

# **Student voice and agency in master's thesis writing in a second language context: Beyond the use of pronouns**

by  
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## **DECLARATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis investigates the multimodal construction of voice and agency in master's theses within the South African context. I argue that voice is not only realized through linguistic features but also other multimodal meaning-making resources. The majority of postgraduate theses produced in South Africa are in English, despite the fact that English is only the fourth most widely spoken first language in the country. This thesis investigates how student voice and agency are discursively constructed in selected master's theses in this second language writing context. More specifically, I investigate how semiotic resources are used across modalities to construct voice and agency in completed master's theses and how students themselves reflect on the thesis writing process in semi-structured interviews. Using insights from genre analysis (Bhatia, 2002; Paltridge, 2002), sociocultural theory (Van Lier, 2008) and postmodern sociolinguistics (Pennycook, 2006) the thesis focuses on ways in which students intentionally violate norms of thesis writing to construct themselves as autonomous. The findings suggest that construction of voice and agency relies not only on the use of language but also on the manipulation of other multimodal meaning-making resources such as the use of visuals, layout, font, other languages and chapter order. Finally, I identify six elements, prominent in the data, that are important in assisting students to construct voice and agency in their thesis writing. This thesis ultimately provides theoretical insight into the multimodal construction of agency and voice, a topic which to this point have received very little attention in scholarly research on second language academic writing.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die multimodale konstruksie van stem en agentskap in meesterstessise in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Ek voer aan dat stem nie net deur talige kenmerke gerealiseer word nie, maar ook deur ander multimodale bronne van betekenis-skepping. Die meerderheid van nagraadse tesis wat in Suid-Afrika geproduseer word, is in Engels, ten spyte daarvan dat Engels slegs die vierde mees gesproke eerstetaal in die land is. Hierdie tesis ondersoek hoe stem en agentskap van studente diskursief gekonstrueer is in gekose meesterstessise in hierdie tweedetaal-konteks. Meer spesifiek ondersoek ek hoe semiotiese bronne oor modaliteite gebruik word om stem en agentskap te konstrueer in voltooide meesterstessise en hoe studente reflekteer op hul skryfprosesse in semi-struktureerde onderhoude. Insigte van genre-analise (Bhatia, 2002; Paltridge, 2002), die sosiokulturele teorie (Van Lier, 2008) en postmoderne sosiolinguistiek (Pennycook, 2006) word gebruik om te fokus op die wyses waarop studente met opset norms van tesis-skryf oortree, om hulself as onafhanklik te konstrueer. Die bevindinge dui daarop dat die konstruksie van stem en agentskap nie net op taal leun nie, maar ook op die manipulasie van ander multimodale bronne van betekenis-skepping soos die gebruik van visuele materiaal, uitleg, teks, die gebruik van ander tale en die volgorde van hoofstukke. Laastens identifiseer ek ses elemente wat prominent voorkom in die data, wat belangrik is vir die vestiging van studente se pogings om stem en agentskap te konstrueer in die skryf van hul tesis. Uiteindelik bied hierdie tesis teoretiese insigte in die multimodale konstruksie van stem en agentskap, 'n onderwerp wat tot op hede baie min aandag ontvang het in vakkundige navorsing van akademiese skryfwerk in 'n tweedetaal.

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“Your dreams do not become valid when other people start approving of them. Your dreams become valid when you pursue them to bring God glory.”

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

APs: author pronouns

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

EPC: English for Professional Communication

ESL: English second language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

L1: first language

L2: second language

LOLT: language of learning and teaching

Phil: Philosophy

PPs: personal pronouns

SASL: South African Sign Language

SCT: Sociocultural theory

SU: Stellenbosch University

SU\_GL: Stellenbosch University's Department of General Linguistics

SU\_Phil: Stellenbosch University's Department of Philosophy

SU\_VA: Stellenbosch University's Department of Visual Arts

UWC: University of the Western Cape

UWC\_LLCC: University of the Western Cape's Department of Linguistics, Language and Communication

UWC\_Phil: University of the Western Cape's Department of Philosophy

UWC\_WG: University of the Western Cape's Department of Women and Gender Studies

VA: visual arts

WG: Women and Gender Studies

ZPD: zone of proximal development

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction and background to the study

“Begin by contextualising the study. Relate how you came to decide on this topic and its relevance and importance. What are the main reasons that led you to decide on this topic?”

(Mouton, 2001:122)

The South African higher educational setting, as elsewhere in the world, is dominated by English. A report prepared for the UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education titled *Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution* (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley) makes multiple references to the role of the English language in academic settings. Essentially, the report can be summarised in two sentences: “The rise of English as the dominant language of scientific communication is unprecedented since Latin dominated the academy in medieval Europe” (Altbach *et al.*, 2009:iv), and “International rankings favour universities that use English as the main language of instruction and research” (Altbach *et al.*, 2009:v, vi).

Globally, most research produced is written in English (see Huttner-Koros, 2015; Van Weijen, 2012; and Columbia Global Centres, 2011 on this topic). This is also the case in South Africa, where the overwhelming majority of research theses and degrees are produced in English, even though only 9.6% of the population has English as a first language (L1) (Statistics South Africa, 2012:23). For this study, it is important to be aware of both the South African context as well as global trends surrounding the research question. Therefore, I will now briefly discuss the current status of the English language in South Africa. I will then shift my focus to English second language (ESL) speakers in South Africa. This is necessary in order to provide a detailed view of the large number of South African students who are faced with the challenges linked to second language (L2) academic writing.

#### *Current status of the English language*

South Africa is a diverse nation, and, with its eleven official languages, it is linguistically no different. In this section, I discuss the history of South Africa’s diversity and its influence on the citizens, with particular focus on the political aspects. The purpose of this section is to present the most current language-related statistics in order for readers to be aware of the role the English language plays in present-day South Africa.

The most recent census in South Africa took place in 2011 and identified that the country had 51 770 560 citizens in that year (Statistics South Africa, 2012:23). Of the 51 770 560 citizens, 50 961 443 identified their L1 from the options provided (Statistics South Africa, 2012:23). In identifying their L1, respondents could choose one of South Africa’s eleven official languages, South African Sign Language or “other”. The national results were as follows (Statistics South Africa, 2012:23):

- Afrikaans: 6 855 082
- English: 4 892 623
- isiNdebele: 1 090 223
- isiXhosa: 8 154 258
- isiZulu: 11 587 374
- Sepedi: 4 618 576
- Sesotho: 3 849 563
- Setswana: 4 067 248
- South African Sign Language (SASL): 234 655
- siSwati: 1 297 046
- Tshivenda: 1 209 388
- Xitsonga: 2 277 148
- Other: 828 258

To facilitate comparison of their proportions, the percentages of L1 users of each language are presented in the chart below.

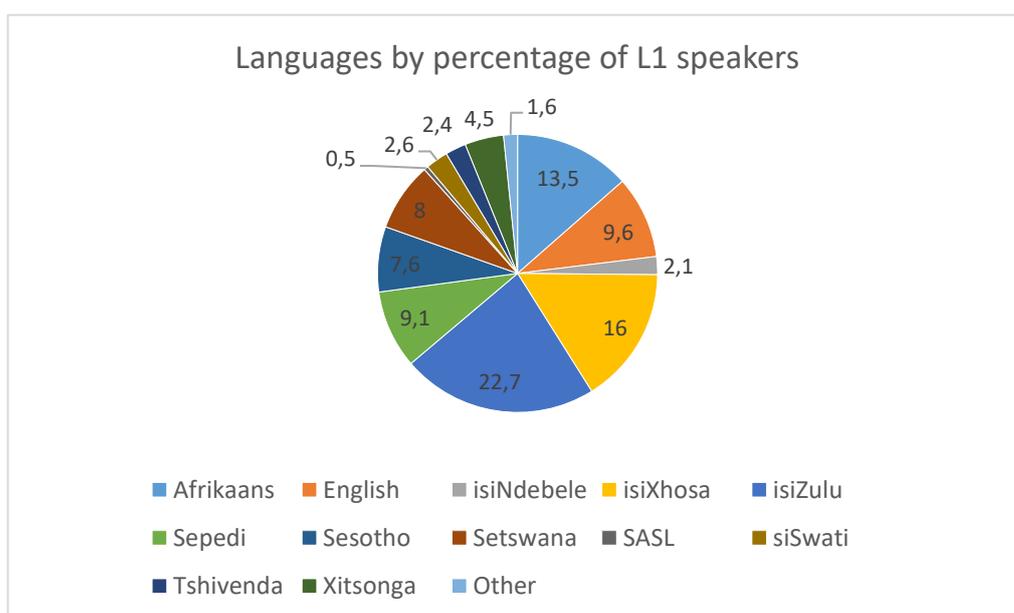


Figure 1: Languages by percentage of L1 speakers

As indicated in the chart, 9.6% of South Africans identified English as their L1. In the Western Cape, where I conducted my study, 20.25% of respondents claimed English as their L1, as is visible in Figure 2 (Statistics South Africa, 2012:23).

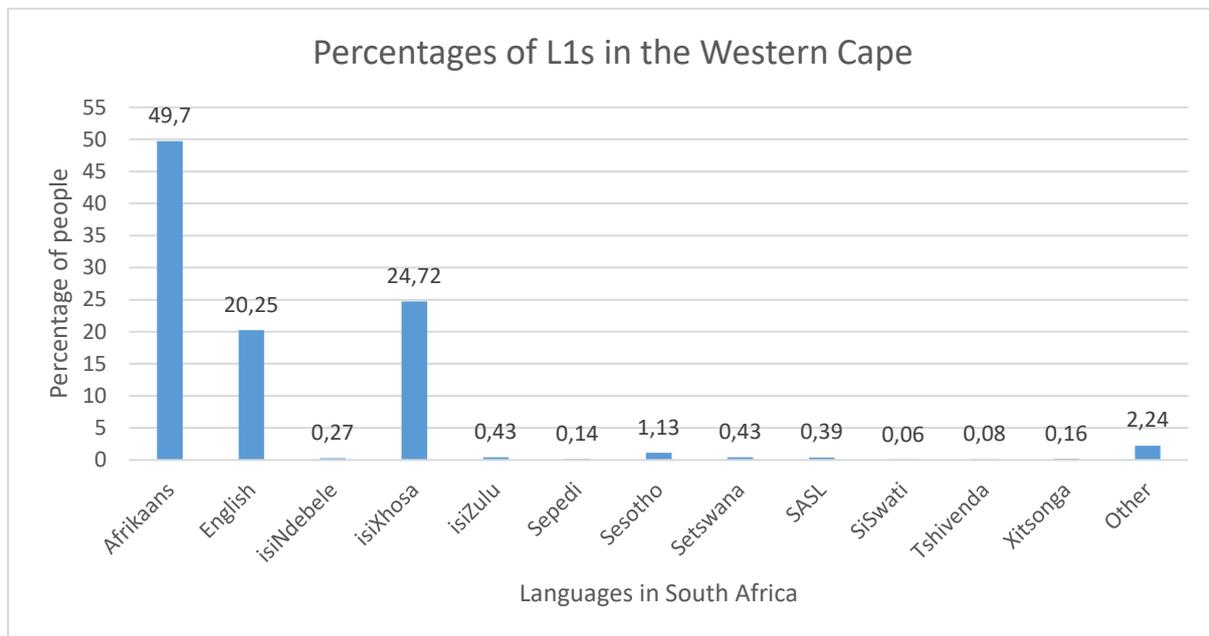


Figure 2: Percentages of L1s in the Western Cape

Many of South Africa's other official languages hardly occur as L1s in the Western Cape. What is of importance here, though, is the fact that English is the L1 of only 20.25% of the Western Cape's inhabitants. It is thus clear that the majority of the citizens in the Western Cape do not have English as their L1.

Nationally, English serves as South Africa's lingua franca. Seidlhofer (2001, as cited in Seidlhofer, 2005:339) explains that English is used as a lingua franca when "people from *different* first language backgrounds, across linguacultural boundaries" use English to communicate. Despite English not being the L1 of the majority of South Africans or inhabitants of the Western Cape, the language is without a doubt the most powerful in the country. The following section will briefly discuss how English gained its power and dominance.

### ***English in South Africa***

Kamwangamalu (2002:1) explains that South Africa has undergone the following language transitions: Dutchification; Anglicization; Afrikanerization; and Democratization. Kamwangamalu (2002:1) explains that the Dutch came to South Africa's Cape of Good Hope

in 1652 and started to colonize and “Dutchify” the area up until 1795, when the British occupied the region. “Anglicization” occurred in a British attempt to make and thereafter to keep the Cape colony British. Kamwangamalu quotes Davenport (1991, as cited in Kamwangamalu, 2002:1), saying that “*Anglicization* ‘sought to replace Dutch by English in all spheres of public life’”. Lanham (1978, as cited in Kamwangamalu, 2002:2) states that English was consequently established as the official language of the Cape colony in 1814. Kamwangamalu (2002:2) notes that this imposition of the English language was done “for ideological reasons” which I will now briefly touch upon. Malherbe (1925, as cited in Kamwangamalu, 2002:2) explains that the then-Governor of the Cape, Lord Charles Somerset, felt pressured to anglicize the colony’s citizens as quickly as possible and to extend English to all spheres of the colony. The Boers, i.e. the Dutch-speaking population, were denied any official posts in the colony, as these were reserved for the English-speaking population. As has been seen repeatedly in history, schools were a key instrument in the imposition of English. Dutch was banned from all schools in the colony and all children were forced to study in English rather than their L1 (Kamwangamalu, 2002:1, 2). Anglicization also played a crucial role in the war that broke out in South Africa, namely the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), which the British won.

In 1910, the Union of South Africa was eventually formed, and the transition to Afrikanerization began systematically. As Kamwangamalu (2002:2) explains: “in theory”, Anglicization lasted until 1910, yet it only “ended effectively” in 1948 when “Afrikaners came into power”. Afrikanerization marked the Afrikaans language as the main language for all spheres of life in South Africa. Afrikaans originated from Dutch, yet it was influenced by many of the various languages found in South Africa. These influences included both lexical and syntactic borrowings from, amongst others, Malay, Bantu languages, Khoisan languages, Portuguese, English, French, and German (South Africa: Languages, 2017). Politicians once again used language as a means to oppress, and in 1953 the apartheid government in South Africa implemented the Bantu Education Act (see Kamwangamalu, 2001 for more on this act). Put briefly, the Bantu Education (or “Black Education”) Act not only segregated children based on their skin colour, but forced Afrikaans upon black students whose L1s were not Afrikaans, but one of a variety of other languages (Kamwangamalu, 2002:2). These students saw English as “the language of liberation against apartheid”, and now English was being removed and replaced with Afrikaans (Kamwangamalu, 1997). This once again led to violence, and on the

16<sup>th</sup> of June 1976 the tragic Soweto uprisings took place. In 1994, South Africa had its first democratic election, and in its new constitution eleven official languages are recognised.

The above is a brief description of the changes in languages' roles that have occurred in South Africa and the politics associated with these changes. In this description, it should be evident that English has played a vital role in the majority of the phases of South Africa's linguistic history. It is undeniable that South Africa's history still affects the usage of various languages within the country today. For example, older white South Africans may still resist learning or speaking English because of the Anglo-Boer War; and many black South Africans refuse to learn or speak Afrikaans because of how it was imposed upon non-whites during apartheid. After the country's first democratic elections in 1994, new language policies were implemented that cater for South Africa's diversity. Zubeida Desai (1999) summarises the key features of South Africa's language policy from The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996:4-5:

- The official languages are, in alphabetical order, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.
- The onus is on the state to take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of the indigenous languages of our people.
- The national and provincial governments must use at least two of the official languages for the purposes of the government.
- National and provincial governments must regulate and monitor the use of official languages. All official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and be treated equitably.
- A Pan South African Language Board established by national legislation must promote and create conditions for the development and use of all official languages; the Khoi, Nama and San languages; and sign language; and promote and ensure respect for all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu; Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa.

Although the South African language policy has been hailed as one of the most inclusive in the world, South Africans able to converse in all eleven languages are incredibly scarce. Therefore, it is no surprise that English emerged as the South African lingua franca. To emphasise its importance, de Klerk (1996, as cited in Kamwangamalu, 2006: 168) explains that "even the strongest opponents of English see to it that their own loved ones master the language".

However, it is not only English's role as a lingua franca that has caused its dominance, but also its increasing global dominance and the power and wealth associated with the language.

From this brief discussion it is clear that English, although by no means a majority language, holds great power within South Africa and consequently influences South Africa's academic setting. According to the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (Republic of South Africa, 2013), South Africa had 23 public universities in 2013. Of these 23 universities, not one does not have English included as a language of teaching and learning.

Research outside of the South African context has suggested that students generally struggle to establish an authorial academic voice and that this struggle is intensified if the student writes in a L2 (Paltridge, 2002:127). Not only do ESL students struggle to establish an authorial identity, but these students face internal conflict with regard to the identity they should adopt in their academic writing (Canagarajah, 2004). Research on students' voice and agency in master's theses is currently dominated by studies that focus on the use of personal pronouns in these theses (see Paltridge, 2002; Hyland, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2008; Harwood, 2005; Bengesai, Goba & Karlsson, 2011). A number of the researchers in this area have argued that the use and/or absence of "I" and "we" in the academic writing of master's students reflects these students' self-determination, agency, and identity—or lack thereof—in terms of their writing. As Hyland (2002b:352) states, "[m]ost obviously, however, a writer's identity is created by, and revealed through, the use or absence of the "I" pronoun". Although the use of pronouns is acknowledged as a way of creating voice and agency in a thesis, this study aims to move beyond the study of pronouns in order to investigate other ways in which agency and authorial identity are constructed in the writing of master's students.

"Agency" is defined by sociocultural theorist Leo van Lier (2008:172) as the ability to control one's behaviour, to engage in behaviour that affects other entities and the self, and to produce actions which can be evaluated. Van Lier (2008:172) states that agency often involves "volition, intentionality, initiative, intrinsic motivation and autonomy". Blommaert (2005:4) states that voice is "a complex concept with considerable history of use". He defines "voice" as "the way in which people manage to make themselves understood". He continues by noting that in order to employ voice, speakers have to 1) "draw upon and deploy discursive means which they have at their disposal" and 2) "use them in contexts that are specified as to conditions of use" (Blommaert, 2005:4, 5). Essentially then, "if these conditions are not met, people 'don't make sense' – they fail to make themselves understood" (Blommaert, 2005:5).

Taking these definitions as a starting point, this thesis investigates ways in which students intentionally violate norms of thesis writing as well as ways in which they construct themselves as autonomous, in other words as having voice. The thesis investigates the conditions established for master's theses and whether or not they leave space for students to make themselves understood regardless of strictly employed requirements. Furthermore, the thesis not only investigates language as a possible means of constructing agency, but takes a more multimodal view, focusing also on issues such as layout and the use of visuals within theses. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), in *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, argue that all communication is essentially multimodal or makes use of multiple semiotic resources in complex ways in order to make meaning. Language, therefore, is not the only way in which voice and agency can be constructed; thus the decision to take a multimodal view in this thesis.

This investigation will provide theoretical insight into the multimodal construction of agency and voice, a topic which to this point has received very little attention in scholarly research on L2 writing. Furthermore, this project will also provide research supervisors and teachers of postgraduate writing courses with practical suggestions of ways in which the authorial identity of students can be encouraged in thesis writing.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

This study investigates how students construct agency and voice in master's thesis writing within an L2 writing context at two universities in the Western Cape province. The overwhelming majority of degrees and theses produced in the Western Cape are done in English. This is despite the fact that the majority of the inhabitants in this province have either Afrikaans (49.7%) or isiXhosa (24.7%) as L1 (Statistics South Africa, 2012:23). More specifically, this study investigates how semiotic resources are used across modalities to construct voice and agency and how students themselves reflect on the thesis-writing process within the genre of academic writing.

## **1.3 Research question and aims**

### **1.3.1 Research question**

The research question, which was continuously kept in mind throughout this research project, is:

How is student voice and agency discursively constructed in selected master's theses in a second language writing context?

### 1.3.2 Research aims

The research aims of this study are as follows:

- To investigate the multimodal construction of agency and voice in students' master's theses at selected departments at Stellenbosch University (SU) and the University of the Western Cape (UWC).
- To investigate student perceptions of the thesis guidelines and norms, as well as the students' possible reasons for deviations from these norms.

### 1.4 Theoretical position

This research project draws from three broad theoretical approaches and two further key theoretical concepts. The overarching theoretical approaches that I use to address my research aims are sociocultural theory, multimodal analysis, and genre analysis. The two key theoretical concepts of this study are voice and agency.

Voice is a concept used in both sociocultural theory and postmodern sociolinguistics. Although different definitions of "voice" occur in these fields, they are compatible. This made it possible for me to draw from different traditions. In sociocultural theory, voice is viewed as "infusing one's words with one's own feelings, thoughts and identity, that is, investing oneself in one's words" (Bakhtin, 1981 as cited in Van Lier, 2008:178). Similarly, Blommaert's (2005:4) definition of voice is "the way in which people manage to make themselves understood". The latter is the definition to which I will continuously return throughout this thesis. Blommaert (2005:4) describes voice as being "a complex concept with considerable history of use", and therefore I rely on its most simple definition. For the theoretical concept of agency, I turn to the work of socioculturalist Leo van Lier. Van Lier (2008:172) defines agency as "the ability to control one's behaviour, to engage in behaviour that affects other entities and the self, and to produce actions which can be evaluated". These evaluative actions that are produced are the central concern of this study.

In addition to sociocultural theory, the thesis also relies on genre analysis, especially within the context of L2 student writing (see Samuelowicz, 1987; Casanave & Hubbard, 1992 in Paltridge, 2002).

In what follows, I introduce academic writing as a genre and then continue to discuss genre theory as proposed by Bhatia (2002), although I eventually work with a framework proposed by Paltridge. I focus on Bhatia's (2002:5) work in the field of genre theory, as he argues that

“(h)owever legitimate and strong the need for a narrow focus on applications to language learning and teaching might be, it is always important to have a broader vision to capture the social and institutional realities of the everyday world”. This “broader vision” of the use of genres is particularly crucial in thesis writing, as master’s students have completed undergraduate and honours degrees, which included more classes and shorter assignments, and now approach their individual research projects in various academic fields and especially with individual theories and arguments in mind. Bhatia (2002:5) consequently developed a genre theory with “broader vision”. He identifies the goals of this theory as follows:

- “to represent and account for the seemingly chaotic realities of the world;
- to understand and account for the private intentions of the author, in addition to socially recognised communicative purposes;
- to understand how language is used in and shaped by socio-critical environment; and,
- to offer effective solutions to pedagogical and other applied linguistic problems.”

The goals of genre analysis, as suggested by Bhatia, align with the goals of this thesis, in particular in trying to understand how language is shaped by specific circumstances to understand the intentions of the author and in order to suggest pedagogical solutions.

In addition to genre analysis, this study also has a multimodal aspect. For the multimodal analysis, I work with a framework proposed by Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield & Tuckwell (2013) from a study in which visual and performing arts theses were analysed. The researchers in this study examined the written components of the theses in order to establish how the authors might have used their creative components to complement their theoretical components. Essentially, they investigated how arts students construct a voice that combines both their creativity and their theoretical contributions. It appears that students from these disciplines feel compelled to include a sense of creativity in their theoretical components in an attempt to describe their creative processes as sincerely as possible. For the multimodal analysis of my study, I aimed to investigate the concept of resemiotization in the work of the visual arts (VA) authors. Resemiotization is defined by Iedema (2003:41) as “how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next”. How the meaning of visuals shift in VA theses, from the theoretical component to creative components and vice versa, will be analysed.

## 1.5 Research design and methodology

This study relies primarily on a textual (multimodal) analysis of master's theses which are in the public domain. The theses are all from the field of humanities. Two university repositories were consulted, those of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and Stellenbosch University (SU).

At SU, theses were used from the Department of General Linguistics, the Department of Visual Arts, and the Department of Philosophy. At UWC, theses were used from the Department of Linguistics, Language and Communication; the Department of Philosophy; and the Department of Women and Gender Studies. These departments were chosen because they are part of the same field as this thesis, namely the humanities and social sciences.

The linguistics departments were chosen because this research project has been done in fulfilment of the requirements for a master's degree at the Department of General Linguistics at SU. At the time of writing, I, the researcher, had been studying in this department for five years, and I had done several assignments in this field. Therefore, I believe I have an understanding of academic writing in a linguistics department. This department was also chosen because of the great variety of theses produced across different fields within linguistics; for example, it is likely that there will be differences between research on formal linguistics and research on applied linguistics.

The departments of philosophy were chosen in the belief that master's theses from this field would have a more conceptual format and argument and in this sense differ from, amongst others, data driven linguistics theses. Both the Department of Visual Arts at SU and the Department of Women and Gender Studies at UWC were chosen in the belief that these departments often encourage creativity, subversion and transgression due to the subject matter investigated and the traditions within these departments. Furthermore, VA students were considered more likely to use extraordinary means to construct their voices, as proposed by Ravelli *et al.* (2013).

Master's theses submitted for graduation in December 2015 and March 2016 were used for this study, as these were the most recent written theses in these particular departments at the time of writing. These limitations are essential in order to determine the scope of this study, seeing as it is conducted in order to fulfil the requirements for a master's degree. I want to emphasise that the idea behind this thesis was never to compare the two universities under study or even the selected departments with one another. Rather, it was more important for me to give an

overview of the type of differences or diversity in the exercise of voice across the different departments—all within the humanities and social sciences—in these two universities.

The textual analysis is conducted in a number of different ways.

Firstly, the use of pronouns is investigated. This part of the research relies on a corpus analysis conducted with the corpus analysis tool AntConc. In particular, I determine how often “I”, “me”, and “my” occur in the theses and which words they typically co-occur with in order to determine whether these personal pronouns are used as author pronouns.

Secondly, I conduct a genre analysis of the genre of master’s theses. This analysis includes the investigation of semiotic meaning-making resources such as layout. In particular, the theses are investigated in light of the established norms of thesis writing whilst trying to determine whether *deviations from guidelines* can be seen as an exercise of voice and agency.

In order to ascertain whether a particular thesis violates established norms, these theses are evaluated against thesis-writing guidelines and categorised into a particular thesis type, as presented by Paltridge (2002). These guidelines include the most widely used guidebook to successful thesis writing in South Africa, Johann Mouton’s (2001) *How to Succeed in Your Masters and Doctoral Studies – A South African Guide and Resource Book*, which according to Google Scholar had been cited a total of 3,027 times at the time of writing (Google Scholar, 2017).

It should be noted that this book is not always prescribed to students; however, it is often recommended. I did take into consideration the possibility that not all students might have consulted the book. Indeed, I could not determine the number of participants who did in fact use Mouton’s book; therefore, these guidelines could not be the main focus of this study.

However, the conventions prescribed by Mouton are often included in departmental guidelines and courses, and nationally this text does help to shape the norms of thesis writing in South Africa, which still makes it a useful measure against which to compare actual theses. The analysis based on these guidelines thus provides us with a general level of adherence to the most widely used thesis guidelines in South Africa.

According to a review of Mouton’s book, it “aims to fill some gaps in the current literature... this book is the first South African text which deals with the management of postgraduate research studies” (Le Roux, 2003:88). The various chapters, arguments, and guidelines in this book are briefly discussed in the section on research instruments and a detailed version of the

guidelines is appended. It was crucial to find and make use of a South African book for the purpose of analysing texts in this research project. This is because South Africa has a unique educational environment: its constitution aims to provide for eleven official languages, and there is a substantial economic gap between its citizens, particularly in the Western Cape.

In both Paltridge's (2002) framework and Mouton's (2001) guidelines, I saw a gap regarding the more creative thesis layout. I therefore added another type to the framework, namely "creative". This thesis type is based on the different creative thesis types Ravelli *et al.* (2013) have identified.

Furthermore, the study incorporated a multimodal and multilingual analysis. The multimodal analysis is based on Ravelli *et al.*'s (2013) study, titled *Extending the Notion of 'Text': The Visual and Performing Arts Doctoral Thesis*. This study examined how student writers attempted to combine the creative components of their degrees with the theoretical component in an attempt to construct a particular—creative—voice. As I included VA theses in my sample, I attempted a similar multimodal investigation in order to determine the purpose of the images within these theses.

The multilingual analysis is based on Canagarajah's (2004) *Multilingual Writers and the Struggle for Voice in Academic Discourse*, in which he proposes strategies that multilingual writers might adopt when negotiating conflicts within their writing. These strategies include avoidance, accommodation, opposition, appropriation, and transposition. Where I detected negotiation in theses, I attempted to analyse it in accordance with Canagarajah's study.

The final analysis is a thematic analysis of interviews conducted. Using Burnard's (1991) stages of thematic analysis, I determined the following themes:

- **You and your thesis:** your frame of mind, your thesis project, a standard format;
- **You and your supervisor:** the academic/work relationship, language of communication;
- **You and your language:** academic language, language difference; and
- **Other:** acknowledgements; a space for voice; Mouton.

Later it will however become clear that I had to include additional themes as they emerged from the data. The purpose of the interviews was to determine the students' cultural and educational contexts and to investigate how these might influence their thesis writing.

## 1.6 Chapter outline

The structure of this thesis is primarily based on Mouton's (2001:122-125) *The Structure of the Thesis*, as is indicated under the chapter heading at the start of each chapter in this thesis.

Chapter two is titled "Second language academic writing" and acts as the foundation of the literature review. This chapter indicates what literature has been covered and reviewed in order to establish the theoretical framework in accordance with which the research study is conducted. The chapter begins by introducing academic writing as a genre and is followed by a discussion of the specific challenge of identity that ESL academic writers face within this genre. The second part of this chapter discusses three different approaches to analysing L2 writing, namely genre analysis, sociocultural theory, and the postmodern approach. The literature covered in this chapter includes work done by Hyon (1996), Canagarajah (2004), Bhatia (2002), Vygotsky (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015), Blommaert (2005), and Van Lier (2008). These discussions lead to the third chapter.

The third chapter is titled "Voice and agency in second language writing" and is a narrow, focused discussion of these two concepts.

Chapter four is titled "Research design and methodology" and describes the methodology followed during data collection and analysis. The chapter begins with a summary of the general research design. Thereafter follows a description of the research site and the data collection process. I then discuss the data capturing and data editing processes before I turn to the data analysis procedures. Regarding the latter, I briefly discuss the corpus analysis, the genre analysis, the multimodal analysis, the multilingual analysis, and the thematic analysis of interviews that I conducted for this study. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

The fifth chapter is titled "Results: presentation and discussion" and presents the analysis of the fieldwork. The presentation of the results is followed by a lengthy discussion of these results. The chapter concludes with the main findings of the study.

The sixth and final chapter of the thesis is titled "Conclusions and recommendations". It begins with a discussion of the main findings of the study. This is followed by a discussion of the results in relation to the literature reviewed in the second chapter. The penultimate section is titled "Significance of results" and discusses the relevance of the study, possible further research, and finally additional recommendations. The last section, "Personal reflections", is a

discussion of my experience as an ESL master's student researching master's theses in ESL environments.

The reference list and appendices can be found after chapter six.

## **1.7 Key concepts**

The aim of this subsection is to clarify how certain key concepts are used in this study and how they should be understood throughout the study. These are not the only definitions available; however, they are the definitions I have used and referred back to throughout this project.

### **1.7.1 Postgraduate studies**

South Africa's university system works as follows: an undergraduate degree is either three or four years long. If an undergraduate course is four years long, the fourth year is generally considered the "honours year" and is simply included in the degree by the time the student graduates. Four-year courses are mostly for degrees that require registration at a professional body, for example nursing, law, engineering, and speech therapy. If an undergraduate degree is three years long, the student graduates without an honours qualification and has to apply for the honours degree, which is then separate and acts as an additional degree. At South African universities, students registered for honours degrees are considered postgraduates, as they have already obtained a degree. After completing the honours degree, the student can then apply for a master's degree. This study focuses on postgraduate students completing master's degrees.

### **1.7.2 Author pronouns**

"Author pronouns" (also known as "authorial identity" or "authorial presence", see Riyanti, 2015:39) in this project refer to first person personal pronouns used by the author themselves, specifically the researcher or principal investigator in a master's research project. This could include the author's use of "I", "me", and "my", and has in fact been the focus of research in the field of student voice in academic writing (see Samraj, 2008; Harwood, 2005; Fløttum, 2005; and Hyland, 2002a, 2002b and 2010). Although this thesis aims to identify student voice in a more multimodal manner, it also analyses the author pronouns used by the participants.

### **1.7.3 Student voice and agency**

The entirety of the third chapter, titled "Voice and agency in second language writing", is dedicated to a discussion of these two concepts. This subsection (1.7.3) merely serves as a reference point for readers with regard to the project's cardinal definitions.

Voice: “the way in which people manage to make themselves understood” (Blommaert, 2005:4).

Agency: the ability to control one’s behaviour, to engage in behaviour that affects other entities and the self, and to produce actions which can be evaluated (Van Lier 2008:172).

## CHAPTER 2: SECOND LANGUAGE ACADEMIC WRITING

“The chapter on the literature review in an empirical study usually also contains the theoretical framework that has informed the study.”

(Mouton, 2001:122)

### 2.1 Introduction: Second language academic writing

This chapter covers the most relevant literature that I have investigated throughout this research project. Even though I did not apply all of the literature discussed here to my study, this literature is relevant in the various fields of research I have touched upon, and for the most part these works influenced the manner in which I approached my study.

I begin by discussing the overarching genre of this research project, namely the genre of academic writing. Thereafter, I emphasise the importance of ESL for students in academic writing and discuss why certain challenges pertain to these specific academic writers. This discussion focuses on the challenge these writers face in portraying an identity that is true to themselves, as well as the notion of conflicting identities and how it is handled in academic texts. One way of indicating identity in academic writing is the use of author pronouns, and this is discussed extensively.

Following the discussion of academic writing and the challenges faced by ESL academic writers, I discuss three theoretical approaches that have been used in applied linguistics and especially focus on these approaches' relevance to the investigation of L2 usage. This discussion contains sections on genre analysis, socio-cultural theory, and the postmodern approach. The motivation behind this chapter is firstly to indicate what literature inspired my study and secondly to indicate to the reader the theories that shaped my analyses. I then link this chapter to the following chapter before concluding.

#### *Academic writing as a genre*

I will begin this discussion by introducing genres and genre analysis. I then continue to systematically indicate why analysing academic writing as a genre makes sense.

A research field's success is made evident, amongst others, by conferences which are held to promote knowledge surrounding the subject and to host informed debates. Conferences and colloquiums on genres, for example, have been a global trend since the early 1990s (see Hyon, 1996). Genre theory can be and is applied differently in many different fields of research. As

such, it is regarded as “a movement which [...] has the positive potential to mean many things to many people” (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993 as cited in Hyon, 1996:694). Genre theory is not only applied differently, but because various theories of genre are constantly evolving, different researchers and different research traditions understand genre theory in different ways. This subsequently leads to various genre-based applications, both in personal research as well as in educational systems, for example. One example of this variation is the inclusion of ESL speakers in the genre of academic writing.

The genre of academic writing is a field of research that focuses on the action of writing texts in any given academic field. In the text *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*, Ken Hyland (2004:2) explains that when one writes a text in any academic field, it is implied that the author recognises that they need to understand and employ a particular discourse in order to fully grasp—and then represent—that particular discipline. In essence, this also defines the act and genre of academic writing.

In *Academic Writing: An Introduction*, Giltro, Gooding, Burgoyne and Sawatsky (2014:ix) explain that academic writing is regarded as a genre since it, like any other genre, consists of the “characteristic fusion of language and [a] situation”. In *Writing Spaces: Reading on Writings*, a text written in an attempt to help new university students with academic writing, Irvin (2010:8) explains that “[a]cademic writing is always a form of evaluation that asks you to demonstrate knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills [...] Writing the paper is never ‘just’ the writing part”, but rather, *writing the paper* and participating in the genre of academic writing means adding yourself as a representative of a particular field.

In addition to defining academic writing, it is also important to explain the key role of ESL speakers and writers within this genre. Swales and Feak (2012:vii) introduce the latest edition of *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* by noting that in this day and age, there is an ongoing increase in the number of “‘expert users’ of English who are not native speakers”. This simultaneously emphasises globalisation and the importance of being able to use English professionally and academically, for research, business or scholarly purposes as well as basic communication worldwide. In this introduction, Swales and Feak also highlight the important role that English-medium instruction in non-monolingual English countries plays in this process. As English is rapidly becoming the “academic language”, it is important to note the major impact L2 users of English have on research into academic writing and, in particular, the challenges these ESL academic writers face.

### *The challenge of identity within ESL academic writing*

It is impossible to study student writing—especially with the purpose of investigating student voice and agency—without discussing the identity students are required to create, and how challenging this identity creation can be. Hyland refers to Fan Shen (1988, as cited in Hyland, 2002b:2) to explain this intrinsic link: “The process of learning to write at university is actually often the process of creating a new identity”. Fan Shen (1989:462) even terms this new identity, namely “my ‘English Self’”.

This holds especially true in the tertiary education context of a country such as South Africa, where this “new identity” typically implies an identity in a language other than the student’s L1. Hyland (2002b:352) explains the relevance of this, stating that “[c]reating such an [academic] identity, however is generally very difficult for second language students”. Hyland provides two reasons for this particular challenge. The first is that academic identities can be remarkably different from the identities students display in their social contexts or the identities they employed in previous educational contexts (Cadman, 1997, as cited in Hyland, 2002b:352). Thus, it is unknown territory. The second reason Hyland offers is that many postgraduate writing teachers do not emphasise disciplinary differences to postgraduate students (Lea & Street, 1999, as cited in Hyland, 2002b:352). To many ESL students, these factors will result in a complete absence of academic identity in their academic writing.

Hyland explains that this lack of academic identity can be extremely problematic, since although many academic departments accept impersonality as the status quo, this does not hold true for all departments and all fields of study. This acceptance of impersonality could then prevent students from adhering to demands and requirements unique to their respective disciplines.

Hyland also notes that teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) easily revert to teaching students to take themselves out of their own writing. This directly affects students’ voice and agency in their writing, because, as Hyland (2002b:351) explains, “the most visible expression of a writer’s presence in a text” is “the use of exclusive first person pronouns”, which is not possible when students remove themselves from their texts. Furthermore, Hyland (2002b:351) notes that if all academic writing is taught to be impersonal, teachers do their students a disservice. He therefore provides his readers with a solution, namely that teachers could rather serve their students by teaching them the various options a writer has for

expressing identity. This is especially important at the academic writing level of postgraduate students, where researchers are at the outset of their academic careers.

This holds especially true when one looks at Mouton's (2001:4, 5) section on *The motivation for postgraduate studies*, where he explains that being awarded a master's degree implies that one has "*mastered* the craft of research or scholarship" and adds that "[i]t is essential that your decision to pursue a master's degree [...] is also based on some interest in the mastering of scholarship and the production of knowledge". To ultimately *produce knowledge* then, it makes sense that the postgraduate student is allowed an opportunity to voice this newly acquired knowledge.

In order to support his argument that students are directed to remove themselves from their writing, Hyland (2002b:351) refers to four separate textbooks that emphasise academic writing's supposed "rigid conventions of anonymity", which are essentially disguised as *style guides* for students.

In Spencer and Arbon's (1996) *Foundations of Writing*, the authors state that "[y]ou don't have to say 'I think' or 'My opinion is' in the paper (...) Traditional formal writing does not use I or we in the body of the paper".

Gong and Dragga's *A Writer's Repertoire* (1995) adopts the same perspective, as it reads "it is unimportant *who* observed the chemical reaction: only the observation itself is vital. Thus the active voice sentence is inappropriate. In this situation, passive voice and the omission of the agent of action are justified".

In Arnaudet and Barrett's (1984) *Approaches to Academic Reading and Writing*, the authors claim that "[i]n general, academic writing aims at being 'objective' in its expression of ideas, and thus tries to avoid specific reference to personal opinions. Your academic writing should imitate this style by eliminating first person pronouns..."

Lester's (1993) *Writing Research Papers* in its turn states that one should write one's paper with a third person voice that avoids phrases such as 'I believe' or 'It is my opinion'.

In Hyland's discussion of the abovementioned extracts, he emphasises that this issue is more complex than these extracts make it seem. He highlights that these texts truly encourage the removal of the academic writer, the postgraduate student, the one working to *produce knowledge*, from their product of knowledge.

Fortunately, the focus has shifted in recent research, and researchers now acknowledge that different disciplines require different ways of looking at the world; and essentially, researchers from various disciplines should be expressing their convictions and findings in ways reflective of their diversity (Hyland, 2000 & Johns, 1997, as cited in Hyland, 2002b:352). Hyland (2002b:352) discusses this further by noting that “words they [researchers and writers from differing fields] choose must present their ideas in ways that make most sense to their readers, and part of this involves adopting an appropriate identity”. The key phrase here is “adopting an appropriate identity”, which implies that researchers, and by implication students at master’s or doctoral level, should still be allowed a space in their writing for them to visibly identify with their respective disciplines.

Hyland (2002b:352) then continues to state the most direct manner in which one can make their identity surface in their writing: “a writer’s identity is created by, and revealed through, the use or absence of the *I* pronoun”. This accounts for the investigation of personal pronouns in this thesis. Hyland (2002b:352) furthermore explains that the use and/or absence of these pronouns result in an author’s appearance in—or absence from—a text, which in its turn then presents the author’s *academic identity* and, as he notes, “a voice with which to present an argument”. This recalls Mouton’s motivation for writing a thesis or dissertation, namely arguing for the new knowledge acquired and produced, within which context a voice is of cardinal importance.

It is because of these constraints placed upon students and the general belief in excluding personal pronouns that I have decided to investigate the use of first person personal pronouns in my study. Although the aim of the study is to search for student voice and agency at other levels, it is clear that the use of personal pronouns plays a key role in student voice and its current place in academic writing.

Hyland examined 240 published journal articles from 8 disciplines for his article *Options of Identity in Academic Writing* (2002b). The aim of Hyland’s study was to determine whether the impersonality and anonymity that is promoted in textbooks and guidelines actually occurs in academic writing. Hyland (2002b:353) concludes that “academic writing is not the uniformly faceless prose it is often thought to be”. Rather, he finds significant differences between the various disciplines. Hyland (2002b) notes that hard sciences and engineering minimise the role of the author in an attempt to emphasise the topic of the study; on the other hand, he identified a stronger attempt at establishing an identity from authors in humanities and social science disciplines. Hyland attributes this to the belief that soft knowledge domains are not as precise

and clear-cut, as ‘black or white’, ‘yes or no’ or ‘right and wrong’ as the hard sciences. This implies that authors in soft knowledge domains should take a personal stance in an attempt to indicate authority and certainty on their topic. Hyland further motivates this argument by referring to Ivanič (1997, as cited in Hyland, 2002b:353), who states that “[a]uthors make a personal standing in their texts to establish a credible scholarly identity and underline what they have to say”. Hyland also notes that academic writers of hard science disciplines use fewer author pronouns in an attempt to sketch a more impersonal picture. This is done in order to strengthen the “impression of objectivity”, and Hyland (2002b:353) explains that the authors achieve this by “subordinating their own voice to that of their results”.

With regard to the results of his study, Hyland furthermore notes that writers tended to use first person pronouns when they presented claims and results; thus entering the text in an attempt to link themselves to their research findings, and ultimately linking themselves to the contribution they might hope to make with these findings. This again motivates Mouton’s argument that postgraduate students who approach master’s studies should do so to produce knowledge. When an author purposefully links themselves to their findings by—as Hyland suggests—adding personal pronouns to their writing, it is an obvious sign that they are now presenting their newly acquired knowledge.

