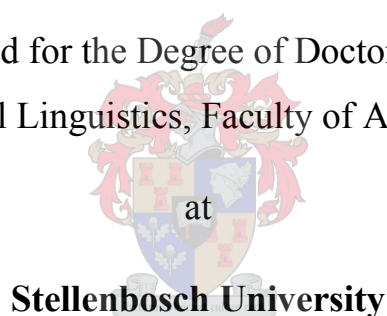


# **Scaffolding Academic Literacy Using the Reading to Learn Methodology: An Evaluative Study**

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Dissertation presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
Department of General Linguistics, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences



Promoter: Professor Christine Anthonissen

**March 2016**

## **DECLARATION**

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Date: March 2016

## SUMMARY

The primary aim of this study was to test and assess the efficacy of an innovative literacy development intervention, Reading to Learn (RtL), with Grade 11 students at two schools within the Winelands District of the Western Cape. The RtL intervention, originally designed to address inequitable literacy development outcomes of students from marginalised communities in Australia, was undertaken against the backdrop of increasingly serious concerns regarding literacy development in primary and secondary education in South Africa.

Recent research has confirmed that poor literacy performance at school cannot be divorced from social conditions and educational practices that may exclude some and privilege other learners. In this study, RtL was designed purposefully to scaffold the development of more advanced academic literacy skills, with special support being offered to students with the greater need, whilst still providing sufficient stimulation for better performing students. A characterising feature of RtL is its affordance of equal opportunities to students from outside mainstream Discourses, by providing explicit access to the Discourse of formal schooling. The theoretical conceptual framework of RtL is derived from the work of Halliday (language as a text in a social context), Vygotsky (learning as a social process) and Bernstein (education as a pedagogic device for maintaining inequality).

The two central research questions considered (i) whether RtL could be effective in a small-scale South African secondary school context, and (ii) whether RtL outcomes in such a context would be comparable to other studies of RtL conducted elsewhere. Using a long-term action research design, this mixed methods inquiry into academic literacy development worked with students' writing portfolios collected throughout the RtL intervention. A linguistic biographical questionnaire was used to gather student-specific data. Student work was assessed, codified and given numerical literacy scores which allowed for descriptive and more advanced statistical data analysis. A number of cases were closely analysed to illustrate the nature of the intervention and students' levels of literacy pre and post intervention. Triangulation of the various kinds of data revealed how general data patterns emerging from the small-scale statistical analysis relate to contextual features specific to local social and educational conditions.

The findings of this study showed that students' academic literacy skills improved over the duration of the RtL intervention. The greatest area of improvement across all students (regardless of school context) was evidenced in more advanced schematic structuring of both the narrative and academic essay genres. From a cross-sectional (across schools) perspective, the greatest overall improvement in written literacy skills was among the weaker cohort of students from the peri-urban township school. The phenomenon of weaker students making greater overall gains was also evidenced from a time series (within school) perspective. This encouraging finding indicates a possible convergence (or 'catch-up') effect, for students previously categorised as academically weak, regardless of school context, meaning that the documented convergence effects also seemed to occur irrespective of students' socioeconomic circumstances. Furthermore, the findings of this study, with regards to the efficacy of RtL, are comparable to findings from other studies conducted globally, those in Australian studies, in particular.



## OPSOMMING

Die primêre doel van hierdie studie was om die effektiwiteit te toets van 'n innoverende onderrig intervensie, “Reading to Learn” (RtL), wat gebruik is in die skryfvaardigheidontwikkeling van Graad 11 leerders by twee skole in die Wynlanddistrik van die Wes-Kaap. Die RtL intervensie, wat aanvanklik ontwerp is om ongelyke uitkomst van geletterdheidsontwikkeling van studente uit gemarginaliseerde gemeenskappe in Australië aan te spreek, is onderneem teen die agtergrond van toenemende besorgdheid oor die ontwikkeling van geletterdheid in primêre en sekondêre onderrig in Suid Afrika.

Onlangse navorsing het bevestig dat swak prestasie in geletterdheidsvaardighede op skool nie losgemaak kan word van sosiale omstandighede en onderrigpraktyke wat party leerders kan uitsluit en ander bevoordeel nie. In hierdie studie is RtL doelbewus ontwerp om as ‘t ware steierwerk te voorsien vir die opbou van gevorderde akademiese geletterdheidvaardighede, op so 'n manier dat spesiale steun gegee word aan studente met groter agterstande, terwyl beter presterende studente steeds voldoende stimulasie kry. 'n Karakteriserende eienskap van RtL is die aanbod van gelyke geleenthede aan studente van buite die hoofstroom Diskoerse, deur die spesifieke verlening van toegang tot die Diskoers van formele onderwys. Die konseptuele raamwerk van RtL is gebaseer op die werk van Halliday (taal as teks binne 'n sosiale konteks), Vygotsky (leer as 'n sosiale proses) en Bernstein (onderwys as 'n pedagogiese instrument wat sosiale ongelykheid instandhou).

Die twee sentrale navorsingsvrae wat gestel is, oorweeg (i) of RtL effektief kan wees in 'n klein-skaal projek binne 'n Suid-Afrikaanse sekondêre skool konteks, en (ii) of RtL uitkomst in so 'n konteks vergelykbaar sou wees met dié van ander RtL studies wat elders gedoen is. Deur gebruik te maak van 'n langtermyn aksie-navorsingsontwerp, het hierdie gemengde metode ondersoek na akademiese geletterdheidontwikkeling gewerk met die skryf-portfolios van leerders. Die data is oor die loop van die aangebode intervensie ingesamel. 'n Vraelys is gebruik om student-spesifieke taal-biografiese data in te samel. Studente se skryfwerk is geassesseer, gekodifiseer en numeries bepunt sodat 'n deskriptiewe en meer uitgebreide statistiese data-analise gedoen kon word. 'n Aantal gevalle is in besonderhede geanaliseer om die aard van die intervensie te illustreer en om die geletterdheidsvlakke van studente voor en

ná die intervensie aan te toon. Triangulering van die onderskeie soorte data het blootgelê hoe algemene patrone wat uitgewys is deur die kleinskaalse statistiese analise, in verband staan met kontekstuele gegewens eie aan die plaaslike sosiale en opvoedkundige situasie.

Die bevindinge van die studie toon dat studente se akademiese skryfvaardighede oor die loop van die RtL-intervensie verbeter het. Die mees beduidende verbetering by alle studente (ongegag die skoolkonteks) was in die skematiese strukturering van sowel die narratiewe as akademiese opstel genres. Uit 'n kruisseksionele perspektief (oor skoolgrense heen) was die grootste verbetering in die geskrewe geletterdheidsvaardighede onder die kohort van swakker presterende leerders uit die skool in die semi-stedelike swart woongebied. Die verskynsel van swakker presterende studente wat oorhoofs groter verbetering toon, is ook bevestig vanuit 'n tydsverloop reeks perspektief (binne skole). Hierdie bemoedigende bevinding dui 'n moontlike konvergering (of “inhaal effek”) aan by studente wat tevore gekategoriseer is as akademies swakker presterend, ongeag die skoolkonteks. Dit beteken dat die gedokumenteerde konvergensie-effekte plaasgevind het ongeag die studente se sosio-ekonomiese omstandighede. Verder is die bevindinge ten opsigte van die effektiwiteit van RtL, wel vergelykbaar met dié van ander studies in ander wêrelddele, en spesifiek ook met die bevindinge van soortgelyke studies in Australië.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved little Aristotle and Dewey who passed away tragically just before this thesis was due. They were my writing buddies. Gone but never forgotten!

ARISTOTLE: 28/08/2013 – 08/09/2015

DEWEY: 28/08/2013 – 22/12/2015



**“Cats leave paw prints on your heart, but Bengals leave love spots on your soul.”**

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I would not have been able to complete this research project and thesis, without the help and support from a number of different people. I would like to publicly offer my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to:

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- Lastly, but not least, thank you to the Grade 11 students and their respective teachers who allowed me into their teaching and learning space. Thank you for your willingness to take part in a study of this nature. I hope you all benefitted as much as I did through this process.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACCS	Affective Writing for the Social Sciences
ANA	Annual National Assessment
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Standards
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EAL	English Additional Language
ELDV	English Language Development
FET	Further Education and Training
L1	Home Language
L2	Additional language other than the Home Language
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy
PMB	Pietermaritzburg
RtL	Reading to Learn
SA	Republic of South Africa
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SFG	Systemic Functional Grammar
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

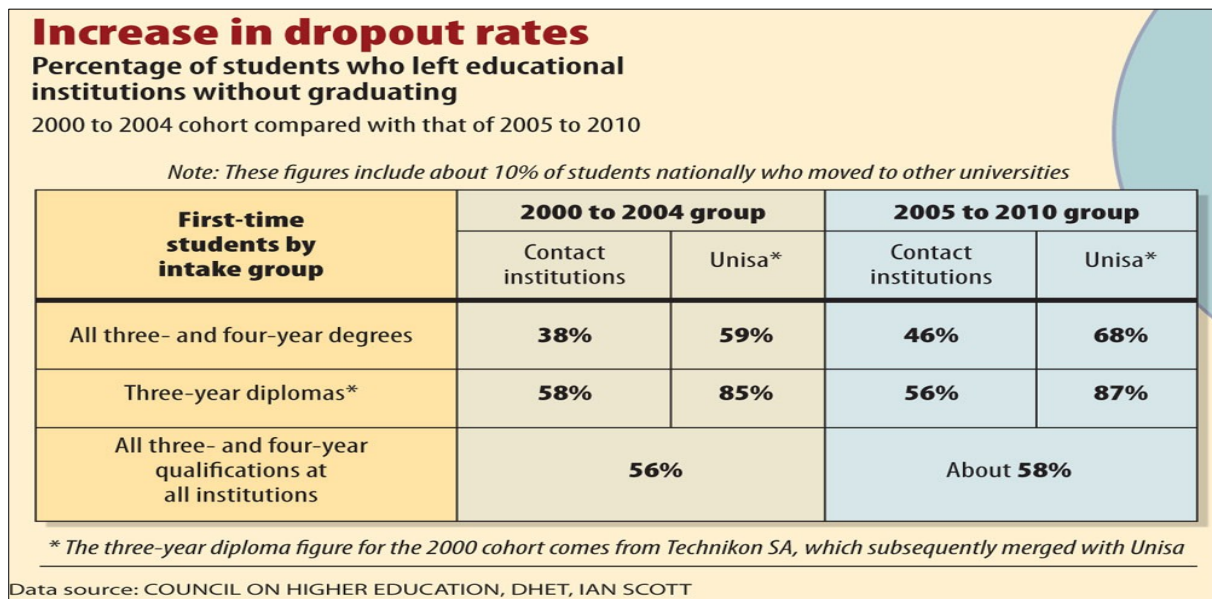
Higher education in The Republic of South Africa has shifted from elitism to mass production, resulting in a range of students<sup>1</sup>, with diverse skills, being given access to university (Fraser & Killen, 2003). For example, the number of students exiting the secondary schooling system with a Bachelor's pass, a pass which provides entrance to university studies, has gradually increased. In 2008, 20.1% students matriculated with a Bachelor's pass. In 2010, this number grew to 23.5% (with 26, 2% in 2012 and 30.6% in 2013). However, entry into university is accompanied with the tacit assumption that students are ready to study at tertiary level. But, the skills developed at school appear not to match the skills<sup>2</sup> required to succeed at university<sup>3</sup>. According to Groenewald (2005), one-in-every-three students are at risk of dropping out of their tertiary studies by the end of their first-year. The high dropout rate of students is confirmed further by the research of Professor Ian Scott of the Council on Higher Education, Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (see Figure 1.1 for clarification).

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<sup>1</sup> The term student(s) is used in this thesis, and refers to students at both a secondary school and university level.

<sup>2</sup> This statement stems from an informal study conducted whilst working as a Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Grades 10-12) English L1 and EAL teacher, as well as an Academic Development Lecturer in the tertiary education sector during 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Other studies which have also reported on the under-preparedness of undergraduate students are: Troskie-De Bruin (1999); Penrose (2002); Van Schalkwyk (2008) and Allardice (2013).

**Figure 1.1: Student Dropout Rates at Institutions of Higher Learning in South Africa**

Source: John (2013)

Given that access to higher education in South Africa has become one of the main mechanisms for addressing issues of social injustice and inequality, statistics such as those shown in Figure 1.1 are of concern. Under-preparedness of students exiting the secondary schooling system, and transitioning into university, particularly amongst previously marginalised students, is often seen as one of the biggest barriers to successful learning at university (Haiden, nd; Van Dyk & Weideman, 2004; McGhie, 2012).

For clarity, under-preparedness in the context of this study refers to the weak ‘academic literacy’ (reading and writing) skills being developed in the secondary schooling system. In other words, under-preparedness refers to a lack of reading and writing skills developed at school to allow students to read to learn, and consequently, demonstrate effectively through writing, that learning has taken place. A deeper discussion of the definition of ‘academic literacy’ for the purposes of this study can be found in Chapter Two (Section 2.6). A brief acknowledgment (and critique thereof) must be given to the ‘Western’ sense of ‘literacy’ that this thesis adopts. I am aware that a Western definition of ‘literacy’ may be limiting and problematic, because students from underprivileged communities are, as a result of the Western definition of ‘literacy’, seen as “lacking” in their linguistic competences instead of

being seen as holding a different, yet equally rich set of linguistic skills (Leibowitz, 2010). Until such time that tertiary institutions accept and value “other” forms of ‘literacy’ skills that a large majority of South African students encompass (variously known as ‘new literacies’), this study will be concerned with assisting students in developing the ‘literacy’ skills needed at university, and hence, a Western (reading and writing) notion of ‘literacy’. Therefore, given that universities require a more formal ‘academic literacy’ skill set to access learning, and subsequently succeed at university, a failure to ensure secondary school students are adequately prepared with university appropriate ‘literacy’ skills, sets students up for failure. Thus, one can understand why the secondary schooling system in South Africa has been described as a “high cost / high enrolment, yet low quality system” (Taylor, 2009:12). This distressing description of secondary education is also evident from international and national ‘literacy’ research reported below.

Unesco’s (2011) assessment of ‘academic literacy’ skills across the world has revealed that more than 75% of South African students in the primary schooling system are performing below minimum international ‘literacy’ benchmarks. According to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Pirls), 43% of South African Grade 5 students appear not to be developing basic reading skills (Howie, Van Staden, Tshele, Dowse & Zimmerman, 2012). Further, according to the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), 25% of South African Grade 6 students are not acquiring basic ‘literacy’ skills, and less than 40% of Grade 6 students achieve basic ‘literacy’ skills only (Unesco, 2011). Table 1.1 below offers a summary of the 2012/2013 Annual National Assessment (ANA) scores which do not paint a positive picture for ‘literacy’ development in the secondary schooling sector. Figure 1.2 offers a graphic representation of a disturbing problem in South Africa – there exists an unequal ‘literacy’ development situation. Students from more impoverished communities have less chance of ‘literacy’ success, creating a growing gap in ‘literacy’ performance between students from high socioeconomic communities and those from low socioeconomic communities.

**Table 1.1: 2012/2013 Annual National Assessment Literacy Scores**

Home Language					
	0-49%	50-69%	70-100%	National Average (2012)	National Average (2013)
<b>Grade 3</b>	44%	33%	23%	<b>58%</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>Grade 6</b>	61%	25%	14%	<b>43%</b>	<b>59%</b>
<b>Grade 9</b>	61%	30%	9%	<b>43%</b>	<b>43%</b>
First Additional Language					
	0-49%	50-69%	70-100%	National Average (2012)	National Average (2013)
<b>Grade 6</b>	75%	18%	7%	<b>36%</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Grade 9</b>	79%	18%	3%	<b>35%</b>	<b>43%</b>

Source: Department of Basic Education (DBE)

**Figure 1.2: Distributional and Social Inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Source: Unesco (2011: 87)



Consequently, tertiary institutions inherit the deficient ‘literacy’ skills of the basic education system, causing high dropout rates amongst undergraduate students. For example, during a pilot run of the National Benchmark Tests (NBTs) in 2009, an entrance exam offered to students at universities across South Africa, 46% of students who wrote the test were classified as students in need of an augmented, or extended degree programme if they were to succeed at their studies. An additional 7% of students were classified as students in need of long-term academic support. Hence, a total of 53% of undergraduate students were in need of ‘academic literacy’ support for studies at university (MacGregor, 2009). Consequently, graduation rates become affected as students either fail to finish a three-year degree in three years, or fail to graduate at all.

Letseka and Maile (2008:6) reported that the graduation rate in South Africa is approximately 50% – arguably one of the lowest graduation rates worldwide. Therefore, it becomes increasingly clear why ‘academic literacy’ support needs to be made available to undergraduate students. However, this can become costly to universities and students alike, both of which are burdened with the cost of extended degree programmes. Alternatively, intensive ‘academic literacy’ development support could be made available to Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Grades 10-12) students in the secondary school sector to ensure students are equipped with the requisite ‘academic literacy’ skills needed to succeed at university. For this reason, an ‘academic literacy’ support intervention, namely Reading to Learn (RtL), developed in Australia, and employed there with good effect, was used to scaffold Grade 11 students’ ‘academic literacy’ skills at two diverse school contexts in the (Western Cape) Winelands District of South Africa.

Due to the rigorous control of the Grade 12 or Matric curriculum by the national Department of Basic Education (DBE), together with the external moderation of Grade 12 students’ summative assessment (final National Senior Certificate exams), it was decided to make use of Grade 11 students as the sample group. This was because a higher level of access, in terms of time made available for me to spend with the Grade 11’s, was granted. It was hoped that the June and November school exams would be made available as an external form of assessment of the RtL intervention. However, ethical constraints put in place by the DBE made this unworkable. This was seen as a criticism of the study as access to these exams was

deemed important, because these results could have provided an objective assessment, external to the RtL programme, as to the efficacy of RtL. Nevertheless, this study intended to test the effectivity of the RtL intervention in meeting the ‘literacy’ needs of the Grade 11 students, and thus bridging the ‘literacy’ skills development gap by assisting students with the development of important ‘literacy’ skills needed for university studies.

## **1.2 Problem Statement and Focus**

This study investigated the effect of a ‘literacy’ intervention (RtL) designed in a non-South African context, and adapted to fit the needs of South African Grade 11 students at two different schools in the Winelands District, and applied to stimulate ‘academic literacy’ development<sup>4</sup>. A description and discussion of the two separate schools was conducted in Chapter Four (section 4.6). The study intended to follow the implementation of the RtL intervention, and eventually to offer an in-depth analysis of students’ changing ‘literacy’ skills, in an effort to test whether its implementation was an effective approach to ‘academic literacy’ development for the targeted Grade 11 students. Statistical analysis of the RtL intervention’s ‘literacy’ scores, together with close scrutiny of selected student portfolios (all pieces of assessed writing), were used to assess the level of efficacy of RtL. It is hoped that the above analysis could also assist in highlighting possible shortcomings in the structure, content and delivery that, if attended to, could result in the greater success of RtL, if RtL is indeed found to be less successful than reported elsewhere internationally.

Despite considerable efforts across most universities in South Africa to gradually improve academic reading and writing skills of undergraduate students, whose secondary schooling appears not to have sufficiently prepared them for tertiary level studies, the retention rate at universities remains disappointing. Although numerous factors play a combined role in the high levels of student attrition, an inability to cope with the rigorous ‘academic literacy’ demands placed on undergraduate students, is currently a cause for concern. These ‘literacy’ demands include: the ability to read complex abstract texts independently; the ability to synthesise vast amounts of academic reading material independently, and the ability to construct and apply appropriate formal academic writing conventions, to name a few. Given

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Academic literacy’, for the purposes of this study, refers to academic reading and writing skills. A more in-depth analysis of the definition of ‘academic literacy’ can be found in Chapter Two (section 2.6).

the high costs of implementing ‘academic literacy’ development modules at universities, it stands to reason that schools should be working with universities and other tertiary education institutions to find ways of improving the educational experience of FET students in an effort to ensure these students are better prepared for the transition to university. For this reason, I chose to implement the RtL intervention<sup>5</sup> as a possible innovative approach to speed-developing academic reading and writing skills amongst selected Grade 11 students. How successful the RtL intervention was, serves as the focus of the present study.

### 1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

#### Research Question 1

Were there statistically significant<sup>6</sup> improvements in the measurable component of Grade 11 students’ ‘academic literacy’ skills, as proxied by their (written) ‘literacy’ scores, when the RtL intervention was used? And, furthermore, do more nuanced qualitative findings (generated using a case study method) triangulate with the quantitative findings?

#### Objective

To use descriptive and analytical statistics to assess whether there were improvements or not in students’ ‘literacy’ scores over time. A linguistic biographical questionnaire was administered to unpack situational context of students, but, more importantly, an analysis of individual students’ writing samples, as part of a case study method, was used to triangulate the quantitative findings.

#### Research Question 2

In comparison to applications of RtL in Australia, were the improvements or lack thereof in students’ ‘literacy’ scores for the present South African context, similar or different?

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<sup>5</sup> My own involvement as a past board member of the local body of RtL South Africa has prompted my interest in this particular study, thus a possible bias in favour of RtL has to be noted. This will be taken into account by using as many controls as possible in an attempt to counterbalance any possible bias. In 2013, I resigned from the board of RtL South Africa to avoid any conflict of interest.

<sup>6</sup> *Statistically significant* refers to the fact that any increase or decrease in ‘literacy’ scores is due to some meaningful underlying process (i.e. the RtL intervention), and not purely due to random occurrence or chance. However, I do accept that only in a controlled experiment can one say that an increase, for example, in ‘literacy’ scores *is* because of RtL – in this sense, making a causal inference of some kind.

## **Objective**

To use descriptive and analytical statistics to assess whether the improvements, or lack thereof, in students' 'literacy' scores were similar or not to applications of RtL in Australia.

## **1.4 Preliminary Literature Review**

### **1.4.1 Rationale for 'Academic Literacy' Intervention before University**

Due to growing concern about low retention rates of undergraduate students at university, the quality of the National Senior Certificate has come under scrutiny, as discussed briefly in Sections 1.1 and 1.2. Various researchers have reported on the under-preparedness of matriculants in South Africa (Troskie-De Bruin, 1999; Penrose, 2002; Van Schalkwyk, 2008 and Allardice, 2013). This has given rise to an increase in the number of 'academic literacy' development modules on offer at universities, making such programmes an essential component of undergraduate studies, especially for extended degree programmes. However, if adequate 'academic literacy' intervention was to be offered at the FET phase (Grades 10-12) universities would not have to spend large amounts of money preparing undergraduate students adequately for their tertiary studies. The burden need not be passed on to institutions of higher learning if low-cost, alternative approaches to 'academic literacy' development can be implemented as part of the current secondary school curriculum. RtL was designed for this purpose, to assist in the development of 'academic literacy' skills across the curriculum.

### **1.4.2 Brief Overview of Reading to Learn**

RtL's pedagogic strategy was developed to address the unsatisfactory performance of indigenous Australian students, and improve both educational access and success, where academic reading and writing skills appeared to be key determinants of these educational outcomes. The conceptual framework which underpins RtL includes: Vygotsky (1978) (learning as a social process); Halliday (1978; 1989; 1996) (language as a text within a social context) and Bernstein (1975; 1990; 1996) (education as a pedagogic discourse). RtL offers a top-down approach to 'academic literacy' development, beginning with the text as a whole unit and working down toward an orientation of individual words within a text (Millin, 2011;

Millin & Millin, 2014). Research into the effectivity of RtL could be valuable as its methodology is theoretically sound, and it attempts to synthesise tried and tested features of a number of different pedagogies.

RtL attempts to combine different aspects of various ‘academic literacy’ pedagogies, resulting in an educational methodology that may be able to fast-track development of students’ ‘academic literacy’ skills (Rose, 2005; Acevedo, 2010; Millin, 2011). Numerous studies undertaken in contexts other than South Africa have demonstrated that RtL is effective at improving ‘academic literacy’ skills (see, for example, McRae, Ainsworth, Cummings, Hughes, Mackay & Price, 2000; Rose & Acevedo, 2006; Acevedo, 2010; Millin & Millin, 2014). Research has also revealed that the smaller (weaker) the students’ ‘literacy’ base, the greater the ‘literacy’ gains, thereby democratising the classroom (Rose, 2005; Rose & Acevedo, 2006; Rose, Rose, Farrington & Page, 2008; Millin, 2011; Millin & Millin, 2014). This is largely due to the fact that RtL’s fundamental objective is to reallocate categories of language awareness or consciousness from higher socioeconomic communities to societal groups alienated by middle class pedagogic discourse and practices. In other words, RtL’s purpose is to eliminate educational oppression by making use of a methodology that aims to assist students in the attainment of vital orientations to reading and writing, achieved by intensive scaffolding in carefully created interactive cycles (Rose & Martin, 2012; Millin & Millin, 2014). See Chapter Three for a detailed discussion of RtL.

### **1.4.3 Previous Research on Reading to Learn**

The use of RtL has become more widespread globally, with schools in Australia, Europe, Scotland, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, Chile and Japan making use of RtL in various forms. However, most of the research being conducted, and subsequently published, revolves around the implementation of RtL at the primary school level, or tertiary level. Because the RtL methodology enables an implementation across the curriculum, and at all levels of education, it stands to reason that RtL can also be introduced at a secondary school level, too. To date, little research has been conducted on the efficacy of RtL in a South African context, hence, having to draw on research that has been produced by Rose et al (2008), Rose, Lui-Chivizhe, McKnight & Smith (2004) and Millin (2011). Although the

research of Rose et al (2004) and Rose et al (2008) are located in a tertiary context in Australia, from a sampling point of view, these studies are the most comparable, because their sample groups are closest to the age group of the participants sampled for the purposes of this study.

Both Rose et al (2004) and Rose et al (2008) offer an evaluation of RtL at two different centers at the University of Sydney. A mixed methods approach was used for both studies: students' writing samples (qualitative data) were collected and given numerical scores (quantitative data) based on a well researched writing assessment rubric developed in line with educational linguistic theory (Martin & Rose, 2003; Rose et al, 2008; Millin, 2011). The rubric is presented in Chapter Four (Section 4.7). The rubric offered an assessment of students' writing at four different levels: context; discourse; grammatical features, and graphic representation<sup>7</sup>. Both studies found an upward trend (general improvement) with regard to students' changing 'literacy' scores. However, with regard to the findings of the first study, one has to be cautious in blindly accepting the conclusions drawn (conclusion validity)<sup>8</sup>. For instance, the sample size from Rose et al (2008) might be considered small - 25 students in total, representing three separate Health Science programmes over years one, two and three of a three-year degree. Therefore, given the relatively small sample size, concern might be raised with regards to the validity of the conclusions drawn. Furthermore, due to the fact that most students opted not to take part in the study, one is not sure whether the sample was truly randomly selected, therefore, arousing concerns about possible sample selection bias and representativeness of the sample, which, in turn, casts doubt about the inferences drawn from the study. However, this is not to say that a non-randomly selected sample cannot be representative of the broader population under investigation. To the contrary, irrespective of whether a sample is randomly selected or not, under the assumption that said sample is reasonably 'representative', stronger claims (inferences) can be made.

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<sup>7</sup> Context (purpose, staging, phases, field, tenor, mode); discourse (lexis, appraisal, conjunctives, cohesion); grammatical features (formal English grammar) and graphic representation (spelling, punctuation, presentation).

<sup>8</sup> (Statistical) conclusion validity refers to the 'power' of a particular research method to uncover meaningful patterns or relationships in the data, in so doing, making the conclusions drawn from the study more 'truthful'. Such conclusions are usually made stronger by the study's (larger) sample size and (smaller) alpha level of the data patterns observed (Trochim, 1997). The alpha or significance level refers to the probability of making a Type I error, which would entail rejecting a true null hypothesis (a 'false positive' as such or finding a relationship, when in actual fact, there is no relationship exhibited in the data), where the null hypothesis variously implies: not statistically significant; no relationship or no difference etc.

Another element of concern regarding conclusion validity in the Rose et al (2008) study is that an exponential trend line was used as a means to test the ‘efficacy’ of RtL. Although an exponential trend line is a useful tool to forecast changes or show general patterns of behavior in students’ ‘literacy’ scores, it does not say much more beyond this, and certainly does not say anything about whether the *change in* scores (performance) across assessed pieces of writing were statistically significant, when moving from one piece of writing to the next. The quantitative data analysis in Rose et al (2008) merely offered a forecast (i.e. upward trend) of students’ ‘literacy’ scores, but did not offer a more in-depth statistical analysis throughout the process of implementing RtL. In other words, RtL represents a process-based approach to ‘literacy’ development, which implies that a process-based research method (i.e. a pairwise comparison procedure) would be most suited to researching RtL’s efficacy as a ‘literacy’ intervention. For example, in an attempt to remedy the shortcomings of Rose et al (2008), I conducted a pilot study during 2010, which offered a more rigorous statistical analysis of the implementation of RtL at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) (See Millin, 2011; Millin & Millin, 2014).

To explain further, as part of a coursework Masters thesis (See Millin, 2011), I made use of a mixed methods approach. Students’ writing samples (qualitative data) were coded and quantified (quantitative data) using the same assessment rubric as Rose et al (2004; 2008) to ensure internal validity. However, the study at UKZN differed in that a more advanced method of statistical analysis was applied. Because the data was found not to be normally distributed, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to test the change in students’ individual scores across assignments or assessed pieces of writing. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test, together with a detailed curriculum and content analysis, offered a more detailed examination of, and explanation for, changes in ‘literacy’ performance at specific points in time throughout the process of implementing RtL<sup>9</sup>. This type of analysis allows for structural problems to be identified in the implementation of RtL. Severe limitations to the UKZN study included issues related to the sampling process (students represented one tutorial group

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<sup>9</sup> Instead of taking the difference in *overall* distribution into consideration, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test computes the pairwise difference in performance for *each* student, when computing the test statistic. This, together with a content analysis of the curriculum, offers a deeper analysis of what aspect of the course better assisted students in their reading and writing development.

out of four only) and the length of the implementation of RtL (RtL was administered over one semester only and not one academic year).

A preliminary review of the literature reveals a dearth of research evidence with regards to RtL in a South African context. For example, the peer-reviewed papers by Wildsmith-Cromarty and Steinke (2014), and Millin and Millin (2014), both of which researched the use and efficacy of RtL at UKZN, are the only studies for a tertiary context, but to date, there has been no empirical study of RtL for the secondary (or even primary) schooling context in South Africa. Having considered the limitations of the studies conducted in Australia, it is hoped that this Doctoral research will be able to add to the body of knowledge about RtL, and thus offer an original contribution to our understanding of RtL in a South African context.

### **1.5 Research Design and Methodology**

This study was designed to incorporate a long-term action research approach, as the goals of the study were to instigate pedagogic change, whilst concurrently explaining and assessing that change in a particular context (McNiff, 2002). Furthermore, an action research design was chosen because one of the more important objectives of an action research is not to develop new knowledge, but to improve pedagogic practice (Pring, 2006). Although new knowledge might arguably be generated through this study, it is hoped that the new knowledge could be used to **improve** the implementation of RtL in the FET phase of secondary schooling (Grades 10-12), if RtL is shown to be effective.

The study was located *mainly* (but not limited to) in stages three (implementation of pedagogy), four (observation and evaluation), and five (evaluation, discussion and recommendations) of a five-stage action research cycle (Thomas, 2009). Further, the study made use of a case study approach, characterised by an in-depth examination focusing specifically on issues related to trends in the data (Denscombe, 1998). This provided for a more holistic analysis of the data. Descriptive statistics and tests of significance comprised the quantitative research methods. A case study of students' writing samples and linguistic biography comprised the qualitative research methods.



Conceptually, it could be argued that the philosophical assumptions of this study comprised a realist ontology, and positivist approach to epistemology. For the purposes of this study, the reality concerning the efficacy of RtL at the two Winelands schools, was based upon the changing ‘literacy’ scores of Grade 11 students (quantitative data), thus presenting an “independent” (objective) reality external to the opinion of the researcher (Pring, 2006). However, although the ‘literacy’ scores comprised quantitative data, such scores were generated with the use of a holistic marking rubric, which in itself, represented both objective and subjective elements for grading a particular student’s performance. For instance, although the marker had clearly defined (objective) categories from which to choose, the marker still had to make a subjective choice about which category best accorded with a particular student’s performance. If for this reason only, elements of an interpretivist epistemology may likely have had effect. In other words, I was unable to separate growing knowledge about each individual student’s performance to state categorically, that the marking was purely objective. Hence, elements of subjectivity may have crept into the process. It must be noted though, that measures were put in place to avoid subjectivity in marking as far as possible. These included ‘blind’ marking and randomly selecting scripts to be double marked to check for consistency.

Choinski, Mark & Murphy (2003) argue that the adoption of a marking rubric does offer an objective framework with which educators may be able to perform evaluation measures. However, Shay (2008) queries whether this practice is truly impartial for assessment purposes, because assessment rubrics may often involve socially situated decision making, for which there ordinarily might be disagreement amongst different markers, rendering the assessment process interpretive (Millin, 2011). Although it is often seen as erroneous to combine differing epistemological paradigms in research, it might be better to locate this study within critical realism, where reality can be independent of our thinking, but errors might exist in our construction of, and search for reality (Pring, 2006).

### **1.5.1 Methods of Data Collection**

This study relied on data collected from Grade 11 students at two separate schools in the Winelands District. One English Home Language class and two English First Additional

Language classes comprised the sample group of approximately 100 students. See Chapter Four (Section 4.6) for a detailed description of the two schools. Firstly, because RtL incorporates an aspect of the ‘genre’-process approach to ‘literacy’ development, the data comprised individual students’ scores from numerous formative writing assessments (quantitative data). Secondly, a portfolio of all written assessments for numerous students (divided into weak and strong students) was collected to form the data for the case study (qualitative data). Thirdly, an analysis of the RtL curriculum was briefly used to enhance the discussion of the case studies. A linguistic biographical questionnaire was also given to students, but only served to describe in detail the students participating in the study. Each piece of writing, which represented the qualitative data, was marked and coded according to a specially designed holistic rubric. The rubric was the same as rubrics used in previous studies of RtL to ensure consistency and internal validity, for purposes of comparing the results of this project with other studies of RtL in Australia. To ensure consistency with marking standards, the full sample of approximately 100 students was marked by me. This study made use of primary data collection (and analysis), because the data generating process entailed data collection for the purposes of this study only.

Figure 1.3 shows a conceptual representation of the implementation and data collection process of this study. It is important to note that I wanted to replicate the study in semester two if time allowed. However, due to school timetabling constraints, sports events, extra-curriculum excursions and general disruptions in the day-to-day running of the two schools, replication was not possible. For instance, the RtL intervention for Sample Cohort 1 represented schools A and B in the Winleands District and comprised roughly 28 to 35 Grade 11 students per class (approximate sample size or  $n = 100$ ). For purposes of replication, which entails the notion of reliability by using repeated sampling, the RtL intervention for Sample Cohort 2 was meant to represent schools C and D in the Winelands District comprising roughly 30 Grade 11 students per class (approximate sample size or  $n = 90$ ). As mentioned, implementation of RtL at schools C and D did not materialise due to time constraints. However, in some sense, the study of schools A and B in semester one was replicated in semester two, because a second ‘genre’ of writing was implemented at the same two schools. Replication, not necessarily in a repeated sample sense, but by choosing an alternative ‘genre’ for implementation, would now be tantamount to keeping the sample the

same, but picking a new set of “errors” to test whether the general patterns observed, still hold under a different ‘genre’ of writing (under different ‘genre’ assumptions). From this perspective, the general patterns of ‘literacy’ performance observed were similar in nature across both ‘genres’ of writing, meaning that, the general results were reproduced under different assumptions pertaining to the myriad ‘genre’ writing conventions.

