reference, I didn't do a lot of things but afterwards I . . .
- I: You knew what to do?
- L: I would put everything together . . . I think by doing a second draft I can structure it properly
- I: I notice that in the draft you have the basic skeleton and then in the main essay you have shifted things around and added a lot. It's definitely come together much more.

- L: At least with the first draft you can put down the things that you think might go in the second draft and then you can put it into more academic language

Although Lebo still was not happy with her final mark and there is evidence that communication broke down at times in the process, there is also evidence that the draft-response-redraft process helped her to get her ideas down on paper, to improve her essay and to acquire aspects of academic literacy, for example referencing and research skills.

4.4.5 Usable feedback points and improvement

Case Study: Xoliswa

A predictable pattern of feedback and response might be that a greater number of usable feedback points acted on by a student would result in more evidence of improvement in the essay. In the case of Xoliswa, this was not found to be true. An analysis of the essay revealed 47 usable feedback points of which the student had fairly meticulously responded to 37. The lecturer's comment on her final essay, however, said: "You have not responded to the feedback, hence no real improvement."

In this case, the student had systematically worked through her essay, correcting all the errors that had been identified in feedback points. Some of the changes are fairly minor, meaning-preserving changes, ranging from simple word substitutions, for example, changing "the issue *about* censorship" to "the issue *of* censorship", to completing references, inserting quotation marks and using more academic language (for example, "the second issue" is changed to "the second case study"). Some of the changes are more complex, such as the addition of explanations. For example, the student draft states "Most censorship was undertaken for commercial reasons." The lecturer has underlined "commercial" and written "explain" in the margin. The student has responded by adding the following explanation: "for instance, a censor censored a project if it was offensive, in fear that it would not sell." In another instance, the student has, without a prompt, added

the explanation “because it is educational” to the statement “viewers in favour of Gaz-lam say that it does not need to be censored.”

When asked how she felt about the feedback, she said:

X: I think it was quite helpful because looking at my second draft I think it was much better because I corrected my second draft according to the comments they gave me. It's quite an effort to do a first draft and then create a second one, so . . .

I: So your response was quite positive. Did you feel that the comments that were made were fair or did you feel that something in here was not true?

X: I thought they were fair when I looked at my draft.

From an analysis of the material it is clear that the student has worked through the feedback points systematically and made the changes suggested to the best of her ability. Why then does the lecturer say (in what would appear to be an angry tone) “no improvement”? It would appear that although the lecturer had highlighted all these feedback points, in her mind they were not important. What was important was that the student provide a thesis statement and structure her argument around that. When asked in the questionnaire what aspects of the essay she tends to focus on, lecturer X said: “Structure of essay, argument development/quality, referencing/use of readings.”

When Xoliswa was asked about the fact that the lecturer saw no improvement, the following discussion took place:

I: Was it easy to understand the comments?

X: Not really . . . some things were confusing.

I: Like this part here where it says you need to give your thesis statement and then systematically use the information that you have to support your point?

X: because I don't think I did that thing.

I: Did you understand what she meant by that?

X: To my thinking, I thought maybe she said you need to first give what you think about censorship in your introduction, isn't it, and what you are

going to talk about. Explain to your reader exactly what you are going to talk about.

I: So when she talks about thesis . . .

X: What is it?

I: You're still not clear what that is?

X: No.

I: (brief explanation follows)

X: Oh, Ok. I see she is still confused about "where's your thesis statement?"

I: You see I was very puzzled with yours because on your final essay it says "you haven't responded to the feedback, hence no real improvement." Did you think that was a fair statement?

X: It's fair because if I didn't respond, she had no choice but to not to improve my draft because I didn't respond to what she wanted.

I: but you thought that you had?

X: I thought that I had tried.

It soon became apparent to the interviewer that this student did not understand what a thesis statement was or what was required of her. She needed more input on this issue than was provided in class. When asked why she did not go to ask the lecturer for help (despite the fact that the lecturer had specifically said "come and talk to me" in her feedback), the student replied, "It's like you are complaining or undermining her." This confirms the findings of other researchers in this field (Paxton, 1994, Starfield, 2000) who have found that students' perceptions of lecturers and tutors as authority figures who should not be questioned undermines the success of communication around feedback issues. This topic was raised in the focus group discussion (see 4.3.2.6). When the interviewer asked Xoliswa if it was fair to say that there was a communication breakdown here, because what the lecturer had tried to communicate was not understood, Xoliswa emphatically agreed. She nevertheless felt positive about the process, saying, "It always helps to get feedback" at the end of the interview.

In this case, there is not a clear relationship between the number of usable feedback points responded to and evidence of improvement. The problems with this essay were systemic,

having their roots in the student not understanding fundamental concepts such as thesis and thesis statement. The student responded to the individual feedback points but this did not remedy the more foundational problems. Paxton found that “when tutors respond mainly to grammatical problems, students are given a limited notion of composing and they might be led to believe that if they corrected the grammatical errors, the essay would be acceptable” (1993:63). In this case, substantial misunderstandings arose in the course of the draft-response-redraft process. It could be argued that this student required more help than was provided by the standard class input and written feedback process. The student was also unwilling to voluntarily approach the lecturer for help. The written feedback alone was not sufficient to help this student. It is, however, difficult to identify and assist a student who is ‘at risk’ because fundamental aspects of academic literacy are not in place, without stigmatising her.

4.4.6 Problematic drafts

The focus group highlighted the problem that students do not always put their best effort into writing the draft, knowing that they will only be graded when the final essay is marked. When asked if the drafting and feedback process was the best way of helping students, student two responded by saying:

But you know sometimes when you get a draft; you know it’s not really the real thing so you hand in something. So I don’t think it’s the only way.

This sentiment was also expressed by Garth, when he said:

I remember being pretty rushed to get this draft in and I actually didn’t have a lot of references and I found it quite hard to get my head around this topic. I couldn’t really come up with a thesis, so I was expecting a comment like that.

Garth is a first language speaker of English who had a privileged education. His class mark was 52%. He didn’t feel motivated to put a lot of work into his draft.

Another student who admitted to not working hard on her draft was Bongi. Although her mother tongue is isiZulu, she had attended a Model C school and had a class mark of 54%. When asked how she had responded to the feedback, Bongi said:

B: I wasn’t surprised because I think I did it like two days before, so I wasn’t

surprised.

I: Oh, so you did the draft in a rush?

B: Yes.

Later in the interview, she says:

I just think it was fair marking this. I didn't put much effort into it.

Bongi's draft was marked by lecturer V. There are 35 usable feedback points, of which Bongi has responded to 21. Lecturer V has made many corrections at a micro level. For example, in Bongi's sentence "Places where censorship should have occurred is in the Nando's chicken advertisement and in the Happy Sindane case", Lecturer V has changed "were" to "where" (accidentally inserting the 'h' in censorship), "should have" to "did", "occurred" to "occur" and "is" to "are". However, a very limited global comment is provided. All the marker has said is: "Bibliography? You must reference all sources you use in the text". The style of the feedback is brief, characterised by untidy handwriting and a lack of praise. This is consistent with the style noted for this lecturer (see 4.4.3). Bongi expected more detail in the feedback, saying, "I would have preferred more because I just felt this wasn't much. Normally they write a paragraph."

However, despite the fact that Bongi had written the draft in a rush and the fact that the feedback was brief and sketchy, there is evidence of improvement in the essay. Bongi has made a real effort to use the feedback constructively. For example, she has provided a bibliography and references. Where the tutor has written "based on these examples, does censorship appear to be necessary or not?" Bongi has added a concluding sentence, saying:

Based on these examples, we can prove that censorship is vital in the media and individual liberty should be considered only to a certain extent.

This concluding comment makes her argument in the essay much clearer.

Once again, it is clear that the draft-response-redraft process, even when imperfectly implemented, can be beneficial to students who are working to acquire essay writing skills, which ultimately contributes to their academic discourse repertoire. Bongi indicated in the interview that she believes that working on a draft helps students to

develop their academic writing skills. When asked if she thinks it is a worthwhile process, she says:

B: It is, because you get to improve.

I: Do you think that by taking your draft and working with it you are learning academic skills? Does it teach you how to write when you have to go back to your draft and improve it?

B: Yes it does because if you just do one thing they give you and they just give back to you; you never go back to it. You just leave it like that.

Bongi's opinion again confirms the findings that students believe that the process is beneficial. This belief is a starting point for using the process to acquire academic discourse.

4.4.7 Summary

The cases that have been discussed illustrate that there is no clear relationship between the usable feedback points and improvement. Individual student factors and other contextual issues such as the relationship between lecturer and student make each case unique. It is clear, however that the draft-response-redraft process is a dynamic one which often results in constructive interaction and positive developments in essay writing. The act of rewriting is, in itself, a beneficial process. In certain cases, students do not fully benefit from the process because the building blocks of academic literacy are not in place. It might be possible to identify students who are at risk, at the drafting stage. It seems that there is a need for lecturers to initiate further intervention at this stage because students are sometimes inhibited by their beliefs about the inaccessibility of authority figures. This intervention could be arranged in a way that did not draw attention to or stigmatise these students.

The evidence from the questionnaires, the focus group, and the case studies clearly shows that the students in this study feel positive about the draft-response-redraft process and value the written feedback they have received. The fact that they value the feedback is further evident in the extent to which the students have tried to use and respond to the usable feedback points. Furthermore, there is evidence from the analysis of the feedback

points that many of the instances in which students responded to the feedback resulted in a degree of improvement in their final essays. This supports the 1997 study by Ferris et al in which they found that “most revisions which could be linked to written teacher feedback resulted in text improvement” (1997: 176). However, as Hyland points out:

Although students themselves are so positive about written feedback and appear to value comments and corrections on all aspects of their texts, the contribution of such feedback to students’ development is still unclear (1998:257)

This study is concerned particularly with contribution of the draft-response-redraft process to the development of academic literacy and the acquisition of academic discourse. Again, the precise contribution of written feedback to this development is not clear. What did emerge from this study was the fact that the potential learning opportunity, indicated by the positive student attitudes was not being fully capitalised on in this course. Certain problems with the initiation and implementation of the process with this group of students meant that the potential of the learning opportunity was not fully realised.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

5.1 Conclusions

One of the most striking features of the group of students in this study is the diversity of the group (see table 2). This group represents a microcosm of the larger student population at UKZN and illustrates the complexity of catering to such a diverse student population (see 1.2). It is primarily for this reason that tertiary institutions in South Africa are shifting to an infusion model of academic development which “takes into account the students’ prior learning experiences and caters for diversity” (Scott, 1993 cited in Paxton, 1994:4). In this model, foundation courses are embedded in mainstream programmes with a focus on developing “the ways of thinking and knowing in the discipline” (McKenna, 2003: 65). Gee highlights the importance of this when he argues that academic literacy is as much about “ways of using language” as it is about “the beliefs, values and attitudes of the group” (1990:127).