Hyland continues by making a distinction between academic writers of English as a L1 and ESL, and dedicates an entire section to *What L2 writers do*. From a previous study, Hyland (2002b:353) concluded that Hong Kong ESL students tended to “underuse writer pronouns or use them unadventurously”, and *played it safe* by rather mentioning their writing than their own thoughts. In his 2002a study, Hyland compared the academic writing of final-year Hong Kong undergraduate students to that of ‘expert writers’ from various disciplines. Hyland (2002b:354) observed that the ‘expert writers’ were as much as “three times more likely to use author pronouns” in their writing, in both the soft and the hard disciplines. Regarding the results, Hyland (2002b:354) notes that L2 speakers generally rely on active sentences, yet it was not the case in this study, as it appears that the student writers (Hong Kong ESL students) went through what Hyland refers to as “linguistic trouble to avoid author pronouns”. Essentially then, these students wrote in the passive voice, with its additional challenges, in order to avoid the active voice. Based on follow-up interviews, Hyland determined two particular reasons for these ESL students’ avoidance of author pronouns:

1. The students were taught that they should avoid “bring[ing] their own opinions into their texts” and consequently held the belief that personal pronouns such as “I” and “we” are inappropriate for the purpose of academic writing (Hyland, 2002b:354).
2. The second reason for these students’ use of particular sentence constructions has less to do with scholarly experience and more to do with their particular “cultural reasons for preferring the passive” (Hyland, 2002b:354). Hyland (2002b:354) mentions that there were respondents who admitted to feeling “uncomfortable with the personal authority that the use of I implied”. He elaborates on this notion by explaining the authorial power that comes with first person pronouns. Although it highlights a strong identity, this mind-set contrasts with many cultural beliefs that emphasise collective thoughts and ways of doing or representing. As a result, these students were wary of making statements outside of their collective group. This wariness could possibly also be attributed to a lack of individual confidence in a language other than their L1 and also in making claims in a language other than their L1.

Hyland (2002b:354) continues his explanation of these students’ understanding of the first person pronoun by stating that they expressed “a reluctance to accept its clear connotations of subjectivity, authority, and personal commitment”. This again explains the students’ anxiety and reluctance to commit to the use of first person personal pronouns in their L2. In Hyland’s comparison between the expert writers and the student writers, he found that the expert writers made use of first person pronouns in an attempt to highlight their personal contributions, whereas the student essays’ authorial pronouns were mostly used in acknowledgement sections, where the purpose of the essay was discussed or when processes were explained.

Hyland (2002b:354) refers to the students’ use of first person pronouns as playing roles in the texts that were “relatively innocuous and text internal”, and he explains that these particular uses “commit the writer to little and carry only a very weak sense of identity”. If an author comes across as unsure of themselves and the text they are producing, it can have a negative effect on the manner in which the text is perceived. The lack of first person pronouns and essentially an individual voice may have an even greater impact on the writing of *soft science research*, since Hyland (2002b:353) states that an authorial stance could “promote an impression of confidence and authority” in fields where right and wrong are not always obvious. In interviews with the students’ subject supervisors in the softer disciplines, many indicated that they noted an absence of “real voice or presence behind the papers”. This led to

a sense of frustration on the supervisor's part, as they attributed this lack to "students' general reluctance to commit themselves" (Hyland, 2002b:355).

It should be noted that Hyland compared English first language writers' published articles with final-year undergraduate essays from ESL students. Even if the two groups of participants shared an L1, differences in their academic confidence would most likely still have caused a noticeable difference in their writing. Hyland is aware of this, though, as he refers to the first group as "expert writers" and eventually refers to the student writers as "emerging writers" (2002b:355). Although these groups could not have been compared fairly, Hyland does raise legitimate concerns and makes valid points that are equally valuable to my study.

Doing away with one's voice and omitting one's opinion will consequently lead to questioning one's identity and, in the case of many academic writers, ultimately sacrificing one's identity. In addition to Hyland, many researchers have investigated the concept of identity in ESL academic writing. I discuss this work now in order to highlight how a sense of one's identity could influence the degree to which an author feels confident enough to put themselves in their text.

In Birgit Brock-Utne's (2002) study *The Global Forces Affecting the Education Sector Today*, she explores the effect of globalization on universities in Europe. Amongst other issues, she focuses on "the increasing predominance of English to the detriment of the academic use of so-called small languages" (Brock-Utne, 2002:283). Brock-Utne (2002:292) advocates for the continued use of indigenous languages as languages of learning in higher educational settings, noting that this is "[o]ne of the most important ways to maintain local cultures". Elirea Bornman and Petrus Potgieter, in their study titled *Language Choices and Identity in Higher Education: Afrikaans-speaking Students at Unisa* (2015), highlight the notion of identity in terms of Brock-Utne's statement, stating that students' identities and cultures should be both maintained and nurtured equally through the use of their local languages within higher education environments. Simply put, "[l]anguage symbolises identity" (Aziakpono & Bekker, 2010, as cited in Bornman and Potgieter, 2015). In fact, Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (as cited in Bornman and Potgieter, 2015), regard "language and its concomitant elements (e.g. speech style, accent and dialect)" as some of the most important elements through which ethnic identity can be realised.

Bornman and Potgieter (2015) also describe the variables associated with ethnolinguistic vitality. The third variable they mention, namely institutional support, is applicable to this

thesis. Institutional support is defined as “the extent to which a group and its language are formally and informally supported in a variety of national, regional and/or local institutions” (Bornman and Potgieter, 2015:4). A vital element of institutional support is the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) used in primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

Bornman and Potgieter (2015:4) draw a conclusion of crucial importance, namely that “the role and influence of educational institutions are not limited to education *per se*, but they are also involved in the identity dynamics within a particular context”. This also includes the degree to which minority groups feel a sense of belonging and inclusion in the educational setting. Many students feel the need to sacrifice their identity by choosing to participate academically in the more common, popular, and accommodated language, English. In making this decision, students automatically drive a wedge between their sense of self and their particular ethnic identity (Bornman and Potgieter, 2015). Jim O’Driscoll (as cited in Bornman and Potgieter, 2015:5) takes an interesting stand regarding this topic, noting that “although using English within multicultural contexts might be considered as accommodative and unselfish, it could be a strategy to master English in order to be able ultimately to project a cosmopolitan persona”. O’Driscoll (2001) describes the *cosmopolitan face* as an attempt to prove worthiness, whether of a particular language associated with higher status or even of a particular setting, such as a university classroom. This again emphasises the need for a stable view of one’s ethnic and academic identity even before starting to write an academic text, as this process has inescapable challenges which seem exacerbated for ESL writers.

## **2.2 Discussion of approaches to analysing second language writing**

The remainder of this chapter focuses on three theoretical approaches that have been developed in the field of applied linguistics. In each discussion I identify an aspect applicable to my study.

### **2.2.1 Genre analysis**

This study makes use of genre analysis, as it investigates the genre of master’s thesis writing within the greater genre of academic writing. Hyon, already in 1996, writes of the importance of the concept of genre in its various applications. She discusses how genre analysis is employed by three traditions, namely English for Specific Purposes (ESP), North American New Rhetoric Studies, and Australian systemic functional linguistics. The fact that so many different traditions apply genre analysis emphasises its importance and also its relevance for

this particular study. This discussion highlights how different researchers in various traditions turn to different definitions of genre and shows how their applications of genre tools differ.

Researchers in the ESP tradition have used and continue to use genre as a tool to enable non-native speakers of English to fulfil the language's spoken and/or written requirements in either academic or other professional settings. Seminal work in this field includes Bhatia (1993), Flowerdew (1993), Love (1991), and Swales (1990). In this field, genres are understood as both oral and written text types; and a genre is defined by two characteristics, namely 1) its formal properties and 2) the text's communicative purposes within its greater social context (Hyon, 1996:695). ESP researchers are thus sensitive to a text's social function as well as its form (Hyon, 1996:695). This duality is reiterated in the definition of genre theory offered by one of ESP's founding fathers, John Swales: "[genres are] communicative events that are characterized both by their 'communicative purposes' and by various patterns of 'structure, style, content and intended audience'" (1990:58, as cited in Hyon, 1996:695).

Within the tradition of New Rhetoric Studies, the approach to genre theory differs from that of ESP scholars in that it emphasises context over form. As Hyon (1996:696) explains, New Rhetoric Studies focuses particularly on a text type's social purpose and the situation within which it is found. Seminal work in this field includes Miller (1984), Bazerman (1988), Devitt (1993), and Schryer (1993). Miller (1984:151) succinctly defines this tradition's view on genre theory, stating that "a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish", i.e. the function of the text type in a particular context. New Rhetoric Studies has operationalised this definition by making use of ethnographic analyses which have resulted in "thick descriptions of academic and professional contexts" that surround a particular text (Hyon, 1996:696).

Hyon (1996:696) explains that Australian genre theories function within the larger language theory of systemic functional linguistics. Systemic functional linguistics highlights language's function in its greater social context and claims that the form of a language is shaped by its context rather than the other way around (Hyon, 1996:697). One of the greatest influences in this field is the work of Halliday (1978), which puts forward that form, function, and social context should all be clearly linked in language usage. Hyon notes that it was one of Halliday's Australian students who developed a genre theory within a systemic functional framework which adhered to this original requirement. Within this theory, genres were eventually defined

as “staged, goal-oriented social processes, structural forms that cultures use in certain contexts to achieve various purposes” (Martin *et al.*, 1987, as cited in Hyon, 1996:697).

In relation to the aims of this thesis, I return to Hyon’s discussion of the use of genre theory within the ESP tradition. The ESP tradition uses genre theory as a means to analyse EAP and English for Professional Communication (EPC). Scholars and researchers in this field use genre-based applications to help non-native speakers of English to read and write in their respective disciplines and professions and to adhere to the linguistic conventions of these contexts. Amongst other findings, ESP researchers propose that genre analyses can help students “control the organizational and stylistic features” of the texts they are required to read and write (Gosden *et al.* as cited in Hyon, 1996:698).

To summarise then, the ESP tradition of genre theory equips non-native English speakers with the conventions that are required of them in the English language. For this reason, I focus extensively on one particular ESP scholar’s work on genre theory, namely Vijay Bhatia. Hyon (1996:702) also mentions Bhatia as one of the “ESP genre specialists”. Although I do not explicitly apply Bhatia’s theory to my data, his research structured my thought as I approached my study. I therefore turn now to Bhatia’s detailed explanation and example of the application of genre theory.

I begin my discussion of Bhatia’s work with his (2002:4) definition of genre analysis. He views this field as “the study of situated linguistic behaviour”. The focus of this study is the situated linguistic behaviour of academic theses.

Because one of the aims of this study is to investigate students’ construction of agency and voice, the study’s purpose goes beyond merely investigating the language and words of the students’ theses. Bhatia (2002:5) states that “[however legitimate and strong the need for a narrow focus on applications to language learning and teaching might be], it is always important to have a broader vision to capture the social and institutional realities of the every day [sic] world”. This again recalls the ESP tradition’s emphasis on language’s social context. The need for a broader view and a focus on social contexts holds equally true for the study of master’s theses and the broader context in which thesis writing is embedded. As a result of Bhatia’s desire to adopt a broader and deeper perspective, he established the following goals of genre theory (2002:5):

- “to represent and account for the seemingly chaotic realities of the world;

- to understand and account for the private intentions of the author, in addition to socially recognised communicative purposes;
- to understand how language is used in and shaped by socio-critical environment; and
- to offer effective solutions to pedagogical and other applied linguistic problems.”

Bhatia mentions that in genre theory one should be aware of the “seemingly chaotic realities of the world”, which holds equally true for the *chaotic realities* of universities, academic departments, and the world of a master’s student.

Bhatia (2002:8) then encourages “a more systematic view” of genre theory by suggesting four differing “yet interacting” perspectives or worldviews on, or even “four different kinds of worlds” within, what he refers to as “the universe of discourse”. These four perspectives to be included in genre theory, as proposed by Bhatia (2002:8), are:

1. The real world perspective
2. The writer’s socio-cognitive perspective
3. The discourse analyst’s perspective
4. The pedagogical perspective

Of the *real world perspective*, Bhatia (2002:8) notes that “[the real world of discourse] may seem chaotic, because it is complex, dynamic and fluid”. Bhatia (2002:8-11) then continues by listing the factors that contribute to this perspective’s complexity, namely register variation, disciplinary variation, generic systems within professional communities, colonies of genres, mixed and embedded genres, and cross-cultural variation.

The *socio-cognitive perspective* refers to the work of “expert genre writers” that employ “rhetorical resources and other generic conventions” which then lead to the production of appropriated and mixed discourse forms (Bhatia, 2002:11). These forms can include cross-cultural variation and mixed forms (Bhatia, 2002:11, 12).

The *analytical perspective* refers to the use of particular research methods in order to analyse discourse. Bhatia also notes that within each research method the analyst can find a further variety of frameworks to follow. Bhatia (2002:13) lists “some of the more prominent” research methods, namely corpus studies, textual analysis, critical and ethnographic analysis, and genre studies.

Fourth and finally, the *pedagogical perspective* as described by Bhatia (2002:14) succinctly highlights this particular research project’s aims, as he states “[i]nsights from such analyses of

pedagogical practices and procedures [...] make analytical findings relevant to specific contexts of application [...] and help integrate analytical findings with language learning procedures”. Bhatia (2002:14) also argues that this perspective “help[s] to sensitise content lecturers to the communication demands imposed upon their students”.

Bhatia notes that a combination of all four perspectives would be ideal for discourse analysis and/or generic research. The entire process of analysis has however been questioned. Bhatia (2002:15) concludes by raising a question equally imperative for my study, namely “[T]o what extent should the analytical procedures account for the full realities of the world of discourse?” He continues by refining this question into the following (Bhatia, 2002:15):

“Is generic description a reflection of reality?

Or

Is it a convenient fiction invented by the teacher?”

In an attempt to answer this self-raised question, Bhatia (1999, as cited in Bhatia, 2002:16) proposes a framework that identifies three different views of discourse, which are crucial to the understanding of genre analysis. These three views are discourse as social practice, discourse as genre, and discourse as text and are summarised below (Bhatia, 2002:17).

<b>DISCOURSE</b>
<b>As</b>
<b>Social Practice</b>
<i>How is discourse constrained by social practices, identities, and social structures?</i>
<b>Context:</b> Broadly configured in terms of socio-cultural realities
<b>Genre</b>
<i>Why do people construct discourse the way they do, and what makes this possible?</i>
<b>Context:</b> More specifically configured in terms of disciplinary cultures
<b>Text</b>
<i>What features of lexicogrammar are statistically and/or functionally distinctive?</i>
<b>Context:</b> Narrowly configured in terms of textual links

Bhatia’s proposed framework thus allows for all three views to be acknowledged and incorporated within genre analysis. Below I present Bhatia’s explanation of these three views. In the discussion of my results, I will indicate how each of these views came to the fore and how each view was applicable to my analysis.

### *Discourse as text*

This view of discourse refers to the analysis of discourse on the surface level. Bhatia (2002:17) refers to the elements included here as the formal and functional elements of discourse, which generally include “phonological, lexico-grammatical, semantic, organisational, including intersentential cohesion, and other aspects of text structure”. He also explains that these elements of discourse do not integrate with the broader context of the discourse. This textual view and analysis of discourse might include intertextuality and interactions or communications with other texts, but the context does not extend beyond this. Bhatia (2002:17) explains that this level of analysis places emphasis on “the properties associated with the construction of the textual product, rather than on the interpretation or use of such a product”. For the greater part of an analysis at this level, the reader of the discourse is ignored; their background knowledge, interaction with the world, and any previous experience they might use to “interpret, use, and exploit such a discourse” are not taken into consideration.

### *Discourse as genre*

This level of analysis extends to the broader context in which a discourse is embedded. This broader context is added in order to make sense of the way in which a text is constructed as well as the way in which a text “is likely to be interpreted, used and exploited in specific contexts” (Bhatia, 2002:17). These uses or interpretations can occur within social, institutional or professional contexts in order to achieve a particular discourse or voice goal. Bhatia (2002:17) explains that this level of analysis can include questions of a linguistic, socio-cognitive, and ethnographic nature, and this analysis is “very typical of any framework within genre-based theory”.

### *Discourse as social practice*

This level of analysis emphasises the even wider context in which a particular discourse is found. Bhatia (2002:17) refers to this as the “social space” of the discourse. Studies of this type include analyses of the participants, namely their identities and how they change; analyses of the relationships in which participants find themselves; and analyses of the effect of the discourse on its readers.

Bhatia (2002:18) concludes by mentioning that whichever way or in whichever order a researcher makes use of the proposed framework, they will necessarily have to investigate the “socio-cognitive aspects of genre construction, interpretation, use or exploitation of generic

resources”, and thus highlight the greater social context in which a text is found and interpreted. Although this is what I aim to do in my genre analysis, I do not explicitly apply much of Bhatia’s theory in my analysis. Rather, Bhatia has influenced my approach to my data analysis. Below I present the genre framework that I applied to my data.

I make use of a framework proposed by Brian Paltridge for the analysis of my sample of theses. In *Thesis and Dissertation Writing: An Examination of Published Advice and Actual Practice*, Paltridge (2002) investigates the genre of theses and dissertations and how it is applied in practice when students write their theses. I will now discuss Paltridge’s study and, when analysing my data, I will explain the relevance of Paltridge’s study to my own. Rather than primarily looking at Paltridge (2002), I also examine his further research and discuss its relevance to my study where applicable.

This particular study of Paltridge’s examined published texts on master’s and doctoral level writing. As motivation for his study, Paltridge argues that actual theses and/or dissertations are rarely analysed, and so he aims to determine what students do in practice when writing. Dudley-Evans (1999), Thompson (1999), and Dong (1998) discuss different thesis types from different academic disciplines. Paltridge (2002) extracts four main types from these works according to which he categorises his sample. The four main kinds of theses he proposes are as follows: traditional: simple; traditional: complex; topic-based; and a compilation of research articles. I will expand on these thesis types in the fourth chapter, where I discuss my research design and methodology. I chose to include this study by Paltridge in my literature review as it touches on many aspects relevant to my study; for example the challenges with which a researcher is faced when using theses as a sample, as well the motivation for and importance of such a study.

The motivation behind Paltridge’s study was to identify the options of structures that students have when they begin their master’s or doctoral research projects. Paltridge did this with the aim of eventually providing students with course material on the different options available to them as they set out on their research projects. Paltridge also highlights the importance of this study as a means to understand why students make the choices they do when writing their theses.

In his 2002 article, Paltridge explains that very few actual theses and dissertations are analysed as part of research. He attributes this to the following factors:

- 1) The difficulty involved in getting hold of such texts. It is difficult to obtain examples of this type of academic writing, especially if the researcher is not part of a university.

Ethical considerations make it even more difficult to contact the authors of such texts to ask follow-up questions, as I have learned in my study too.

- 2) Secondly, Paltridge mentions the size of this text type as a challenge. Theses and dissertations contain a great deal of writing, and consequently the size makes the analysis of every single aspect of such a text nearly impossible – especially within the scope of a master’s project. Paltridge explains that this limits a study in two ways: analysing—and consequently observing—every single aspect of a thesis, and also the number of theses the researcher includes in their sample, which they then eventually reduce.
- 3) Every field or discipline, and even every tertiary institution, has different expectations of its students with regard to what a thesis or dissertation should look like. Additionally, a supervisor can also have different requirements for their students. This results in an even greater variety of influences on these students.
- 4) Lastly, Paltridge notes that the writing of certain fields changes. Even in one area of study, it can change over a certain time period. This will influence a researcher’s results, as their expectations will have to change as a field’s type of writing changes. This issue is complicated by the fact that these changes are often not explicit.

Still, Paltridge emphasises that this genre within academic writing should be acknowledged as separate, as he highlights the differences between theses or dissertations and other research writing (2002:126):

- theses and dissertations are longer than other research writing;
- theses and dissertations have a different purpose, i.e. they are done in fulfilment of degree requirements;
- theses and dissertations require that students demonstrate a particular kind of skill and knowledge that has been gained;
- theses and dissertations have a particular set of requirements to which they need to adhere.

This explains why theses and dissertations are simultaneously a challenging and unique subject of research. Therefore, it is important to constantly remind oneself of the motivation for

researching this particular field. One such motivation is effective ESP teaching. Investigations into thesis structures and thesis types are also necessary in the broader field of ESP. As Paltridge (2002:126) notes, few researchers in the ESP field focus on this aspect of ESP teaching, and when they do, they only focus on a single aspect of the thesis or dissertation for analysis. For ESP teachers, it is also important to be aware of and to understand the influences on students' writing and why they adopt particular forms, especially in order to make students aware of this. Once students are aware of different influences as well as the different options available to them, they can make their own choices with regard to textual organisation as they see fit in their respective fields of research.

Paltridge also highlights the vital role this awareness can play in the case of non-native English speakers. For example, Paltridge mentions that the majority of theses or dissertations written in English in Hong Kong are produced by non-native speakers of English (Allison et al. 1998, as cited in Paltridge, 2002:127). From the discussion in the first chapter on English in South Africa, it is clear that this is the case in South Africa as well. As a result, Paltridge claims that these non-native speakers "often have difficulty in meeting the demands of the kind of writing required of them at this particular level" (Samuelowicz, 1987 as cited in Paltridge, 2002:127). Essentially then, Paltridge emphasises why research into thesis types and structures is of such importance, especially for ESP teachers: globally, more researchers are writing in English, despite their native languages not being English. Consequently, research on the characteristics and requirements of the genre of thesis and dissertation writing is of vital importance in helping non-native speakers of English to eventually succeed in their master's and/or doctoral degrees.

For the final discussion on genre analysis, I turn to John Swales and Christine Feak's text *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (2012) to examine academic writing as a genre. The text begins by once again emphasising the writer's identity and underlining its importance for the success of a text by stating that the writer needs a "credible image as a competent member of [their] chosen discipline" (Swales and Feak, 2012:1). In the discussion of Paltridge's work, I mentioned his argument regarding how theses and dissertations differ from other research articles. Swales and Feak highlight some similar aspects that are central considerations for student writers. These considerations are audience, purpose, organisation, style, flow, and presentation (Swales and Feak, 2012:3). These considerations can also be regarded as key characteristics of the genre of students' academic writing which are necessary for successful communication. Swales and Feak explain these characteristics as follows:

### *Audience*

Swales and Feak (2012:4) highlight the importance of the audience, as they explain that the writer's understanding and comprehension of their audience inevitably affects the content of their writing and likely the way in which they present their writing. They suggest the following parties as possible members of the audience of an academic text: an instructor, an advisor or supervisor(s), thesis committee members, and peer reviewers or even conference and/or publishing reviewers. It is important to be aware of who the text's audience will be, as Swales and Feak (2012:4) also state that these audience members will certainly have knowledge of the topic of writing and they will have certain expectations "with which [the writer] needs to be familiar".

### *Purpose and strategy*

The concepts of purpose and strategy are intertwined, since they are dependent on each other. Both of these concepts are important in the genre of academic writing for students, since the purpose of the text will determine one's writing strategy. In turn, the chosen writing strategy is how the writer attempts to fulfil their purpose. Swales and Feak explain the position of a postgraduate writer in order to identify the purpose of such a writer, noting that in this case the audience will know more than the writer. As a result, the writer's purpose will be to "*display familiarity, expertise, and intelligence*". In order to adhere to the purpose of their writing, their strategy should thus be to display what they have observed through various investigations into the topic.

### *Organisation*

Swales and Feak (2012:8) explain that the organisation of an academic text is important, since readers, the audience, will expect a structured, predictable format "that is appropriate for the particular type of text". Swales and Feak also point out that this pattern can be advantageous, since readers will be able to follow a predictable pattern even in the case of language or other errors. It is thus important to be aware of all the different patterns or formats that academic writers employ in order to be able to choose one. The internal organisation of a text is approached differently by various writers. However, Hoey's (1983, as cited in Swales and Feak, 2012:11) strategy of organising a text's structure in terms of problems and solutions remains a common way of writing. This organisation requires a division into four parts, namely situation, problem, solution, and evaluation. In addition to the problem-solution format, Swales and Feak also mention other types of organisation: comparison-contrast, cause-effect, and

classification or categorisation. It is evident that Swales and Feak do not necessarily promote one particular format in their discussion. However, they do emphasise that postgraduate writers should choose one particular pattern or structure of writing and then adhere to its proposed format.

### *Style*

According to Swales and Feak (2012:14), writers should be aware of the style of the text they are writing because 1) it needs to be consistent and 2) it should be suitable for its message and its audience. A text can easily be misinterpreted as being too complex or too simplistic because of the style in which it is written, regardless of its content. Swales and Feak also underline the importance of being aware of one's options and then adopting a particular style in academic writing, since styles and trends can easily differ between disciplines. The stylistic differences Swales and Feak mention include the use of contractions and the use of "I". The variety across disciplines can easily confuse academic writers that are new to the genre of academic writing, begging the question "What is academic?" Yet even spoken and written academic English differ from each other. To determine the appropriate style, Swales and Feak note, writers tend to turn to sources that are less than ideal. Swales and Feak explain that general advice on academic writing is more often "based on personal preference" than actual research done in the field and, furthermore, academic writing seems to be "poorly understood by teachers and students alike" (Lillis, 1999, as cited in Swales and Feak, 2012:17). Therefore, the following advice is given to students writing academically: follow the stylistic conventions of your discipline, and at the same time consider "push[ing] gently at the boundaries of convention" (Casanave, 2012, as cited in Swales and Feak, 2012:22). Swales and Feak (2012:22-25) then continue to list options students can consider in an attempt to simultaneously adhere to the conventions of their field of research and push boundaries:

- 1) The use of the first person pronoun "I"
- 2) The use of contractions, e.g. "won't" instead of "will not"
- 3) Choices between different negative forms, e.g. "not . . . any" vs "no"
- 4) The use of vague expressions, e.g. "etc."
- 5) Choosing between addressing the reader as "you" vs not doing this and writing in the passive voice
- 6) The use of a direct question to the reader
- 7) Adverb placement within a sentence, e.g. at the start of the sentence vs mid-sentence

- 8) The use of split infinitives, e.g. “to downwardly adjust” vs “to adjust . . . downwardly”
- 9) The attempt to use fewer words
- 10) The use of both the active and passive voice – “the key is to choose the right voice for the right purpose”.

### *Flow*

Swales and Feak (2012:30) explain that the flow of a text is of cardinal importance for successful communication between the author and the reader. If done successfully, the flow of a text connects the different ideas and makes it possible for the reader to follow the sequence as the author intended it to be. In *Academic Writing for Graduates*, Swales and Feak (2012:31) propose the “old-to-new information flow”, since it seems to be the most commonly used method. This flow requires older information to be positioned earlier and new information to be positioned later on in a text. Repetitions as well as linking words are also suggested to writers to maintain the flow of their texts, as these may establish links between concepts more clearly. The flow of a text and possible ways to maintain it are discussed in depth by Swales and Feak, once again highlighting how important it is to make the text as reader-friendly as possible for one’s audience.

### *Presentation*

In this particular text, Swales and Feak promote the idea that if the flow of the text and its content are strong, smaller errors may not be as easily noticed, and vice versa: if a text does not flow well, errors may be more visible. Therefore, they suggest that students firstly focus on the content and overall flow of the text and only thereafter pay attention to the other aspects. However, although this holds true to a certain extent and for some postgraduate writers and examiners, all aspects of a text are examined strictly at thesis and dissertation level, and presentation should be considered of vital importance here.

One’s audience; the purpose of the text and the strategy needed to fulfil this purpose; the organisation of the text; the style of the text; the flow of the ideas and concepts in the text; and the presentation of the text are the foremost considerations for postgraduate level academic writing, as proposed by Swales and Feak (2012). Their text *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* attempts to make students aware of their own writing and to help these students realise the different options they have within their writing processes. This text once again highlights the need for students to be taught what their options are and even how to *gently* push the boundaries of these options.

### 2.2.2 Sociocultural theory

In the following discussion of sociocultural theory, I focus on Vygotsky's work as discussed by Mitchell, Myles and Marsden (2013), Lantolf (1994), and Lantolf, Thorne (2006). Sociocultural theory (SCT) broadly links with Bhatia's belief that every discourse is embedded in a greater context or social space. Social interaction has long been a topic of interest for researchers. SCT was originally put forward by the developmental psychologist (Mitchell *et al.*, 2013:220) and psycholinguist (Lantolf, 1994:418) Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky and his colleagues.

According to Mitchell *et al.*'s text *Second Language Learning Theories* (2013:220), the 1980s saw the rise of applications of Vygotsky's theory to L2 learning, especially by James Lantolf and his associates. Vygotsky's theory has since been immensely influential, and many different views have developed from Vygotsky's original ideas. According to Mitchell *et al.* (2013:221), there are "[c]ontemporary interpretations and modifications" of Vygotsky's original work, and this field is best described as "neo-Vygotskian". In this discussion, I look at Vygotsky's ideas in their current state of development and the elements thereof that are applicable to this particular research project. These ideas are nonetheless still in line with Vygotsky's original proposals.

Lantolf (1994:418) outlines Vygotsky's fundamental insight as follows: "higher forms of human mental activity are always, and everywhere, *mediated* by symbolic means". More simply put: "human mental functioning is fundamentally a *mediated* process that is organized by cultural artifacts, activities and concepts" (Ratner, 2002, as cited in Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:197). This then proposes that humans use *cultural artifacts*—society's ways of doing—to create means through which to regulate and develop our own biological and/or behavioural activities. Lantolf and Thorne (2006:197) note that "language use, organization, and structure" are the primary tools that humans use for this mediation. The argument is thus that humans develop themselves through relationships with and participation in cultures, communities, relationships such as those with family and peers, and schooling institutions. Lantolf and Thorne (2006:197, 198) explain that SCT does not discard the important role that neurobiology plays in higher order thinking. However, SCT does argue that the most important element remains our interactions with our environments.

It is clear that SCT is complex and consists of multiple constructs with additional underlying elements. Below I expand upon the key constructs in turn.

## **Mediation**

The first construct that I will discuss is mediation, which is regarded by many as the most important element of SCT (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:198). Vygotsky argued that the most distinct dimension of human consciousness is its capacity for “voluntary control over biology”, and that this is made possible once we use “higher level cultural tools”. Such tools include language, literacy, numeracy, categorization, rationality, and logic. Lantolf and Thorne (2006:199) explain that humans use these higher level cultural tools to mediate our relationships with others as well as the “social-material world” in which we find ourselves. In the same breath, one should also remember that as we change and transform the world around us—our social and material environment—with our (physical or mental) tools, we simultaneously change ourselves and eventually the way in which we live in the world.

### ***Mediation through regulation***

The first form of mediation discussed by Lantolf and Thorne (2006:199, 200) is regulation. Regulation is a way in which we learn, and it is often explained through the example of children acquiring languages and participation in social and cultural activities. We all aim to regulate our own activities and participation; however, initially it is regulated by others. Lantolf and Thorne suggest that the process of developing self-regulation moves through three stages.

The first stage is termed *object-regulation*. This refers to being regulated by objects and how we rely on objects for external support. Lantolf and Thorne explain that in this stage children may be controlled by objects or they may make use of objects in their particular environments in order to think about or make sense of their surroundings. An example of object-regulation is the use of beads in order to count or do basic mathematics.

The second stage is termed *other-regulation*. During this stage, individuals rely on the mediation of other individuals, for example parents, friends, coaches or educators. The other individuals provide differing levels of assistance or direction-giving. This second stage is also often termed *scaffolding* (more on this under the heading *Scaffolding*).

The third and final stage is termed *self-regulation* and is essentially every individual’s mediation goal. Lantolf and Thorne (2006:200) define “self-regulation” as the state in which you possess an ability “to accomplish activities with minimal or no external support”. They note that this state of self-regulation is only possible through internalization. “Internalization” is defined as the process

in which individuals turn the “once external assistance” (i.e. object-regulation and other-regulation) into a resource that is now internally available (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:200). Lantolf and Thorne (2006:200) add here that this process of internalization is “still very much social in origin, quality and function”. It must also be remembered that this stage of self-regulation, although the final stage, is never in a stable condition. For example, language learning: even native speakers may fall short of words in their native language when they are in stressful situations, just as great mathematicians may need calculators or pens and paper to do a difficult calculation.

### ***Mediation by symbolic artifacts***

Vygotsky argued that we as individuals have the capacity to use symbols as tools in order to mediate our own psychological activities; we as humans are capable of using symbolic tools to “control and reorganize our biologically endowed psychological processes” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:201). It is important to note that the use of these tools is first of all voluntary and only secondly is it intentional.

The ability to use these symbolic tools separates humans from other species, since it should make us capable of inhibiting and delaying automatic biological processes. Essentially, we can use these tools to consider action plans and their respective probable results before taking action rather than reacting automatically without thinking about consequences and possible failure. Vygotsky also argued that human consciousness possesses all of the elements needed to plan: memory of previous actions, attention to relevant (and overlooking of irrelevant) aspects of the situation, rational thinking, and projecting outcomes (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:201). This means that as humans, we are able to assess a situation and weigh up various courses of action and their respective various outcomes *before* we react in a situation. This is possible because of and through the use of cultural symbolic artifacts to determine our “next move”, so to speak. Cultural artifacts that are used to mediate mental or social activity include numbers, graphs, charts, art, music, and the most powerful: language (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:201). The importance of language is visible in the fact that language allows individuals to either change an environment or to take themselves out of that environment, because language gives us words with which we can talk and in which we can think. Language allows us to talk and think about incidents or ideas that are currently occurring in our or other environments, and also about events that do not yet exist or never will exist. Lantolf and Thorne (2006:202) summarize Vygotsky’s theory that I have now discussed as follows:

“[W]hile biological factors formed the basis of human thinking, in and of themselves, they were insufficient to account for our ability to voluntarily and intentionally regulate our mental activity. We achieve this ability as a result of the internalization of culturally constructed mediating artifacts including, above all, language.”

### **Mediation through an L2**

This discussion of Lantolf and Thorne’s (2002:202) work highlights the question of an L2 and asks to what extent we use an L2 to mediate our mental activity.

Lantolf and Thorne (2006:202) explain that humans use language to regulate mental functioning, and the primary way in which we do this is through private speech. Private speech occurs when we “appropriate the patterns and meanings” of our social communications with our environment and community in such a way that we transform them inwardly “to mediate our mental activity” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:202). Private speech is characterised by the use of abbreviations and the personal knowledge one has of the meaning of these abbreviations. Lantolf and Thorne (2006:202) discuss this phenomenon of private speech by comparing it to social speech between two participants who have shared knowledge on a particular topic or understand each other’s thought processes; for example close friends or two people who have been married for a significant amount of time. Both private speech and social speech as explained above “need not be fully syntactic in [their] form” on all occasions, since in the case of private speech, an individual knows what they are trying to communicate to themselves and, in the latter case, the participants know each other’s thoughts (Lantolf and Thorne 2006:202). When we make use of private speech, we are aware of the topic at hand, yet we need to talk to ourselves privately in an attempt to construct a response to the scenario. In research done with children, Frawley (as cited in Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:202, 203) explains that private speech turns the speaker’s attention to the following interlinked aspects:

- What is the deed that needs to be accomplished?
- In what way can this be accomplished?
- The moment it is accomplished
- Finally, the speaker then evaluates that which has been accomplished

Utterances such as “let’s see” are used in the English language as social speech to indicate that private speech has to take place before the individual can respond (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:203).

### **Internalization**

Internalization was previously known as “interiorization” and is also known as “appropriation” (Van Lier, 2004:133). Internalization is defined by Lantolf and Thorne (2006:203) as “the process through which cultural artifacts, such as language, take on a psychological function”. After mediation, internalization is the second core concept of SCT. Internalization is explained as a constant process of negotiation that reconstructs the individual’s relationship to his social environment, which is then carried over into the individual’s future performances (Winegar, 1997).

### ***Imitation***

Vygotsky expanded on the notion of internalization by explaining that the key to successful internalization is the human capacity “to imitate the intentional activity of other humans” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:203). Imitation, according to Vygotsky’s theory, should not be confused with behaviourism as understood in psychology, where no thought is put into the act of imitation. Rather, this level of imitation is a “goal directed cognitive activity that can result in transformations of the original model” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:203). To emphasise imitation’s role in development, Vygotsky is quoted as saying that “[imitation is] the source of instruction’s influence on development” (Vygotsky, 1987, as cited in Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:204). Thus, imitation is successfully doing what we have been taught by instructors or teachers.

It should be understood that the result of imitation, namely exhibiting an internalised action, does not necessarily occur as soon as a concept is grasped by an individual. Rather, the act of imitation is first exercised by the individual and then recalled when the situation requires that particular response. This is especially applicable in L2 learning, where individuals witness, experience, or are made aware of the correct usage of the target language, and then through private speech imitate the required or apt response until they are certain of the particular usage (see Lantolf and Genung, 2002; Saville-Troike, 1988; Centeno-Cortés, 2003).

### ***The zone of proximal development***

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a characteristic feature of SCT and is defined by Vygotsky as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:206).

An essential feature of Vygotsky's work is the notion that an individual initially requires assistance, either from an object or others, who may either assist the individual or set the example which the individual then imitates. The belief then is that the initial assistance predicts or indicates what the individual will eventually be capable of on their own. The ZPD complements this notion. Assessment done through the ZPD provides "a nuanced determination of both development achieved and developmental potential" (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:206). According to Lantolf and Thorne (2006:206), the ZPD has two characteristic features:

1. Interpersonal interaction leads to higher intrapersonal functioning, and this process then allows for cognitive development; and
2. This process requires internalization.

Vygotsky essentially proposed a learning theory of *learning through participation* and highlighted participation "in socio-culturally and institutionally organized practices", of which educational settings such as schooling are one example (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:206). The argument is that participation in classroom activities is stimulating and ideal for development, since classrooms are "intentionally designed learning environments". Thus, should an educator make use of the ZPD model, an environment can be created that will unlock the potential of specific forms of development in the student's future (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:206). Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1992, as cited in Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:208) put the ZPD to the test in an L2 learning environment. They found that the ZPD allows educators to determine "the frequency and quality of assistance" an individual student might require in order to develop their individual potential and to learn how to perform as required in their L2 in a particular situation in which they may find themselves.

In summary, the ZPD allows educators to see the specific area in which an individual student might require further development, since the ZPD also determines the "locus of control" and will indicate whether the individual needs assistance or whether this locus of control is within the individual themselves (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:208).

Lantolf and Thorne (2006:208) refers to language as one example of a cultural tool that is used "to carry out concrete goal directed activities". Because of this target, a traditional language test—which only aims to determine an individual's grammatical knowledge of a language—will be insufficient in determining a student's individual language development. Rather, to determine a learner's development, they should be given a goal-oriented task where language is used as a means to an end (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:208). Instead of testing a student's grammatical knowledge of a language in order to determine their development, this theory proposes testing students'

development by investigating the individual's level of control over the target language as a means to regulate their own as well as others' behaviour. This is done in an attempt to determine how capable the individual is of using language to carry out goal-directed tasks given to them (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006:208). Succinctly then, Vygotsky proposed that learning should take place within the ZPD as this allows 1) for learning from others who are more knowledgeable and 2) for an individual to grasp concepts in a greater social context.

This learning that is promoted in the ZPD can take place, amongst other methods, through the assistance provided through scaffolding.

### ***Scaffolding***

Scaffolding is linked to the second stage of regulation discussed above, namely *other-regulation*. It is a term that was not used by Vygotsky himself, but was first coined by Jerome Bruner and his colleagues (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976). Barnard and Campbell (2005:76, 77) define scaffolding as the process in which someone with more knowledge teaches another with less knowledge, thus making use of a scaffold in an attempt to equip the learner with the required knowledge or *know how*. The goal of scaffolding remains in line with Vygotsky's, namely autonomy. Wood *et al.* (1976, as cited in Van Lier, 2004:150) list six crucial functions of scaffolding, namely:

1. To gain interest in the task;
2. To reduce the degrees of freedom required to do the task; thus simplifying what has to be done;
3. To maintain the desire to reach the goal;
4. To identify crucial features shared between what has been produced and the ideal solution of the task;
5. To control both frustration and risks throughout the task or problem solving, and;
6. To demonstrate the ideal version of the task performed;

As Van Lier (2004:147) underlines, scaffolding is implemented for a temporary purpose and once the goal or task is achieved, the scaffold is removed. Therefore, scaffolding promotes "efficient and quick access to pedagogical goals" before the scaffold is removed (Van Lier, 2004:147). Van Lier (2004:149) also highlights two aspects of scaffolding, namely its unpredictability and its variability, claiming that within these features "learning opportunities emerge".

The complexities of and varying (and contrasting) beliefs surrounding SCT have been applied to many aspects of pedagogy, for example *Sociocultural Theory and the Teaching of Process Writing: The Scaffolding of Learning in a University Context* (Barnard and Campbell, 2005); *Implications*

of *Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in Teacher Education: ZPTD and Self-Scaffolding* (Fani and Ghaemi, 2011); and *The Relevance and Implications of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in the Second Language Classroom* (Turuk, 2008). In the discussion of the results of my study I will elaborate on how scaffolding was detected in my study as well.

### **2.2.3 Postmodern approach**

The third and final theoretical approach I will discuss in relation to this thesis is the postmodern approach to applied linguistics. I look to the work of Alastair Pennycook, Michael Breen, and Jan Blommaert for guidance and previous research. I use this section to outline the postmodern perspective. In the following chapter (chapter 3), I discuss the outflow of postmodern thinking, namely the notions of 'voice' and 'agency'.

I look to Pennycook (2006) for an understanding of the concept of the postmodern approach. It should however be made clear that Pennycook makes a distinct division between the concepts of postmodernity and postmodernism. He explains that postmodernity's core stance is a realist position, and the focus of this position is "the state of the world under late capitalism" (2006:60). Changes in social structures, communication, and culture have led to a field of interest focused on people's experiences of new conditions in their workplace and their economic and political environments (Pennycook, 2006:60). In the field of linguistics, this trend resulted in "flattened work hierarchies, new technologies, and new media", with significant influences on, for one, literacies, which eventually led to "for example [...] multiliteracies" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2003 as cited in Pennycook, 2006:60). Multiliteracies is a term coined by the New London Group in 1994 and was established as a pedagogical approach. The approach of multiliteracies aims to incorporate new technologies and especially the effect of globalisation on educational environments. Consequently the multiliteracies approach allows for an increase of cultural as well as linguistic diversity. The inclusion of diversity simultaneously allows for the inclusion of a diversity of students and also to teach students about diversity. The New London Group advocates multiliteracies as a pedagogical approach that is inclusive of a wide range of perspectives as well as a range of tools, including the concept of multimodality (Learning theories, 2017).

This thesis, however, does not explicitly focus on postmodernity, but rather on postmodernism. Postmodernism differs from postmodernity in that postmodernism attempts to challenge the "materialism and realism" that postmodernity reflected. Postmodernism mainly sets out to question and challenge general assumptions and beliefs (Pennycook, 2006:62). Dean (1994, as cited in Pennycook, 2006:62) succinctly summarises postmodernism by stating that it is "the restive

problematization of the given” – that is, under postmodernism, nothing is blindly accepted and believed. The movement attempts to question everything humans previously accepted as true. Postmodernism questions humanity’s claims of “overarching truths” such as *human nature*, *enlightenment*, and *emancipation*, and does so in order to make humanity sceptical about any “talk of reality, truth, or universality” (Pennycook, 2006:61). Furthermore, postmodernism rejects any sense of unity and totalisation (Pennycook, 2006:61).

Postmodernism allows individuals not to merely take beliefs or structures for granted, but rather to critically investigate these beliefs or structures. To explain how this way of thinking can be constructive, Pennycook (2006:63) explains that it can structure our thoughts to “think beyond polarities such as universalism and relativism” and, most importantly, the postmodern way of thinking suggests that “knowledge, action, and value are always specifically located”. Thus, every action is specifically situated for a particular function. This also means that concepts that were once taken for granted, for example gender, race, language, identity, power, and even policy, are now seen as constantly shifting and especially as “produced in the particular, rather than having some prior ontological status” (Pennycook, 2006:63).