**Figure 1.3: Conceptualising the Reading to Learn Intervention Research Process**

Schools A and B RtL Intervention (Sample Cohort 1)				Schools C and D RtL Intervention (Sample Cohort 2)	
Grade 11 Semester One	Benchmark Assessment	Process-based Assessments	Final Assessment	Grade 11 Semester Two	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <b>CANCELLED</b> </div>

Source: Author’s compilation

### 1.5.2 Methods of Data Analysis

To assess the levels of and changes in students’ ‘literacy’ scores, the following two kinds of statistical techniques were used:

Descriptive statistics incorporated tables, graphs and summary statistics (e.g. measures of central tendency and dispersion) to explore similarities or differences in students’ ‘literacy’ scores. The specific descriptive statistics used were based on whether the data in question was (assumed to be) normally distributed or not. Making such a distinction is an important consideration when deciding whether to use parametric or nonparametric (distribution-free) statistical techniques.

More specific statistical techniques were used, which take cognisance of the fact that I wanted to incorporate more of the available information about an individual student’s performance across different written assessments. For the purposes of this study, owing largely to the fact that small samples of data were collected over time, a Wilcoxon signed-

rank test (for related samples) might best be suited to analysing such data. Furthermore, such a test also assists one in determining whether there is likely to be a statistically significant overall improvement or decline between written assessments over time.

The quantitative data analysis formed the basis for a more detailed analysis of the qualitative data (individual case studies and curriculum assessment), because it served to highlight changes in students' writing skills that could only be explained further by a closer inspection of students' writing portfolios. A content/curriculum analysis of the RtL intervention was also used to assist further in the possible explanation of changing trends in students' 'literacy' scores, scores which were considered indicators of their 'academic literacy' skills. Additionally, an analysis of students' writing portfolios, selected for the case studies, was used as a means of triangulation with regard to the results obtained from the quantitative data. A coding system was used to analyse changes in students' writing. The variables used in the coding process were closely aligned with the holistic marking rubric discussed in Chapter Four (Section 4.7). For example, the marking rubric assigned a mark for the use of conjunctives in students' writing. The analysis of students' writing would then highlight or show an increased/decreased ability to use conjunctives in their writing over the course of the RtL intervention.

## **1.6 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics "refers to the search for rules of conduct that enable [researchers] to operate defensibly in the context in which [they] have to conduct [their] research" (Pring, 2006: 142). As a result, several ethical considerations were taken into account when this research project was conducted. These included rules to protect, first and foremost, the students. Students who took part in the RtL programme were briefed about the option of their school-based grades being made available for this research project. Students were informed that their permission was to be given on a voluntary basis; that grades would remain confidential throughout the research and anonymity would be maintained in the write-up of the research findings. The data would be stored in electronic format on my (the researcher's) personal computer only. The file containing students' 'literacy' scores would be password protected. Student portfolios would also be safely stored and made available to me only. Use of this data in the

future would be for research purposes only, under the proviso that student anonymity be maintained so that no link could be made between a particular student's name and their respective scores.

### **1.7 Definition of Key Concepts Used**

There are two key concepts in this study, that of '**academic literacy**' and **RtL**. Given the complexity of these two concepts, and the importance thereof to the study, considerable attention will be given to unpacking the meaning of these two concepts within the context of this study, in the next two chapters. For this reason, I do not define or briefly explain these two terms in this section, but define various other concepts here deemed important to this study. Given that clarity of terms is needed to ensure the reader is working from the same frame of reference as the researcher, with regards to terminology used in the research project or study, a brief definition and/or explanation is provided for the following terms:

#### **Teacher/Researcher**

For the purposes of this study, I act as both the 'researcher' (i.e. the person investigating the effects of an intervention for explorative purposes) and the 'teacher' – the researcher and teacher are one-in-the-same person. Although somewhat rhetorical, their roles are briefly described as follows. The teacher enables learning to take place in a classroom setting (Northedge in Van Schalkwyk, 2008: 11), and was responsible for the creation of lesson materials and the dissemination of those materials in a structured lesson format. The researcher, amongst other things, collects the data; conducts the data analysis and collates the findings into a document detailing the entire process, from conceptualisation of the study through to conclusions and recommendations.

#### **Academic Development**

Given that this study is located in a South African context, the term 'academic development' represents educational development in a secondary school context to help promote equal access to quality learning opportunities. With a greater equality in access to quality education, there is a greater chance that more students might achieve successful learning outcomes (Scott in Van Schalkwyk, 2008: 10).

## **Secondary School**

Education in South Africa is governed by two national departments: the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The DBE is responsible for primary and secondary schooling which includes Grades 0-9 (referred to as primary education) and Grades 10-12, also known as the Further Education and Training (FET) phase or band. The FET phase is not to be confused with university or tertiary level education, which is governed by the DHET. So, for the purposes of this study, secondary school students and the secondary school context, refer to Grade 11 students located in the FET phase or band, which is governed by the DBE.

## **Students**

Students refer to the Grade 11 students taking part in the study. They are, at times, also referred to as learners, but generally speaking, I have tried to maintain consistency by referring to the subjects taking part in the study as ‘students’. Given the location of the two school sites, it is also unfortunate to have to label students even further into ‘marginalised students’ or ‘advantaged students’. This is an important distinction to make, because whether a student is categorised as advantaged or not, says something about the level of resources made available to students at school for ‘academic literacy’ development. So for the purposes of this study, being classified as advantaged means students coming from higher socioeconomic homes or communities whereas, being classified as marginalised means those students coming from lower socioeconomic homes or communities. Another term that is sometimes used to represent marginalised students is ‘previously disadvantaged students’.

## **Discourse**

‘Discourse’ is defined as ways of doing-saying-being-valuing and believing in the world (Gee, 1989). It provides one with an identity and in providing one with an identity can also confirm membership in a particular community. ‘Discourse’ moves beyond language usage only and assigns behavior. For example, the ‘Discourse’ of a religious group may ascribe ways of behaving, dressing, interacting, what food may or may not be eating, what activities are appropriate or not and what language usage is considered appropriate. This is unpacked briefly in Chapter Two, section 2.3.

**Discourse (d)**

Discourse with a little (d) is defined as a succession of sentences, spoken or written and used to convey meaning (Matthews, 2007). Taking this definition a step further, ‘discourses’ are ways of using language which share particular meanings, and have specific linguistic features assigned to them (Paltridge, 2010). Therefore, ‘discourse’ means language in use and encompasses ways of using language. This would then mean it is very much tied to which ‘Discourse’ community one is using language in. This is unpacked briefly in Chapter Two, section 2.4.

**1.8 Impact of the Study**

Given that there is a dearth of research into the use of RtL in the South African context, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge, and provide a growing body of research into alternative ‘academic literacy’ development pedagogies to aid student throughput in the secondary schooling system and at South African universities. RtL has been introduced to academics across South Africa, and has been met with a large amount of criticism due to differences in the Australian and South African situational contexts in which RtL has been implemented. This study aims to shed light on the applicability of RtL in South Africa. If the use of RtL is shown to be effective, it is hoped that its use can be extended to other schools in the Western Cape, and at a later stage, to other schools across South Africa.

**1.9 Thesis Organisation**

In keeping with recommended practices for structuring a thesis (Prosser & Webb, 1994), this section outlines how the thesis will proceed. **Chapter two** explores in more detail the nature of ‘literacy’, ‘academic literacy’ and its competing ideologies in a changing environment in the field of Education and Linguistics. **Chapter three** describes and discusses some of the theoretical propositions underpinning RtL, including insights into the work of Halliday. Because Halliday posits that language is essentially socially-constructed, a discussion of ‘genre’ theory and systemic functional grammar is deemed necessary. The work of Vygotsky (scaffolding learning) is also given importance followed by a discussion of the work of

Bernstein (codes of knowledge in education) in critiquing current definitions of ‘academic literacy’ in higher education.

**Chapter four** outlines the research design, data collection process, methods of data analysis and limitations to the study. This chapter also offers a description of the school sites and the data to be collected, laying the foundations for the qualitative and quantitative data analysis to follow in subsequent chapters. **Chapter five** comprises the qualitative data description and analysis, providing a detailed description of who the students are by means of a linguistic biography. This chapter includes a more nuanced analysis, by considering a more detailed breakdown of a smaller sample of selected students’ ‘literacy’ scores (by the various rubric categories of assessment) for each piece of writing, as well as each selected student’s writing portfolio, to triangulate the general patterns emerging from the quantitative data analysis of the larger sample of students (by class cohort) undertaken in Chapter six. This chapter uses a case study approach to consolidate certain qualitative and quantitative data in order to develop key theoretical propositions concerning RtL and its implications for educational equality. **Chapter six** comprises the quantitative data description and analysis of all students’ ‘literacy’ scores, across both schools. The aim of this chapter is to describe and explain various general patterns of behavior observed in the data, which can be viewed as an extension of the propositions made in Chapter five.

**Chapter seven** offers a more detailed discussion and critique of the data findings, and links the findings to related theory discussed in Chapter three. **Chapter eight** then concludes the thesis by restating the research questions and objectives; commenting on various key findings in context of the stated research questions and objectives; offering recommendations for future research and implementation of RtL in South Africa; outlining the important contribution to knowledge that has been made; explaining various limitations of the study and, lastly, critically reflecting on what might be done differently in future studies.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERACY AND ACADEMIC LITERACY**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In Chapter One the ‘literacy’ context of South African students was outlined. It drew attention to a possible crisis in ‘literacy’ development within the secondary school context, which is then carried forward to Universities across South Africa. In this chapter, the concept of ‘literacy’ and subsequently ‘academic literacy’ is explored thereby offering the reader a definition of ‘academic literacy’ for the purposes of this study. This is important given the multiple meanings often given to the concept ‘academic literacy’ in scholarly work and because the lens chosen through which to understand ‘academic literacy’ for the purposes of this study is different to many broader, more contemporary understandings of ‘academic literacy’. Whilst unpacking the concept of ‘academic literacy’, the concept of ‘Discourse’ and ‘discourse’ is given brief attention. This chapter then concludes.

#### **2.2 Definitions of Literacy**

A number of key concepts at the centre of this study include ‘literacy’, ‘Discourse’, ‘discourse’, ‘primary discourse’, ‘secondary discourse’, and ‘academic literacy’. In attempting to describe and explain what these concepts entail and to offer a concrete definition of ‘literacy’ for the purposes of this study, one needs a brief explanation of the above concepts to ensure both the researcher, and the intended readership of this research are using the same frame of reference. This is largely due to the complex and often varied considerations given to these concepts, and particularly to ‘literacy’ and subsequently ‘academic literacy’. Such clarification of central concepts is also given to counter popular perceptions often held in publicly available print resources as well as in mainstream news organisations which narrowly infer that to be literate incorporates skills pertaining to reading and writing only. Being literate encompasses so much more than just being able to read and write printed texts.

On the one hand, 'literacy', at a basic level, is understood to encompass the ability to read and write with a strong emphasis of making use of the letters of an alphabet (Gee, 1989a). In other words, 'literacy' entails the possession of skills relating to reading, writing and arithmetic (Govender, 2011:16). But Williams and Snipper (1990:4) argue that the ability to read and write only well enough to function at a very basic level in a community can only really be considered as 'functional literacy', or 'low literacy'. Gee (1989a) articulates that, in general, the literate individual is able to make use of a set of social practices to maintain social interaction. This is echoed by Gibson (1996:1) who defines 'literacy' as a common sense social need. Whatever skill is needed to interact and function in a community, if an individual possesses the skills to enable them to do that, they could be considered literate. Again, this brings into question whether the ability to function in a community can be considered 'low literacy' if that ability is at a very basic level. From the five very brief articulations of what comprises 'literacy', one can already observe that it is a highly debatable concept with very grey boundaries. Because of this, the term 'literacy' will be unpacked in more detail in paragraphs to follow.

The concept 'literacy' is used to refer to a complex and multifaceted set of skills. It is understood differently within different domains and therefore often gives rise to misunderstanding of the processes of acquisition, learning or development of 'literacy' by individuals within various disciplines, including Linguistics and Language Education. At a very basic level, 'literacy' has come to refer to an individual's ability to read and write. However, with recent developments, also in technologies, the term has become referent to different types or levels of 'literacy', of which the most common is referred to as 'functional literacy'. According to Williams and Snipper (1990:4), 'functional literacy' denotes the ability to read well enough and write well enough to function adequately in a particular society. This could include the ability to understand road signs, read the headlines of a newspaper or write a cheque. Given the vast developmental and social differences in societies across the world, and their rate of advancement, the very definition of 'functional literacy' could be interpreted differently from one society to another. Consequently, the concept 'literacy' has given rise to distinctions between 'high literacy' and 'low literacy', or between individuals possessing 'restricted literacy' and others with 'full literacy' (Gee, 1989a: 39). It is generally understood that development of the latter is what gives access to higher order

mental skills (Anat & Yehudit, 2003; Rose & Martin, 2012). Given the above, it stands to reason then that one can argue that different types of ‘literacy’ exist within different communities of practice<sup>10</sup>, and that these have different social and mental effects on different groupings given the social and cultural context in which they are located. Gee (1989a) then articulates that ‘literacy’ should be considered as a set of practices that enable the use of language to make sense of social interaction; such a coherent set of practices is referred to as ‘Discourse’. These ‘Discourse’<sup>11</sup> practices are integrally connected to the societal or cultural grouping’s worldviews and sense of identity (Gee, 1989a:39).

Naive and unreflective understandings of ‘literacy’ often hold that becoming literate involves the acquisition of the three R’s only – reading, writing and arithmetic (Govender, 2011: 16). However, this is a dated perception which has not yet come to grips with the concept of ‘New Literacies’. This has come to represent the ability to comprehend multi-modal type texts – print, film, music, technology, and art to name a few (O’Brien & Scharber, 2008; Antonacci & O’Callaghan, 2011). Furthermore, and perhaps more controversially, communities which do not develop and use knowledge acquired through printed texts (verbal or multimodal) in their everyday life may still function very well and can thus, in slightly different terms, be considered literate too. For example, farm labourers working in an environment which requires knowledge of farming activity acquired practically and not through printed texts, can be considered literate even if the skills needed to function within that ‘Discourse’ are not based on conventional ‘literacy discourse’ practices (Gibson, 1996).

Although this study will ultimately use very narrow definitions of ‘literacy’ and ‘academic literacy’ (See section 2.6 below), it is nevertheless important to delineate the concepts set out at the beginning of this section. This is in an effort to further highlight the complexity of what it means to be being considered ‘literate’, and to understand the barriers experienced by students who have not grown up in homes or communities with ‘conventional literacy’ practices. In terms of social mobility in modern societies ‘functional literacy’, or ‘low literacy’ arguably counts as a severe handicap, not only as a limitation to employment, but

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<sup>10</sup> A community of practice is a group of people who engage on an ongoing basis to achieve a common purpose. These communities emerge in response to a common goal and have a shared set of practices (Eckert, 2006). The example used in this chapter referred to the farm labourer community.

<sup>11</sup> The concept ‘Discourse’ is unpacked briefly in section 2.3 of this Chapter.

also to life chances more generally. In a country wracked with inequality and high levels of unemployment, limited levels of ‘literacy’ (where ‘literacy’ is measured in terms of levels achieved in reading and writing skills) are considered an obstacle.

According to Gibson (1996: 1), predominant ‘discourses’ of society construct ‘literacy’ as a “commonsense social need” according to which people tend to label others as possessing either a ‘high literacy’ or ‘low literacy’. For example, in a Developed Economy or Western Society where the ability to read and write opens doors for employment, being able to read and write well would allow an individual to identify themselves as being in possession of ‘high literacy’. Conversely, an individual unable to read and write well enough to secure employment might be considered to be in possession of ‘low literacy’. Such a ‘social discourse’ results in people being included or excluded from the dominant spaces and opportunities of a given society. The misconception underlying this notion then is that those who fall short in a set of skills that would qualify them as ‘literate’ would be unsuitable in a range of socially valued activities, including their work performance. I decidedly use the term “misconception” here as it is just that – a misconception, or mistaken belief that only the conventionally ‘literate’ will have any chance of employment and thus also of good life chances in modern society.<sup>12</sup> For example, the work of Gibson (1996) in rural farmlands in the Western Cape highlighted that in labour intensive communities, those with specialised skills such as artisans, builders and farm labourers, often need a type of ‘literacy’ far removed from that of ‘literacy’ practices that rely solely on printed texts.

Where definitions of ‘literacy’ refer specifically to levels of schooling and ‘literacy’ skills developed in the school curriculum, it is not surprising that the schooling ‘discourse’ or University ‘discourse’ inadvertently functions to stratify people in society. ‘Discourse’ and ‘discourse’ is unpacked in more detail in paragraphs to follow. For the purposes of this study, this research adopts the stance that students, for whichever reason, intend to advance to a higher education institution, such as a University, after completion of their secondary school

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<sup>12</sup> By ‘conventional literacy’ I refer to the kind identified in the work of Govender (2011) who states that being literate involves the ability to read and write, and do arithmetic; to previous research by Millin (2011) where ‘literacy’ refers to the ability to read and write (English) texts with comprehension; as well as to a Unesco report (2006:149) which states that ‘literacy’ is a set of tangible skills, particularly the cognitive skills of reading and writing.

education, will need to become members of what can be identified as the “literate community”.

### 2.3 Defining ‘Discourse’

Gee (1989a), in defining ‘Discourse’, maintains that a ‘Discourse’ encompasses ways of doing-saying-being-valuing and believing in this world. ‘Discourse’ provides one with an identity and thus membership of a particular group. ‘Discourse’ is more than simply language or a language; it refers specifically to patterns of language use. Beyond language use it also involves behaviour in the community, or forms of “being”, which combine our language, acts, principles, mind-set as well as our social identities. ‘Discourses’ carry ideologies extant in a given ‘Discourse’ community and so determine what is acceptable or not within such a community. To contextualise the above definition as it applies to this research, the ‘Discourses’ prevalent in schools and universities have certain ways of doing-saying-being-valuing and believing which determine successful access to valued community spaces and events: the ‘discourse’ of an individual user shows his/her integration (or not) with the dominant ‘Discourse’ community.

### 2.4 Defining ‘(d)iscourse’

In a lot of the literature, ‘discourse’ represents ways of doing-saying-being-valuing and believing specific to the community that the ‘discourse’ is located in – very similar to that of a ‘Discourse’. Consequently, a schooling ‘discourse’ would entail the ability to read, write, think critically and present well informed opinions to name a few. But already, this definition has been found to be biased (Leibowitz, 2010). However, if one is to adopt an earlier viewpoint of a ‘discourse’, for the purposes of this study, it refers also to language in use<sup>13</sup>. According to Gee (1990:103), ‘discourse’ refers to any stretch of language (spoken or written) which hangs together and allows members belonging to a community to understand one another (socio-linguistic viewpoint). But this language usage is situated, meaning it is

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<sup>13</sup> [d]iscourse (with a little d) refers to language-in-use. When we combine the use of language with other social practices, such as ways of doing, behaving, believing, clothes worn and customs and practices, then we refer to Discourse (with a big D).

tied to an individual's experiences relative to the 'Discourse' they use the language in (MacKay, 2003:4)

These very specific language patterns are developed as conventions which eventually are observed as prescriptions. Failure to heed the discursive rules that make up school or university 'Discourses', which prescribe the type of 'discourse' that is acceptable, may alienate a speaker from the community and limit the kind of success he/she can expect within the institution. Considering the discursive access practices, it is not surprising then that not all students assimilate easily into the 'Discourse' communities of the formal educational domains of school or university. For example, a student from a low socioeconomic home coming into the university environment may find it very difficult to assimilate easily into the 'Discourse' practices of the university. Boughey (2002:296) attributes this difficulty to students being considered as outsiders to the university 'Discourse'. This would largely be due to a lack of familiarity with the 'literacy' practices of the university as well as its cultural values and practices (Taylor, 1988; Ballard & Clanchy, 1988; Thesen & Van Pletzen, 2006; Kapp, 2006). This then offers a way of bypassing the old-age practice of blaming student failure to that of language inadequacies and instead looks at 'academic literacy' practices of the university as an alienating force (Bernstein, 1990, 1996). In this scenario, providing students with pathways into the 'Discourse' of the university might help students better understand how language is used in a more formal context to convey meaning. Thus discursive conventions can limit access to the dominant 'literacy' practice of educational institutions as well as limiting the progress candidates make in acquiring the requisite practices. For the purposes of this study, providing access to the pathways of the University or school 'discourse' entails making explicit knowledge about how to write effectively for assessment purposes. Thus, this study will narrow its focus to a micro aspect of 'academic literacy'.

## **2.5 Discussion of 'Discourse' and '(d)iscourse'**

An important contributor to limited access in formal educational domains is to be found in differences between a students' 'primary Discourse' and the 'Discourse' of the school or university, which would be considered a 'secondary Discourse'. Very briefly, a 'primary

Discourse' includes ways of doing-saying-believing and valuing within the immediate family, or home. A 'secondary Discourse' includes the above but beyond the immediate family.

Students essentially acquire<sup>14</sup> both of these kinds of 'Discourse' but at different stages: a person's 'primary Discourse' is acquired through early socialisation within the family environment, whereas 'secondary Discourses' are acquired through a process of apprenticeship alongside individuals who have mastered a/the 'secondary Discourse', and subsequent ways of doing-saying-believing and valuing within a particular 'Discourse' (Gee, 1989a). In other words, a 'primary Discourse' includes the ways of being-doing-valuing, believing and talking within our immediate everyday lives, and interactions within this 'Discourse' are those we encounter on an everyday basis. Anything beyond our 'primary Discourse', which we acquire later on in life (after early socialisation) includes the way we use language, the way we feel, think, act and interact in a more public community. This includes wider communities beyond the family community (Gee, 2002:161).

How the acquisition of both 'primary' and 'secondary Discourses' impact on student achievement at school is important for the context of this study, because when the 'Discourse' of the school or university is similar to the 'primary Discourse' of students, such students have a proven learning advantage (Heath, 1983; Street, 1995; Gee, 1996; Gee, 1999; Rogers, 2002). Often the 'discourse' patterns preferred in education coincide with those of higher socioeconomic groups who also have had better educational opportunities and thus perpetuate kinds of linguistic stimulation conventionally associated with developing knowledge in an informal educational context. Parents who have achieved higher levels of education will thus be fully literate, be familiar with literacy practices used within educational domains and will be able to offer behavioural models for what is expected within a schooling context (Kapp, 2006). Children, who emanate from homes where the primary educators have achieved lower levels of 'literacy', will have had more limited linguistic stimulation in preschool development as well as during their schooling. Typically these

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<sup>14</sup> The difference between acquiring a 'Discourse' versus learning one is the following: acquisition involves acquiring something subconsciously through exposure. No formal teaching takes place and it usually happens in a more natural setting. Motivation is a key element in the acquisition of a language or in this case, a 'Discourse'. (Gee, 2002: 53). Learning on the other hand, requires an active teaching process whereby knowledge to be gained is made explicit by someone else; often someone who has mastered whatever is being taught.

children find it more difficult to acquire ways of doing-saying-being-valuing that enable a successful introduction to, and progress in formal schooling (considered a ‘secondary Discourse’) (Rose, 2005; Heath, 1982; Scollon & Scollon 1981).

‘Academic literacy’ (to be unpacked in the next paragraph) is considered a type of ‘Discourse’ (form of language use and awareness of how to behave and interact) in which knowledge is presented for learning purposes. It has been developed within school and university contexts and has become quite rigidly conventionalised as the preferred form of ‘Discourse’ for the schooling purposes. Students who have not intuitively, and through home context modeling acquired this ‘Discourse’ early on need to be assisted in school to assure fair educational opportunities. These students slower progress should not be construed as an innate biological deficiency, but rather as a lack of successful apprenticeship into the ‘Discourse’ of the educational domain (Bernstein, 1990; 1996; Rose, 1999). It is for this reason that Gee (2002:56) defined ‘literacy’ as a “control of secondary uses of language in ‘secondary Discourses’, or ‘dominant Discourses’.” Thus, ‘Academic Literacy’ can also be defined as a control or mastery of language from within a ‘secondary Discourse’ – university ‘Discourse’. ‘Academic Literacy’ will be unpacked further in the next section.

## 2.6 Defining Academic Literacy<sup>15</sup>

In educational debates across the country the ‘academic literacy’ skills of South African students are under regular discussion due to concern from stakeholders within the secondary school context as well as the university context (Groenewald, 2005; Unesco, 2011; Howie et al, 2012). The concept ‘academic literacy’ refers to multiple aspects of ‘literacy’ in a complex range of relations to one another and to other aspects of academic work. It is used with different meanings by different scholars and in different contexts. Here it will be given

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<sup>15</sup> This study, although describing a Western sense of ‘academic literacy’ (reading and writing skills) has as its foundation, an academic literacies framework which has its origination in New Literacy Studies. Universities and schools are seen as sites of discourse and power which involves a set of communicative practices which students need to adopt. Students need to be able to switch from their common conventional literacy practices of the home community and deploy a set of linguistic practices appropriate to the setting of formal education (Lea & Street, 1998). Chapter Three describes the Reading to Learn Literacy intervention which has as its foundation, this understanding and is designed to assist students in deploying appropriate reading and writing skills for assimilation into the formal discourse of schooling or university. This study does not advocate the use of printed texts only in the development of academic literacy but acknowledges the changing field of literacy to incorporate other forms of ‘new literacies’ as well.



special attention in order to delineate it and to ensure an understanding of what it actually means in the context of this study. Disambiguation of the concept is important as this thesis needs to work with a concept that can reflect meaningfully on strategies of teaching and learning that will improve the kind of ‘literacy skills’ required for building and using new knowledge in formal educational contexts. It is important to point out again that this study intends to evaluate one particular approach to the development of ‘academic literacy’ skills of secondary school students; it is not offering an overview of ‘academic literacy’ pedagogies in general. For this reason, this section will only briefly give an impression of different views currently held on what ‘academic literacy’ entails, in an effort to arrive at a definition of ‘academic literacy’ most suited to the purposes of this study.

Current statistics on the academic progress of students’ who have graduated from secondary school with the basic requirements for university entrance, indicate that exceptionally large numbers of these students are not doing well (Van Dyk & Weideman, 2004; McGhie, 2012; John, 2013). Numerous studies have indicated that a large number of students are poorly prepared for the academic rigours of university level studies (Troskie-De Bruin, 1999; Penrose, 2002; Van Schalkwyk, 2008; Leibowitz, 2010, and Allardice, 2013). According to Silver, Raslinda and Kogut, (2014:125) part of becoming a successful student at school or university requires successful learning of how to use academic language, the ‘discourse’ of formal educational domains. Therefore, a highly specialised form of ‘academic literacy’ is a prerequisite to educational success.

When attempting to explain the concept ‘academic literacy’, one is tempted to merely describe it as the skill of reading and writing which is often recognised as being the core components of the academically literate person. One could argue then that the academically literate individual is an individual who is able to read a text fluently with comprehension and is able to write a similar type of text coherently. It stands to reason that in a South African secondary school context and a South African university context, an academically literate student would have to be able to read an academic English<sup>16</sup> text fluently and with

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<sup>16</sup> This assumes English as the LoLT – and thus does not consider the 4 Universities in South Africa where a considerable number of students still use Afrikaans as well as English as LoLT. This is not a “debate” that can be dealt with here – the study concentrated on students with various L1s (including Afrikaans and isiXhosa) but all of whom have used English as the LoLT in secondary school and are preparing (mostly) for tertiary studies or employment where English will be the primary language of interaction.

comprehension, and then be able to produce similar text types in written English. Such ‘academic literacy’ is generally required for assessment purposes, but is also taken to be the best possible style and ‘genre’ for reliably presenting scientific knowledge. English is the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) for the Further Education and Training band (FET) in South Africa (See Chapter One, section 1.7 for clarification of the FET sector). However, as already mentioned in Section 2.2 above, defining ‘academic literacy’ without reference to the home language (L1) of a vast majority of South African students is exclusionary as it does not recognise the second language (L2)-development process that may contribute to students’ difficulties in assimilating into the ‘Discourse’ of the formal educational domain. The ways in which students who have L2-English as the language of learning and teaching make use of the ‘discourse’ of their home communities certainly needs special attention however, in order to maintain the focus of this study, only limited attention can be given to this aspect of the ‘academic literacy’ development of these students. For example, Leibowitz (2001:2) asserts that because ‘academic literacy’ contains a specific set of ‘discourse’ rules and regulations, influenced by written forms of language, and used primarily at institutions of secondary school and higher learning, students not able to fully embrace and utilise this ‘discourse’ (for whichever reason), are disadvantaged. This may very well encompass students whose ‘primary Discourse’ is vastly different to the ‘Discourse’ of formal education.

With the advancement of technology and the subsequent availability of vast sources of information stored and transmitted electronically, one cannot limit the skill set of ‘academic literacy’ to that of the printed word/text. For this very reason, both Van Schalkwyk (2008:26) and Kern (2000: 40) postulate that ‘academic literacy’ embraces more than just the skill of being able to read and write printed texts. They suggest that it involves far more, such as the ability to engage with reading and writing as supplementary tools for developing thought, for the acquisition of subject knowledge from both printed and technological sources, and for the development of critical thinking skills that will expand students’ comprehension of the self and the world in which one finds oneself located.

Hyland (2009) defines ‘academic literacy’ as the ways of thinking about and using language which exist in academic contexts such as in institutions of formal education. To reiterate, according to Gee (1989b:6) ‘discourse’ refers to “connected stretches of language” but these

particular “stretches of language” exist in a larger ‘Discourse’ which is often appropriated by a specific community of practice. For this reason, it would be erroneous to see ‘academic discourse’ as one single form in which to present a ‘stretch of language’ (with one rigid set of conventions) or as one that occurs universally across the broader university community. In concurrence with Gee, Kutz (1986:385) cautions against seeing ‘academic literacy’ as a static set of features. Instead, for these scholars, ‘academic discourse’ (which is produced on the basis of ‘academic literacy’ skills) is dynamic, and often prescribed differently by differing discipline ‘Discourses’. In other words, ‘academic literacy’, although it is a prescribed form of language use found within formal educational settings, it may be bound within prescribed organisational patterns or structures which differ when used in different academic disciplines. To add weight to the above statement, Kern (2000:23) points out that the concept ‘academic literacy’ is often seen as “an elastic concept: its meaning var[ying] according to the disciplinary lens through which one examines it”. This is also because each ‘genre’ of text has developed its own rules and regulations which may be context bound. To mention the variable forms in which academic texts and ‘discourses’ are presented of course still does not provide a concrete definition of what ‘academic literacy’ comes to represent within the context of this study.

Gilliver-Brown and Johnson (2009: 334) collated the research of Leki (2000) and Braine (2002) and defined ‘academic literacy’ as a range of skills, or simply as language use, situated in the formal educational domain. Understood holistically, it comes to represent competence in reading and writing, development of critical thinking skills, ability to become an autonomous student, effective practice in good judgment (perhaps also in the sourcing of credible academic information), and knowledge of academic writing conventions when writing of academic essays. From the above, it becomes clearer what cognitive skills and language skills are needed for ‘academic literacy’ skills development. Thus, ‘academic literacy’ combines inter-related competencies which Ratangee (2007:24-25) and Van Dyk and Weideman (2004:16-17) have defined in terms of measurable constructs. These include:

- Comprehending academic texts, illustrated by formulating own understanding
- Recognising and understanding words and ‘discourse’ markers in context of the broader text

- Summarising and synthesising information from numerous sources
- Identifying thesis statement, topic sentences and main supporting ideas
- Identifying and following academic arguments presented in texts
- Understanding arguments presented and evaluating evidence offered to support arguments
- Being able to draw inferences and conclusions based on strength of arguments
- Engaging in critical reading – distinguishing between fact and author bias
- Understanding information presented in visual formats
- Understanding basic numerical concepts and information presented numerically as in tables and graphs
- Reporting facts or narrating events
- Offering written assessment that moves beyond formulaic patterns and represents originality and criticality

The above points come to represent, to some degree, the definition of ‘academic literacy’ for the purposes of this study. Therefore, this study sees ‘academic literacy’ as a coherent set of skills to be understood within a functional model of language and communication. It then defines the academically literate student as one who is able to use written language to perform functions required within formal educational domains. According to Ballard and Clanchy (1988: 7-8) this includes, but is not limited to, the ability to produce essays that show a clear argument with evidence of analytical reasoning, an element of criticality and subject relevance. Further, academically literate students will be able to show evidence of an ability to follow rules and regulations for specific essay types.

In summarising the previous sections discussion which served to delineate the concept ‘academic literacy’ for this study, it was very broadly defined as a range of language skills, language usage situated in the formal educational domain, represents competence in reading and writing, development of critical thinking skills, ability to become an autonomous learner, good literacy practices (sourcing of credible information) and knowledge of academic writing conventions (discipline specific) to name a few. ‘Academic literacy’ is also seen as a coherent set of language skills in a functional model of communication. The ‘academic literate’ student is able to use written language to perform functions within the educational

domain – produce essays which show a clear argument, evidence of analytical reasoning, an element of criticality and subject relevance, and show an ability to follow rules and regulations whilst simultaneously also pushing the boundaries of the rules and conventions set by the educational domain, if need be.

In trying to locate the ‘academic literacies’ framework within which this study finds itself located, one has to very briefly unpack the problem of how ‘academic literacy’ is conceptualised within the secondary school context in South Africa. Often, knowledge is seen as something that has to be departed onto students (Jacobs, 2015) and the curriculum where knowledge is imbedded has to be learned. ‘Academic literacies’ is then seen as a set of skills that is to be taught to students through decontextualised methods and texts. Further, ‘academic literacy’ is taken to be a skill that has to be taught mostly to ESL students not considered proficient in English. The underlying assumption then is that any non-native speaker of English is considered to be deficient in any type of ‘academic literacy’ skill set. With this particular frame of mind, students are the problem and the source of poor performance, giving rise to the belief that ‘academic literacy’ is to be considered as an “add-on” module given by language practitioners to impart vital skills for success. This belief is what underlies a study-skills model of ‘academic literacy’ (Jacobs, 2015). Such an approach to ‘academic literacy’ often results in intensive grammar instruction through explicit teaching instruction. However, the intensive teaching of grammar skills does not necessarily result in the development of skill to produce extended pieces of cohesive and coherent writing. Students often tend to struggle to transfer rules of grammar into longer passages of writing. The academic skills model tries to remedy the short-comings of the study-skills approach by promoting general language proficiency to enable students to use English as the medium of instruction at school or university. Class activity has as its central focus, semantics and vocabulary development and more focus on the surface features of language skills which are supposedly more easily transferable to content specific modules. With the academic skills model, behaviourist theories of learning such as classical conditioning, positive reinforcement and focused drills are favoured. This means that the “add-on” model is seen more as an “add-on for support” model to ‘academic literacy’ development (Jacobs, 2015).

The ‘academic literacy’ framework that this study adopts is a move away from a focus on students as the problem, to the literacy development curriculum, the teacher and their pedagogic practice as sites where literacy development is centred and the school can contribute to the students’ progress. Students who in a traditional model would be identified as ‘linguistically deficient’ are assessed as being in need of assistance with the development of the requisite literacy skills for progress in learning more generally. Teachers need to be aware of students’ barriers to learning and need to provide appropriate supplementation to the school curriculum to ensure all students are able to succeed. Therefore, this study moves away from the classic autonomous, skills-based approach to an integrated ‘academic literacy across the curriculum’ approach where ‘academic literacy’ skills are taught within subject specific lessons. The ‘academic literacies’ framework is linguistically inclusive by using an integrated curriculum – academic skills integrated with content (Jacobs, 2015). The central focus is the teaching of disciplinary specific ‘academic literacy’ skills. In other words, ‘academic literacy’ is not seen as a separate lesson on its own, rather, ‘academic literacy’ skills are made explicit within a subject specific lesson. This means the pedagogic approach is one that attempts to move away from a purely normative approach (identify literacy practices, make them explicit and help students assimilate) to ‘academic literacy’ development towards a transformative approach (going one step further than normative – allow students to situate themselves within a subject discipline and begin to contest norms and conventions of the discipline). But, for the above to be realised, there needs to be an overlapping of the academic skills model (already discussed briefly above), academic socialisation model and academic literacies model (Jacobs, 2015). This study attempts to do just that.