This study shows that, in this group, the students potentially have a range of different values and beliefs about reality, truth, language and knowledge. These beliefs are based on their socio-economic, cultural and educational backgrounds. Each student also has unique attitudes towards academic discourse. Some wish to become fully acculturated into the academic discourse community in order to achieve academic success. These students adopt the norms and values of the discourse community unquestioningly. In many of these cases, academic discourse is closer to discourses they have already encountered in middle class, westernised homes and schools. Other students experience conflict with the process, desiring access to the powerful discourse of academia and the success it can bring, without losing their existing identity and discourses from home and other social, political and cultural contexts. For these students, academic discourse is a contested terrain and they do, at times, feel like “strangers in a foreign land” (McCarthy, 1987:233, cited in Shay, 1994: 23). Academic discourse is closely related to and has its origins in the English language and predominantly Western frames of reference (see 2.1.3 and 2.1.4). This current-traditional view of the world is influenced by positivist science, capitalism and powerful Western ideas about individualism and self-actualisation. This is

in conflict with many non-western cultures which value the interconnectedness of people above individualism (Ramanathan and Atkinson, 2000: 48). Concepts taught in writing classes, particularly in the process approach, such as voice, peer review, critical thinking and textual ownership have their foundation in western frames of reference and ideas about the primacy of the individual.

Gee argues that students require a “scaffolded apprenticeship” into academic discourse (1990: 139). The rhetorical processes and conventions of academic discourse need to be made explicit to students (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988: 19). However, an apprenticeship that does not take into account the rhetorical and political issues discussed above, will run the risk of acculturating students, possibly causing them to leave behind the richness of their own experience and adopt a new set of values. Raimes argues that we should, in teaching academic literacy, avoid indoctrinating students. Students need a “critical distance” on academic literacy in order to use it effectively (1991:416). If UKZN is to be the “premier university of African scholarship”(see chapter 1.2), ways need to be found to not only integrate the experiences of African students in a meaningful way, but to facilitate a process of transformation which would foreground the primacy of African values and frames of reference while maintaining a productive relationship with Western academic traditions.

Delpit argues that discussions about the values, ways of knowing and thinking embedded in academic discourse are required. She goes further to say that: “Teachers must allow discussions of oppression to become a part of language and literature instruction” (1995: 165). It is important to validate the discourses that students already know and add to their repertoire of available voices and discourses. Students need access to the codes of powerful discourses and to feel comfortable with accessing and using these codes, for example the formal conventions of academic discourse (see 2.1.2). Discipline-specific academic literacies which enable students to understand how language creates meaning and how knowledge is encoded need to be developed (McKenna, 2004: 282). Quinn points out that there is a close relationship between discipline content and rhetorical processes (2000: 118). Lecturers need to examine the “commonsense” and subconscious nature of their discipline-specific literacies in order to articulate and teach how language functions to express knowledge, ideas and values within their disciplines (McKenna, 2004: 284).

The rhetorical foundations for academic discourse (see 2.1.3) should be discussed because these reflect ways of experiencing the world and making sense of it. Ideas about language, writing and knowledge are foundational to academic discourse. Students need to build awareness of the relationship between language and context and of the language choices that are available to them that are effective in particular contexts.

The data from this study supports research (Paulus, 1999; Hyland, 1998; Conrad and Goldstein, 1999) that indicates that students have very positive attitudes to the draft-response-redraft process and to the feedback they have received. Students also showed that they valued the feedback by the extent to which they tried to respond to the feedback. However, the research also showed that these positive attitudes and the potential of the process to mediate academic literacy was not fully utilised. The information from the questionnaires, the focus group and the individual students indicated that they desired more input on how to use academic discourse effectively. The following aspects seem to be specific areas that emerged from both the literature and this study:

- Discipline-specific work with synthesis of material from multiple sources is vital, especially for students from ex DET schools who have not worked with analysis and synthesis at a school level.
- Academic development courses need to work with the concepts of plagiarism, intertextuality and referencing (see 2.1.7 and 2.1.8). Exercises and discussions on these issues help students to understand the rhetorical foundations of academic writing and the rationale for referencing, which is a core feature of academic discourse. Angelil-Carter argues that working with these concepts is a powerful way of helping students to develop a critical voice. Working effectively with referencing can give students more confidence to make choices in their writing and to use the discourse of a discipline effectively (2000: 174).
- Students need to experiment with developing an academic “voice” which would allow them to speak with an appropriate degree of authority when writing academic essays. Degrees of certainty are a related area that students find difficult

and specific work on modality can be very useful in this regard. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (1985) provides a system for discussing these issues although time constraints are a problem in a course of this nature.

- Students need a shared language with which to discuss academic discourse with each other and with the lecturers (Paxton, 1994: 80). This metalanguage makes it more possible to reflect on one's practice and develop one's skills. In the focus group it became clear that respondent two, who was also studying *Academic Communication Studies*, was better able to articulate the difficulties with writing an essay, because he had the language with which to do so. The *Media 130: Writing and the Media* students would have benefited from more input on these concepts and exercises to develop these skills (for example, writing a thesis statement, or writing a statement of intent).
- The training of junior staff emerged as an important issue (see 4.4.3). It was clear that the less experienced teachers also need to fully understand the rationale for feedback and how it can best be used to facilitate academic development. This apprenticeship could involve evaluating and discussing examples of student work with experienced lecturers in order to develop a repertoire of comments and strategies for responding. Lecturers also need to understand the rhetorical foundations for the conventions they are teaching and to be able to discuss these with students. Without this training, there will be inconsistencies in the feedback cycle and the potential of the learning opportunity will not be optimised.
- The role of developmental feedback and integrated assessments needs to be fully developed. The students' desire for longitudinal continuity in the feedback provided in the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* course, which would have enabled them to assess their own progress, was clearly expressed. The students suggested that a lecturer work with a group of students in the course of a semester in order to gain a better sense of each student's particular issues with academic writing and in order to develop materials and discussions to assist them with these issues. It was also felt that discussions in smaller groups would be beneficial as well as individual consultations, where necessary. It is also possible that journal

writing or dialogue journals would assist students to reflect on their own progress (Fulwiler, 1987).

- This study shows that feedback (sometimes regardless of quality or quantity) is a stimulus for revision. This supports other studies which have shown that revision results in improvement (Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Polio et al, 1998; Robb et al, 1986). This study also found, as Ferris et al did, that most revisions linked to usable feedback points resulted in improvement (1997). However, students need to understand the purpose of the feedback and how it is intended to be used. Input on the theory of the genre-process approach to writing may help them to understand the rationale behind the process and to use it more effectively. Hyland concluded that:

There needs to be a more open teacher/student dialogue on feedback, since the data suggests that the feedback situation has great potential for miscommunication and misunderstanding (1998:255).

The data for this study also included several examples of misunderstandings that arose (see 4.4.4.5). The students desired more sustained dialogue over a longer period of time in order to be able to better gauge their own progress.

This study found, as Hyland did, that there were striking differences in the way in which usable feedback was received by and responded to by individual students. There were also marked differences in lecturer feedback patterns. Hyland notes that the written teacher feedback:

varies due to the individual differences in needs and student approaches to writing. It also appears to be affected by the different experiences that students bring with them to the classroom (1998: 280).

Individual students may have very different perceptions of what constitutes useful feedback, as was evident in the focus group and the case studies. Hyland argues that these individual responses to the draft-response-redraft process are very important and goes further to say that:

It may be that “good” revision and “good” feedback can only really be defined with reference to the individual writers, their problems and their reasons for writing (275).

Lecturer feedback patterns, especially those of lecturer X illustrated how a teacher can respond to individual needs by using written feedback. For example, the feedback she gave to Samantha, John and Xoliswa differed substantially in content and tone. This facility to provide individualised attention is one of the potential strengths of the process (Ferris et al, 1997). However, the students in this study repeatedly expressed their frustration with a perceived lack of consistency in the draft-response-redraft process. The suggestions that emerged from the focus group for developing a better sense of continuity in the process (see 4.3.2.9) included having a single lecturer mark an individual's work in the course of a semester and tutorial discussions where exercises could be used to address particular problems experienced by that group of students. Hyland also suggests that work in groups may enable students to compare their experiences of feedback with other students, possibly helping them to see that there are many ways of responding to feedback and to develop individual strategies that are effective (1998:281).

5.2 Recommendations for further research

The draft-response-redraft process is a highly complex human interaction. This makes research in this area both complicated and fascinating. It is clear from this study and many others that the feedback and the draft-response redraft process have the potential to assist with the development of academic writing skills and to mediate access to the academic discourse community. However, the wide range of individual student factors, the need for substantial groundwork and facilitation of the process as well as logistical problems such as class size and time constraints make it difficult for institutions to fully exploit its potential as a learning tool. Hyland argues that “a better understanding of both positive and negative aspects of teacher written feedback is necessary if writing teachers are to exploit its potential most effectively” (1998: 281). Further research is needed, particularly in the South African context.

Firstly, we need a better understanding of the students and their needs. The complex socio-economic and institutional context of South African environment requires that we address the issue of students being “problematised” (McKenna, 2003: 62) because of

historical educational disadvantage. Rose (1988) argues that marginalised students can “cross the boundary” if they encounter teachers who “recognise that disadvantage is constructed by the system, not a characteristic of people” (cited in Ivanic, 1998: 83). Teachers need to develop a sense of “plausibility” (see page 57) which includes an understanding of the diversity of student backgrounds and a sensitivity to the needs of disadvantaged students. Further research in the South African context is required in order to understand how students respond to feedback.

There is an absence in the literature of longitudinal studies of individual South African students. These studies would better enable us to assess the impact of the draft-response-redraft process on the extent to which students are able to integrate changes made in a draft-response-feedback cycle to their long term development of academic literacy. More detailed insight is needed into how students respond to draft-response-redraft process and how they interact with teacher written feedback. Hyland notes that “researchers have stressed the need for more studies which consider the effects of feedback within the total context of teaching” (1998: 257). She emphasises the importance of contextual factors, individual student responses and student perspectives.

Further research is also required into methods for mediating academic literacy. Researchers and teachers need to work out how to make the epistemological and rhetorical foundations of discipline specific literacies more explicit. The unanswered question is: how do we teach the conventions of academic literacy effectively and contextually? Answering this question requires working with subject lecturers in mainstream courses to analyse processes and work out methods for making both the conventions and rhetorical processes of discipline-specific literacies more explicit. Starfield argues that it is:

. . . vital that students are taught the required skills and the lecturers ‘surface’ the many ground rules which are taken for granted by established academics. These can then be assessed. By developing a shared language with students, in which terms like evidence, claim, argument, structure and so on are used, lecturers can then develop valid assessment procedures which enable students to develop arguments (2000:108).

We need to research ways in which the draft-response-redraft process can be introduced to the students in such a way that there an ongoing dialogue established between teachers

and students about their aims and expectations with regard to feedback. There were problems inherent in the ways in which the process studied for this paper was initiated with the *Media 130: Writing and the Media* class. Ways of establishing a contextual framework for students so that students understand the rationale for the process genre approach as well as the rhetorical foundations for and conventions of academic writing need to be explored. As teachers begin to explain the rationale for the teaching approach, students are better able to understand and respond to feedback. This study clearly showed that more preparation and scaffolding was required for this particular draft-response-redraft process. The requirements of the task, the criteria for assessment, analysis of the topic, research and referencing; and the rationale for referencing all required further discussion. This could reduce the potential for miscommunication which is inherent in this process and which has been clearly seen in this study and others.