When applying postmodernism to applied linguistics, Pennycook (2006:62) highlights that its principal concern remains to question; in this case, it is to question the concepts of language and mother tongue. To remain within a postmodern frame of mind, Pennycook highlights four features and what each of them requires of the individual (2006:63, 64):

- *Difference*: the construction of and engagement with forms of social and cultural difference
- *Dominion*: the contingent effects and workings of power
- *Disparity*: issues of access and disadvantage
- *Desire*: why people engage with particular social and cultural forms, and how to create possibilities for alternative futures.

Here, Pennycook proposes that if an individual desires a postmodern view of life, they need to bring it into every element of their being and question every aspect of their life, their environment, and their community. It is clear that postmodernism is likely to leave an individual with more questions than answers and perhaps even a feeling of powerlessness.

It is therefore important to determine where the power then lies in the postmodern approach. Ricento (2006:18) explains that from the postmodern perspective, power should be sought within texts and their greater discourses, since these sites reflect power relations and will also result in reproductions

of power through the genres of both speech and writing. Furthermore, Ricento (2006:18) explains that every discourse or speech act should be understood within its respective “broader sociohistorical framework”, that is, the greater context in which the discourse is rooted. It is this context which gives the discourse its power. Ricento (2000, as cited in Hornberger, 2006:34) also discusses a crucial addition to this point which highlights a core aspect of my study: “the key variable which separates the older, positivistic/technicist approaches from the newer critical/postmodern ones is agency”.

Ricento (2000, as cited in Hornberger, 2006:34) defines “agency” as “the role(s) of individuals and collectives in the processes of language use, attitudes, and ultimately policies”. Although I will not be holding to Ricento’s definition of agency throughout this thesis, the emphasis he places on agency within the postmodern perspective is crucial for the project.

Below I indicate how the postmodern perspective and the emphasis on agency can be applied to an educational environment. For this discussion, I turn to Michael Breen’s text titled *Teaching Language in the Postmodern Classroom* (1999). Breen (1999:47) begins by defining the postmodern movement as follows: “postmodern thinking is not concerned with prescriptions for how we may act. It is more a coming together of diverse ideas which seek to interpret the human condition”. The act of *seeking to interpret* underlines the determination to question all aspects of life, as discussed above. Breen discusses three reasons he believes postmodern thinking can be reconciled with a classroom environment as well as language teaching:

1. The notion of autonomous (language) learning as proposed by postmodern thinking. Breen (p.48) argues that if postmodern theories are correct, “[o]ur own efforts at innovation at the present time... must directly reflect our own personal and professional experiences in the postmodern condition”. Thus, our newest and latest attempts to do something (for example language learning) should reflect our previous attempts and what we have learned from these experiences. Our questioning of previous attempts should influence our more recent attempts at learning.
2. The postmodern perspective reveals our current circumstances to us, and this should consequently challenge us: “a postmodern perspective provides us with a critical stance that can enable us to re-evaluate recent innovations in language teaching with which we may identify” (Breen, 1999:48).
3. Postmodern perspectives “may suggest new directions we might take in our work” (Breen, 1999:48). Breen (1999:48) explains that the generation that is being taught by educators who

experienced the postmodern movement may be even more inclined to “feel the conditions of postmodern life”. The characteristic features that Breen refers to here are uncertainty and constant change. Students today are constantly facing a changing world and this needs to be taken into consideration not only in language teaching but in any pedagogy. Breen explains that once educators study postmodern views, they can implement these views in order to address students’ uncertainty by giving them some sense of certainty in the classroom.

This discussion on the postmodern approach highlights that power relations are reflected in texts and discourses and also that this is done through agency, which Ricento argues is a unique feature of the postmodern approach. Agency, in its turn, refers to those involved in the processes of discourses (Ricento, 2006:18 and Hornberger, 2006:34). Agency is thus of crucial importance in the postmodern view as it is essentially seen as a *power tool* through which a text and discourse can draw power, both inside and outside of the classroom. The following chapter (chapter 3) will elaborate on this discussion by bringing the notions of ‘voice’ and ‘agency’ to the foreground.

### 2.3 Conclusion

This chapter began by introducing L2 academic writing. After discussing academic writing as a genre, I discussed certain challenges that pertain to ESL academic writers with a special focus on the portrayal of identity and the options the student has in this regard. I focused especially on the work of Ken Hyland (2002a and 2002b), who emphasises how difficult it can be for ESL academic writers to create an academic identity. I also considered the role personal pronouns play in this process and how the presence or absence thereof impacts the writer’s voice in their writing. I also touched on Bornman and Potgieter’s (2015) study to further underline the concept of identity in educational settings.

After discussing the challenge of identity within ESL academic writing, the remainder of this chapter discussed three theoretical approaches to analysis within applied linguistics.

First, I looked at genre analysis. This particular research project focuses on the genre of master’s thesis writing<sup>1</sup>, and therefore this section is of crucial importance to this study. I began by discussing how genre theory is employed by three traditions, namely ESP, North American New Rhetoric Studies, and Australian systemic functional linguistics. Thereafter, I shifted focus to Vijay Bhatia’s

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<sup>1</sup> What should be visible from my discussion on genre is that this thesis uses the concept of *genre* as both a process and a product, and therefore the genre analysis is applicable to both the process of writing and the written product.

work and discussed how he extends his proposed framework of genre analysis to one of multiple perspectives. He explains that this is necessary because, in his view, a discourse is always simultaneously a text, a genre, and part of a social practice. Therefore, Bhatia's framework had to allow for the fact that every discourse is always embedded within a wider context. I adopted Bhatia's point of view as I approached my data analysis by continuously keeping the genre of thesis writing in mind. I however employed a framework of different thesis types proposed by Paltridge (2002). Lastly, I turned to Swales and Feak (2012) and discussed what student writers should consider as key characteristics of the genre of academic writing.

The second approach I discussed was SCT as it was originally proposed by Vygotsky and later adapted and discussed by Lantolf and his colleagues. Although SCT is a broad and multifaceted developmental and learning theory, I focused on the aspects of mediation and internalization. Within the discussion on mediation, I described mediation through regulation (object, other, and self); mediation by symbolic artifacts; and mediation through an L2. In the discussion on internalization, I presented the concepts of imitation, the ZPD, and scaffolding. I attempted to discuss the features the SCT proposes to explain how individuals learn through their cultures and environments.

The third section of this discussion focused on the postmodern approach. I began by reiterating Pennycook's distinction between postmodernity and postmodernism. I continued the remainder of my discussion from the perspective of postmodernism, which is characterised by uncertainty and constant change. I explained how, in the postmodern approach, power relations are reflected in discourses, and that this is done through the concept of agency. The emphasis on agency is maintained in the following chapter, together with a comprehensive discussion of the concept of voice.

## CHAPTER 3: VOICE AND AGENCY IN SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING

This chapter discusses the two key concepts of this research project, namely voice and agency. I define both concepts in line with previous research and then explain the relevance of voice and agency to this study.

### 3.1 Voice

Voice is a concept that is used in both SCT and postmodern sociolinguistics. The definitions drawn from these different fields are in fact highly compatible. This made it possible for me to draw from both traditions.

Van Lier (2004:99), as a first example, links voice to, amongst other characteristics, a spirit of inquiry and reflection and then ultimately thinking for oneself. In SCT, with its emphasis on context and environments, Van Lier links *voice* to *autonomy*. He emphasises that in this sense “voice” does not refer to independence or even individualism, but rather authorship over one’s own actions within whichever societal context one finds oneself (Van Lier, 2004:8). In Guldberg’s (2010:173) *Using the lenses of socio-cultural activity theory and communities of practice to guide an empirical study*, she explains that the success of her study was measured by “the extent to which participants’ *voices* were carried outside the network in which they reside”. In stating the goal of this SCT study, Guldberg not only reiterates the SCT’s focus on greater societal contexts but also underlines the weight voice carries within SCT, as it relates to individuals’ power and autonomy within their environments. Tyldesley (2013:39) also emphasises the power of voice and the relevance of a broader context by claiming that voice “positions people and gives them the resources to recreate different positions”.

These definitions are useful in providing a broader understanding of the concept of voice. However, as indicated at the start of this project, I draw from Jan Blommaert’s (2005:4) definition of voice because of its simplicity: “[voice is] the way in which people manage to make themselves understood”.

Because numerous researchers have studied voice (for example Voloshinov, 1973; Bakhtin, 1981 and 1986; and Ducrot, 1996), various definitions of the concept are available. This discussion will however continuously look to Blommaert’s research on voice. Blommaert (2005:4) focuses on the concept of voice throughout his research, because he argues that when one analyses voice, one essentially does “a critical analysis of discourse in contemporary societies”. This argument motivated my use of Blommaert’s definition, since I eventually

attempt to critically analyse my sample within their contemporary society, and Blommaert's definition makes this possible in the most direct and least complex way. I also turn to Blommaert's definition because he highlights the influential factor of inequality in his research. In this study, I also work with participants who are faced with unequal support regarding the employment of voice in institutions where exclusion always plays a part. Blommaert (2008) deliberately seeks out incidences where people employ voice *despite* these inequalities, as I will also attempt to do. I will now elaborate on Blommaert's work by turning to his article titled *Bernstein and poetics revisited: voice, globalization and education* (2008) in order to provide a detailed definition of voice and to clarify its relevance to this research project.

Blommaert (2008:425) explains that his article takes as a starting point the understanding of "voice as the capacity to make sense". This article is however built around a notion put forward by Bernstein (as cited in Blommaert, 2008:425), namely that language is a concrete resource and, more importantly, that this resource is "differentially distributed as to access and command". Also central is Bernstein's (as cited in Blommaert, 2008:425) attention to the argument that "differences in *how* people talk often lead to differences in the value attributed to their talk". This argument essentially proposes that *how* people talk can affect their voice or the manner in which they make themselves understood. For this reason, Blommaert (2008:425) believes that language as a concrete resource should be a crucial concern, especially in the field of language in education. Blommaert (2008:426) also believes that we are moving systematically towards a greater understanding of, and perhaps empathy towards, linguistic variation and its role in "assessment, appraisal and evaluation" in educational settings. We cannot merely rely on what Blommaert (2008:426) refers to as "the safe fortress of homogeneity". He explains this concept and its dangers as follows (Blommaert, 2008:426):

One culture-one language models, in which language is a stable, bounded, singular item, and in which 'knowing' the language becomes a self-evident condition for any sort of qualification of normalcy. Unless you speak our language (well), you will not be a citizen, a good student, a member of my neighbourhood, a human being worthy of consideration.

Blommaert (2008:427) suggests that we rather look at "language in society". Therefore, the emphasis of language analysis should be on its function, namely "what real people really do with real bits and pieces of linguistic and semiotic material" (Blommaert, 2008:427). We cannot merely say that 'language is a tool that is used to convey meaning'. Behind this

description, linguists should also question, what meanings exactly? How does language serve this purpose? How do people actually use language to convey meaning? Why do we use language in so many different ways? (Blommaert, 2008:427).

Therefore, Blommaert (2008:427) suggests that we rather turn to the concept of voice to explain the notion of language in society. As a result, we can then say that “people use language and other semiotic means in an attempt to have voice [and] to make themselves understood by others” in a society. This concept of voice is, however, not without complexities and unpredictability. As Blommaert (2008:427) explains, in an attempt to convey one’s voice, “whatever is produced is not necessarily perceived or understood”. This then also motivates Blommaert’s (2008:427) argument that having the ability to convey voice is “an intrinsically social process”, since it is always connected to other social structures, history, culture or power.

Blommaert turns to Bourdieu’s (as cited in Blommaert, 2008:427) interpretation for further explanation: “voice is a social product” and therefore it cannot be “unified”, since it is always a part of a bigger process of selection and exclusion which is embedded in greater social structures.

In summary then, voice is the practical conversion of “socially ‘loaded’ resources into socially ‘loaded’ semiotic action” (Blommaert, 2008:427). It should also be understood that these resources can differ significantly (see Blommaert, 2008:427): the most important thing to note here is that “[s]ome people will have a lot [and] others will have few”. Here, Blommaert draws on the work of Bakhtin to explain that dialogue, discourse, or an attempt at voice never occur on neutral grounds, but rather they are “social and political diagnostic[s] that [are] played out in a field which is never neutral but always someone’s home turf”. Blommaert (2008:427, 428) states that this inequality is furthered by the so-called “rules of the dialogue”, which are rarely established through a democracy but are more likely to be imposed “either by force or consensus”. These “rules” are then generally normalised through the concepts of history, culture, and ideology which form the greater social context (Blommaert, 2008:428).

Thus, whenever we speak, we place ourselves in this greater social context and a link is formed “between communication and the social context in which it takes place” (Blommaert, 2008:428). Blommaert (2008:428) argues that the concept of voice essentially provides us with the belief that *meaning* is invested with “real interests” and that it is “‘theoretically’ mediated”. Blommaert (2008:428) explains that ‘theoretically mediated’ suggests that *meaning* is organised “on the basis of ideological patterns of normativity”. Institutions are one example of

where these patterns can be found in our environments. Blommaert (2008:428) explains that institutions find a way to ‘freeze’ the conditions or capability one might have to convey voice; that is, “unless you speak or write *in this particular way*, you will not be heard or read”. Blommaert (2008:428) terms this “imposed normativity”. He also argues that the education system is one example of such an institution. Fortunately, Blommaert explains that this cannot hold up indefinitely. Eventually, regimes will change, as has been continually shown throughout history, South Africa being a case in point.

When I began this discussion on voice, I mentioned Bernstein’s (as cited in Blommaert, 2008:425) argument that there are concrete resources that we may have at our disposal in order to conduct and convey voice, of which language is one example. I now return to Blommaert’s arguments that dialogue never occurs on neutral grounds and also that the rules of dialogue are never decided upon through a democratic process, but are rather imposed.

Blommaert (2008:429) notes that even the most simple of resources are “differentially distributed” and will be affected by inequality. These resources might be very basic, for example fluency in a local language, or more advanced, for example literacy skills. Furthermore, Blommaert (2008:429) explains that although bureaucracies might claim that they attempt to “develop their language regimes on grounds of reasonable assumptions about average proficiency and skill levels” of those that will be affected by the regimes, in reality it happens that these ‘average levels’ are the levels of the “educated middle class”. In summary, Blommaert states that “[bureaucratic language regimes] often exclude those who needed access the most”.

Blommaert’s work is highly relevant to this particular study and the language policies of the two universities under investigation, namely SU and UWC. I say this because Blommaert explains how the *educated middle class* is a class to which not all participants of discourses can relate. When these ‘other’ participants then attempt to produce voice, they fail and silence their own voices because they do not adhere to what the social context requires. To understand another’s voice and how they articulate it, Blommaert (2008:433, 436) suggests that one must “extend the scope and range of what we consider to be competence”. He proposes that even a minimal shift in dialogue might bring a different voice forward. Goffman (1981, as cited in Blommaert, 2008:437) refers to ‘minimal shifts’ as “shifts in ‘footing’”. Blommaert (2008:437) elaborates on this by stating that ‘shifts in footing’ can also be described as “shifts in voice through micro-shifts in genre”. One example of such a ‘micro-shift in genre’ is when a narrator

tells a story and shifts from “factual reporting” to “emotional narrative” (Blommaert, 2008:437). Footing can also go wrong. Blommaert (2008:437) offers an example of an individual accused of a crime formulating her own statement and also writing down a response to her actions. Thus, while defending herself, she ends up using a voice “that is not hers to use, and consequently silences herself”.

Details are of extreme importance when one shifts between different voices, and Blommaert (2008:438) explains that what can be perceived as “mere details” for the listener or analyst may be “crucial features” for the person talking. Therefore, it should be both encouraged and understood that people will make use of every possible resource at their disposal, i.e. their repertoire. Blommaert (2008:438) also notes that repertoires are not generic and should “never be taken for granted”. Rather, each repertoire’s nature and structure should be established empirically with the repertoire of the individual in question being analysed in light of their unique social context. Blommaert (2008:438) believes that “presumed universalism” plays too big of a role in these cases and can lead to devastating results for diverse participants of dialogues. For example, this presumption could result in a listener or analyst responding with “you *chose* to answer in this way” instead of comprehending the voice someone is attempting to produce (Blommaert, 2008:438).

Blommaert (2008:438) explains all of this in terms of globalization. He argues that we are increasingly unable to make assumptions about others and the “nature and structure of [others’] repertoires” since the world’s borders are now constantly moving. Blommaert (2008:439) extends his argument by naming two features of globalization. I focus on one of these here, namely that “we can no longer make any a priori assumptions about the repertoires of people in globalization contexts”. Blommaert (2008:439) explains the importance of grasping this: “[w]hen people do not make sense, it is often not because they do not *want* to make sense but because they do not have access to the means required for making sense *here*, in this actual context with these actual interlocutors”. Blommaert (2008:439) suggests that one example of such a context are schools and the education system and their attempts towards ‘mainstreaming’ and ‘uniforming’ despite the clear increase in diversity. It should be understood that this attempt of the education system is perceived as “democratic”. Blommaert (2008:439) explains: “when an education system has achieved total absorption of its population into the mainstream, it is judged to have contributed to democracy... [this attempt is] not just pedagogical, but also political”.

Blommaert explains this complexity in terms of two examples. Again, I focus only on the one applicable to this thesis. The two examples offered are meant to explain the two directions of globalization, namely the flow from the centre to the periphery and the flow from the periphery to the centre. In South Africa, we find many examples of the flow of globalization taking place from the centre to the periphery. This means that there is a flow of symbols, systems, and instruments to ‘outside territories’. These symbols, systems, and instruments are “presumed universal recipes for development, democracy, success, [and] leadership” (Blommaert, 2008:439). After apartheid, educational reform was a key element in South Africa’s transformation to a more democratic country (see chapter 1 for a brief discussion of language in education during apartheid). In an attempt to increase equality, the post-apartheid government’s education system made use of mainstreaming, and their target was “a level of education that fits a middle-class profile” (Blommaert, 2008:440).

Blommaert (2005, as cited in Blommaert, 2008:440) continues to discuss the topic by stating that it is no surprise that “English is often seen as the key to gaining access to the mainstream” and also that “there is colossal awe for and belief in the upwardly mobile power of English”. Again, one should be reminded that different sectors of the population possess different repertoires. Therefore, if mainstreaming occurs and the same resource (namely English) is distributed to this diverse group, it will not be absorbed equally. Blommaert (2008:440) notes that in such cases, mainstreaming is merely “an illusion”. A “democratic school system” will then result in the dismissal of “severe and fundamental differences” within a population and is consequently most likely to increase the *inequality* between scholars and students.

Although the English language is for most part globalised and absorbed in South Africa, Blommaert explains that not all elements are effectively globalised: “the capacity to articulate complex personal meanings—voice—through English literacy is differentially distributed... even if it appears to be recognized”. Blommaert detected this in South Africa after a study conducted in the Cape area (see Blommaert, 2008:439-444). He argues that the resources needed to clearly produce one’s voice are not carried over or learned properly amidst other features of globalization. He summarises this as follows (Blommaert, 2008:440):

[W]hat is *not* carried over is the truly empowering potential of these resources, the way in which they should help people to make sense and be heard by means of them. It is this potential—lacking, unfortunately, for many in the periphery—that truly ‘mainstreams’ pupils.

On this note, Blommaert explains that when resources or products such as literacy and language are forced to be normative and perceived as merely fulfilling “stereotypical ‘linguistic’ functions”, it results in these linguistic products being “silenced and made invisible” (Blommaert, 2008:447). Those who are forced to become part of mainstream and uniform educational systems then face a battle to produce their own voices, i.e. to make sense to others and to make themselves understood by others, because they may not fit into the mould so easily. Essentially, when mainstream schooling is disguised as democratic, it will most likely do scholars and students more harm than good.

Blommaert (2008:447) states that it is indeed still possible to produce voice despite constraints put upon the individual by the environment they find themselves in. However, the detection of voice in these situations becomes a more complicated issue: “detecting [voice] requires a tactic of examination that focuses on implicit patterns, on poetics rather than linguistics”. Blommaert (2008:447) describes this as “a demanding and complex form of analysis”. Students and scholars typically attempt to make themselves heard or understood with whatever resources they have available to them; explicitly, they rely on linguistic resources, and implicitly on sociocultural resources (Blommaert, 2008:447). Blommaert emphasises that both of these elements need to be taken into consideration in an attempt to identify another’s voice.

Although Blommaert (2008:447) does acknowledge that the alternative form of analysis he suggests is more demanding and complex for the analyst or educator, he does believe it to be “very necessary if we believe in equity and equality”. In 2017, 23 years after South Africa’s first democratic election, inequality is still pervasive. When we turn our attention to the language policies of UWC and SU, we see how the use of English is still encouraged despite the majority of non-English mother tongues. Consequently, many voices are likely to be silenced or made invisible.

Blommaert (2008:448) concludes by explaining that should we, as linguists and language-in-education researchers or policy makers, advocate homogeneity in language and culture, we essentially advocate a greater emphasis on linguistic norms and rules and especially the “standardization of appraisal criteria for language performance in education”. Standardization in a country as diverse as South Africa might be problematic, and Blommaert (2008:448) suggests that this could essentially “reinforce the belief that meanings can only be produced in grammatically well-formed sentences, spoken in the right accent or written in the correct orthographic code”. The more this standardization is emphasised and enforced within our

education system, “the more people will fail to match these criteria... and the more people will be excluded from those whose voices are being heard in society” (Blommaert, 2008:449). Furthermore, Blommaert (2008:448) argues that the belief that uniformity of rules, norms, and procedures will automatically generate a democratic society is “absurd”. As a means of addressing this complicated situation, Blommaert (2008:448) suggests that “[d]emocracy resides in doing justice to the really existing diversity” and that this diversity requires specialised analytical tactics to identify unique voices. We need to investigate what people are actually doing with the language and linguistic products at their disposal, instead of waiting for them to do what the system requires them to do.

### **3.2 Agency**

In the first chapter of this thesis I turned to Leo van Lier for the definition of one of the key concepts of this study, namely agency. Van Lier (2008:172) defines “agency” as the ability to control one’s behaviour, to engage in behaviour that affects other entities and the self, and to produce actions which can be evaluated. This definition aligns perfectly with SCT’s perspective and its focus on the broader contexts in which individuals find themselves. To further the discussion on agency, extend the definition presented here, and note its relevance to this particular research project, I turn to Van Lier’s chapter titled *Agency in the classroom*, which can be found in Lantolf and Poehner’s *Sociocultural Theory and the Teaching of Second Languages* (2008).

Van Lier uses this particular chapter to discuss agency and the role it can play in language learning. This connection to language learning is also the reason that I am making use of this particular text for a comprehensive definition of the concept of agency. The first section of this text discusses different researchers to which Van Lier turns for various definitions of the concept of agency.

Van Lier (2008:163) begins by stating that the central principle of agency is “the activity and the initiative of the learner”, which he then links with the original work of several researchers, with emphasis on Vygotsky (see chapter 2 for a discussion of Vygotsky’s work under *Sociocultural theory*). Other definitions of agency are also presented, for example the definition offered by Ahearn (2001:112), which describes agency as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act”. This definition again underlines the important role of mediation and how it can be used to make sense of our environments. Van Lier also discusses Duranti’s (2004, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:163) three basic properties of agency and how these shape his

understanding of the concept. Duranti's three basic properties are as follows (Van Lier, 2008:163):

- “1) control over one's own behaviour;
- 2) producing actions that affect other entities as well as self;
- 3) producing actions that are the object of evaluation.”

It is thus evident that both these definitions find themselves within the framework of SCT and its notion of mediation, both intermentally and intramentally, as discussed in the previous chapter (from Wertsch, Tulviste and Hagstrom, 1993, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:163). Intermental mediation refers to the thought and mediation processes that occurs within an individual, for example through the act of private speech. Intramental mediation refers to the processes or actions that take place outside of an individual, for example conversations with other individuals. Acknowledging both the intermental and the intramental explains how agency is certainly an “individual character trait or activity” yet also “a contextually enacted way of being in the world” (Van Lier, 2008:163). As a result then, agency cannot take place in a void, but always occurs within a social event. Even when agency occurs as an individual act, Van Lier (2008:164) explains that the employment of agency will still be “socially interpreted” and often also “socially motivated”. Lantolf and Thorne (2006:143) also provide a definition of agency, which states that agency is “the ability to assign relevance and significance to things and events”. Van Lier (2008:164) explains this last definition from a sociocultural perspective, saying that we use our “historical and cultural trajectories” to shape and mediate our individual notions of agency.

To understand the importance of identifying agency in the classroom, it is important to turn to Lantolf and Thorne's (2006) explanation that agency is something that can be exercised or produced either by individuals or by communities. In the classroom, for example: scholars or students can act individually or they can act as a group, which can either be made up of smaller groups or encompass the entire class. Thus, learners can act from an ‘I’ perspective as well as a ‘we’ perspective (Van Lier, 2008:164).

Van Lier (2008:171) states that agency is firstly situated within a particular context; and secondly, it is a behaviour that learners exhibit, something that they do, rather than being a property they possess. To make sense of this argument, I return to Ahearn's (2001:112) sociocultural definition of agency, which defines as agency as “the socioculturally mediated

ability to act”. This definition supports the understanding of agency as a behaviour rather than a property, because now agency is seen as an ability, where “ability” is not understood as being *competent* but rather as one’s *potential*. “Ability” here refers to that which is possible through mediation of “social, interactional, cultural, institutional and other contextual factors”, which is again reminiscent of SCT’s ZPD<sup>2</sup>. These factors then work together in varying degrees to create the specific environment or context in which agency is eventually produced.

Van Lier (2008:171) also discusses five characteristic features of agency, namely “volition, intentionality, initiative, intrinsic motivation and autonomy”. Although Benson (2001) proposes that these features can be categorised under the overarching term of *autonomy*, Van Lier argues that this overarching term can also be *agency*. Van Lier furthermore links these features to issues or “dichotomies” one can find in the classroom, and ultimately explains how these relate to the notion of agency. He lists six dichotomies but notes that only four relate to agency<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, I focus only on these four, which are:

- Autonomy and Dependence

Benson (2001, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:173) defines autonomy as “the capacity to take control over one’s own learning”. Kohonen (1992, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:173) also highlights autonomy’s link with interdependence. Van Lier (2008:173) describes autonomy as the exercise of one’s responsibility within one’s greater social environment or context. Furthermore, Van Lier (2008:173) links autonomy to agency by underlining that autonomy is an act done of one’s own accord and within a particular societal context. Whereas dependence means that one’s actions are controlled by others, autonomy and agency require a sense of independence.

Duranti (2004) links another aspect of autonomy to agency. Both autonomy and agency require one to predict and consider probable effects of one’s actions, both on others and on oneself. In line with these concepts, Duranti (2004) also adds realization: to realise one’s actions are one’s own responsibility, and to realise that these actions will immediately be subject to evaluation.

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<sup>2</sup> The ZPD, as proposed by Vygotsky, is explained and discussed in the second chapter under the socio-cultural perspective.

<sup>3</sup> The two dichotomies that Van Lier lists but does not relate to agency are deliberate and incidental learning and declarative and procedural knowledge/memory. Van Lier (2008) argues that “no clear judgement on agency” can be made on the basis of these distinctions and therefore I do not devote further attention to these concepts.

Following these explanations, it can clearly be seen how autonomy can be regarded as a feature of agency and especially why these two concepts are so closely related.

- Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

The second dichotomy that relates to agency is that between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Here, Van Lier turns to Deci and Ryan (1985, as cited in 2008:172) for an explanation. Intrinsic motivation is evident “when the agency manifested derives from an interest in and for the activity itself”, whereas in the case of extrinsic motivation, “the interest comes from external sources” (Van Lier, 2008:173). External sources may refer to rewards or punishments that were promised beforehand, and internal sources may refer to a particular interest. Van Lier (2008:173) notes that although “[t]his distinction is in many ways related to agency”, it is still a challenge to determine the different motivations behind the production of agency. Furthermore, all activities related to learning are generally “a complex mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors” (Van Lier, 1996, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:174).

- Self-Regulation and Other-Regulation

Thirdly, Van Lier discusses the dichotomy of self-regulated and other-regulated. He notes that these terms derive from Vygotsky’s work (see chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion). Here, Van Lier (2008:174) only notes that Vygotsky determined that there are “intricate relations between self- and other-regulated [activities]”. Van Lier (2008:174) relates this to agency by stating that self-regulation “expresses agency”, yet other-regulation is still relevant because of the important role it can play in achieving one’s full potential, as explained by means of the ZPD.

- Self-Initiative and Control

The last feature Van Lier discusses and relates to agency is self-initiative and control. He notes that this dichotomy is closely related to that of self-regulation and other-regulation. Van Lier (2008:174) explains that “initiative is a clear indicator of agency”, and one can identify initiative in interactions themselves. He continues by noting that even controlled or structured activity, as showcased through the ZPD, “may be aimed at fostering agency” (Van Lier, 2008:174). Van Lier (2008:174) does state that this may “of course” also not be the case, yet he concludes his discussion by noting that “one might argue that fostering agency is a defining feature of the ZPD”.

In addition to these issues or dichotomies related to agency, Van Lier also discusses other features of agency. Lantolf and Thorne (2006:143) argue that agency also entails “the ability to assign relevance and significance to things and events”.

Based on the abovementioned features as well as the varying—yet quite similar—definitions of agency Van Lier presents, he determines the following three “core features of agency” (Van Lier, 2008:172):

- 1) Agency includes “initiative or self-regulation”, either by an individual or a group
- 2) Agency occurs interdependently, thus “it mediates and is mediated by” a greater sociocultural context
- 3) Agency includes “an awareness of the responsibility for one’s own actions” in relation to one’s environment as well as others who might be affected.

These three core features will also be used when the results of this study are discussed in an attempt to identify whether participants exhibited agency. To identify initiative is, however, a complex issue. Van Lier (2008:176) argues that although interactional data are sufficient<sup>5</sup> to analyse initiative, such data will not display features such as “content, purpose and higher levels of awareness (of possibilities, dangers and consequences)”. Therefore, Van Lier (2008:176) proposes “further methodological tools [in order to comprehend] the complexities of the multiplex notion of agency”. Van Lier (2008:176-180) then discusses these proposed tools in terms of four concepts, namely perception and action; voice and identity; intersubjectivity, engagement, and contingency; and cognition and emotion: whole-body learning. I will now discuss each of these concepts and briefly mention the methodological tools Van Lier proposes with regard to each concept. The purpose of this discussion is to elaborate on each of these concepts in order to showcase its relation to agency.

Van Lier (2008:176) refers to the ecological perspective as proposed by Gibson (1979) and Van Lier (2004), where “perception goes hand in hand with action”. This perspective essentially argues that “perceiving is a form of action”. Van Lier (2008:176) then explains why the active process of “perceptual learning” is such a central aspect of agency: perceptual

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<sup>5</sup> For interactional data to be “sufficient” as I have stated here, Van Lier (2008:176) does require a “second level of analysis” which includes “analysis of narrative, introspective and dialogical data”. Van Lier (2008:176) lastly notes that “ethnographic and sociolinguistic interviewing” could add “an important level of depth to interactional analysis (Silverman, 2001; Potter and Wetherell, 1987, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:176). These factors should thus be included alongside interactional data before it can be regarded as “sufficient” to analyse the concept of initiative.

learning is multisensory and “takes place in the context of real work in the real world”. Van Lier (2008:176) elaborates on this by explaining that perceptual learning is not merely an “increasingly sophisticated” mental process of perceiving “basically fragmentary sense data”. Rather, perceptual learning is an “increasingly sophisticated” way to perceive “real features in the environment” (Van Lier, 2008:176). One example of such an environment is the world of language.

Van Lier (2008:177) notes that the way in which this particular aspect of agency should be researched is “relatively unexamined”. He does however refer to “physical indicators” that may indicate agency through the individual’s own actions (autonomy), for example “body orientation, gaze and pointing” (Goodwin, 2000 and Norris, 2004, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:177). In educational environments there will also be indicators of perceptual awareness, which might be found in “verbal interactions” (Van Lier, 2008:177). Van Lier also includes Bhabha’s (1994, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:177) belief that “perceptual agency involves learning to perceive from a third-space perspective”. Van Lier (2008) concludes this section by noting that perceptual learning does not occur when an individual is isolated and merely served with input stimuli. Rather, “[perceptual learning] occurs during meaningful and relevant activity in pursuit of a worthwhile goal in an ecologically valid environment” (Van Lier, 2008:177). Consequently, Van Lier proposes project-based learning for the advancement of perceptual learning, especially with regard to agency (Beckett and Miller, 2006).

Secondly, Van Lier discusses the concepts of voice and identity. He again relies on the ecological theory of perception, and notes that this theory states that “to perceive something is always to also co-perceive oneself” (Gibson, 1979, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:177). With this, Van Lier (2008:177) argues that every act of perception one performs in a learning environment “is simultaneously an act of self-perception”. In the case of language learning, one’s learning environment will include (amongst others) both a new language and a new culture, and therefore Van Lier (2008:177) suggests that this self-perception might include “adjusting one’s sense of self and creating new identities to connect the known to the new”.

Extensive research has been done on learners being confronted with new identities (this is also discussed in the chapter 2 of this thesis). Essentially, this confrontation includes continuing “struggles and reconciliations”, which can result in resistance and/or accommodation (Van Lier, 2008:177). This/these new identity(ies) is/are a crucial component in producing one’s own voice (as discussed at the start of this chapter), and Van Lier (2008:178) argues that voice

can only be produced “if a close connection exists between the words and the self and its emerging L2 identity(ies)”. Van Lier explains that there should not be “a separation” between the person and the word(s). This “person” includes one’s actions, emotions, mind, body, and purpose (Van Lier, 2008:178). Rather, to produce agency, learners should “invest physical, mental and emotional energy” (Van Lier, 2008:178). Lastly, Van Lier (2008:178) underlines and explains the relationship between voice, identity, L2 learning, and agency by noting that, for the most part, “L2 development is the development of agency through the L2 (or the enactment of an L2 identity)”.

Thirdly, Van Lier discusses intersubjectivity, engagement, and contingency with regard to agency. Van Lier (2008:178) begins this section by noting that humans use language as “a tool to relate to the world and to others”. Van Lier (2004, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:178) argues that intersubjectivity proceeds through three phases:

1. “[F]ace-to-face engagement”: this occurs more or less within the first nine months of life.
2. “[T]he phase of joint attention”: this second phase occurs with the child’s realization that they and their interlocutor are both focusing on the same object (here Van Lier also mentions Tomasello, 1999).
3. “[S]ymbolic intersubjectivity”: this third phase takes place when “grammaticalized language” allows for “the sharing of ideas, plans, goals and beliefs”.

Van Lier (2008:178) explains that, when acquiring one’s first language, these three phases of intersubjectivity occur over a period of about four years. In the case of learning an additional language, however, all three phases are presented at once. This bombardment of the phases of intersubjectivity provides us with one crucial reason as to why learning an additional language is so complicated and also so different from acquiring an L1.

Van Lier (2008:178) considers engagement as “a central part of agency” and also takes note of its opposite, namely disengagement. Van Lier (2008:178, 179) explains that both a willingness and a lack of willingness to engage could be considered “an expression of agency”. This holds especially true in L2 environments.

Van Lier’s (2008:179) discussion of contingency draws on Van Lier (1996). He defines “contingency” as follows: “a contingent utterance is linked in terms of content and sequential organization to (a) previous utterance(s) and at the same time it predicts, presages, or foreshadows other utterances to come” (Van Lier, 2008:179). Based on this definition, Van

Lier (2008) notes that contingency has four dimensions, namely backward, forward, outward, and inward. The inward dimension consequently relates contingency to agency: “we constantly have to work to place our words and actions within a recognizable chronotope or time-space configuration” (Bakhtin, 1981, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:179). In the same breath, Van Lier (2008:179) also notes that “conversely, agency may also be expressed forcefully by a deliberate refusal to do so [to employ contingency], so that simple descriptors of agency are by no means easy to find in this respect”. As a result of this argument, questions are raised regarding the “*degree or quality of agency*” (Van Lier, 2008:179). In this regard, Van Lier (2008:179) notes that not all acts or productions of agency necessarily contribute to learning, and therefore it is extremely important for educators to emphasise that “the orientation of particular agentic behaviors [should be] aligned with the learning goals”. In summation, then: every ‘act of agency’ is not necessarily correct and does not necessarily contribute to learners’ language learning. Therefore, certain ‘precautionary measures’ should be kept in mind during evaluations. Van Lier (2008:179) concludes this section by warning against “the mistake of viewing agency through a window of conformity with established classroom practices and rejecting forms of resistance (however subtle) as expressing lack of agency.”

The last concept(s) Van Lier (2008:179) relate(s) to agency is/are that of “cognition and emotion: whole-body learning”. Van Lier begins by acknowledging the link that Vygotsky (1987, as cited in Van Lier, 2008) makes between cognition and emotion. He notes that this has subsequently been confirmed by neurological research (Damasio, 1999) and psycholinguistics (Rommetveit, 1998). Van Lier (2008:180) summarises the link between cognition and emotion, in terms of learning, as follows: “Learning of any kind is not primarily a matter of making changes to the workings of the brain (through information processing), rather, it is a whole-person, body and mind, socially situated process”. This belief can be understood in terms of language learning as well, as Van Lier (2008:180) notes that language learning is physical and cognitive, individual and social, and multisensory and situated within activity. These findings have led researchers to deduce that action-based approaches such as project-based learning would be the ideal in the classroom or learning environment, since such approaches allow for “whole-person involvement in learning” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Beckett and Miller, 2006, as cited in Van Lier, 2008:180).

Van Lier (2008:181) explains that “agency in its various shapes and forms is not usually part of the analysis”, since it is not clear “how agency would be or might be identified”. This again emphasises the complexities that surround the concept of agency. Van Lier’s chapter on *Agency*

*in the classroom* discusses several features of agency as well as issues related to agency, especially those found within language learning. Although Van Lier continually mentions that identifying agency as produced by learners is challenging, I nonetheless propose to do so in the following chapters.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

In the first section of this chapter I thoroughly described the notion of voice. I discussed Blommaert's (2008) article *Bernstein and poetics revisited: voice, globalization and education* in an attempt to make the reader fully aware of what the education system in 'democratic' South Africa expects of its diverse population. Through this discussion, I hope to have made clear how an alternative means of analysis is the only reasonable way to identify South Africa's diverse voices. I refer to "voice" as the manner in which one attempts to make sense and make oneself understood. Voice is a crucial component of this research project.

The second section of this chapter focused on the concept of agency as described in Van Lier's (2008) chapter titled *Agency in the classroom*. I discussed the features and core concepts of agency that Van Lier identifies. Van Lier's emphasis is on the classroom environment and the issues related to agency that one finds amongst students in a classroom.

The concepts of voice and agency are core features of this research project. In the fifth chapter of this study, I will discuss my research findings in terms of voice and agency as proposed in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

“This chapter documents the design and methodology followed during your fieldwork.”

(Mouton, 2001:123)

### 4.1 General research design

This research project employed both a qualitative and a quantitative analysis. For the quantitative component, I used a textual analysis tool, AntConc, to do a corpus analysis of the theses and thereby to investigate the students’ use of author pronouns. The qualitative component comprised more than one analysis. I conducted a genre analysis of the genre of academic writing with a specific focus on the genre of thesis writing. Although this analysis used Paltridge’s model, I narrowed its focus to make it applicable to my context by using a thesis framework provided by Johann Mouton’s *How to Succeed in Your Master’s and Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book* (2001). I also conducted a multilingual analysis, where I searched the theses for uses of languages other than English. In addition, I did an analysis of a multimodal nature, where I investigated students’ use of visuals. Lastly, I conducted interviews with some of the participants in order to obtain more illuminating information and to further my understanding of these students’ contexts within which they acted. I subsequently conducted a thematic analysis of the interviews. These analyses were all motivated by my attempt to establish the (predominantly multimodal) means through which students produced voice and agency.

### 4.2 Research site

The theses that were analysed were from SU and UWC. All of the theses were submitted for master’s graduation in December 2015 or March 2016. From SU, a total of 28 theses were collected from the departments of General Linguistics (11), Philosophy (6), and Visual Arts (11). At UWC, 11 theses were collected from the departments of Linguistics, Language, and Communication (9), Philosophy (1), and Women and Gender Studies (1). All of the theses submitted at the particular departments were included in the sample and all 6 departments were asked to contact their students and/or alumni to invite them to participate in interviews with the principal investigator. At SU, there were two theses that were written in Afrikaans, one from Visual Arts and one from Philosophy. These two theses were not part of the corpus analysis, but were included in all other analyses.

The selected departments were chosen following careful consideration. The Department of General Linguistics (SU) and the Department of Linguistics, Language, and Communication (UWC) were chosen as this particular research project is being done in fulfilment of the requirements for a master's degree in Second Language Studies at the SU Department of General Linguistics. 2017 is the sixth year that I have been a student at this department, and I believe I have a thorough understanding of the nature of the academic writing required in this field. I set out with the belief that the requirements would be the same at UWC. I also assumed that if there were any cases of students experimenting with multilingualism in their theses, it would be found in theses from these departments.

The Department of Visual Arts (SU) was chosen in the belief that these students engage with their research topics in extraordinary manners. As some VA master's degrees include both a creative, practical component and a theoretical component, I wanted to see how these two components may have been combined in an attempt to create a unique academic voice. The Departments of Philosophy (SU and UWC) as well as the Department of Women and Gender (WG) Studies (UWC) were chosen on the basis of their topics and argument structures. The belief was that students from the WG department would perhaps engage more personally with their topics than for example students of formal linguistics would. Students from the philosophy (Phil) departments were expected to utilise a more conceptual form of argument.

The difference in the number of theses produced at the two institutions underlines that this research project does not aim to make statements of a comparative nature. Rather, it is termed an "investigatory project" aimed at determining the current state at two of the Western Cape's and the country's major universities. As a preliminary to this investigation, I present some information on each institution's background in what follows.

SU and UWC both form part of the QS University Rankings: BRICS' top ten universities in South Africa, with SU in third place and UWC in eighth (Collier, 2016). These two universities were chosen because of their linguistic profiles. In 2016, the majority of students at SU were not studying in their mother tongue. Of the 30,854 students enrolled at SU, 53.9% had a mother tongue other than English: 40.7% were Afrikaans and 13.2% indicated another home language (Stellenbosch University Statistical Profile, 2016).

In 2016, UWC had a total of 21,792 enrolled students, 38.6% of which identified English as their mother tongue. This indicates that the overwhelming majority of UWC students had a mother tongue other than English in 2016 (Morta, 2017).

These figures are of cardinal importance to underline the *second language component* of this research project, as it was not possible to determine all of the participants' respective linguistic profiles. Therefore, throughout this thesis the reader should keep in mind the L2 contexts and environments sculpted for the students at the universities in question.

There is a vast difference between the numbers of theses produced at each university. This difference led me to investigate each institution's origin. UWC, then called "The University College of the Western Cape", enrolled 166 students in 1960. Parliament declared it a constituent college of the University of South Africa for people classified as "Coloured". This was at a time when apartheid had already been established in South Africa. The University College of the Western Cape offered limited training "designed to serve a separated Coloured community" (UWC History, 2013). In 1970, the institution acquired full university status, which allowed the University to award its own degrees and diplomas. However, the institution was still governed by the apartheid ideology. Through what is known as the University of the Western Cape Act of 1983, UWC "gained its autonomy on the same terms as the established 'white' institutions" (UWC History, 2013). Former president Nelson Mandela went on to applaud UWC for their transformation "from an apartheid ethnic institution to a proud national asset" (UWC History, 2013).