The academic socialisation model is a move away from considering ‘academic literacy’ as a set of tangible skills. Students acquire ways of talking, writing, thinking that typify subject area inclusion and once rules have been acquired, students can reproduce them easily, but this does assume students have easy access to the rules. Access to different genres and different ways of constructing knowledge is made available which is aligned with a constructivist approach to language learning. RtL exhibits elements of the academic socialisation model but also incorporates aspects of the academic literacies model too. The academic literacies model is concerned with language usage that constructs meaning, identity and power and

foregrounds what counts as knowledge. It makes visible ways in which subject disciplines operate as a site of power and gives access to discourse knowledge. It also makes explicit relationships between the creation of power in discourse practices and actual literacy practices (Jacobs, 2015).

Within the ‘academic literacies’ framework, discipline-specific literacies are quite different from one discipline to another. It is believed that students best acquire these disciplinary ‘literacies’ by watching how experts from the specific disciplines model these literacy practices. In other words disciplinary specific literacies are best acquired when reading and writing are developed within the ways that particular disciplines use language. This means that disciplinary specific literacies are best taught within the context of particular academic disciplines by ‘insiders’ who have mastered the Discourses of those particular academic communities and understand how knowledge is made in their disciplines (Jacobs, 2015). The above challenges the *autonomous (individual / decontextualised)* view of academic literacy as a commodity; instead, offers an *ideological (social/contextualised)* view of ‘academic literacies’. It rejects skills-based models of ‘academic literacy’ as a stand-alone and rather sees reading, writing and meaning making as always situated within specific social practices. Helping students become academically literate therefore involves making explicit for students the literacy practices and disciplinary norms & conventions of their disciplines and the meaning-making purposes that they serve. The ‘academic literacies’ model also builds upon the new literacies approach which also sees reading, writing and literacy development embedded within social practices. The new literacies approach challenges the belief that literacy is concerned with the acquisition of a particular set of cognitive skills, which once acquired can be put to use unproblematically in any new context (Street, 1984; Gee, 1990). Work in the New Literacy Studies draws on linguistics and social anthropology for its theoretical and methodological framing and it takes, as its starting point, the position that literacy is not a unitary concept; reading and writing are cultural and social practices, and vary depending upon the particular context in which they occur.

A model of literacy which this study has not addressed is one that could be termed the critical literacy model. The primary proponent of this model is Street (1995) who has pointed out how literacy development is connected to larger social positionings. His critical position is

one that points out the way in which understandings of literacy have historically been developed within European and North American societies with a perspective that stigmatizes illiteracy and assumes that their model of literacy would assure easy solutions to societal difficulties of developing communities. More recently Pennycook (2004) has put forward similar considerations assuming a multiplicity of literacies. His approach is skeptical of literacy development models that assume there is a clear end goal where language practitioners and learners will succeed once they find the appropriate and effective pedagogy. This study has acknowledged the interconnectedness of social aspects of communities and the literacy development of learners from the communities. Given the set aim of testing the efficacy of a particular program, the study did not set out to critique RTL from this critical perspective. However, the importance of noting and avoiding idealisations of what can be achieved without attention to social and historical context, is acknowledged.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the concepts ‘literacy’ and ‘academic literacy’. However, a discussion of these concepts is not complete without unpacking the concepts ‘Discourse’ and ‘discourse’ as these provided the basis for understanding the academically literate individual. Consequently, this chapter opened with a discussion of ‘literacy’ followed by a discussion of ‘Discourse’ and ‘discourse’. This chapter then concluded after a discussion of ‘academic literacy’ and its definition in the context of this study. Chapter Three will move on to offering an overview of the literacy intervention chosen for implementation and investigation.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **READING TO LEARN**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter Two provided a basis for this chapter as it introduced the concepts ‘literacy’ and ‘academic literacy’ as it is realised in this study. This chapter provides an overview of a possible intervention for addressing the current ‘literacy’ concerns by firstly, presenting an overview of the Reading to Learn (RtL) intervention. Secondly, a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the intervention is offered in the following order: first, the work of Halliday is offered, according to which language is construed as a communicative instrument developed within a particular social context. Directly associated with this is a discussion of Genre Theory and Systemic Functional Grammar as these form a major part of the work of Halliday. Secondly, the seminal work of Vygotsky that positions learning as a social process is offered. Finally, the work of Bernstein in which education is seen as a pedagogic device in maintaining inequality is discussed. Bernstein’s work will assist in explaining some of the unequal ‘literacy’ outcomes in South Africa. His work provides a strong rationale for the use of RtL in a South African context. Before concluding this chapter, a very brief description of other studies of RtL in other national and international contexts is offered. It must be pointed out, that because this study is looking at the efficacy of RtL within a micro setting in South Africa, more attention is given to describing and explaining the intervention than to a deep discussion of ‘academic literacy’, ‘academic literacy models’ and a historical account of ‘academic literacy’. Further, more attention is given to describing what RtL is and given word limitations, this study does not necessarily engage in a deep critical analysis of RtL. This is a limitation to the study but it is hoped that this limitation will provide an avenue for paper publications in the form of a critical discussion of RtL within a South African context at a later stage.

#### **3.2 An Introduction to Reading to Learn**

RtL is a ‘literacy’ programme developed by scholars working within the linguistic framework of Systemic Functional Grammar who recognised a ‘literacy’ achievement gap between

academically successful and academically considerably less successful students. These scholars believed that their perspective on language as a social construct could be used to develop teaching and learning strategies that would close this gap (McRae et al, 2000; Culican, 2006; Rose, Rose, Farrington & Page, 2008). The gap was perceived as particularly pronounced between students from historically advantaged homes with easy access to the ‘Discourse’ of education, and historically less advantaged students with very limited access to the ‘Discourse’ of education conventionalised in their learning environment. (Rose & Acevedo, 2006) The fundamental premise, on which the RtL approach is based, is one which proposes redistributing categories of consciousness normally linked to middle-class occupations, to community groups disadvantaged by the ‘discourse practices’ of the high-literate community. By introducing middle class pedagogic ‘discourse’ to students from home communities largely excluded from such ‘discourse’, the RtL-developers believed they could democratize the school classroom, and offer equal opportunities of success to all students (Rose & Acevedo, 2006; Rose & Martin, 2012). In other words, RtL was developed with its main goal being to eliminate educational oppression by ensuring that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status or linguistic affiliation, have equal access to quality ‘literacy’ practices (Rose, Gray & Cowey, 1999). This they believe can be achieved by offering a ‘literacy’ intervention to students that has as its focus, the scaffolding<sup>17</sup> of students’ acquisition of vital orientations to reading and writing skills specific to formal educational domains.

Originally designed for use among Australian students in the middle years of schooling, RtL has been further developed to reach students across all grades of schooling, including adult education and the tertiary sector, as well as across subject disciplines. The programme has a number of distinct features, which are said to render it suitable for South African school-based interventions in a similar way to its suitedness to Australian students. These include a pedagogy designed to be appropriate for adolescent students; an inclusive pedagogy with regards to diversification of cultural and linguistic factors found within multilingual and multicultural classes; a close link to conventional, national curriculum standards and practices; flexible modes of delivery, and a strong supportive base for advanced ‘literacy

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<sup>17</sup> The term “scaffolding” is explained in detail in section 3.4.4 of this chapter. It basically refers to the input teachers give to students to assist them to produce tasks that they ordinarily would not be able to complete on their own.

development' which apply to reading and writing skills, as well as grammar skills. Further, RtL offers a 'literacy' pedagogy aimed at extending the 'literacy' skills of more abled students as well as those of underachieving students within one classroom (Culican, Rose & McCusker, 2004; Rose & Acevedo, 2006; Rose & Martin, 2012). In other words, it has been designed as a pedagogy that allows educators to "pitch" one lesson to diverse students with differing abilities and at different levels of skills development. It is hoped that this would limit the need to develop multiple classroom activities to meet the needs of diverse skill sets amongst students, and enable a more inclusive classroom practice.

RtL is a teaching and learning methodology for 'literacy' development. It includes a professional teacher development programme that, as mentioned above, was developed in Australia over a number of years to meet the needs of a community of students who typically find it difficult to gain access to learning content due to serious lags in their 'literacy' development (Rose, 2004; Rose & Martin, 2012). The programme is based on three core principles. The first principle derives from the assumption that reading provides the primary mode of learning. Thus, the explicit teaching of reading concurrently with the teaching of curriculum content is advised. Teachers then need to integrate the teaching of reading and writing skills across all subject disciplines (Rose & Acevedo, 2006:1). This means all teachers, regardless of subject discipline, are considered 'literacy' teachers. Secondly, unlike current trends in education in South Africa, which sees class activities pre-determined by student ability, all students in the same classroom are taught at the same level of reading and writing skills to ensure the abilities gap commonly found in classrooms, and maintained by differentiated learning, is not maintained, or exacerbated. This is discussed further in section 3.4.4. Thirdly, learning supposedly takes place when teachers are able to offer support to students beyond their current abilities, thereby ensuring students reach higher levels of learning through purposeful scaffolding (Rose & Acevedo, 2006:1).

From a South African educational perspective, the above three core principles sound promising. However, current research shows that South Africa may lack the skilled teacher force needed to implement such a programme like RtL (Nel & Muller, 2010; Krugel & Fourie, 2014). Firstly, given that a large majority of educators, especially in lower socioeconomic schools lack foundational English language skills, asking subject specialist

educators to now incorporate the teaching of English ‘academic literacy’ in their classrooms may prove problematic (Balfour, 1999; De Wet, 2002; Nel & Muller, 2010; Fakeye, 2014; Krugel & Fourie, 2014). Bear in mind this study is researching ‘academic literacy’ at a Grade 11 level which requires English as the language of teaching and learning. Secondly, given that successful scaffolding requires mastery of subject material, and given that a large majority of educators are not proficient in the language of teaching and learning, successful scaffolding through RtL may be challenging. This is because RtL uses ‘genre theory’ and systemic functional grammar, both not widely taught in teacher education programmes in South Africa. However, inefficiency in the teacher labour force should not be a deterrent if the intervention is deemed successful. Rather, recommendations for additional training should be given to the Department of Basic Education.

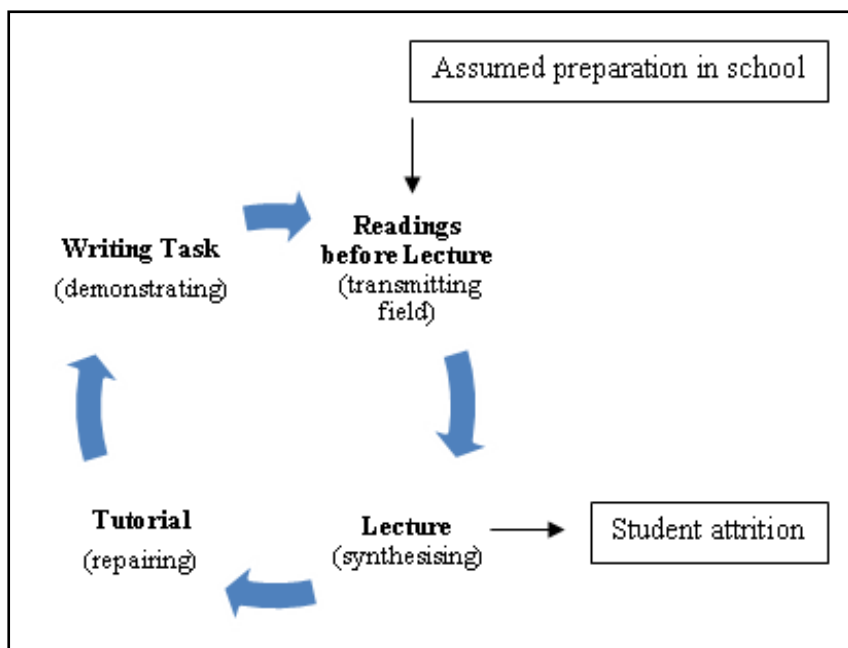
With the three core principles in mind, one of the main reported “accomplishments” of RtL is its ability to minimise educational inequality in classrooms (Rose & Acevedo, 2006; Acevedo, 2010; Millin, 2011; Rose & Martin, 2012). This is achieved by making use of a pedagogy that has as its central focus, the supporting of students’ in the development of essential orientations to ‘academic literacy’ skills (reading and writing) accomplished by explicit scaffolding in a specifically designed teaching cycle. Rose & Acevedo (2006:36) refer to this cycle as the Initiate-Response-Feedback (IRF) cycle (Rose, 2006a:5). Backtracking to the acquisition of essential reading and writing skills, if one examines university ‘academic literacy’ requirements, one of the most important skills required for access and subsequently success, is the capacity to learn from reading independently (Rose et al 2008). This is due to the fact that university modules generally require considerable amounts of abstract academic texts to be read prior to lectures to ensure vast amounts of resources are incorporated into the module curriculum. The function of the lecture, and subsequently the role of the lecturer, is then to synthesise and build upon information supposedly already acquired via pre-lecture course readings (Rose et al 2008). Students are then expected to demonstrate knowledge acquisition, and comprehension of subject material by way of written assignments. Rose et al (2008) refers to this practice as the traditional academic cycle (See Figure 3.1). However, according to Rose et al (2008), the traditional academic cycle may erroneously take for granted that students enter university with the necessary skills needed to independently learn from reading. This is a skill that should have

been developed in the secondary school phase. Consequently, students that might already have been disadvantaged by a poorer quality of secondary school education might be further disadvantaged when entering university. This could be as a result of being unable to develop the skills required to independently learn from reading – a necessary requirement for autonomous learning at university.

Already mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, studies which report on the under-preparedness of secondary school students are Troskie-De Bruin (1999); Penrose (2002); Van Schalkwyk (2008) and Allardice (2013). From Figure 3.1, the assumption that the secondary school system has adequately prepared students to cope with the traditional academic cycle cannot be taken for granted. It is no surprise then that university academics in South Africa are faced with, for example, relatively high rates of attrition insofar as lecture attendance is concerned. An inability to read and understand what has been read before lectures coupled with student attrition, means tutorial sessions fail to remedy an already systemic problem in relation to weaker performing students. This implies a failure of such students to demonstrate adequately, in writing, what has been learnt, and which in turn translates to a breakdown in the traditional academic cycle (Rose et al, 2008). In other words, students not fully equipped for independent learning at the secondary schooling phase of education, might find themselves at a distinct disadvantage when entering the tertiary sector. Traditionally, this type of student is considered as one emanating from lower socioeconomic families, and or communities (Duncan & Seymour, 2000; Ghosh, 2013). However, universities are increasingly finding that students from more affluent families with urban schooling backgrounds also might lack the necessary ‘literacy’ skills to independently learn from reading<sup>18</sup>.

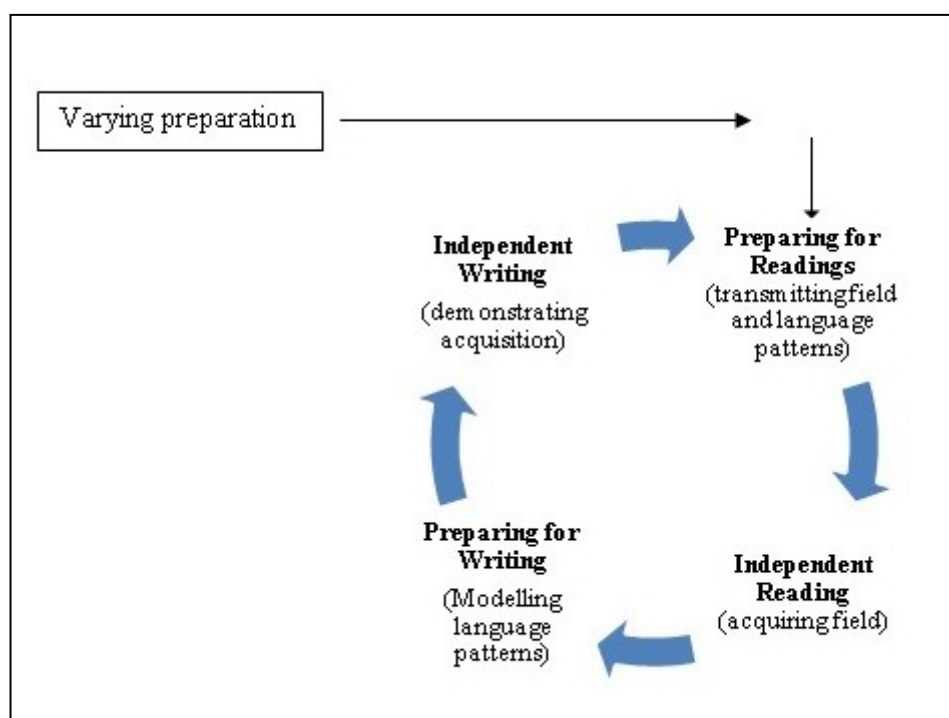
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<sup>18</sup> This is observational and stems from information regarding the demographics of students attending extended degree programmes at Stellenbosch University. This also stems from lecturing experiencing at three separate universities in South Africa (Stellenbosch University, University of KwaZulu-Natal and Varsity College).

**Figure 3.1: The Traditional Academic Cycle**

Source: Rose et al (2008)

Given that university lecturers in mainstream subject specialisations lack the time and skills needed to remedy students' individual 'literacy' shortcomings, it is hoped that the RtL intervention, at a secondary school level, may offer the support needed to equip students with the requisite 'literacy' skills needed to learn from reading at school, and subsequently university. This is supposedly achieved through the scaffolding academic cycle. See Figure 3.2. Instead of assuming students are able to independently read academic material, educators scaffold the reading of more advanced texts in class by working through specific language patterns found in texts. Further, during the preparation for reading phase, educators assist students in developing critical reading skills. This supposedly gives students access to the 'discourse' of formal education.

**Figure 3.2: Scaffolding Academic Cycle**

Source: Rose et al (2008)

Given the dilemma faced by many students at University, it becomes even more important to ensure adequate preparation is done at a secondary school context, to ensure high school students transitioning into the university sector are adequately prepared for the rigours<sup>19</sup> of 'academic literacy' at university. Students deemed at-risk of struggling to assimilate easily into the 'Discourse' of university might benefit from this level of scaffolding. The RtL 'literacy' intervention was apparently designed to alleviate this problem through a very specific classroom cycle.

### 3.3 The Reading to Learn Classroom Cycle

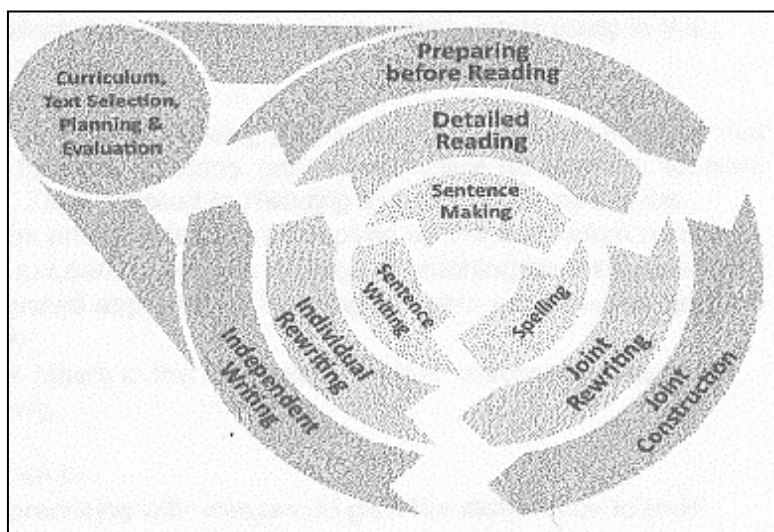
The fundamental principle for the design of an intervention like RtL is that ordinarily nearly all subject content to be studied at school is not merged with the skills that are required ('Discourse' of the school) to enable learning of curriculum material. These skills are twofold (Acevedo, 2010:18). The first enables students to independently learn from reading and the

<sup>19</sup> By academic rigour, I am referring to the need to be thorough, conscientious in thought and argument, accurate in the presentation of evidence, encouraging criticality but also creativity.



second involves actual classroom skills necessary to help students' become independent scholars. These include the ways of doing-saying-valuing and believing appropriate to the formal educational domain. In an effort to remedy the separation of these skills in current pedagogic practices, RtL is allegedly designed to combine the teaching of curriculum content together with the skills students might need to learn from reading and interacting with other students and educators (Acevedo, 2010). This is accomplished by scaffolding students reading and writing skills on three different levels. Figure 3.3 offers a graphic representation of these three levels. Depending on the needs of the students (determined by a needs analysis), the number of strategies employed in the classroom interaction vary. For example, more advanced learners might only require the three strategies on the outermost layer of the sphere. However, students in need of more intensive scaffolding might benefit from the three strategies on the outermost layer as well as the strategies in the middle layer. The three innermost strategies (sentence making, spelling, sentence writing) tend to be used more frequently for younger, foundation phase learners.

**Figure 3.3: Three Layers of Reading to Learn**



Source: Acevedo (2010:19)

The first of the three (outer) layers prepare students for classroom reading, and the subsequent comprehension of texts, together with the reconstruction of chosen text types (Acevedo, 2010:19). Carefully chosen texts, for lesson purposes, then become models for guiding and supporting individual rewriting activities at a later stage. This requires careful

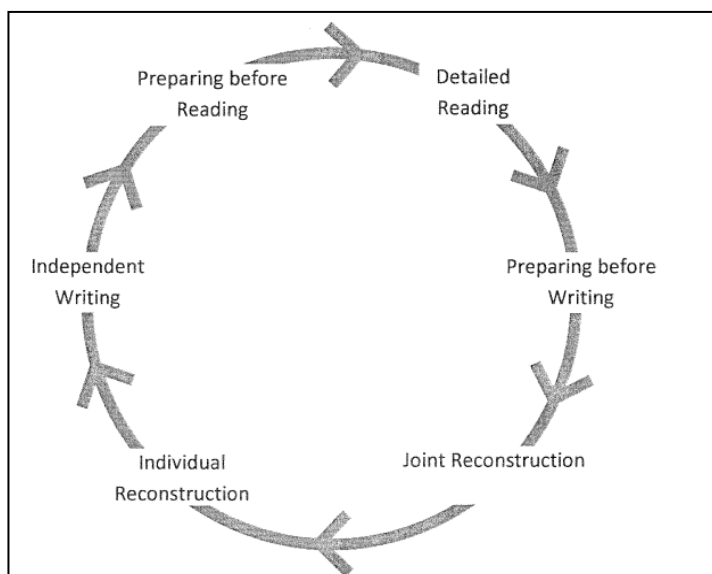


selection of classroom material for lessons because if they are to serve as a model for correct text construction, they need to be well crafted. However, I found this problematic as very few curriculum-based textbooks within the South African curriculum offer well-crafted texts that might fit neatly into different ‘genre’ types, thus modeling language patterns specific to ‘genre’ types. This may well be due to poorly designed curriculum materials or the fact that texts in reality, do not always fit into the neat ‘genre’ based mould.

The second (middle) level of the cycle is employed to expand students’ comprehension of the text, and to help students make use of the text’s information, together with embedded language patterns, in the reconstruction of their own text (Acevedo, 2010:19). The intensive scaffolding supports even the weaker students in reproducing similarly challenging texts. The intensive support comes from both teachers and peer facilitation if weaker students are paired with stronger performing students. These strategies would be used for students with poorer language proficiency, or for students who have had limited orientation to the ‘discourse’ of formal education.

The third (inner) layer of the cycle provides a high level of scaffolding to equip students with the skills needed to manipulate language patterns encountered within the sentences of the text. Students are also assisted with the spelling of words foreign to them (Acevedo, 2010:19). These strategies essentially help students understand sentence construction and spelling but can also be used to help build a bigger vocabulary for students with limited vocabulary development.

The three different levels give rise to a separate, more updated six stage teaching cycle (See Figure 3.4), which demonstrates the top-down make-up of RtL. This means support is offered from the top (commonsense meaning of the text), down to the sentence and word level. This is in contrast to normal classroom instruction, which uses more of a bottom-up approach to ‘literacy’ development. Obviously, the level of scaffolding offered during classroom instruction is dependent on the demographics of the classroom population.

**Figure 3.4: Six Stage Pedagogic Cycle of Reading to Learn**

Source: Acevedo & Rose (2007:3); Rose (2006:13b)

The following paragraphs offer a basic description of classroom interaction that may take place during different stages of the RtL cycle illustrated above. Multiple sources were consulted for this description and include Rose, Lui-Chivizhe, McKnight & Smith (2004); Acevedo & Rose (2007) and Martin & Rose (2007). For the purposes of this study, ‘preparing for reading’, ‘detailed reading’, ‘individual reconstruction’ and ‘independent writing’ strategies were mostly used.

**Preparing before reading:** Asking students (both high school and tertiary level) to critically engage with advanced texts is becoming increasingly more difficult given the low levels of ‘literacy’ skills development in South Africa (Unesco, 2011; Howie et al, 2012). Further, because fewer students engage in academic texts on a daily basis (See section 5.2.6), when subjected to academic forms of reading, the subject matter is most likely going to be unfamiliar to students. This tends to make it more difficult to access subject content. Because students may find the subject matter unfamiliar, criticality becomes challenging. Given that few students at both the FET phase of schooling, and tertiary level engage in advanced academic reading, the ability to access patterns of language dissimilar to patterns of everyday spoken language becomes a barrier to accessing subject content<sup>20</sup>. For this reason, preparing

<sup>20</sup> This is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

students for advanced academic reading is crucial. The RtL approach supposedly does this on two separate levels: students are oriented to the ‘field’<sup>21</sup> of the text pre-reading, and students are scaffolded through the interpretation of wording expressed in each sentence/paragraph of the selected text. Again, the level of scaffolding at this level varies according to the needs of students.

To orient students to the ‘field’ of the text, teachers prepare students by paraphrasing what the text is about as well as highlighting the sequence of the text that will unfold during reading of the text. Students’ focus is drawn to the schematic stages of the text’s ‘genre’. For example, with a narrative, while paraphrasing the story, the teacher will draw attention to the shift from the orientation to the complication, resolution and finally the coda. This needs to be done without over loading students with the meta-language. At this point in time, teachers may engage students in a whole-class discussion about the text topic to elicit students’ frames of reference, thereby making the text more meaningful. However, it is noted that text selection becomes a crucial element in the success of the scaffolded approach to reading. Teachers need to ensure texts are age appropriate and culturally relevant for non-native speakers of English. Freire (1970) stresses the need for ‘literacy’ teaching to be loaded with words and phrases that are significant to students. For example, a text on aquatic animals may be problematic for deep rural, inland students if they have never experienced time at the sea, or an aquarium.

Given that time constraints may exist in curriculum content coverage in South African classrooms, teachers may elect to choose sections of the text to go through, instead of the whole text. Even if the whole text is not covered with the RtL approach, what is more important is that a new methodology to tackling more advanced academic reading is being modelled, thereby giving students access to a new way of tackling reading. If successfully implemented, the preparing for reading subdivision of the cycle may enable students to access context (‘genre’), or ‘discourse semantics’, a feat often deemed insurmountable for weaker readers on their own.

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Field’: what is going on in the text – what the text is about?

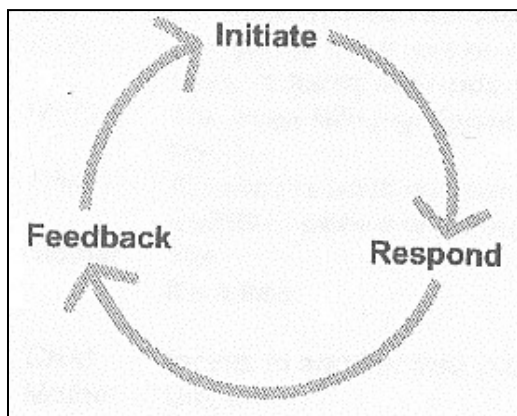
**Detailed reading:** After preparing students for the reading of the text, the next step is to assist students in working through one or two selected pages of the text. This entails an identification of key elements of the text, which assist in the extraction of meaning. This is a crucial element of scaffolding advanced reading skills as students are taught to understand how certain language tools assist to create meaning in a text. This stage of the RtL cycle encompasses three further stages: *preparing*; *identifying* and *elaborating*.

Throughout the **preparatory** phase, access to detailed meaning of individual sentences, (or in the case of tertiary level students, access to individual paragraphs) is given to make certain enough support is given to enable the recognition of the meaning of wording in the text. This is accomplished by paraphrasing the sentence in a commonsensical manner to ensure students are able to understand the text being read. Ample links are made to following sentences to ensure students are able to recognise and grasp the function of rhetorical devices such as conjunctives commonly used in texts. The educator then offers positional cues and requests students to locate words that might be associated with the cues. Three types of positional cues are given to students. First, cues are given to assist students in understanding the context of the text, which includes the meaning of the whole sentence. Second, students are given cues concerning the positioning of the wording in the sequence of words in the sentence. Third, students are given cues to understand what the wording means in commonsense terms. These three cues form part of the cognitive processes needed to comprehend texts – interpreting the wording of a text in the context of the whole sentence and understanding what preceded each word; understanding the sequence of meaning in a sentence, and recognizing the meaning of each individual word. A discussion of the theoretical component of this process can be found in section 3.4.1. Again, the above scenario assumes all teachers in South African classrooms are sufficiently proficient in the language of teaching and learning to enable the scaffolding of the above preparatory phase. Research into teacher competency does not provide evidence to say that this might not be a problem (Balfour, 1999; De Wet, 2002; Nel & Muller, 2010, Fakeye, 2014; Krugel & Fourie, 2014).

Once students accurately point out words linked to positional cues, they are then encouraged to underline the word (**identifying stage**) and jot down the technical terms associated with the underlined word/phrase/clause (for example noun phrase). The educator is supposed to

then elaborate on the use of the word or phrase, thus completing the **elaboration phase**. This is merely offering more information about the word, function and form. This cycle is formed on the concept of Vygotsky's notion of scaffolding. Students are prepared by careful questioning techniques about the text, with differing degrees of difficulty, according to students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (This is discussed in detail at a later stage in this Chapter). This is modelled by a carefully designed interaction cycle called the Initiate-Response-Cycle (IRF) illustrated in Figure 3.5. In practical terms, the teacher supposedly initiates the reading process by preparing students for the text and by offering positional cues; students respond accordingly and the teacher affirms their response. This is then followed by extensive feedback or elaboration. If students are unable to follow the questioning, feedback is given to further guide students. If students comprehend the text successfully, affirmation is given.

**Figure 3.5: Scaffolding via the IRF cycle**



Source: Rose & Acevedo (2006a: 26); Rose (2006a: 5)

**Preparing for writing stage:** Students are requested to use words or phrases underlined during the detailed reading stage. This forms the basis for joint rewriting activities. The words highlighted are essential constituents of correct sentence structure and include content words needed for conveying vital information from the text. These form the guide for students to replicate. Educators, at this stage, focus on issues of graphology. Students brainstorm new ideas (synonyms) to substitute terminology used in the modelled text for the joint rewrite activity. At this point students are being scaffolded through paraphrasing

techniques. A strategy that could enhance this process is semantic mapping to assist with vocabulary development (Antonacci & O’Callaghan, 2011).

**Joint reconstruction:** The IRF cycle (Figure 3.5) is again utilised to train students in the processes used for the creation of new texts. Students collaborate by sharing ideas for the new text whilst having their ideas affirmed. The educator may also elaborate on the suitability of new ideas, words or phrases. This stage can be used to highlight again, the precise function of rhetorical devices such as conjunctives in the creation of cohesive and coherent texts. Students could jot down new ideas on a chalk or white board, depending on availability of resources, offering another opportunity for scaffolding students writing choices. This provides an avenue for negotiated reconstructions of the modelled text. The educator might comment further on aspects relating to word choice chosen for the rewritten text. Students should be encouraged to consider whether the original construction of the ‘field of discourse’ has been altered in their newly constructed texts (See discussion in section 3.4.3) by the use of new words/phrases.

**Individual reconstruction and independent writing:** Through a careful re-negotiation of the construction of new texts, educators effectively equip students with the skills to develop academic autonomy. Both a process-based approach<sup>22</sup> to academic writing as well as a product-based approach<sup>23</sup> are utilized as students brainstorm, draft and re-draft new versions of the text studied. Ample feedback is then offered to support students. Students use the feedback to independently construct their own text, which can then be used for formal assessment purposes.

From the above description, it is clear that the practical implementation of RtL in the classroom is comprehensive and allows for the development of both reading and writing skills. However, the comprehensive nature of the intervention also lends one to question whether teachers will not be overburdened by the work load? With an already jam packed curriculum, teachers often find little time to engage in intensive feedback with students’

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<sup>22</sup> A process-based approach to writing development comprises a brainstorming session, group re-writes and individual re-write activities. Students will generally write multiple drafts before handing in a final version.

<sup>23</sup> This is considered a more traditional approach to writing development. Students are offered a text model and are required to mimic the modelled text. The text is broken down and analysed before students replicate the text.

writing. Nevertheless, this intervention has supposedly been developed through extensive consultation with theoretical propositions of reading and writing theory making it a valid contribution to the reading and writing component of the curriculum. The next sections to follow will offer a brief discussion of the theoretical basis on which RtL was founded. Aspects of the discussions to follow may seem repetitive in that some information has already been conveyed in a discussion of RtL, but the purpose is to demonstrate that practical considerations of RtL already discussed, are closely related to the theoretical components.

### **3.4 Theoretical Foundations of Reading to Learn**

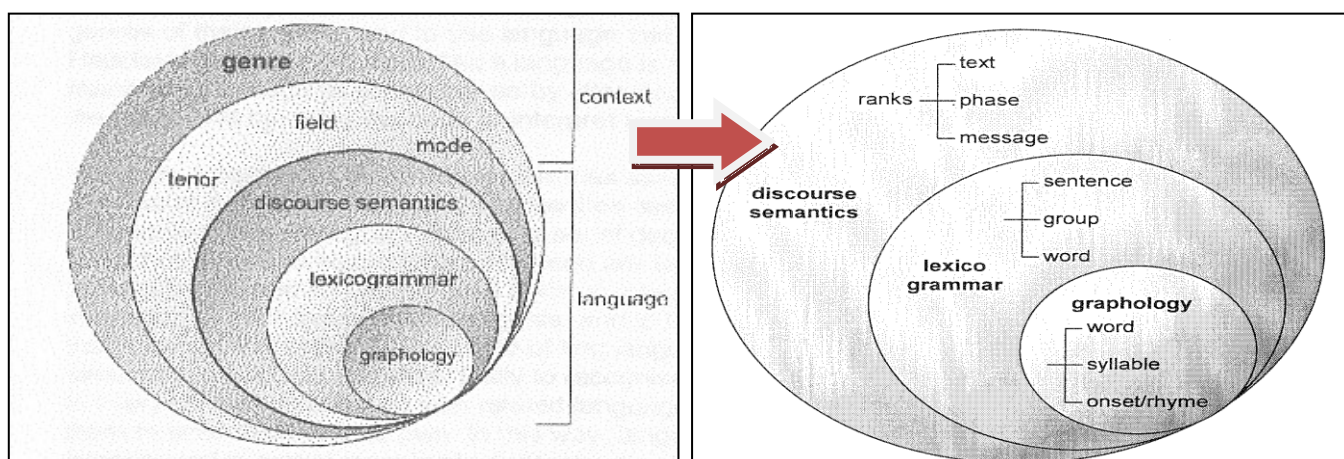
#### **3.4.1 Halliday – Language as a Text Within a Social Context**

‘Literacy’ testing over the past couple of years has provided enough evidence that students in South Africa are struggling to reach ‘literacy’ milestones (Unesco, 2011; Howie et al, 2012). Chapter One offered statistical evidence of this growing problem, which shows that the reading and writing of academic texts at school is proving difficult. This growing problem however is not limited to non-native speakers of English (and neither is the problem limited to English texts either) as national and international ‘literacy’ benchmark tests have shown that this may be equally challenging for native speakers of English in South African schools too (Bharuthram, 2012; Millin, 2011; Le Cordeur, 2010). According to Martin and Rose (2007:1) one reason for this challenge is possibly because the capacity to grasp the complexities of reading and writing, and subsequently access meaning within a text, or convey meaning in writing, entails an aptitude for identifying patterns found embedded in language on three separate levels. This includes firstly, level of the text, or ‘discourse semantics’; secondly, level of the sentence known as ‘lexico-grammar’, and thirdly, level of the word or ‘graphology’ (Rose & Martin, 2012:18). Consequently, the teaching of reading and writing skills is considered complex and may require language to be broken down into smaller, more manageable components to ensure students are able to grasp the abstract components of academic language. For this reason, and already mentioned briefly in an earlier section of this chapter, RtL makes use of a top-down approach to the teaching of reading and writing.