Further, this process should have a political component, which allows for a discussion of language and power in the classroom, exploring the roots of academic discourse in powerful Western ideologies and middle class values. Delpit argues that “We need to talk about the relationship between language and power in tertiary institutions and in the wider society” (1995: 165). Methods need to be developed for encouraging students to reflect on (and validate) the discourses they already know and use and the relationship of these to academic discourse. There should be an emphasis on student choice and on expanding their repertoire of language choices so that they can begin to use academic discourse confidently, to their own individual purposes.

Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) found that both L1 and L2 students seem to be limited in their range of strategies for dealing with teacher feedback, even in situations where the feedback is understood by the students (156). In this study this was evident even with a capable, L1 student (see 4.4.4.3); difficulties were encountered when he tried to integrate the feedback into his own writing. Further research into student strategies for dealing with feedback is required so that this knowledge can be utilised in the classroom.

Recent trends, which highlight the importance of self-assessment and giving learners greater control over the draft-response-redraft process, need further research. These methods facilitate self-monitoring and learner autonomy (see 2.3.9). Muncie, for example, argues that feedback is only effective if students analyse and evaluate the essay

themselves (2000: 52). These strategies aim to give students the confidence to make choices for themselves and are worthy of further research. Lees, for example, argues that:

Our covering students' papers with suggestions and corrections is not the same thing as leading the students to revise for themselves . . . Student writers, in learning to be serious, need to learn how to hope – how to ignore the evidence that their ability has so far produced and believe in the possibility of producing something else. Among other things such belief is a skill: it can be learned, both by students and by teachers, and it ought to be . . . writing requires as its driving force, an ability to believe, in the face of evidence to the contrary that one can find language for something that has not yet been said. We need to give students the space to develop this belief (1988: 267).

The data for this study also revealed that students, particularly in the South African context, have particular beliefs about lecturer authority and accessibility that impact on the draft-response-redraft process. It is possible that the more positive attitudes to feedback reported in the 1990s (see 2.3.6) are related to changing approaches to the teaching of writing in that era and to changes in power relations in the classroom, with teaching becoming more interactive and less authoritarian. These changes, while allowing for more dynamic writing teaching, can be culturally problematic for some students who expect a more authoritarian style of teaching and find it difficult to approach teachers for help due to these beliefs. Research in the South African context is required to better understand how students respond to authority and what changes in the classroom would facilitate better communication.

It became clear that many L2 students, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, are still struggling with problems that, at times, seem overwhelming. Students in the focus group and individuals such as Sipho felt that there was a need for lecturers to have a better understanding of the specific needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The attitude of L2 students to error has been shown to be a particular area for concern, both in this study and Hyland's study. Students often express a desire to have their errors corrected but become despondent when meticulous error correction highlights the extent of the language problems encountered. South African students from the former DET schools are accustomed to having every error corrected. It is possible that they find a degree of security in this familiar practice. However, tertiary institutions, such as UWC often prefer to provide feedback only on grammatical errors that obscure meaning and to

encourage surface editing only when the student is close to the end of the writing process, believing that “language use improves when students are comfortable with what they want to say and how they want to say it” (Nightingale, 1986, cited in Parkerson, 2000: 125). Bond points out, however, that “it is no easy task to accurately determine whether the source of student problems is linguistic or cognitive, or to what extent this distinction is helpful for diagnostic purposes” (1993:148). Further research is required into the extent to which error correction should be used in a South African context, and at what stage of the draft-response-redraft process this is most effective.

5.3 Concluding comments

It is clear from this study that the draft-response-redraft process is something that students feel very positive about and which has the potential to facilitate the development of academic literacy and to mediate access to the academic discourse community. However, in order for this process to be effective, well planned intervention is required at the point at which the process is initiated with a group of students. Lecturers and students need to share a common understanding of and a common language for discussing academic discourse, process writing, conventions of academic writing, the purpose of feedback and how it will be used in the draft-response-redraft process. In this way a contractual framework needs to be established with the students and repeated frequently to provide a context in which the communication of the draft-response-redraft process can effectively take place. The classroom should also be a place where discussions about different discourses can take place, validating student’s existing discourses while providing access to academic discourse. Discussions about the power relations implicit in academic discourse are also essential.

The emphasis should be on providing students with more choices and on encouraging them to develop the skills to assess their own essays. Less experienced tutors also need more training in these issues in order to participate in the process more effectively. The students in this study also felt the need for more ongoing communication about their developing academic writing skills in the course of a semester. For logistical reasons, it was suggested that this could be provided in a small group, tutorial setting so that a lecturer could get to know a particular group better and help them to work with their developing academic literacy on an ongoing basis.

There can be no doubt that students' ability to understand, integrate and critique the written discursive practices central to academic study is of crucial importance to their success at university and more broadly in the broader social environment. It is hoped that this study, along with other similar research, will make a small contribution to this process and more generally to the process of educational transformation to which so many Academic Literacy practitioners have been committed for the past twenty five years.

References

African National Congress (1994) *Policy Framework for Education and Training*.

Angelil-Carter, S. (2000) Understanding Plagiarism Differently in Leibowitz, B. and Mohamed, Y. (2000) *Routes to Writing in Southern Africa*, Cape Town: Silk Road International Publishers.

Angelil-Carter, S. , Bond, D. Paxton, M. and Thesen, L. (Eds.) (1994) *Language in Academic Development at UCT*, Cape Town, UCT Press.

Ashwell, T. (2000) Patterns of Teacher Response to Student Writing in a Multiple-Draft Composition Classroom: Is Content Feedback followed by Form Feedback the Best Method? in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, Volume 9(3).

Babbie, E., Mouton, J. et al (2001) *The Practice of Social Research*, (South African Edition), Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Badger, R. and White, G. (2000) A Process Genre Approach to Teaching Writing in *ELT Journal*, 54(2), OUP.

Ballard, B. and Clanchy, J. (1988) Literacy in the University: An Anthropological Approach in Taylor, G. et al (1988) *Literacy by Degrees*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Bartholomae, D. (1985) Inventing the University in Rose, M. (Ed.) (1985) *When a Writer can't write: studies in writer's block and other composing process problems*, New York: Guilford Press, 134-165.

Berlin, J.A. (1988) *Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories in* Tate, G. and Corbett, E.P.J. (1988) *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Bernstein, B. (1977) *Class, codes and control*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Berthoff, A.E. (1987) *Dialectical Notebooks and the Audit of Meaning in* Fulwiler, T. (1987) *The Journal Book*, Portsmouth: Boynton\Cook.

Bond, D. (1993) 'Literacy by Degrees': Exploring the Links between Language and Learning in the Tertiary Context in Angelil-Carter, S. (1993) *Language in Development at UCT*, Cape Town: UCT Press.

Boughey, C. (1994) New Meanings for old words: defining and developing academic literacy at South African universities. Paper presented at the SAAD conference, 1994, University of Natal, Durban.

Brannon, L. and Knoblauch, C.H. (1982) On Students' Rights to their own texts: A Model of Teacher Response in *College Composition and Communication*, 33(2).

Chapelle, C.A. and Duff, P.A. (2003) Some Guidelines for Conducting Quantitative and Qualitative Research in TESOL, *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(1).

Clarence-Fincham, J. (1998) *Voices in a University: A Critical Exploration of Black Students' Responses to Institutional Discourse*. Doctoral thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Clarence-Fincham, J. (2006) Personal correspondence.

Cleary, L.M. (1991) *From the Other Side of the Desk: Students Speak Out about Writing*, Portsmouth: Boynton\Cook.

Cohen, A.D. & Cavalcanti, M.C. (1990) Feedback on compositions: teacher and student verbal reports in B. Kroll (Ed.), *Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Collins Concise Dictionary (2004) 21st Century Edition.

Connors, R.J. and Lunsford, A.A. (1993) Teachers' Rhetorical Comments on Student Papers in *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 44, No. 2, May.

Conrad, S.M. and Goldstein, L.M. (1999) ESL Revision after Teacher-Written Comments: Text, Contexts and Individuals in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8(2).

Cope, B. and Kalantzis, M. (Eds.) (1993) *The Powers of Literacy: A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing*, London: Falmer.

Cresswell, A. (2000) Self-Monitoring in Student Writing: Developing Learner Responsibility in *ELT Journal* Vol. 54/3.

Delpit, L. (1988) The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children in *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 58 No.3, August 1988, 260 -298.

Delpit, L (1995) *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*, New York: The New Press.

Durrheim, K. (1999) Research Design in M. Terreblanche and K. Durrheim, *Research in Practice*, Cape Town: UCT Press.

Elbow, P. (1997) High Stakes and low stakes in assigning and responding to writing in Sorcinelli, M.D. and Elbow, P. (Eds.) *Writing to Learn: Strategies for assigning and responding to writing across the disciplines*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Faigley, L. and Witte, S. (1981) Analyzing Revision in *College Composition and Communication* Vol.32, No 4, December, 400 – 414.

Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and Power*, London: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1992) *Critical Language Awareness*, London, Longman.

Fathman, A. and Whalley, E. (1990) Teacher Response to Student Writing: Focus on Form versus Content in B. Kroll (Ed) *Second Language Writing: Research insights for the Classroom* New York: Cambridge University Press pp 178 – 190.

Ferris, D., Pezone, S, Tade, C. and Tinti, S. (1997) Teacher Commentary on Student Writing: Descriptions and Implications in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 6(2).

Flower, L and Hayes, R. (1981) A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing in *College Composition and Communication* 32. 365 – 376.

Flowerdew, L. (2000) Using a genre-based framework to teach organisational structure in academic writing in *ELT Journal*, Volume 54(4), OUP.

Frankenberg-Garcia, A. (1999) Providing Student Writers with pre-text feedback in *ELT Journal*, Vol. 53(2), OUP.

Fulwiler, T. (Ed.) (1987) *The Journal Book*, Portsmouth, Boynton/Cook.

Gee, J. (1990) *Social linguistics and literacy: ideology in discourse*. Basingstoke: Falmer.

Gee, J. (1996) *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*, London, Taylor and Francis.

Greenbaum, L.A. (1991) Teaching Legal Writing in a South African Context: An evaluation of the work of student tutors in assisting with the development of legal writing skills in first year law students at one South African law school. Unpublished M.A. thesis (UKZN, Durban).

Griffin, C.W. (1982) Theory of Responding to Student Writing: The State of the Art in *College Composition and Communication*, 33(3).

Halliday, M.A.K. (1985) *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, London: Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M.A.K. and Hasan, R. (1989) *Language, context and text: aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective (2nd Edition)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hedgecock, J and Leftkowitz, N. (1996) Some input on input: two analyses of student response to expert feedback in L2 writing in *Modern Language Journal*, 80: 287 - 308.

Hugo, A. (2003) From literacy to literacies: preparing higher education in South Africa for the future in *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 17(2). 46 – 53.