SU, on the other hand, dates as far back as 1685, when a regular school was built in the town of Stellenbosch. In 1859, higher education came to the forefront, and the nature of the building shifted. In 1886, a "proper college building" was inaugurated and the institution was named "Victoria College" (Stellenbosch University Historical Background, 2013). Thanks to a generous donation by Jan Marais, Victoria College became Stellenbosch University on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1918. Essentially, this meant that SU could grow without further obstruction from the British from 1918 onwards.

This context directly relates to the number of theses produced at the two universities and consequently the number of theses from each institution included in this study. The differences between the institutions' backgrounds explain the difference in student numbers in 2016

between UWC (21,792) and SU (30,854). Furthermore, it explains the difference in the number of theses included from similar departments at the two universities, namely 28 theses from SU and 11 from UWC. This difference in numbers suggests that not only does SU have more students that enrol, but SU also generally awards more postgraduate degrees than UWC. This means that even though I included linguistics and philosophy departments from both universities, the number of theses collected from the two universities will still differ. Initially this was seen as a shortcoming, as one cannot make a comparison if the numbers of theses differ so significantly. However, I eventually decided to regard their respective thesis numbers as interesting characteristics of these two universities with such different backgrounds. Furthermore, as indicated earlier, the aim of this study was never to compare the institutions. Rather, this project is of an investigatory nature.

### ***Language policies and tertiary institutions***

Another sphere in South Africa that is also affected by the English language and where the use of English as an *intranational* lingua franca is visible is the country's tertiary institutions.

Bornman and Potgieter (2015:2) explain that despite the increase of global Anglicisation, South Africa's constitution of 1996 "held the promise of becoming a cornerstone for a culture of language equity, language pluralism, language tolerance and respect for diversity". This promise was also likely to have been the driving force behind implementing a language policy that encouraged an education system with eleven official languages. Dampier (Dale-Jones and Royds, 2012) summarises the language in education policy as simultaneously attempting to meet two demands: "maintaining multilingualism and gaining access to global markets". The language policy for higher education (Ministry of Education, 2002:3) in South Africa is laid out as follows in section 29(2) of the Constitution, namely that "[e]veryone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable". The fact, however, is that this ideal is very rarely *practicable*. As is often the belief, this policy seems ideal on paper, yet it appears somewhat impossible in practice: "language planners under the democratic regime have been trying, *at least on paper*, to correct the linguistic inequalities of the past" (Aziakpono and Bekker, 2010: 39).

When Kim Wallmach poses the question "Is South Africa a role model for other multilingual countries?", she answers with reference to Kaschula (2001, as cited in Wallmach, 2006) and

also summarises the state of policy implementation and the success of our *wonderfully diverse* language policy. The relevant quote is as follows:

Perhaps, but as always, implementation is the key and increasingly, South African linguists and language planners have begun to refer to the government's 'forked tongue of multilingualism' (Kaschula, 2001) – one part of the tongue makes the right noises, whilst the other part remains mute, resulting in little practical implementation of policy, limited status planning and little use of indigenous languages when it comes to technology...

At the 2012 Teachers Upfront seminar, Graham Dampier (Dale-Jones and Royds, 2012) explained how the lack of policy implementation affects the generation still in school: "We have educated our children out of their ability to do maths because we lack a language policy that is aware of its own limitations..." This starts in basic education: scholars are taught in their home language for the first three years of school and in Grade Four, when exposure to more complicated subjects begins, teachers start teaching in English (Dale-Jones and Royds, 2012). This is what Dampier refers to as educating our children "out of their ability", since they do not have the opportunity to first understand the work they are being taught. Rather, they are trying to understand the English. This confusion starts at an early age, and ultimately it takes South African children much longer to grasp new concepts. It is understandable that this eventually also has an impact on the academic performance of students at South Africa's tertiary institutions.

This section and this study do not aim to analyse language policies, and therefore I will now merely present the language policies of the two universities relevant to this study, namely SU and UWC. This is done to give the reader a description of the linguistic contexts of the research project's participants and to show how these institutions create *second language environments* for their students to act within. Both language policies are appended (Appendix 2 and Appendix 3).

To begin with: the layout of UWC's policy is quite simple and easy to read and comprehend; whereas SU's policy appears more complicated, with multiple sections and subsections. Whereas UWC's policy spans 3 pages, SU's extends over 12.

## The University of the Western Cape

The most recent language policy of UWC that was available online was approved in March 2003.

The preamble of UWC's language policy (The University of the Western Cape language policy, 2003) states that UWC is a "multilingual university" and that it is "alert to its African and international context". It continues by saying that UWC is "committed to helping nurture the cultural diversity of South Africa and build an equitable and dynamic society" and explains that this language policy is one way of honouring this commitment. The language policy also claims that it attempts to "guide institutional language practice" in order to further "equity, social development, and a respect for our multilingual heritage". This seems like a promising language policy for a multilingual South Africa.

However, despite the promises made in its preamble, UWC seems to be more focused on succeeding in its "international context" than in its "African" one. UWC's policy discusses their LOLT in five separate sections. These are as follows:

- Language(s) used in lectures, tutorials, and practicals

Lectures, tutorials and practicals "will be delivered in the language formally approved by the Faculty concerned. If lecturers are competent users of other languages, they are encouraged to use these languages in addition to the main language of teaching".

- Language(s) used in the setting of tasks, assignments, tests, and examinations

"English, Afrikaans and Xhosa should be used wherever it is practicable to do so."

- Language(s) used/allowed in writing of tasks, assignments, tests, and examinations

"Unless otherwise negotiated between a student or a class and a lecturer, the language in which tasks, assignments, tests and examinations should be completed shall be English."

- Language(s) in which texts are available

"[E]fforts should be made to provide alternatives and options in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa wherever it is practicable and academically desirable to do so." These "texts" refers to "support materials such as course outlines, lecture notes and computer courseware".

- Language(s) students use in their self-directed learning processes and activities

“[D]epartments should actively seek to appoint some student tutors who can assist students in Xhosa and/or Afrikaans, as well as English.”

The section on *Language(s) used/allowed in writing of tasks, assignments, tests and examinations* is most important for this research project, since theses fall under this section. This section notes the possibility of negotiation. This negotiation, however, is never promoted, and students are rarely even aware of this possibility. This then indicates that master’s students at UWC are expected to write their theses in English, regardless of the 61.4% of students who are mother tongue speakers of another language.

### Stellenbosch University

The most recent approved language policy for SU that was available was approved on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, 2016.

The preamble of SU’s language policy (Stellenbosch University language policy, 2016) is summarised as “The essence of the Policy”. This section begins the policy by stating that SU is “committed to engagement with knowledge in a diverse society”. Furthermore, the policy claims that SU “aims to give effect to section 29(2) of the Constitution in relation to language usage in its academic, administrative, professional and social contexts”. SU’s language policy also “aims to increase equitable access to SU for all students and staff and to facilitate pedagogically sound teaching and learning”. Lastly, the section explains that since SU is situated in the Western Cape, the institution is committed to multilingualism “by using the province’s three official languages, namely Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa”.

The provisions made by SU’s language policy are as follows:

- “Afrikaans and English are SU’s languages of learning and teaching. SU supports their academic use through a combination of facilitated learning opportunities for students, including lectures, tutorials and practicals, as well as learning support facilitated by means of information and communication technology (ICT).”

- With regard to lectures:

“[B]ased on students’ needs and practicability, SU provides a variety of ICT-enhanced learning strategies, including podcasts and vodcasts of lectures, which are made available to students in Afrikaans, English and, in some cases, isiXhosa for the further reinforcement of concepts and for revision purposes.”

- With regard to learning materials for undergraduate modules:

“All compulsory reading material is provided in English” and “[c]ompulsory reading material (excluding published material) is also provided in Afrikaans where reasonably practicable.”

- With regard to written work for tests, examinations, and other assignments in undergraduate modules:

“Question papers [...] are available in Afrikaans and English. Students may answer all assessments and submit all written work in Afrikaans or English.”

- With regard to postgraduate learning and teaching as well as final-year modules at NQF level 8:

“[A]ny language may be used provided all the relevant students are sufficiently proficient in that language.”

Since undergraduate students are allowed to choose between Afrikaans and English when writing assignments and since postgraduate learning may occur in either Afrikaans or English, it is assumed that postgraduate students are also allowed to submit assignments in Afrikaans or English.

### **4.3 Data collection process**

All theses that were analysed for this research project were available in the public domain, i.e. on the library websites of the particular universities. SU theses are uploaded to the SUNScholar Research Repository (<http://scholar.sun.ac.za/>) and UWC theses are uploaded to the UWC Electronic Theses and Dissertations Repository (<http://etd.uwc.ac.za/xmlui/>). The theses are thus easily accessible and including them in the study required no special clearance. The department heads of all six departments were contacted individually and asked whether they would invite the students whose theses were analysed to participate in interviews, as I was not allowed access to personal contact details. I contacted the department heads and they made

contact with the students and/or alumni only once ethical clearance and institutional clearance were granted by both SU and UWC (Appendices 4, 5 and 6). Seven students contacted me in return and were willing to participate in interviews. I met three students for face-to-face interviews, a further three interviews took place over Skype and one interview was done over a phone call. I began the interviews by giving the participants a linguistic background questionnaire. This was not used for statistical purposes, since I could not collect a completed questionnaire for each participant. It was however enlightening to keep each individual's background in mind while studying the respective interviews. The participants whom I interviewed over Skype and the one I interviewed over a phone call completed this questionnaire in their own time and emailed it to me. The list of interview questions can be found Appendix 7. I informed each participant that we did not need to adhere strictly to the interview questions, as I interviewed each one to hear about their unique experience of their master's writing journey.

#### **4.4 Data capturing and data editing**

I began the process of data analysis by coding each thesis and each participant with a particular identification key, thereby separating the personal details of the participants from the data. I began the actual analysis by identifying the *biographical information* of each thesis. This included the thesis' title, the respective department and university, and the date the thesis was handed in.

Thereafter I did the textual analysis: each thesis was converted to .txt format and analysed with AntConc in order to investigate the use of author pronouns. After identifying the pronouns, I realised that many of the so-called author pronouns were in fact not used from an authorial perspective. Many of these personal pronouns ("I", "me", "my") were merely from interviews with the students' participants, from their data sources, or were even used for numbering (I). This was a crucial distinction to be made regarding the context in which the pronouns were used. Consequently, I had to return to AntConc and determine the context of each instance of "I", "me", and "my". This excluded the pronouns used in plagiarism declarations, interviews conducted by the participant with their respective participants, participants' consent forms attached to their theses, chapter or section headings, and duplications in abstracts (for example, some theses had both English and Afrikaans abstracts, and so uses of "my" in the translated abstract would constitute duplications).

This was followed by a language analysis, where I identified the language the thesis was written in and I searched for any languages other than English that were used in the thesis. Thereafter followed a genre analysis, where I compared each thesis to the prescribed structure in Mouton's text on the genre of thesis writing. This was done for the *Preliminaries* section as well as the following five chapters prescribed by Mouton. While I went through the theses for this particular analysis, I also identified all visuals in the theses.

When all of my analyses were completed, I contacted the six departments in order to ask them to reach out to the participants on my behalf and invite them to participate in interviews. Seven students responded.

#### **4.5 Data analysis**

In this research project, I essentially set out to analyse theses in order to investigate possible means that students use to employ voice or agency. I did this through various analyses. First, I did a corpus analysis. Thereafter, I did a genre analysis of the genre of thesis writing, with special attention paid to thesis writing within the South African context. The framework that I used for the genre analysis is based on Johann Mouton's *How to Succeed in Your Master's and Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book* (2001). I also did a multimodal analysis, where I investigated the use of visuals within theses; for this component, I turned to a previous study titled *Extending the Notion of 'Text': The Visual and Performing Arts Doctoral Thesis* (2013) by Ravelli *et al.* I also conducted a multilingual analysis, where I analysed the theses in order to identify languages other than English that might have been used. Since I also held interviews with participants, I did a thematic analysis of the interviews. All of these analyses were equipment I used in my search for agency and voice as employed by the authors in my sample.

##### **4.5.1 Corpus analysis**

A corpus analysis was done to investigate the use of the author pronouns "I", "me", and "my" in the students' theses. This analysis was done for three reasons. The first reason is that most research done on academic writing has questioned and then determined their participants' use of author pronouns. Further scholarship based on this project could then use these specific findings to, for example, compare studies.

The second motivation behind this component of the research project were the findings of previous researchers in relation to the use of author pronouns. In *Options of Identity in*

*Academic Writing*, Hyland (2002b:351) notes that “the most visible expression of a writer’s presence in a text” is “the use of exclusive first person pronouns”. Thus, the use of these author pronouns is in fact one way to determine students’ voice in their writing.

The third reason for doing a corpus analysis of author pronouns can be found in the latter part of the title of this project, namely *Student voice and agency in master’s thesis writing in a second language context: Beyond the use of pronouns*. In order to conduct research that goes “beyond the use of pronouns”, I felt that it was important to also determine the use of pronouns.

The analysis tool AntConc was used for the corpus analysis. AntConc is, as explained on its webpage, “a freeware corpus analysis toolkit for concordancing and textual analysis” (Laurence Anthony’s Website, 2017). I used AntConc to search for the use of “I”, “me”, “Me”, “my”, and “My” in the participants’ theses. At first, I merely searched for the number of author pronouns used in the theses. Upon closer inspection, however, it became clear that many of these author pronouns were not used by the author per se but by their respective participants. This is not what I was looking for in my analysis, since these uses do not reflect the author’s level of confidence, for example, but merely their participants’. Therefore, I continued by searching for the author pronouns and then determining the words with which they co-occurred and the context in which they were used in an attempt to determine whether these pronouns were in fact acting as author pronouns.

#### **4.5.2 Genre analysis**

The theory of genre analysis was a focal point of my literature review chapter and consequently of the analysis of my sample. I viewed academic writing as the broader genre of this study, with thesis writing as the genre in focus. As I discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, the concept of genre is interpreted differently by different fields and even by different individuals. Therefore, I had to decide on a structured framework for the genre analysis of this study. I based my study on Brian Paltridge’s *Thesis and Dissertation Writing: An Examination of Published Advice and Actual Practice* (2002). Paltridge examined guidelines and text books that advised students on their postgraduate writing and then compared these to a sample of master’s and doctoral theses and dissertations from different disciplines. From this study, Paltridge derived four main thesis types: traditional: simple; traditional: complex; topic based; and a compilation of research articles.

Dudley-Evans (1999) terms the most typical and traditional format the IMRAD (introduction, methods, results, discussion) thesis type. Thompson (1999) further revised the traditional category by distinguishing between *traditional: simple* and *traditional: complex*.

### **1. *Traditional: simple***

Such a thesis type reports on only a single study done by the researcher or group of researchers.

A *traditional: simple* thesis type has what Paltridge (2002:129) refers to as “a typical macro-structure”. This “typical” structure consists of an introduction, a review of the literature, the materials and methods, the results, a discussion, and a conclusion. Paltridge notes, as he derived from his study, that this structure is more common at master’s level than at doctoral level. The majority of the theses in Paltridge’s sample leaned towards *traditional: simple*, and this category consisted of theses from a great variety of academic fields, including optometry, engineering, architecture, education, linguistics, botany, and forestry.

### **2. *Traditional: complex***

The second category, namely the *traditional: complex* thesis type, was introduced by Thompson (1999). Thompson named this structure based on its complex patterns of organisation and its complex internal structure. The *traditional: complex* thesis structure typically reports on more than one study. The typical structure of such a thesis begins similarly to the *traditional: simple* structure, with an introduction and review of the literature. Thereafter, it provides a space for a more complex structure. It can then include ‘general methods’ followed by “a series of sections which report on each of the individual studies” (Paltridge, 2002:132). A thesis of this structure concludes with a general section which acts as an overall conclusion to all of the studies reported on.

Paltridge discusses one such example. It was titled “a case study”, but actually reported on five case studies, all relating to the same general topic. The structure of this thesis was as follows:

- 1) general introduction with key points relevant to the topic, general description of research strategy, overview of the thesis;
- 2) two chapters with further background to the study;
- 3) five case studies presented;
- 4) conclusion with a general discussion that drew the findings together, recommendations for application of findings, a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Paltridge found examples of this thesis type in the fields of architecture, medicine, optometry, and surveying.

Apart from these two thesis structures, Paltridge also proposed two other categories to which theses could be assigned. These two thesis types are *topic based* and *a compilation of research articles*.

### **3. *Topic based***

This type is also derived from Dudley-Evans (1999). The typical structure for this thesis type is as follows: an introductory chapter, a series of chapters with titles based on various sub-topics of the general topic under investigation, and finally conclusions. Paltridge found the same number of *traditional: complex* and *topic based* theses in his study. Theses from his study that fell into this category included works from cultural studies, architecture, engineering, linguistics, economics, and public health.

### **4. *Compilation of research articles***

The fourth thesis type presented by Paltridge is termed *a compilation of research articles*. This thesis type logically consists of a compilation of publishable articles. Consequently, this thesis type is both structurally and content-wise very different from the other thesis structures. According to Paltridge, the chapters in this thesis type are more concise than chapters from traditional thesis types. It also appears as though these theses are compiled with a different audience in mind: “they are written more as ‘experts writing for experts’, than novices ‘writing for admission to the academy’” (Paltridge, 2002:132). In a similar study by Dong (1998, as cited in Paltridge, 2002:132), she notes that native speakers tended to make use of this thesis type more than non-native speakers. In Paltridge’s study there was only one thesis that consisted of a collection of articles, and it was from the field of dental science.

This thesis type is however only allowed in doctoral thesis writing, and therefore I could not include this category in my study, as I only worked with master’s theses.

I based my study on Paltridge’s framework. However, I also used the thesis type or model as suggested by Johann Mouton’s *How to Succeed in Your Master’s and Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book*. I did this because the South African context is emphasised throughout this study, and therefore I aimed to find the guideline used most in South Africa for this genre. In Mouton’s text, (2001:ix) he states that “[a]lthough in general terms scholarship is a universal endeavour, it takes place in specific socio-political and

geographical settings that give it a particular ‘flavour’”. Mouton discusses each of the five chapters of his suggested thesis type and also adds each chapter’s suggested headings and content. Mouton does note in his preface that the book tends to be biased towards the field of humanities, since his academic background is in this field. This is however advantageous to this particular research project, as it analyses theses from different departments in the humanities and social sciences.

Upon investigation, I detected that *traditional: simple* and *Mouton’s* thesis types have similar structures, with the exception of Mouton grouping his “presentation of results and discussion” in one chapter. He does however note that this chapter can be divided into more chapters if the study requires it. Consequently, I could find no compelling reason to distinguish between *traditional: simple* and *Mouton’s*, so I removed *traditional: simple* from the framework and used it interchangeably with *Mouton’s* throughout the project.

Examples of the structures of the thesis types of *traditional: simple* (Appendix 8); *traditional: complex* (Appendix 9); *topic based* (Appendix 10); and *Mouton’s structure* (Appendix 11) are all appended. I began by doing a general comparison between each thesis in my sample and Mouton’s guidelines, as this was the model upon which I based my analysis. Thereafter, each of the theses were categorised into one of the thesis types in order to determine how to categorise the theses that were not done according to Mouton’s guidelines.

However, during the analysis I detected that many theses could not be disassembled and categorised into any of the abovementioned thesis types. I realised that the majority of the theses for which I could not find a category were from the VA department. I found a source that addressed my concerns and realised that I would have to include a multimodal aspect to my analysis and add another thesis type.

### **4.5.3 Multimodal analysis**

I base the multimodal aspect of my study on the study done by Ravelli *et al.* titled *Extending the Notion of ‘Text’: The Visual and Performing Arts Doctoral Thesis* (2013). This study examined doctoral theses where the students were required to have both a visual or performing component and a written component. The sub-disciplines considered included sculpture, mixed media, still and moving images, installations, and various performances.

This differs from my sample since, from my understanding, only the VA students had a practical component in their theses. Furthermore, because of the different master’s degrees

offered within the VA department, not all students were expected to have a practical component in their theses. Therefore, I could not analyse all the theses in my sample or even all the theses from the VA department using Ravelli *et al.*'s analysis. I did however have a gap in my analysis, since many theses did not fall into any of the four thesis types discussed above. Below I briefly introduce the four thesis types suggested by Ravelli *et al.*

### 1. *Parallel*

This thesis type is based on the *Research question model* as proposed by Milech and Schilo (2004). In this thesis type, the two components, the practical or creative and the written, are positioned in parallel: each of these components is “conceptualized as *independent to the same research question*” (italics in original; Milech and Schilo, 2004, as cited in Ravelli *et al.*, 2013:402).

### 2. *Influenced*

In the second thesis type presented by Ravelli *et al.*, the written component is positioned as separate from the creative component, whilst there remains an acknowledgement of the influence from the other component. The two components are not entirely parallel as with the first thesis type, but rather the one component influences the other.

### 3. *Incorporated*

In this thesis type, the written component generally describes the creative component, and therefore the reader is fully aware of the creative project and recognises that the two components form part of the same study. Furthermore, Ravelli *et al.* suggest that in this incorporated thesis type, the connections explicitly link the two components. This format also allows the author to take on different roles: those of participant in the research and creative process, observer of the creative project, and academic researcher. In addition to the different roles the author can play, there are also different ways of linking the written with the creative; examples found in Ravelli *et al.*'s study included journal quotes, planning sketches, and photographs.

### 4. *Intermingled*

The final thesis type suggests a format in which the two components are “encountered together” (Ravelli *et al.* 2013:410). This type originates from Hamilton and Jaaniste (2010), who proposed a *connective model*. Ravelli *et al.*'s structure is however more focused than Hamilton

and Jaaniste's general title. In an example from the 2013 study, in this thesis type, the written component continuously referred to the creative component, to such an extent that the one could not be possible without the other, or at least could not be understood without the other. In addition to words, many visuals are usually used in reference to the creative component. Ravelli *et al.* also note that these theses are likely to add visuals that are not necessarily connected to their creative component. One aim of the *intermingled* thesis type is also to remind the thesis' readers of the importance of visuals with regard to the greater research project. In theses of this type, the creative component becomes a participant of the written thesis as well, again emphasising the two components' interdependence (Ravelli *et al.* 2013:412).

For the multimodal analysis in my study, I first set out to find a typical thesis type that could be added to the four already discussed in the genre analysis section, since there was an evident gap for a certain type of thesis. In my study, I do not categorise the theses into the different types from Ravelli *et al.*'s study, but their study did make clear the need to be aware of the creative components in theses. As a result, I also added a *creative* thesis type to my analysis, for theses that could not be categorised into the four types mentioned previously. Consequently, the four thesis types were *Mouton's*; *traditional: complex*; *topic based*; and *creative*.

I also set out to identify the use of visuals in my sample. I investigated the use of unusual images as well as the thesis as an image in itself. Where I identified extraordinary uses of images, I investigated whether these served as attempts to convey voice or agency.

#### **4.5.4 Multilingual analysis**

For the multilingual analysis, I began by examining my sample for any uses of languages other than English. I consulted Canagarajah's *Multilingual Writers and the Struggle for Voice in Academic Discourse* (2004) as a framework within which to conduct the multilingual analysis. Canagarajah proposes five strategies that multilingual writers can use to negotiate conflicts they face when writing:

##### **1. Avoidance**

This strategy allows the multilingual writer to completely remove themselves from the issue of conflicting identities. Canagarajah (2004:284) suggests that it may be "liberating" for the writer not to bring this conflict into their text. He does however also note that *avoidance* may result in writing that lacks a creative or critical discourse, whereas the (successful) negotiation of conflicting traditions will assure this.

## **2. Accommodation**

With this strategy, conflict is resolved by adopting the more favourable identity. Whereas Canagarajah (2004:284) describes *avoidance* as “hesitant and surface-level adoption”, he describes *accommodation* as “more conscious internalization of the dominant discourses”. *Accommodation* is viewed as an affirmation of the already established discourse that the author adopts. Although the author’s voice will be homogenous, it may fall short in its “ideological complexity”, since the writer can easily lack independence when adopting another identity and feel restricted in a way that minimises his or her creative and critical outlook (Canagarajah, 2004:285).

*Avoidance* and *accommodation* are both strategies that appear to prefer the dominant discourses, and it is important to note that these strategies could easily result in the silencing of the author’s own voice.

## **3. Opposition**

This strategy is used by authors who maintain their original identities in their writing despite the fact that they contradict the dominant discourse. As with *avoidance* and *accommodation*, the *opposition* strategy also does not provide a space for an independent voice resulting from negotiation; although there is no conflict here, negotiation is once again avoided. *Opposition* also has the potential to silence the author’s voice if they do not communicate with the text’s audience as required by the particular genre and discourse.

## **4. Appropriation**

This strategy allows the author to inject themselves into the dominant discourse by using aspects they are comfortable with from their preferred discourse. Canagarajah (2004:285) describes this strategy as “finding a favourable space for one’s own voice in the established discourses”.

## **5. Transposition**

The *transposition* strategy creates a space in which the author resolves the conflicting identities and creates a “third voice” by writing in an entirely newly designed discourse.

*Opposition*, *appropriation*, and *transposition* all allow authors to construct voices that are independent of the dominant discourse. These strategies also create a space in which authors

can negotiate the voice they deem necessary for the context and discourse. This eventually empowers writers.

In the instances where I did find other languages, I attempted to categorise these uses within one of the strategies proposed above.

#### **4.5.5 Thematic analysis of interviews**

Burnard (1991) proposes stages of interview analysis in *A Method of Analysing Interview Transcripts in Qualitative Research*. Burnard suggests 14 stages for a thematic content analysis of semi-structured and open-ended interviews. These stages are based on the original “grounded theory approach” from Glaser and Strauss (1967), as well as other work done on content analysis (see Babbie, 1979 and Fox, 1982).

##### *Stage one*

The first stage of the analysis consists of making notes after the interviews on the topics that were discussed.

##### *Stage two*

In the second stage, the researcher reads through all the transcripts and notes “to become immersed in the data” (Burnard, 1991:462). The idea behind this stage is to get a clear idea of the interviewee’s perspective on life and their context and to record new thoughts. Burnard suggests making note of issues such as possible recurring themes at this stage.

##### *Stage three*

After reading the transcripts again, the researcher now writes down as many headings as possible in an attempt to capture all of the aspects that the interview covered. This is also where the researcher should make the first distinction between unusable data and data that are relevant to the research topic. In this stage, Burnard suggests that the researcher’s headings or categories should be able to account for the majority of the data. This stage is also termed “open coding” (Berg, 1989, as cited in Burnard, 1991:462).

##### *Stage four*

At this point of the analysis, the researcher rereads the categories or headings and creates more “higher order headings”. According to Burnard, the purpose of this stage is to reduce the number of categories by determining whether some categories are similar and can be combined.

### *Stage five*

The fifth stage requires the researcher to finalise the list of categories by ensuring that nothing is redundant.

### *Stage six*

During this stage, the researcher is encouraged to ask colleagues to also make lists of categories without being aware of those the researcher has compiled. This is then followed by a discussion where the necessary adjustments are made.

### *Stage seven*

In this stage, the transcripts are read again with the final list in hand to ensure that all aspects of the interviews are covered by the category headings.

### *Stage eight*

At this stage, the researcher now works through each transcript and codes the sections of the interviews that fall under the relevant categories.

### *Stage nine*

The content of each code is put together in its appropriate category. It is important to also maintain the context of each section at this stage in order to ensure that the meanings remain intact.

### *Stage ten*

All data are categorised under the necessary headings and subheadings.

### *Stage eleven*

Here, the researcher is encouraged to return to respondents or interviewees and ask them whether their quotes fit in a particular category. This is done in order for the validity of the study to remain a priority.

### *Stage twelve*

At this stage, the different categories are all filed together. It is important to refer back to the transcripts of the complete interviews in order to avoid transcribing anything out of context.

*Stage thirteen*

Finally, the researcher writes up the interview data. Under each category, the necessary examples should be added, and thereafter the researcher can add commentary that links the examples given to the argument the researcher is trying to make.

*Stage fourteen*

In the final stage of the analysis, the researcher should decide whether they will link the examples and the commentary to further literature. The first option Burnard provides is that all examples are given under the relevant headings. Then, in a separate section, links are made to literature, further commentary is given, and a discussion is presented. The second option is that the findings or examples are written down directly alongside the literature and are consequently presented as ‘findings and discussion in terms of literature’.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with an average of 25 questions. Upon initially listing the questions, I determined four overarching themes, namely *You and your thesis*; *You and your supervisor*; *You and your academic – second – language*; and *General*. The purpose of the interviews was for me to identify the artifacts each student had at their disposal to organise and structure their individual mediation processes. I aimed to identify how these students could employ voice and agency through the means they were given, whether through previous experiences, their institutional structures, or through other elements.

Upon investigation, I divided the first theme into two further subsections, namely *Your thesis-writing journey* and *A standard format*.

1. *You and your thesis*:

*Your thesis-writing journey*

In this subsection, I attempted to identify the tools that the students had at their disposal upon starting their research projects. I asked about whether guidelines were provided or certain textbooks prescribed. I also enquired about their research topics, as well as asking about whether they felt writing the thesis was “worth the trouble”.

*A standard format*

In this subsection, I asked students about their view of a standard format of a thesis. I asked questions regarding whether they believed there is an expected, required, or standard format; whether they adhered to these beliefs regarding requirements; and whether they employed

particular aspects of their theses deliberately. I investigated this sub-area in order to determine whether this view influenced how the students approached their theses.

## *2. You and your supervisor*

In this section, I aimed to investigate the students' relationships with their supervisors. I asked questions regarding how they got along with their supervisors, whether they had to sacrifice opinions and the content or structuring of their theses because of their supervisors, and in which language they communicated.

## *3. You and your academic – second – language*

The questions in this section were only aimed at respondents who were Afrikaans mother tongue speakers and who wrote their theses in English. I wanted to determine their personal feelings about their situations and whether they would have written in Afrikaans if it were possible.

## *4. General*

In this section, I asked the students whether they believed a master's thesis provides a space for students to voice their own convictions and whether it allows students to offer an opinion on their research. Lastly, I also asked the students whether they were aware of Mouton's text, if it had been prescribed, and whether they used it during their writing process.

### **4.6 Limitations of the study**

The strict ethical considerations definitely limited the study. As I was not allowed to access the participants' contact details from the universities' systems, I had to rely on the six departmental representatives to contact the participants. This was challenging, as many of the theses' authors are no longer in the respective systems of their (former) universities. This is the case for various reasons; some merely did not continue their studies and have changed their email addresses since they attended university. Thus, many participants never received my email inviting them to partake in interviews. However, I could, without any limitations, collect all of the theses, as they were in the universities' open repositories. Furthermore, the seven participants who did partake in interviews gave insightful feedback. Essentially, I had quite a small corpus, yet in the scope of my master's project it was deemed sufficient.

Initially, I planned on using each department's departmental guidelines for analysis. These guidelines were however not as easily available as the other instruments were. Not all

departments provide formal guidelines to their master's students. Eventually, I received guidelines from two of the departments. This meant that I could not do an equal analysis of all the theses according to their particular departments' guidelines. The study was limited by this aspect, since now I was only able to analyse the theses on the grounds of Mouton's guidelines and Paltridge's framework of thesis types, and not according to the specific guidelines given to the students, as I initially set out to do.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter began by introducing the general research design of this project. Thereafter, I presented a comprehensive discussion of the research site of the study. I presented my sample and motivated the inclusion of each selected department from the two universities. I also thoroughly explained the choice of the two universities based on their linguistic profiles. Furthermore, I elaborated on each institution's background in an attempt to highlight the differences between UWC and SU. I also discussed the role of English in tertiary institutions in South Africa and briefly touched upon South Africa's language policy for higher education, as well as the policy's implementation. Finally, I also presented relevant sections of UWC and SU's language policies.

I subsequently presented my data collection process and explained the data capturing and editing of the study. Lastly, and in great detail, I presented the five types of analyses I did in this study, namely corpus analysis, genre analysis, multimodal analysis, multilingual analysis, and a thematic analysis of interviews. Before concluding this chapter, I also highlighted some limitations of the study. In the following chapter, I will present and discuss my results based on the five sets of analyses.

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

“The chapter[s] that follow document the results of your fieldwork.”

(Mouton, 2001:124)

### 5.1 Presentation of results

In this chapter, I present and discuss the analyses of my sample. I begin by briefly presenting the sample’s details. The first analysis I present is the corpus analysis. Thereafter I present the genre analysis, followed by the multimodal analysis. I then present the multilingual analysis, and lastly I present the thematic analysis of the interviews.

For the presentation of the analyses, I would like the reader to keep in mind that I worked with six departments from two different universities. This gave me a data sample of 39 theses; however, two were written in Afrikaans and consequently were not used for every aspect of the analyses. I indicate which sample is used where. Figure 3 gives a detailed presentation of the sample.

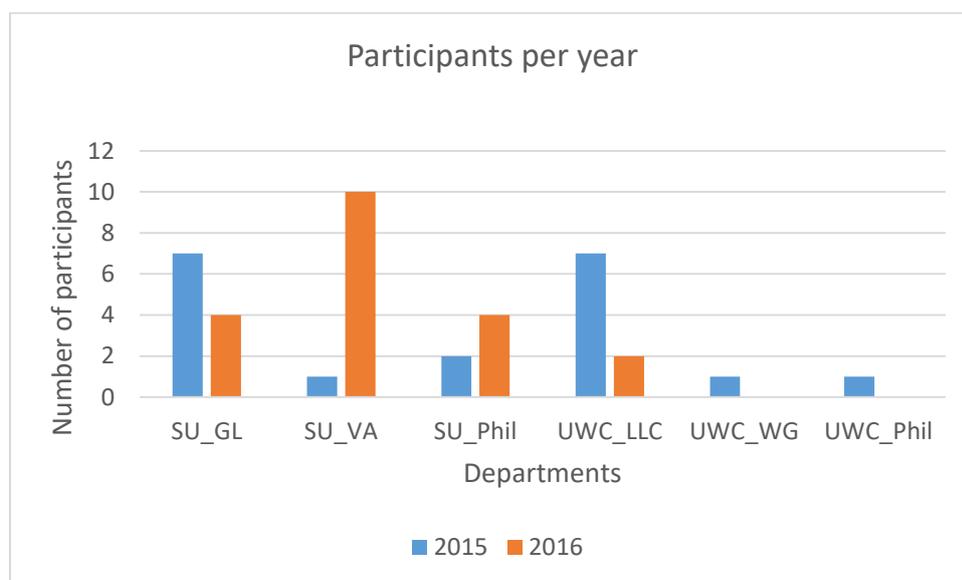


Figure 3: Participants per year

In the graph, it is evident that the number of theses produced in each year, department, and university differs. SU\_GL (Stellenbosch University, General Linguistics) produced seven theses in 2015 and four in 2016. SU\_VA (Stellenbosch University, Visual Arts) produced one thesis in 2015 and ten in 2016. SU\_Phil (Stellenbosch University, Philosophy) produced two theses in 2015 and four in 2016. UWC\_LLC (University of Western Cape, Linguistics, Language, and Communication) produced seven theses in 2015 and a further two in 2016.

UWC\_WG (University of the Western Cape, Women and Gender Studies) produced one thesis in 2015. UWC\_Phil (University of the Western Cape, Philosophy) produced one thesis in 2015. The differing numbers of theses produced itself constitutes an interesting result. The discussion of the two institutions in the previous chapter provides insight into this finding.

As can be seen in the Figure 4 below, SU had a total of 28 theses and UWC a total of 11 from the various departments.

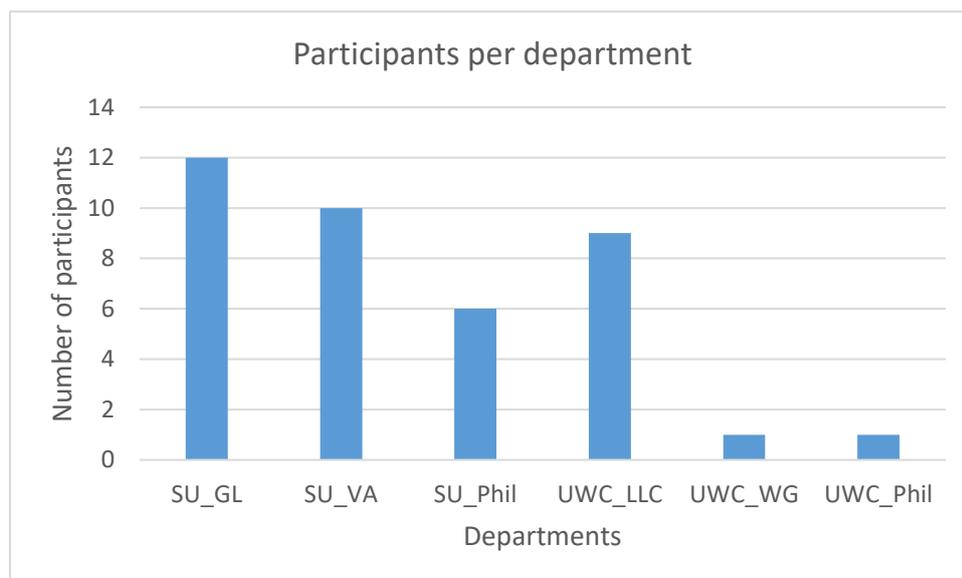


Figure 4: Participants per department

### 5.1.1 Corpus analysis

I used the AntConc textual analysis tool to investigate the author pronouns (APs) used by the participants. I identify the use of the pronouns “I”, “me”, and “my” and indicate where these personal pronouns (PPs) were in fact used as APs. For this analysis I used the sample of 37, thus excluding the two Afrikaans theses.

Data on the total number of occurrences of PPs and APs are appended for additional information (Appendix 12). In Table 1 below, I begin by presenting the use of PPs and APs per thesis, as well as the percentage of times the PP is used as an AP. The average is also indicated for each department and university.

	SU				UWC			
	GL	VA	Phil	Average	LLC	Phil	WG	Average
<b>“I” as PP/thesis</b>	177.2	270.8	116.6	204.1	451.4	276.0	423.0	432.9
<b>“I” as AP/thesis</b>	30.8	129.5	90.2	82.0	54.9	238.0	266.0	90.7
<b>“I” as AP %</b>	17.4	47.8	77.4	40.2	12.2	86.2	62.9	21.0
<b>“me” as PP/thesis</b>	23.4	39.0	3.4	26.0	60.1	22.0	90.0	59.4
<b>“me” as AP/thesis</b>	3.6	20.1	1.6	10.0	9.6	11.0	58.0	14.1
<b>“me” as AP %</b>	15.6	51.5	47.1	38.3	15.9	50.0	64.4	23.7
<b>“my” as PP/thesis</b>	50.5	131.2	37.0	80.9	136.9	55.0	206.0	135.7
<b>“my” as AP/thesis</b>	13.7	90.4	15.0	45.2	32.2	50.0	167.0	46.1
<b>“my” as AP %</b>	27.2	68.9	40.5	55.9	23.5	90.9	81.1	34.0

Table 1: Average use of APs and PPs per department

The number of theses differed per university and department, so in Table 2 the average numbers of APs and PPs were determined in order to compare the values where possible, namely in the linguistics and philosophy departments.

	GL vs LLC		Phil	
	SU	UWC	SU	UWC
<b>“I” as PP/thesis</b>	177.2	451.4	116.6	276
<b>“I” as AP/thesis</b>	30.8	54.9	90.2	238
<b>“I” as AP %</b>	17.4	12.2	77.4	86.2
<b>“me” as PP/thesis</b>	23.4	60.1	3.4	22
<b>“me” as AP/thesis</b>	3.6	9.6	1.6	11
<b>“me” as AP %</b>	15.6	15.9	47.1	50.0
<b>“my” as PP/thesis</b>	50.5	136.9	37	55
<b>“my” as AP/thesis</b>	13.7	32.2	15	50
<b>“my” as AP %</b>	27.2	23.5	40.5	90.9

Table 2: APs and PPs of departments compared

Table 2 compares the average numbers of APs and PPs per thesis across the same departments from SU and UWC. In Table 2, it can be noted that UWC uses more PPs on average in each thesis. Also, the philosophy departments use more APs than the linguistics departments. The percentage of PPs that are APs does not differ much between departments, apart from the UWC Philosophy Department’s use of “my” as AP, which is more than double that of the SU department (90.9% compared to 40.5%).

Table 3 compares the use of PPs and APs per thesis from the selected universities, regardless of department. UWC students use approximately twice the number of PPs that SU students use; however, the SU students use APs more often when the percentages are compared.

	SU VS UWC	
	SU	UWC
"I" as PP/thesis	204.1	432.9
"I" as AP/thesis	82.0	90.7
"I" as AP %	40.2	21.0
"me" as PP/thesis	26.0	59.4
"me" as AP/thesis	10.0	14.1
"me" as AP %	38.3	23.7
"my" as PP/thesis	80.9	135.7
"my" as AP/thesis	45.2	46.1
"my" as AP %	55.9	34.0

Table 3: APs and PPs of SU vs UWC

These data are simplified further in Table 4, to compare the use of APs as a percentage of PPs, regardless of whether "I", "me", or "my" was used. From Table 4, one can see that UWC students use more than twice the number of PPs per thesis. However, SU students are much more likely to use a PP as an AP. UWC students used 628 PPs per thesis compared to SU students' 311 PPs. However, SU students use PPs as APs 44% of the time compared to UWC students' 24%.

		Total	Average per thesis
SU	Total PP	8398	311.0
	Total AP	3703	137.1
	% AP of PP	44.1	
UWC	Total PP	6908	628.0
	Total AP	1660	150.9
	% AP of PP	24.0	

Table 4: Average APs and PPs of SU vs UWC

### 5.1.2 Genre analysis

I began the genre analysis by comparing each individual thesis' chapter organisation to my chosen model, namely Mouton's guidelines in *How to Succeed in Your Master's and Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book* (2001). For this analysis I again used the sample of 37, thus excluding the two Afrikaans theses. Both Mouton's model and Paltridge's (2002) thesis types are in English.

### 5.1.2.1 Mouton's guidelines

I will begin by presenting Mouton's requirements for the preliminaries and the following chapters and the extent to which the 37 participants adhered to these requirements. To analyse the participants' theses in terms of Mouton's chapter organisation and thesis layout, I looked for headings that implied particular sections. There were some instances of headings that were not listed in the participants' table of contents, but for those participants I went through their theses and identified the headings used.

#### *Preliminaries*

To understand the extent to which the participants adhered to the requirements of the preliminaries, the reader should keep Figure 4 in mind, which indicates how many participants there were from each department. In Figure 5, the light blue (title page) column can be used for simple comparison regarding adherence to the other requirements in this section, since every participant had a title page.

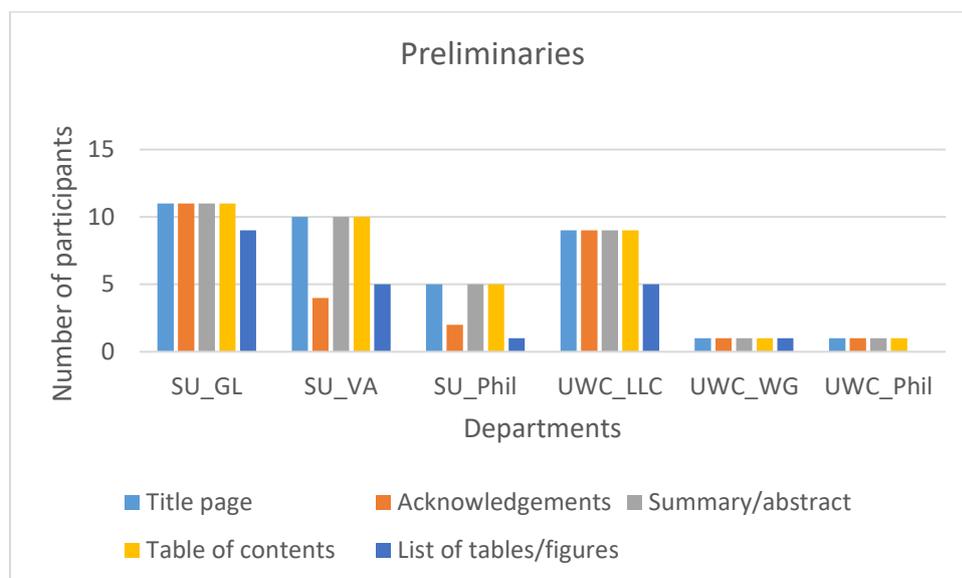


Figure 5: Adherence to different requirements of Preliminaries

For the preliminaries, Mouton (2001:122) has five requirements. All of the participants adhered to the first, third, and fourth requirements, namely the title page, a summary or abstract, and a table of contents. In an interview, participant US\_04 noted that for her, the acknowledgements section was the one place she could dispense with the formalities and thank the people and institutions without which her thesis would not have been possible. It was interesting that nine of the 37 participants did not include any form of acknowledgement.