From a practical pedagogic perspective, educators move from an awareness of meaning across the whole text ('discourse semantics') within the preparing to read stage of the RtL cycle to making students explicitly aware of how meaning is created at a sentence or clausal level ('lexico-grammar') down to individual word ('graphology') level. This is in direct contrast to current classroom practice which makes use of a bottom-up approach to 'literacy' development as individual word formation and recognition is taught first before moving on to sentence level formation and comprehension. This is closely aligned with a phonetic approach to 'literacy' development (Long & Zimmerman, 2008:3).

Martin and Rose (2012: 19) argue tongue in cheek that texts generally consist of patterns, of patterns, of patterns. The use of a 'top-down' approach (whole-language approach) to 'literacy' development is considered crucial as a text can normally make more sense if students have an orientation to the topic of the text and its organizational patterns, or 'discourse semantics' first (Martin & Rose, 2003; Rose & Acevedo, 2006). An understanding of the 'discourse semantics' assists students in understanding, or ascribing a type of schematic structure to the text. This is because access to the 'genre' of a text assists in a greater awareness of how a text is structured to meet the social function of the text. 'Genre theory' is discussed in more detailed in section 3.4.2. A sentence within a text is better understood in relation to other sentences within close proximity of the sentence under investigation ('lexico-grammar'), and likewise, individual words within a sentence can only make sense in relation to other words in a sentence ('graphology'). According to Rose and Martin (2012:19), the patterns of meaning at the whole text level, together with patterns of meaning at the clausal or sentence level, and patterns of meaning of individual letters and sounds, is known as realisation. In other words, patterns of meaning of 'discourse' are realised through patterns of meaning in grammar, which are realised as patterns of graphology. See Figure 3.6.



**Figure 3.6: Halliday's Stratified Model of Language**

Source: Rose & Acevedo (2006); Martin & Rose (2007:2)

It stands to reason then, that to offer students an understanding of the text as a whole, before unpacking individual sentences, followed by a focus on individual words within a reading task, makes the reading process more manageable, especially for struggling readers. The teaching of writing can then be built upon the reading process with students starting with individual words, working towards sentence reconstruction and finally whole paragraph reconstruction (Martin & Rose, 2003; Rose & Acevedo, 2006). Throughout this process, students need to be actively listening, engaging with the lesson and speaking with one another thereby, also offering skills development in listening and speaking. This is because purposefully designed interaction is offered to scaffold students through the reading and writing process. In an attempt to neatly summarise the three layers of meaning within a text, the paragraphs to follow offer a brief discussion of each of Halliday's three layers of meaning embedded within a text. Sources consulted include Rose & Acevedo (2006); Millin (2011); Rose & Martin (2012).

**1: Level of the text** ('discourse semantics' which is beyond clausal level) – a comprehension of the overall global meaning of the text, together with a recognition of the organisational patterns of a specific text equips students with the skills to assign the text to a particular 'genre'. This in turn helps students understand the purpose and function of texts, thereby rendering the meaning making process easier. For example, if students can understand the organisational patterns, or sequencing of events in narratives, it may enable them to extract

meaning more efficiently by understanding what type of information is ordinarily presented in the beginning, middle and end of a story. Likewise, for students skimming and scanning academic texts, if students understand the schematic structure of journal articles, they will understand what type of information is presented in the abstract, introduction, conclusion and topic sentences.

**2: Level of the sentence** ('lexico-grammar' – clausal level) – students need to be able to make out the composition of wording embedded in phrases while concurrently identifying the purpose of each phrasal constituent. In other words, students need to be able to identify the subcomponent of clauses that present information about the 'circumstances' of the text (where, when, why and how); 'participants' of the texts, also referred to as the 'noun phrases' (who or what the sentence is about), and the 'processes', or 'verbal phrases' (what is being done). A further mention of these subcomponents of clauses is offered in Section 3.4.3. However, within a South African context, this may prove onerous for non-native speakers of English if a syntactic awareness is not fully developed in the students mother tongue rendering the transference of this particular linguistic skill to English texts difficult (Cummins, 1991). Given that a very large majority of students either start school using English as the language of learning and teaching, or change from their home language to English early on in their school career, limited linguistic awareness results in limited 'pegs' to build on their English proficiency (Cummins, 1979; O'Connor & Geiger, 2009; Gammaroff, 1995; Kapp, 2006). RtL was supposedly created in an effort to overcome this barrier.

**3: Level of the word ('graphology')** – students need to be able to recognize what each word means within a text. Furthermore, they also need to be able to recognize how each separate letters are arranged to come together to form particular words. For this reason, students need to be able to comprehend how discrete symbols jointly form single words. These words then build upon each other to form phrases, clauses, sentences and ultimately paragraphs within a text as a whole. Again, their organisational structure aids in meaning as their proximity to each other is important.

Given the above brief description of the different components of an academic text which need to be engaged with in order for students to make better meaning of texts, it stands to reason that the teaching of reading and writing may be complex, and specialised. For this reason, it becomes essential that educators work to simplify the text for students, and help students break down the various patterns found within texts to ensure students are successfully able to access meaning of the text at all three levels.

Given that students within the tertiary sector are required to independently read advanced academic material to access subject content, and given the dismal ‘literacy’ performance of both tertiary and secondary school students as evidenced by international and national ‘literacy’ reports, it becomes even more crucial for educators to scaffold students through the complex layers of meaning within texts. However, the extent of this scaffolding is often debatable. Some schools of thought are of the opinion that access to the more technical aspect of texts, such as terminology, is sufficient support for non-native speakers of English to have access to meaning within technical, abstract texts (Cohen, Glasman, Rosenbaum-Cohen, Ferrara & Fine, 1978). However, current research states that a mastery of technical terminology may not necessarily be a solution to ensuring access to academic content (Selinker, Todd & Trimble, 1976). Instead, researchers assert that an inadequate understanding of non-technical aspects of texts (referencing techniques such as grammatical and lexical cohesive techniques together with theme and rheme patterning) may be bigger hurdles into accessing meaning. In other words, limited access to meaning within texts may be largely due to a lack of careful consideration to the form and function of rhetorical devices used in specific types of texts.

The above theoretical component is further realised in RtL through Genre Theory and Systemic Functional Grammar, discussed briefly in the sections below.

### **3.4.2 Genre Theory**

The RtL methodology is heavily rooted in ‘genre’ theory. It comprises the explicit teaching of organisational patterns and structures found within differing types of ‘genres’ developed to meet differing social purposes. It allegedly originated out of a necessity to overhaul

traditional approaches to teaching writing, which focused squarely on formal grammar, rules of punctuation, spelling and used a process approach to writing (Cope, Kalantzis, Kress & Martin, 1993: 239). In other words, the origination of ‘genre theory’ and pedagogy arose out of a frustration with the teaching of rigid rules and regulations of grammar which placed a strong emphasis on strict ideas of what was considered correct, or not. As a result of the rigidity of traditional pedagogic practices researchers aligned with ‘genre theory’ started becoming more concerned about the inequitable learning outcomes commonly found in formal educational domains partly due to a “hidden curriculum” (Rose, 1999) (See section 3.4.5 below for a more detailed discussion). This “hidden curriculum” is supposedly a consequence of progressivist<sup>24</sup> pedagogies of reading and writing (Cope et al, 1993). This would ordinarily be worthy of a lengthy debate but given limitations to this chapter, and the fact that reading and writing pedagogies are not the focus of this study, this will not be discussed in detail.

The result of the ‘genre’ movement saw the development of specialised teaching materials together with focused pedagogic practices that supposedly provide sequenced instructional access to powerful disciplinary knowledge. It is also meant to assist in the development of writing skills essential for attainment in an educational context where a student’s academic future depends on the ability to demonstrate knowledge acquired through formal written examinations (Rose, 1999). ‘Genre’ teaching entails making students explicitly attentive to the way language functions to make meaning. A criticism of this within a South African context assumes teachers are informed about the way language functions to make meaning to enable them to teach this explicitly. However not all teachers are fully proficient in the language they use for teaching and learning in classrooms and thus might not be aware of these patterns. Even native speakers of English might but unaware of this.

Richards and Schmidt (2002:224) offer a definition of ‘genres’ by defining it as a type of ‘discourse’ that transpires within a very particular setting that comprises distinctive and recognisable patterns. Furthermore, ‘genres’ possess very distinct rules of organisation and structure, referred to as schematic structures, which offer distinguishing communicative

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<sup>24</sup> Progressivist pedagogies place less emphasis on modelling and scaffolding and tend to advise students to write about what they want in any format, assuming students already have access to different genres (Martin & Rose, 2007). It assumes students have already assimilated into the ‘Discourse of formal schooling’.

functions. According to Martin (1984:25) and Martin and Rose (2003:7) a 'genre' can be further defined "as a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of [a] culture". In other words, it is seen as a social activity because members participate in a 'genre' with other members, goal oriented because it serves a purpose for getting a particular goal done (convey information, entertain, argue, persuade) and it is staged as it requires a number of steps to be taken to reach the intended goal. According to Paltridge (2010:86), 'genres' are "dynamic and open to change" but it is not an open call for anyone to flout the norms and conventions as they please. In fact, mastery of the 'genre' is a necessity if one is to successfully learn the rules and conventions. This requires practice as the more skilled one becomes within the confines of the 'genre', the better one is able to start manipulating the rules and regulations to serve the individual purpose of the author, whilst still meeting the requirements of the disciplinary 'genre' (Bhatia, 1998:25-6). It is at this point then that I offer an element of criticism towards 'genre' teaching.

If sufficient time is not given for teaching and learning and thus automaticity of 'genre' conventions, students will very rarely develop levels of autonomy which allow them to start manipulating the rules and regulations. Students merely become mechanical users of staging taught explicitly with little creativity for manipulation. Further, according to Kress (1993:236) 'genre pedagogy' is seen to have narrowing limits. This is because it tends to be too concentrated on textual form. For 'genre theory' to liberate students then, time on task is important (Rose, Rose, Farrington & Page, 2008; Millin & Millin, 2014). In other words, the impact on student performance is directly proportional to the time spent modeling 'genre' conventions. In other words, a limitation of genre theory is that one needs to be aware of the rules and regulations of numerous genres to become fully competent in the use of genre theory to impact students' writing skills. Different subject disciplines may interpret a type of genre differently and the way a text is structured, or the way language is used to create meaning, may differ. Because the data collection phase of this study was limited to one academic year, only one approach (subject discipline) to the academic argument could be taught which may be construed as a limiting factor. At the same time, given the above mention of the development of mechanical writers with genre theory, and because the study is limited to one academic year, it is not possible to test the transferability of the skills developed in the classroom during the study. Nevertheless, the intention of the study was to

first, test the efficacy of RtL first and foremost. If the results show promise, a longer study could test the transferability of the skills developed through RtL by incorporating RtL methodology for a longer timeframe and testing the skills outside of the RtL classroom.

A ‘genre’ then, for the purposes of this study, which is located within the field of Applied Linguistics, refers to a text type, either spoken or written and is classified according to the intent of the communicator. Although the concepts ‘genre’ and ‘text type’ are used interchangeable in this study, I am aware that caution needs to be taken here as ‘genre’ and ‘text type’ can be separated. According to Lee (2001:38) ‘genre’ has as its basis, “external, non-linguistic, traditional criteria [whilst a] ‘text type’ is based on internal, linguistic characteristics” of the text itself. In other words, based on Lee’s (2001: 38) definition, a ‘genre’ is placed into a particular category based on external criterion such as overall social purpose, intended audience and activity type and fulfils conventionally, culturally determined groupings of texts based on characteristics other than lexical or grammatical features. Further, ‘genres’ are categorised according to use rather than form (Biber, 1988: 170).

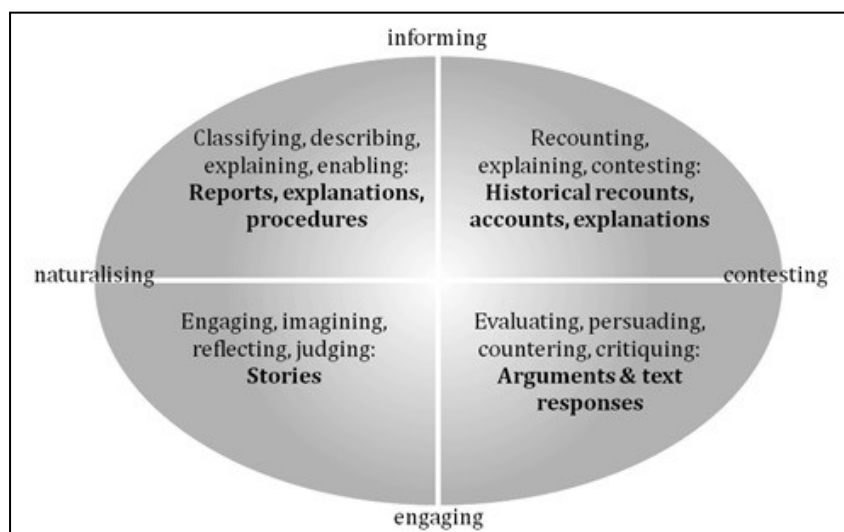
What makes the distinction between a ‘genre’ and ‘text type’ somewhat confusing at times is the fact that two particular texts can belong to one ‘text type’ even though they belong to two different ‘genres’. For example, a narrative and recount may belong to the same ‘text type’ because they share similar linguistic features - ‘past-tense’, ‘chronological connectives’. Yet they are separate, distinct ‘genres’ in that the narrative’s social purpose is to entertain by making use of a different schematic structure to that of the recount, whose social purpose is to recount the events of the past. The recount essentially has two clear stages – an orientation and a recount stage whereas, the narrative consists of three distinct stages – orientation, complication and resolution (see Figure 3.8 below) (Rose & Martin, 2012: 112). In another example, and relevant to the academic argument domain, expositions and discussions can be seen to belong to the same ‘text type’ but are two separate ‘genres’. In this case, the exposition is made up of a thesis, argument and reiteration whereas the discussion consists of an issue with opposing sides offered alongside evidence, followed by a resolution. Knowledge of these stages and phases of ‘genres’ is important in meeting the social purpose of a text and unless students are explicitly made aware of these schematic structures, accessing information within texts, and recreating similar types of texts, can be problematic



within formal educational domains where success is determined by tangible, written evidence.

Becoming a “successful” student at school or university often requires students to demonstrate knowledge acquisition of subject related matter through the written medium or extended pieces of writing – academic essay. Although this type of assessment has already been proven to be alienating to students unable to successfully acculturate themselves into the ‘Discourse’ of formal schooling (Rose, 1999: 10), it nevertheless is going to be a long time coming until the writing of essays for assessment purposes at universities are abolished in favour of less alienating forms of assessment. For this reason, mastering the ‘discourse’ (and in this case, having access to the ‘genre’ of a specific ‘text type’) of the formal educational community is crucial, even more so for students who find themselves at odds with the ‘discourse practices’ of the university. Paltridge (2010: 82) articulates that one way students are able to communicate their ideas, acquired through the reading of subject related texts, is through written exercises. Again, this would require a deep understanding and knowledge of ‘genres’ used in the formal educational domain including their social purpose, and organisational patterns based on their purpose. Rose and Martin (2005: 113) offer a typology of ‘genre types’ and their purposes but do highlight that these are not set in stone and may actually encompass multiple purposes. See Figure 3.7 below.

**Figure 3.7: Genre Typology and Social Purpose**



Source: Martin & Rose (2005)

Language use in ‘genre theory’ is crucial and differs according to the content of the ‘genre’, purpose of the ‘genre’ and the relationship between the author of the text and the readership/or interlocutor, or intended audience (Paltridge, 2010:85). Language usage within different ‘genres’ is also dependent upon whether the text is considered spoken or written, as well as the cultural context. It then becomes obvious that for successful participation in, or production of a specific type of ‘genre’, an in-depth knowledge of ‘genre’ conventions and norms is needed. This is referred to as ‘register’. If little orientation is given to students on the types of ‘genre discourses’ to be encountered at school or university, it stands to reason that students will find themselves alienated and unable to successfully demonstrate, through very specific forms of language use and text structure, what they have learnt through course material. A lack of orientation to the ‘genre’ prescribed at school or university then becomes the barrier to success as students are assessed on subject knowledge through very specific ‘genre’ conventions. One has to then question what is really being assessed – content knowledge, or an inability to convey content knowledge through prescribed articulatory conventions. Again, one sees the lack of assimilation into the ‘Discourse’ of formal education as a barrier.

To recap, Rose and Martin (2005) define ‘genre’ as the global social purpose of a text. The social purpose of any type of text shapes the kind of text that is. For example, a narrative’s social purpose is to entertain and generally moves from an orientation of the setting such as who, what and where to the development of a complication which requires some type of resolution to close off the narrative. In contrast, providing evidence in a particular sequence to create an expository type of text serves the social function of persuading the reader to take on a particular viewpoint in an argumentative case. In both cases above, it becomes clear that to become successful in navigating ones way through successful learning and demonstration thereof, requires an element of understanding about the use of, and replication of certain types of ‘genres’. RtL was designed to makes use of a ‘genre’-type pedagogy, which essentially entails the use of teaching strategies, aimed at assisting students to write the ‘genres’ that formal schooling requires. For this reason, one of the fundamental aims of the development of an intervention like RtL, which makes use of ‘genre’ theory, is to make explicit, knowledge about the language in which the formal educational curriculum is written and articulated through in the classroom (Martin & Rose, 2005).



Figure 3.8 below offers a very basic orientation to the schematic structure of the narrative ‘genre’, followed by Figure 3.9, which offers a basic orientation to the schematic structure of an exposition, commonly known as the basic academic essay in schools in South Africa. Both structures formed the basis for materials used in the teaching of academic writing for the study. See Appendix One, Two, Three and Four for modelled texts developed to explicitly teach schematic structuring of these two genre types.

**Figure 3.8: Narrative Genre**

<b>Stage 1: Orientation</b>	<b>Phase 1.1: Setting</b> (presents people, activities, places etc)  <b>Phase 1.2: Description</b> (describes the people, places & things)
<b>Stage 2: Complication</b>	<b>Phase 2.1: Problem</b> (sets up the unexpected event that will create the problem/tension)
<b>Stage 3: Resolution</b>	<b>Phase 3.1: Solution</b> (describes how the problem is resolved or fixed)  <b>Phase 3.2: Reaction</b> (explains how the characters react to the problem being solved)  <b>Phase 3.3: Narrator’s Comments</b> (the narrator’s thoughts on the events that just happened: not mandatory)
<b>Stage 4: Coda (moral of the story)</b>	<b>Phase 4.1: Reflections</b> (the characters thoughts about what has happened, often offered as a moral to the story)

Source: Author’s own compilation. Source consulted: Rose (2006c)

**Figure 3.9: Basic Academic Essay / Exposition Genre**

<b>Stage 1</b> <b>Introduction</b>	<b>Phase 1.1:</b> Background Information	Controversial Statement Contextual Information Definition/s
	<b>Phase 1.2:</b> Thesis Statement	
	<b>Phase 1.3:</b> Controlling Ideas (firstly; secondly, thirdly etc)	
.....		
<b>Stage 2</b> <b>Body</b> <b>(Paragraph 1)</b>	<b>Phase 2.1:</b> Topic Sentence	
	<b>Phase 2.2:</b> Evidence	
	<b>Phase 2.3:</b> Elaboration / Explanation	
	<b>Phase 2.4:</b> Sign-post Forward	
.....		
<b>Body</b> <b>(Paragraph 2)</b>	<b>Phase 2.1:</b> Topic Sentence	
	<b>Phase 2.2:</b> Evidence	
	<b>Phase 2.3:</b> Elaboration / Explanation	
	<b>Phase 2.4:</b> Sign-post Forward	
.....		
<b>Stage 3</b> <b>Conclusion</b>	<b>Phase 3.1:</b> Restatement of Thesis Statement	
	<b>Phase 3.2:</b> Short / Brief Summary of each Paragraph	
	<b>Phase 3.3:</b> Recommendations	

Source: Author's own compilation. Source consulted: Martin & Rose (2007:9)

### 3.4.3 Systemic Functional Grammar

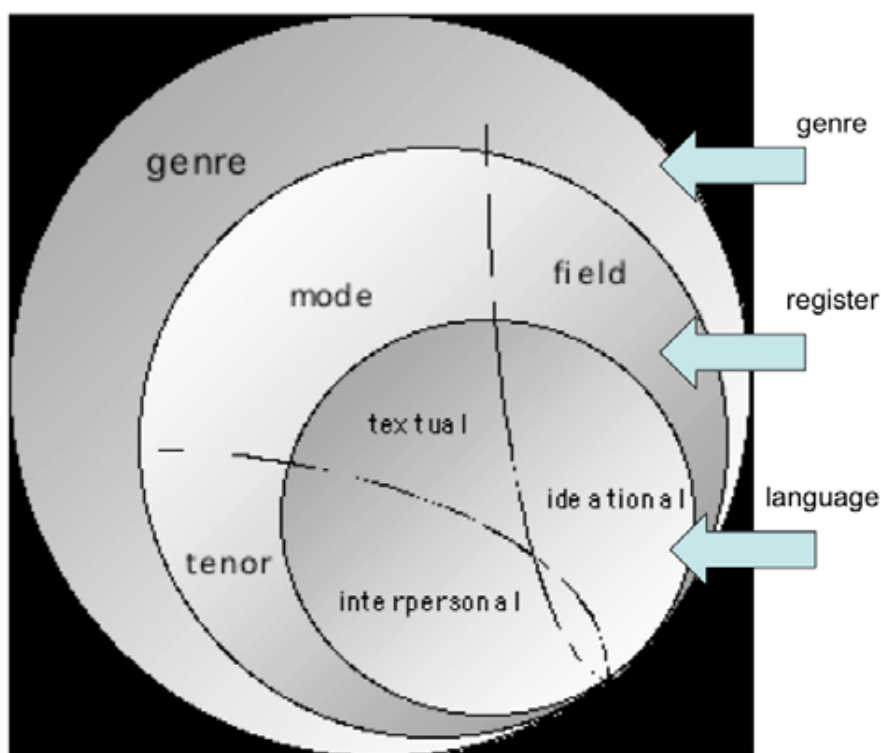
Halliday's 'Systemic Functional Grammar' (SFG) offers linguistic insights into the social nature and function of specific linguistic systems and is a resourceful tool for detailed textual analysis, or in the case of this particular research project (Clarence-Fincham, 2001: 25), able to offer students insights into the nature of text construction through a detailed textual analysis of word choices. According to Halliday (1978:4 in Clarence-Fincham, 2001:25)

Language is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve in people's lives. In order to understand linguistic structures [in functional

terms], we have to proceed from the outside inwards, interpreting language by reference to its place in the social process.

Thus, according to Halliday (1978) language can be understood as a system of probable meaning, supplemented with forms through which meaning is then realised (Clarence-Fincham, 2001:25). Whilst most texts tend to restrict themselves to the level of the sentence, SFG moves beyond the sentence level to offer an observation of grammar within, and across larger texts. At the same time, SFG allows for an interpretation of a text in relation to its context of use. This includes both the broader cultural context as well as more specific contexts (broader contexts, institutional contexts, socio-cultural contexts, local contexts) (Derewianka & Jones, 2010: 7). What this means is that interpretations of a text are not restricted to one particular viewpoint and may differ according to the cultural context that either the producer of the text is located in, or the recipient of the text, is located. In essence, SFG offers a social viewpoint of language, which means that language is functional.

Language is used, whether spoken or written, to achieve certain goals. SFG offers a way of describing how language choices are partial to a set of three factors: the ‘field’; ‘tenor’, and ‘mode’. Simply put, the recipient of a message, whether spoken or written can speculate as to the meaning of the message from the text’s outer framework, called the ‘context of culture’, to a very specific ‘context of situation’ through extra linguistic features found within the text through the ‘field’, ‘tenor’ and ‘mode’ (Clarence-Fincham, 2001; Hariyanto, 2014). See Figure 3.10 below.

**Figure 3.10 Genre, Register and Language**

Source: Derewianka & Jones (2010: 9), adapted from Martin (1997: 8)

The ‘field of discourse’ refers to the type of social interaction being portrayed in a text (Clarence-Fincham, 2001: 26). In other words, this offers insight into what is going on within the text. Ideally, the ‘field’ answers questions to what is happening within the text, or what type of activity is taking place as well as who is interacting together. According to Clarence-Fincham (2001), this “social feature is realised at the linguistic level as the experiential metafunction”. The ‘experiential level’ entails an understanding of the activity taking place within the text, commonly realised through the ‘processes’ (the verbal group); offers insights into the ‘participants’ taking part in the activity (nominal group) as well as the surrounding ‘circumstances’ of the activity which are realised through adverbial phrases. The linguistic features which accomplish these functions are ‘lexicalisation’, ‘transitivity’ and ‘voice’ (Clarence-Fincham: 2001). Very simply, ‘lexicalisation’ is the choice of words used to create meaning embedded within clauses and ‘transitivity’ is an inquiry into the type of ‘processes’ (material, behavioural, mental and so forth), ‘participants’ (again, material, behavioural, mental and so forth), and ‘circumstance types’ (place, time, manner, extent and so forth).

The second ‘context of situation’ (Clarence-Fincham, 2001:26) of Halliday's conceptual framework is the ‘tenor of discourse’. This refers to the participants involved in the text as well as the relationship between participants, their roles and status, or rank, and the permanency of the relationships. (Clarence-Fincham, 2001: 26). In other words, the ‘tenor’ allows one to distinguish what kind of person the author is, what type of audience is expected and what type of relationships are being established. In non-interactive texts such as the text types used for the purposes of this research, the linguistic features used to convey ‘tenor’ include ‘mood’ and ‘modality’. Very simply, ‘mood’ involves clause structures that function to state, ask, request or command information and thereby set up different types of interaction. When interacting with one another, one can create interpersonal relationships and the expression of these relationships is found embedded within clauses. ‘Modality’, on the other hand, is the careful selection of lexis that allows the author to take a particular stance within the text with varying degrees of certainty.

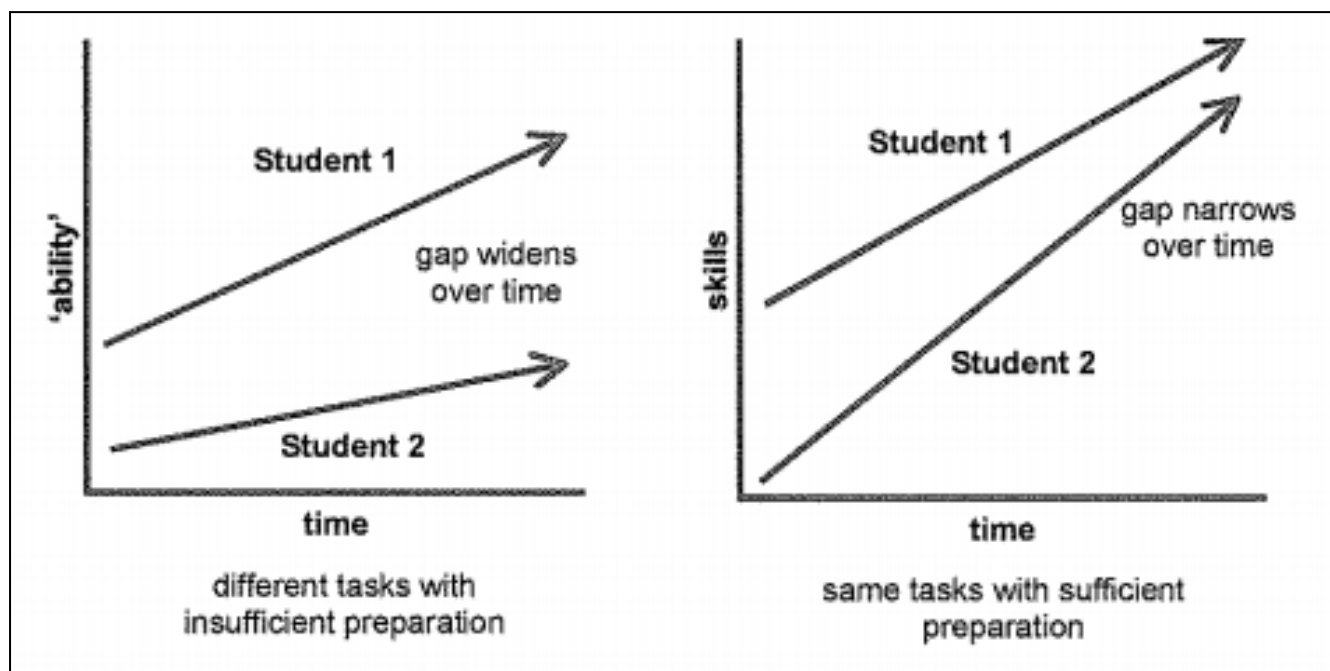
The third feature of Halliday’s conceptual framework is the ‘mode of discourse’ (Clarence-Fincham, 2001:27). Derewianka and Jones (2010:7) refer to this as the type of channel used for communication. Clarence-Fincham (2001:27) further explains the ‘mode’ as the function of the language within the text, which incorporates the organisation, channel and status. For Halliday (1978:113) it is only through the textual ‘mode’ that ‘interpersonal’ (the way language is used to interact with others) and ‘ideational’ (the way language is used to represent and reflect on meaning in the world) meaning is realised in the text. The linguistic features used to realise ‘mode’ are cohesion and coherence, and information structure. From a pedagogic point of view, this might include, but not limited to, the teaching of grammatical cohesion - reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunctive cohesion, and lexical cohesion - repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy and collocation. Information structure is taught using theme and rheme patterning. Together, the ‘field’, ‘tenor’ and ‘mode’ form the ‘register’ of a text, which may be determined by the ‘genre’ of a text.

To summarise briefly, in SFG, the proposal is that language use is functional and directly linked to the purpose for which individuals use language to achieve numerous goals in certain social contexts (Derewianka & Jones, 2010: 9). The grammar within the text is then prearranged into three distinct bundles of functions, called ‘metafunctions’, which assign

function to the choice of language used within a text. By making students aware of a text's 'genre', which then assigns a particular social purpose to the text, students can then start focusing on the 'register' of the text type. This is then analysed and reproduced within Halliday's SFG metafunctions: 'field', 'tenor' and 'mode'.

### **3.4.4 Vygotsky – Learning as a Social Process**

Current educational traditions in South African classrooms may be more directly associated with the incremental learning model formalized through Piaget's philosophy of intrinsic developmental stages (Piaget, 1928; Rose, 2005; Millin, 2011). This falls within the boundaries of progressivist pedagogies (Rose, 2005; Cope & Kalantzis, 2012). This means teachers are trained to present diagnostic forms of assessment early on in the school year to determine individual students' "developmental" stage at a given point in time and then provide activities or tasks based on individual diagnostic testing. Progressivists consider this practice student-centered in that learning tasks are driven by student performance. This ideology forms a strong component of the CAPS curriculum in South Africa. However, the problem with this approach to teaching and learning is that the abilities gap between better performing students and historically weaker students seldom closes because learning opportunities are governed by individual student competency (Rose & Martin, 2012:11). In other words, teachers seldom provide learning opportunities for students to catch up to the stronger cohort of students in each class if differentiated learning tasks are constantly used. This disparity in student performance is illustrated well in Figure 3.11. The graph on the left illustrates the widening gap caused by current pedagogic practices and the graph on the right, represents a narrowing of the gap in student achievement supposedly through the use of RtL (Rose & Acevedo, 2006). Similar results showing a narrowing of the 'literacy' skills gap was found in Rose & Acevedo (2006); Rose (2008); Acevedo (2010) and Millin (2011).

**Figure 3.11: Disparity in Student Literacy Performance**

Source: Rose & Acevedo (2006: 37)

Chapter One of this thesis provided evidence of the unequal learning outcomes currently being experienced within South African schools through the reporting of 'literacy' outcomes of the Annual National Assessment exams as well as other national and international 'literacy' benchmark tests (Section 1.1). In an effort to rectify the growing 'literacy' concerns in South African education, an intervention like RtL is being proposed as it allegedly has as one of its core aims, the need to close the 'literacy' abilities gap between students who perform better than their weaker performing counterparts. RtL supposedly offers equal learning opportunities to all students by featuring characteristics of Vygotsky's theory of social learning into its pedagogic approach (Rose, 1999; Martin & Rose, 2005; Rose & Acevedo, 2006). A strong component of Vygotsky's work is 'scaffolded learning'.

The concept 'scaffolding', or 'scaffolded learning' represents a high level of support offered to students by a more capable individual, often an educator. The support is given to assist students in producing a higher-level quality of work than normally possible by the student on their own (Rose, Lui-Chivizhe, McKnight & Smith, 2004). Vygotsky (1978) claimed that 'scaffolded' support makes it possible for students to successfully complete complicated

tasks on their own that ordinarily they would not have been able to do. For example, in the context of this study, this represents the completion of a grade specific, quality (prescribed according to the CAPS document), genre specific narrative and academic argument essay. As students become more competent at the writing task, or gradually show evidence of acquiring the necessary skills to complete the writing task, the level of support is gradually withdrawn. In general, ‘scaffolded learning’ follows a process whereby the teacher models the desired task and skills required or even thoughts needed to think about the task. Students observe the task being modeled and practice the desired skills under close scrutiny of the teacher until the task can be completed without assistance. (Rose et al, 2004: 42).

Shifting the philosophy of ‘scaffolded learning’ to the teaching of reading and writing in classrooms requires students’ attention to be directed towards multiple language patterns found embedded within texts, and the subsequent recognition of meaning conveyed by these language patterns. These patterns are discussed in preceding sections. Because these language patterns are highly specialised and specific to individual ‘genres’, and distinct from language patterns found in everyday spoken language, a high level of ‘scaffolding’ is needed to assist students in accessing meaning. This is especially important if limited access to the ‘discourse’ of the school has been made available. The starting point or point of origin for the ‘scaffolding’ process within the RtL approach is the reading of texts. Knowledge about patterns of language learnt through the reading process is subsequently applied to the writing process and thus the assessment process through the written medium (Rose et al, 2004: 43). During the ‘scaffolded’ reading process, students are prepared for reading at a global level. This orients students to the macro aspects of the text and the ‘scaffolding’ of micro aspects of the text follows. This process is enacted through the six stage RtL cycle discussed in detail in Section 3.3.