Hyland, F. (1998) The impact of Teacher Written Feedback on Individual Writers in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7(3).

Ivanic, R. (1998) *Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Janks, H. and Ivanic, R. (1992) Critical language awareness and emancipatory discourse in Fairclough, N. (1992) *Critical Language Awareness*, London: Longman.

- Kapp, R.** (1998) Language, Culture and Politics: the case for multilingualism in tutorials, in Angelil-Carter, S. (Ed) (1998) *Literacy in Academic Contexts*, Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Knoblauch, C.H. and Brannon, L.** (1983) Writing as Learning through the Curriculum *College English*, Volume 45, Number 5, September 1983.
- Kress, G.** (1985) *Linguistic processes in sociocultural practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lamberg, W.** (1980) Self-provided and peer-provided feedback in *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 31 pp 63 – 69.
- Lees, E.O.** (1988). Evaluating Student Writing in Tate, G. and Corbett, E.P.J., *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, New York: OUP.
- Leki, I.** (1990). Coaching from the margins: Issues in Written Response in B. Kroll (Ed), *Second Language Writing: Research insights for the classroom*, pp57 – 68, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Leibowitz, B. and Mohamed, Y.** (2000) *Routes to Writing in Southern Africa*, Cape Town: Silk Road International Publishers.
- Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E.** (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Lindfors, J.W.** (1986) Writing to be read. Keynote address at the Language Development Conference, University of Natal, September 1986.
- Maley, A.** (undated) Interview with Dr N.S. Prabhu in *The Teacher Trainer*, <http://www.tttjournal.co.uk>.
- Martin, J.R.** (1989) *Factual Writing: exploring and challenging social reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McKenna, S. (2003) Changing discourses of academic development at a South African Technikon 1991 to 2002 in *South African Journal of Higher Education*, Vol 17 No. 2 (60 – 67).

McKenna, S. (2004) Lecturers' Discourses about the Interplay between Language and Learning in *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 18 (2), 278 -286.

Moore, R. (1994) Towards a Writing Curriculum: Proficiency and Politics in Student Academic Writing in Angelil-Carter, S. (1993) *Language in Development at UCT*, Cape Town: UCT Press.

Muncie, J. (2000) Using written teacher feedback in EFL composition classes in *ELT Journal*, 54(1), OUP.

New London Group (1996) A pedagogy of multiliteracies: designing social futures" in *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–92.

Ngara, E. (1998) The African Renaissance, institutional vision and outcomes based education. Paper presented at a conference: The African Renaissance, 26 – 27 March 1998, University of Natal, Durban.

Norton Peirce, B. (1995) Social Identity, Investment and Language Learning in *Tesol Quarterly*, 29(1), 9-31.

Ong, W.J. (1988) Literacy and Orality in our Times in Tate, G. and Corbett, E.P.J., *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, New York: OUP.

Parkerson, A. (2000) Providing Effective Oral and Written Feedback on Student Writing in Leibowitz, B. and Mohamed, Y. (2000) *Routes to Writing in Southern Africa*, Cape Town: Silk Road International Publishers.

Paxton, M. (1993) Tutor Responses to Student Writing in Angelil-Carter (Ed.) (1993) *Language in Academic Development at UCT*, Cape Town: UCT Press.

Paxton, M. (1994) Case Studies of Tutor's Responses to Student Writing and the Way in Which Students interpret these unpublished M.Ed thesis (Rhodes).

Paulus, T.M. (1999) The Effect of Peer and Teacher Feedback on Student Writing in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8(3).

Perl, S. (1998) The Composing Process in Tate, G. and Corbett, E.P.J. (Eds) *Writing Teacher's Sourcebook* 2nd edition, New York: Oxford University Press.

Polio, C. Fleck, C. and Leder, N. (1998) 'If only I had more time': ESL learners' changes in Linguistic Accuracy on Essay Revisions in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7 (1).

Prabhu, N.S. (1987) *Second Language Pedagogy*, Oxford University Press.

Prabhu, N.S. (1990) There is no best method – why? in *TESOL Quarterly*, 24(2), 161 – 176.

Quinn, L. (1999) An examination of the drafting-responding process used to develop students' writing in an English Language for Academic Purposes Course, unpublished masters thesis, Rhodes University.

Quinn, L. (2000) An examination of feedback on draft essays, using Halliday's definition of context in Weideman, A. (Ed.) (2000) *Socially responsible applied linguistics: proceedings of the SAALA 2000 conference*, Bellville.

Raimes, A. (1991) Out of the Woods: Emerging Traditions in the Teaching of Writing, *Tesol Quarterly*, 25(3): 407 – 430.

Ramanathan, V. and Atkinson, D. (1999) Individualism, Academic Writing, and ESL Writers in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8: 45 – 75.

- Ramanathan, V. and Kaplan, R.** (2000) Genres, Authors, Discourse Communities: Theory and Application for (L1 and) L2 Writing Instructors in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 9: 171 – 191.
- Reither, J. A.** (1988). Writing and Knowing: Toward Redefining the Writing Process in Tate, G. and Corbett, E.P.J., *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, New York: OUP.
- Reynolds, J. and de Klerk, V.** (1998) Entering the Discourses of the University in *SAJALS*, 6(1), 43 – 58.
- Robb, T., Ross, S. and Shortreed, I.** (1986) Salience of Feedback on Error and its effect on EFL Writing Quality in *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(1): 83 - 93.
- Sadovnik, A.R.** (2001) Basil Bernstein (1924 – 2000) in *Prospects: the quarterly review of comparative education* XXXI(4): 687 – 703.
- Semke, H.D.** (1984). The effects of the red pen. *Foreign Language Annals*, 17 195 – 202.
- Shay, S., Bond, D., Hughes, T.** (1994) Mysterious Demands and Disappointing Responses: Explaining Students' Difficulties with Academic Writing Tasks in Angelil-Carter, S., Bond, D. Paxton, M. and Thesen, L. (Eds.) *Language in Development at UCT*. Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Shay, S.** (2000) Discourse Analysis for the study of assessment as social practice in Weideman, A. (Ed.) (2000) *Socially Responsible Applied Linguistics: Proceedings of the SAALA Conference*, Bellville.
- Silva, T.** (1990). Second Language composition instruction: developments, issues and directions in ESL in B. Kroll (Ed.), *Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom*, (155-177). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Simon, R. I.** (1992) *Teaching against the grain: texts for a pedagogy of possibility*, New York: Bergin and Garvey.
- Sommers, N.** (1982) Responding to Student Writing *College Composition and Communication* 33: 148 – 156.
- Sommers, N.** (1988) Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers in Tate, G. and Corbett, E.P.J., *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, New York: OUP.
- South Africa** (1997) Draft white paper on higher education, Government Gazette No. 17944, Pretoria.
- Starfield, S.** (2000) Assessing Students' Writing in Leibowitz, B. and Mohamed, Y. (2000) *Routes to Writing in Southern Africa*, Cape Town: Silk Road International Publishers.
- Swales, J.M.** (1990) *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* Cambridge: CUP.
- Taylor, G. et al** (1988) *Literacy by Degrees*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Tate, G. and Corbett, E.P.J.** (1988) *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Van Rensburg, W.** (2004) The discourse of selfhood: students negotiating their academic identities in a writing centre in *Journal for Language Teaching* 38(2): 216 – 228.
- Van Wyk, A.** (2003) Access to Higher Education in South Africa: Bridging the Divide through Academic Literacy in *Tesol Journal*, 12(3).

Weber, J.J. (2001) A Concordance and Genre-informed approach to ESP essay Writing in *ELT Journal* 55(1), OUP.

Winberg, C. (2002) The role of situated learning in acquiring academic discourse unpublished paper at the 2002 SAALA Conference, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

White, E. M. (1988). Post-Structural Literary Criticism and the Response to Student Writing. in Tate, G. and Corbett, E.P.J., *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, New York: OUP.

Yin, R.K. (2003) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Zamel, V. (1982) Writing: The Process of Discovering Meaning. *TESOL Quarterly* 16(2), 195 – 209.

Zamel, V. (1985) Responding to Student Writing *TESOL Quarterly*, 19 (1).

Zamel, V. (1987) Recent Research on Writing Pedagogy *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(4).

www.ingedej.ukzn.ac.za (accessed November 2006)

www.medill.northwestern.edu "Policy of Academic Integrity" (accessed March 2006)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS ON THE USE OF DRAFTS FOR ACADEMIC WRITING

Media 130 2004

In this questionnaire you will be asked your opinion on the process of writing a draft essay and receiving feedback from the lecturer. The questionnaire is confidential. Your honest response is appreciated.

In each question, you are presented with a statement to which you should respond on the computerised answer sheet. Your possible answers are:

A= strongly disagree B= disagree C= neutral response D= agree E= strongly agree

Fill in your answer on the right hand side of the answer sheet, under answers 1 – 42.

Please use an HB pencil only.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Gender: M ☐ F ☐

Age: 17 – 20 ☐ 21 – 25 ☐ 26 – 30 ☐ 31+ ☐

Home Language: _____

English is my : (please tick one) ☐ first language
☐ Second language
☐ Third language

Preparation

1. I felt that the work done in lectures prepared me for writing the essay draft.
2. I knew what was expected of me when writing this draft.

How I felt about the feedback on my draft

3. I found that the process of writing a draft essay and receiving feedback on it was helpful.
4. I would have preferred not to have an opportunity to write a draft.
5. I found the lecturer's handwriting legible.
6. I found that I could easily understand the comments on my essay draft.
7. I felt that the comments on my essay draft were helpful.
8. I felt that the comments on my essay draft were threatening.
9. I felt that the comments on my essay draft were unfair.
10. I felt that the comments on my essay draft were valid.
11. I felt overwhelmed by the feedback on my draft.
12. I did not know how to use the feedback that I was given to improve my essay.
13. I did not read the comments on my essay draft.

Difficulties experienced with writing the essay draft

14. An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was analysing the topic.
15. An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was writing an introduction.
16. An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was providing a coherent argument.
17. An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was providing support for the argument.
18. An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was using academic English
19. An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was writing a conclusion.
20. An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was spelling.
21. An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was grammar.
22. An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was punctuation.

Did the feedback help me with difficulties I experienced?

23. The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with analysing the topic.
24. The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with writing an introduction.
25. The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with developing a coherent argument.
26. The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted helped me to provide support for my argument.
27. The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with the correct use of academic English
28. The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with writing a conclusion.
29. The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with spelling.
30. The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with grammar.
31. The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with punctuation.
32. As a result of reading the feedback comments on my draft, I made structural changes to my essay (reorganisation of ideas, changes in argument or changes in content)
33. As a result of reading the feedback comments on my draft, I made grammatical changes to my essay (spelling, punctuation, grammar or choice of words).

My opinion of the lecturer's comments on the draft essay

34. The lecturer's comments on my draft essay provided a good balance of positive encouragement and critical comments.
35. the lecturer's comments on my draft essay were overly critical
36. the lecturer's comments on my draft essay were not sufficiently critical.
37. The comments on my draft essay were clear and could easily be understood.
38. the comments on my draft essay were confusing.
39. I felt that the comments on my essay draft were difficult to understand.
40. I felt that the comments on my essay draft were not sufficiently explained.
41. the lecturer's comments on my draft essay were overly extensive.
42. the lecturer's comments on my draft essay were thorough and detailed.
43. the lecturer's comments on my draft essay were brief but helpful.
44. the comments on my draft essay were insufficient and sketchy.