The last of Mouton’s requirements here is to include a list of tables and figures that are used within the thesis. Mouton states that this is “standard practice”, yet it was clear that there were participants who had no tables or figures and for whom this was not necessary. There were however also lists of illustrations and lists of abbreviations. I have included them in this sample, since these lists had the same purpose as Mouton’s requirement; they were merely unique to the respective departments.

### *Chapter 1: Introduction*

The “generic format” of the first chapter as proposed by Mouton (2001:122) is written and prescribed differently than the following chapters. From the second chapter onwards, although never explicitly stated, Mouton appears to supply specific headings. Figure 6 illustrates that this is not the case for the first chapter, where it seems that in a sense he merely describes the concepts that he requires.

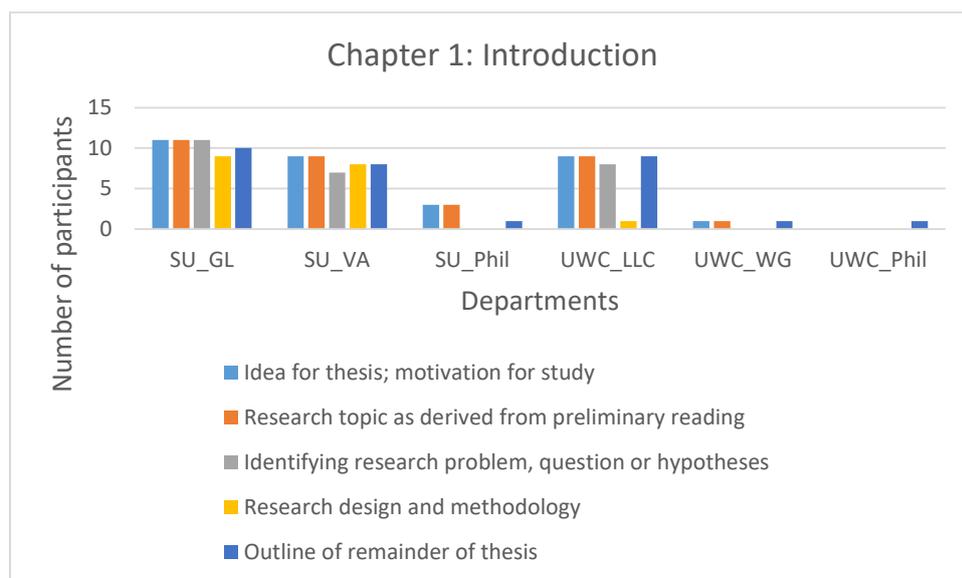


Figure 6: Adherence to different requirements of Chapter 1

Under “research problem, question or hypotheses” (the third requirement), many students did not have a heading that referred explicitly to their problem, question or hypotheses. They did however have their research “aims and objectives” as a heading. I felt that this did not exactly adhere to Mouton’s requirement, so I did not include these headings in this graph. I did include “Research assumption” (UWC\_03), given its similarity to “hypothesis”.

As is visible in Figure 6, there is a general absence of the “research design and methodology” section as prescribed by Mouton. The fourth requirement is a “[g]eneral indication of research design and methodology”. The use of the words “general indication” suggested to me that

Mouton was being less strict with this requirement. Therefore, I searched for any indication of a section dedicated to the design or methodology in the first chapter. This included “Data collection” (SU\_07) as well as “Process and intentions” (SU\_17).

In summary, the first chapter had five requirements. In Figure 7, I indicate each of the six departments’ average level of adherence to these five requirements:

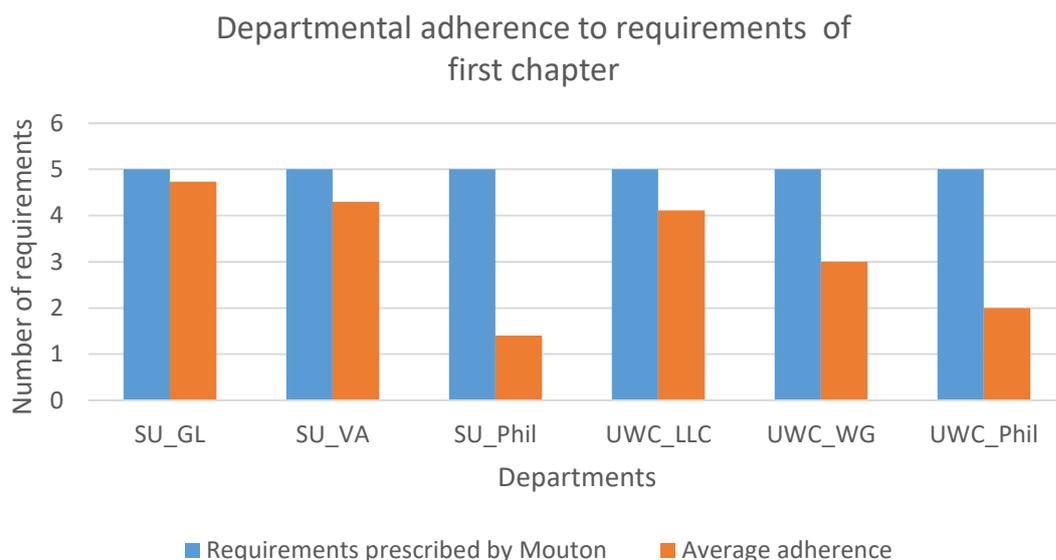


Figure 7: Departmental adherence to requirements of first chapter

### *Chapter 2: Literature review/theoretical framework*

Mouton’s second chapter is dedicated to the literature review or theoretical framework of the research project. I identified the chapters that overlapped with Mouton’s; however, with certain theses, I could not find any chapters that acted as literature reviews. I did however identify literature review and/or theoretical framework chapters in 30 of the 37 theses.

It is also interesting to note the differences in how participants placed their literature reviews and/or theoretical frameworks. Mouton prescribes that the second chapter of the thesis should be dedicated to this topic. Of the 30 theses that had a structured literature review and/or theoretical framework, only 12 presented it in just one chapter. The remaining 18 theses (all of whom used their second chapter as well) dedicated two or more chapters to literature reviews and/or theoretical frameworks. Figure 8 shows the different chapters used for this purpose.

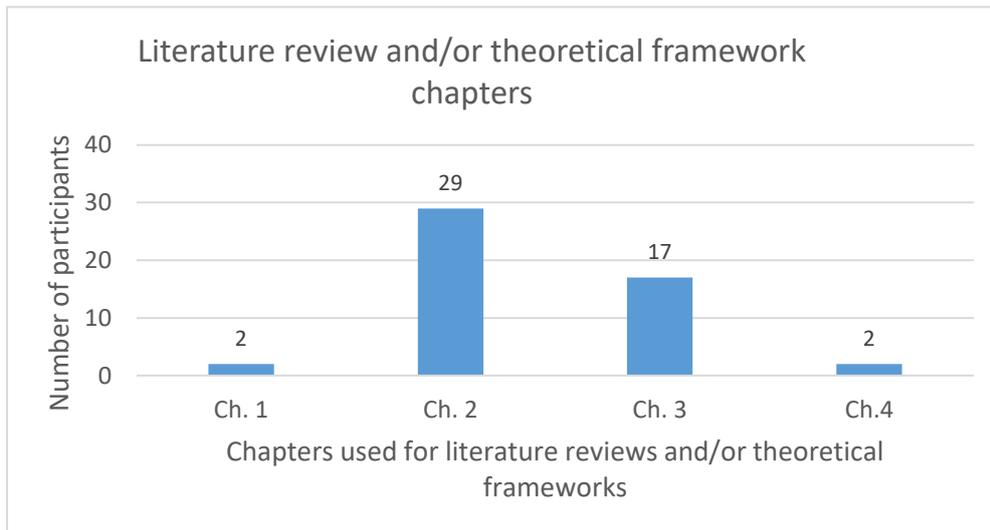


Figure 8: Literature review and/or theoretical framework chapters

I will now focus on the sections that Mouton prescribes for students within the literature review and/or theoretical framework chapters. Figure 9 illustrates the extent to which the 30 participants in this particular sample adhered to Mouton's guidelines for this chapter. The sample consists of 30 theses because it was impossible for me to identify a chapter structured as a literature review in any of the six theses from the two philosophy departments, as well as one thesis from the Visual Arts Department.

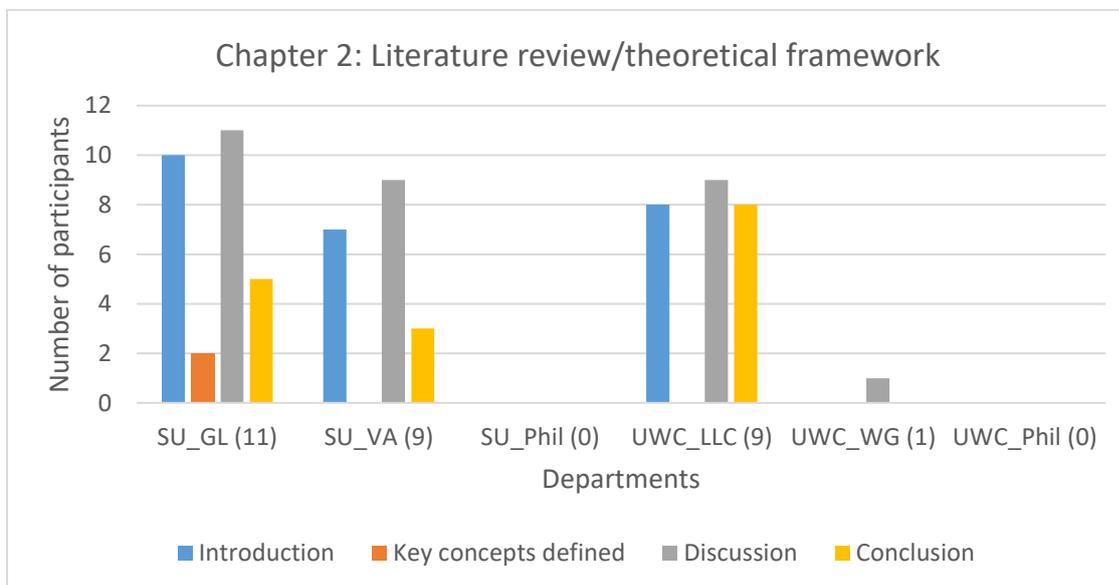


Figure 9: Adherence to different requirements of Chapter 2

Mouton firstly prescribes an introductory section to introduce the literature that will be covered. In this category, I identified and included any sections that introduced the discussion of theories to follow.

The second prescribed section in this chapter is one that defines the key concepts of the study. As visible in Figure 9, only two participants (SU\_07; SU\_08) out of all 37 defined key concepts

in their second or literature review chapter. It should be kept in mind that this was the only chapter in which Mouton made provision for this component. There were however a further five participants who defined or explained their core concepts or key words outside of the space prescribed by Mouton and they were from SU\_GL (1), SU\_VA (2), SU\_Phil (1), and UWC\_Phil. These definitions can be found in the participants' preliminaries section (2) or their first chapter (3). It is interesting to observe that in the two departments where no students had a section dedicated to such definitions, UWC\_LLC and UWC\_WG, all of the students included a list of the keywords used in their theses, just without definitions.

After the definitions, Mouton prescribes a discussion of the literature or theory. Mouton (2001:123) explains: "Present the literature that you have read in an organised and structured manner". Therefore, I did not only include discussions titled "Discussion", but also discussion sections that were structured (and titled) uniquely and individually by the participants.

For the last section of this chapter, Mouton requires a conclusion that summarises the chapter's main findings. Thus, if a participant had a conclusion at the end of each discussion topic but no overall conclusion of the entire chapter, I did not include it. It also became clear that many participants concluded their literature reviews without using a particular heading. Since I worked according to Mouton's prescribed guidelines, I did not include conclusions that had no title. One interesting heading for a conclusion was "Synthesis" (SU\_12).

Figure 10 provides an indication of each of the six departments' average level of adherence to the four requirements of the second chapter.

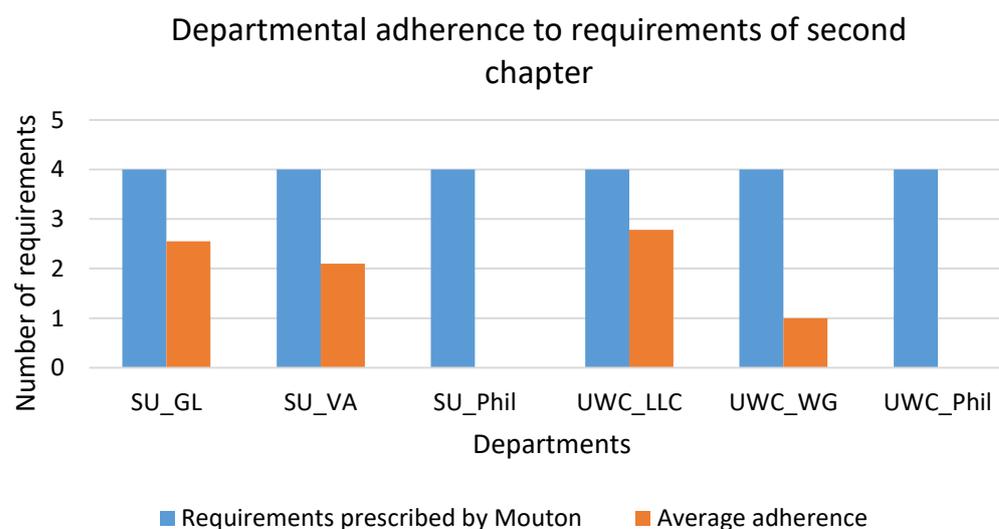


Figure 10: Departmental adherence to requirements of second chapter

### Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Up until this point, the chapter organisation of the majority of the theses overlaps with Mouton’s generic format. As discussed above, 29 of the 30 participants in the above sample made use of (at least) the second chapter for their literature review and/or theoretical framework. From the third chapter onwards, however, students seem to follow a different route.

As with the chapter on literature reviews and theoretical frameworks, there were participants who did not have a designated chapter for their research design and methodology. In seven of the theses, I could find no chapter dedicated to the research design or methodology. Six of these seven were also six of the participants who did not have a literature review chapter. Furthermore, two participants only had headings that indicated a research design or methodology in their preliminary sections. I did not include these two in the sample, since Mouton requires an entire chapter dedicated to this section. Consequently, I analysed 28 of the theses according to Mouton’s guidelines for the research design and methodology chapter. Figure 11 illustrates how this sample of 28 participants adhered to Mouton’s requirements for this chapter.

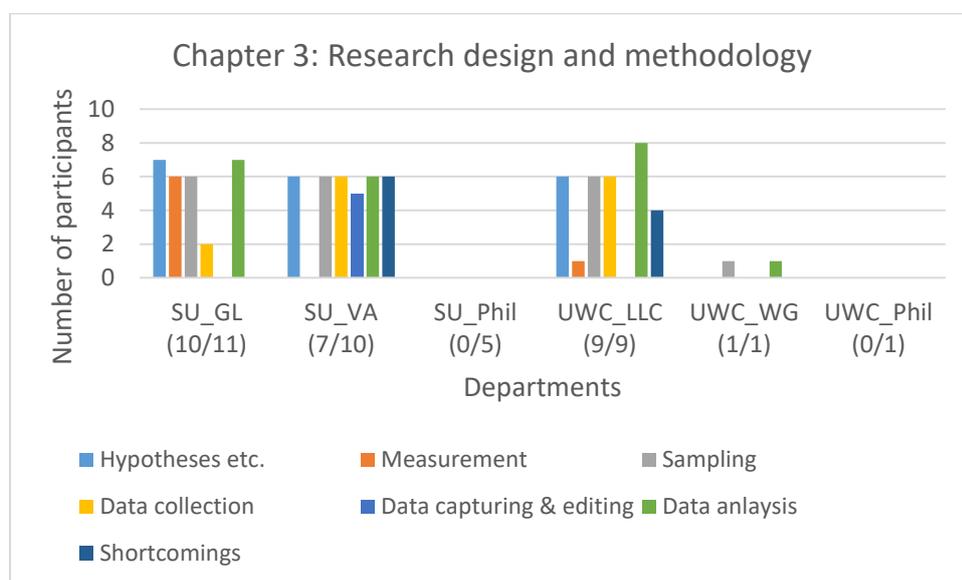


Figure 11: Adherence to different requirements of Chapter 3

The first section of the methodology chapter requires “hypotheses, conceptualisation, definitions, key variables”. Mouton uses the word “conceptualisation”, from which I gather that he merely prescribes to the author to provide a sense of his or her ‘train of thought’ for the project. Consequently, I included general research designs and research approaches under this section, as well as introductory explanations to this particular chapter. It should be noted that

I only included “introduction” sections that did in fact describe the conceptualisation in some sense, and I did not include introductions that merely stated what would be discussed in this particular chapter.

The second requirement of the third chapter relates to “issues of measurement”. Mouton states that this section should include a discussion of the instruments used for the measurement of the study’s key variables. For this section, I identified theses where the specific words “measurement” or “instrument/s” or were used in a section heading. It was important for me to be strict in identifying adherence to this requirement in order to determine how the participants viewed their data collection methods in relation to Mouton’s “measurement” or “instruments”. At the SU Department of General Linguistics, a few students made use of these words to title a section. However, it is interesting to note that none of the VA students made use of this section title.

For the section “sampling design and sampling methods”, I also included titles that indicated “participants”, “participating respondents” or “population”. It should be kept in mind that I first identified the prototypical headings as required by Mouton, yet many of the participants personalised their headings. It should also be noted that this section was only included if it formed part of the methodology chapter as prescribed by Mouton.

Mouton lists “data capturing and data editing” as an additional section, despite already dedicating a section to “data collection” and “data analysis”. Because Mouton distinguishes between these sections, it was imperative for me to search for the words “capturing” or “editing” before including a particular thesis section in this sample. For Mouton’s section titled “data analysis”, I had to identify the word “analysis” in order for a thesis to be included.

Mouton’s final section of the methodology chapter is titled “shortcomings and sources of error” and is described as “a discussion of the quality of data collected”. Therefore, I included any headings that indicated a discussion about errors, limitations or validity. Above, one can see that ten of the sample of 28 theses addressed shortcomings in the third chapter. Interestingly, however, of the 37 participants in the overall sample, 20 theses included a section on the limitations of the project. These participants spread these sections across their theses and some addressed this issue in more than one chapter. Figure 12 below shows how discussions of theses’ shortcomings were distributed across thesis chapters. It should also be noted that Mouton does require a similar discussion in the fifth or final chapter.

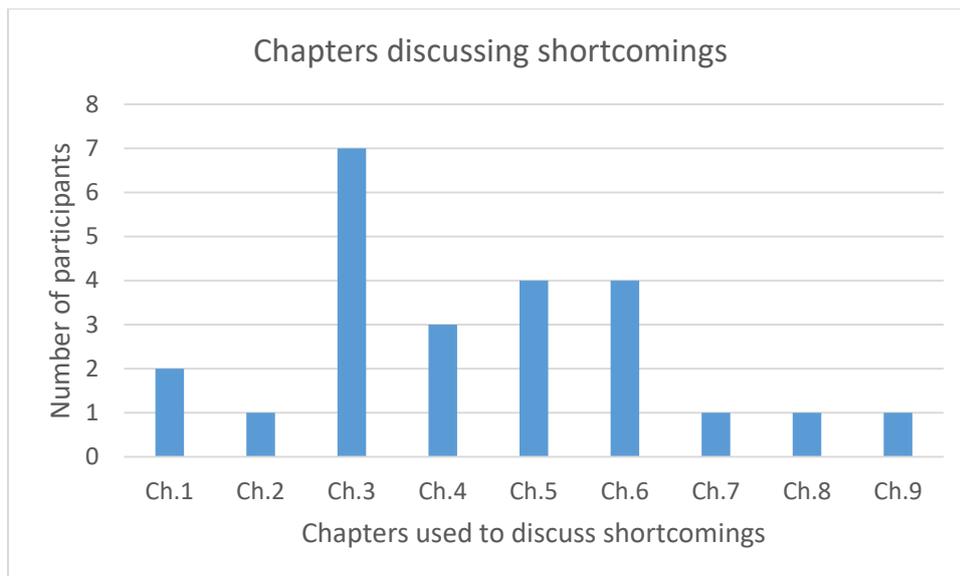


Figure 12: Chapters discussing shortcomings

Figure 13 provides an indication of each of the six departments' average level of adherence to the seven requirements of the third chapter.

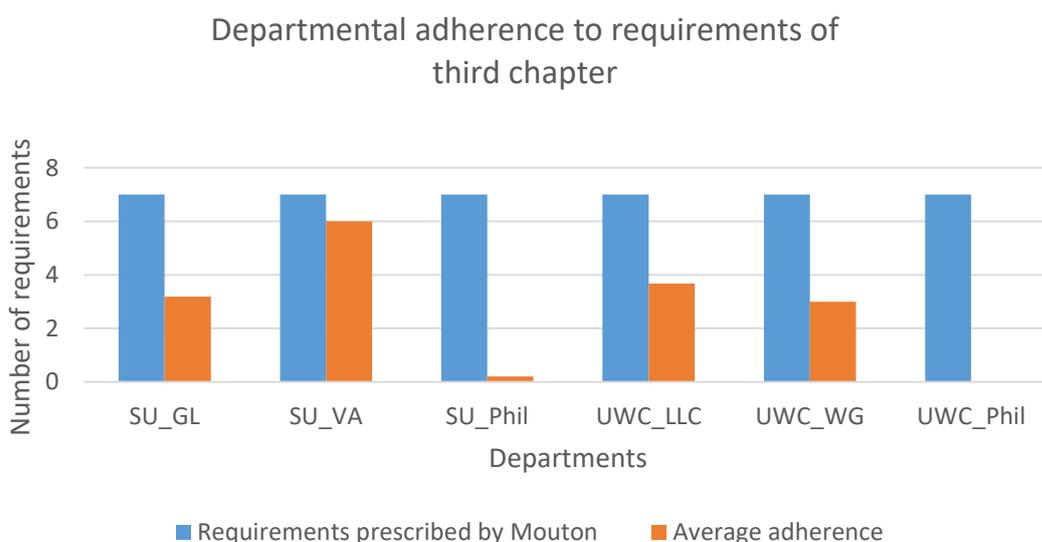


Figure 13: Departmental adherence to requirements of third chapter

Once again, it should be noted that chapter three was not the methodology chapter of all of these 28 participants. In order to analyse the thesis structures according to Mouton's guidelines, I identified each participant's methodology chapter and analysed only this particular chapter according to Mouton's prescriptions for the third chapter. I considered it necessary to do this because very few students did in fact adhere to Mouton's prescribed chapter organisation. Figure 14 illustrates the different chapters these 28 participants employed for discussions of research designs and methodologies.

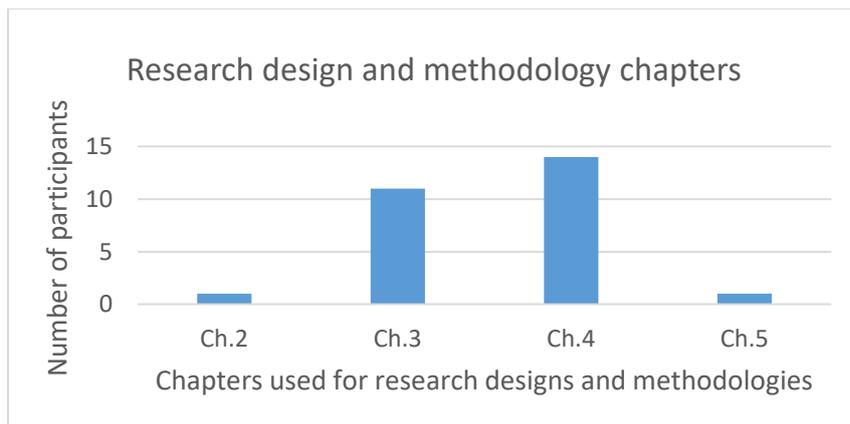


Figure 14: Research design and methodology chapters

#### *Chapter 4 ff.: Results: presentation and discussion*

The fourth chapter Mouton requires is titled “Results: presentation and discussions”. Again, I examined the sample of theses for corresponding chapters and searched for all the sections required by Mouton in that particular chapter. I identified chapters that indicated results and/or findings and consequential discussions.

Mouton states that this chapter should include both the presentation of the results as well as the discussion of these results. His guidelines do however title this as “Chapters 4 ff.”, and the conclusion to be drawn is that Mouton would allow more chapters, perhaps a secondary chapter, on this topic. I observed that there were in fact participants that had one chapter on their findings and an additional chapter to discuss these findings.

Thirty-seven theses were analysed. As with chapters two and three, there were theses in which I could not identify a fourth chapter as prescribed by Mouton. In this case, it was impossible to determine which chapters were findings and which were used for discussions in six of the theses. Of the remaining 31 theses, 14 only had one chapter for both their findings and their discussion, and 17 theses used two or more chapters to present and discuss their findings.

Below I make use of the sample of the 14 participants that only had one chapter for both their findings and their discussions. Figure 15 presents the findings of the analysis of this sample according to Mouton’s requirements for the fourth chapter.

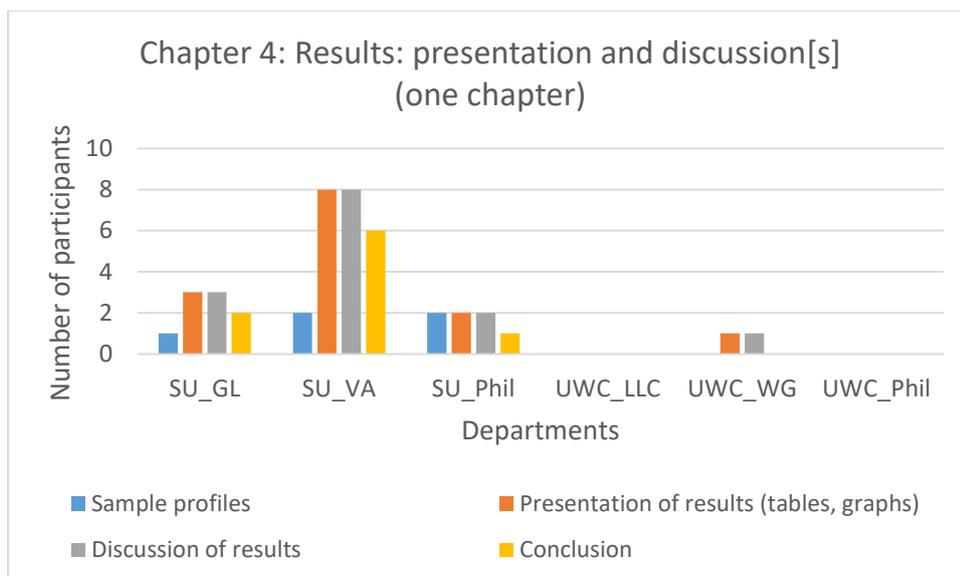


Figure 15: Adherence to different requirements of Chapter 4 (one chapter)

Chapter four begins with the guideline to include a section on the sample profile. Mouton does however mention that some supervisors will prefer this to be in the methodology chapter, and that is why he repeats this section. Of the 14 theses in this sample, the 5 that did include a section on their sampling all had their own headings and did not use the headings suggested by Mouton.

The second section requirement is the presentation of the results. Of this section, Mouton (2001:124) says “[d]iscuss and summarise the main results that you obtained using tables and other visual devices (graphs, figures, plots)”. Given the qualitative nature of the research conducted in the departments chosen for this research project, I decided to also include extracts from interviews under this section. All 14 of these theses either presented their results in a graph or a table or included extracts. Mouton titles the final section of this chapter “concluding interpretations”. Under this section, I also included the section headings “Summary”, “Concluding remarks”, and “Preliminary conclusion”.

I will now use the sample of the 17 students that used two or more chapters to present their findings and their discussions. Figure 16 presents the findings of the analysis of these chapters according to Mouton’s requirements for the fourth chapter.

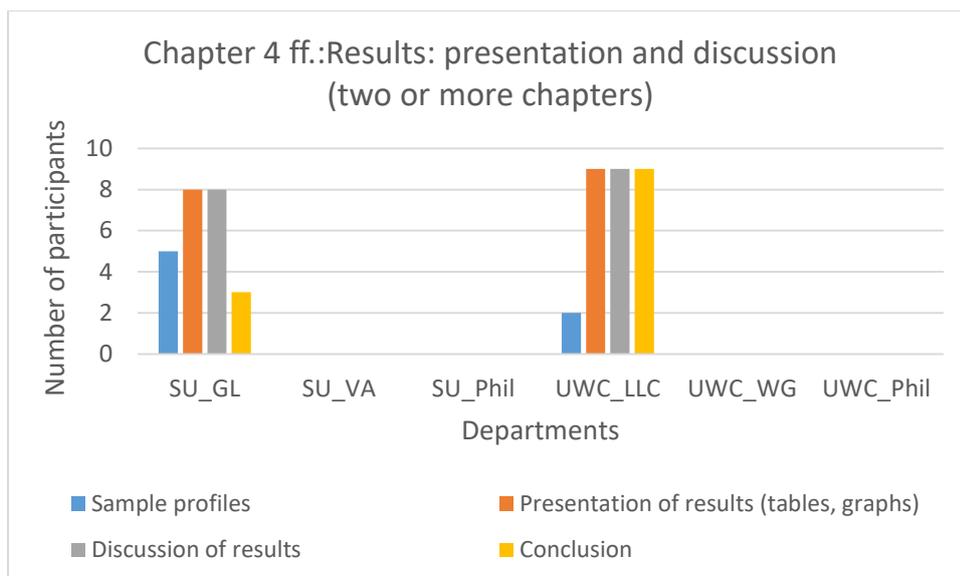


Figure 16: Adherence to different requirements of Chapter 4 (two chapters)

First of all, it is interesting to note that all 17 of the participants who used two or more chapters to present and discuss their findings were from either the SU or the UWC linguistics departments. For this section, I searched for the requirements in any of the chapters used for the presentation and discussion of findings.

All 17 of these theses had an entire chapter dedicated to the discussion of their findings, albeit together with their final conclusions or summaries of the thesis. Mouton's final requirement for this chapter is a conclusion. It should be noted that many of these 17 students combined the discussion of their findings with the final conclusion chapter (the fifth chapter, as proposed by Mouton). This meant that some of these students did not have a separate conclusion of their discussion. I attempted to only include conclusions of the discussions under this section and not the overall conclusions of the thesis. Interestingly, all of the UWC students who had more than one chapter for the presentation and discussion of their findings included a conclusion of their discussions and had an additional chapter for the overall conclusions of the thesis. This occurred in only three of the eight SU theses that had more than one chapter for the presentation and discussion of findings.

In summary then, the fourth chapter had four requirements. Figure 17 illustrates each of the six departments' average level of adherence to these requirements.

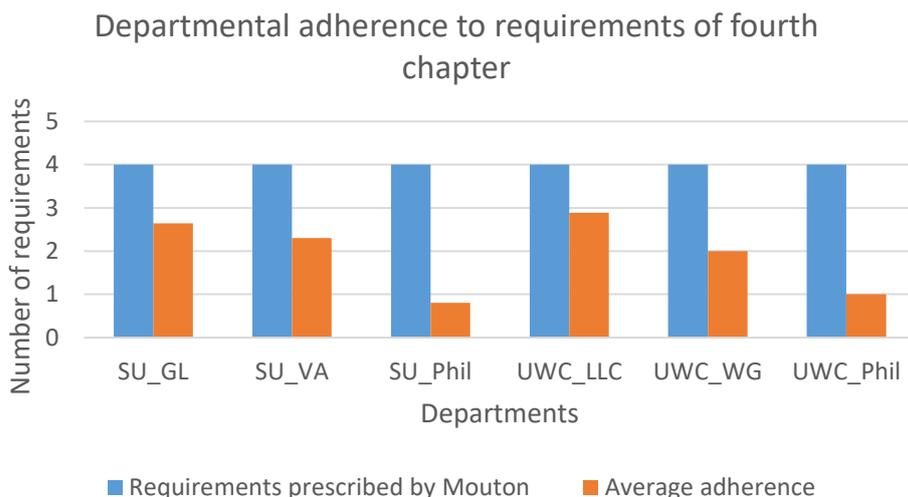


Figure 17: Departmental adherence to requirements of fourth chapter

*Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations*

Mouton titles chapter five “Conclusions and recommendations”. For all 37 theses in the sample, I identified their final chapter and searched for Mouton’s required sections in these chapters. Figure 18 presents the participants’ adherence to these five requirements.

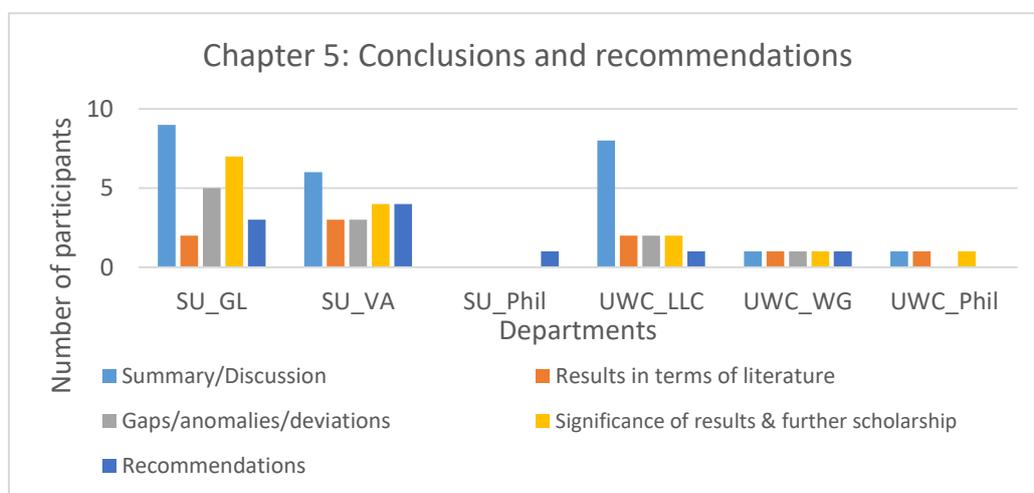


Figure 18: Adherence to different requirements of Chapter 5

There were students who only had a chapter heading for their final chapter without distinguishing further between the sections required by Mouton. I only included sections with headings that explicitly indicated Mouton’s required sections.

In Mouton’s required section regarding “gaps, anomalies and/or deviations in the data”, many of the students had a section titled “Limitations”. I included this section if it was in their final chapter. There were also sections titled “Fulfilment of research objectives”, yet I did not

include these. These sections merely answered the research questions or indicated whether the objectives had been attained and did not discuss the ways in which the data were insufficient, which is what Mouton requires.

For the last section of the final chapter, Mouton (2001:125) requires a section that addresses “policy and other recommendations”, which includes “recommendations regarding further research”. This is something he also required in the previous section, namely “[indicating] uncertainties that might require further scholarship”. Therefore, I decided to include sections titled “further scholarship” under the previous requirement, and under the latter requirement I only included sections that clearly discussed recommendations or implications for practice or policy. It should be noted here that Mouton (2001:125) remarks of this particular section that it will only be applicable “[i]n some types of study”, since many theses are investigative in nature and do not necessarily aim to make recommendations, but merely to describe their findings.

Mouton (2001:125) also requires a reference list. He clearly states that this is “not [a] bibliography”, but then continues by saying “[m]ake sure that you know which of these options is required by your supervisor”. Since I had no way of knowing which of the two the participants’ respective supervisors required, I made a distinction between “reference list” and “bibliography” for this requirement. All 37 participants included one or the other. There was one participant that titled this as “Sources cited”. I included this in the group that made use of “References” or “Reference list”, since the sources cited in the project are exactly what a reference list provides. Figure 19 present all the occurrences of referencing.

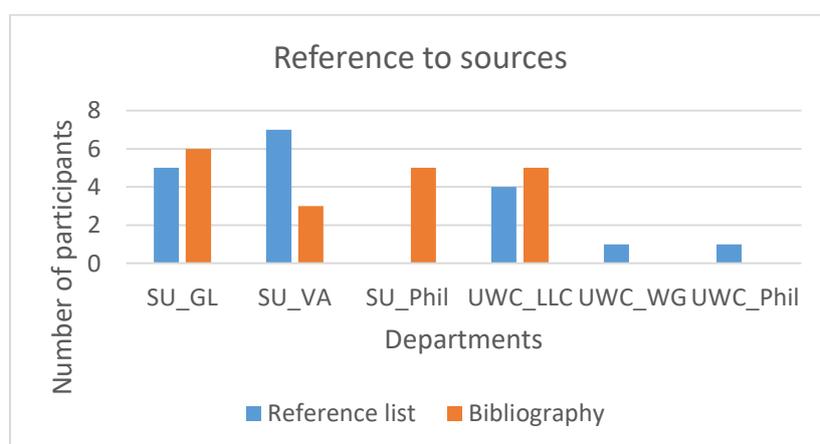


Figure 19: Reference to sources

Mouton (2001:125) finally states that there may be some research projects that should include appendices, but this will depend on “the kind of study and the rules or preferences of the

institution or supervisor”. He provides examples such as questionnaires, cover letters or ethical documentation. The latter is especially interesting, since Mouton does not address ethical considerations in either the proposal or the final thesis. However, 17 participants discussed the ethical issues they faced in their projects, either with or without a particular heading addressing the issue.

Figure 20 illustrates each of the six departments’ average level of adherence to the fifth chapter’s five requirements.

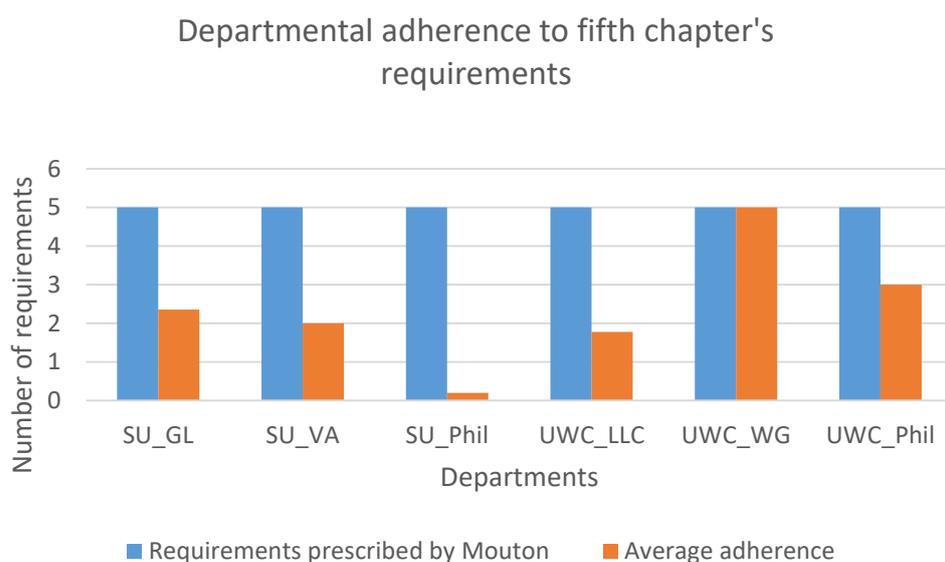


Figure 20: Departmental adherence to fifth chapter's requirements

### 5.1.2.2 Thesis types

The analysis based on Mouton’s suggested format indicates that the majority of the students did not adhere to this format. Consequently, I categorised the theses according to the four thesis types I discussed in the previous chapter. The results of the categorisation of the theses are presented in table 5.

	Stellenbosch University			University of the Western Cape			Total
	GL	VA	Phil	LLC	Phil	WG	
<b>Mouton’s</b>	7	6		7			20
<b>Traditional: complex</b>	1						1
<b>Topic based</b>	3	2	4	2	1	1	13
<b>Creative</b>		3	1				4

Table 5: Theses categorised according to thesis types

Despite my previous belief then, the majority of the theses in my sample did in fact fall under the category of Mouton's thesis type. I should note again that Mouton's thesis type is also linked to the *traditional: simple* thesis type, as discussed by Paltridge (2002). Upon further investigation, I determined that most theses merely appear to be complex and thus to belong to the *complex* rather than the *simple* category. However, once examined in detail, it was clear that their structures are all similar to a certain extent, and in fact they are of the *traditional: simple* or Mouton's type.

One example of a structure that initially complicated the analyses used more than one chapter for its literature review. A few theses used this structure. Students could perhaps have done this to emphasise the different topics being reviewed, or merely because the discussion was too long and they wanted shorter chapters. After thorough analysis, I realised that these theses were in fact not *sufficiently complex* to be put in a different category, but still fit into the *traditional: simple* category.

### 5.1.3 Multimodal analysis

This section focuses on participants' use of visual elements in their theses. For this section, I work with the sample of 39 theses, thus including the two theses that were written in Afrikaans. I identified any extraordinary visuals—any images other than university logos, tables, graphs, and diagrams—in order to investigate whether students used said visuals to convey voice or agency. Furthermore, I also considered how the theses looked and whether students used the image of the thesis to portray something particular. I used *Extending the Notion of 'Text': The Visual and Performing Arts Doctoral Thesis* (2013) by Ravelli *et al.* as a basis for understanding the use of visuals in academic writing.

Of the 39 theses, a total of 8 theses included images. Interestingly, 8 of the 10 VA students included visuals. I identified three different reasons for these students' use of visuals:

- 1) To document the creative or practical component, for example a visual diary that was kept or proof of planning. 7 of the 8 theses included visuals from this category; four theses embedded these images within the theses and the remaining three appended the images.

The first example is from a student who embedded images of her creative process within her thesis (SU\_16):

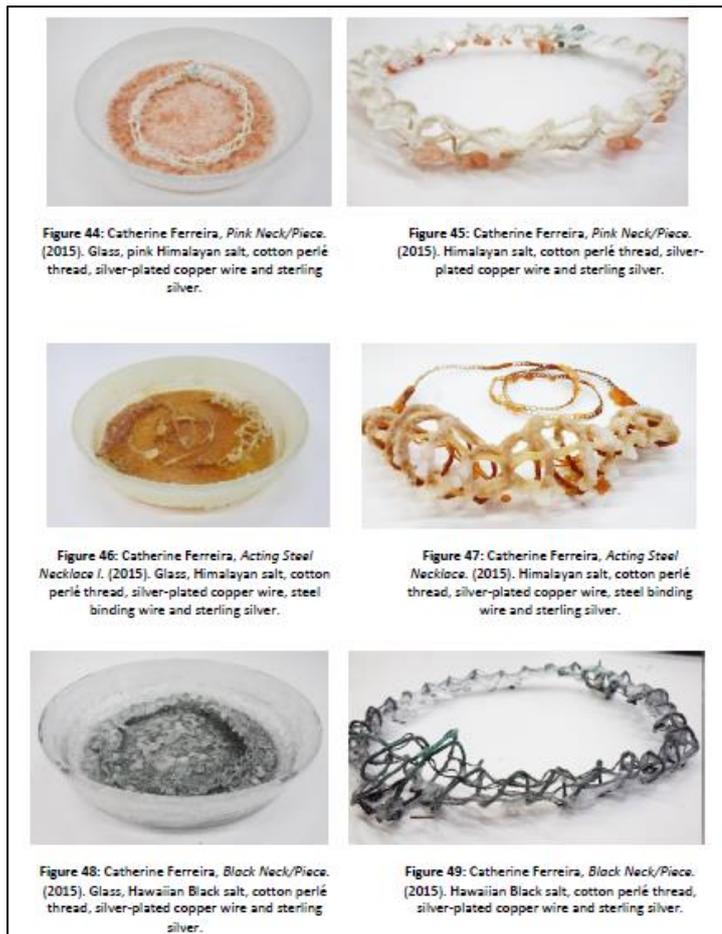


Figure 21: SU\_16's embedded documentation of creative component

The second example is from a thesis that appended images of the creative process (SU\_19):



Figure 22: SU\_19's appended documentation of creative component

- 2) To strengthen the literature discussed, for example by including images of artworks that were mentioned. Five theses included photographs in this category. Only one author

from this category appended the images; the remaining four embedded them within the body of the thesis.