RtL makes use of three important aspects of Vygotsky’s theory of learning as a social process: namely, ‘social interaction’; ‘mediated learning’, and the assistance with developing higher order cognitive skills within students’ individual ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD). The ZPD refers to the gap between an individual student’s actual ‘academic literacy’ capability (what they are capable of achieving without teacher intervention) and his or her potential capability (what the student is able to achieve after teacher intervention), which



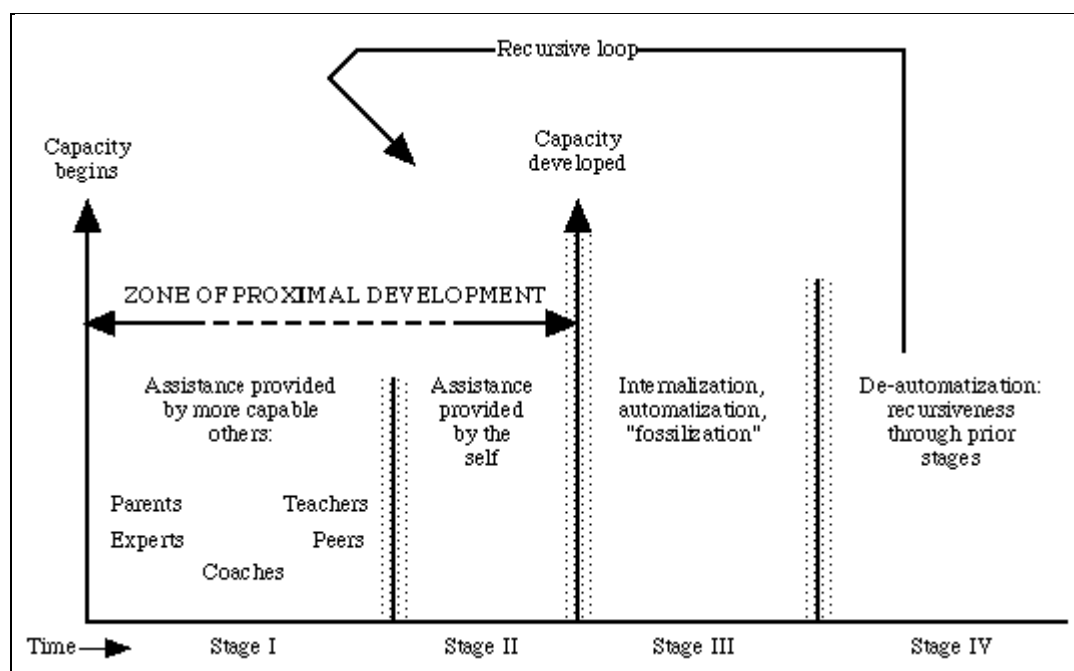
results from collaboration with a significant (more capable) other, such as a peer, mentor or teacher (Lantolf & Appel, 1994).

Linking the above discussion back to current pedagogic practices at school, educators often require students to demonstrate what they have learnt at school through written assignments. These are accomplished through formative (term or semester based, on-going assessment) and summative (end of term or semester exams) assessment practices. It has already been established in discussions before this section that formal academic writing conventions comprise complex patterns of language usage that students need to be able to use in their written demonstration of subject content acquisition (formal educational ‘discourse’). However, given that a large majority of South African students appear to lack higher order ‘literacy’ skills (evidenced by national and international literacy tests such as PIRL’s, ANA’s and SACMEQ), ‘literacy’ interventions like RtL could support students in the successful achievement of these tasks. If a student is left to develop these complex skills, and thus a grasp of academic language on his or her own, most students from working class, oral-cultured families would most likely fail at doing so. A more detailed discussion of this is offered in section 3.4.5 below. Therefore, RtL was purportedly designed to make use of social interaction, in supportive environments, to help students develop higher levels of ‘academic literacy’ skills - more advanced than students would ordinarily have been able to develop individually (Vygotsky, 1978).

This symbolic ‘place’ is referred to as the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). It is within this zone that students struggling to cope with the ‘literacy’ demands at school are given the “tools” to grasp complex texts independently – understanding of academic texts and language patterns used in academic texts for making meaning. Because students are supposedly equipped to develop the capacity to replicate thought patterns, or language spoken during comprehensive scaffolding from a significant other (teacher talk on how to engage with texts and access meaning through language), they increasingly develop the ability to replicate these thought patterns modelled in class. Eventually students should be able to complete tasks without the assistance of others (Mitchell and Myles 2004). It is these thought patterns that demonstrate to students how to access meaning embedded within texts. As a result, students slowly develop academic autonomy. The level of support given to students is slowly reduced until

such time that students are capable of integrating the newly acquired skill set into their own consciousness. The assistance given to students steadily becomes internalised and thus self-governing. This is essentially indicative of a successful process of ‘scaffolding’. See Figure 3.12.

**Figure 3.12: Vygotsky’s Stages of Learning**



Source: Thorpe & Gallimore (1988)

Vygotsky (1978) states that students normally develop more sophisticated forms of awareness and reasoning during collaboration with peers more skilful than themselves (Schaffer 2004). It is during these ‘*social interactions*’ that students are able to attain essential “cultural tools” necessary for participation in society. These tools relate to communicative skills that are necessary to enable access to pedagogic strategies. Furthermore, these “cultural tools” are thought of as being similar to Bernstein’s ‘restricted’ and ‘elaborated codes of consciousness’<sup>25</sup> (see Bernstein 1990; 1996). Insofar as the application of RtL in the Australian context is concerned, because most Aboriginal children emanate from oral-cultured families, where ‘low-literacy’ is allegedly a problem, ‘elaborated codes of consciousness’ do not necessarily get passed onto these students pre-school, nor

<sup>25</sup> This is discussed in the next section.

during early socialisation within the home. It could be argued that the reality for a large portion of South African students with respect to a childhood orientation to ‘literacy’, because of high rates of ‘low-literacy’ in the home, is not too dissimilar to the experience of non-native English speakers in Australia. Therefore, it is important to make use of ‘literacy’ interventions that are able to tackle this barrier. RtL was designed with this barrier in mind.

Teaching and learning, if understood to take place through social interaction, can result in the acquisition of cultural tools (orientations to reading – educational ‘Discourse’) needed to access academic texts (Schaffer 2004). However, the type of language used in classrooms, for example, a higher-order versus lower-order language vocabulary, should be considered as not only a crucial foundation for communication, but also a vital component of cognitive development. In other words, language becomes the “tool for thought” or channels of mediation in the development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Mitchell and Myles 2004). Consequently, it is language that guides students’ thoughts and directs their attention to important rhetorical devices within academic texts. As a result, language offers a direct connection between comprehension of academic texts and interaction within the school. Communication, and the type of language used in the communicative process facilitates higher order thinking, which means that the learning of ‘academic literacy’ skills becomes a ‘*mediated process*’ (Schaffer 2004). Further, links between students’ individual frames of reference, and complex ideas put forward within academic texts, should be developed in class activities. For individual students who might already be familiar with the use of rhetorical devices in texts, ‘*assimilation*’ takes place. However, for students who have limited proficiency in their native or home language – a plausible assumption for many South African students, a process of ‘*accommodation*’ needs to take place. This can often be problematic and time consuming when one considers that students in any particular classroom context have different language abilities. Still, it is throughout the mediation of language usage, that students are supported in the development and manipulation of “mental tools”, which enable access to Halliday’s three layers of texts, see Figure 3.6 (Mitchell and Myles 2004).

The success of the mediated process in South African classrooms discussed above is reliant upon collective processes within the classroom as well as face-to-face interaction. Through

these interactions, students, ‘pool’ their comprehension of the complexities of more advanced academic texts, and jointly make sense of the texts. This collaborative understanding would not be achievable if attempted individually. Discussions in class with ‘experts’ (educators) are fundamental if the thoughts and viewpoints of these educators are to be internalised by students. This is supposed to result in a greater control of mental processes. Interaction with peers of better language ability is also essential because they scaffold better language practices, which leads to enhanced thought patterns (Vygotsky, 1978).

Since RtL follows an I-R-F cycle (Figure 3.5) (Lemke 1990; Rose 2006a), students are provided with new language patterns necessary for comprehension of academic texts. During this process, the change from ‘interpersonal’ (or shared) speech to ‘intrapersonal’ (or inner) speech provides an environment conducive for the development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). However, bear in mind this development is not arbitrary. Instead, it happens during explicit ‘scaffolding’ within the student’s ZPD. It must be noted however, that mediated learning through educator scaffolding may be a problematic process in the South African context as few teachers in some rural schools possess the qualifications, or native English-speaking proficiencies needed to generate ‘new’ higher-order language and thinking patterns necessary to achieve advanced ‘academic literacy’. It would seem tautological to say that improving educator or teacher skills in English language proficiency is an important part of strengthening the process of mediated learning. Therefore, efforts by the Department of Basic Education in building language capacity would be a catalyst to ensuring the success of ‘literacy’ interventions such as RtL, which rely strongly on significant others to build language capacity.

In the discussion above, reference is made to cognitive academic language proficiency. This refers to the theory of language proficiency (Cummins, 1991). In the first instance, children develop basic interpersonal communicative competence (BICS) which is the pre-requisite for the development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS is generally needed for everyday face-face conversations whilst CALP incorporates skills needed to succeed with more complex academic tasks. CALP is an important component of academic success. In the case of this study, CALP also involves tasks which are generally context reduced and cognitively demanding. The dilemma faced by many non-Native speakers of

English in South Africa is the fact that learners struggle to develop CALP fully in the home language before changing to English as the language of learning and teaching. According to Cummin's theory of linguistic interdependence, this results in the development of CALP in English taking longer to develop, if it develops at all (Clarence-Fincham, 2000).

### 3.4.5 Bernstein – Education as a Pedagogic Device

The introductory chapter of this thesis provided clear evidence that there is a growing 'literacy' problem at a secondary school level in South Africa. 'Literacy' performance of students appears to be dropping with students from more impoverished communities more likely to face the full brunt of this growing problem (Unesco, 2011:87). This points to another disturbing reality for education in South Africa – there appears to be a high level of distributional and social inequality in education proxied by unequal 'literacy' performance of students (Hlungi et al, 2010; Unesco, 2011: 87). See Figure 1.2 in section 1.1 of Chapter One for a graphic representation of this inequality. According to Figure 1.2, there tends to be a difference in 'literacy' performance of students emanating from well resourced, ex-model C<sup>26</sup> schools as opposed to students coming from township and rural schools. Given this scenario, it becomes too easy to assign the 'literacy' outcome of students to socioeconomic circumstance only. However, one should possibly be attributing lower levels of performance to issues such as poorer levels of early childhood linguistic stimulation and possibly a lack of early socialisation into the dominant 'Discourse' of formal education (Duncan & Seymour, 2000; Ghosh, 2013). Both Bernstein (1996) and Rose and Martin (2012) articulate that all too often, the academic performance of students is attributed to innate biological abilities and cultural associations. This is not to be disputed. However, this does not necessarily account for the poor academic performance of some students, whereby an association between academic performance and innate biological abilities becomes the 'scapegoat' for legitimising individual failure instead of looking at unequal opportunities for quality learning at some schools (Bernstein, 1996).

Rose and Martin (2012) attempt to make a case for the fact that 'literacy' development curriculums at school fail to provide explicit instruction in reading and writing after the first

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<sup>26</sup> Former white schools during Apartheid.

two years of schooling. This is often linked to competence models of education (Rose, 2005). In competence models of schooling, the 'literacy' development curriculum presupposes an already established, innate educational competency due to the fact that supposedly, all students arrive at school with the necessary pre-orientations to the 'dominant discourse' of formal education (Rose, 2004; Rose, 2005). Consequently, 'literacy' instruction after the first two years of schooling becomes implicit with the teachers role being that of the 'guide on the side'. Bernstein (1996), Rose (2005), and Rose and Martin (2012) argue further that knowledge systems necessary for successful assimilation into the school 'Discourse' is construed to be invisible to the student struggling to assimilate into the 'Discourse' of the school. Given this scenario, teachers within a competence model of schooling, assume all learners entering the formal educational domain, are already successfully assimilated into the 'Discourse' of schooling and thus fail to explicitly help students make the transition (Rose, 2005). In practical terms, this could relate to reading and writing skills. By the end of year two, if a student has still not mastered the skill of learning to read, little assistance is given beyond year two, meaning the student may struggle to become an independent reader later on. According to Bernstein (1996), this is not because of an innate biological fault on the student's part, but rather, more likely due to unequal opportunities of becoming fully accommodated into the 'Discourse' of formal education.

In direct contrast to the competence model of 'literacy' development, RtL supposedly adopts more of a performance model to 'literacy' development. With this model of 'literacy development', classroom attention is given to the learning of specialised 'literacy' skills needed to complete specific academic tasks at school (Rose, 1999:5). The skills needed to become successful learners in a 'discourse' possibly foreign to some students, is made explicit during classroom interaction. In this scenario, the teacher moves away from being the "guide on the side", to the "sage on the stage" (Bernstein, 1996). With interventions like RtL, the attempt to make knowledge specific to formal educational 'Discourse' more visible to students, the age old metaphor of the 'hidden curriculum' found in many educational systems might possibly be rectified (Rose, 2005).

In discussing the concept of the 'hidden curriculum' in education, one needs to do so whilst simultaneously discussing the role of instructional and regulative classroom 'discourse'

(Rose, 2005). According to Rose (2004), often reading forms the basis for most school based activities. As a result, educators need to place a strong emphasis on helping students develop systematic approaches to reading skills development. Reading is crucial in that students cannot write about knowledge that they have not acquired through reading based activities (Hart, 2009). It is thus plausible to state that reading becomes a crucial pedagogic medium for accessing vital information, which means well developed reading skills becomes crucial for academic success (Bernstein, 1990; Rose, 2004). Given the importance of solid reading skills, this is a skill that needs to be well developed as early as possible within the ‘literacy development’ curriculum. However, this becomes problematic within the South Africa school curriculum because unequal opportunities to fully develop these crucial skills are made available. For example, according to Unesco (2011), 75% of primary school learners fail to meet minimum ‘literacy’ benchmarks with 45% of Grade 5 learners struggling to develop basic reading skills. Consequently, the negative impact that the role of instructional and regulative classroom ‘discourse’ has on students’ ‘literacy development’ is reason to believe that this might be a strong component of student ‘literacy’ insufficiencies (Rose, 2004).

Instructional ‘discourse’ refers to the multiple opportunities created in a classroom for the development of specialised skills. In the context of this study, this involves highly specialised reading and writing skills. Regulative ‘discourse’ is the creation of an identity, and order and management of performance (Bernstein, 1996, Rose, 2005). In educational contexts, instructional ‘discourse’ is embedded within a regulative ‘discourse’. In other words, instructional ‘discourse’ involves skills development whereas regulative ‘discourse’ involves the maintenance of social order (Ivinson, 2002; Rose, 2005). According to Bernstein (1996), a lack of explicit instruction (regulative ‘discourse’) in ‘academic literacy’ skills development (instructional ‘discourse’) is more likely to blame for unequal ‘literacy’ development in students and not necessarily as a result of a student’s innate biological ability. In discussing the above, one also needs to bring into the discussion, the concept of codes of consciousness.

Middle-class ‘discourse’ has the propensity of being categorised as ‘elaborate’ whereas, working-class ‘discourse’ tends to be categorised as ‘restricted’ (Rose, 1999). According to Bernstein (1996), this is a possible reason for why children from working class homes are more prone to underperformance in comparison to students from middle class homes. This

could result from restrictions to speech codes working-class children encounter prior to school. According to Nash (2006), it might be important to consider that these ‘codes’ of speech are meant to facilitate academic performance, and do not grant competency. Therefore teachers should be offering suitable classroom practice that could help working-class students respond better to, and produce meaning through apt codes of speech. In a schooling context, this refers to elaborated codes. Having access to either ‘restricted’ or ‘elaborated’ codes of consciousness affords students’ different means of understanding meaning through experience (Bernstein, 1996).

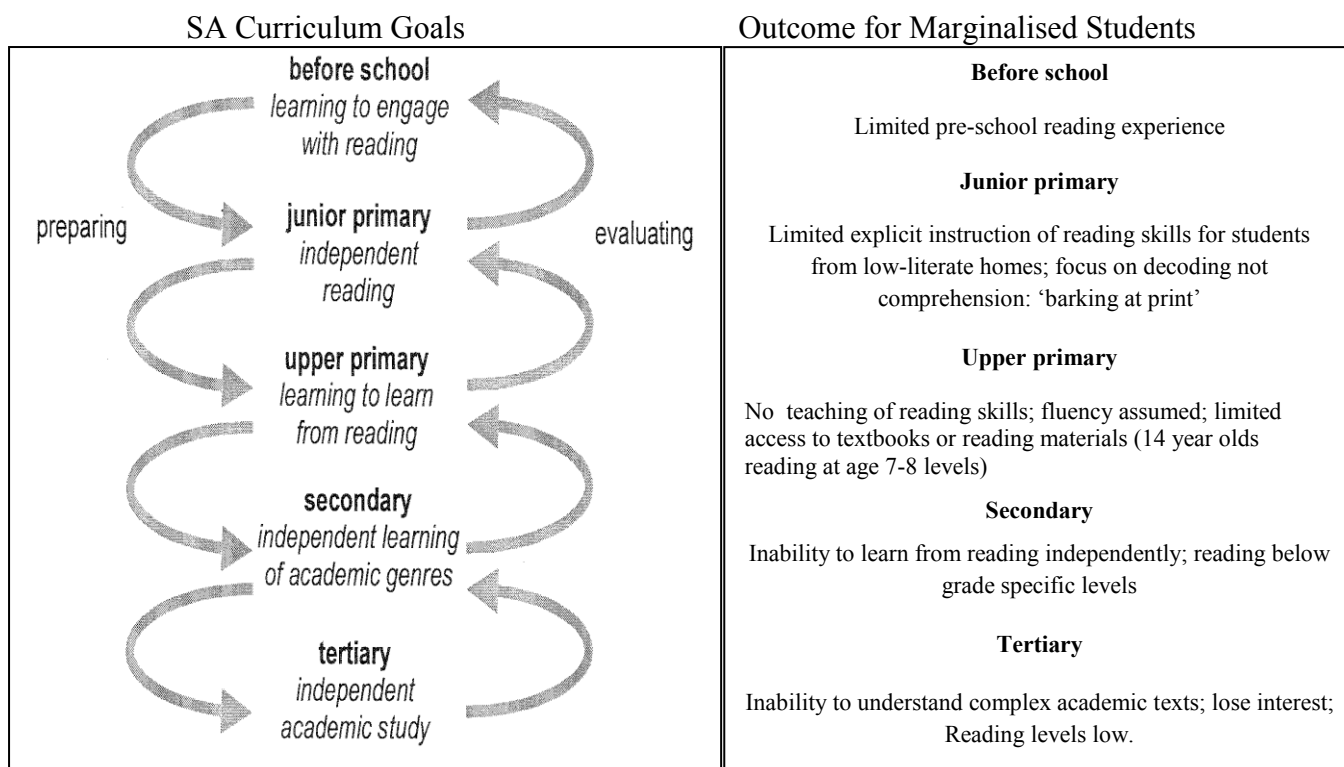
Halliday offers a different term for Bernstein’s codes of language. These are written or spoken forms of language (Halliday, 1989). Just like elaborated and restricted codes of knowledge, written (elaborate) and spoken (restricted) codes of consciousness necessitate dissimilar degrees of skill. Written codes are considered more cognitively demanding partly due to the fact that speaking consists of face-to-face relations. Meaning is supported by non-verbal cues. However, written codes of knowledge are abstract because meaning is rooted in specific language patterns (rhetorical devices). It is written codes of language patterns that RtL attempts to make more explicit to students who have not being given ample opportunities to immerse themselves into these ‘discourses’.

The level of inequality regarding access to written codes of language is demonstrated by pre-school access to written or spoken forms of language. Rose (2004) articulated that children from high-literate, middle class families supposedly spent approximately 1000 hours engaging with reading material through their parents before school. Consequently, these students are more likely to develop relevant skills necessary to engage efficiently with written texts. As a result, these students will be more likely able to learn to read within the early years of schooling. On the contrary, students coming from low-literate homes tend to have less access to written stories. As a result, these students are more likely to find it difficult to engage with written texts. Consequently, developing the skills necessary to become fluent readers’ early on in school might be an issue. These difficulties are compounded during each year of schooling as the curriculum increasingly demands more of these students. Subsequently, students like these tend to fall behind. This highlights probable faults



embedded within the sequencing and pacing of the literacy curriculum (Rose, 2004). Figure 3.13 below offers a graphic representation of this.

**Figure 3.13: The Literacy Development Curriculum's Impact on Marginalised Students**



Source: Rose (2004); Hart (2009)

According to Rose and Martin (2012), the disparity in academic achievement between working class students and middle class students is because the preparation of “successful” students in obtaining essential reading and writing skills is realised covertly (implicitly) during the secondary phase of schooling. At this stage of schooling, it is assumed that students are already able to independently learn from reading. As a result of this assumption, a large proportion of curriculum based content is set out as homework. This offers important learning opportunities necessary for the development of independent reading skills. Students able to read and write independently will probably be able to acquire content knowledge (Rose, 1999). However, students unable to make use of these learning opportunities may be excluded from the ‘literacy’ development cycle. This is because the cycle is hierarchical in nature in that knowledge builds upon previously acquired knowledge and skill sets. Consequently, an inability to perform according to predetermined ‘literacy’ curriculum goals

and objectives (Figure 3.13) at specific phases of schooling worsens students' chances of reaching appropriate reading and writing goals at a later stage. For this reason, it is reasonable to maintain that the end result of the pacing of the 'literacy' development curriculum is twofold: students from high-literate homes are given more opportunities to succeed whilst students from low-literate homes might be excluded from acquiring the necessary skills needed to succeed at school (Rose, 2004; Hart, 2009). RtL was supposedly designed to remedy this scenario by providing explicit instruction in the learning of academic reading and writing skills.

### **3.5 Review of Some Findings of Reading to Learn Interventions Globally**

The use of RtL has become more widespread globally with organizations in Australia, Europe, Scotland, Uganda, South Africa, Chile and Japan making use of RtL methodologies. However, most of the research being conducted, and subsequently published, revolves around the implementation of RtL at the primary and secondary school level (Grades 1-7). Very little research is available for the teaching of RtL at a Senior High School level making a study of this kind unique. However, it does pose a problem when trying to compare results globally. Given that the purpose of implementation of RtL at a Grade 11 level for this study is to test whether skills required at a university level can be enhanced or taught via the use of RtL at a High School level in South Africa, I have chosen to briefly look at results of RtL globally with undergraduate students as they are a closer match to the age group chosen for this study. To date, the only research available with regards to the efficacy of RtL at a tertiary level, and suitable for comparison with quantitative data available, is that which has been produced by Rose, Rose, Farrington and Page (2008), Rose, Lui-Chivizhe, McKnight and Smith (2004) and Millin (2011).

Both Rose et al (2008) and Rose et al (2004) offer an evaluation of the use of RtL at two different centers at the University of Sydney. A mixed methods approach was used for both studies as students writing samples (qualitative) were collected and given numerical scores based on a well researched writing assessment rubric developed in line with educational linguistic theory (Martin & Rose, 2003; 2007). These two studies were run over two full semesters, the timeframe recommended for implementation of this methodology. Both studies

found an upward trend with regards to students changing ‘literacy’ scores. However, an element of caution, with regard to the findings of the first study is raised when one takes into account conclusion validity<sup>27</sup>. Given that the sample size of Rose et al (2008) was small; thereby constituting less than 10% of the population, it does raise some issues with regards to conclusion validity. Further, due to the fact that some students opted not to take part in the study, one is not sure as to whether the sample was truly randomly selected. Another element of concern regarding conclusion validity with Rose et al’s (2008) study is that an exponential trend line was used as a means to test the ‘efficacy’ of RtL. Although an exponential trend line is a good indicator in forecasting changes in students’ ‘literacy’ performance, it does not say much about whether the change in performance between assignments was statistically significant from one another. In other words, the quantitative analysis of the data in Rose et al (2008) offered a forecast (upward trend) of students’ changing ‘literacy’ scores but did not offer an explanation of the statistical relationship between the change in scores and the implementation of RtL. Millin (2011), in an attempt to remedy the shortcomings of Rose et al (2008) offered a more rigorous statistical analysis of the implementation of RtL at UKZN.

As part of a coursework Master’s thesis, and a pilot study into the feasibility of researching RtL at a Doctoral level, Millin (2011) made use of a mixed methods approach as well. Students’ writing samples (qualitative) were codified using the same assessment rubric as Rose et al (2004; 2008). However, Millin’s (2011) study differed in that both descriptive and analytical data analysis was conducted. Because the data was found to be not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was employed to test the change in student’s individual scores across assignments. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test offered a deeper analysis and explanation for changes in ‘literacy’ performance at specific points in time within the implementation of RtL. This type of analysis allows for structural problems to be identified in the implementation of RtL. Severe limitations to Millin’s (2011) study included issues related to the sampling process and the length of the implementation of RtL. Rose et al (2008) articulated that the rate of improvement in ‘literacy’ performance is directly proportionate to the time spent within the methodology. Therefore, because Millin’s study was only conducted over one semester, concerns regarding whether a true indication of the efficacy of RtL was given is questioned. The results of Millin’s (2011) study indicated that

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<sup>27</sup> Conclusion validity refers to the statistical power of a study, strengthened by the sample size and alpha level of the data (Trochim, 1997).

students' 'literacy' scores did increase within the first half of the module, but decreased within the second half. This decrease was attributed to a rise in academic complexity of the reading material and assignment requirements; a change in pedagogic practice and type of text used to scaffold academic language patterns; and insufficient time for students to internalize language patterns modelled. Although the overall pattern of changing 'literacy' scores was less promising, requiring a degree of change in the way RtL is currently being implemented at UKZN, the change in scores of individual students, particularly the weakest cohort of students, illustrates well that RtL may democratize the classroom and lessen the abilities gap between weaker, and stronger readers as these students showed significant improvement in their 'literacy' scores.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter offered more of a description of RtL than a critical analysis of RtL. It started with an overview of what RtL comprises of, followed by a description of the RtL classroom cycle as it is realized from a practical point of view. The theoretical foundations of RtL were then discussed starting with Halliday, language as a text within a social context. In discussing this theoretical thread, a discussion of 'genre theory' and systemic functional grammar was also deemed important as they are part and parcel of the work of Halliday. The second theoretical thread discussed was Vygotsky's notion of scaffolding followed by a discussion of Bernstein's theory of education as a pedagogic device in maintaining inequality. A brief overview of relevant studies of RtL, particular to this study, was then put forward. This chapter then concluded. Chapter Four will offer a discussion of the research methodology of this study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter sets out the research aims of the study, after which it offers a brief defense of the research design. This is followed by a discussion of issues relating to validity of the data constructs, and ethical considerations pertaining to the sample participants under investigation, given that the sample comprises of students under the age of 18. A description of the two school sites and student participants is offered, followed by a description of the data and data collection process. An in-depth discussion of the methods of analysis employed for the study is then given, followed by a brief discussion of my thoughts on possible limitations to the study. This chapter then concludes.

#### **4.2 Aims of the Study, Research Questions and Research Hypothesis**

The overarching aim of this study was to investigate the effect of the RtL ‘literacy’ development intervention on the academic writing skills of selected Grade 11 students at two diverse school contexts within the Winelands District. The reason for this particular aim for the study was due to the belief that the current academic preparation of students within the secondary school context does not adequately equip students with the skills expected of them at university to enable both access to learning and showing evidence of successful learning outcomes<sup>28</sup>. Chapter One (section 1.1) offered some evidence of the low retention rates, or graduation rates of students at South African universities, which serves to illustrate the struggles undergraduate students experience at university. In an effort to find alternative ways of assisting secondary school students in the development of higher ‘academic literacy’ skills before entering university, this study proposed to follow the implementation of the RtL intervention at two separate school sites for the duration of the 2014 academic school year. Further, this study proposed to offer an in-depth analysis of students’ changing ‘literacy’ skills within the RtL intervention. This was to test whether the RtL implementation could be considered an effective approach for ‘academic literacy’ development of Grade 11 students,

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<sup>28</sup> Studies which have also reported on the under-preparedness of undergraduate students are: Troskie-De Bruin (1999); Penrose (2002); Van Schalkwyk (2008) and Allardice (2013).

or not. Statistical analysis of the intervention's assessment results, together with a brief content analysis of the RtL curriculum, whilst conducting a close examination of selected student's assessment portfolios (all written assignments) was conducted to get a better idea of the level of efficacy of the intervention. The above analysis could also assist in highlighting possible shortcomings in structure and content of the RtL intervention, that if attended to, could result in the implementation of RtL being considered more successful, if found to be less successful than reported success rates of RtL internationally. Two research questions arose out of the aims of the study. Chapter One (section 1.3) offered a more succinct articulation of the research questions but for clarity, they have been summarized briefly below.

**Research Question 1:** This research question sought to uncover whether students did show statistically significant improvements in their academic writing skills during and at the end of being subjected to the RtL intervention. The objective was to use both descriptive and more advanced statistics to assess the rate of change recorded and assessed in students' academic writing skills. Furthermore, a linguistic biographical questionnaire was administered to students to unpack students' situational context. This was done to better understand complexities within classrooms and students home background that could influence the results of RtL. But more importantly, an analysis of selected student's writing portfolios was done as a case study approach to triangulate the quantitative findings.

**Research Question 2:** This research question sought to compare the rate of change in students' 'academic literacy' scores of the current research project, to that of similar applications of RtL in an Australian context. This is because the intervention originated in Australia, and the largest success rates have been reported there. The objective of this research question was to ascertain whether similar rates of success could still be achieved within South Africa. Both descriptive and analytical statistics were used to assess whether the reported improvements of the current research project were comparable to reported results of other studies of RtL.

**Research Hypothesis:** Given that a pilot study regarding the implementation of RtL for 'academic literacy' development within a South African context was conducted for my

Masters study (Millin, 2011; Millin & Millin, 2014), in an effort to test the feasibility of a study of RtL at a Doctoral level, it was reasonable to hypothesise a positive upward trend in the ‘academic literacy’ scores of students within this particular research project as well. This was because an upward trend in students’ academic writing skills was found in the pilot study.

### **4.3 Defense of the Research Design**

My incentive to delve into research within the field of ‘academic literacy’ development was ignited, and subsequently solidified during my undergraduate years at UKZN. At this time I was enrolled in a Bachelor of Education degree and found myself studying alongside contemporaries emanating from deep rural schools within the KwaZulu-Natal province. The rigorous ‘academic literacy’ requirements for successful participation within the Bachelor of Education programme at UKZN often left a large number of the students (from previously disadvantaged schools) struggling to cope due to poor preparation for tertiary studies. Many hours spent tutoring fellow classmates left me concerned about the struggles some students faced when entering university. My interest in ‘academic literacy’ development was established further during the period 2004 – 2010 of which I was employed as an English tutor for a private tutoring company. One of my students was a 13yr old African student, who, after numerous years of schooling, still could not decode C-A-T.

Because of educational policy laws and regulations in South Africa that state no student may fail a learning phase more than once; this student had been allowed to progress through the grades despite not being able to demonstrate a sufficient level of ‘academic literacy’ skill. Further, from my own teaching experience at a secondary school level, and working with teachers in the Further Education and Training Band (FET) (Grades 10-12) during my data collection phase during 2014, it became apparent that a large majority of FET teachers do not possess the skills and aptitude to assist students unable to read or write proficiently in the teacher’s classrooms. This was because their formal teacher education training erroneously assumed that students would enter the FET phase of schooling having acquired the requisite ‘academic literacy’ skills already. Given the above, I felt compelled to dedicate a significant amount of time during my postgraduate studies in evaluating alternative ‘academic literacy’

practices that had documented successful track records of assisting students in the development of more advanced ‘academic literacy’ practices. Further, I felt that the research needed to demonstrate that its central aim would be to facilitate pedagogic change, in secondary school classrooms, to ensure that the research could inform classroom teaching practices within the field of ‘academic literacy’ development for all students, regardless of socioeconomic status; educational context, or availability of resources at a school level.

For reasons mentioned above, an action research design frame was specifically chosen, and subsequently tested during my pilot study (Millin, 2011; Millin & Millin, 2014). This was because it is heavily practitioner based and allows for the researcher to be intimately involved in the design and implementation of the intervention under investigation, whilst simultaneously allowing for a high level of professional development. This is because the researcher is able to reflect on the classroom practice, make adjustments accordingly in order to lead towards pedagogic change<sup>29</sup> (Opie, 2005). Further, the research design frame for this particular study was deemed a long-term action research design frame because its goal was to introduce pedagogic change within a specific educational context whilst simultaneously evaluating and interpreting that change over an extended period (McNiff, 2002; Millin, 2011). The researcher, involved in both the implementation of the intervention, and the analysis of its effectivity, is considered as the agent introducing the change (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In other words, an action research design frame was chosen for this study because the fundamental goal of the research project was to implement the RtL intervention within a secondary school context within the Winelands District to influence pedagogic change with regards to the teaching of ‘academic literacy’ development, whilst simultaneously developing a level of criticality to the use of RtL in a South African context to better the design and use of RtL.

I hope that this study will also add insights into the use of RtL more widely within a South African context, which could hopefully lead to a larger, more representative study of RtL at a later stage. The motivation for the adoption of an action research design frame was also because I felt that because pedagogic change does not necessarily happen overnight, but rather, happens through a rigorous process of strategy employment, evaluation and

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<sup>29</sup> Teacher involvement in this study meant I taught all the classes. I did not provide materials and leave the classroom at any given time. So I was actively involved in the reflection process.



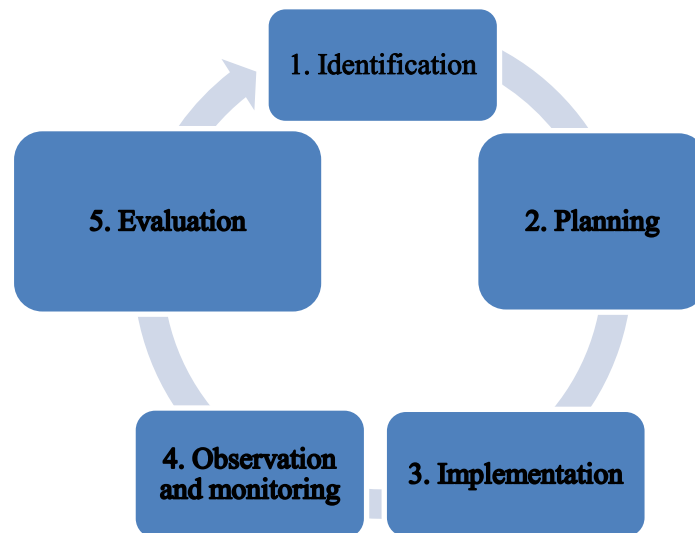
modification of said strategy, and redesign of the strategy under investigation until a desired outcome is met, I felt that the action research design frame would be suitable (Thomas, 2009; Cohen et al, 2011). The action research plan provided a setting beneficial to evidence-based professional development as it required an active component of data gathering and reflection throughout the investigation of the data (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis & MacTaggart, 1988).

It is important to highlight that the purpose of this study and the subsequent adoption of an action research design frame was not to develop additional theoretical assumptions with regards to RtL, as that has already been accomplished by the founder, Dr David Rose. Rather, through the adoption of an action research cycle design frame, I hoped to acquire new insights into the implementation, and subsequent improvement needed for the implementation of RtL within a South African context. This is because one of the most fundamental objectives of an action research is not necessarily to generate original information, but rather, to enhance practice of a pedagogic intervention like RtL (Pring, 2006). I acknowledge that the preceding statement might be seen as problematic for a Doctoral study, which requires the need to develop new knowledge. Although some new insights about the theoretical assumptions of RtL may be generated through the research process, the sole purpose of this study was to generate new information about the active implementation of RtL within a South African secondary school context to trigger pedagogic change in current classroom practice. For this reason, I am committed to triggering pedagogic change in the field of ‘academic literacy’ development based on the findings uncovered about the implementation of RtL (Thomas, 2009; Millin, 2011).