- 45. the comments on my draft essay helped me to understand what was expected of me.
- 46. the lecturer edited my draft too much.
- 47. the comments on my draft were constructive.
- 48. the comments on my draft were destructive.

General

- 49. I feel that a positive relationship with the lecturer commenting on the essay is essential for this essay writing process to work effectively.
- 50. I don't think that the lecturer's relationship with the student has any effect on the essay writing process.
- 51. The process of drafting an essay and receiving comments on it was: (tick the one word which most applies to your experience) a) constructive ☐ b) painful ☐ c) time consuming ☐ d) a waste of time ☐ e) a positive learning experience ☐ f) difficult ☐ g) worthwhile ☐ h) something I would rather not engage with ☐
- 42. What aspect of the process of writing a draft and receiving feedback on it has been positive for you?

- 43. How could the process be improved?

- 44. Any other comments

- 45. Which lecturer provided the feedback on your essay draft? _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire

Appendix 2: Questionnaire Results

REPORT ON STUDENT EVALUATION OF APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES MASTERS (MEDIA 130: THE USE OF DRAFTS FOR ACADEMIC WRITING), PIETERMARITZBURG 2004

Alison Crouch

June, 2004

The following report is based on student evaluation questionnaire data, derived from a questionnaire drawn up by the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU) evaluators in conjunction with the lecturers of this module. The questionnaire was administered in a lecture period to Media 130 students in one of the final lectures of the first semester of 2004.

A total of about 93 students were registered for this module, 62 (67%) of whom answered the questionnaire.

In this questionnaire, students were presented with positively phrased statements (with one or two exceptions) to which they could respond on a five-point scale; they could either **A. strongly disagree**, **B. disagree**, **C. be neutral**, **D. agree**, or **E. strongly agree**. For purposes of analysis, and to gauge a mean response, each category was awarded a numerical value, i.e. 1 for strongly disagree, 5 for strongly agree. Categories A & B were considered to be negative responses, D & E positive ones.

All student comments included in the report are quoted verbatim.

PREPARATION

	Question	Number of Respondents				Mean
		Total	%Positive	%Neutral	%Negative	
1	I felt that the work done in lectures prepared me for writing the essay draft.	62	39	35	26	3.1
2	I knew what was expected of me when writing this draft.	62	40	27	32	3.1

HOW I FELT ABOUT THE FEEDBACK ON MY DRAFT

	Question	Number of Respondents				Mean
		Total	%Positive	%Neutral	%Negative	
3	I found that the process of writing a draft essay and receiving feedback on it was helpful.	61	82	11	7	4.2
4	I would have preferred not to have an opportunity to write a draft.	61	3	7	90	1.6
5	I found the lecturer's handwriting legible.	61	54	31	15	3.5
6	I found that I could easily understand the comments on my essay draft.	61	61	25	15	3.5
7	I felt that the comments on my essay draft were helpful.	61	75	15	10	3.8

8	I felt that the comments on my essay draft were threatening.	61	0	15	85	1.8
9	I felt that the comments on my essay draft were unfair.	61	5	21	74	2.1
10	I felt that the comments on my essay draft were valid.	61	69	23	8	3.8
11	I felt overwhelmed by the feedback on my draft.	61	10	49	41	2.6
12	I did not know how to use the feedback that I was given to improve my essay.	61	15	21	64	2.3
13	I did not read the comments on my essay draft.	61	5	3	92	1.5

DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED WITH WRITING THE ESSAY DRAFT

	Question	Number of Respondents				Mean
		Total	%Positive	%Neutral	%Negative	
14	An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was analysing the topic.	61	49	28	23	3.4
15	An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was writing an introduction.	61	30	26	44	2.8
16	An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was providing a coherent argument.	61	57	26	16	3.6
17	An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was providing support for the argument.	61	52	23	25	3.4
18	An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was using academic English.	61	25	20	56	2.6
19	An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was writing a conclusion.	61	34	26	39	3.0
20	An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was spelling.	61	16	20	64	2.2
21	An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was grammar.	61	18	21	61	2.5
22	An aspect of this draft that I experienced difficulty with was punctuation.	61	8	33	59	2.3

DID THE FEEDBACK HELP ME WITH DIFFICULTIES I EXPERIENCED?

	Question	Number of Respondents				
		Total	%Positive	%Neutral	%Negative	Mean
23	The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with analysing the topic.	60	45	38	17	3.4
24	The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with writing an introduction.	61	34	41	25	3.1
25	The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with developing a coherent argument.	61	41	39	20	3.3
26	The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted helped me to provide support for my argument.	61	26	51	23	3.1
27	The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with the correct use of academic English.	60	33	43	23	3.1
28	The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with writing a conclusion.	61	31	36	33	3.0
29	The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with spelling.	61	38	30	33	3.0
30	The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with grammar.	61	31	36	33	3.0
31	The lecturer's feedback and comments assisted me with punctuation.	61	31	34	34	3.0
32	As a result of reading the feedback comments on my draft, I made structural changes to my essay (reorganisation of ideas, changes in argument or changes in content).	60	60	20	20	3.7
33	As a result of reading the feedback comments on my draft, I made grammatical changes to my essay (spelling, punctuation, grammar or choice of words).	61	54	30	16	3.5

MY OPINION OF THE LECTURER'S COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT ESSAY

	Question	Number of Respondents				
		Total	%Positive	%Neutral	%Negative	Mean
34	The lecturer's comments on my draft essay provided a good balance of positive encouragement and	61	66	23	11	3.7

	critical comments.					
35	The lecturer's comments on my draft essay were overly critical.	61	13	34	52	2.5
36	The lecturer's comments on my draft essay were not sufficiently critical.	61	21	31	48	2.7
37	The comments on my draft essay were clear and could easily be understood.	60	62	25	13	3.6
38	The comments on my draft essay were confusing.	61	10	23	67	2.1
39	I felt that the comments on my essay draft were difficult to understand.	61	5	25	70	2.1
40	I felt that the comments on my essay draft were not sufficiently explained.	61	25	28	48	2.7
41	The lecturer's comments on my draft essay were overly extensive.	61	5	36	59	2.3
42	The lecturer's comments on my draft essay were thorough and detailed.	59	37	34	29	3.1
43	The lecturer's comments on my draft essay were brief but helpful.	60	48	42	10	3.5
44	The comments on my draft essay were insufficient and sketchy.	60	10	20	70	2.2
45	The comments on my draft essay helped me to understand what was expected of me.	60	58	23	18	3.6
46	The lecturer edited my draft too much.	60	10	22	68	2.3
47	The comments on my draft were constructive.	60	65	30	5	3.8
48	The comments on my draft were destructive.	60	7	22	72	1.9

GENERAL

		Number of Respondents				
	Question	Total	%Positive	%Neutral	%Negative	Mean
49	I feel that a positive relationship with the lecturer commenting on the essay is essential for this essay writing process to work effectively.	60	70	13	17	3.9
50	I don't think that the lecturer's relationship with the student has any effect on the essay writing process.	60	25	20	55	2.5

51. The process of drafting an essay and receiving comments on it was:

	Total Number of Respondents	Percentage Selected¹
a) Constructive	62	32
b) Painful	62	0
c) Time Consuming	62	6
d) A Waste of Time	62	2
e) A Positive Learning Experience	62	42
f) Difficult	62	2
g) Worthwhile	62	11
h) Something I Would Rather Not Engage With	62	2
Did not answer	62	8

WHAT ASPECTS OF THE PROCESS OF WRITING A DRAFT AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK ON IT HAS BEEN POSITIVE FOR YOU?

- *None really the lecturer only helped with spelling which can be sorted out with a spell check. If one properly, drafting can be constructive, but not when the lecturer doesn't help you yet still marks you down, as was my case.*
- *It gives me some excellent guides that I wouldn't notice before.*
- *To help me understand what's expected of them and learn ways to better their argument and strengthen their introduction and conclusion. Constructive criticism enables us to find out if we are on the right track.*
- *Comments on the scripts.*
- *Waiting an introduction and conclusion, supporting my argument coherently and also using cohesive logical connections.*
- *It helped me structure my essay better and write in a more formal, academic style.*
- *The fact that the lecturer makes it a bit clearer / concise of what is needed in your essay therefore you can improve on it.*
- *Good to see where went wrong, chance to re-consider essay.*
- *The fact that you're mistakes are corrected by the lecturer, thus telling you what they want from you so as not to make the mistakes in the finale more important, draft.*
- *Got encouragement for the effort and research but also help on areas that need to be worked on -- now able to strengthen weak areas with positive criticism.*
- *It was a positive learning experience in that I was able to see where I went wrong, and I was given critical but constructive feedback which assisted me in re-writing the essay.*
- *General layout of quotes, extra arguments etc.*
- *I gained from the feedback positively because it helped me to understand what I was doing wrong or right and where to improve my essay.*
- *Getting the feedback, learning what is wanted.*
- *It helps to see where you went wrong and helps correct it.*
- *Being sure that the 2nd draft will be better than the first, because of the feedback and subsequent changes made.*

¹ One student chose four options, despite being asked to tick only one.

- *I was given a second change to improve my work and I also got to see that I was on the right track and know now to improve my work.*
- *To know what I did wrong in the draft so that I could correct it in the final essay.*
- *It helps me know exactly what I'm supposed to write and makes me know a lot.*
- *Knowing what my mistakes were and improving them before getting a final mark.*
- *The comments made by the lecture, helped me realize my mistake and get a chance to improve my writing.*
- *Helped me to realize my mistakes before the final draft which is a good thing and the suggestion helped me.*
- *Going to the lecture. I didn't get a ticked sheet but I personally went. The lecture was helpful but often assumed I know too much.*
- *The draft feedback was very positive to me because I realized that at the beginning I had not done accordingly, but after the essay feedback I improved a lot and I also wrote what was relevant to the topic.*
- *It helped me with my grammar, spelling and the use of academic English.*
- *Censorship is the one which has positive learning to me.*
- *Seeing where you went wrong in your draft essay and hence rectifying the mistake.*
- *My efforts being recognized that I can advance showing me my mistakes.*
- *The lecturers comment to some extent.*
- *The possibility to know that what I have done is right or wrong and to what extent.*
- *Being able to anticipate how the lecturer will respond to the final draft is useful. It is nice to know whether I understood the topic or not and if my work is sufficient before receiving a final mark on it.*
- *Get to correct mistakes.*
- *Learned from my mistakes enabling me to cut out irrelevant information making my essay far more informative and academic.*
- *Anything that I was unsure of could be corrected and learnt from.*
- *The time when I was forced to rewrite it to hand it in I had to analyze the lecturers comments and reconsider and juggle aspects of my argument.*
- *Receiving feedback helped me to learn from my mistakes and realize firstly what I was doing wrong identify the problem in order to put it right.*
- *Learning to construct my academic argument in a clear and precise manner. To be more forward and confident in my academic argument – rather than being tentative and unsure.*
- *To understand exactly what is missing in certain paragraphs and what and what extra could be added.*
- *To help to provide room to improve.*
- *The lecturer helped me to correct unnecessary grammatical and spelling errors, as well as pointing out where structural / reference corrections were needed. This will hopefully result in a better final draft.*
- *It helped me understand what was expected of me. It helped me restructure my essay.*
- *Writing a draft allowed me to get a better idea of where my weaknesses are and helped me to correct and strengthen those weaknesses.*
- *My mistakes were pointed out and it helped me correct my final draft.*
- *I understood better what was expected of me and it helped me achieve this effectively and efficiently in my final draft.*
- *Learn from the mistakes made on the draft so that I know not to repeat them and I know what to do for my final draft.*