The first example is an embedded image (SU\_18):



Figure 23: Example of embedded image discussed by SU\_18

The second example is from the student who appended images (SU\_22):

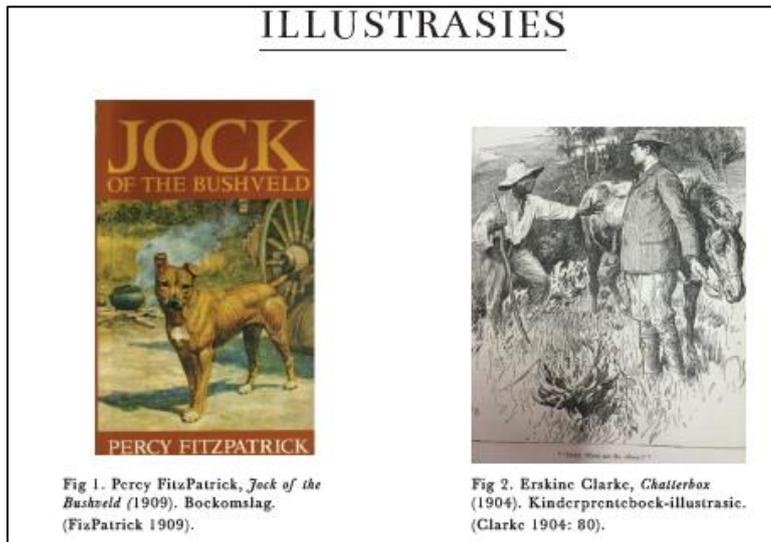


Figure 24: Example of appended images discussed by SU\_22

- 3) Images of the actual creative or practical component, for example art photographs that the author took or photographs from installations done or sculptures made. Five students included images of this type; only one appended the images and the remaining four authors embedded the images within their theses.

The first is an example from the thesis of an author who appended an example of her creative component (SU\_22):



Figure 25: Appended example of SU\_22's creative component

The following examples are from the theses of authors who embedded images of their creative components in their theses:

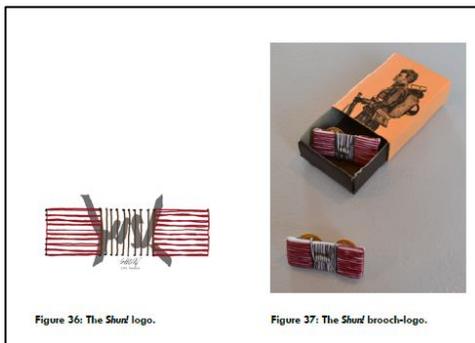


Figure 26: Embedded example of SU\_14's creative component



Figure 27: Embedded example of SU\_16's creative component



*Figure 28: Embedded example of SU\_17's creative component*



*Figure 29: Embedded example of SU\_18's creative component*

Furthermore, there were two theses that stood out in terms of extraordinary visuals. Both of these theses, namely SU\_14 and SU\_17, were produced in the VA department.

SU\_14 had two unusual visual elements: the final page of the preliminary section (before chapter one began) contained a poem with an illustration that was most likely drawn by the participant himself (Figure 30), and the final page of the thesis (before the reference list) also contained a poem with a hand-drawn illustration (Figure 31). I assume that the drawing was done by the author himself as he did not reference the artist. SU\_14 also used a different font for his title page and a third font for the body text of his thesis.

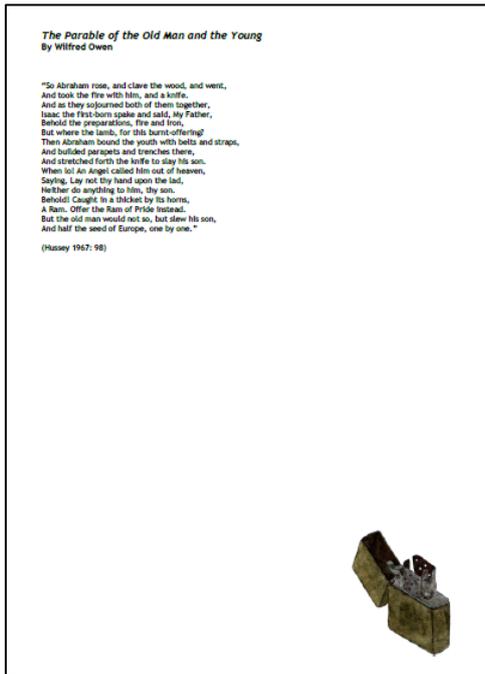


Figure 30: SU\_14's extraordinary visual embedded in preliminaries

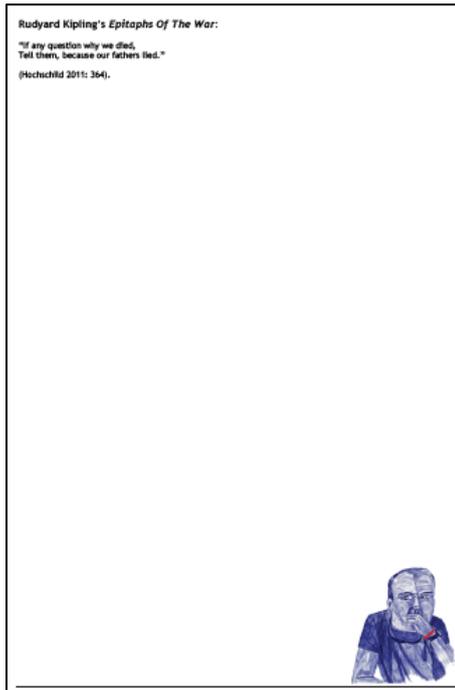


Figure 31: SU\_14's extraordinary visual embedded on final page of thesis

Furthermore, SU\_14 also included an earlier photo of himself to explain his interest in his particular research topic (Figure 32). He also included photos of the visual diary he kept throughout his research project – both the creative and written component (Figure 33).



Figure 32: SU\_14's photo of himself employed as motivation for his research topic



Figure 33: SU\_14's photos of visual diary

SU\_17's thesis is titled "Migrations". It included an extraordinary page before the title page (Figure 34) and another after the reference list (Figure 35). This creates the impression of the cover pages of a book.

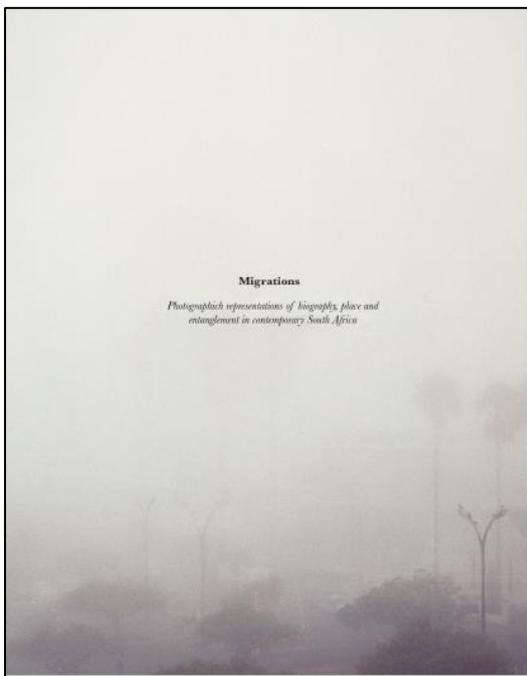


Figure 34: SU\_17's front cover page

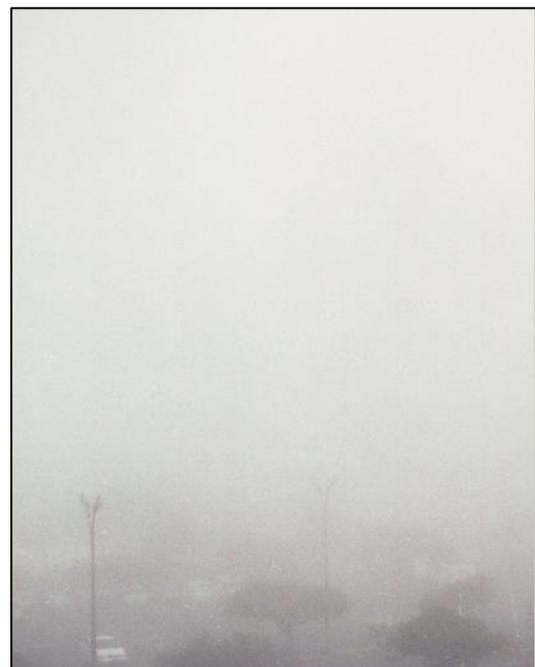


Figure 35: SU\_17's back cover page



I include the “Acknowledgements” heading as well as the first words below the Afrikaans dedication to emphasise that everything else in the thesis is written in English.

The second use of a language other than English was found in a thesis from SU’s Philosophy Department (SU\_23). This participant made use of an Afrikaans word in a footnote in his thesis; here, he stated what the Afrikaans word would be for a particular feeling mentioned on that page. Figure 38 presents this footnote:

and people may respond in the same way in similar situations. Virtues and the

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<sup>36</sup> In Afrikaans the word “hartsbegeerte” would be appropriate to emphasise the sincerity of this desire.

*Figure 38: Footnote in SU\_23’s thesis*

### **5.1.5 Thematic analysis of interviews**

I reached out to all 6 departments from which the 39 participants were drawn. Seven people responded and were prepared to be interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was for me, the investigator, to get an idea of the environment each department creates for its master’s students. The seven people I interviewed were from four different departments, namely SU\_GL, SU\_VA, UWC\_LLC, and UWC\_Phil. Unfortunately, I did not manage to contact any of the students in my sample who were from SU\_Phil or UWC\_WG. I did however contact current master’s students from these two departments and asked them about their current experiences with regard to guidelines and support and so forth. These two students’ responses will be noted in the discussion. Fortunately, the seven interviews that I did conduct were extremely enlightening. I identified four main themes before the interviews and listed a few questions. However, I encouraged interviewees not to stick to these questions but rather to tell me about their individual experiences of their thesis-writing journey. Each of these seven interviewees completed a linguistic background questionnaire as well as a consent form (Appendix 13 and Appendix 14). The linguistic background questionnaire was not included for statistical purposes, but was rather used to provide me with an understanding of each respondent’s linguistic context.

I had four face-to-face interviews, two Skype interviews, and one telephone call, which was substituted for Skype due to a poor internet connection. The seven interviewees were from the following departments:

- UWC\_05: Linguistics, Language and Communication (UWC)
- UWC\_10: Philosophy (UWC)
- SU\_01: General Linguistics (SU)
- SU\_04: General Linguistics (SU)
- SU\_05: General Linguistics (SU)
- SU\_21: Visual Arts (SU)
- SU\_22: Visual Arts (SU)

As Burnard (1991) suggested, I reread and refined the categories or themes into sub-categories in an attempt to cover the entireties of the interviews. I had four overarching themes: *You and your thesis*; *You and your supervisor*; *Language*; and *Other*. From the analysis, I identified further sub-themes. The results are now presented accordingly.

## **1. YOU AND YOUR THESIS**

I divided this theme further into five sub-themes. In this theme, I wanted to get feedback on the authors' perspectives of their writing. In this section, I asked interviewees to talk about their own thesis writing, their motivation, and the final product.

### **Your frame of mind**

In this sub-theme, I wanted to investigate the writers' motivations for undertaking their research projects. I also enquired about their thoughts throughout the writing process. The questions in this section were as follows:

*How did you decide on the topic for your research project? Was it personal curiosity, proposed by your supervisor or someone else, or required due to bursaries' requirements etc.?*

All seven interviewees gave the impression that the idea for the project originated with them and noted that it was merely adapted, narrowed or *fine-tuned* by supervisors or the department as a whole. Four of the students indicated that they extended the research that they had done in their honours studies.

*Did you attempt to mirror<sup>6</sup> your research question in your thesis in any manner? How did you approach this and how successful do you believe this was?*

Six of the seven interviewees indicated that they did not attempt mirroring in any manner.

UWC\_10 had the following response:

“Philosophy people don’t do those things [...] We probably think: if you have a point to make, make it with an argument that is rational so we can assess it, think about it and reflect on it.”

“I don’t think there is place in philosophy to make points like that.”

SU\_22 mentioned that there were other students in her department (VA) that did the mirroring in a visual way, although she did not. This again highlights how unfortunate it was that only two students from this department responded to the request for an interview.

### **Your thesis project**

In this sub-theme, I enquired about the actual writing of the thesis, what the participant might have done or not done, and what their reasons were for their choices.

The first part of this section was used to determine the writers’ preparation for their thesis projects and the role their departments played in this.

*How did your department prepare you for your master’s studies and what tools, resources, workshops or guidelines did they provide you with in order to start writing your thesis?*

Two students indicated that they did not receive any formal programmes or workshops. Both of these students were from UWC. Participant UWC\_05 indicated:

“Die enigste voorbereiding wat ons gehad het vir postgrad was in honneurs [...] vir master’s en onwards is daar niks formal nie.”<sup>7</sup>

UWC\_10 did however indicate that he was the first master’s student in his department (Philosophy), as his department was quite new. He stated that the department adjusted their

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<sup>6</sup> I explained “mirroring” as the act of using modes other than words, to exhibit or carry the research question over. For example using “he/she” throughout the entire body of a text to highlight a research topic on feminism.

<sup>7</sup> “The only preparation that we had for our postgraduate studies, took place in our honours course [...] for master’s studies and onwards there are no formal preparations.”

approach to his personality. Although the department did not provide him with guidelines, he noted that there is a centre for postgraduate students on campus.

All three students from SU's General Linguistics department indicated that there was a workshop at the start of the course, yet two of them did not attend it.

The general feeling was that the departments provided sufficient guidelines. The two students from the VA department also indicated that their course work and course outline provided them with the requirements and guidelines that they needed.

*Did you have to ask for more help because of a feeling of uncertainty as you approached your research project, like there were not enough resources or help at your disposal?*

It seems that all seven interviewees received support from their supervisors in this regard. One student noted that she had already moved abroad when she was doing her thesis, so there were times that she felt that she did not have enough materials. She did however mention that she felt this way because she could not get to the library and not because the resources were not available.

*Did your project ultimately feel like it was "worth the trouble"?*

Five of the interviewees were convinced that their study was "very definitely" worth the trouble (SU\_05). Of the remaining two, one indicated that the practical component of her master's (in VA) was more beneficial than the written component. The remaining student (SU\_01) said the following:

"Maybe. In the end I don't think I really use it; just the paper saying I got a master's degree. I envisioned using it more than I actually do."

### **A standard format**

This sub-theme questioned students' view of the *standard format* of a thesis: whether they felt there is one specific format that is required from master's students, what such a format entailed, and whether they adhered to this.

*Do you believe that there is a required, standard format in which to present a master's thesis? Why do you say so?*

The responses were quite different and each had a unique motivation. SU\_01 and SU\_04 both suggested having a range of standards, for example different standards for different fields,

rather than trying to force one specific standard on all the different fields. SU\_04's argument was quite simple:

“Visually moet daar sekere standaarde wees. Dit moet maklik leesbaar wees. Obviously mense moet hierdie goed lees en dit merk. Dit help nie jy skryf iets om mense te help en dan sukkel hulle om daardeur te kom nie.”<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, SU\_05 argued for one standard across the board, regardless of discipline:

“I don't want to have five chapters and somebody else just two because they didn't really worry about it.”

Two other respondents also agreed with the idea of one standard for all. However, their motivations differed from that of SU\_05. SU\_21 explained that she thinks there should be one standard for all master's theses so that it simplifies the process of looking for data in other theses. UWC\_05 had a similar motivation, as she explained that their supervisors merely provide them with previous theses as a guideline, and therefore one standard will make it easier to read, understand, and learn from previous theses. She also noted that she did in fact adhere to this required format and did not ignore any of the requirements.

UWC\_10, the only philosophy participant who agreed to do an interview, used this question to explain the manner in which philosophy students approach a philosophical question or argument. He therefore explained that they perhaps have a unique approach.

He encouraged the idea of different standards for different departments “within limits”, and explained his reason for this answer. He told me that his proposal was initially declined by UWC's higher degrees committee for not being in the right format, even though his supervisor had agreed with the way in which he had presented it. He had to change his approach and the format before submitting it again and having it accepted. He noted the following in reflection on this occurrence:

---

<sup>8</sup> “Visually there have to be certain standards. It has to be easy to read, because obviously, people have to read and mark it. It won't help anyone if you write something to help people and then they struggle to get through the study.”

UWC\_10:

“We are dealing with qualitatively different fields of study. Research theses should be sensitive to the qualitatively different nature of research projects in different fields.”

He also explained that philosophy students work according to a certain argument structure and that he merely set out to follow this structure.

SU\_22 discussed her response in terms of what is expected of the students in the VA department:

“By die kunsfakulteit moedig hulle nogals mense aan tot alternatiewe maniere van navorsing doen en hoe dit saamgestel word.”<sup>9</sup>

SU\_22 thus noted that the VA department encouraged them to be alternative and that she adhered to this. I then responded to her answer with:

*So jy was bewus van hierdie riglyne en jy het dit geïgnoreer?*<sup>10</sup>

“Ja!”<sup>11</sup>

*Hoekom?*<sup>12</sup>

She then explained that a master’s project in VA requires both a theoretical component, which is the thesis, as well as a practical component. SU\_22 designed a children’s book for her practical component, and she wanted to mirror the book’s format in her thesis. Figure 39 illustrates SU\_22’s theoretical component or thesis in the book form she submitted it. Figure 40 illustrates the practical component, namely the children’s book:

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<sup>9</sup> “At the arts faculty they encourage you, to an extent, to look at alternative ways of doing research and how it is presented.”

<sup>10</sup> *So you were in fact aware of the guidelines and you purposefully ignored them?*

<sup>11</sup> “Yes!”

<sup>12</sup> *Why?*



Figure 39: SU\_22's theoretical component

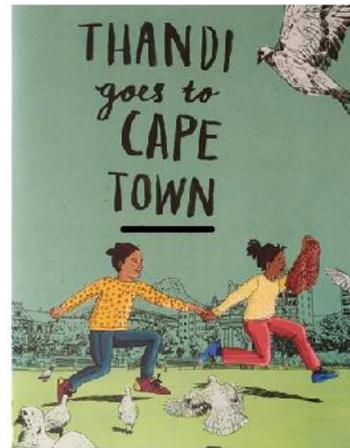


Figure 40: SU\_22's creative component

*Did you ignore some of the thesis requirements you believed to be in place? Were you continually aware of this throughout your writing process?*

All of the students said that they attempted to adhere to the guidelines. Thus, where they did not do this, it was not deliberate.

SU\_04 noted that she did stray from the format for one reason:

“Die grootste ding is, jy is veronderstel om objektief te wees in jou navorsing. Maar ek het spesifiek ’n topic gekies wat my toelaat om myself in my navorsing in te bring. En dit is wat ek geniet en waarvan ek hou om te skryf.”<sup>13</sup>

Besides that, she adhered to the believed guidelines.

*Do you feel that a thesis should be written in a particular font, text size or number of columns? How did you respond to this aspect of the thesis, and what were your reasons for doing so?*

Three of the interviewees felt that there should definitely be a standard for these microstructural elements. Two of the students said that they had not given this topic much thought, and that if it is easily readable, it should not be an issue. Two students felt that this aspect of a thesis should not have particular requirements:

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<sup>13</sup> “The biggest thing [requirement] is that you are supposed to be objective in your research, but I specifically chose a topic that allows me to put myself in the research. And that is what I enjoy and like to write about.”

SU\_01:

“I don’t think there should be [requirements regarding these elements], but I felt that there definitely was [sic]. My advisor was pretty strict about [the thesis having to be] that format and font and those tables.”

SU\_22:

“Myne was totaal anders. Dit is toepaslik op jou spesifieke tesis. As jy nou in ‘n wiskundige rigting is, dan is meer leesbare fonts dalk, en sekere groottes, van belang. As dit nou meer van ’n kuns-tesis is, dan is dit nou meer die estetiese waarde wat gaan bydra tot die ervaring van die leser.”<sup>14</sup>

## 2. YOU AND YOUR SUPERVISOR

This second theme investigated the writers’ relationships with their supervisor(s) and also the language(s) that were used for communication in this relationship.

### **The academic/work relationship**

*Did you and your supervisor ever disagree about the way in which you organised or wrote your thesis?*

Three interviewees noted that they did not have any disagreements with their supervisors. The other four noted that they did have disagreements, but after further discussions they would compromise and/or decide together on the best possible solution. Interestingly, two of the interviewees (SU\_21 and UWC\_10) told me that their responses would be very different if I had asked these questions about their current Ph.D. supervisors since these relationships appear to be more strained.

UWC\_10 summarised his relationship with his supervisor as follows:

“It helped our relationship that I decided on a field in which he had expertise [...] It makes a lot of difference if there is an approach of compromise [from both the student and the supervisor] [...] A good relationship can lead to good resources.”

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<sup>14</sup> “Mine was completely different. It depends on your particular thesis. If you are in a more mathematical field, then more readable fonts maybe, and certain sizer, are of importance. If it’s more of an arts thesis, then the aesthetical value will contribute more to the reader’s experience.”

*Did you ever feel that you had to sacrifice particular opinions because of your supervisor?*

Five of the participants said that they did not feel that they had to sacrifice their opinions, although one of these five (UWC\_05) mentioned that they had to compromise.

Two participants said yes, they had to make sacrifices. SU\_21 again had another response, highlighting that both she and her supervisor made sacrifices.

*Do you feel that your supervisor encouraged you to express yourself and to “take control” of your thesis and “run with it”?*

Two students said that they did not feel that their supervisors encouraged them to express themselves. Below I present one of these responses:

SU\_01:

“No I don’t think she encouraged me to express myself [...] she was really great, but she was very, very detailed. Like even down to the wording of sentences. Very, very precise, correct. I think especially in terms of: there was one point when I felt I was expressing it from my voice and she didn’t want it to be from my voice. She wanted to move away from that, I guess.”

Four of the participants said that they felt that their supervisors encouraged them to express themselves and that they were given a lot of leeway. One student felt that her answer was both “yes” and “no”.

SU\_22:

“Hy het baie keer [...] hy wil nou hê ek moet oor dít skryf en dít is nou vir hom [goed] en hiérdie gaan nou goed wees. Maar op die einde het ek net vir hom gesê dis nie iets waarin ek belangstel nie [...] hy het sekere idees gehad, ek het gesê ek gaan dit nie doen nie en hy was fine.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “A lot of times he [...] he wants me to write about this, and this or that will be good. But in the end I just told him that I am not interested in it [...] he had certain ideas, I said that I am not going to do it and he was fine”

*Did you feel that you could confidently deviate from accepted standards and guidelines? Why or why not?*

The general impression was that the students did not have any particular plans to deviate from the requirements. The following three responses are however interesting to keep in mind. I wanted to include these responses to emphasise that the student's relationship with their supervisor will influence the way in which they deal with requirements and standards.

SU\_01:

“I didn't feel like I could [deviate], but that could just have been my experience with my advisor. I didn't [deviate] [...] It seemed clear to me that if I wanted to pass, I had to follow certain expectations.”

SU\_04:

“Sy [supervisor] was nogal: ‘whatever jy doen is fine, maar jy moet jouself kan back; jy kan nie net iets sê omdat jy dit wil sê nie [...] Jy moet genoeg evidence hê. Maar as jy mense verkeerd wil bewys, gaan vir dit’. Sy was baie supportive.”<sup>16</sup>

SU\_22:

“Ja, die department het eintlik vir ons gesê hulle wil nie hê dit [ons werk] moet tradisioneel wees nie. Dit was eintlik 'n vereiste [dat dit nie tradisioneel moes wees nie].”<sup>17</sup>

UWC\_05 noted that she felt confident enough to include a chapter her supervisor advised against adding.

### **Language of communication**

*In what language did you communicate with your supervisor? What is your supervisor's mother tongue?*

In order to facilitate comparison, the results from this question are illustrated in Table 6 below:

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<sup>16</sup> “She [my supervisor] was quite: ‘whatever you do is fine, but you have to be able to back yourself; you can't just say something because you want to [...] you need sufficient evidence. But if you want to prove people wrong, go for it’. She was very supportive.”

<sup>17</sup> “Yes, the department actually told us that they did not want it [our work] to be traditional. It was actually a requirement [to not be traditional].”

	SU_01	SU_04	SU_05	SU_21	SU_22	UWC_05	UWC_10
L1	Eng	Afr	Eng	Afr	Afr	Afr	Eng
Supervisor's L1	Afr	Afr	Eng	1) Afr 2) Afr	Eng	1) "From Zambia" <sup>18</sup> 2) Eng	Eng
Communicated in	Eng	Eng	Eng	1) Eng 2) Afr	Afr and Eng	1) Eng 2) Eng	Eng
Wrote thesis in	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng	Afr	Eng	Eng

Table 6: Languages of communication between participants and their supervisors

SU\_04 and her former supervisor are both Afrikaans mother tongue speakers, yet they communicated in English:

"Dit is vreemd om met haar Afrikaans te praat. Ons ken mekaar in Engels, so ons het net naturally Engels gepraat."<sup>19</sup>

SU\_21 and both her former supervisors are all Afrikaans mother tongue speakers. To the one supervisor she spoke English and to the other she spoke Afrikaans. SU\_21 explains that she spoke English to the one supervisor because they were mainly discussing her work, which she did in English. She also noted that this supervisor was her head supervisor and also head of the department:

"[E]k het haar nie gepla met silly goedjies nie. Ek het na haar toe gegaan vir die groot goed".<sup>20</sup>

SU\_21's co-supervisor seemed more relatable and involved in the student's project:

"Die een met wie ek Afrikaans gepraat het, was bietjie meer my ouderdom en bietjie meer *hands on*."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The respondent merely noted that English was not this supervisor's mother tongue, but she was unsure as to what her mother tongue was, therefore she only noted that she is from Zambia. The top four indigenous languages in Zambia are Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, and Lozi.

<sup>19</sup> "It is strange to talk to her in Afrikaans. We know each other in English, so naturally we just spoke English."

<sup>20</sup> "I did not bother her with silly stuff. I went to her for the big things."

<sup>21</sup> "The one whom I spoke with in Afrikaans was closer to my age and a bit more *hands on*."

SU\_22's mother tongue is Afrikaans and her supervisor was English. She noted that they switched between the two languages.

### 3. YOU AND YOUR LANGUAGE

#### **Academic language**

*Is English your mother tongue?*

Four of the interviewees are Afrikaans mother tongue speakers and three are English mother tongue speakers. Of the four Afrikaans mother tongue speakers, only one did her thesis in Afrikaans. The following questions were aimed at the remaining three Afrikaans interviewees.

*How long has English been your academic language of preference?*

SU\_21 switched to English in Grade 6 (age 11/12).

SU\_04 was in an Afrikaans school until the end of her school career, yet when she came to university she switched to English from her first year. She explains:

“Al die handboeke, alles, is in Engels. Dit maak nie sin om dit in Afrikaans te doen nie.”<sup>22</sup>

UWC\_05 had English as an additional language until the end of her school career, and also switched to English when she started university.

#### **Language difference**

*Do you believe this language difference has made it more difficult to communicate your voice and convictions in your thesis?*

SU\_04:

“No, maar ek is fully bilingual. Vir iemand wat nie is nie, kan dit dalk moeiliker wees”.<sup>23</sup>

The two SU students both stated that they preferred doing their thesis in English. UWC\_05's response differed from that of the two SU students:

“Ja. Dit was vir my ‘n struggle gewees. Maar gelukkig het ek vir my co-supervisor gesê: ‘Engels is my tweede taal, ek sukkel om myself uit te druk; my werk sal ek

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<sup>22</sup> “All the text books, everything, is in English. It doesn't make sense to do it in Afrikaans.”

<sup>23</sup> “No, but I am fully bilingual. For someone who isn't [fully bilingual] it might be more difficult.”

uittik in basic English – die enigste way hoe ek dit kan uitdruk’ en dan het sy gehelp om dit bietjie meer academic te laat klink.”<sup>24</sup>

*Would you have made more personal statements more confidently, had you written your thesis in your mother tongue? Why do you say so?*

SU\_21 appeared confident in English throughout the interview. In response to the previous question, she stated that she preferred doing her thesis in English and that it would have been more difficult had she done it in Afrikaans. When I asked her this question, she appeared hesitant and then responded as follows:

“The personal part of it: ek voel ek express myself baie meer persoonlik in Afrikaans. Engels is vir my ’n baie clinical manier om iets neer te sit. Ek het gesukkel om die word minimum [van die tesis] te reach; ek skryf nie baie as ek in Engels skryf nie. As dit in Afrikaans was het ek dalk bietjie meer [...] Dit is mos maar so met die taal waarmee jy met jou ouers praat. Ek dink dit [die tesis] sou meer persoonlik gewees het as dit in Afrikaans was.”<sup>25</sup>

SU\_04 stated that the opposite is true for her, and that she is just more confident in writing in English.

UWC\_05 remained true to the nature of her other answers and sincerely stated:

“Ek dink so. As ek kon. Want dis makliker om jousef uit te druk in jou moedertaal. Baie keer het ek gevoel dis soos ’n blok: jy wil iets sê in Engels, maar jy weet nie hoe nie. Especially academic. Engels is een ding, jy kan dit sê, maar om dit te sê in hierdie hoë Engels... En obviously wil jy academic klink, jy wil ’n goeie punt hê; al hierrie goed is in die back of your mind. En dan dink jy: my Engels is só eenvoudig.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “Yes. It was a struggle for me. But fortunately I told my co-supervisor: ‘English is my second language, I struggle to express myself; I’ll type out my work in basic English – the only way I can express it’ and then she helped me to make it sound more academic.”

<sup>25</sup> “The personal part of it: I feel that I express myself a lot more personally in Afrikaans. English is, to me, a very clinical way of saying something. I struggled to even reach the word minimum [of the thesis]; I don’t write a lot if I write in English. If it was in Afrikaans, I might have had more [...] It is like that in the language that you use with your parents. I think it [the thesis] would have been more personal had it been in Afrikaans.”

<sup>26</sup> “I think so. If I could. Because it is easier to express yourself in your mother tongue. A lot of the time it felt like a blockage: you want to say something in English, but you don’t know how. Especially academically. English is one thing, you can say it, but to say it in high English [formal, academic English] [...] And obviously you want to

#### 4. OTHER

##### Acknowledgements

*Do you feel that the acknowledgement section of a thesis is necessary or not? Why do you feel this way?*

SU\_05 waited quite a while before she noted the following:

“I think it’s necessary from the researcher’s perspective, because I think it’s the only place where you actually can be yourself or put your personal stamp on it. Because everything else is so rigid, or should be.”

SU\_04’s mother tongue is Afrikaans and, as stated before, she wrote her thesis in English. The interesting thing is that she dedicated her thesis to her grandparents in Afrikaans.

“[D]it [die bedankings] is vir my nogal ’n spesiale ding. My oupa is oorlede net voor ek my tesis ingegee het, so dit was vir my sad...”<sup>27</sup>

*Hoekom het jy dit in Afrikaans gedoen?*<sup>28</sup>

“Ek sou nooit met my ouma-hulle Engels gepraat het nie.”<sup>29</sup>

UWC\_05’s mother tongue is also Afrikaans, and she mentioned earlier that writing her thesis in English was challenging. She noted that she regarded the acknowledgements section as both important and personal. I asked her if it would not have meant more to her if she wrote her acknowledgements in Afrikaans:

“Ek het nogals nooit gedink om dit in Afrikaans te skryf nie, al praat ek nie saam my ma en pa Engels nie het ek dit nog steeds in Engels gedoen.”<sup>30</sup>

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sound academic, you want a good mark, all of these things are in the back of your mind. And then you just think: my English is so simple.”

<sup>27</sup> “It [the acknowledgements] is quite special to me. My granddad passed away just before I handed in my thesis, so it was sad...”

<sup>28</sup> *Why did you do it in Afrikaans?*

<sup>29</sup> “I never would’ve spoken English to my grandparents.”

<sup>30</sup> “I actually never thought to write it in Afrikaans, even though I never speak English to my parents, I still wrote it in English.”

**A space for voice**

*Do you believe there is a place for master's students to voice their convictions in their theses?  
Do you believe a master's thesis is a place for a student to let readers and other academics  
read his/her personal beliefs surrounding his/her own findings?*

This question is so crucial to this study that I feel compelled to present the differing views as well as comments regarding this topic.

SU\_21:

“Nee [...] in my Ph.D. fokus hulle so erg op my en hoe ek by goed uitgekome het en my eie opinie, en ek het nie oefening daarin gekry nie en hoe om dit te skryf nie. My meesters was 'n persoonlike topic... maar ek weet nie of personal beliefs encouraged word in die reading [Mouton] nie.”<sup>31</sup>

SU\_01:

“I think it should, but I don't feel that mine did so much. I don't know if that was because of my advisor or because of what Stellenbosch requires. I think at the end, the discussions and conclusions, should be more of your own personal beliefs.”

SU\_04:

“Ja, for sure. Dis hoekom jy die ding doen. Dis veronderstel om objektief te wees, tot op 'n punt. Maar as jy sterk voel oor iets en jy het bewyse vir wat jy sê, go for it [...] As jy navorsing doen oor mediese goed, sure, maar ons is humanities. Dis wat ons doen. So dis vir my vanselfsprekend dat jy jouself in jou navorsing gaan insit.”<sup>32</sup>

UWC\_10:

“[I]t's irrelevant [your convictions]. What is important is the research and the findings and the validity. You shouldn't have to say that.”

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<sup>31</sup> “No [...] in my Ph.D. there is such a focus on me and how I reach my conclusions and my opinion, and I never really practised writing it [about herself]. My master's was a personal topic [...] but I don't know if personal beliefs are encouraged in the reading [Mouton's].”

<sup>32</sup> “Yes, for sure. That's why you do the thing [the thesis]. It is supposed to be objective to a certain extent. But if you feel strongly about something and you have evidence for it, go for it [...] If you're doing research on medical stuff, sure, but we are humanities. It's what we do. So it goes without saying, to me, to put yourself in your research.”

SU\_05:

“I do believe it [your convictions] does come through because at the end of the day you do become subjective and you do lean towards what your problem statement was or what your hypotheses were when you first started [...] Everything should be written more objectively, but leaning towards your opinion.”

UWC\_05:

“Ek dink ‘n student moet dit doen [‘n opinie lewer] maar dan moet jy ook dink oor hoe jy dit gaan doen. Dit moet nog steeds academic en professioneel klink.”<sup>33</sup>

SU\_22:

“Ja, ek dink dis juis wat hulle maar by die kuns ook aanmoedig. Omdat dit dalk nou nie so wiskundig is van reg en verkeerd nie, wil hulle eintlik graag jou eie persoonlike stem hoor.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Mouton**

*Have you heard of the text *How to Succeed in Your Master’s and Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book*? Was it recommended for your studies, and if so, by whom? Did you use it at all?*

Four of the seven interviewees had never heard of the text before I told them about it. One student said it was recommended, that she used it, and that it was helpful. Two students said that although it was not recommended for them, they knew about it; one of these two used it and the other did not. The latter said that she wished there was a book that was recommended to them by their department. The participant who found it of his own accord and did use it had the following response (UWC\_10):

“These kinds of books don’t spend a lot of time talking about philosophical analysis as a research methodology. So [I used it] to the extent that it was relevant to me and what I was doing [...]”

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<sup>33</sup> “I think a student has to do it [raise an opinion] but then you have to think about how you are going to do it. It still has to sound academic and professional.”

<sup>34</sup> “Yes, I think that is exactly what they encourage at the arts. Perhaps because it’s not so mathematical and either right or wrong, they actually want to hear your own personal voice.”

“[In different fields] we just don’t mean the same thing [...] and books like this [more inclusive of different fields] could make researchers and students more sensitive to be alert to this [...] theses would be so much clearer.”

## 5.2 Discussion of results

In this section, I highlight the interesting results and also discuss what conclusions can be drawn regarding the overall findings. I will make personal comments, but I will keep to the previously discussed literature as a guide.

I wish to begin this discussion by relating my study to Bhatia’s (2002) three views of discourse and the level of analysis they link to. These views need to be kept in mind throughout the discussion of the findings, as they highlight the unique features of the discourse sample.

### *Discourse as text*

Bhatia (2002) notes that this view of discourse focuses on the surface level and could include the organisational aspects of the discourse. In the case of this research project, this level of analysis was used to identify the ways in which the 37 theses were structured. I used four different structures as frameworks for the *discourse as text*-analysis of my sample.

### *Discourse as genre*

This view of discourse relates to the broader context in which the discourse is found. The knowledge of the context influences the interpretation of the goal. More specifically then, the context itself influences the particular *voice goal* of the discourse. The discourse used in this study is the genre of thesis writing within tertiary institutions.

### *Discourse as social practice*

This view looks to the even wider environment in which the discourse is found, namely the *social space* (Bhatia, 2002:17). This level of discourse analysis analyses the participants, their identities, and their relationships. In this thesis, I examined the linguistic context of the universities the participants were enrolled at, and I conducted interviews to determine participants’ linguistic backgrounds and relationships with their supervisors.

### 5.2.1 Corpus analysis

I begin by discussing the corpus analysis that I did. I highlight my reasons for doing this analysis in chapter four. The primary motivation was that the majority of studies on voice and agency in academic writing investigate the use of PPs. As I started my analysis, the results reflected interesting issues.

Of all the departments, philosophy used the most APs. This could be because the philosophy students do not have a formal structure from their departments to which they adhere; rather, the thesis is used to construct their arguments. The philosophy student from UWC noted that he did not have a formal course outline as he started his thesis and, in personal correspondence with a current SU master's philosophy student, she also noted that she would have liked it had their department provided them with some format or guideline as to what to do. One could thus argue that these students have more flexibility and consequently more opportunity to put themselves into their texts, since they do not feel pressured to follow a particular format or structure. Previous studies have also found philosophy to be a field that conventionally uses PPs (see Hyland, 2005), and my results reflect this.

At both SU and UWC, the linguistics departments used the lowest number of APs. Interestingly, the students that I interviewed from the departments continuously emphasised how involved their departments and/or supervisors were in preparing them for their projects and throughout the writing process. This could have influenced the students' perception of the extent of their own role. On the other hand, the minimal use of APs could also be a result of using prescribed guidelines and, as has been extensively discussed, many formal guidelines encourage the removal of the author from the text.

Although less than the philosophy departments, the VA students used significantly more APs than the linguistics students. These are most likely found in most VA students' compulsory creative components and in the continuous references to their creative components within their written components. At SU, I also noted that "my" as an AP was used 69% of the time by VA students, whereas in linguistics and philosophy these figures were 27% and 41%, respectively. This is because of the continuous reference VA students made to "my project" or "my work". The fact that VA students are encouraged to put themselves into their projects will again be highlighted in the discussion of the interviews.

Furthermore, I conducted this analysis thinking that SU would be likely to use more APs than UWC. I thought this would be the case because it is a common trait of L2 writers to remove

themselves from their texts (for example see Hyland, 2002b), and UWC reflected more of an L2 environment, because students are only allowed to write in English. My original beliefs were confirmed after my analysis, since the average percentage of APs at UWC was 24% compared to SU's 44%. Although the aim of this study is not to compare the two institutions, this comparison was done for interest's sake. It also allows us to question whether UWC students perhaps refrain from using APs because they want to remain in a "safe space" by only doing what formal guidelines and style guides propose. Students at SU are however more inclined to use APs. There are many possible reasons for this that I did not investigate thoroughly; it may be because there are more English L1 speakers at SU, or because of SU's higher socio-economic status and students' higher sense of self. One can only speculate. This particular study, however, aims to move *beyond the use of pronouns*.

### 5.2.2 Genre analysis

Bhatia (2002:5) notes that a genre analyst should account for both "the private intentions of the author" as well as "socially recognised communicative purposes".

With regard to my research project, I had to determine the different intentions of the 39 theses that I analysed, and also the intention shared by each of the 39 participants, namely to pass their master's course and receive their degrees. The aim of determining the "socially recognised communicative purpose" of a master's thesis was one of the driving motivations of this research project. The ultimate purpose of each thesis was to fulfil the degree requirements, yet what is the socially recognised manner in which to achieve this purpose? There are various stakeholders in this answer, including the supervisor(s), the department and/or department head, faculty committees, higher degree committees, universities, as well as the master's student. As became clear in my research project, all stakeholders do not necessarily share the same idea regarding the socially recognisable manner in which to communicate the purpose of a master's thesis. Therefore, I investigated the general genre of academic writing in an attempt to determine the *socially recognised manner* of writing a master's thesis.

Bhatia (2002:6) explains that *analysing genre* means to investigate

instances of conventionalised or institutionalised textual artefacts in the context of specific institutional and disciplinary practices, procedures and cultures in order to understand how members of specific discourse communities construct, interpret and use these genres to achieve their community goals and why they write them the way they do.

This elaborate definition of genre analysis is also applicable to this particular study. This is evident when it is reviewed according to the “four contributors” Bhatia (1999, as cited in Bhatia, 2002:6) proposes, namely *purposes*, *products*, *practices*, and *players*.

The *purpose* refers to the “institutionalised community goals and communicative purposes”, which in the case of this particular study refer to the goal of producing a master’s-level thesis that will fulfil the requirements at specific tertiary institutions.

The *product* refers to the “textual artefacts or genres”, which are the 39 selected theses that were analysed for the purpose of this study within the genre of academic writing, with a further focus on the genre of thesis writing.

The *practices* refer to the “discursive practices, procedures and processes”, which in this case are the process and practices required by each particular university and especially the departmental conventions for thesis writing. How these practices are understood and communicated to the master’s students plays a vital role in this research project, as I continuously question the (occasionally) very specific practices expected of students. Furthermore, I investigate these practices in this particular section in an attempt to determine how students use these practices to perhaps employ—or avoid—voice and agency.

The *players*, i.e. the “discourse community membership”, are the master’s students who produced the theses that were analysed. These students are part of the greater discourse community of master’s students as well as the discourse community of ESL postgraduate academic writers. Finally, Bhatia (2002:6) mentions that genre analysts should investigate *why they write them (the discourses) the way they do*.

Bhatia (2002:6) emphasises the important contribution of the combination of all four concepts, noting that “the important consideration is how and to what extent we integrate these four elements”. I hope to have kept all four contributors in mind as I analysed the data in this study.

At the outset of the genre analysis, I compared the theses’ chapter organisation to Mouton’s suggested generic format. As I felt that most theses did not fit Mouton’s format, I consequently attempted to categorise the sample of 39 theses into 4 thesis types. The results indicated that the majority of the theses did in fact fall under Mouton’s thesis type, despite my initial belief. Mouton’s thesis type is closely related to the *traditional: simple* thesis type, as discussed by Paltridge (2002). In Paltridge’s study, the majority of his sample leaned towards this structure, as was true for mine. Upon further investigation, I determined that the theses merely appeared

to be complex and to differ greatly, but once examined in detail, their structures were all shown to be similar to a certain extent and in fact *traditional*.