Within in this study, the action research design frame covered a five stage cycle with all five stages featuring within this research. See figure 4.1 below (Thomas, 2009: 114; Cohen et al, 2011: 354). According to Cohen et al (2011), the key feature of an action research is that it works on a problem and tries to solve the problem. In the context of this study, this refers to *poor academic writing skills of Grade 11 students*. An action research can be collaborative and builds on teacher involvement. Again, in the context of this study, *school based teachers were included in the teaching and planning process*. An action research involves the planning of an intervention by the practitioners, and for this project, *I designed the RtL intervention for*

*implementation. An action research involves the implementation of an intervention (I implemented the RtL intervention over the 2014 academic year) and it evaluates the success of the intervention in solving the problem identified at the onset of the study (I used both quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the efficacy of the RtL intervention).*

**Figure 4.1: The Action Research Cycle**



Source: Thomas (2009); Cohen et al (2011)

#### 4.4 Validity

Validity refers to the “best available approximation to the truth or falsity of any given inference or conclusion” made about a particular study (Trochim, 1997). According to Field (2009:11-12) validity refers to correct procedures put into place to allow a study to offer correct inferences about the research questions set out in the beginning stages of the research design. In other words, validity refers to this particular study’s level of power given to the inferences that may be made based on the analysis of the data collected. One could possibly identify multiple points within the study which shows how I have attempted to ensure the study’s level of validity. Due to word constraints, internal validity, construct validity and conclusion validity are given prominence in this section.

**Internal validity** is seen as the study's capacity to put forward, with a certain degree of accuracy, whether the RtL intervention at the two school sites made either a positive or negative difference to individual student's 'literacy' scores (Trochim, 1997; Bechhofer & Patterson, 2000). In ensuring a degree of internal validity was upheld for the duration of the study and data collection procedure, processes were put in place to ensure a *testing threat* did not influence the inferences drawn from the data analysis. A testing threat refers to a situation whereby the implementation of a "pre-test" can be seen to positively affect students' results on a "post-test" if the exact same topic for the writing assessment process is offered for both the pre-test and post-test (Trochim, 1997; Cohen et al, 2011: 184). In situations within research similar to this study, where a testing threat may become problematic, a learned effect then becomes a barrier in testing the efficacy of a particular intervention.

For this reason, a different narrative topic, and academic essay topic was set for both the baseline / diagnostic writing phase (formative/on-going assessment/pre-test) than to the re-write phase (final summative assessment/ post-test) to ensure students did not produce the same ideas, or thoughts (and thus copy chunks of writing) from their initial writing samples, which had been given extensive feedback during the course of the intervention. It must be noted though that the same assessment criteria were used for measurement purposes in all phases of the data collection process, thus strengthening the study's construct validity. Any hint of a testing threat, or learned effect, was eradicated because the application and subsequent final summative assessment of the acquisition of the 'literacy' skills being taught within the RtL intervention, was done via an assignment with a completely different topic. In addition, to avoid any bias on my part, the final topic chosen was done by the teachers at the two school sites. A further effort to ensure that the internal validity of the study was not compromised, students who were either absent, or did not finish a writing task, had their assignment for that lesson excluded. This was to ensure that a *mortality threat* was not present within the research project. A mortality threat may occur when a high number of students drop-out, or in this case, do not complete their writing task. In this instance, students' writing scores were left out and a pairwise comparison on marks was not done. This was to ensure that there was not an over inflation of the mean or median scores (Trochim, 1997, Fielding & Gilbert, 2006: Cohen et al, 2011).

**Construct validity** for the purposes of this study refers to the researcher's ability to employ standard definitions and constructions of terminology used in other studies similar to that of this research project (Cohen et al, 2011). In other words, construct validity fore-grounded the need to ensure that the operational definitions which provided the framework for comprehension of terminology within this study would be able to be generalized to other similar studies of this nature (Trochim, 1997; Cohen et al, 2011: 188). According to Cohen et al (2011: 188), a clear articulation and delineation of constructs used within the study is necessary to demonstrate that a detailed review of the literature has been used in the formulation of the study's constructs. This includes a study of counter examples of constructs which lends to an element of criticality. In an effort to ensure construct validity of the study was not brought into question, key concepts were outlined within Chapter One (section 1.7), and within footnotes to ensure the readership were made aware of how certain terminology were used within this study, and within each chapter. Constructs were also unpacked in Chapter Two and Three. Further, where I felt that a concept used within the write up of the research could skew comprehension of the study, due to contextualization of the terminology, a definition was provided. With regards to ensuring construct validity was maintained with the assessment criteria used in this study, and in an effort to ensure the results of this study were remotely comparable to other similar studies of RtL globally, the same marking rubric was used as other RtL studies. This is because the definitions of the assessment criterion were similarly defined. In other words, each criterion used for assessment had been elaborated on (See Table 4.1). By ensuring the above conditions were dealt with correctly within this study, '*inadequate pre-operational explication of constructs threat*' did not reduce the research's construct validity. This refers to my capacity to delineate the concepts being measured prior to measuring them (Trochim, 1997).

**Conclusion validity** is the degree to which conclusions can be drawn about the relationships present in the data and whether these relationships are reasonable (Trochim, 1997). For this particular study, this referred to the conclusions I drew about the change in students' 'literacy' skills, as proxied by their writing scores, in conjunction with the implementation of the RtL intervention. Therefore, conclusion validity takes into account the statistical power of the research and is made stronger by the research's sample range and alpha level of the data. Very simply, alpha levels are used in statistical modeling when a hypothesis is being tested. It

is often also referred to as the significance level and is used in statistical testing to ensure the probability of making an error in the outcome of the research (decision) is avoided (Trochim, 1997).

The hypothesis in this case is that the implementation of RtL would have a positive effect on Grade 11 students' writing skills (See section 4.2 above for a brief mention of the study's hypothesis). With regards to the sample size, this is referred to as the number of units (schools, or students) made available for the study in question and according to Field (2009), the law of bigger numbers in research posits that the larger the sample size, the smaller the standard of error. For this particular study, the sampling size ranged from 97 at its maximum to 80 at its minimum. This was due to student absenteeism and the unfortunate deaths of two students at one of the school sites. Although the sample size for the purposes of the research was adequate, it must be noted that I was the only person involved in the marking process of approximately 800 individual writing tasks. A sample size any bigger could have jeopardised the standard of the marking. Nevertheless, I do acknowledge that the sample size may be interpreted as small in nature by some researchers. At the same time, I acknowledge that the sample drawn for the study was not representative of all school based demographics across the country. Therefore, this study did not intend to generalize the findings of the study to the broader South African school population at all. What this study did attempt to do though, is make use of three separate classroom dynamics which could closely represent the type of individual students found within South African schools – one English Home Language class (native speakers of English); one English Second Language class at an ex-model C school (non-native speakers of English from middle class families) and an English Second Language class at a lower quintile, rural school (third or fourth language speakers of English from an impoverished community).

Conclusion validity for a particular study is also based on the appropriate test statistic's alpha level ( $\alpha$ ) or probability value (p-value). In other words, the Wilcoxon matched-pairs test aimed to establish whether there was a statistically meaningful difference between 'literacy' scores from one assessment to the next (pairwise comparison). Under a null hypothesis of no pairwise difference, a large p-value (greater than 0.05 or 5%) would imply that there was a greater likelihood that any difference in scores was purely due to random occurrence, and not

some meaningful pattern of behavior which, for purposes of the study, could be said to be driven or explained by the RtL intervention.

#### **4.5 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations in the context of research, aims to seek out the rules and regulations of behavior that allow a researcher to operate fairly and honestly in the context of their research (Pring, 2006: 142). Considering possible ethical constraints for any study is imperative given that many researchers often find themselves in a dilemma when having to strike a balance between the demands placed on themselves as professional scientists seeking out truth, versus the rights and protection of research subjects (Cohen et al, 2011:75). Ethics within the social sciences needs to be considered on numerous levels ranging from the nature of the research project; procedures to be adopted; methods of data collection, to the reporting of the data, and what the researcher intends to do with the data once the project is complete (Cohen et al, 2011:76). Consequently, several ethical considerations were taken into account for this research.

Firstly, upon consideration of the nature of the research project itself, ‘academic literacy’ skills of non-native speakers in South Africa are often spoken of, and reported on negatively, adding to a general preconceived notion that non-native speakers of English are generally poor at all academic reading and writing tasks. At all times during the implementation of the intervention, I avoided any form of comparison between students from the two different school sites when discussing the project with students. This was done to protect the integrity of the students at the more impoverished school. Secondly, given that school is already a highly stressful environment for students, the procedures adopted for data collection purposes were designed to fit within the formative assessment processes that already take place during the school year. In other words, the individual writing tasks were designed to imitate weekly classroom activities so as to avoid placing an extra burden on students. Thirdly, all students were thoroughly briefed about the nature of the research project. They were informed that their writing tasks throughout the data collection process were to be used to assess the efficacy of the RtL intervention, and not individual student aptitude, and that voluntary consent was needed from each student. Further, students were repeatedly reminded that they

were permitted to withdraw from the research project at any given time during the year if they felt uncomfortable with being a participant.

With the student biography questionnaire, given that highly sensitive data was being voluntarily given, students were told that the information would be kept confidential during the research project, and made anonymous with the reporting of the data. Confidentiality would be maintained by ensuring any identifiable information to the participants would be replaced with a pseudonym or number. For example, all students were issued a number and all assessments made use of that particular number. Further, information that could identify a participant with a pseudonym or number was kept safe guarded on my computer, protected by a password. I would also make sure that students were aware that the data would be stored both in hard-copy format (writing portfolio's) and electronically (personal information and assessment scores) at my private residence, and all electronic copies of assessment scores and personal information would be password protected. The writing portfolios would be stored in a locked cabinet.

#### **4.6 Description of School Sites and Student Participants**

##### **School site A**

This particular school is classified as an ex-model C school (quintile<sup>30</sup> five) with limited fee support from the Department of Basic Education due to the fact that the majority of students at this school are classified as students emanating from middle to upper class families. Because of this, the financial resources needed to fund the day-to-day running of the school are generated from hefty school fees charged to the parents. As a result, annual school fees for this school are approximately R26000 per academic year. The number of applications for admission to this particular school is usually considerable each year with a large majority of applications being turned away. This is largely due to the positive reputation that this school has, as well as an abundance of resources made available to the students. This ranges from multiple sporting facilities, to high tech classrooms, a profusion of academic text books and materials made available to students and teachers, and well qualified educators. School site A

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<sup>30</sup> South African public schools are categorised into quintiles for purposes of financial allocation from Government. Quintile one is the poorest with quintile five being amongst the wealthiest. The poverty rankings are determined by the community surrounding the school.

is also classified as a dual-medium school with both English and Afrikaans being offered as the language of learning and teaching. Evidence of this policy/practice match is seen through lesson observations as well as teacher confirmation.

School site A currently has 1225 students enrolled with 66 permanent staff members employed and a further 10 part-time staff members working at the school. This encompasses academic staff and does not include ground maintenance staff. The school grounds are impeccable with an aesthetically pleasing ambiance given upon arrival at the school. As one walks through the corridors, one is greeted immediately by the support staff and students alike, with little noise and truant students visible during class times. Management of students and level of discipline appears to be strong throughout the school with students responding positively to discipline given. The Headmaster was visible at every visit and I was able to engage with the Headmaster during the research process.

### **Students: English Home Language Class (referred to as Class A)**

A large majority of students in this class considered themselves bilingual and speak both English and Afrikaans at home to parents, siblings or other family members. A smaller majority of students in this class considered themselves monolingual with only English used for communication at home. Only three students speak three or more languages at home with Greek and German constituting the additional languages. Further, almost all of the students in this class considered themselves proficient in English and Afrikaans and would be comfortable with either English or Afrikaans as the medium of instruction at school. Nearly all of the students reside in the Winelands District with a few students travelling in from neighbouring towns. According to student questionnaires, all parents hold a matric<sup>31</sup> qualification with a large majority of mothers staying at home fulltime to care for the family affairs. The father's occupation is categorised as professional. Therefore, from the information presented in the student biography questionnaire (Discussed in detail in Chapter Five) it can be inferred that almost all of the students in this class come from well off, middle-class families.

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<sup>31</sup> Matric is the highest school based qualification. It is also called Grade 12.



**Students: English First Additional Language Class (referred to as Class B)**

A large majority of students in this class considered themselves bilingual with both English and Afrikaans used at home for communication purposes. A smaller majority of students indicated that they speak Afrikaans only at home. Students indicated a preference given to Afrikaans as the medium of instruction at school. Most of the students reside in the Winelands District, and similar to Class A, some students travel in from neighbouring towns. Again, similar to Class A, none of the students indicated that a parent or guardian has less than a matric qualification. A large majority of students' mothers stayed at home fulltime and father occupations were categorised as professional. Therefore, from the information presented in the student biography questionnaire (Discussed in detail in Chapter Five) it can be inferred that almost all of the students in this class came from well off, middle-class families.

**School site B**

This specific school is classified as an urban township public school, and located within quintiles one to three given that a large majority of the students that attend the school originate from low socioeconomic homes. Ample financial assistance per student is supposedly given to the school by the Department of Basic Education. In addition, this school is classified as a 'no-fee' school which in theory, stipulates that no students can be turned away from the school if unable to pay school fees. In reality, this very rarely is enforced as schools need to supplement Department of Basic Education funding and thus, do tend to charge a nominal fee. This results in students able to pay the school fees being given first option of attending the school.

The current annual school fees set for this school are R200.00. School site B is not aesthetically pleasing and can be described as generally very dirty with long overgrown grass, broken window panes, and graffiti splashed across school walls and doors of classrooms. Evidence of a vegetable garden is present but appears un-kept. Although all the classrooms have white boards, there is a lack of resources and limited educational posters on the walls. Where there are classroom generated posters, the information is not always accurate. Desks and chairs are cramped and the staffroom lacking in comfortable amenities. There are no

sports fields for after school sport functions and the library, although well stocked, is apparently not well used.

School site B is classified as an English medium school, but feedback from the teachers highlights a gross mismatch between the language policy of the school and the language practice within classrooms with a large majority of teachers using isiXhosa as the language of learning and teaching. According to the teachers, this is due to the fact that most students at this school lack academic English proficiency to successfully learn through English. School site B has approximately 1000 enrolled students and 28 fulltime educators. I found that students at this school very rarely greeted individuals not part of the teaching staff and staff were also not welcoming with front-office staff often overlooking me when assistance was needed. Noise levels at the school left teaching and learning near impossible and student truancy was an issue with students either not turning up for lessons or arriving 15-20min late for class. Management was not visible and teachers themselves rarely held students accountable for noise levels, or tardiness. The Headmaster was very rarely seen during the school visits and his level of absence was noted on several occasions by the teachers.

### **Students: English First Additional Language Class (referred to as Class C)**

A very large majority of the students at this school are isiXhosa home language students who spend most of their time outside of school speaking isiXhosa to their friends and family. Almost all of the students define themselves as bilingual with English and isiXhosa as their languages of use. Further, almost half of the students describe their proficiency in English as good or excellent. A very small percentage of students speak more than two languages other than English and isiXhosa. Of the students that do speak three or more languages, these include isiZulu and Shona. Almost all the students reside close to the school with one student travelling from outside of the local town. About three quarters of the students' parents or legal guardians do not hold a matric (Grade 12 qualification). Of the few parents that have obtained a qualification higher than a matric certificate, 7 have a post-graduate qualification. Job descriptions described by the students range from unemployed, farm worker, domestic worker to one parent being a lawyer, one a policeman, one a chef and one a teacher. A very high percentage of the parents are unemployed or farm labourers. Without placing too much

emphasis on an analysis of students' socioeconomic circumstances at this school, as I am aware that this type of judgment is based purely on circumstantial evidence, it does appear that most students come from lower socioeconomic families or households.

#### **4.7 Description of the Data**

Before embarking on describing the data that was collected for the purposes of this study, it is important to delineate the term to ensure both the researcher and the readership are in agreement with what constitutes data. So for the purposes of this study, the data is seen as distinct pieces of raw information that have been collected, observed or created for the purposes of this study. In this particular context, the data is considered observational in nature as it is captured in real-time (Thomas, 2009). Although secondary data collection processes are considered more inexpensive and more convenient when time constraints are involved, this particular study opted to collect primary data sources, as secondary data sources were not available given that this study is the first of its kind in South Africa. Again, for clarification purposes, primary data is the collection of data which are considered to be sources of information collected by the researcher; the data collection processes are under the control of the researcher; and the data is collected for the sole purpose of the study (Cohen, et al, 2011; Kadam, Shaikh & Parab, 2015).

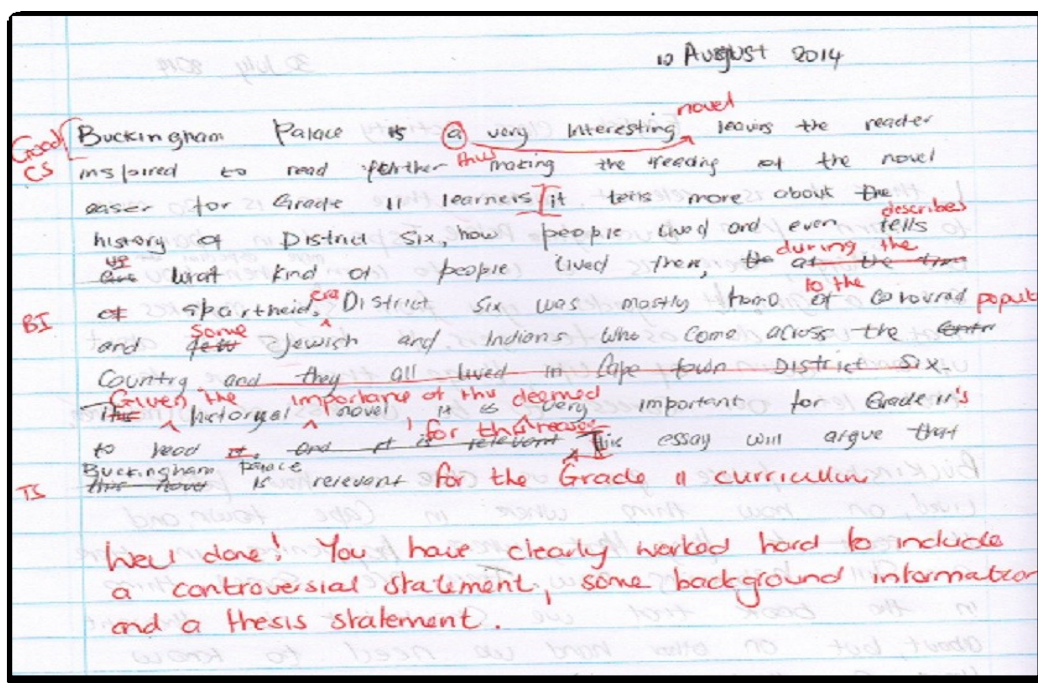
The method chosen for the data collection was a mixed methods approach as the data collected was considered to comprise of both quantitative and qualitative data. For the sake of this study, the quantitative data is considered to be data that can be measured objectively<sup>32</sup> and is usually collected as numerical scores or numbers whereas, the qualitative data are collections of observations and not measurements, and may offer detailed descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation. In other words, what the students have written for their writing portfolio forms the qualitative data and the scores given to assess what students wrote about, forms the quantitative data. Further, the case studies (selected student writing portfolios) and RtL curriculum analysis formed part of the qualitative data as did a student biographical questionnaire.

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<sup>32</sup> I acknowledge that this is not always the case and elements of subjectivity can creep into the process. This is discussed in Chapter One under philosophical aspects of the study.

In an effort to describe the data sources further, given that the study under investigation was determining the effectivity of an academic reading and writing intervention, it stands to reason that the data included vast quantities of qualitative data sources. Because students were required to write multiple drafts of two types of writing genre's and the reading and writing intervention incorporated both a product and process approach to writing, the first set of data to be collected was the writing samples from students. This totaled approximately 800 individual writing samples. Figure 4.2 offers an example of a writing sample collected. The length of each writing sample gradually increased as more stages and phases of each genre were introduced.

**Figure 4.2: Qualitative Writing Sample for the Introductory Stage of an Academic Essay**



As each writing sample (qualitative data source) was handed in, it was then marked, extensive feedback given, and finally codified by being given a numerical score using a holistic marking rubric. The marking rubric was designed specifically for the purposes of assessing this particular reading and writing intervention. See Table 4.1 for the marking rubric used to generate the quantitative data scores. I opted to use this particular rubric to ensure consistency with reported success, or failure rates of the intervention given that

previous studies of RtL all made use of the same marking rubric. This was also because research question two of this study set out to compare whether the findings of the research project would be comparable with other studies of RtL globally.

A third source of the primary data was made up of multiple case studies of selected student writing portfolios, together with a brief analysis of the RtL curriculum. The selection process for the case studies was done by selecting two weaker performing students from each of the three classes used for the study. Two genres were chosen for the literacy intervention and the rationale behind the choice of the narrative genre and persuasive or expository genre for the research project was because it was considered of more importance than other genres by the teachers at the two school sites. However, due to time constraints, the qualitative writing samples, which made up the case studies, represented the academic argument only. This was chosen over the narrative as that particular genre is more important in terms of academic writing skills for university. Table 4.2 below offers a detailed description of each writing sample, which collectively, made up the writing portfolios,

A final source of primary data was the linguistic biographical questionnaire. A set of questions were designed to establish who the students were, where they came from in terms of family history, what their family background was and students' perceptions of their linguistic proficiency. This was used to generate more information about each individual student's background. Additionally, the linguistic biographical questionnaire was collected to assist with the comprehension of data patterns that might have been questionable with regards to the efficacy of the RtL intervention. It was also hoped that the emergent data patterns from the questionnaire might provide future research pathways should interesting patterns emerge. The questionnaire has been included in the appendix under Appendix: Chapter Four.

**Table 4.1: Holistic Marking Rubric for Quantitative Data Collection**

Assessment criteria	Student no:	Description	3/3 <sup>33</sup>	2/3	1/3	0/3
<b>Context</b>	Purpose	Appropriate for genre and writing assignment?				
	Staging	Are there appropriate stages? How well developed is each stage?				
	Phases	How well developed is each phase?				
	Field	Does the writer construct the plot, settings and characters (narratives); explain the field (factual texts), or describe the issues (argument)?				
	Tenor	How well does the writer engage the reader (narratives) or persuade the reader (argument)?				
	Mode	How well written is the text for the school age? Is it spoken or written language?				
<b>Discourse</b>	Lexis	Content words related to the field.				
	Appraisal	How well is appraisal used to engage/persuade/evaluate?				
	Conjunctives	Is there a clear logical relationship between sentences?				
	Reference	Is it clear who is referred to in each sentence (pronouns, articles, demonstratives)?				
	Grammar	Have grammatical conventions of formal English been used accurately?				
<b>Graphic features</b>	Spelling	How accurately are core words and non-core words spelt?				
	Punctuation	Has punctuation been used accurately and consistently?				
	Presentation	Paragraphs? Legible writing? Clear layout?				
	<b>Total</b>					

<sup>33</sup> See Appendix Five for a brief description of how marks were awarded for the above categories.

**Table 4.2: Description of Writing Samples**

<b>Writing sample</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Measurement Level</b>	<b>Sample Size (N)</b>
Narrative baseline <b>(Task 1: NO)</b>	Introductory narrative writing assignment used for diagnostic or baseline testing purposes, and representing Task 1. Also referred to as the pre-test.	Continuous	92
Narrative: orientation <b>(Task 2: N1)</b>	Extended piece of writing forming the orientation stage of a narrative for Task 2. Referred to as assignment N1. Narrative text used as model.	Continuous	93
Narrative: complication <b>(Task 2: N2)</b>	Extended piece of writing forming the complication stage of a narrative for Task 2. Referred to as assignment N2. Narrative text used as a model.	Continuous	92
Narrative: resolution and coda <b>(Task 2: N3)</b>	Extended piece of writing forming the resolution and coda stage of a narrative for Task 2. Referred to as assignment N3. Narrative text used as a model.	Continuous	49 <sup>34</sup>
Narrative re-write <b>(Task 3: N4)</b>	Extended piece of writing forming the final (summative) re-write of a narrative text. This included all four stages of the narrative and was referred to as Task 3. Also referred to as the post-test. A narrative text and student narratives from assignments 1-3 (Task 2) were used as the model text.	Continuous	59
Academic essay baseline <b>(Task 4: A0)</b>	Introductory academic essay writing assignment used for diagnostic or baseline testing purposes, and representing Task 4. Also referred to as pre-test.	Continuous	83
Academic essay: introduction <b>(Task 5: A1)</b>	Extended piece of writing forming the introduction stage of an academic essay for Task 5. Referred to as assignment A1. An academic essay was used as the text model.	Continuous	87
Academic essay: body <b>(Task 5: A2)</b>	Extended piece of writing forming the body stage of an academic essay for Task 5. Referred to as assignment A2. An academic essay was used as the text model.	Continuous	88
Academic essay: conclusion <b>(Task 5: A3)</b>	Extended piece of writing forming the conclusion stage of an academic essay for Task 5. Referred to as assignment A3. An academic essay was used as the text model.	Continuous	87
Academic essay: re-write <b>(Task 6: A4)</b>	Extended piece of writing forming the final (summative) re-write of an academic essay. This included all three stages of the academic essay and was referred to as Task 6. A purposefully written academic essay and students' academic essays from assignments A1-A3 (Task 5) were used as the model text. Also referred to as the post-test.	Continuous	89

<sup>34</sup> The drop in student participation is discussed in chapters to follow but was basically due to a discontinuation of the narrative lessons with Class C. The reason is discussed later in this thesis.



#### 4.8 Data Collection

The sampling method is considered a convenience or purposive, non-random sampling method. The non-random nature of the sampling process is largely due to school-based constraints. School buy-in was a huge limitation which meant the sampling process came down to using schools that were prepared to participate. The numbers were few due to teacher anxiety about being judged. Nevertheless, despite sampling limitations, the two schools represented widely differing contexts, making for very interesting comparative research. There was no control group for this study and this may be considered a limiting feature of this study. Given that school buy-in to the study was a major barrier this meant very few schools were willing to allow their students to act as either the control or treatment group. But given vast differences in class population, teacher characteristics, teacher expertise and pedagogic practices used in individual classrooms for academic writing support, I felt that there would be no guarantee that the control group would in fact function as a proper control group if they were made available. Because of this uncertainty, I decided to continue with the study without a control group. Because this study did not propose to generalize the findings to a greater South African population, the green light was given to proceed with the study.

Given that the fundamental goal of RtL is to assist students in the development of crucial orientations to academic reading and writing (Discussed in Chapter Three), which then assists in equipping students with the requisite ‘academic literacy’ skills needed to succeed at both a school level and university level, it stands to reason that students go through an intensive process of writing multiple drafts of a given assignment. This in turn required me to provide extensive feedback on the multiple drafts to ensure students were given ample time and guidance into effective academic writing. Therefore, the data collection process for the research comprised the collection of two pieces of diagnostic (pre test) writing samples (N0 and AO), six pieces of formative (process) writing samples (N1, N2, N3 and A1, A2, A3) and two pieces of summative writing (post test) samples (N4 and A4) (See Table 4.3 below for an explanation of the writing samples/tasks collected).



In the context of this study, the classroom practice entailed offering students an overview of what each modelled text was about before unpacking the text. This provided an opportunity for the overall purpose of the text to be highlighted showing students very clearly that each text genre needed to fulfil a specific purpose, and that purpose was realised through very careful structuring of the text. The level of detail offered with this section of the RtL cycle differed according to the needs of the students in each different class. Once the overall purpose was highlighted, explicit teaching took place making students aware of how each phase of the genre was structured and what language tools could be used to identify each phase within a stage. See Chapter Three, Figures 3.8 and 3.9 for a breakdown of stages and phases of each genre. Once each phase within a stage was unpacked, students were required to replicate their own phase, which was handed in and marked. Feedback was given and students would have to attend to the comments given during the feedback to enhance their drafts. This would be rewritten and handed in alongside the construction of the next phase of the essay. See Appendix Six for an example of classroom teaching schedules.

**Table 4.3: Description of the Writing Samples Collected**

Genre	Task	Assignment	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
Narrative	Task 1	Narrative baseline (NO)		✓
	Task 2	Assignment N1 (Orientation)	✓	
		Assignment N2 (Complication)	✓	
		Assignment N3 (Resolution and Coda)	✓	
	Task 3	Rewrite (N4)		✓
Academic Essay	Task 4	Academic essay baseline (AO)		✓
	Task 5	Assignment A1 (Introduction)	✓	
		Assignment A2 (Body)	✓	
		Assignment A3 (Conclusion)	✓	
	Task 6	Rewrite (A4)		✓

For clarification purposes, formative assessment comprises assignments that add to the student's educational experience and is not necessarily always incorporated into the grading of a course or module. For research purposes however, the formative assignments were integrated as part of the on-going diagnostic assessment of students' baseline academic writing skills, whilst concurrently giving students constructive feedback that would hopefully improve students' development of their 'literacy' skills. It also occurred throughout the duration of the RtL intervention. Contrastingly, summative assessment normally takes place

at the beginning, and/or end of a learning phase, or within stages of learning phases. Summative assessment is commonly utilized as the final grade test or examination. For the purposes of this research, the summative assessment was used as a tool to assess students' overall acquisition of the skills taught within the RtL intervention as well as their base-line skill. In other words, the summative assessment formed the pre and post intervention scores. It was hoped that the difference between the first diagnostic (summative) assessment (pre) and the last summative assessment (post) for both the narrative and academic essay would provide me with an idea of students overall rate of change in 'academic literacy' skills. On the other hand, the formative assessment would be used to test the students' rate of change in 'academic literacy' scores for the duration of the RtL intervention. This provided the data that offered deeper insight into where, within the intervention, students either struggled, or did well. This also gave more direction for the case study and curriculum analysis.

The initial proposal for the research project envisaged a year- long intervention, with the data collection process being implemented at four different schools. School A and B would be involved in the RtL intervention for the first semester (first two terms) of the 2014 academic year. The study was then to be replicated at an additional two school sites (School C and D) to test the findings of the RtL intervention from School A and B. Table 4.4 below offers a graphical representation of the data collection process for the initial proposal of the research project, and the subsequent actual (but altered) data collection process. After considerable delays and time constraints beyond my control (Discussed in section 4.10), only Schools A and B were used for data collection purposes. The proposed additional school sites, which were not used, are indicated with a line through, showing the cancellation of the second phase of data collection.

**Table 4.4: Proposed Data Collection Process**

Schools A and B RtL Intervention (Sample Cohort 1)				Schools C and D RtL Intervention (Sample Cohort 2)	
Grade 11 Semester One	Benchmark	Process-based	Final	Grade 11 Semester Two	<b>CANCELLED</b>
	Assessment	Assessments	Assessment		

Source: Author's compilation.

The data collection process for the research project followed a very similar pattern to my pilot study which involved the teaching of academic reading and writing to undergraduate students at UKZN (Millin, 2011; Millin & Millin, 2014). Given that the RtL programme ordinarily makes use of a six stage cycle for implementation purposes (See Chapter three, Section 3.3 for a detailed discussion), given time constraints experienced at the school sites, this was adapted slightly with five stages being created for the application of RtL with classes A, B and C. Although five strategies were available, whether all five were utilized was dependent on student needs. Chapter Three, Section 3.3 discussed this in detail. Nevertheless, a very brief reminder of these stages is offered below to illustrate what type of activity took place during the teaching phase of the research project.

1 – **Preparing for reading:** This corresponded with the ‘preparing before reading’ and ‘detailed reading’ stage. See Figure 3.4. Students were oriented to the genre conventions of the text, purpose of the text and structuring of the text. Further, a detailed reading of the text was done to ensure decoding issues did not become stumbling blocks in the comprehension of the text. Genre specific conventions, such as staging and phasing, and grammatical considerations were highlighted. Consciousness raising techniques were used interchangeably with explicit teaching strategies. A text written for the specific genre was created to model genre conventions that students needed to acquire. See Appendix 1-4.

**2 – Pre-writing stage:** This corresponded strongly with the ‘preparation before writing’ stage of the six stage cycle. See Figure 3.4. Students were given opportunities to brainstorm and plan their writing.

**3 – Focusing on ideas:** This corresponded with the ‘joint reconstruction’ stage. See Figure 3.4. Students were tasked with group sessions before embarking on an individual writing activity. This was mostly utilized by weaker students who grappled with comprehension of the set novel for the English curriculum. The academic essay required students to write about the class novel and a certain level of familiarity with the novel was needed.

**4 – Individual writing and editing of drafts:** This formed the ‘individual reconstruction’ phase. See Figure 3.4 below. Students were given time to construct individual writing samples based on the modelled text taught in class. Both the narrative and academic essay text as a whole was broken down into stages and after each stage was modelled, and taught, students were expected to reconstruct their own text. These were then marked and ample opportunities in class were given for students to enhance their final drafts by making use of constructive feedback.

**5 – Final submission:** This formed the ‘independent writing’ stage. See Figure 3.4 below. Students were expected to hand in a final submission of the modelled text (narrative and academic essay). This formed the summative assessment (N4 and A4) portion of the research and students were able to make use of detailed feedback from their previous drafts in the compilation of their final piece of writing. A new topic for this assignment was chosen.

It is important to note a clear distinction between this study and that of previous studies tasked with assessing the efficacy of RtL. Previous studies made use of a different approach to data collection as those studies used pre and post ‘academic literacy’ scores only. This meant that those studies only compared the difference in two sets of writing scores. This study could have adopted this same approach however, I felt that it would be limiting in that any instructional and implementation design flaws with the RtL intervention, or school based barriers, might not have been taken into account as the pre and post scores may not have adequately reflected where in the process, students scores went up or down. This study hoped

to get a better understanding of students' on-going 'literacy' development within different stages of the RtL intervention by making use of multiple writing scores throughout the implementation process.

The time given for the implementation of the RtL intervention at the school sites was largely dictated by the class teachers. Initially, School A (classes A and B) offered two 45 minute English classes per ten day cycle. The one class was combined to allow for a ninety minute RtL lesson every ten days. The second class had these two 45 minute lessons split over a Friday and Monday. School B (class C) offered two 45 minute lessons every six day cycle. Both the 45 minute lessons were combined to allow for a 90 minute lesson. With both school sites, all teaching, and subsequent working on drafts had to be completed within the class time as homework was not an option for fear of student writing portfolios going missing. If a student did not finish a task, instead of awarding a lower, incomplete mark, I marked the assignment as 'did not finish'. This provided valuable feedback with regards to time constraints and whether students were struggling to keep up with the implementation of RtL at schools. Barriers and constraints to the above set-up are discussed in section 4.10. The linguistic biographical questionnaire was administered to students in the last 45 minute lesson. To ensure a language barrier did not influence students' comprehension of the questionnaire, the teachers at both school sites were on hand to translate.

## **4.9 Methods of Data Analysis**

Already mentioned in the previous section, the data collected included both quantitative and qualitative data. The method of data analysis was dependent upon the nature of the data. Therefore, what follows, is a description and explanation of the research methods to be used as part of both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

### **4.9.1 Quantitative Data Analysis**

Both descriptive and analytical statistics were used for the analysis of students' 'literacy' scores. By "analytical", I mean a more advanced statistical procedure to test for statistical

significance of various data patterns observed in the data. The following details the two categories of statistics used in the quantitative data analysis process:

Descriptive statistics were employed to describe the central tendency (average of test scores split into mean and median) and dispersion of students' 'literacy' scores. Because the data was found to be not normally distributed, the median and interquartile range were mainly used for commentary and analysis purposes. Simply put, by normal distribution, I am referring to the shape of the distribution generally being bell-shaped. If the data distribution is found to be fairly symmetrical in shape, in that the marks cluster around the middle range, then the data is said to be normally distributed (Rowntree, 2000:58). This was not the case as evidenced by the level of skewness, for example, in the data table (See Chapter Six, Tables 1-3).