- *It helps me to improve my essay, I can see where I went wrong and erase further mistakes in the future.*
- *The comments help to understand where your weaknesses are so you can improve and get a better mark.*
- *That I had a good introduction which I found helped me as I am not usually good with intros.*
- *It was good to see where I went wrong and what was needed to make the essay better.*
- *It helps you realize your mistakes and fix them thus helping you to work constructively and to do better in the future.*
- *Helping to understand the topic and what is required and to let one know if they're headed in the right direction.*
- *It made me feel that the work I had done was sufficient. It also provided motivation for me to start my essay.*
- *Being given an opportunity to improve and use the given comments to the best of my ability. I enjoyed the process of correction.*
- *I found out a lot more in the world of advertising and the controversy found in it. It improved my writing skills.*
- *The chance of reworking it.*
- *Learning from your mistakes and being able to correct them.*
- *Noticed where I had gone wrong. Given me a chance to correct my errors.*
- *Seeing where exactly I went wrong – I have to correct it.*
- *Feedback on layout and arguing correctly.*

HOW COULD THE PROCESS BE IMPROVED?

- *Don't just mark us down, tell us how to improve everything, not silly things like spelling.*
- *It can be improved by giving students like first draft, second draft and the final draft maybe that can help to improve our writing skills. And also advising or remind them that work has to be done.*
- *Giving a larger period of time for lecturers to give more feedback. Give more than a few days to correct our draft before handing in the final essay.*
- *It need no improvement right as it is.*
- *Knowing there you should write about and knowing the directional words like, describe or explain etc then one should improve the process of writing and first draft.*
- *By not writing the draft.*
- *Elaboration of the comments and setting appointments with the lecturers if you are confused. Maybe a hand out on how to write an academic essay would help understand exactly what is expected from us.*
- *Write clearly.*
- *It could be improved by being able to speak to the lecturer – but this I know can be very time consuming.*
- *Perhaps a list of possible topics could be discussed I think topic choice was difficult.*
- *The process works well at the moment but maybe face to face feedback would be more constructive.*
- *By sitting down and talking to the pupil in person.*
- *By being made more interesting.*
- *I don't think that there are any problems with the process at present.*

- *More time is needed before handing in first draft.*
- *Trying to give us enough time for our draft.*
- *I think the one that's in place works well.*
- *By allowing more time between feedback and rewriting the draft.*
- *No improvement needed.*
- *Slower pace, and more writing.*
- *There is no other way to be improved because the lecturer even stated that if you need further clarification you can come to her.*
- *It must not be too threatening.*
- *I do not know.*
- *The procedure is sufficient.*
- *I'm not very sure.*
- *More detailed commentary with direct examples of where I went wrong, this general language becomes blurry and possibly can be interpreted wrongly, e.g. a got an criticism to strengthen my argument but where how and in what way would they prefigure. The lectures don't really cover the structure they what the essay in and what marks will be rewarded to what section the process of marking and lengths of individual sections.*
- *I think that the topic could have been explained more clearly and it would have been very helpful if the lecturers had been able to give us more specific areas or sites of research as I really battled to find relevant information.*
- *More comments.*
- *After marking students should go for short consultation times and ask lecturers about problems experienced. Students must take criticism positively and correctly adjust mistakes. An example of an academic essay must be presented to the students for better results.*
- *Perhaps more practice with internet referencing. Better handwriting by the lecturers would be easier to read their comments.*
- *Perhaps a more basic detailed sheet of what was good and bad. The sheet was quite vague. Perhaps getting a mark would be helpful to add an extra insensitive to improve.*
- *There is nothing to improve on - I had an excellent experience and it helped me considerably.*
- *To be able to sit down with the lecturer and discuss one on one the draft of the essay. To not be so rushed and pressured into getting it perfect -- rather focus on the learning experience.*
- *By being more specific about comments. If a lecturer what to comment, then they have time to explain.*
- *A tutorial whereby the marker and student can interact to make sure of wht is what.*
- *More time could be spend with each student to explain the comments in detail - it felt a bit rushed when asking questions.*
- *By offering personalized assistance from tutors.*
- *The lecturers could explain in more detail before and exactly what is expected of us.*
- *I think the topic should have been more thoroughly discussed and the lecturers should have clarified on how to go about writing the essay.*
- *Perhaps two lecturers could go over one draft and both put their comments on it, this would be time consuming but essay drafts could be handed in earlier. If two people look over it, mistakes missed would be picked up.*

- *I'm not sure, the process is effective, I don't think it could be improved. Maybe in referencing – a practice exercise perhaps before the draft.*
- *I don't think it needs improvements, its fair enough that we get a second chance.*
- *If the lecturer feels you need help, they organize meetings or extra help. Not sure – its ok for me – its up to you if you want more help or not.*
- *I think they could elaborate more in what they say and may be give us examples.*
- *By writing a bit more and explaining in slightly more detail.*
- *It could not be improved by giving a course on how to construct and formulate argumentative essay not just reading notes as we are first years and need to be taught constructively.*
- *It second draft could be introduced to further improve feedback and improvement.*
- *Perhaps more time could be allocated, other than that it is fair.*
- *I found no problems with the system in place.*
- *Perhaps more feedback in some areas in the essay.*
- *I could have had more comments.*
- *More information could be given on the topic.*
- *More detailed feed back on specific areas.*

ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

- *Maybe if they don't take marks for the first draft and take if for the next.*
- *Draft writing is extremely helpful and students can only benefit from a better understanding of the subject.*
- *Writing a draft depends on the direction and also making use of information you have apt knowing where to put your argument forward.*
- *I think she is a good judge of our essays. Her feedback is constructive and helps us to improve.*
- *It was a fun essay to do, although it needed plenty of research.*
- *Too time consuming.*
- *It is very good and essential make us realize our mistake early, it give every body a fair chance to do well.*
- *Lecture times should be spent more on analyzing topics.*
- *The feedback was really helpful as it helped me improve my vocals as well as the content as such.*
- *Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak my opinion.*
- *I worked very hard on my final draft so that I would hopefully have little correction and improvement to make on my final work.*
- *Late hand ins should be not treated differently but should go in their own time for consultation to better their essays.*
- *It really helped having a second party comment on my essay. Sometimes it seems like what is written makes sense to the writer but will have a different meaning for the reader.*
- *The markers comments were constructive, critical and also carefully balanced with praise, I appreciated that.*
- *Overall it has been a beneficial exercise.*
- *This feedback is a very helpful process.*
- *The process is fairly effective.*

- *The draft process was definitely helpful.*
- *The writing of a draft is an excellent idea because the feedback from it can help you improve your mark for the final draft by correcting your mistakes made where you went wrong.*
- *The marked draft highlighted my weak areas which I need to work on.*
- *I fully approve of writing a draft because it allows me the opportunity to learn from ones mistakes and improve.*
- *It was worthwhile doing a rough draft.*

Appendix 3: Editing Checklist for Argumentative Essays

Structure

- Is there an effective introduction (overview of key issues, thesis statement included, definition of key concepts, essay structure outlined)?
- Are my paragraphs organised, with a clear, relevant controlling idea and linked, elaborated supporting ideas? Does each paragraph deal with a single controlling idea?
- Is there an effective conclusion (key arguments developed in the essay summarised; no new information introduced)?

Use of Readings

- How sound/deep/sophisticated is my understanding of the arguments in the readings?
- Have I worked hard at paraphrasing the arguments in my own words?
- Have I drawn enough from all the set readings?
- Have I actively woven together information from different readings?

Quality of Argument

- Have I analysed the topic carefully?
- Have I developed an argument that answers all aspects of the topic?
- Have I developed my argument systematically?
- Do my controlling ideas link clearly to each other and the topic?
- Do I justify (back up) the claims that I make?
- Do I provide supporting evidence and/or more details?
- Have I avoided making too strong claims that I cannot reasonably support? Have I checked my use of modal verbs?
- Have I explored the issues raised by the topic deeply and fully enough?

Referencing and Bibliography

- Is all the information I took from readings/books correctly acknowledged in the body of my essay?
- Is all the bibliographic information of all the readings/books/websites that I used correctly listed at the end of my essay?

Expression, Grammar and Presentation

- Could I express my intended meanings more clearly?
- Could I be more explicit in my explaining my meaning for my reader?
- Is my style of language formal and academic enough?
- Have I avoided everyday, slangy ways of writing?
- Is my argument succinct, to the point or am I needlessly repeating myself anywhere?
- Have I checked for grammar slips such as subject-verb disagreement, incorrect use of pronouns, sentences without finite verbs?
- Have I run a spell check? Have I proofread for errors?

Appendix 4: Essay Topic

Media 130: Writing and the Media

Research Assignment Topic

Censorship and the Media in South Africa

“The primary justification for censorship is that certain messages are harmful to society, or to certain sections of society” (Karam, 2001, p. 571).

One of the key issues here is whether or not certain individuals have the right to prevent others from seeing or hearing certain messages. The question therefore arises: Should individual liberty be considered more important than what is deemed, by some sectors of society, to be the public good?

Write an essay of about 5 – 6 typed pages (1200 words), in which you debate this topic in the context of the South African society and media, making reference to one of the following: advertising, cinema, television content, or news reporting, and using at least two case studies to support your argument.

You will need to provide a full bibliography and source at least three other supporting texts.

Appendix 5: Essay Marking Sheet

Essay Marking Sheet

Student No:

Marker:

Mark:

Itemised rating scale: *1 = excellent (app 80%), 4 = borderline (app 50%), 7 = very weak (app 20%)*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Structure

Effective introduction (overview of key issues, ess. struct. outlined) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Paragraphs: clear, relevant CI's, linked SI's ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Effective conclusion (key arguments summarised, no new info introduced) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Use of Readings

Sophisticated understanding of arguments ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Extensive paraphrasing of arguments ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Extensive use of all readings ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Quality of Argument

Relevant, focussed, full response to topic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Systematic development of argument ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Claims regularly and clearly justified ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

In depth, detailed exploration of issues ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Original, creative, insightful perspective ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Referencing and Bibliography

All necessary in text references correctly made ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

All bibliographic info correctly supplied ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Expression, Grammar and Presentation

Meanings fluently communicated ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Formal academic style throughout ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Succinct, pithy writing ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

No surface grammar errors ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Correct spelling throughout ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Global Comments:

Appendix 6: Focus Group Questions

1. How many of you went to see your tutor/lecturer about your draft?
2. Was this more or less useful than comments on your draft?
3. How did you feel about the comments on your draft?
4. Does the relationship that you/the class has with the lecturer make a difference to how effective the feedback process is?
5. Had you ever received feedback on drafts before? (elaborate)
6. How did you find this experience?
7. How did you feel about the feedback?
8. Did you know what to do with the comments?
9. Who felt overwhelmed by the experience? (explain)
10. Did anyone feel very angry/resentful?
11. Comments specific enough/too vague?
12. How many people felt they didn't need this kind of help? Why not?