The 20 theses that were categorised as Mouton's thesis type included GL (7) and VA (6) from SU and LLC (7) from UWC. Not one philosophy thesis made use of this "simple" structure. Five philosophy theses were categorised as *topic based* and the remaining one as *creative*; not because the latter referenced a creative component, but merely because this thesis could not fit any of the other formats, as its structure was entirely unique. It is also noteworthy that the only thesis that was not categorised through this analysis was a philosophy thesis. This was because this thesis's chapters were not titled; they were merely termed "chapter one", "chapter two", and so forth.

At this point, I would like to return to Vygotsky's notion of imitation. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) emphasise imitation as the key to successful internalization. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to interview one of the philosophy authors, and this provided me with detailed information regarding the context of the philosophy writers. He stated that there were no formal course outlines or guidelines given to him as he started his thesis. He also claimed that this was not necessary, since he studied philosophy and someone doing a master's degree in philosophy should be aware of the 'right' and 'wrong' ways to argue. As a result, we can note that this student imitated the structure of philosophy arguments. As I remarked in the review of the SCT literature, imitation does not necessarily occur as soon as a concept is grasped by an individual. Rather, it is exercised and recalled when the individual is in a situation that requires that response, which is exactly what this student did. Despite the fact that he was the first master's student in the Philosophy Department and there were no guidelines given to him, his supervisor was satisfied with the format in which his thesis was presented.

As seen in the results, there were instances where Mouton suggested only one particular location for a particular section, for example the defining of key concepts in the second chapter. More students than indicated did in fact include this section, just not where Mouton places it. The same goes for the particular chapter used. Whereas Mouton states that chapter two should be the literature review, many students used both chapters two and three, and consequently they used chapter four for their research design, and so forth. This goes to show that many students do include what is required of them, just not in the "generic format". Many students fit the pieces in as they want the reader to experience the study or in the sequence they want the reader to receive the information. Each student's individual placement of sections and

chapters could indicate a sense of voice and agency imparted to the thesis. From the graphs, we can detect that many students did not adhere to Mouton's "generic thesis format", but instead they may perhaps have employed agency. Through internalization then, these students determined that the structures they chose were for the benefit of their study.

Then again, voice and agency could also have been sacrificed by students who instead structured their theses as their supervisors or departmental guidelines suggested.

From a different perspective then, one can also argue that where the requirements were ignored, students were adhering to disciplinary conventions. For example, this may have been the case in the departments of philosophy, where students follow a conceptual framework and way of writing. It is a tradition in their discipline and, as the one interviewee explained to me, "other philosophers will laugh at your argument if you structure it any other way". It is thus what these students are familiar with and it is this academic field's way of communicating and mediating to and with the outside world. Thus, this is the exact manner in which they employ voice and agency. As Van Lier (2008:172) notes, "agency is interdependent, it mediates and is mediated by sociocultural contexts" - in this case, the context of the departments. In summary then: where these students are not employing and are perhaps sacrificing individual voice or individual agency by ignoring the requirements of a generic format, they could instead be adhering to a group voice and a group agency generic to their discipline; as Van Lier (2008:164) terms it, "acting from a *we* perspective rather than an *I* perspective".

### **5.2.3 Multimodal analysis**

Thereafter, I analysed the visual elements, both those found in the theses as well as the thesis as an image. The two most interesting findings were both from theses produced in the VA department. The framework that was used in this study, as put forward by Ravelli *et al.*, originated from a sample of theses in visual and performing arts doctoral degrees. In my sample, the VA students were the only students whose theses had the same practical and/or creative components, and this could explain why these theses were the only ones in which I found visual imagery. As Ravelli *et al.* (2013:414) explain, this intermingled-ness and ability to refer to other—perhaps crucial—components within a research project is true to the nature of arts disciplines, and other disciplines "may or may not have the same potential".

The first noteworthy visual element is that of the student who included his hand-drawn images and a poem at both the start and the end of his thesis. It was clear throughout the investigation of this thesis that it was a project that was close to this student's heart. It is likely that he wanted

to make himself visible within the product of the thesis and that was why he felt the need to add his hand-drawn images at both the start and the end of the thesis. Ravelli et al. (2013:400) note that some illustrations may appear to be decorative and might not even relate to the creative component of such a project; however, such an illustration can still be related to the thesis project as a whole as the author regarded it as *necessary to include*. As Ravelli et al. (2013:412) highlight further, these seemingly purely decorative images “re-insert the voice of the creative component within the written” and consequently emphasise the author’s need to have not only a voice, but a *creative voice*.

Furthermore, seven theses, including SU\_14, included photographs that acted as visual diaries, presenting the creative process. These images project resemiotization; “replacing practice in theory, and theory in practice”, and consequently both components become intertwined (Ravelli et al., 2013:407). The creative component, which is embedded and incorporated within the written, allows for a space in which the reader of the theses also gets to understand the other component (Ravelli et al., 2013:408). Resemiotization also allows for an understanding of how “practices capitalize on making meaning traverse across semiotic modes” (Iedema, 2010:140).

The second example of an extraordinary image is from the thesis titled “Migration” with the extraordinary cover pages. Throughout this project, it was also evident that this was a personal research project, and even more, the researcher had empathy with her participants, since she explains that she, too, resides in a country that is not her own. This student successfully uses the affordances of the different modes she has experience of working with. I use “affordances” here to refer to the limitations and potentialities of each mode, which is shaped by its specific purpose and context (Kress, 2011, as cited in Oostendorp, 2017). For example, colour saturation is used to create a feeling of melancholy. By adding this creative component to her thesis, this author also emphasises the authoritative voice of images, which she then aims to highlight throughout the written project.

Five theses, including SU\_17, also added photographs from their creative components or practical projects to their theses. By including elements of her creative component, namely photographs, in her written component, the thesis, SU\_17 made her creative project an active participant in her writing. In a sense, the author then assigns her photographs an agentive role of *voice* (Hood, 2010, as cited in Ravelli et al., 2013:405). She thereby allows the creative components to speak on behalf of the theory and consequently embody the development of the theory.

Both of these students clearly attempted to convey a part of who they are through visual elements embedded within their theses. Through mediating images and embedding these images within their theses, these students could convey voice and agency. These students are accustomed to using images as a form of meaning-making, which is accepted in their department. Even more, the VA department encourages the use of non-linguistic semiotic resources to make meaning. The department therefore encourages, as proposed by the New London Group (1996:72), the use of different “interests, purposes, languages, discourses and registers”, specifically non-linguistic visual images that students bring to the thesis-writing process.

#### **5.2.4 Multilingual analysis**

Finally, I identified languages other than English that were used within the theses. I found it interesting that only two of the greater sample of theses were written in Afrikaans, especially given the statistics regarding the linguistic environments of both the province and the country. This is reminiscent of Canagarajah’s (2004:428) first and second strategies towards which students of conflicting identities lean, namely *avoidance* and *accommodation*. Students that apply avoidance completely remove the issue of their conflicting identities from their L1 identity and their academic language identity. Accommodation again refers to merely adopting the more favourable linguistic identity. The fact that the overwhelming majority of the theses at SU did not present any reference to another language despite the broader linguistic environments could indicate a combination of avoidance and accommodation.

UWC students are not allowed to write their theses in a language other than English. However, in 2016, 40.7% of the students at SU indicated that they were Afrikaans mother tongue speakers (Stellenbosch University Statistical profile, 2016). From this point we can detect that SU makes voice and agency possible by allowing the writing of a master’s thesis in Afrikaans. This is allowed because SU is a bilingual university, even though English is the academic lingua franca.

I also focused on abstracts. Since an abstract *can* be written in both Afrikaans and English, it allows for the possibility of *not writing* the abstract in one of the two languages. Thus, at SU, a space is created for students to use voice and agency to convey what they believe is necessary and only that. Students can choose whether they want to partake in this activity provided to them, and their choice, either way, indicates a sense of agency – a sense of controlling one’s environment to the extent to which one can.

I would also like to discuss the Afrikaans dedication that was embedded in the English acknowledgements section. Since everything else in this thesis was in English, it was clear that the student in question felt that this was the only manner in which to write the dedication and be genuine. She felt that this was the only way in which to convey her voice genuinely and it appears to be a product of agency. This Afrikaans dedication, embedded in the English acknowledgements section, was something she could control, and she chose to do it in this manner. This occurrence reminds one of Canagarajah's fourth strategy, namely *appropriation* (2004:285). By employing this strategy, an author embeds themselves within the dominant discourse in a manner with which they are comfortable and which then forms their preferred discourse. SU\_04's preferred language of communication with her grandparents was Afrikaans, and as a result of *appropriation*, she embedded an Afrikaans dedication within the dominant discourse of an English thesis and ultimately "[found] a favourable space for [her] own voice in the established discourse" (Canagarajah, 2004:285).

Finding only one thesis with a language other than English in its acknowledgements section contradicted a belief I had at the outset of the study. I had thought that since this section is a highly personal space, more students would use it for writing in their L1. Still, I only found one participant who used another language in this section. Is this section the "personal space" some believe it is? There are students who do put a part of themselves into this section – that was clear. But it is also very likely that there are students who deem even this section merely a requirement; something that has to be written just like an abstract or an introduction. So why would they bother to risk writing an academic section in their L1 rather than the academic language of English?

Lastly, I would like to refer to the student who included the Afrikaans word for a particular feeling in a footnote. It was clear that the author of this thesis felt that he could not describe that particular feeling adequately in English. He did not even elaborate on or define the Afrikaans word in the footnote. He merely wanted to include the Afrikaans word. This again reminds one of Canagarajah's (2004:285) *appropriation* strategy, as this author found "a favourable space for [his] own voice in the established discourses", namely the safe space of a footnote within the discourse of a thesis. This appears to be another indication of both voice and agency. I got the sense that he wanted to make it clear that, had he written his thesis in Afrikaans, he would have been able to describe this particular feeling more accurately. Had he written his thesis in Afrikaans, he would have had more words at his disposal. By indicating this to his readers, this student is also conveying voice and agency.

### **5.2.5 Thematic analysis of interviews**

I conducted interviews with some of the authors of the sample texts. These interviews aimed to explore the motivations and situations surrounding the sample texts, i.e. to investigate why and how these theses came about. When I originally planned these semi-structured, open-ended interviews, I had four main themes. During the analysis, I detected additional themes, and I will now discuss the responses in terms of each theme.

#### **1. You and your thesis**

In this theme, I investigated students' frame of mind and the realities surrounding their thesis projects.

##### **Your frame of mind**

The question of what motivated the students' research topics again highlighted the importance of their honours degrees. The responses from philosophy and VA in their turn highlighted the differences between the departments.

##### **Your thesis project**

For the most part, all of the students were sufficiently equipped for their thesis-writing process. If they were not given physical guidelines or course outlines, the students were aware of where they could obtain such guidelines. The respondents felt that they had the cultural artifacts, activities, and concepts—as suggested by the SCT—and the semiotic resources to mediate their processes and to make meaning of this process. Many referred to the vital role that their experience from their honours degree's played in this process, which emphasises the experience of academic writing as an artifact and resource clearly needed for this process.

##### **A standard format**

In the responses in this section, I noted the importance of each student's view of his or her research project and how this view affects and motivates their view of a standard thesis format. One participant noted that standards should be flexible. Her motivation was as follows:

“Visually moet daar sekere standarde wees. Dit moet maklik leesbaar wees. Obviously, mense moet hierdie goed lees en dit merk. Dit help nie jy skryf iets om mense te help en dan sukkel hulle om daardeur te kom nie.”<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, this is an example of someone who did research to help others and, because this was her motivation, it influenced her view regarding formats. She explains that nothing besides readability is an issue: the thesis aims to help people, so they should be able to read it.

There was also another respondent who said that there should be one standard for everyone across disciplines. She motivates this opinion as follows:

“I don’t want to have five chapters and somebody else just two because they didn’t really worry about it.”

This participant had a different motivation for her particular view on a standard format. She did not want to do more work than someone getting the same degree. This again encourages the notion that one’s motivation for one’s thesis impacts one’s view of a standard format.

Another participant mentioned that master’s students make use of other master’s theses and if someone deviates from the standard, they make it difficult for others to use their study. Another respondent echoed this view, mentioning that her supervisor did not tell her how her thesis should look, but rather gave her examples of previous theses.

There were a few respondents who mentioned that a thesis is a professional document and therefore it has to look professional by adhering to the standard. There was a VA student who also felt this way, and she even said that she really hoped that it did not look as if she had ignored some of the requirements.

Another VA student, on the other hand, explained that in their department they are continuously encouraged to be alternative. She was one of the two participants who used an entirely different font. She explains the motivation that was instilled in her by her department:

“Myne was totaal anders. Dit is toepaslik op jou spesifieke tesis. As jy nou in ‘n wiskundige rigting is, dan is meer leesbare fonts dalk, en sekere groottes, van belang.

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<sup>35</sup> “Visually there have to be certain standards. It has to be easy to read, because obviously, people have to read and evaluate it. It won’t make sense if you write something to help people and then they struggle to get through your work.”

As dit nou meer van ‘n kunstesis is, dan is dit nou meer die estetiese waarde wat gaan bydra tot die ervaring van die leser”<sup>36</sup>

She thus conveys that the aesthetic element was the greatest concern.

The one philosophy student who was prepared to be interviewed had an experience where the question of a standard format came to the fore. His proposal was rejected by the university’s higher degrees committee for not adhering to the expected format. He had to change his entire approach, but did it to have his work accepted. He mentioned that this did in fact worry him, but he discovered that the person who declined his proposal was not from a philosophy background. After establishing that someone from philosophy would evaluate his thesis, he returned to his original approach for his thesis. Therefore, he emphasised that although within limits, each department should have their own standard.

To adhere to a format or ignore the requirements of a format may indicate agency or may merely be a depiction of departmental conventions, as was discussed in relation to adherence to generic guidelines.

What became evident in the students’ responses was that they are *willing* to adhere to what their supervisor or department proposes if it is something that is conventional in their department. The philosophy student whose proposal was initially rejected made it clear that he organised his proposal in a manner that was known and encouraged in their department. This was the format he was used to using as a mediation tool. When he was required to change his proposal, he did. After it was accepted, he returned to his original approach: the approach and format encouraged by his department. This format is the tool he knows how to organise and mediate through.

Thus, it is clear that if a student is required to adhere to a particular format in their thesis, it should be a format in which they know the mediation and organisation tools, and they should have experience in employing these tools to conduct voice and agency. The format students are willing to adhere to has to be a format of familiarity with familiar artifacts, activities, and concepts.

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<sup>36</sup> “Mine was completely different. It depends on your particular thesis. If you are in a more mathematical field, a more readable font and size might be of importance. If it’s more of an arts thesis, then the aesthetical value will contribute more to the reader’s experience.”

## **2. You and your supervisor**

### **The academic/work relationship**

The supervisor is a mediator in themselves. The supervisor becomes a way through which a master's student organises the artifacts, activities, and concepts available to them. From the responses, it was clear that this relationship plays a crucial role in the way in which a master's student organises all aspects of their research project and also the degree to which a master's student feels enabled or not to employ voice or agency.

### **Language of communication**

It was interesting to note how respondents reverted to English with their supervisors even if neither of them were English-speaking or if their supervisor understood Afrikaans. This again highlights the concept of *academic language* and also explains why the majority of students write their theses in English: in all aspects of academia in South Africa, English is accepted as the lingua franca.

## **3. You and your language**

From the responses presented, it is clear that a student's proficiency in their academic language affects their voice, the way in which they make themselves understood, as well as the extent to which they have control over their behaviour, and the extent to which they produce actions to be evaluated. Essentially, the extent to which they employ agency.

The way in which students experience their academic language, whether it is their L1 or L2, will affect different individuals differently, and this will ultimately determine whether authors feel any need to employ their voice in their writing.

## **4. Other**

### **Acknowledgements**

I asked interviewees this question, because as a master's student I—initially—thought that the acknowledgements section seemed like the only place where I would be able to present something personal. I wanted to know what other master's students' thoughts were on this section. Other students did in fact share my sentiments regarding this section, and noted that it was the one place where they felt they could bring a part of themselves into their theses. This again highlights the need for students to know how to produce voice and agency in their writing

– an acknowledgements section should not be the only place that a student feels allowed to do this.

### **A space for voice**

One student noted that she would have wanted to employ more voice. She could not identify whether she did not because of her supervisor's or the university's requirements. This emphasises that institutional structures certainly influence the way in which students make meaning. Furthermore, it affects the extent to which students *can* control their actions and ultimately the extent to which students feel both *allowed* and *encouraged* to portray agency and voice.

### **Mouton**

Lastly, one student commented on Mouton's text and suggested that it could be more inclusive of the diverse fields.

This echoes the view that students are willing to adhere to requirements that they are familiar with. They are willing to mediate through the artifacts and concepts their departments provide them with if they are familiar with these.

## **5.3 Conclusion**

This chapter is divided into two sections, namely the presentation of the results and the discussion of the results.

In the presentation of the results, I began with a corpus analysis, where I investigated the authors' use of author pronouns. I made use of the textual analysis tool AntConc. Secondly, I did a genre analysis where I presented the results in terms of Mouton's (2001) guidelines and the requirements he has regarding each of the five chapters he proposes. I presented how each thesis in my sample adhered to these guidelines. Thereafter, I categorised each thesis in my sample according to Paltridge's (2002) framework of thesis types. Thirdly, I conducted the multimodal analysis, where I examined the use of visuals within the theses. I based this particular analysis on Ravelli *et al.*'s (2013) study, where they analysed doctoral theses of visual and performing arts students. Subsequently, I did a multilingual analysis, where I examined each thesis for uses of a language other than English. I based the multilingual analysis on Canagarajah's (2004) five proposed strategies that multilingual writers can employ in

writing contexts where they are confronted with conflicting identities. Lastly, I did a thematic analysis of the seven interviews I conducted in line with Burnard's (1991) guidelines.

I investigated the results from these analyses in an attempt to identify ways and means through which students may have employed voice or agency. It is a complex process to identify the employment of voice and agency. Therefore, I attempted to identify the elements that could have prevented students from employing voice and agency. Upon further investigation of the discussion of the results, I identified 6 elements that could shape or prevent students from producing voice and agency. These elements are:

- institutional structures and constraints;
- disciplinary conventions;
- language proficiency;
- personal views on the thesis and the thesis-writing process;
- relationship with supervisor; and
- previous experience with academic writing

In the following, concluding, chapter I will elaborate on these elements that could influence students attempting to produce voice and agency.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Your concluding chapter is perhaps the most important in your thesis because it presents the end product of your endeavour.”

(Mouton, 2001:124)

### 6.1 Summary

Before I discuss my results, I present my research question once again:

How is student voice and agency discursively constructed in selected master’s theses in a second language writing context?

To answer this question, I studied the literature on academic writing as a genre; on the challenges ESL writers face; and on the three different approaches to understanding L2 writing, namely genre analysis (Hyon, 1996; Bhatia, 2002; Paltridge, 2002; Swales and Feak, 2012), SCT (Lantolf and Poehner, 2008), and the postmodern approach (Pennycook, 2006). I also read extensively about and presented an elaborate discussion of the concepts of voice and agency. Thereafter, I developed a research design that consisted of five different analyses: a corpus analysis, a genre analysis, a multimodal analysis, a multilingual analysis, and a thematic analysis of interviews. I analysed my sample of 39 theses and conducted 7 interviews.

I can thus finally attempt to answer my research question. Student voice and agency is discursively constructed by and/or prevented by, amongst other things, the following six elements: institutional structures and constraints, disciplinary conventions, language proficiency, personal views on the thesis and the thesis-writing process, the relationship with the supervisor, and previous experience with academic writing. Below I discuss these factors in terms of my findings as well as the relevant literature.

### 6.2 Results in terms of literature

I concluded the previous chapter by indicating the six elements that I believe influence and construct a student’s attempt to convey voice and agency, as derived from my study. Below I explain how each of these elements affects students’ attempts at producing voice and agency.

#### 1. *Institutional structures and constraints*

Here I refer to university requirements, departmental requirements perhaps disguised as guidelines, and even structures enforced by supervisors. Blommaert (2008) confirms the power of said structures by explaining that institutions have the tendency to freeze the construction of

voice; unless you speak or write in a particular way, you will not be read or heard. By contrast, institutions also have the power to determine what is ‘right’, as Ravelli *et al.* (2013:417) note: “these apparently very different alignments of written and creative components can all be seen to exemplify [...] theses, because the institutions ‘makes it so’. This is what institutions have accepted [...].”

## 2. *Disciplinary conventions*

How a particular field argues and writes plays a vital role in how students mediate their writing processes. These conventions are generally imposed upon students; however, there is room for negotiation, for example with one’s supervisor. For example, we can look at the philosophy student whom I interviewed. He received no guidelines, yet he was able to mediate his entire thesis process because he was aware of how it is done in his department – his cultural artifacts. This student’s writing process was also a visible example of the role of imitation, as proposed by Negueruela (2006).

Institutional conventions and the clear disciplinary variations both underline Bhatia’s (2002:8) proposed *real-world perspective* which should be included in the application of genre theory.

## 3. *Relationship with supervisor*

No matter whether all of the other elements fail or succeed, one’s relationship with one’s supervisor can be a decisive factor in one’s success. The supervisor acts as a scaffold (as proposed by Van Lier, 2004) to the postgraduate student who is acting in the unknown world of researching and writing. The concept of supervision in postgraduate writing entails a relationship that does not necessarily consist of constant communication, but remains possible should a situation arise where the supervisor/scaffold is needed. Van Lier (2004:147) reiterates this notion, stating that “scaffolding occurs in the variable rather than the rule-constrained parts”. It is also noteworthy that in many cases, the supervisor fulfils most – if not all – functions of scaffolding, as proposed by Wood *et al.* (1976, as cited in Van Lier, 2004:150) and as discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. The functions the supervisor fulfils could include, amongst other, maintain the student’s desire to reach the goal of completion, to provide solutions or suggest alternatives, and to demonstrate better versions of the task at hand (i.e. academic writing). The master’s student’s relationship with their supervisor could be the most stable scaffold and can result in the greatest mediation and meaning-making through which students can make themselves understood and make sense of their environments. Whereas the goal of scaffolding (as proposed by Vygotsky) is generally autonomy, one can assume that this

is the supervisor's aim for their students as well: to research and write autonomously – and graduate.

#### *4. Language proficiency*

How comfortable and confident one is in one's academic language will affect the degree to which one is willing to employ voice in this particular language. Differing levels of proficiency could refer to differences in value attributed to these languages and, ultimately, these resources. Blommaert (2008), for example, explains the difference between low- and high-value resources. From the point of view of this study, the differently valued resources explain why voice can never be equal. For example, at UWC, English is regarded as a high-value resource, because it is the only accepted language of writing at this institution. Another example of why voice can never be equal based on language proficiency is the onset of learning one's academic language. Whereas some ESL students are taught English from Grade 1, others' first academic encounter with English occurs when they enter a tertiary institution.

#### *5. Personal views on your thesis and the thesis-writing process*

The motivation for writing the thesis also influences the organisation of the thesis and the student's mediation process. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000:155) point out that individuals have "intentions, agency, affect and above all histories". Thus, one's story and one's view have a significant influence.

#### *6. Previous experience with academic writing*

It is clear that previous experience with academic writing is a tool students regard as "something that is familiar" in the overwhelming world of thesis-writing. It is through previous academic writing that students identified what worked or did not work, what improved the organisation of their world, what made the most meaning, and what made them understood. Ultimately, it can be argued that this experience is a crucial part of the scaffolding for the mediation process.

### **6.3 Gaps, anomalies, and deviations in the data**

There were no significant gaps or deviations in the data, apart from the lack of interviews from disciplines for which I had theses.

## 6.4 Significance of results

The significance of this study lies not only in the relevance of identifying voice and agency in thesis writing, but more importantly in realising the importance of employing voice and agency. The motivation to know how to construct voice and agency is perfectly worded by Ravelli *et al.* (2013:417):

[T]he anxiety often felt by students and supervisors as to how a thesis ‘should’ be written and presented can perhaps be better transformed into a stronger sense of agency on the part of the authors, using an understanding of different typical relations as a way of opening up the semiotic space, and giving candidates licence to choose the approach which best suits their own project, while still meeting all the requirements of a [master’s degree], to be an original contribution to research.

Furthermore, it is students who are prepared to *do their own thing* and put a personal stamp on their writing who allow future students to do so. By not necessarily adhering to structured guidelines but rather following their own voice and agency, authors make it possible for future academic writers to again produce their own voice. As Ravelli *et al.* (2013:417) state: “There have certainly been no guidelines which have prescribed the possibilities; indeed it has been the invention of the authors [...] which has shaped the semiotic potential”. This quote holds especially true for a first-year ESL student entering an English tertiary institution who has the belief that their voice and agency should be subordinate to rigid structures and course outlines.

This study should be relevant to academic writers, teachers of academic writing, postgraduate students, and supervisors guiding students. As Bhatia (2002:14) proposes, one should always include the *pedagogical perspective* within genre theory; this should be kept in mind so one can use one’s findings to make them relevant to a particular context and finally to integrate them within language teaching. This particular study then does in fact have pedagogical significance if taught to the key players in the field of academic writing. Students should be made aware of their options at the onset of their master’s degree; it should be stated for example that “these are the different options you have to write your thesis with” and even more “these are the different choices you have within these different options”. In addition, students should know their options if they have ideas that seem entirely different from the options given to them. Students should be aware of their options regarding identity and how to include it in their writing (Hyland, 2002a and 2002b; Canagarajah, 2004); their options regarding thesis type (Paltridge, 2002); their options for incorporating their creativity and their external inspirations

(Ravelli *et al.*, 2013); and how to become aware of their own voice and agency and their options for displaying it in their academic writing – even if, or especially if, the writing is taking place in their L2.

Thesis writing, for the most part, is new and scary. By providing students with some sort of a structure, they may feel less scared (and alone), and this could lead to more postgraduate students actually writing their theses and eventually graduating. It is already so stressful to register for a course, financially and otherwise. We should perhaps have a greater focus on not only keeping students enrolled and helping them graduate, but on giving them a voice.

#### **6.4.2 Further scholarship**

In further scholarship on this topic, I would suggest that a larger number and variety of disciplines be considered. I would also suggest greater scope in terms of years of publication of theses. In a longer study, I would also recommend spending more time obtaining the respective departmental guidelines, as this could enable a whole new level of analysis and would make it possible to determine what is expected of the students in each department. Due to ethical restrictions, I could not personally reach out to the authors; in a longer study this should also be prioritised. Although it would indeed be an ethical challenge, it would be immensely beneficial to a similar —although extended—study to determine the individual marks that the students received for their theses. It would be interesting to determine whether students adhering to requirements more strictly receive better marks, or whether students ignoring the required guidelines receive better marks. Having theses from a greater variety of departments would also make it possible to generalise regarding the type of thesis towards which students lean in a particular discipline. Such findings would allow writing teachers to be discipline-sensitive and help students to discursively construct a voice within the structure they are taught and are familiar with within their department.

#### **6.5 Personal reflections**

Although it has been written about a lot and I conducted interviews focused on this topic, nothing truly prepares you for writing your first major research project in a language that you do not consider your own. I was introduced to English, my L2, at the mere age of three. I consider myself privileged to have never struggled with the language difference to the extent that I felt restricted. This was not the case throughout my thesis. I did the majority of my undergraduate essays in English, yet writing my thesis was different. For the first time I felt

that I had to think discursively about issues, think about what my opinion is, and it was a challenge doing so in my L2.

I attended the workshop SU presents to their new MA students in January 2017. I did not attend the workshop as a participant, but as a researcher investigating the guidelines given to MA students. During one of the sessions, a lecturer hinted that linguistics students, teamed up with their supervisors, usually do not require a proof reader and/or editor, as we have “sufficient skills”. This made me happy as an ESL student and even confident. Shortly afterwards, I had a conversation with our departmental secretary, in English, and as I was speaking I realised how many mistakes I was making. This wiped out all of the confidence I had ten minutes ago and made me so anxious. I realised that even though I might have knowledge of the content I am writing on, I might not word it in such a manner that anyone will take me seriously – as a linguist or a researcher. In that moment, and continuously throughout this process, I could identify with others struggling to convey a voice.

Upon receiving the feedback from my proof reader, she identified that there were a vast number of times where I made use of “your” when speaking of participants in similar studies, whose theses or dissertations were analysed. In my mind I had a familiar relationship with peers, where I should rather have used “one” or “their”. I also experienced that the literature I investigated was all applicable to me and my writing process as well. Throughout writing my thesis I was in a constant struggle between identifying as a participant in a study of master’s theses, where I should pay attention to the content of the literature versus being the principal investigator of my own research project. This was especially highlighted as I discussed, amongst others, the purpose and strategy of student writers’ research projects (Swales and Feak, 2012). I was continuously tempted to analyse my own writing in light of the literature I was investigating.

When I wrote the section on identity negotiation, I questioned myself more than once: what identity did I adopt as I wrote? I established that I do in fact adopt an academic identity, very different than the identity I have in a group of peers with whom I share a L1. Subsequently I was consciously aware of “this other person within myself” who was writing the thesis. I was able to identify the wedge between my sense of self and my ethnic identity (as proposed by Bornman and Potgieter 2015).

I have read about the many different paths you can take as you start your thesis or in writing in general, and I determined that the author of each written piece had his or her own—

subjective —view of what seems more appropriate for whatever context. This could differ from (something as obvious as) country to country (Canagarajah, 2004). Besides the various opinions I read about —with sufficient sources cited, I might add—I also had my supervisor and other key players that attempted to help me *write the right way*. Through my investigations, I finally determined that everyone had their own *right way*. Once I realised that everyone would be writing in the completely *wrong way* in someone else’s view, I felt a sense of emancipation. My writing in this thesis would never perfectly fit the genre of thesis writing as understood by every single reader. I wanted to raise my voice and share the findings from my study. I wanted to discursively construct voice and agency. There is no wrong way to do it – and as it seems, no one right way, either.

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“A list of references includes only those sources that you explicitly refer to (and quote) in your text.” (Mouton, 2001:125)

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**APPENDICES**

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## **Appendix 1: Discussion of Mouton's (2001) *How to succeed in your Master's & Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book***

Johann Mouton's *How to succeed in your Master's & Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book* originated during a course Mouton taught at the University of Stellenbosch. As a result of students' desperation for guidance in management of research projects, Mouton put together a guide which is "aimed at helping you to manage that particular component [the research component] of your postgraduate studies" (2001:6). With a few considerations I will mention, Mouton's text should effectively be provided to every Master's or Doctorate student in South Africa. Mouton (2001) does however note in his preface that this guide "is by no means the final product as the landscape of postgraduate research in South Africa changes all the time." He also adds that "[a]lthough in general terms scholarship is a universal endeavour, it takes place in specific socio-political and geographical settings that give it a particular 'flavour'." Which is definitely something all South African students can resonate with.

Mouton declares in his preface that the book does tend to be bias towards the field of humanities since his academic background is situated in this field. ." This is however advantageous to this particular research project as it will analyse theses from different departments in the faculty of humanities and social sciences. Mouton then concludes this preface by stating that "the general principles of project management at postgraduate level do not vary significantly across the academic disciplines. The book should, therefore, also be relevant and useful for students in other disciplines and faculties" (2000).

Following the preface, Mouton provides a helpful section titled *Navigating your way through the book*. This section starts off by describing the nature of thesis-writing in South African universities in a brief manner, which is then followed by *The eight steps of successful scholarship*. The remainder of the text is then divided into two complementing parts, namely *Part 1: Managing your research* and *Part 2: Resource chapters*. Both parts have plenty of helpful chapters for students making their way through their research projects.

### *Part 1: Managing your research*

This first part comprises of eight chapters divided into four sections, namely:

#### *Section 1: Preparing your research.*

##### Chapter 1: Getting started

Chapter 2: You and your supervisor

Chapter 3: Scanning the field of study

*Section 2: Planning your research*

Chapter 4: The research proposal

Chapter 5: Research resource management

*Section 3: The research process*

Chapter 6: The literature review

Chapter 7: Conducting fieldwork

*Section 4: The research product*

Chapter 8: The research thesis

This first part of the text provides students with guidelines to both approach the differing sections of a thesis and ultimately produce their research projects.

Besides sharing his knowledge on research projects, Mouton clearly strives to also provide students with wisdom he has learned along the way of teaching. One such example can be found on page 6, where Mouton (2001) discussed “Factors associated with non-completion of postgraduate studies”. Mouton starts off by mentioning statistics from a study about non-completion rates and states that there seems to be “very high non-completion rates amongst humanities students” which appears to be a repetition of Mouton’s concern about postgraduate students not entirely grasping the weight of undertaking this degree (found under *The motivation for postgraduate studies*, p.4,5). Mouton then identifies six of the most pertinent factors that contribute to non-completion, namely:

- Poor planning and management
- Methodological difficulties
- Writing up
- Isolation
- Personal problems
- Inadequate or negligent supervision

Interestingly for this particular research project, under “Writing up”, Mouton (2001:7) mentions that “[t]he problems associated with academic writing are exacerbated in a situation where English is not the student’s mother tongue” – which quite often happens in South Africa. Mouton (2001:7) continues: “Given that English is generally accepted as the international language of science, increasing numbers of postgraduate students attempt to write their theses in English, even if it is their second or third language. In South Africa, where the majority of the population does not speak English as their home language, this becomes an additional barrier to overcome.” The importance of this particular extract will be underlined continuously throughout this research project as it contributed to the statement of the problem.

After these factors are discussed, Mouton provides information about finding the ideal institution and course; application procedures to enrol and; general registration procedures.

The second chapter is titled “You and your supervisor”. This is an enlightening chapter for the postgraduate student as your supervisor is the one person you will be working with closest and this relationship could effectively influence the success of the research project, as Mouton (2001:16) states: “[t]he role of the supervisor cannot be overestimated” and again adds: “it is not accidental that a whole chapter has been devoted to this” (2001:25). This chapter includes both a section titled “What you can realistically expect of your supervisor” (2001:19) as well as a section that requires responsibility from the student, titled “What the supervisor can expect from you” (2001:21). On a practical level, this chapter also provides the student with a checklist for his/her first meeting with their supervisor which covers the topics of “supervision”, “project management”, Meetings” as well as “thesis” (2001:23, 24).

The third chapter (p. 27 -41) is titled *Scanning the field of study* and takes the postgraduate student through the train of thought required to develop a research idea and finally, a research topic. The chapter consists of various possible sources for research topics, such as the student as individual, the supervisor, South African databases and indices and lastly, South African Internet sites. The chapter effectively provides the student with databases for research ideas (p. 28-34) as well as easily accessible “South African Internet sites for researchers” (p.36-39). The chapter then helpfully concludes with “Some guidelines for the selection of a research topic” (2001:39).

At this point, after said section heading, I would like to note the informal approach Mouton aims for. Mouton clearly indicated at the first chapter that postgraduate studies is not something one should take on lightly, in the remainder of the text however, there are multiple indications

that Mouton would like the readers to see him as “a friend helping out” – this informality of this heading is one such indication as the word “some” is quite colloquial.

The fourth chapter (p.44-61) titled *The research proposal* is also the start of the second section titled *Planning your research* as your research proposal is essentially “a project planning document” (2001:45). This chapter then provides the student with a step-by-step plan, divided into four phases, on how to complete their research proposal. The chapter extensively discusses research problems and research designs, but also includes a sub-section on the formal aspects such as language, formatting and length. Mouton concludes this section with “[i]f you are not very proficient in English, then it is also essential that you ask someone who has English as his or her mother tongue or a professional language editor to read through your document before submitting it to your supervisor” (2001:60). Mouton’s continuous need for *what ifs* for English second language postgraduate students is a clear indication that he regards EL2 thesis writing as a reality in South Africa.

Chapter five (p.62-83) is titled *Research resource management* and provides the reader with five categories of “research resources”, namely *Human resources; Time; Information; Funding* and; *Computing resources* (2001:62). In this chapter he discusses the value of each of these resources and continues to identify the various ways in which postgraduate students can make the most of these resources. In the category of *Human resources* Mouton (2001:63) starts off by stating that “[t]he most important human resource in your project is yourself” but then follows up by identifying “your supervisor” and then lists “statisticians”, “Information officers”, “Language editors” and “others”. It is important to note once again the emphasis on *Language editors* as Mouton notes “[a]n increasing number of students write theses in their second language, which means that they are usually required by the university or technikon to get the assistance of a language editor. Some institutions insist that you consult a language editor before submitting the final manuscript” (2001:63). It is also interesting to note that Mouton (2001:66) dedicates an entire section on *Time* and time management and even includes an example of “[a] software tool for time management”. Under the category of *Funding*, Mouton includes “Sources of funding for your degree” (2001:75) as well as “Financial support for research expenses” (2001:77). Mouton (2001:81-83) concludes chapter five with a template for a “research resource checklist” where he discusses each resource’s type, availability and access; source; ethical issues involved, the stage in the research process where this resource is fitting; as well as the cost involved for each resource required. All in all a helpful chapter for a research student.

Chapter six is a discussion of the literature review that *should be* included in a thesis. It is a practical chapter which includes sections such as “Strategies for searching the literature” (2001:88), “The criteria for a good literature review” (2001:90) and a helpful guide on “The number of references” with an explanatory figure of how to determine the number (2001:95-97). The chapter also includes a section on “How to organise your review of the scholarship” with examples of six possibilities, namely: chronologically; by school of thought, theory or definition; by theme or construct; by hypothesis; by case study or; by method (2001:91).

Chapter seven, titled *Conducting fieldwork*, is an easy-to-use guide for a student conducting an empirical study. The chapter includes discussions on “Identifying and selecting your data sources” (2001:99); “Using existing instrumentation: validity and reliability assessment” (2001: 100); “Access (legal and ethical) to instrumentation” (2001:101); “Developing new instrumentation: design, construction and piloting” (2001:102); “Fieldwork/data documentation (2001:104); “Data capturing and data editing” and; “Data analysis and interpretation (synthesis) (2001:108). It also includes examples of errors in data documentation, data capturing and errors in analysis and interpretation (2001:108-110). Over twelve pages, Mouton thus attempts to touch on every aspect involved in fieldwork of an empirical research project.

Chapter eight is titled *The research thesis*. Mouton (2001:113) starts this chapter off by stating “[t]he thesis is the final embodiment of your research project” and as of this sentence, this chapter then acts as the marrow of this research project. Chapter eight is divided into *The logic of the thesis*; *The structure of the thesis* and; *The rhetoric of the thesis*.

*The logic of the thesis* (2001:113-120)

In this section Mouton discusses the logic your argument in your research project should follow. He starts this section off by discussing the various objectives your findings can be grouped according to and follows this up by providing the “three rules of scientific evidence” namely: objective evidence; appropriate evidence and; the weight/support of the evidence (Mouton, 2001:113, 114). Mouton, in a simple and easily understandable manner, compares the “Logic of research” to the “Logic and structure of the thesis”. Here he states that the “Logic of research” comprises of four factors:

1. Research problem
2. Design
3. Evidence

#### 4. Conclusions

Mouton then continues to identify how this logic can be applied to the structure, namely that each of the abovementioned factor can be applied to a particular chapter:

1. Research problem: Chapters 1 and 2
2. Design: Chapter 3
3. Evidence: Chapters 4 ff.
4. Conclusions: Chapters 6 ff.

Although basic and standard, Mouton essentially explains that the structure of your thesis should complement the logic of your research and argument. The next part of this section discusses forms and types of reasoning that can be employed in your thesis. This includes deductive reasoning, inductive generalisation and retroductive reasoning (Mouton, 2001:117-119). The last point under *Logic of the thesis* discusses “Common fallacies of scientific reasoning” with examples which finally emphasises Mouton’s argument that students should argue the logic of their research and their thesis with earnest intent when they approach their thesis.

*The structure of the thesis* (2001:120-129)

This section was used for analysis of the participants’ theses. It discusses the structure at thesis level, chapter level and paragraph level. These structures are explained through tables. Mouton (2001:121, 122) starts off with the *Structure at the thesis level* and titles the accompanying table: “Generic format for the structure of a thesis”. This required format is divided into a “Preliminaries” section and five accompanying chapters. Each of these six sections have between four and seven points that students should include in these sections. The generic format of a thesis, as prescribed by Mouton, is simplified below (2001:122-125):

#### **Preliminaries**

- Title page
- Acknowledgements
- Summary/abstract
- Table of contents
- List of tables/figures

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

- Developing the idea for the thesis and/or the motivation for the study
- Deriving the research topic from preliminary literature, reading done
- Identifying the research problem, question or hypotheses
- General research design and methodology
- Outline of remainder of the thesis

## **Chapter 2: Literature review/theoretical framework**

- Introduction: articulating the literature covered
- Definitions of key concepts
- Discussion of literature
- Conclusion

## **Chapter 3: Research design and methodology**

- Hypotheses, conceptualisations, definitions, key variables
- Issues of measurement
- Sample design and the sampling methods
- Data collection and fieldwork practice
- Data capturing and data editing
- Data analysis
- Shortcomings, sources of error

## **Chapter 4 ff.: Results: presentation and discussion**

- Sample profiles
- Presentation of results
- Discussion of results
- Conclusion

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations**

- Summary of salient points
- Interpretation of results in terms of literature or theories discussed
- Discussion of gaps and/or deviations in the data
- Discussion of larger significance of the results

- Policy and/or other recommendations

## Reference list

## Appendices

Mouton does include an explanation of each of these required sub-sections in a sentence or two and he also provides examples of appendices at the end of this table. It should be noted here that Mouton's "generic format" isn't necessarily generic in the sense that this structure can be applied to theses in all fields of research. When one has the confidence to adjust this required format according to your approach and your particular research project, however, it can become a helpful guide.

Table 8.2 (Mouton, 2001:125-126) contains the "Generic format for the structure of a chapter". Although this particular format was not used to analyse theses in this research project, it can still be useful for students who are not used to writing academically. It briefly explains the requirements of each chapter as well as crucial aspects to be included and lastly, what to avoid.

Table 8.3 (Mouton, 2001:128-129) is titled "Generic format for the structure of a paragraph". This table consists of the most basic high school writing skills, yet I believe students who did not graduate in a field where they often had to do essay-like assignments, could benefit from this.

### *The rhetoric of the thesis* (2001:129-134)

This section discusses "the principles of style, content and form in scientific writing" (Mouton, 2001:129). This section focuses on the shift scholars have to make when they go from everyday conversational and informal writing to technical, scientific and academic writing and discusses twelve general rules researchers should adhere to when they write their theses. These rules are as follow (Mouton, 2001:129-133):

1. Write clearly, simply and to the point
2. Use positive constructions
3. Avoid passive constructions
4. Do not use an indefinite "this"
5. Avoid sexist and derogatory language
6. Avoid colloquial (spoken) language
7. Structure and organise your argument

8. Assess alternative perspectives and rival points of view
9. Think through the sort of evidence that would be convincing to a competent reader
10. Use linking devices
11. Edit and rework your writing
12. Check grammar and spelling

Here Mouton identifies and discusses in great detail, crucial aspects to take in consideration when writing your thesis. This list is noteworthy as it can be used, as is, in any field of research and will be applicable to all students using this book as a guideline. Mouton compiled these twelve rules from a variety of sources, which he also lists at the end of this particular chapter.

The end of chapter eight also means the end of the first part of the book that was aimed at “Managing your research” and now leads to the second part, titled “Resource chapters”. In an attempt to cover all of the aspects of writing a thesis or dissertation, this part of the book becomes less of a guideline regarding the thesis-writing and more of a resource for the required research. This part is divided as follows:

*Part two: Resource chapters*

This part is not divided into overall sections, but only into chapters.