Analytical statistics were employed to evaluate the sample distributions of students' 'literacy' scores. Again, because the distributions for most scores were not normally distributed, using a parametric test, which assumes normality of the data distribution in question (or that the underlying population distribution is normally distributed), was not suitable for statistical testing purposes. Rather, a nonparametric test, which is distribution-free and more flexible with respect to the assumptions it makes about the data distribution(s) in question, was more appropriate for assessing whether there were statistically significant differences between relevant (paired) sample distributions. In keeping with the statistical methods used in my pilot study of RtL (Millin, 2011; Millin & Millin, 2014), the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was employed, which was a suitable test to use for data that is generally not normally distributed.

#### **4.9.1.1 Explanation of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test**

The analytical results were generated using the Wilcoxon (matched-pairs) signed-rank test (See Chapter Six, Section 6.3). The parametric equivalent of this test is the dependent or paired samples *t*-test. An alternative parametric testing procedure, which might have been used, is repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). But, both of the aforementioned tests make stronger distributional assumptions about the sample data, which do not necessarily hold in small samples ranging from roughly 10 to 50 observations. A

nonparametric test might be more flexible and robust in its application. “[I]n statistical parlance, the Wilcoxon test is more robust (less susceptible) to violations in the distributional assumptions so important in parametric testing procedures – in layman’s terms, under varying distributional properties and small sample sizes, the Wilcoxon test is more powerful at discerning the ‘truth’ in the data” (Millin & Millin, 2014: 35). In other words, nonparametric techniques, such as the Wilcoxon test, are more powerful than parametric techniques at discerning meaningful patterns in the data, when one needs to be more flexible regarding distributional assumptions of the data; when faced with small samples of data and such data is not necessarily symmetrical (the data is otherwise skewed) around the mean or median (Upton & Cook, 2008: 360-361) – hence, the use of the nonparametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test in this study.

In contrast to a simple sign test, which only makes use of information concerning the direction of differences within pairs, the Wilcoxon test is more powerful in that it makes use of information concerning both the direction and magnitude of said differences (Siegel, 1956: 75-83). The test is used to determine whether the collective differences in each student’s performance across two assessments, represents a meaningful (or statistically significant) difference in students’ demonstration of their written ‘literacy’ skills across the two tasks (the two samples of data). The Wilcoxon test makes no prior assumptions about the sample, hence, population distribution under consideration, and is best applied to research questions in which the researcher wants to make comparisons between paired (or dependent) samples.

The test proceeds by converting continuous data into ordinal (ranked) data by computing the difference in performance for each student across two tasks, ignoring ties or no differences; ranks the absolute value of these performances from smallest to largest; replaces (adds back) the signs with their corresponding ranked differences, and then uses the sum of the positive or negative ranks to compute a test statistic, which follows a standard normal distribution, with mean of 0 and standard deviation or variance of 1. In the pairwise comparisons to follow in Chapter Six, where, for example, the comparison is written as A4-A0, this literally means A4 “minus” A0 or the difference of the two data points for each pair. This is important to note, because if the RtL process is to show a significant improvement pre-intervention (A0) versus post-intervention (A4), the difference on the whole, should be *positive* more often than not.



The test statistic is shown to be significant (statistically different from zero, where zero essentially means no difference between the two assessed literacy performances or sample distributions of ‘literacy’ scores) if the probability value ( $p$ -value or level of significance) is less than or equal to 0.05 (5%). For interest sake, the critical  $z$ -values for the test statistic at various levels of significance (two-tailed) are (approximately): 1.65 (10%); 1.96 (5%) and 2.58 (1%). Hence, a  $z$ -statistic of greater than or equal to 1.96 is indicative of a statistically significant (meaningful) difference between two sample distributions, which in this case, relates to pairwise ‘literacy’ performance (scores). For a more detailed explanation of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and the statistical power thereof, the interested reader is referred to Wilcoxon (1945); Siegel (1956) and Posten (1982).

**Table 4.5: Pairwise Samples of Data for the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test**

Paired Samples of Data	
Narrative	N1 – N0
	N2 – N1
	N3 – N2
	N4 – N3
	N4 – N0
Academic Essay	A1 – A0
	A2 – A1
	A3 – A2
	A4 – A3
	A4 – A0

\* Note: See section 4.7, Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 for definition of the above paired samples of data.

#### 4.9.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The student responses to the linguistic biography questionnaire were aggregated in an excel spreadsheet and a simple count process was used to explore data patterns and associations between students’ parental education; home locality; language of teaching and learning; degree of multilingualism and self-reported degrees of ‘academic literacy’ proficiency with/against students’ actual ‘academic literacy’ performance. (See Appendix Seven and Eight for the Questionnaire and the Coding Sheet). This was used to describe who the students were in more detail and to offer insights into possible external barriers to the

efficacy of an intervention like RtL. The results of this analysis will also be used to highlight future research pathways. It must be noted that only students' academic essay scores were used against the linguistic biography responses as I felt this would give a better representation of 'academic literacy' skills than the narrative. The purpose of the questionnaire was merely a 'bank' of information about students to turn to if the data patterns emerging from the assessment scores and case studies were proving difficult to interpret. For example, if a student functioned as an outlier, I could turn to the linguistic biography to assess if any external variables were to blame.

The individual student writing portfolio's chosen for the case study were analysed on two different levels. Firstly, the overall assessment scores used for analytical purposes were disaggregated further into the subcategories of writing being assessed (See table 4.1 for a description of these subcategories). Instead of an overall grade being used as with the quantitative data analysis, in this case, the overall grade was broken down into the subcategories. For example, where a student may have been graded 38/42, all 14 categories (awarded a mark of 3 per category = 42) were taken into account to get a micro perspective of students change in 'literacy' skills. This was done to highlight which specific academic skills were enhanced with RtL, and which specific aspects of academic writing may need more attention should RtL be used further. An analysis of emerging patterns in students' writing portfolio was then conducted with specific reference given to the subcategories mentioned in Table 4.1. This essentially allowed for triangulation. The case study served to investigate a smaller number of students' writing portfolio's in more detail with respect to their change in academic writing skills as per the categories used in the marking rubric.

#### **4.9.2.1 Case Study Method**

The case study is a common approach to qualitative inquiry but is not necessarily always qualitative in nature. In some cases, it may necessitate the use of mixed methods (Stake, 2003). In this case, a mixed method approach involves the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data methods to validate the findings of one set of data (Bryman, 2006). This is a relevant construct of case studies for this particular study as selected student writing

portfolios were analysed with a case study approach but assessment scores (numerical) were given to the writing portfolio's which added an extra element to the analysis.

The case study approach to inquiry is useful in that it allows an in-depth examination of data through multiple sources of data, lending itself well to a means of triangulation (Tellis, 1997). It is also useful in that it offers a study of real people, in real situations without having to present findings alongside abstract theories and principles (Cohen et al, 2011). Further, Cohen et al (2011) states that case studies are able to break through situations in a manner that may not be possible through numerical analysis. This is an important statement for this study as a quantitative analysis of students' writing portfolios may not necessarily tell the full story. To get a richer description of the change in students' writing performance, a case study allowed for a deeper analysis of what was really going on within students' writing portfolios. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) argue that case studies are particularly useful when the researcher has little control over extraneous variables (classroom disruption, student truancy, student behavior) and because of this, the use of a case study allows for a rich, in-depth discussion of all factors at play within the study; allows for a blending of a description of events that took place together with an analysis of the data, and the researcher is integrally involved in the analysis procedure.

However, case studies are not free of criticism. One major criticism of the use of case studies is the supposed absence of research rigour. A lack of systematic processes and procedures, or a lack of inclusion of certain parts of the data by the researcher can be a limitation (Yin, 2009). But then again, this could be a limiting factor of all types of research. It is not only case studies where the researcher has to make a judgment call about what data to include and what data to omit. It is hoped that a drive towards responsible, ethical research can remedy this situation as best as possible. Another major criticism of case studies is that it holds a certain type of preoccupation for unique, sometimes individual cases which does not lend itself easily to generalisability (Pring, 2006). In the case of this study, I feel this is not as much of an issue as the study is looking at a very specific micro analysis of RtL implementation at two very specific school sites and given that the sampling process was purposive, generalisability of the findings of this study to the greater South African population was not a consideration, or objective.

A possible criticism of this study relates to codifying (or converting) qualitative data (students' pieces of writing) into quantitative data (numerical 'academic literacy' scores). However, the criticism is not unique to this study, but could be levelled at any other study, for that matter, which seeks to 'measure' something or other. Trying to measure something inherently 'qualitative' in nature (like 'academic literacy' skills) is an age-old problem. For example, one might equate the problem with trying to measure one's intelligence quotient (IQ). As a quantifiable measure of one's verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities, for many years we were led to believe the traditional IQ 'score' represented the 'truth' about one's intelligence. However, we now know that intelligence is multi-faceted [see Howard Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences] and also very often, culture specific.

At the heart of any 'measure' is how accurately it captures the 'truth' – some definable reality (an ontological problem). Despite various ontological arguments and continued controversy surrounding quantifying inherently qualitative phenomenon, one really needs to ask the following question (concerning validity): does the measure (whether qualitative or quantitative) accurately capture what it seeks to measure? In the case of the present study, this is tantamount to asking whether or not the numerical assessment score obtained from grading or marking a student's piece of writing, accurately measures the intended (theoretical) construct (i.e. 'academic literacy' skill or performance).

What determines or comprises a valid measure of 'academic literacy' skills in the context of the present study is a contentious issue, and could be debated to no end. However, of greater concern is the error with which such 'truth' is measured (measurement or observational error). Loosely defined, measurement error refers to deviations from some or other 'truth', irrespective of how the 'truth' is defined. Rowntree (2000: 36) provides us with a common-sense explanation of measuring some or other phenomenon, which might be useful to remember in the context of this study. "Whatever the subject-area, it is sensible to remember that the observations or recorded values are really just APPROXIMATIONS to some true values. If we have counted carefully and enjoyed good co-operation from our questionnaire respondents (or if we have measured carefully with a small enough unit of measurement), our data should contain minimal error. The sample-figures will be *accurate enough* for us to base sensible decisions on them."

In defence of the more quantitative approach adopted by this study, bearing in mind the abovementioned proviso, a number of points must be made. First, the rubric assessment tool used (mutually) exclusive numerical rating scale categories 0, 1, 2 and 3, representing the smallest possible unit of measurement and as few rating scale categories as possible to minimise measurement error. In other words, one is more easily able to assign a student's work to a particular performance descriptor as opposed to having to make a choice between assigning a student's performance to one of a greater number of (mutually) exclusive rating scale categories (e.g. 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 or 10); or, having to choose between mutually inclusive rating scale categories (e.g. 0-3, 4-5, 6-7 or 8-10). Second, the rubric used to convert the qualitative data into quantitative data was consistent with other studies of RtL, making comparisons across studies more feasible. Third, this study focused on certain 'micro' elements of writing, with fourteen separate sub-categories of assessment criteria being used in the rubric. This entails a more detailed (and hopefully more accurate or valid) description of performance with respect to the specific elements of writing (and associated 'academic literacy' skills) being demonstrated/assessed, vis-à-vis the more generic-type rubrics used ordinarily as part of the secondary school English FET curriculum. Fourth, regardless of concerns about whether or not the RtL assessment rubric being used is a valid instrument or tool with which to measure or test 'academic literacy' skills (otherwise known as construct validity), it must be noted that the rubric was applied as consistently as possible for all students and all pieces of assessed writing throughout the intervention, thereby hopefully minimising problems related to measurement error.

#### **4.10 Limitations to the Study**

A discussion of the limitations to any study is deemed important as it offers the researcher time to reflect on possible shortcomings, or errors in the design and implementation of the research itself. This could offer valuable insights into a better design of research of a similar nature should other scholars want to take the study further. Therefore, the first and single most important limitation to this study was the replicability of the study. The proposed study envisaged the teaching of the narrative and academic essay genre within the first two terms (semester one) of the school year at the first cohort of schools, allowing time to select an additional three classes, at possibly an additional two school sites, to test the findings of the

study. This would have greatly enhanced the quality of the findings of the study, and thus the reliability of the findings. However, school constraints severely limited the luxury of being able to replicate the study. However, already explained in Chapter One is that because a new genre was taught in the second half of the year, to some degree, the study was replicated even if the same sample cohort was used.

Secondly, curriculum constraints often forced the teachers at the school to ‘borrow’ lessons set aside for the research. Furthermore, extra school curricula such as sporting events and academic school tours from Class A and B meant high levels of student absenteeism. With Class C, the class teacher experienced a death in the family resulting in a loss of six weeks of teaching. The low levels of ‘academic literacy’ proficiency of students within class C resulted in extra time being required (based on an informal needs analysis). As a result, the entire academic year (4 semesters) ended up being used to cover the two genres instead of being able to use the time to replicate the study in its entirety. Perhaps a future study could focus on one genre only?

Thirdly, dysfunctionality at the school of class C proved problematic, resulting in a severe loss of time for teaching. This is often referred to as a loss of time on task and impeded quality time being given to the intervention. Instead of rushing through the teaching of the genres and risking the outcome of the intervention, due to poor time on task, I chose to rather forego the replicability aspect of the study and focus on the quality of teaching with the time given. Again, perhaps a future study could focus on one genre instead of trying to rush through two.

Lastly, although this study did not propose to generalize the findings of the study to the broader population of students in South Africa, which would have provided an element of external validity, the study did experience some elements of the Hawthorne effect. Although this only really comes into consideration when generalisability is being questioned. I accept that this effect is largely related to issues regarding external validity and thus is not entirely relevant but given that it was noticeable in the data collection process, and could have influenced the results of the study, mentioning of this issue is worthwhile. The Hawthorne effect is generally the idea that participants within a study alter their performance when being

observed. Ordinarily, the effect was known for participants performing better than they would normally under observation, but it is generally accepted to represent all altered behavior too, whether positive or negative, under observational conditions (Cohen et al, 2011; Mertens, 2005). In the case of this study, students from Class A showed general tendencies of complacency within the study. Because the students were performing academically well already, they saw little worth, or motivation in taking the study seriously and this was mentioned in the student questionnaire. A possible solution for future studies might include strategies to enhance student motivation.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

This chapter offered a discussion of the methodological assumptions and processes adopted by this study. An action research cycle was chosen as the design frame given that I was interested in problems related to poor ‘academic literacy’ development at a school level. The research questions generated for the study gave rise to a mixed-methods approach with the use of both quantitative and qualitative data for analytical purposes. The qualitative data comprised students’ collection of writing samples from both a narrative genre and academic essay genre. These writing samples were codified using an already established holistic marking rubric for the specific purposes of the RtL intervention. The codified data formed the quantitative data. Both analytical and descriptive statistics were generated using basic statistical procedures and the more advanced Wilcoxon-signed rank test whilst a case study approach was used to triangulate the statistical findings with select student writing portfolios. The actual data collection process took place between January 2014 and November 2014. Chapter Five offers a description and analysis of the qualitative data.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **QUALITATIVE DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the research process was outlined by offering a discussion of the various aspects of the research design. This chapter now moves towards giving a description and analysis of the qualitative data. The presentation of the qualitative data analysis is divided into two very clear sections: a description and analysis of student responses to the linguistic biographical questionnaire, and a description and analysis of selected student case studies. The student assignments analysed within the case studies serves as a means of triangulation for the quantitative data findings. However, the presentation of the findings of students' changing 'literacy' scores throughout the duration of the RtL intervention, which provides the quantitative analysis, will be given in Chapter Six.

#### **5.2 Description and Analysis of the Qualitative Data**

This section will investigate student responses to the linguistic biographical questionnaire and other contextual information extracted from the questionnaire with a view to considering the real and likely effects these circumstances may have on students' 'literacy' development; also on the effectivity of RtL. The linguistic biography questionnaire was administered at the end of the intervention. It was employed to capture emerging patterns in students' individual geographic, socioeconomic and linguistic context (situational context) according to their own reports, so observable patterns were described in this section. The observable patterns include student responses to the questionnaire as well as observational patterns noticed by myself during interaction with students throughout the implementation of RtL. I do not offer information on students' personal biographies as being causally linked to observable patterns in their academic performance. This is because the questionnaire asked for sensitive information about students' family background and I was not sure if students were being absolutely honest. For example, it might be difficult to report that both parents did not finish school and are unemployed. So causality in general terms was not my intention. However, this is not to say that "contextual causality" could not be established by the questionnaire



responses<sup>35</sup>(Miles & Huberman, 1994; Maxwell 2004). In other words, in describing the patterns found within the biographies of students, I offer insights into who the students are, where they come from, and what their current and previous linguistic stimulation was. In giving a detailed description of the personal circumstances that students give in their responses to the biographic questionnaire, a report is given of factors which may have had an effect on the outcome of the RtL intervention. Again, such a report does not claim to present hard, verifiable evidence of causal links between context and performance. For example, if student tardiness is an on-going issue due to lengthy travel time between the home and school location (Class C and A made use of a first period), which resulted in some students continually being unable to complete writing tasks, student biographical data was consulted to highlight this issue before I erroneously inferred that the RtL writing tasks were too onerous for these students. If that was the case, then I attributed the inability to complete the task to the student arriving late each day due to transport issues. This would assist me in avoiding attributing this issue to the complexity of RtL. A better understanding of students' individual context is important as it assists in making sure that positive or negative performances for the duration of the intervention are not due to factors external, and unknown to the intervention.

Only students' pre-intervention academic essay performance and possible associations will be commented on when paired with selected biographical patterns found. Another important point to highlight is that only students who completed a questionnaire were included in the linguistic biographical analysis. Students who were absent for the period when the questionnaire was disseminated were still incorporated into the quantitative analysis though for Chapter Six. This means the number of respondents mentioned in the findings given in this chapter may not equal the number of students who actually took part in the writing component of the research. In other words participants who were absent on the day the questionnaire was administered, were included in the RtL programme but not in the research data for this section. The presentation, analysis and discussion of the data from the questionnaire will be sub-divided thematically. Each of the three participating Grade 11

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<sup>35</sup> There has been an increase in opinions based on whether causality can be made with inferences drawn from qualitative studies and both Miles and Huberman (1994), and Maxwell (2004) argue that qualitative studies, that make use of intensive long-term interventions can in fact offer a more complete picture of data lending to contextual causality.

classes will be discussed individually, with patterns appearing across all three groups collated into a summary of findings.

### **5.2.1 Locality and Context**

#### **Class C**

Already discussed in Chapter Four (Section 4.6), Class C is classified as a semi rural township school which is grouped within Quintiles 1-3. This school is classified as a no-fee school based on the socioeconomic circumstances of the surrounding community and based on infrastructural factors of the school. With this particular class, 26 out of the 31 (84%) students from this school reside in the immediately surrounding community. Five (16%) of the students travel to school from further afield on a daily basis, with the furthest location being approximately 25km away. That this is a no-fee school which is located in a township indicates that a majority of learners attending this school emanate from lower socioeconomic families. Considering the links that have been established between ‘literacy’ development and socioeconomic circumstances (Duncan & Seymour 2000; Hartas 2011; Ghosh 2013) one can expect the low socioeconomic circumstances of the students’ home community to have an impact on students’ ‘literacy’ stimulation. Low socioeconomic circumstances are an important variable considered at a later stage within this section of the data description and analysis chapter. This school is an English medium school on the basis of the national language-in-education policy. Although the home language for a majority of the students is isiXhosa, the school’s language policy follows a national directive according to which English is the language of learning and teaching as from Grade 4. Students from this particular Grade 11 class therefore are English Additional Language (EAL) students who do not take English as a Home Language subject.

#### **Class B**

Class B is located at school site A which is classified as an ex-model C school which means that it was privileged in terms of state funding in the era before 1994. Based on the fact that in the new dispensation it is classified as a quintile 5 school, this school is afforded less financial resources by the Department of Basic Education than those in quintiles 1 to 4. The location of the school and the socioeconomic circumstances of a large majority of the

students that make up the school population determines the placement of the school into a particular quintile. The school's quintile 5 status assures that a majority of the students do not come from the immediate community located within walking distance of the school only. This is a school widely renowned for giving good educational opportunities, so that families from outside the directly adjacent "feeding area" choose to enrol their children here. For example, 17 out of the 31 (55%) students from this particular class reside in the greater Winelands District, 7 (23%) students travel from approximately 50km out and 4 (13%) students travel from approximately 25km out. Further, this school is classified as a dual medium school which means that both English and Afrikaans are used as languages of learning and teaching. Both are offered as Home Language subjects. The students in this class that participated in the study were enrolled as Afrikaans Home Language students which meant they were in the English as an Additional Language class.

### **Class A**

This particular class is located at the same school site as Class B above. Already noted is the fact that this school is an ex-model C school. Given its prestigious reputation, and similar to Class B, a large number of students travel from outside of the immediate community to attend this school. For example, 13 out of 31 (42%) students come from the greater Winelands community. Seven out of 31 (23%) students live approximately 50km away and 8 (26%) students live approximately 25km away. Given that classes for this cohort of students were held very early (first period), students that had to travel to school by bus were often late for class which did put a strain on teaching and learning. This also resulted in a high level of absenteeism amongst students, meaning a number of students constantly struggled to finish their written assignments in class. But this was an issue related to transport and not a 'literacy' barrier. Similar to Class B above, this is a dual medium school and this class was identified as an English Home Language class. In spite of this, a large number of students in this English Home Language class indicated that they were Afrikaans Home Language students.

### 5.2.2 Parental Education and Literacy Performance

#### Class C

With this particular class of Grade 11 students, 9 out of the 31 (29%) students indicated that their father has less than a national senior certificate<sup>36</sup>, 11 out of 31 (35%) students indicated that their mother has less than a national senior certificate, and 5 out of 31 (16%) students indicated that their legal guardian has less than a national senior certificate. Five (16%) students indicated that neither parent within their home has a national senior certificate. Five (16%) students indicated that their father holds a national senior certificate, 8 (26%) students indicated that their mother holds a national senior certificate and only 4 (13%) students indicated that their legal guardian holds a national senior certificate. Given that this school is located within a township area, the number of students living in homes where both parents hold less than a national senior certificate is relatively high as opposed to students living with both parents who have a tertiary qualification. When looking at students' reports of their parents' post school education, the numbers reported drop significantly. Only 4 out of 31 (13%) students indicated that their father holds a tertiary qualification, only 3 out of 31 (10%) mothers were reported to hold a tertiary qualification and only 4 (13%) legal guardians hold a tertiary qualification. Only 1 (3%) student indicated that both the father and mother hold a tertiary qualification.

Interestingly, of the students that indicated neither parent had completed a national senior certificate, the average for the pre-intervention academic essay score was 44%. For students whose parents were reported to hold a national senior certificate, pre-intervention academic essay scores averaged 45%. Contrastingly, the one student who indicated that both parents held a tertiary qualification, the student's pre-intervention academic essay score was slightly higher (50%). This, however, is noted with caution as it is one student's score as opposed to the average of a number of students clumped into the category of having both parents holding a national senior certificate or not. When segregating the data categories further, students who reportedly had a father only who had completed a tertiary qualification, the pre-intervention academic essay average was 42%. Further, students who indicated that just their mother held a tertiary qualification their pre-intervention academic essay average was 44%.

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<sup>36</sup> The national senior certificate is the Grade 12 exit level certificate. This is a pre-requisite for university entrance if sufficient grades were attained with the NSC examinations.

When taking into account national senior certificate holders, the pre-intervention academic essay score average was the same (46%) for students who indicated that either the mother or father individually (not both) held a national senior certificate. Another interesting finding was that the pre-intervention academic essay average for students who indicated that their father holds less than a national senior certificate was the same as students whose father or mother holds a national senior certificate. The pre-intervention academic essay average for students whose mother holds less than a national senior certificate dropped off slightly and was 44%.

In considering the possible association between students' pre-intervention academic essay average and formal education of parents, a tertiary qualification only appears to offer a significant positive effect when both parents hold a tertiary qualification. Where only one parent holds a tertiary qualification, students appear to have performed worse than students emanating from homes where both parents are in possession of a national senior certificate, and on a par with students whose parents do not possess a national senior certificate. There appears to be no additional benefit to students' pre-intervention academic essay average should the parents hold a national senior certificate as opposed to students coming from homes where neither parent completed their national senior certificate. This leads one to conclude that in the case of this township school, educational status of the parents seems to have little impact on students' pre-intervention 'academic literacy' skills. This could be due to socioeconomic circumstances meaning that due to parents' low forms of education, students do not benefit from parental support in academic performance. Again, as mentioned in the introduction to this section, a general causal relationship is not being suggested. One may want to refer to a contextual causal relationship though. This is largely because there does exist studies which link low socioeconomic circumstances to students' 'literacy' performance (Cross, 2002; Smith, 2011; Spaul, 2013).

### **Class B**

With this particular Grade 11 class neither father, nor mother were reported to hold less than a national senior certificate<sup>37</sup>. Students indicated that 4 out of 31 (13%) fathers had completed the national senior certificate qualification and 8 (26%) students indicated that their mother

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<sup>37</sup> 29 students did not fill in the questionnaire for a legal guardian and this category will thus not be mentioned further with this particular class.

holds a national senior certificate qualification. Further, only 4 (13%) students indicated that they come from a home where both their father and mother have no post school qualification – education beyond the national senior certificate. With regards to post school qualification, 20 (65%) of the students indicated that their father holds an undergraduate degree, and 19 (61%) students indicated that their mother holds an undergraduate degree. Seventeen (55%) students reported that both parents in the home have completed an undergraduate degree. A smaller number of students indicated that a parent had completed a postgraduate degree namely 2 (6%) fathers and 1 mother (3%).

When pairing parental education and students' pre-intervention academic essay performance, the average score for students who indicated that their father has completed a national senior certificate was 67%. The average pre-intervention essay score was almost similar for students who reported that their mother holds a national senior certificate – 68%. For students who indicated that both parents hold a national senior certificate the average pre-intervention academic essay score was 67%. Interestingly, the average pre-intervention academic essay score for students with either a father, or mother in possession of an undergraduate degree was almost the same – 67% and 66%. Where both parents hold an undergraduate degree, the pre-intervention academic essay average for students was 66%. The average pre-intervention academic essay score decreases slightly to 64%% for the student whose father holds a postgraduate degree. An average pre-intervention academic essay score cannot be computed for both parents holding a postgraduate degree as one of the students was absent for the baseline essay test and the numbers are so low that expressing this number in percentage format does not make much sense.

From the above, one can observe then that there is a slight increase in students' pre-intervention academic essay score where parents hold a national senior certificate. This is a similar pattern to the one found with Class C, although not as pronounced, where the students emanating from homes where parents are less qualified, slightly better pre-intervention academic essay score averages were recorded. Again, this leads one to conclude that the association between students' academic essay performance and an increase in parental education is not necessarily positive with this particular class. But, what must be pointed out are the higher average pre-intervention essay performance scores for students from this class

in comparison to students from Class C. Given the higher socioeconomic status of these students, the average performance is almost 20% higher. Again, this highlights the link between school performance and socioeconomic context (Cross, 2002; Smith, 2011; Spaul, 2013).

### **Class A**

With this particular Grade 11 class, 7 out of 31 (23%) students indicated that their father has completed the national senior certificate and 5 out of 31 (16%) students indicated that their mother has a national senior certificate. Only 4 students (13%) reported both father and mother within the same household in possession of a national senior certificate. With regards to post-school education, 9 (29%) students indicated that their father has attained an undergraduate certificate and 12 (39%) students indicated that their mother has an undergraduate certificate. When combining both father and mother's level of education, only 8 (26%) students indicated that both their father and mother have an undergraduate degree. Only 5 out of 31 (16%) students reported that their father has a postgraduate degree and only 2 (6%) of the mothers reportedly hold a postgraduate certificate. Combined, only 1 (3%) student indicated that both his father and mother hold a postgraduate qualification.

When pairing students' reports on the level of formal education of their parents and pre-intervention academic essay performance, for students who indicated that both parents in the home had acquired a national senior certificate, pre-intervention essay scores were calculated as 64% as opposed to homes where both parents had acquired an undergraduate degree (73%) or postgraduate degree (78%). From the above, it appears that for this particular Grade 11 class, parental education may have a positive influence (or positive correlation) on students' performance with higher performances observed with students who come from homes where both parents possess a higher qualification.

With regards to students' pre-intervention academic essay performance when paired with either father or mothers' formal education, students average pre-intervention academic essay score where one of the parents hold a national senior certificate, is the same with an average of 66%. When paired with having a parent who has an undergraduate degree, students' pre-intervention academic essay score average with a father who has an undergraduate degree is

73% as opposed to 70% for students who indicated that their mother has an undergraduate degree. Where a father has a postgraduate degree, students' average pre-intervention academic essay performance is 79% as opposed to the 76% average where a mother has a postgraduate degree.

In summarising the above findings, unlike Class C and to some extent, Class B, parental education does appear to have an overall positive correlation on students' pre-intervention 'academic literacy' performance. In other words, the higher the parental education, the higher the students' academic performance. This could be attributed to two possible factors. Firstly, given higher levels of education, and the fact that students from Class B, and more so Class A, attend a wealthier school, socioeconomic circumstances again may have a positive impact on students' academic performance. Secondly, given higher levels of education of parents, students' from Class B and Class A may have been better primed for accessing the 'Discourse' of formal education given that parents' from these two classes are well versed in the requirements of the Discourse of formal education. This highlights the positive impact parents' education has on student performance when appropriate 'literacy' practices are being modelled at home (Kapp, 2006).

### **5.2.3 Medium of Instruction and Literacy Performance**

#### **Class C**

The medium of instruction at any school is ordinarily the language used for learning and teaching and is mandated by a school's Language-in-Education Policy. Chapter Four, Section 4.6 offered a brief description of this schools mandated language policy which is to use English as the language of learning and teaching. An analysis of a question related to languages used for teaching and learning within the biographical questionnaire was intended to give insights as to whether there exists a policy/practice gap insofar as the language of learning and teaching is concerned.

For this particular Grade 11 class only 3 (10%) students indicated that the school they attended for Grades 1-3 used English as the medium of instruction. Four (13%) students attended a school that used Afrikaans as the medium of instruction during Grades 1-3 and a



further 5 (16%) students indicated that both English and isiXhosa were used as the medium of instruction for Grades 1-3. Nineteen (61%) students indicated that the language of teaching and learning for Grades 1-3 was isiXhosa.

When comparing the average performance of the various linguistic scenarios listed above the following was found: of the 19 students who experienced mother tongue education for the first three years of schooling, their average performance for the pre-intervention academic essay was 47%. If one pools the students who were schooled in English or Afrikaans for their first three years of schooling, this gave an average achievement of 41% for the students' pre-intervention academic essay performance. This represents non home language instruction for the first 3 years of a students' schooling. Five students indicated that they experienced mother tongue education with a great deal of English code switching during class. The average for this cohort of students in this group overall was 40% for their pre-intervention academic essay score. This is an interesting finding and leads one to further question not only the benefits of mother tongue education on students early developing 'academic literacy' performance, but also the negative effect code-switching has had at a very early stage of schooling. The benefit of mother tongue education is very well documented in the literature.

Taking the pre-intervention academic essay performance of students further, only 9 out of 31 (29%) students managed to score 47% and higher. All of those 9 students received mother tongue instruction during Grades 1 – 3. In other words, although presenting weak academic 'literacy' skills, the top performing students all reportedly encountered mother tongue instruction in Grades 1-3. Conversely, 9 out of 31 (29%) students scored 40% or less for their pre-intervention academic essay performance. Three of those 9 (33%) students experienced mother tongue instruction for Grades 1 – 3 and 5 of the 9 (56%) students did not experience mother tongue instruction for the first three years of schooling. Again, this may add evidence to arguments in favour of mother tongue instruction for early 'literacy' development.

Although the schools' language-in-education policy prescribes English as the language of learning and teaching at this school, this is not the case in practice according to the school teachers encountered throughout the duration of the research process. According to the school

teachers, given that learners lack full academic proficiency in English to successfully learn in English, teachers at this school spend as much as three quarters of the teaching time teaching in isiXhosa. However, all formative and summative assessment procedures still take place in English. According to the learners, this makes the assessment processes very difficult as learners indicated that they are often unable to comprehend the questions in English in the first place. In this case, it appears that comprehension of the testing vehicle becomes the form of assessment and not necessarily testing of subject knowledge.

Students were also asked to indicate on their linguistic biography questionnaire what language was used for teaching and learning from Grade 4 and onwards. Twenty four out of 31 (77%) students indicated that they were taught in English. Only 2 (6%) students indicated that they were taught in isiXhosa from Grade 4 onwards and 5 (16%) students indicated that both English and isiXhosa were used. However, it must be noted that students added extra comments on the side to this question relating to language used for teaching and learning from Grade 4 onwards, which confirms what teachers articulated about the use of isiXhosa to aid comprehension in classrooms. Most students noted that extensive code-switching took place in class.

### **Class B**

With this particular Grade 11 class, 24 out of 31 (77%) students indicated that they experienced mother tongue instruction (Afrikaans) for Grades 1-3 whereas, 7 (23%) students indicated that they had experienced both English and Afrikaans as the language of teaching and learning from Grades 1-3. The results appear to be identical for schooling post Grade 3 with 24 (77%) students indicating that mother tongue instruction (Afrikaans) was used for schooling from Grade 4 onwards and 7 (23%) students reportedly experienced both English and Afrikaans as the language of teaching and learning from Grade 4 onwards.

In trying to assign any form of association between students' pre-intervention academic essay performance and medium of instruction at school, there seems to be a similar pattern to that of students from Class C. Students who experienced mother tongue education appear to have performed slightly better in their pre-intervention 'academic literacy' performance. For example, with Grades 1-3, the average performance for the pre-intervention academic essay

for students who indicated that they received mother tongue instruction was 68%. Students who received both English and Afrikaans as the language of teaching and learning performed slightly worse in the pre-intervention academic essay with an average of 65%. A similar pattern was found with associations between medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. Students who continued to receive mother tongue education from Grade 4 onwards performed slightly better in the pre-intervention academic essay with an average of 67%, slightly better than the 65% average found with students who had both English and Afrikaans as the language of teaching and learning from Grade 4 and onwards. Although the performance difference is marginal, it does provide evidence again for the contribution that mother tongue education has on students developing 'academic literacy' skills. Again, the benefits of mother tongue education are well documented in the literature.

### **Class A**

With this particular Grade 11 class, 26 out of 31 (84%) students indicated that they used English as the medium of instruction at school for Grades 1-3. Only 1 (3%) student indicated that Afrikaans was used as the medium of instruction for Grades 1-3. Four (13%) students reportedly used both English and Afrikaans as the medium of instruction for Grades 1-3. For Grade 4 and onwards, 27 (87%) students indicated that they used English as the medium of instruction, and 4 (13%) students indicated that they used both English and Afrikaans as the medium of instruction for Grade 4 and onwards. It is clear then that the majority of learners in this particular class used English as the language of teaching and learning from Grade 1 onwards. But this was expected as this is an English Home Language class.