Appendix 7: Questionnaire for lecturers on academic writing feedback

Media 130 2004

Please complete the following questionnaire as fully and as candidly as you can. It will be used to assist me in my research into how students learn the skills of academic writing. I am particularly interested in how students are responding to and using the opportunity to receive feedback on their essay drafts.

Name: _____

University Title: _____ **Gender:** M [] F []

Approximate years of teaching experience at tertiary level: _____

1. What do you consider to be the main goal of giving feedback to students on their academic writing at the draft stage? _____

2. Do you think that you personally were able to achieve this goal when providing feedback? Please explain. _____

3. Why was it possible to achieve this goal or why not? _____

-
-
-
4. Have you developed a method for providing feedback on drafts? Y []
N []
5. Do you use the same method for every essay? Y []
N []
6. Please briefly describe the method you use to provide feedback to students.
-
-
-
-
-
-
7. Is a fixed set of criteria used for marking essays? Y []
N []
8. Is this available to the students before they write the essay? Y [] N []
9. Do you find it easier to use the criteria or do you ultimately mark by “gut feel”?
Please comment. _____
-
-
-
-
10. What aspects of the essay do you tend to focus on? _____
-
-
-

11. Do you think that written feedback is sufficient? Y []
N []

12. Would you ideally like to have an essay interview with each student? Y []
N [] Please explain. _____

13. Approximately how many of your students voluntarily came to see you to discuss
their draft essays? _____

14. If so, what aspects of the draft essays concern them most? _____

15. Do you experience difficulty with the task of providing feedback to students on their
draft essays?

Y [] N []

16. If yes, what are the problems that you experience with this task? _____

17. Approximately how much time do you spend on each draft? _____

18. Do you feel that providing feedback on the students' draft essays is a worthwhile exercise? Please explain the reasons for your answer. _____

19. Do you perceive that providing students with feedback on their draft essays results in improvements in student academic writing or not? Please explain. _____

20. Have you personally experienced receiving written feedback on your work? (either as a student yourself, or in your professional capacity) If so, comment on the experience and how it might affect the way that you provide feedback to students. _____

21. What thoughts are uppermost in your mind when awarding a mark to a student assignment? _____

22. Do you give the students an indication of their mark/symbol on the draft?

Y [] N []

23. What is your thinking on whether or not to indicate the mark/symbol on the draft? ____

24. Any other comments: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix 8: Sample of Analysis

Essay Marking Sheet

Student No: X015wa

Marker: X

Mark:

Itemised rating scale: 1 = excellent (app 80%), 4 = borderline (app 50%), 7 = very weak (app 20%)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Structure

Effective introduction (overview of key issues, ess. struct. outlined) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ General intro without explicit thesis statement & without an outline of how you'd deal with your argument. This needs your attention ✓

Paragraphs: clear, relevant CI's, linked SI's ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Effective conclusion (key arguments summarised, no new info introduced) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Use of Readings

Sophisticated understanding of arguments ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ The compulsory readings need to be done & referred to also. *

Extensive paraphrasing of arguments ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Extensive use of all readings ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Quality of Argument

Relevant, focussed, full response to topic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ What was your argument? *

Systematic development of argument ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ You explored issues but didn't actually structure your own take on the debate. Please ensure you do it.

Claims regularly and clearly justified ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

In depth, detailed exploration of issues ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Original, creative, insightful perspective ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Referencing and Bibliography

All necessary in text references correctly made ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ The compulsory readings were not listed! Check Traver's handout on how to do 'in-text' referencing. (V.I.P.)

All bibliographic info correctly supplied ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Expression, Grammar and Presentation

Meanings fluently communicated ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Formal academic style throughout ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ Generally, fairly good but work on expressing yourself in a more formal, academic way.

Succinct, pithy writing ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

No surface grammar errors ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Correct spelling throughout ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Global Comments:

Some good points raised. You need to give your thesis statement in the intro, then systematically use the info you have in this essay to support your point. Use these comments or come & talk to me. It will greatly improve the essay.

Censorship and media in South Africa

The issue ~~about~~^{of} censorship has been highly debated all around the world. In most countries, censorship is often enforced by the government. On the one hand people claim that censorship is a helpful strategy, on the other hand, censorship is seen as a way to withhold information that needs to be known by the public. People then view censorship ^{as} ~~an~~

as being against the freedom of expression and the public's right to know.

To expand on the fact that the government practises most censorship, The US government has censored ideologies and ideas and it also persecuted the people who hold them. J.M. Coetzee, a censorship scholar said that state censorship presents itself as a bulwark between society and forces of subversion or normal corruption. ^{Since the} ~~As there was an~~ introduction of emerging media like cable, satellite tv, and the internet, state censorship started dissolving. Authorities used censorship to control (cultural) activities they considered potentially dangerous, such as sex, violence and racism ^(film and censorship). In Brazil, all films and other publicity materials had to be submitted for examination by the censors prior to exhibition. Transmission was not granted when material contained anything offensive to the public, scenes of violence or ^{is} capable of encouraging criminal acts, induces evil habits or is offensive to any community or religion. (Ruth Perie, 1997^{page}). ^{There are} a number of films which have been re-edited against the wishes of directors, this then denied freedom of expression. Most censorship was undertaken for commercial reasons.

Is this a quote?
Use inverted commas.

explain

19.

This is a fairly good intro but where is your thesis statement?

However, censorship not only occurs in films. Journalists also have principles that act as their guidelines. These principles were introduced to ensure that journalists behave ethically. The principles were as follows: journalists have a duty to maintain the highest ethical standard. They should defend the principles of freedom of press and other media in relation to collection of information and the expression of comments and criticism. Journalists are also encouraged to protect their sources of information. In the United States, institutions of learning have approved bans on certain categories of speech. (cite your sources)

Most people emphasise that viewing materials containing violence, vandalism, cruelty and sex would cause corruption. Showing of violence, sex may cause children to mimic such acts because they see them as natural when they see them on television. The media naturalises behaviours causing people to see them as normal. Media is said to be the main cause of an increase in rape and crime rates. There are also concerns about use of vulgar language, for example, swearing. A person would hear his/her kids using bad language and wonder where they hear it from, whereas they get it from the media they consume. People argue that programmes containing strong language should be censored, because these could have a bad impact on their children. Stories containing racism should also be censored, because they could lead to hatred and controversy between races. These can also cause harm to certain races. [Another issue is whether it is right to reveal people's personal secrets in the media, for instance, the lives of prominent people. Some people say they have a right to know their celebrities and politicians, and governments do in their personal lives, and some say it is not right to dig into other people's lives.]

(give credit to all your sources)

Furthermore, there are a lot of shows, shown without being censored. One is the drama series shown on SABC 1, called Gaz-lam (My Blood). This drama series is

Is this case study number 1?

very ~~much~~ similar to Yizo-Yizo. Parents and other members of the public had a lot to complain about when Gaz-lam was launched. Gaz-lam shows a lot of violent scenes, nudity and sex. Programmes with scenes of this kind have greatly increased worldwide. Viewers in favour of Gaz-lam say that Gaz-lam does not need to be censored. ~~They state that~~ as long as proper age restrictions and warnings are used. It lies within the parents or guardians to ensure that children under the restricted age do not watch the programme. They claim that Gaz-lam is an educational drama and that people need to be aware of ~~such~~ ^{the} issues raised by Gaz-lam. ✓

~~is it a case study?~~
The second issue lies in the local soap opera, Generations. Some audience members are not impressed by the character of Mam' Mfundisi. Mam' Mfundisi is a woman who pretends to ^{be} spiritual and very religious. She uses Christianity to go around taking money from people, pretending to be collecting donations for her Christian society and other charity organisations, whereas she takes the money for her self. This then causes ~~very~~ religious audiences to be very upset. They say that this wrongly ~~portrays~~ Christianity; it confuses vulnerable people who are not strong enough about Christianity. Some argue this fact. They say that this is of great help to people. It helps people to be aware of the fact that there are some manipulative people out there ^{who} who claim to be Christians and then rob other people. So, link this to the debate + your argument.

(2002: 1096)
O'Shaughnessy and Stadler²⁰⁰² raised the fact that explicit sex and violence have become commonplace in fictional media, and that campaigns against media sex and violence, have been around since the 1970s and there is continuous debate about these issues. Questions like: do we need censorship? Who should be allowed to see what? Are there limits to what is to be shown?

Possible answers would be that freedom should be granted to people to view whatever they want to view in the media.

But what is your view

Some arguments against censorship also arise in the *Media and Society* (by O'Shaughnessy and Stadler²⁰⁰²). The first argument relates to the value and importance of fantasy. Fictions allow us to explore and understand our sexual and violent feelings. The second suggests that censorship of violent or sexuality won't work. Censorship is said to reflect a belief that if we control media images, we control human behaviour. People act and feel violently to one another for a variety of reasons, not because they see violence on television. O'Shaughnessy and Stadler suggest that the best way to deal with violence is not to censor the media, but to deal with the deeper causes of anger and violence. Focusing attention on media violence and censorship distracts us from looking at the social problems that determine violence. [On his election in 1974, President Giscard d'Estaing, went against

Use a more formal language to express this.

How does this relate to your argument?

censorship. He announced that there would be no more censorship in France.]

What was your thesis statement on the argument?

In this argument we dealt with two questions, whether censorship is essential or not. Censorship is not that essential as long as people are warned about the contents of a programme. It is all about choices and what the viewers want to view. Censorship depends on where it is being used.

As we have considered the ^{arguments} ~~issues that are~~ for censorship, let us look at ^{those} ~~issues that~~ ^{goes} ~~are~~ against censorship. Sometimes censorship ^{is} against the freedom of the press and the human right to knowledge. Censorship is said to prevent the free flow of information. It also denies producers the freedom of expression and also denies audiences the right to know. Censorship is the opposition to freedom of the press. Some people state that nothing should be censored, as long as people are warned about the contents of a programme. Coetzee stated that censorship is a sign of weakness in the state. "The record of censorship in modern history all over the globe was so ugly as to have discredited it forever," wrote J.M. Coetzee. ^(cite source) Another thing people are against is that censors believe that they act in the interests of people whether it be children, family, community or country. Non-government ^(what about government censors?) censors in particular are almost always acting in what they perceive as the public interest.