Chapter 9: The Three Worlds framework

Chapter 10: Research design map

Chapter 11: Research proposals: examples

Chapter 12: Understanding basic computer terminology

Chapter 13: Resources for literature reviews

Chapter 14: Referencing; rules and formats

Chapter 15: Research ethics

As this part does not contain as many guidelines and required, generic formats as part one, this part will not be discussed in as much detail. I will merely mention interesting, useful resources provided for readers, researchers in each chapter.

Chapter nine is titled *The Three Worlds framework*. This framework refers to a structure that is used to determine and clarify a research problem. According to Mouton (2001:137), this framework is based on a distinction made between “three ‘worlds’ or ‘frames’ or ‘contexts’”.

World 1: The world of everyday life and lay knowledge

World 2: The world of science and scientific research

World 3: The world of meta-science

Mouton (2001:139) also provides a figure that explains the framework of the three worlds in a basic visual manner. Essentially it is a useful research tool or instrument which a student can use, if grasped, to get in the mind-set of scientific research and ultimately produce knowledge that will be useful in a particular environment.

Chapter ten is the *Research design map*. It a practical chapter in the sense that it distinguishes between empirical studies and non-empirical studies and provides detailed discussions of 18 empirical research designs and four non-empirical. If a student selects the research design applicable to his study, this chapter could be very helpful in stating what is required of the student.

Chapter eleven contains two examples of research proposals. The first proposal is titled “A poor proposal” and the latter “A good proposal”. I believe this chapter can be very helpful for students approaching their research proposals at the onset of their research projects.

Chapter twelve is titled *Understanding basic computer terminology*. It should be kept in mind that technology is ever-changing and constantly developing, however this chapter mainly discusses the basic element of computers. The chapter asks the following questions (2001:201):

- How does a computer work?
- What is the Internet?
- What is the Web?
- What are search engines?
- What are meta-searchers and web crawlers?

Although I do believe computers and the Internet are less of a scarce commodity sixteen years later, South Africa is a country with many students from a low socio-economic class and some have extremely little exposure to computers before they arrive at university. Therefore this chapter is still relevant to a certain extent, however, it could use an upgrade of a certain extent and I am sure many new, relevant aspects can be added.

Chapter thirteen is titled *Resources for literature reviews*. It is an entire chapter dedicated to providing literature for the research student. The resources are divided between the scientific

fields of *Arts, humanities and social sciences; Education; Economics, business and management sciences; Law; Medical science and health sciences* and; *Natural sciences and engineering* with an average of seventeen databases per field.

Chapter fourteen, *Referencing: rules and formats*, will be used for the analysis of the research participants' theses in this research project. Although this chapter recognises the Harvard method, unfortunately it only provides the referencing formats of the APA method. This is definitely a limitation of this text. I had to make use of Stellenbosch University's *Make sense of referencing* to analyse the theses in this research project.

The fifteenth and final chapter is titled *Research ethics*. This chapter discusses four different relationships in which a researcher can find himself, and how to get this relationship to reach its full potential. The relationships are:

- The relationship to the practice of science (professional ethics)
- Relationship to society
- Relationship to the subjects of science
- Relationship to the environment

This is an insightful chapter and definitely recommended for research students to read as they approach their research project.

The book then ends with an extensive bibliography, followed up by a subject index.

## **Appendix 2: Stellenbosch University's language policy**

## The essence of the Policy

Stellenbosch University (SU) is committed to engagement with knowledge in a diverse society. The Language Policy aims to give effect to section 29(2) of the Constitution in relation to language usage in its academic, administrative, professional and social contexts. The Policy aims to increase equitable access to SU for all students and staff and to facilitate pedagogically sound teaching and learning. Since our campuses are situated in the Western Cape, we commit ourselves to multilingualism by using the province's three official languages, namely Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa.

### 1. Introduction

At SU our focus is on engagement with knowledge. As part of this engagement, SU takes into account the diversity of our society, including its linguistic diversity, and the intellectual wealth inherent in that diversity.

The South African Constitution grants official status to eleven languages and regards all these languages as assets that should be used as a means of developing human potential. The Constitution determines that no-one may be discriminated against unfairly on prohibited grounds. It further determines that everyone has the right to receive education at public education facilities in the official language or languages of their choice, taking into account equity, practicability and the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

The Language Policy aims to increase equitable access to SU for all students and staff, and to ensure that language practices facilitate pedagogically sound teaching and learning.

### 2. The multilingual context

SU follows a dynamic process to make the institution inclusive and diverse, including the use of more than one language. Therefore SU creates opportunities for the advancement of multilingualism.

SU is a national asset, and its students and staff represent most of the language groups in South Africa. Although we acknowledge that all South African languages function as resources for communication, we choose to focus our institutional commitment on the users of Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa, which are the three official languages of the Western Cape Province.

The contextual considerations for using these languages are as follows:

#### **Afrikaans**

Afrikaans has developed an academic repertoire over decades, to which SU has contributed significantly. Applying and enhancing the academic potential of Afrikaans is a means of empowering a large and diverse community in South Africa.

#### **English**

Speakers of the various South African languages use English to communicate with each other, and English has significant academic, business and international value.

Therefore, SU uses English routinely, but not exclusively, in its academic, administrative, professional and social contexts.

### **isiXhosa**

isiXhosa is used by one of the largest language communities in South Africa. By means of specific initiatives, SU is contributing to the advancement of isiXhosa as a developing academic language in addition to expanding isiXhosa as an internal language of communication.

## **3. Application of the Policy**

The Language Policy applies to all faculties, support services divisions, management bodies, staff and students of SU.

## **4. Purpose of the Policy**

The purpose of the Language Policy is to guide language planning, language management and language use at SU.

## **5. Aims of the Policy**

- 5.1 To give effect to section 29(2) (language in education) and 29(1)(b) (access to higher education) read with section 9 (equality and the prohibition against direct and indirect unfair discrimination) of the Constitution.
- 5.2 To contribute to achieving SU's Vision 2030, as contained in the University's Institutional Intent and Strategy (2013–2018), so as to enable inclusivity and equitable access to SU for all prospective and current students and staff in pursuit of excellence.
- 5.3 To facilitate effective learning and teaching, research, and service delivery at SU.
- 5.4 To promote multilingualism as an important differentiating characteristic of SU.

## **6. Policy principles**

The Language Policy is based on the following two foundational normative principles, which must guide all aspects of the interpretation and implementation of this Policy:

- 6.1 Language at SU should promote access to and success in academic, administrative, professional and social contexts, and should not constitute a barrier to students or staff. This is particularly important given the constitutional imperatives to redress the results of past racial discrimination and to ensure no direct or indirect unfair discrimination against present or prospective SU staff and students.

- 6.2 All aspects of the Language Policy and the implementation thereof in teaching and learning should facilitate pedagogically sound teaching and learning.

The following principles must also be taken into account in interpreting and guiding the implementation of this Policy:

- 6.3 SU respects the languages used by students and staff and acknowledges their language preferences and levels of language proficiency.
- 6.4 SU acknowledges the complex role of language in general and our separate languages in particular in our society. All languages are regarded as resources for the effective construction of knowledge.
- 6.5 SU applies its chosen languages in such a way that it includes all students, staff and other stakeholders.
- 6.6 SU acknowledges that academic literacy and the use of academic language comprise sets of complex practices which are linked to how disciplines create knowledge. These practices are best developed within the contexts of academic disciplines and their fields of study.
- 6.7 SU establishes suitable language services and academic staff development services to support the implementation of the Language Policy.
- 6.8 The Language Policy and its implementation are informed by what is reasonably practicable in particular contexts. Relevant factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, the number of students who will benefit from a particular mode of implementation, the language proficiency of the students involved, the availability and language proficiency of staff members, timetable and venue constraints, as well as SU's available resources and the competing demands on those resources.
- 6.9 The Language Policy implementation adapts to the changing language demographics and language preferences of students and staff.

## 7. Policy provisions

The Policy principles above give rise to the following binding Policy provisions:

### 7.1 Learning and teaching

- 7.1.1 Afrikaans and English are SU's languages of learning and teaching. SU supports their academic use through a combination of facilitated learning opportunities for students, including lectures, tutorials and practicals, as well as learning support facilitated by means of information and communication technology (ICT).
- 7.1.2 Undergraduate modules are offered by any of the measures set out in 7.1.3, 7.1.4 and 7.1.5 below.
- 7.1.3 For undergraduate modules where it is reasonably practicable and pedagogically sound to have more than one class group:
- 7.1.3.1 There are separate lectures in Afrikaans and English.

- 7.1.3.2 Learning opportunities, such as group work, assignments, tutorials and practicals involving students from both language groups are utilised to promote integration within programmes.
- 7.1.3.3 Students are supported in Afrikaans and English during a combination of appropriate, facilitated learning opportunities (e.g. consultations during office hours or routinely scheduled tutorials and practicals).
- 7.1.4 For undergraduate modules where both Afrikaans and English are used in the same class group, the combination of facilitated learning opportunities is as follows:
  - 7.1.4.1 During each lecture, all information is conveyed at least in English and summaries or emphasis on content are also given in Afrikaans. Questions in Afrikaans and English are, at the least, answered in the language of the question.
  - 7.1.4.2 Students are supported in Afrikaans and English during a combination of appropriate, facilitated learning opportunities (e.g. consultations during office hours, or routinely scheduled tutorials and practicals).
  - 7.1.4.3 For first-year modules, SU makes simultaneous interpreting available during each lecture. During the second and subsequent years of study, simultaneous interpreting is made available by SU upon request by a faculty, if the needs of the students warrant the service and SU has the resources to provide it. If two weeks have passed with no students making use of the interpreting service, it may be discontinued.
- 7.1.5 In the following instances, lectures will be offered in one language only:
  - 7.1.5.1 Where the nature of the subject matter of the module justifies doing so, for example where the module is on the language itself.
  - 7.1.5.2 Where the assigned lecturer is proficient to teach only in Afrikaans or English. For these modules additional support is provided:
    - (a) If the lectures are in Afrikaans, SU makes simultaneous interpreting available in English. If the lectures of the first-year modules are in English, SU makes simultaneous interpreting available in Afrikaans, and during the second and subsequent years of study, simultaneous interpreting is made available by SU upon request by a faculty, if the needs of the students warrant the service and SU has the resources to provide it. If two weeks have passed with no students making use of the interpreting service, it may be discontinued.
    - (b) In addition to lectures, there are appropriate, facilitated learning opportunities (e.g. consultations during office hours, or routinely scheduled tutorials and practicals) in Afrikaans and English.

- 7.1.5.3 Where all the students in the class group have been invited to vote by means of a secret ballot, and those students who have voted, unanimously agree to it, the module will be presented in Afrikaans only or English only, provided that the relevant lecturers and teaching assistants have the necessary language proficiency and agree to do so.
- 7.1.6 In addition to lectures, based on students' needs and practicability, SU provides a variety of ICT-enhanced learning strategies, including podcasts and vodcasts of lectures, which are made available to students in Afrikaans, English and, in some cases, isiXhosa for the further reinforcement of concepts and for revision purposes.
- 7.1.7 The learning materials for undergraduate modules are made available as follows:
  - 7.1.7.1 All compulsory reading material is provided in English except where the module is about the language itself.
  - 7.1.7.2 Compulsory reading material (excluding published material) is also provided in Afrikaans where reasonably practicable.
  - 7.1.7.3 SU module frameworks and study guides are available in Afrikaans and English.
- 7.1.8 Question papers for tests, examinations and other summative assessments in undergraduate modules are available in Afrikaans and English. Students may answer all assessments and submit all written work in Afrikaans or English.
- 7.1.9 In postgraduate learning and teaching, including final year modules at NQF level 8, any language may be used provided all the relevant students are sufficiently proficient in that language.
- 7.1.10 The following measures are taken for persons with special learning needs/disabilities:
  - 7.1.10.1 Where students or staff need alternative texts such as Braille or enlarged texts as a means to communicate and understand information and these are not available, the relevant member of staff should liaise with SU's Braille Office to arrange the timeous availability of the alternative texts.
  - 7.1.10.2 As South African Sign Language is the primary means of communication for some Deaf people, a sign language interpreter and/or real-time captioning is available during lectures, tutorials and principal SU public events, where it is required and it is reasonably practicable to do so.
  - 7.1.10.3 These provisions are subject to SU's Policy regarding Students with Special Learning Needs/Disabilities.
- 7.1.11 Faculties may deviate from the Policy provisions in Paragraph 7.1 in particular instances only if the deviation is:
  - 7.1.11.1 Consistent with the principles of this Policy; and

7.1.11.2 Justified by the human and physical resources made available by the University, by pedagogical concerns or by faculty-specific considerations; and

7.1.11.3 Approved by the relevant faculty board, and reported with the justification to Senate and approved by Senate, or, when urgent, by its Executive Committee.

## **7.2 Internal institutional communication**

7.2.1 Documentation of primary importance (e.g. policies and strategic Human Resources documents relating to service conditions) is made available in Afrikaans and English. The remainder of the documentation is made available in Afrikaans, English or isiXhosa depending on the languages of the target audience.

7.2.2 The language of written communication within faculties and divisions (e.g. agendas and hand-outs) and at meetings depends on the language needs of the readers or participants (including staff and students), provided that no one is excluded by the language of communication.

7.2.3 Oral or written enquiries and requests by students and staff are, where reasonably practicable, dealt with in the language of the enquiry or request.

7.2.4 Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa are used judiciously at official events, such as official meetings, ceremonial occasions and inaugural lectures.

7.2.5 In residences and other living environments, language is used in such a way that, where reasonably practicable, no stakeholder is excluded from participating in any formal activities in these environments.

7.2.6 The following provisions apply to information technology (IT) software system user interfaces, mobile applications and web content management systems:

7.2.6.1 Where multilingual operation is reasonably practicable (e.g. where SU is able to influence the development of the software products, or where the product supports it, or SU builds it), SU supports Afrikaans and English based on the user's language preference.

7.2.6.2 Where commercial off-the-shelf software applications that do not support multilingual operation are employed, the operation defaults to English.

7.2.6.3 Where the user's language preference is unknown, the default is English.

7.2.7 The following provisions apply to information system data:

7.2.7.1 Where reasonably practicable, information system data pertaining to an individual should be multilingual.

7.2.7.2 Where the data design accommodates multilingualism and where feasible, the associated user interfaces for capturing the data should support multilingual data capture.

7.2.7.3 Where the data design only caters for a single language, English is used.

7.2.7.4 For all other data, English is used.

### **7.3 External communication**

7.3.1 Afrikaans and English and, where reasonably practicable, isiXhosa are SU's languages of external communication.

7.3.2 SU respects the language policies and preferences of its stakeholders, partners and external correspondents. This means that official communication and meetings with them are generally in their language of preference, or that the necessary language services (e.g. translation or interpreting services) are provided.

7.3.3 Where SU does not have the capacity to accede to the language preference, the medium of communication is English.

7.3.4 IT interfaces for stakeholders are treated as in Paragraph 7.2.6. Examples would be user interfaces for alumni, donors and parents or guardians.

### **7.4 Language planning**

7.4.1 Annually, the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching agrees with the deans of the faculties the mechanisms to ensure accountability for the implementation of this Policy, which include at the least the annual report on the faculty's realisation of its Language Implementation Plan contemplated in paragraph 8.1, and the compliance report submitted after each semester contemplated in paragraph 8.3, with due regard to the Policy principles detailed in paragraph 6 and paragraphs 7.4.1.1 and 7.4.1.2 below. No later than the last meetings of Council and Senate of each year, the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching reports to Council, via the Rector's Management Team and Senate, on the accountability mechanisms agreed with the deans of the faculties for the next ensuing year.

7.4.1.1 The English offering is revised upwards so as to achieve full accessibility to SU for academically deserving prospective and current students who prefer to study in English.

7.4.1.2 The Afrikaans offering is managed so as to sustain access to SU for students who prefer to study in Afrikaans and to further develop Afrikaans as a language of tuition where reasonably practicable.

7.4.2 Each faculty and support services division describes its implementation of this Policy in its Language Implementation Plan.

7.4.3 Every faculty reviews its use of language for learning and teaching, and records the language arrangements in its Faculty Language Implementation Plan annually, at the least. This Plan is reported to Senate via the faculty board and Senate's Academic Planning Committee. Senate has the power either to accept the faculty's Language Implementation Plan or to refer it back to the faculty. Once accepted, the language arrangements for learning and teaching of a particular module are published in the relevant module frameworks.

- 7.4.4 Changes to the language arrangements in the faculty's Language Implementation Plan that fall outside the regular review process, but are necessitated by, for example, a specific student group's preferred language of tuition, pedagogical considerations or the unavailability of a lecturer with the necessary language proficiency, can be made by the relevant department head and dean after consultation with the faculty student committee. These changes are reported at the next faculty board and Senate meetings. The students of the specific modules are informed of the changes and the reasons for these changes as soon as practically possible.
- 7.4.5 Every support services division regularly reviews its use of language and records the language arrangements in the Language Implementation Plan for that particular division. These plans are approved by the relevant line managers and the Rector's Management Team.

## **7.5 Promotion of multilingualism**

- 7.5.1 The Language Centre, the faculties, the language departments, support services and management bodies are co-responsible for the advancement of multilingualism at SU.
- 7.5.2 SU incentivises innovative multilingual practices by providing institutional funding for, for example, expanding teaching in more than one language in faculties; conducting research; sharing best multilingual practices; ICT-enhanced learning strategies; and discipline-specific academic literacy initiatives.
- 7.5.3 SU advances the academic potential of Afrikaans by means of, for example, teaching, conducting research, holding symposia, presenting short courses, supporting language teachers and hosting guest lecturers in Afrikaans; presenting Afrikaans language acquisition courses; developing academic and professional literacy in Afrikaans; supporting Afrikaans reading and writing development; providing language services that include translation into Afrikaans, and editing of and document design for Afrikaans texts; developing multilingual glossaries with Afrikaans as one of the languages; and promoting Afrikaans through popular-science publications in the general media.
- 7.5.4 IsiXhosa as an emerging formal academic language receives particular attention for the purpose of its incremental introduction into selected disciplinary domains, prioritised in accordance with student needs in a well-planned, well-organised and systematic manner. The academic role and leadership of the Department of African Languages, through its extensive experience in advanced-level teaching and research in language and linguistic fields will be harnessed to the full. In certain programmes, isiXhosa is already used with a view to facilitating effective learning and teaching, especially where the use of isiXhosa may be important for career purposes. SU is committed to increasing the use of isiXhosa, to the extent that this is reasonably practicable, for example through basic communication skills short courses for staff and students, career-specific communication, discipline-specific terminology guides (printed and mobile applications) and phrase books.

## 7.6 Support

The Language Centre provides language support services aimed at the effective implementation of the Language Policy, in collaboration with the faculties, support services divisions and management bodies, by providing, for example, reading and writing development support, language services that include translation, interpreting and editing services, modules in professional communication, academic literacy and language acquisition, and research. The faculties, support services divisions and management bodies may, after consultation with the Language Centre, also provide language support of their own.

## 8. Feedback, monitoring and conflict resolution

- 8.1 Each faculty, responsibility centre and the Student Representative Council submits a report to the Rector's Management Team once a year, by a date determined by the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching, detailing:
  - 8.1.1 Any difficulties that it has experienced with implementing the Language Policy;
  - 8.1.2 Any mechanisms, strategies or techniques that have improved the implementation of the Policy, or may better advance the goals of the Policy; and
  - 8.1.3 Any suggestions for amendments to the Policy.
- 8.2 The Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching prepares an annual report to the Senate and the Council taking into account the responses above. The aims of the report include addressing areas of concern and sharing knowledge within the University.
- 8.3 Each faculty reports in writing to the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching after the end of each semester on its compliance during that semester with its Language Implementation Plan. In each instance where there has been non-compliance, the report describes it and the reasons for it fully and the steps the faculty is or will be taking to avoid future deviations from the Language Implementation Plan.
- 8.4 Students who feel negatively affected by the implementation of the Language Policy should adhere to the following procedures:
  - 8.4.1 In the case of implementation by faculties, complaints are lodged as prescribed by the relevant faculty's appeals/complaints procedure or, in the absence of such a procedure and in order of preference, with the relevant staff member, the relevant departmental chairperson or head, or the dean. If the complaints are not satisfactorily resolved at faculty level and the complaints are related to academic contexts, students can refer the complaints to the Academic Planning Committee (APC), via the Student Academic Affairs Council, and if not resolved at the APC, the APC refers the matter to the Senate, with a recommendation.
  - 8.4.2 In the case of implementation by support services, complaints are lodged with the relevant hierarchy of line managers or, in the case of the broader

University, with the Rector's Management Team via the Student Representative Council's executive.

- 8.4.3 In the case of implementation in student living environments, complaints are lodged with the house committee or the relevant residential head. If the complaints are not satisfactorily resolved at university residence or private student ward level, students may refer the complaints to the Senior Director: Student Affairs.
- 8.4.4 In cases where the use of the mentioned structures is not suitable, complaints may be submitted to the SU ombud for settlement in consultation with the relevant structures.
- 8.5 Staff members who feel negatively affected by the implementation of the Language Policy should adhere to the following procedures:
  - 8.5.1 In the case of implementation by faculties, complaints are lodged, in order of preference, with the relevant departmental chairperson or head, or the dean.
  - 8.5.2 In the case of implementation by support services, complaints are lodged with the relevant hierarchy of line managers or, in the case of the broader University, with the Rector's Management Team via the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching.
  - 8.5.3 In cases where the use of the mentioned structures is not suitable, complaints may be submitted to the SU ombud for settlement in consultation with the relevant structures.

## 9. Policy governance

The Language Policy is approved by Council with the consent of Senate and after consultation with the Institutional Forum.

The owner of the Policy is the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching. The Vice-Rector reports on an annual basis on matters concerning the Policy to Council via the Rector's Management Team, the Senate, and the Council's Language Committee.

The Vice-Rector may appoint a Language Planning and Management Project Team and assign tasks to it to perform. The curator of the Policy is the Senior Director: Learning and Teaching Enhancement, who supports the Vice-Rector.

## 10. Revision

Language policy-making and implementation are dynamic processes.

The Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching:

- 10.1 Facilitates the testing of the Language Policy against changing circumstances through research on the implementation, monitoring and impact of the Policy;
- 10.2 Facilitates regular consultation with the broader SU community about matters concerning the Language Policy;
- 10.3 Publishes information gained from such research and consultations; and

10.4 Whenever he or she deems it necessary, initiates and oversees a review of the Language Policy with a view to its possible amendment or replacement.

The Language Policy lapses five years after the date of its implementation. Subject to (10.4) above, it must be reviewed during its fifth year of operation.

## **11. Disclosure**

The Language Policy is a public document and is published on the University's website.

## **12. Repeal**

The Language Policy repeals and replaces the Language Policy and Language Plan adopted by Council on 22 November 2014.

## **13. Reference documents**

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

Draft Language Policy of the Department of Higher Education and Training (2016)

Higher Education Act 101 of 1997

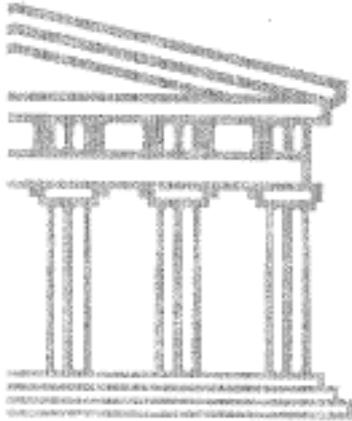
National Language Policy for Higher Education (2002)

Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000

SU's Policy regarding Students with Special Learning Needs/Disabilities

Use of Official Languages Act 12 of 2012

## Appendix 3: University of the Western Cape's language policy



**UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN CAPE (UWC)**

LANGUAGE POLICY

DATE OF LAST APPROVAL: C2003/3



A place of quality, a place to grow, from hope to action through knowledge

## **THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE LANGUAGE POLICY**

### **Preamble:**

The University of the Western Cape is a multilingual university, alert to its African and international context. It is committed to helping nurture the cultural diversity of South Africa and build an equitable and dynamic society. This language policy relates to one aspect of that commitment. It attempts to guide institutional language practice so that it furthers equity, social development, and a respect for our multilingual heritage.

### **Language of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:**

The languages of teaching, learning and assessment will be discussed under the following headings:

- Language(s) used in lectures, tutorials and practicals
- Language(s) used in the setting of tasks/assignments/examinations
- Language(s) used/allowed in the writing of assignments/examinations
- Language(s) in which text material is available
- Language(s) students use in their self-directed learning processes and activities

### **Language used in lectures, tutorials and practicals:**

Lectures, tutorials and practicals for any module will be delivered in the language formally approved by the Faculty concerned. If lecturers are competent users of other languages, they are encouraged to use these languages in addition to the main language of teaching, if such a practice facilitates communication or discussion.

### **Languages used in the setting of tasks, assignments, tests and examinations:**

Regarding the languages used in the setting of tasks, assignments, tests and examinations, English, Afrikaans and Xhosa should be used wherever it is practicable to do so.

### **Languages used in writing tasks, assignments, tests and examinations:**

Unless otherwise negotiated between a student or a class and a lecturer, the language in which tasks, assignments, tests and examinations should be completed shall be English.

### **Languages in which texts are available:**

Regarding the language students use in their self-directed learning processes and activities, departments should actively seek to appoint some student tutors who can assist students in Xhosa and/or Afrikaans, as well as English.

### **Access to Academic and Professional Discourse:**

- All students will have access to entry-level courses aimed at strengthening their English oral and aural communication skills and improving their academic literacy in English.
- All students will have access to support services to assist them in developing their academic literacy in English.

**Promoting Multilingualism:**

- The university undertakes to make language acquisition courses in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa available to both administrative and lecturing staff.
- All students will be encouraged, through enrichment programmes, to develop proficiency in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa.

**Languages of Internal Communication:**

The main language of internal communication for academic and administrative purposes shall be English. However, the university will progressively make important information available in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa. Essential information such as rules will be made available in the three languages as a matter of priority. If departments for whatever reason deem it necessary, or because research into the needs of the client group reveals a clear need, Afrikaans, English and Xhosa translation of formal communications should be made available, provided that it is practicable to do so.

In spoken debate and deliberation, the objective is to be understood by everyone present. Should a speaker prefer to speak in Afrikaans, English or Xhosa, use will be made of informal interpreting if it is practicable to do so.

The university shall have staff available to assist enquiries in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa, particularly in advisory sessions and at registration in the examination periods. In appointing administrative staff who deal directly with students, the university will make their capacity to assist students in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa a strong recommendation. In these ways it will attempt to nurture and use the abilities of all in the university community in accordance with its mission statement, and to promote multilingualism, linguistic diversity and racial harmony at UWC.

**Languages of External Communication:**

The language used for external communication shall normally be English, unless sensitivity to the recipient requires use of another language. If individuals request information from the university in either Afrikaans or Xhosa, the information will be translated into that language, and the translated version will be sent to the individual accompanied by the English version. In all cases the official version shall be the English version.

Signage on campus will progressively be in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa, having due regard to readability and aesthetic considerations.

Adapted from the original draft discussion document (1988) by the Board of Management of the Lilivini Sentrum, April 2003

## Appendix 4: Ethical clearance



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Jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

### Approval Notice Stipulated documents/requirements

09-Feb-2017

Nel, Monet M

Ethics Reference #: SU-HSD-003792

Title: Student voice and agency in Master's thesis writing in a second language context: Beyond the use of pronouns

Dear Ms Monet Nel,

Your Stipulated documents/requirements received on 01-Feb-2017, was reviewed and accepted.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: 21-Nov-2016 - 20-Nov-2019

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter.

If the research deviates significantly from the undertaking that was made in the original application for research ethics clearance to the REC and/or alters the risk/benefit profile of the study, the researcher must undertake to notify the REC of these changes.

Please remember to use your proposal number (SU-HSD-003792) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham  
REC Coordinator  
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

*National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.*

*The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.*

## Investigator Responsibilities

### Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1. **Conducting the Research.** You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.
2. **Participant Enrolment.** You may not recruit or enrol participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use.
3. **Informed Consent.** You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using only the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.
4. **Continuing Review.** The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is no grace period. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, it is your responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrolment, and contact the REC office immediately.
5. **Amendments and Changes.** If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You may not initiate any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The only exception is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.
6. **Adverse or Unanticipated Events.** Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouché within five (5) days of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the REC's requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.
7. **Research Record Keeping.** You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC.
8. **Provision of Counselling or emergency support.** When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.
9. **Final reports.** When you have completed (no further participant enrolment, interactions or interventions) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.
10. **On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits.** If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

## Appendix 5: Institutional clearance from SU



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19 January 2017

Ms Monet Nel  
Department of General Linguistics  
Stellenbosch University

Dear Researcher

**Research project:** *Student voice and agency in Master's thesis writing in a second language context: Beyond the use of pronouns*

The researcher has institutional permission proceed with this project, as stipulated in the institutional permission application. This permission is granted on the following conditions:

- Participation is voluntary.
- Persons may not be coerced into participation.
- Persons who choose to participate must be informed of the purpose of the research, all the aspects of their participation, the risks to participation, their role in the research and their rights as participants. Participants must consent to participation. The researcher may not proceed until she is confident that all the before mentioned has been established and recorded.
- Persons who choose not to participate may not be penalized as a result of non-participation.
- Participants may withdraw their participation at any time, and without consequence.
- Data must be collected and processed in a way that ensures the anonymity of all participants.
- The data that is collected must be responsibly and suitably protected.
- The researcher must pay due diligence in seeing that the data is handled in the strictest confidence.
- The use of the collected data may not be extended beyond the purpose of this study.
- Individuals may not be identified in the report(s) or publication(s) of the results of the study.
- The privacy of individuals must be respected and protected.
- The researcher must conduct her research within the provisions of the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013.

Best wishes,



Prof Ian Cloete  
Senior Director: Institutional Research and Planning

## Appendix 6: Institutional clearance form UWC



**STUDENT  
ADMINISTRATION**  
Administration Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
ashaikjee@uwc.ac.za, nichoeman@uwc.ac.za  
021 959 2110

6 March 2017

Dear Monet Nel

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

As per your request, we acknowledge that you are in the process of obtaining the necessary permissions and ethics clearances and are welcome to conduct your research as outlined in your proposal and communication with us. Please note that this permission is subject to you obtaining permission from the Ethics Committee of the University.

Please note that while we give permission to conduct such research (i.e. interviews and surveys) staff and students at this University are not compelled to participate and may decline to participate should they wish to.

Should you wish to make use of or reference to the University's name, spaces, identity, etc. in any publication/s, you must first furnish the University with a copy of the proposed publication/s so that the University can verify and grant permission for such publication/s to be made publicly available.

Should you require any assistance in conducting your research in regards to access to student contact information please do let us know so that we can facilitate where possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Shaikjee'.

DR AHMED SHAIKJEE  
MANAGER: STUDENT ADMINISTRATION  
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

## **Appendix 7: Interview questions**

You have completed your master's thesis in the last year (2015/2016). Please familiarise yourself with your research project again before you answer the questions below. Please be as honest and elaborative as possible.

### 1. YOU AND YOUR THESIS

#### **Your thesis writing journey**

- How did you decide on the topic for your research project? Was it personal curiosity, proposed by your supervisor or someone else, or required due to bursaries' requirements etc.?
- Did you attempt to mirror your research question in your thesis in any manner? How did you approach this and how successful do you believe this was?
- How did your department prepare you for your master's studies and what tools, resources, workshops or guidelines did they provide you with in order to start writing your thesis?
- Did you have to ask for more help because of a feeling of uncertainty as you approached your research project, like there were not enough resources or help at your disposal?
- Did your project ultimately feel like it was "worth the trouble"?
- What did you initially plan to do with the findings from your research project? What have you done with these findings since you graduated? Why or why not?

#### **A standard format**

- Do you believe that there is a required, standard format in which to present a master's thesis? Why do you say so?
- Do you feel like you adhered to this format? If so, did you do it for your entire thesis?
- Did you ignore some of the thesis requirements you believed to be in place? Were you continually aware of this throughout your writing process?
- Do you feel that a thesis should be written in a particular font, text size or number of columns? How did you respond to this aspect of the thesis, and what were your reasons for doing so?

- Did you apply any aspect of your format, approach or layout deliberately? What was the reason for this?
- Did you feel that you could confidently deviate from accepted standards and guidelines? Why, or why not?
- Was there an aspect of your thesis that you feel like you did deliberately, despite a different recommendation, opinion or standard??

## 2. YOU AND YOUR SUPERVISOR

### **The academic/work relationship**

- Did you and your supervisor ever disagree about the way in which you organised or wrote your thesis?
- Did you ever feel that you had to sacrifice particular opinions because of your supervisor?
- Do you feel that your supervisor encouraged you to express yourself and to “take control” of your thesis and “run with it”?
- Did you feel that you could confidently deviate from accepted standard and guidelines? Why or why not?

### **Language of communication**

- In what language did you communicate with your supervisor? What is your supervisor’s mother tongue?
- Any other comments regarding your relationship with your supervisor:

## 3. YOU AND YOUR LANGUAGE

### **Academic – second – language**

- Is English your mother tongue?
- If not, how long has it been your academic language of preference?
- Do you believe this language difference (if applicable) has made it more difficult to communicate your voice and convictions in your thesis?

- Would you have made more personal statements, more confidently, had you written your thesis in your mother tongue? Why do you say so? Please give an example

#### 4. GENERAL

- Do you feel that the acknowledgement section of a thesis is necessary, or not? Why do you feel this way?
- Do you believe there is a place for master's students to voice their convictions in their theses? Do you believe a master's thesis is a place for a student to let readers and other academics read his/her personal beliefs surrounding his/her own findings?
- Have you heard of the text *How to succeed in your Master's and Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book*? Was it recommended for your studies, by who? Did you use it at all?

Thank you so much for the time you have taken out of your schedule to help a student still completing her thesis. I wish you all of the best in your future endeavours.

Kind regards from a thankful heart,  
Monet Nel

**Appendix 8: Thesis type: *traditional: simple* (Paltridge, 2002:138, 139)**

*Degree:*

*Study area:*

*Title:*

*Chapter 1: Introduction*

The nature of the problem

Origins of the study

Focus and structure of the thesis

*Chapter 2: Literature review*

Introduction

Performance assessment

Performance assessment and reliability

Conclusion

*Chapter 3: Methodology*

Introduction

Selection of research design, setting, informants and texts

Data collection and analysis

Conclusion

*Chapter 4: Results*

Introduction

Degree of Rater consistency

Interpretation and application of performance criteria

Raters' reading strategies

Influences on rater judgements of writing ability

Conclusion

*Chapter 5: Discussion*

Introduction

Degree of rater consistency

Interpretation and application of performance criteria

Raters' reading strategies

Influences on rater judgements of writing ability

Conclusion

*Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations*

**Appendix 9: Thesis type: *traditional: complex* (Paltridge, 2002:139, 140)**

*Degree:*

*Study area:*

*Title*

<i>Chapter 1:</i>	<i>Introduction</i>
	The concept of town character
	Research strategy
	Thesis structure
<i>Chapter 2:</i>	<i>Byron Bay: From sacred sites to tourist attraction</i>
	Regional setting, natural history and cultural history
	Concern with maintaining town character
<i>Chapter 3:</i>	<i>Place character: A theoretical framework</i>
	Spirit and concept of place
	Models of place
	Dimensions of place character
<i>Chapter 4:</i>	<i>Methodological considerations</i>
	Community involvement in assessing town character
	Landscape assessment paradigms and methods
	Research design
<i>Chapter 5:</i>	<i>A threat to town character</i>
	Club Med development proposal
	Research questions
	Method
	Results
	Conclusions
	Limitations and further research
<i>Chapter 6:</i>	<i>Community description of town character</i>
	Survey aims and research questions
	Method
	Results
	Discussion
<i>Chapter 7:</i>	<i>Identifying town character features</i>

Research questions

Method

Results

Discussion

*Chapter 8: Relating landscape features to town character*

Research questions

Inventory of town character features

Randomly selected landscape scenes

Part One: respondents, and rating scales

Analysis and results

Part Two: respondents and rating scales

Analysis and results

Discussion and further research

Conclusion

*Chapter 9: General discussion*

Addressing the research questions

Concluding remarks

**Appendix 10: Thesis type: topic-based (Paltridge 2002:140)**

*Degree:*

*Study area:*

*Title:*

*Chapter 1:*            *Introduction*  
Disappearing wonders

*Chapter 2:*            *Plotting*  
Travels of colonial science  
Plotting destinations

*Chapter 3:*            *Sightseeing*  
Topophilic tourism  
Site specifics  
Painting the place and myth  
Souvenering the site

*Chapter 4:*            *Astral travel*  
Mnemonic tours in the 'new wonderland'  
Memory tours  
The buried village: Embalmed history  
Living out the past  
Museumising the past: Sanctioned memory

*Chapter 5:*            *Postscript*

**Appendix 11: Thesis type: *Mouton's structure* (2001:122-125)**

<i>Preliminaries:</i>	Title page
	Acknowledgements
	Summary/abstract
	Table of contents
	List of tables/list of figures
<i>Chapter 1:</i>	<i>Introduction</i>
	Idea for thesis/motivation for study
	Research topic as derived from preliminary reading
	Research problem/questions/hypotheses
	General research design & methodology
	Outline of remainder of thesis
<i>Chapter 2:</i>	<i>Literature review/theoretical framework</i>
	Introduction
	Key concepts defined
	Discussion
	Conclusion
<i>Chapter 3:</i>	<i>Research design and methodology</i>
	Hypotheses/definitions/key variables
	Issues of measurement
	Sample design & sampling methods
	Data collection methods and fieldwork practice
	Data capturing and data editing
	Data analysis
	Shortcomings/sources of error
<i>Chapter 4:</i>	<i>Results: Presentation and discussions</i>
	Sample profiles
	Presentation of results
	Discussion of results
	Concluding interpretations
<i>Chapter 5:</i>	<i>Conclusions and recommendations</i>
	Summary

Interpretation of results in terms of literature/theory

Gaps/anomalies and/or deviations in the data

Significance of results

Policy or other recommendations

*Reference list*

*Appendices*

## Appendix 12: Total number of occurrences of PPs and APs

		/ as pp	/ as pp/thesis	/ as AP	%	/ as AP per thesis	me as pp	me as pp/thesis	me as AP	%	me as AP per thesis	My as pp	my as pp/thesis	my as AP	%	my as AP per thesis
SU	GL	1949	177,2	339	17,4	30,8	257	23,4	40	15,6	3,6	556	50,5	151	27,2	13,7
	VA	2979	270,8	1424	47,8	129,5	429	39,0	221	51,5	20,1	1443	131,2	994	68,9	90,4
	Phil	583	116,6	451	77,4	90,2	17	3,4	8	47,1	1,6	185	37,0	75	40,5	15,0
		<b>5511</b>	<b>204,1</b>	<b>2214</b>	<b>40,2</b>	<b>82,0</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>26,0</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>38,3</b>	<b>10,0</b>	<b>2184</b>	<b>80,9</b>	<b>1220</b>	<b>55,9</b>	<b>45,2</b>
UWC	LLC	4063	451,4	494	12,2	54,9	541	60,1	86	15,9	9,6	1232	136,9	290	23,5	32,2
	Phil	276	276,0	238	86,2	238,0	22	22,0	11	50,0	11,0	55	55,0	50	90,9	50,0
	WG	423	423,0	266	62,9	266,0	90	90,0	58	64,4	58,0	206	206,0	167	81,1	167,0
		<b>4762</b>	<b>432,9</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>21,0</b>	<b>90,7</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>59,4</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>23,7</b>	<b>14,1</b>	<b>1493</b>	<b>135,7</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>34,0</b>	<b>46,1</b>

### Appendix 13: Linguistic background questionnaire

Dear participant

Thank you for the opportunity to learn from you. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. No answers can be wrong as these are facts from your life. The first section is biographical information and the second is more linguistic.

Name and surname:.....

Age:.....

What language is your mother tongue:.....

What is the mother tongue language(s) of the caregivers who raised you:

.....  
 .....

Please list all the languages you speak and indicate your level of proficiency:

Language	Age from which you used this language	I had formal studies of this language	Level				
			Poor	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Fluent

**Poor:** I can use simple phrases and very few complete sentences.

**Basic:** I can communicate point of view in a simple manner

**Intermediate:** I can describe experiences in short sentences

**Advanced:** I can participate in discussions

**Fluent:** I use this language spontaneously

In what language did you receive primary schooling:.....

In what language did you receive secondary schooling:.....

What was the majority language used in lectures at university:.....

Would you have wanted to change this? Why or why not?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

What language(s) do you use at work?

.....

What language(s) do you use in your home?

.....

What language(s) do you use with close friends?

.....

In what language do you feel most comfortable:

to express your opinions	
speak informally	
speak formally	
write informally	
write academically	
reading informally	
reading academically	

If you could choose any other official South African language to be fluent in, what language would that be? Why?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

Do you ever read the newspaper or news articles online? If so, in what language do you prefer reading it? Why?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

Do you ever read books in your leisure time? If so, in what language do you prefer reading it? Why?

.....  
.....  
.....

What are your personal, subjective feelings towards the English language in South Africa and South African universities?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

What are your personal, subjective feelings towards the Afrikaans language in South Africa and South African universities?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Thank you so much for taking the time to answer the questions. I am sure as a past Master's student you are aware of how much I appreciate this!

Monet Nel

## Appendix 14: Consent form



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### STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

---

Student voice and agency in Master's thesis writing in a second language context: Beyond the use of pronouns

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Monet Nel (Hons, Stellenbosch University) from the Department of General Linguistics at Stellenbosch University. The results gathered from this research project will form part of a Master's degree in Second Language Studies and will consequently be presented in the form of a thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you completed a Master's degree in 2015 or 2016 from either Stellenbosch University or the University of the Western Cape in the field of linguistics, philosophy, visual art or women and gender studies.

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is

1. to analyse selected master's theses from overwhelming English second language universities in accordance with the thesis-writing guidelines provided by Johann Mouton's *How to succeed in your masters and doctoral studies – A South African Guide and Resource Book* as well as the respective departmental guidelines students are provided with
2. to investigate the multimodal construction of agency and voice in terms of master's theses
3. to investigate student perceptions of thesis guidelines and norms, as well as possible reasons for deviations from norms
4. to provide research supervisors and teachers of postgraduate writing courses with practical suggestions of ways in which the authorial identity of students can be encouraged in thesis writing

#### 2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to answer a list of questions according to your preference. This could be in the form of an email, a phone call or a face-to-face interview.

### **3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no identifiable risks or discomforts associated with participation in the study.

### **4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There are no particular benefits for the research participant, however, the findings of this study could potentially provide research supervisors and teachers of postgraduate writing courses with practical suggestions of ways in which the authorial identity of students can be encouraged in thesis writing.

### **5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

The participant will not receive payment for his/her participation.

### **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of limited access to your interview, by only the project coordinator and supervisor (Dr. Marcelyn Oostendorp, PhD, Stellenbosch University).

Each participant was given a particular identification number (key) which is completely random, before the start of the research project, and their true identities will thus not be part of the research project in any sense. The interviews will immediately receive the same coding and essentially there will be no possible link between the participants' identities and the data provided by them. This confidentiality will remain should this study be published.

### **7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be interviewed for this study or not. If you volunteer to be interviewed, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study.

The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

## 8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Monet Nel (principal investigator): 076 471 7560; [monetnel@gmail.com](mailto:monetnel@gmail.com) or Dr. Marcelyn Oostendorp (supervisor): [moostendorp@sunac.za](mailto:moostendorp@sunac.za)

## 9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za); 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

<b>SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE</b>
--------------------------------------------------------------

The information above was described to \_\_\_\_\_ (name and surname of participant) by Monet Nel in English and I, the participant, am in command of this language thus no translator was used. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[my/his/her]* satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Participant**

**Date**

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to \_\_\_\_\_  
[*name of the participant*]. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any  
questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Investigator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**