References:

1. Petrie, R and Whitaker, S (1997) *Film and Censorship*. Virginia
2. Travelyan, J. (1973) *What the Censor Saw*. London: Micheal Joseph.
3. Aldgate, A (1995) *Censorship and The Permissive Society*. New York: Oxford
4. O'Shaughnessy, M and Stadler, J (2002) *Media and Society* 2nd edition. New York: Oxford.
5. <http://hotwired.wired.com/netizen/97/16/inolex29.html>

*What about the readings from the Course Reader?
Check your spacing here & throughout your text.*

Censorship and Media in South Africa

The issue of censorship has been highly debated all around the world. Censorship is advantageous but it can also be disadvantageous. In the following argument we will look at how censorship is seen by different people and how it affects these people.

In most countries censorship is often enforced by the government. On the one hand people claim that censorship is a helpful strategy, on the other hand, censorship is seen as a way to withhold information that needs to be known by the public. People then view censorship as being against the freedom of expression and the public's right to know.

To expand on the fact that the government practises most censorship, US government has censored ideologies and ideas and it also persecuted the people who hold them. J.M. Coetzee, a censorship scholar said, "State censorship presents itself as a bulwark between society and forces of subversion or normal corruption." Since the introduction of emerging media like cable, satellite TV, and the internet, state censorship started dissolving. Authorities were said to use censorship to control activities they considered potentially dangerous, such sex, violence and racism [Petrie, R and Whitaker, S (1997)]. In Brazil, all films and other publicity materials had to be submitted for examination by the censors prior to exhibition. Transmission was not granted materials ^{are} contained anything offensive to the public. Scenes of violence or rape is capable of encouraging criminal acts. ✓

A number of films have been re-edited against the wishes of directors, this then denied freedom of expression. Most censorship was undertaken for commercial reasons, for instance a censor censored a project if it was offensive, in fear that it would not sell. ✓

However, censorship not only occurs in films. Journalists also have principles that act as their guidelines. These principles were introduced to ensure that journalists behave ethically. These principles are as follows: Journalists have a duty to maintain the highest ethical standard. They should defend the principles of freedom of the press and other media in relation to collection of information and the expression of comments and criticism. Journalists are also encouraged to protect their sources of information [www.fpb.govt.za/classification/guidelines-html]. In the United States, the Institution of learning have approved bans on certain categories of speech.

Most people emphasise ^{that} viewing materials containing violence, sex, vandalism and cruelty may cause corruption. Screening of violence and sex may cause children to mimic such acts because they see them as natural when they see them on television. The media naturalises behaviours causing people to see them as normal [O'Shaughnessy and Stadler(2002)]. Media is said to be the main cause ~~in~~ of the increase of rape and crime rates. There are also concerns about the use of vulgar language. Parents are concerned that children get bad language from the media they consume. Programmes contain bad language should be censored because it will have bad impact on children. Stories about racism should also be censored because they could lead to hatred and controversy between races. Another issue is

whether it is right to reveal people's personal secrets in the media, for instance in the lives of prominent people. Some people say that they have a right to know what their celebrities and politicians do in their personal lives, and some argue that it is not right to get involved with other people's personal lives.

*What is your stance on the matter?
Where is your thesis statement?*

Furthermore, I have based my first case study on a drama series called Gaz-lam (My Blood) which is screened on SABC 1. This drama series is very similar to Yizo-Yizo. Parents and other members of the public had a lot to complain about when Gaz-lam was launched. Gaz-lam shows a lot of violent scenes, nudity and sex. Programmes with scenes of this nature have greatly increased worldwide.

Viewers in favour of Gaz-lam say that Gaz-lam does not need to be censored because it is educational, the only thing that can be done is that viewers could be warned about the contents of the programme. It lies with the parent or guardians to ensure that children under the restricted age do not watch the drama.

But how does this relate to your argument.

The second case study is based on the local soap opera, Generations. Some audience members are not impressed by the character of Mam' Mfundisi.

Mam' Mfundisi is a woman who pretends to be very spiritual and religious. She uses Christianity to go around taking money from people, pretending to be collecting donations for "Christian Society" and other charity organisations, whereas she takes the money for herself. This causes religious people to be very upset. They say that this gives Christianity a bad name. Some people say that Mam' Mfundisi's character helps people, it warns them that there are manipulative

people who claim to be Christians whereas no, people who are out to rob other people. So this proves the fact that not all people are against censorship.

*Has this case
ever been tak
to the publica
board ?
How does it relate
to your argument*

As we have considered the arguments for censorship, let us look at those against censorship. Sometimes censorship goes against the freedom of the press and human's right to knowledge. Censorship is said to prevent the free flow of information. It also denies the producers the freedom of expression. Censorship is the opposition to freedom of the press. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers." [Boyle in Article 19 world report 1988:xii] (Course Reader {2004:570}) Some people state that nothing should be censored, as long as people are warned about the contents of the programme. Coetzee stated that censorship is a sign of weakness in the state. "The record of censorship in modern history all over the globe was so ugly as to have discredited it forever," wrote Coetzee [Coetzee, J.M.(1997)]

Another thing people are against is that censors believe that they act in the interests of people whether it be children, family, community or country. Non-government censors however are almost always acting in what they perceive as public interest. Whereas government censors are almost always using censorship in favour of the government. O'Shaughnessy and Stadler(2002) explicit sex and violence have become common place in the media, and that campaigns against sex

and violence, have been around since the 1970s and there are continuous debates about these. Do we need censorship? Who should be allowed to see what? Are there limits to what is to be shown? A possible answer should be that freedom should be granted to people to view whatever they want to view in the media. People want to see violence and sex because these are great forms of entertainment.

Some arguments against censorship also arise in the *Media and Society* (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler:2002). The first argument relates to the value and importance of fantasy. The second suggests that censorship of violence and sex is not approved.⁷⁶ Censorship is said to reflect a belief that if we control media images, we control human behaviour. People act and behave violently to one another for a variety of reasons, not because they see violence on television. O'Shaughnessy and Stadler suggest that the best way to deal with violence is not to censor the media, but to deal with the deeper causes of anger and violence.

In this argument we dealt with two questions, whether censorship is essential or not.⁷⁷ *that was not the topic of this essay!* Censorship is not essential as long as people are warned about the contents of a programme. It is all about choices and what the viewers want to view because at the end of the day, it is the audience who make the industry grow. Another thing is that censorship depends on where it is being used.

References:

- 1 Petrie, R and Whitaker, S (1997) *Film and Censorship*. Virginia
- 2 Travelyan, J (1973) *What The Censor Saw*. London; Micheal Joseph.
- 3 Aldgate, A (1995) *Censorship and the Permissive Society*. New York: Oxford
- 4 O'Shaughnessy, M and Stadler, J (2002) *Media and Society* 2nd edition. New York: Oxford.
- 5 <http://hotwired.wired.com/netizen/97/16/inolex29.html>.
- 6 www.fpb.govt.za/classification/guideline.html
7. *Writing and The Media*. Course Reader (2004)

↑ reference this correctly.

Transcript of interview: Xoliswa

- I: So, this is your draft. You can see what changes you have made. Where I have highlighted it is where you have made changes. Where there is orange, you have added ideas. Where there is pink, you've added references and where it's green or blue you have changed the grammar or re-worded it more academically. First of all, where did you go to school?
- X: I went to (inaudible) High school in the Western Cape.
- I: Ok, what kind of school is it?
- X: It's English/Afrikaans.
- I: so it's an ex-model C school?
- X: yes.
- I: Ok. When you got your feedback from the lecturer, how did you feel about it? How did you respond?
- X: I think it was quite helpful because looking at my second draft I think it was much better because I corrected my second draft according to the comments they gave me. It's quite an effort to do a first draft and then create a second one, so . . .
- I: Ja, so your response was quite positive. Did you feel that the comments that were made were fair or did you feel that something in here was not true?
- X: I thought they were fair when I looked at my draft.
- I: Was it easy to understand the comments?
- X: Not really . . . some things were confusing.
- I: Like this part here where it says you need to give your thesis statement an intro and then systematically use the info that you have to support your point
- X: because I don't think I did that thing.
- I: Did you understand what she meant by that?
- X: To my thinking, I thought maybe she said you need to first give what you think about censorship in your introduction, isn't it, and what you are going to talk about. Explain to your reader exactly what you are going to talk about.
- I: So when she talks about thesis . . .
- X: What is it?
- I: You're still not clear what that is?
- X: No.
- I: Ok, a thesis is basically your argument. So in other words your thesis would be, for example, "individual liberty is more important than public good" or "Public good is more

important than individual liberty” or the thesis statement might be that we need to find a balance between individual liberty and public good. So basically you take your essay topic and decide what your argument is going to be. And that is what she is wanting to see in your introduction.

X: Oh, Ok. I see she is still confused about “where’s your thesis statement?”

I: You see I was very puzzled with yours because on your final essay it says “you haven’t responded to the feedback, hence no real improvement.” Did you think that was a fair statement?

X: It’s fair because if I didn’t respond, she had no choice but to not to improve my draft because I didn’t respond to what she wanted.

I: but you thought that you had?

X: I thought that I had tried.

I: that’s what I can see because everywhere it is green is where you have improved the grammar. You have made the corrections that she suggested. You have added references, and so on. So when I saw your essay I thought this student has tried to improve and the lecturer hasn’t actually seen but it’s not just that . . . you have improved but you haven’t improved in the way that she wanted you to.

X: Maybe it was just (inaudible)

I: You didn’t go to see the lecturer?

X: No.

I: Was it a conscious decision not to go?

X: I don’t know. I just didn’t know.

I: Ok, so my response was “let me go and see this essay and see what has happened.” Then I saw that you had tried to improve so the way I see it is that you didn’t know what that meant or how to do it. Am I right?

X: Ja.

I: Ja. Your relationship with the lecturer? How did you feel about her?

X: It’s not like she identifies who I am in class. It’s not like she knows me.

I: so you’re not in a tutorial group with her?

X: No.

I: Do you think that if you knew her better it would be easier to understand what she was saying?

X: Ja.

I: Would you go and see her if she was your tutor?

X: Ja

I: Am I right in saying that it's quite difficult to go and see a stranger or someone who is virtually a stranger?

X: It's like you are complaining or undermining her.

I: Oh! So that's why you wouldn't want to go and see her? That's interesting.

I: What did you learn from taking your essay and doing it again?

X: I could . . . improve my ability . . . how did you mean?

I: Did you learn any skills, like how to reference or how to . . . by actually doing it again?

X: Yes. Spell check and things like that . . . make use of that.

I: Did you think that you did learn something from the process?

X: Yes, especially here now!

I: Oh, that's a bit late!

X: Yes, but I can use that to my advantage next time.

I: Ja, perhaps in your case then it would have been good to go and see the lecturer because there was a lot that was said there that wasn't understood by you.

X: I should have gone before I even started.

I: Ja, but I also understand about not going . . . if you don't know the person, it's very difficult to go.

I: Is it fair to say that there is a bit of a communication breakdown there? Because what she communicated there wasn't really understood by you.

X: Ja.

I: It's a pity. But still, it's part of a learning process. Any other comments?

X: It always helps to get feedback.

I: Thank you for your time. I have enjoyed talking to you.