When taking into account students' pre-intervention academic essay performance, students who indicated that they were schooled in English as the medium of instruction from Grades 1-3, their average performance was 71%. There was only 1 student who indicated that the language of learning and teaching was Afrikaans for Grades 1 -3 and although it would seem erroneous to offer this student's performance as a comparison measure (because this might be an Afrikaans student taking this class as a home language and not an additional language), it is nevertheless still interesting to note that this student's pre-intervention academic essay score was 79%. Of the students that indicated that both English and Afrikaans were used as the language of learning and teaching in Grades 1-3, pre-intervention academic essay

performance was 75%. With this particular class, dual medium education seems to have had the highest impact on students pre-intervention essay scores. But in this case, levels of motivation might have had a confounding effect on the English students' performance in that they were complacent. The class teacher indicated that she struggled with this class as they did not feel like they needed much academic help. This was corroborated with a question on motivation. Most of the students in this class stated that they did not feel very motivated to take part in this study as they did not feel they needed assistance with their writing.

When taking into account language of learning and teaching from Grade 4 onwards, students who were schooled in English had an average pre-intervention essay score of 72%. This is higher than the average pre-intervention essay score of 70% for students who indicated that they experienced the use of Afrikaans as the language of teaching and learning from Grade 4 onwards. Although it would seem that English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards may seem slightly beneficial, caution is employed as the students who reportedly made use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards may represent students taking English as a Home Language whilst Afrikaans is their actual home language. In other words, these may be the students taking both English and Afrikaans as a Home Language instead of taking Afrikaans as the Home Language and English as the First Additional Language. In dual medium schools in South Africa, this is a common occurrence.

#### **5.2.4 Students' Self-Perceptions of Academic Literacy Performance**

For this particular question, I was trying to gauge an association between students' pre-intervention academic essay score and students' self-reported proficiency in English to get a better idea as to participants' levels of confidence in their English 'academic literacy' skills. It is assumed that this may affect levels of motivation with regards to participation in the literacy intervention.

##### **Class C**

Given that English is the Department of Education's mandated medium of instruction at school site B (even if this is not corroborated in practice), focus will be given to students' self-reported levels of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in English.

Further, because this ‘literacy’ intervention targets academic English, English proficiency is necessarily the focus.

With regards to listening skills, 15 out of 31 (48%) students felt that they are fully proficient, giving themselves a rating of 5/5; 11 out of 31 (35%) students rated their listening skills in English as a 4/5 and 5 (16%) students rated their listening skills as a 3/4 or less. Only 2 out of 31 (6%) students rated their speaking skills in English as fully proficient with 23 out of 31 (74%) students rating their speaking skills as a 4/5. Again, 5 (16%) students rated their speaking skills in English as a 3/4 or less. Eleven (32%) students rated their English reading skills as fully proficient (5/5) and 18 (58%) students rated their reading skills as a 4/5. Only 2 (6%) students rated their reading proficiency at a 2/4 or less. This is contrary to verbal reports in class with a majority of students citing comprehension barriers for the reason they had not read their literature novel.

Interestingly, 12 out of 31 (38%) students rated their English writing skills as a 5/5 and 13 (42%) students rated their English writing skills as 4/5. That is 81% learners who felt they are capable of writing essays in English well. Only 6 (19%) students indicated that their English writing skills are a 3/5 or less. This is an important finding given that only 6 out of 31<sup>38</sup> (19%) students scored above 50% for their baseline academic essay score. This does indicate a possible mismatch in students’ individual perceptions of their English ‘academic literacy’ skills and actual academic writing skills. Further, students were surprised and appeared distressed at the results of their initial baseline score, with some students indicating that they had never been taught how to structure and write an essay correctly before but thought they wrote well regardless. This could be indicative of an over inflation of class marks normally given to students various English tasks.

As a point of interest, when looking at students home language skills, 23 out of 31 (74%) students indicated that they rate their isiXhosa listening and speaking skills 5/5. Only 4 (13%) students rated their listening and speaking skills 4/5. Eighteen out of 31 (58%) students rated their isiXhosa reading skills 5/5 and all 31 students rated their isiXhosa writing skills 5/5 or 4/5. Compared to students’ perceived English proficiency described in the

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<sup>38</sup> Only one student was part of the 6 that scored above 50%.

paragraph above, an overwhelmingly larger majority of students rated themselves more highly proficient in isiXhosa as opposed to English, yet when asked what language students would prefer as the language of learning and teaching, 30 out of 31 (97%) students chose English. Further, a large majority of students who chose English as their preferred language of learning and teaching indicated that English is seen as the gateway to jobs, more respect and was equated to quality education, hence their choice of English for teaching and learning. I found the latter reason for the choice of English interesting (equality schooling) because students also expressed concern over the use of English during contact sessions at the school, citing it as their main struggle in comprehending the textbooks and exams in English. They seemed unaware of a potential contradiction in their understanding of English instruction being equated to quality teaching and learning despite being aware of their poor proficiency. This points very clearly to an ongoing struggle in education with linguistic imperialism.

### **Class B**

Students from this sample group attend a dual medium school so it was not unexpected that students in the English Additional Language group reported Afrikaans as the language of teaching and learning given that they are Afrikaans home language learners. For this reason, it was expected that students' self-reported proficiency levels in Afrikaans would be higher than in English. However, and to reiterate again, given that this literacy intervention is an English 'academic literacy' intervention, more attention was given to students' self-reported proficiency in English in comparison to actual 'academic literacy' performance as proxied by students pre-intervention academic essay score.

All 31 (100%) students reported full proficiency in listening skills in Afrikaans. Thirty (97%) students indicated that they felt that they are fully proficient in speaking in Afrikaans with 1 (3%) student indicating that he felt able to understand when listening in Afrikaans, but not very well. The student did not elaborate on this. The self-reported level of full proficiency (5/5) dropped slightly as one moved to the more cognitively demanding skills of reading and writing. Only 25 (81%) students felt they were very good (5/5) at reading in Afrikaans as opposed to the 6 (19%) students who felt they were good (4/5) at reading in Afrikaans, but not very good. This dropped even further for writing skills in Afrikaans. Only 21 (68%)

students felt they were very good at writing in Afrikaans, 9 (29%) students felt they were good, but not very good and 1 (3%) student felt he was merely adequate.

When taking into consideration students' self-reported proficiency in academic writing in English, the picture changed slightly. Now only 17 out of 31 (55%) students felt they were very good at listening in English, 13 (42%) felt they were just good and 1 (3%) student felt his English listening skills was merely adequate. With regard to students' English speaking skills, only 9 (29%) students felt they were very good at speaking in English, 19 (61%) students felt they were good, but not very good at speaking in English and 3 (10%) students were less confident in their English speaking skills and rated themselves as adequate only. Students' confidence in their reading ability was slightly better with 14 (45%) students reporting full proficiency in English reading skills, 11 (35%) students felt their English reading abilities are good and 6 (19%) students reported that their English reading skills are only adequate. The picture looks a little more dismal with students' self-reported writing skills in English. Only 7 out of 31 (23%) students felt that they are very good at writing in English, 18 (58%) students indicated that they felt they are good at writing in English and 6 (19%) students felt their English writing skills are merely adequate.

When pairing students' self-reported perceptions of their writing abilities in English and actual pre-intervention essay performance, it became clear that students who reported full proficiency in their English writing abilities (5/5) perhaps were over confident in their writing abilities. I accept that this is a subjective judgement because, of the 7 students who reported full proficiency in their English writing skills, these students had an average score for their pre-intervention academic essay of 68%. In my opinion, this could be rated as good, but is not a very good score. Students who reported that they were good, but not very good (18 students), their weighted average was 66% which is probably a more closely aligned score with the category – good. Interestingly, students who felt they were merely adequate (6 students) actually had the same average as students who rated themselves as good. It is likely that these 6 students did not feel very confident in their writing abilities, or that they rated themselves against their L1 proficient peers.

**Class A**

This particular class appeared to report a greater degree of academic language proficiency across more than one language than the other two classes. This may be due to the fact that a large majority of students in this class come from homes where Afrikaans is the home language and have opted to take English and Afrikaans as home languages at school. All students (100%) in this class reported full proficiency in English for listening skills. Twenty eight out of 31 (90%) students reported full proficiency for English speaking skills with 3 (10%) students indicating that they have good, but not very good English speaking skills. Twenty seven (87%) students reported that they felt they are very good at reading in English with 3 (10%) students rating their English reading skills as good, but not excellent. One (3%) student rated his/her English reading skills as satisfactory. Incidentally, this student did appear to struggle with finishing writing tasks in class, possibly indicating an association between weaker reading skills and task completion. Slightly fewer students reported very good English writing skills with only 25 (81%) students now indicating that they felt they had very good English writing skills. Four (13%) students felt they had good English writing skills with 2 (6%) students reporting that they felt they had satisfactory English writing skills.

With regards to Afrikaans proficiency, only 15 (48%) students reported full proficiency in Afrikaans listening skills, 12 (39%) students reported that they felt they had good Afrikaans listening skills and 4 (13%) students felt they had satisfactory Afrikaans listening skills. Self-reported proficiency levels appeared to drop off for Afrikaans as the skill became more cognitively demanding with only 10 (32%) students reporting full proficiency in Afrikaans speaking skills; 8 (26%) students reported that they felt they were good at Afrikaans speaking skills and 13 (42%) students felt that their Afrikaans speaking skills were satisfactory or less. With regards to Afrikaans reading skills, 11 (35%) students reported full proficiency, 12 (39%) students felt their Afrikaans reading skills were good and 8 (26%) students felt their Afrikaans reading skills were satisfactory or less. Less students reported full proficiency in Afrikaans writing skills with only 8 (26%) students reporting full proficiency, 7 (23%) students reporting good Afrikaans writing skills and 16 (52%) students reporting that their Afrikaans writing skills were satisfactory or less. Again, this is an English Home Language class so the above would be expected for Afrikaans second language learners.



When pairing students' self-reported English academic writing skills with pre-intervention essay scores, students who rated their English writing skills as very good (5/5) scored an average of 72%. Whilst this is a good average score, I feel that this may be better suited to the 'good' category and not 'very good' category. This may explain levels of motivation where most students from this class did not feel they needed to participate and as a result, did not feel motivated to put in the effort. Although only 4 students rated their English writing skills as 'good' as opposed to the 25 students who rated their English writing skills as 'very good', these 4 students had a higher pre-intervention essay score of 74%. Of the 2 students that felt their English writing skills were satisfactory, the average pre-intervention score was 70%, initially indicating a lack of confidence in actual writing abilities when in fact, these students' writing abilities were actually good. In offering an explanation for the latter finding, one of the 2 students appeared to be an overly high achiever which would explain the categorisation of a mark of 70% as adequate instead of very good. The second student was an Afrikaans home language student and perhaps his essay writing performance was usually scored higher in his/her home language, which would explain some form of criticality with his English performance.

### **5.2.5 Students' Self-Reported Degree of Multilingualism**

This section will report on students' self-reported linguistic repertoire as it was given in the questionnaire and will not associate academic performance with linguistic repertoire. This is because the data did not allow a way of measuring the reported linguistic repertoires independently, so that an association with performance in pre-intervention essays would be very speculative and limitedly informative.

#### **Class C**

A large majority of learners in this class indicated that they speak at least three languages. This includes, but is not limited to, English, isiXhosa, Sesotho, Shona, isiNdebele, isiZulu and Afrikaans. When deciding which language to use in a given context, students indicated that they had to take family or community members into account based on whether there was a shared language. In other words, for students from Class C, English was used mostly at school and one African language used at home with parents or siblings. If grandparents lived

at home and did not speak English, or the parents language, students spoke an additional African language to their grandparents but this would be mostly likely where a grandparent was an African from outside of South Africa. In this case, English would be used at school, a South African Indigenous language used with parents and siblings and an additional African language, different to the one used with the parents, for the grandparents.

With classroom interaction at school, 8 out of 31 (26%) students indicated that they use English for communicative purposes; 2 out of 31 (6%) students indicated that they use isiXhosa; and 20 out of 31 (65%) students indicated that they make use of both English and isiXhosa. When studying, 16 out of 31 (52%) students reportedly study in English, 4 out of 31 (13%) students reportedly study in isiXhosa and 11 (35%) students reportedly make use of English and isiXhosa as the medium through which they study. A slightly different picture emerged when one looked at parental engagement. Twenty five out of 31 (81%) students indicated that they use isiXhosa when interacting with their parents, or guardians, 4 (13%) students indicated that they use both English and isiXhosa when interacting with their parents and 2 (6%) students indicated that they use either Shona or Sesotho when interacting with their parents. When out of school, 14 (45%) students indicated that isiXhosa is the chosen language for interacting with friends and other community members, whereas, 16 (52%) students indicated that they use both English and isiXhosa.

From the above it is evident that students' perceive themselves as multilingual. However, the degree of proficiency in multiple languages is uncertain given students' response to questions related to how well they know each language and have mastered various skills. One has to question whether a superficial level of proficiency is being developed in multiple languages instead of a deep level of fluency in one language. Without having measured the level of proficiency of students' reported command of multiple languages, it is hard not to infer that a basic communicative competence has been developed for multiple languages instead of cognitive academic language proficiency? However, I state this with extreme caution as it is merely an observation with limited empirical evidence. Chapter Three, Section 3.4.4 unpacks the definition of BICS and CALP briefly.

## Class B

A number of students from this class indicated that they speak more than one language, but not multiple languages. Besides English and Afrikaans, students indicated that French, German and isiZulu were also languages used to interact with family and community members outside of school. Unlike Class C where high levels of self-reported multilingualism were evident, students from this class show strong evidence of bilingualism. With this particular class, 16 (52%) students indicated that teaching and learning takes place in Afrikaans only. Fourteen (45%) students indicated that both English and Afrikaans were used for classroom teaching. This may be due to teacher language preference and not out of a necessity as at school site B (class C) where the teachers have to use the students home language instead of the policy mandated English, due to students' language proficiency constraints. For study purposes, 27 out of 31 (87%) students indicated that they study in Afrikaans with 4 (13%) students indicating that they use both English and Afrikaans.

Given that this school is a dual medium school, it is not unexpected that a large majority of students might use more than one language to converse on the school grounds with peers. This was evidenced from student responses with 22 (71%) students indicating that they use both English and Afrikaans to communicate on the school grounds. Only 8 (26%) students indicated that they use Afrikaans only. Students' homes appear to be bilingual too as 12 (39%) students indicated that more than one language (but not three) is used to communicate with family. Nineteen (61%) students however, indicated that only Afrikaans is used at home. With regards to communication with friends, 22 (71%) students indicated that both Afrikaans and English is used as opposed to the 8 (26%) students who use Afrikaans only.

To summarise the above, students in this group appear to be more bilingual than multilingual. This *might* be associated with these students' reported pre-intervention academic performance (evidenced by scores presented in Chapter Six, Table 6.2). This group, overall, performed slightly better academically than the multilingual students from Class C according to pre-intervention records. One can perhaps infer that students who have developed a deeper proficiency in two languages instead of a more superficial proficiency in more than two languages are better prepared for using their linguistic resources in knowledge development.

**Class A**

Twenty One out of 31 (68%) students indicated that they use English as the language of learning within the classroom and 10 out of 31 (32%) students indicated that they use more than one language, namely English and Afrikaans, as the language of teaching and learning in the classroom. These 10 students could be the Afrikaans home language students who have opted to take English as a home language alongside Afrikaans as a home language. Interestingly, an overwhelming 28 out of 31 (90%) students use English when studying on their own at home as opposed to 3 (10%) students who use both English and Afrikaans. Again, this is an English home language class so it is expected. When looking at language used for social interaction at school, 14 out of 31 (45%) students indicated that they use mostly English to interact with friends, 1 (3%) student indicated that he uses Afrikaans mostly to interact with friends and 16 (52%) students indicated that they use either English or Afrikaans to interact with friends depending on the language of their friends.

With the same class, 14 (45%) students indicated that they use English only in their home to interact with family members, 2 (6%) students indicated that they use Afrikaans only to interact with family members and 15 (48%) students indicated that both English and Afrikaans are used to interact with family members. Again, one needs to bear in mind that this is an English home language class. Similar to Class B, students from this particular class appear to be more bilingual than multilingual. Given this class' very strong pre-intervention academic performance and the fact that a large majority of students learn in their home language, in comparison to Class C, where English is used for teaching and learning even if it is a second or third language, this provides strong evidence for the benefit of mother tongue education. A discussion of mother tongue education is not the scope of this thesis but it is worth noting.

**5.2.6 Reading and Reading for Enjoyment**

This particular question was asked to gauge students' interest in reading, and how much they actually read<sup>39</sup>. Associations between quantity of reading (calculated by students' responses

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<sup>39</sup> Question 16 – Do you read a lot?

Question 17.1 – How many hours do you spend reading per day (for school or for fun)?

Question 17.2 – How many books do you read in a month?

to number of books read in a month)<sup>40</sup> and pre-intervention academic performance was calculated cautiously as inconsistencies were noted across student responses. This is largely due to the subjective nature of this question.

### **Class C**

With this particular class, 14 out of 31 (45%) students indicated that they read a lot and 17 out of 31 (55%) students indicated that they did not read a lot. This was a subjective response and what constituted a lot to one student might have differed to the next. However, of the 14 students who supposedly did read a lot, only 8 indicated that they read more than 2 hours a day and only 9 of those learners indicated that they read 2 or more books a month. This does not take into account how much material was covered in that time though so could differ between a slow reader and a fast reader. Also, students were not asked what types of books they preferred. An overwhelming number of students indicated that they read to improve their English, improve their knowledge and to de-stress, or relax. A smaller number of students indicated that they struggled with reading as they found it boring. Again, a limiting factor with this question was that I did not ask them to give examples of what literature was chosen to improve their English or gain knowledge.

A large majority of learners (24/31 – 77%) read their school books, as well as newspapers, in English. Only 4 (13%) students indicated that they read their school books in both English and isiXhosa and only 4 (13%) students indicated that they read newspapers in isiXhosa. Students did not mention which isiXhosa newspaper this was, or how they were able to access it. When it comes to reading for fun, 19 (61%) students indicated that they read in English for enjoyment, 3 (10%) students read in isiXhosa for enjoyment and only 4 (13%) read in both English and isiXhosa for enjoyment. I accept that the availability of books that can be read for enjoyment may not be as widely available in isiXhosa and this was evident by a browsing of books in the school library. There were very few books available in isiXhosa. The above description means that less than half the class indicated that they read a lot and a very large majority of the students spend their time engaging with English texts, not isiXhosa

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Question 18 – What language do you mostly read the following books in? (school books; reading for fun; newspapers or magazine).

<sup>40</sup> I accept that this question might have been too vague. It did not ask the quantity of reading for books, internet texts, magazines or complexity of reading materials etc.

texts. However, few of these texts appear to be cognitively demanding or academically abstract in nature.

Interestingly, the average performance on the pre-intervention academic essay for students who do not read a lot was 46% as opposed to the average performance of students who indicated that they do read a lot (44%). Although the difference is marginal, it may indicate that either reading is not having an impact on students overall ‘academic literacy’ development or it could be that the type of reading students are engaging in is not having a positive influence on students ‘academic literacy’ performance. Already mentioned earlier, it could be that the type of texts students are reading are not cognitively demanding and thus not developing more cognitive academic language proficiency. I hazard a guess this may be true as informal discussions with students in class illustrated that students struggled to read the English set novels as comprehension of the texts is a barrier. This could mean that reading done outside of class is “easy” reading. Or, the incongruous results could be due to the subjective nature of this question with individual students differing with respect to what constitutes a lot of reading.

### **Class B**

Only 4 out of 31 (13%) students indicated that they read a lot. Of the students that do read a lot, the hours dedicated to reading range from 1 hour to 5 hours a day resulting in an average of 1 book read a month. The reason given for reading for these 4 students was to “escape from reality”. Conversely, 27 out of 31 (87%) students indicated that they do not read a lot and reasons given for this range from “boring”, “no time”, “prefer TV”, “prefer being outdoors” to “falling asleep when I read”. Of the 27 students who indicated that they do not read a lot, 17 read less than an hour each day. When asked what language reading was done in, 15 students indicated that their school books are Afrikaans and 14 indicated that their books are both Afrikaans and English. When reading for enjoyment, a larger majority of students read in English (12 out of 31 – 39%), as opposed to reading in both English and Afrikaans (8 out of 31 – 26%).

With regards to associations between reading and ‘academic literacy’ performance, of the students that reported that they do read a lot, their average pre-intervention essay score was

68% as opposed to the 66% average of students who do not read a lot. If we break down the analysis further, there is a slight increase in students' scores for students who reportedly read more than two hours per day after school (67%) as opposed to students who reportedly only read between half an hour and one hour (65%). Unlike Class C where reading does not seem to correlate positively with 'academic literacy' skills development, in this class reading does appear to correlate positively, suggesting that how much reading learners do after school may provide a slight educational advantage with respect to students developing 'academic literacy' skills. The difference in relationship with this class as opposed to Class C might be due to the type of texts read – easy versus more difficult.

### **Class A**

With this particular class, only 8 out of 31 (26%) students indicated that they read a lot. Twenty three (74%) students indicated that they do not read after school. For students who indicated that they do read a lot, the number of hours spent reading in a day ranged from 1 hour to 2 and a half hours, with one student indicating that he read up to 7 hours per day. According to the students, their reading equated to roughly 2-3 books per month. Of the 8 students that indicated that they do read cited as motivation for their reading was: "relaxation, love of learning, general interest, love of the challenge, and reading as an escape from reality". Conversely, students who indicated that they do not read a lot after school, the following reasons for their lack of motivation to do so was: "too impatient, boring, too much sport after school, no time, struggle to focus, and getting too side tracked". Although these students indicated that they did not read a lot, they still reported reading on average, 1 hour per day.

When pairing reading and academic performance, the 8 students that did read a lot, had a weighted average for their pre-intervention essay score of 78%. Incidentally, the student that indicated that he read approximately 7 hours per day appeared to consistently have the higher mark in the class. This supports a popular perception of the benefits of reading, namely that it assures good 'academic literacy' development, but without further information regarding students parental involvement, academic aptitude, whether they read because they are good at reading and so forth, this is merely speculative. Students that indicated that they did not read a lot, they had an average score (70%) for the pre-intervention essay that was significantly

less than that of the students that indicated that they did read. Again, this possibly indicates a positive association between developing ‘academic literacy’ skills and reading. But to be fair, 70% is also not a very low score. Either students’ have profited from the little reading that they have done or in this case, reading is not a determining variable.

### **5.2.7 Summary**

In summarising the above situational context of the three classes, it is clear that there are numerous factors that one could associate either positively or negatively with students’ pre-intervention academic performance. Although the purpose of the questionnaire was merely to describe the sample population, interesting insights have become noticeable. These cannot be discarded as they offer valuable insights into factors that might or might not have confounding effects of students’ ‘academic literacy’ performance. The first of these insights has to do with socioeconomic circumstances and students’ academic performance.

Given that Class C is a no-fee school and is situated within a township, one can infer that its feeder community is a low socioeconomic community. Further, educational attainment of parents and guardians within this community were generally much lower than that of students from Class B and A. Pre-intervention academic performance of students from the township school was on average much lower than that of students from Class B and A. One cannot ignore the impact socioeconomic circumstances have on academic performance. This is well documented in the literature with Cross (2002); Smith (2011) and Spaul (2013) to name a few offering evidence of this negative impact. However, the socioeconomic factor merely acts as a proxy for other variables at play and in the context of this study, this relates to linguistic stimulation. Well educated parents are able to offer a richer form of linguistic stimulation to their children which essentially models ways of interacting with aspects related to formal educational ‘Discourse’. Kapp (2006) in a study of student performance of a Western Cape township school noted that students from homes where parents were better educated assimilated more easily into the ‘Discourse’ of school. This could explain higher academic performance of students from Class B and A despite lower levels of reading. Often the higher academic achievement is attributed to access to English as the medium of instruction and this was clearly evident in the perceptions of students from Class C. However,



as Kapp (2006) articulates, although English is seen as the tool for educational mobility by lower socioeconomic communities, the language itself is often not developed enough to serve as a language for educational liberation, alongside poor linguistic stimulation, denying an easy assimilation into the ‘Discourse’ of school.

This brings to light the second important finding of the linguistic biography. Students from Class C reported higher levels of multilingualism than students from Class B and A, who showed evidence of bilingualism. In the case of the multilingual students, one has to question the quality of their mother tongue instruction in early grades of schooling. Given that high amounts of code switching were reported together with an early switch to English as the language of learning and teaching at a Grade 4 level, it can only be assumed that students had not been given sufficient time to start developing cognitive academic language proficiency in their mother tongue before making the switch to English. According to Cummins (1979), a second or third language can only develop alongside the first language and if the first language development is stunted, there are limited “pegs” with which to develop ones second language (Cummins, 1984). One has to question then whether students from Class C have merely developed a basic interpersonal communicative competence in multiple languages only. This would explain levels of frustration with regards to reading comprehension. This is contrary to students from Class B and A who have been immersed in the home language from Grade One and continue with their education in their home language. The above scenario could have a direct impact on the full efficacy of an intervention like RtL. Although there is evidence to show that RtL can act as the gateway to accessing the formal education ‘discourse’, one has doubts as to whether RtL, in a short time frame, can aid impoverished students in their proficiency of English. But this does not mean access to the ‘discourse’ is not possible.

Following on from the above scenario, it would appear that a vicious cycle is at play for students from Class C. Socioeconomic circumstances have clearly impacted negatively on students’ linguistic stimulation, which has negatively affected their ability to easily assimilate into the ‘Discourse’ of education. This results in student frustration with regards to reading (which is exacerbated by poor language proficiency). Students, in their struggles to read for meaning, stop reading, which is a necessary activity for building language proficiency.

Again, the above description and analysis is based on the students under investigation and any inference drawn cannot be articulated in a strong causal sense. However, a level of contextual causality cannot be ignored either.

### **5.3 A Case Study Analysis of Selected Students**

The section to follow contains a more detailed, micro analysis of individual students' writing portfolios. The selection process for case study purposes was purposeful in that students with the greatest level of improvement (quantitatively) were combined in Table 6.7 (Chapter Six, Section 6.4). Within this table, the students were selected based on their degree of movement in the context of performance quintiles. One could suggest numerous other selection choices that I could have used. For example, I could have also looked at students who stagnated, or students who did not perform as other studies of RtL suggested that they should have performed (See Chapter Three, Section 3.5). But limitations dictated how many students could be studied and given that one of the fundamental goals of RtL is to supposedly eradicate educational inequality (See Chapter Three, Section 3.2), it was reasonable that more detailed attention should go to performance of those students who started within the lower performing cohort, and improved, eventually to finish within a better performing cohort of students. Furthermore, Tables 6.4; 6.5 and 6.6 in Chapter Six, Section 6.3, provided evidence that of the three sample classes, only 3 students in total did not show evidence of academic writing improvement, and no students stagnated, evidenced by the category 'ties' in the tables. 'Ties' refers to students who made no gains or losses in their performance. In other words, their assessment score stayed the same between the pairwise comparisons. However, to avoid a bias in the reporting process, two extra analyses are added to show evidence that although a general improvement in students' academic literacy skills was noted, there were still some students whose rate of change was not as marked. So to avoid only providing an analysis of students who made the greatest gains, an analysis is also offered for two students who started in the lowest performing cohort and did not manage to work their way out of the lowest performing cohort by the end of the RtL programme.

An analysis of students who made the greatest gains also allowed for comparability of this study of RtL with other studies globally as it is one of the focus elements of this study. Given

word limitations, and time constraints, and because this study is more interested in the academic argument essay, which is more useful for university transition purposes<sup>41</sup>, the case studies will only unpack students' academic argument essays. It is hoped that an analysis of students' narratives can be done in a future postdoctoral study, possibly adding an extra element of analysis by incorporating aspects of Labov's narrative analysis theory (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972). One might question why the narrative was taught then? By using two separate genres, I was able to test the efficacy of RtL across more than one genre and thus, ensuring replicability of the study of some sorts.

The analysis of students' writing portfolios was done through a discourse analytical approach. In the context of this study, this represented an analysis of language usage at the level of the text. It incorporated an investigation into how language was used in students' essays to communicate specific ideas, and to adhere to specific genre conventions which assisted in the communication of these ideas (Paltridge, 2010). The marking rubric provided the parameters for what was being studied through the analysis of students' writing. The marking rubric categories (See Chapter Four, Table 4.1) were combined and placed into one of four categories: topic (purpose, field, tenor); context (staging, phasing, and presentation); discourse (mode, lexis, and appraisal) and grammatical features (conjunctives, reference, grammar, spelling, punctuation). The categorisation of these categories is slightly different to how they are clustered in the rubric and this was merely to make the reporting process easier.

It is important to point out that students 72, 92, 53, 33, 50 and 96 were English First Additional Language (EFL) learners at different sites, namely Class C and Class B, and students 6 and 4 were English Home Language (HL) students from Class A. Pseudonyms were given to the above student numbers to make the reporting more personalised. A higher marking standard was used with the English HL students (Class C). This was explained briefly in Chapter Seven, Section 7.3. An important point to highlight with regards to the analysis to follow is that a strong focus on the teaching component of the research was on the schematic structuring of the narrative and academic essay. In teaching structure, one cannot stay clear of teaching aspects related to discourse (register) and content material related to the essay topic. Therefore, in analysing the selected students' writing portfolios, most attention

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<sup>41</sup> The academic argument essay is the most likely genre students will have to reproduce at University as opposed to the narrative genre.

was given to the categories topic, context and discourse. Although it would be remiss to not comment on grammatical aspects of students' writing, a limitation of the study was the time constraints placed on me in teaching issues related to the grammatical features represented in the marking rubric. For this reason grammatical errors or variances were assessed with more leniency as they were not taught explicitly. In other words, because the time offered to test the efficacy of RtL was limited, I had to choose which aspects of academic writing I was going to focus on. Schematic structuring was the priority.

The Appendices offers extracts from students' writing portfolios. Given the length of the portfolios I was unable to scan entire portfolios but have used baseline and selected extracts to provide evidence for arguments to follow. The scanned extracts back up the quantitative findings. These extracts can be found in Appendix Nine.

### **5.3.1 Assessment Requirements**

All three classes were required to write a number of pieces of writing. This included a pre-intervention task, a process task and a post-intervention task. These comprised the writing portfolios. This is presented in more detail in Table 4.2, Chapter Four; Section 4.7 The assignment set for the pre-intervention task required students to write an essay in which they were to argue whether the set literature novel for each class was relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum. The novel was selected by the teacher but also prescribed by the National Department of Basic Education. The process task, which included three drafts, used the same essay topic as students were supposed to use for their pre-intervention task as a means of comparison in developing their academic essay argument skills. It was hoped that the baseline task would serve as a reminder of how far students had come in terms of their academic writing abilities.

The post-intervention task required students to write an argumentative essay on whether the legal drinking age should be raised in South Africa. It is noted that the content requirements for the post-intervention task could be construed as easier in nature, and perhaps less cognitively demanding. But this was done purposively because students would not have had time to research the topic, unlike the topic set for the baseline intervention or process task

(the novel would have already been taught extensively in class). The post-intervention topic was also carefully chosen for the English First Additional Language learners who might have struggled with the essay due to limited vocabulary. The wording of the pre-intervention essay question, together with a model of what was expected of students is offered in the Appendices (2, 3 and 4). For the pre-intervention task, no guidance was given to students whatsoever. Their baseline skills were being tested and students were given *carte blanche* in the construction of their essays. I wanted to get a better idea of what was being taught in students' respective classes with regards to academic writing.

The assessment of students' writing was done with a holistic marking rubric presented in case studies to follow. A point to highlight again is that the scores generated via the marking rubric were relative scores. If a student scored 3/3, that is not to say that in conventional classroom practice that the essay was worthy of a score of 100%. The scoring system was used to show *a rate of change* in students' writing performance. If a student scored 1/3 for a category, and then scored 2/3 or 3/3 that was indicative of an improvement in control of the category in question. If a student scored 2/3 and then subsequently scored 1/3, it was indicative of a drop in performance regarding the category in question. For example, if a student did not show any evidence of an introduction, body and conclusion, they might plausibly have scored 0/3. If they then started separating their paragraphs into a clear introduction, body and conclusion, they could then score 2/3. If the introduction, body and conclusion demonstrated an understanding of background information, thesis statement, controlling ideas and so forth, they could then score 3/3.

The general finding at the onset of the intervention was that most students did not have a comprehensive idea of what constituted an academic essay argument. Class A did provide some elements of correct schematic structuring, use of appropriate content words related to the subject/topic and a good command of grammatical features, however, this group was still lacking in academic literacy skills with regards to phrasing in stages of the academic essay. Arguments were at times, subjective and lacked evidence to back the student's argument. Class C demonstrated the weakest skills with regards to academic writing and nearly all of Class C's students did not demonstrate appropriate schematic structuring, content words were not appropriate, essays were not cohesive and arguments were very subjective. In analysing

some of these issues in more detail, six students writing portfolios will be discussed in detail in the section to follow. This will be done by firstly offering an overview of students' mark sheet, followed by a discussion of the writing.

### 5.3.2 Case Studies

#### Case Study One: Aaron (Student No. 92) Class C

**Table 5.1: Case Study One: Aaron (Student No. 92) Class C**

Assessment criteria	Student no:	Description	AO	A1	A2	A3	A4
<b>Context</b>	Purpose	Appropriate for genre and writing assignment?	1/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Staging	Are there appropriate stages? How well developed is each stage?	0/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Phases	How well developed is each phase?	0/3	2/3	2/3	3/3	3/3
	Field	Does the writer construct the plot, settings and characters (narratives); explain the field (factual texts), or describe the issues (argument)?	0/3	2/3	2/3	3/3	3/3
	Tenor	How well does the writer engage the reader (narratives) or persuade the reader (argument)?	0/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Mode	How well written is the text for the school age? Is it spoken or written language?	1/3	2/3	2/3	3/3	3/3
<b>Discourse</b>	Lexis	Content words related to the field.	1/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Appraisal	How well is appraisal used to engage/persuade/evaluate?	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Conjunctives	Is there a clear logical relationship between sentences?	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Reference	Is it clear who is referred to in each sentence (pronouns, articles, demonstratives)?	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Grammar	Have grammatical conventions of formal English been used accurately?	1/3	2/3	1/3	3/3	2/3
<b>Graphic features</b>	Spelling	How accurately are core words and non-core words spelt?	2/3	3/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Punctuation	Has punctuation been used accurately and consistently?	3/3	3/3	3/3	2/3	3/3
	Presentation	Paragraphs? Legible writing? Clear layout?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>

## Topic

Aaron struggled to argue within the parameters of the baseline topic and appeared to offer more of a personal recount of whether the novel was interesting or not. This was an inappropriate genre for the assignment task, and off topic. For example, instead of offering an objective argument for whether the novel was appropriate for a Grade 11 study, (its historical relevance might be important given the history of Black South Africans during Apartheid), Aaron's argument was based on whether he enjoyed the story, and whether it grabbed his attention. Limited reference was made to events within the novel and its subsequent impact on students' perceptions of Apartheid policy. Further, Aaron tended to rehash the same point of view for the main argument multiple times ("did not grab my attention"), showing little evidence of reading comprehension (also of the set assignment) or reading of the novel at all. This kind of difficulty was encountered in the work of numerous students who indicated that the novel had not been read in its entirety due to a lack of interest in the subject matter, or poor English proficiency, leading to comprehension issues. See Figure 5A.1.

Although early submission of the assignment (earlier drafts before the final task) showed a subjective argument, this did gradually improve over the course of the intervention. For example, Aaron's pre-intervention essay stated that the novel was not relevant because it was not interesting to him (See Figure 5A.1 in the appendices). But this subjective viewpoint showed elements of transformation as Aaron was scaffolded into how to argue objectively. This was evidenced by his point of argument in his later drafts stating that the novel was now relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum given its historical context (See Figure 5A.2 in the appendices). After feedback and guidance of the kind described in Chapter Seven, Section 7.5, Aaron started showing signs of offering a more objective argument by eliminating subjective, personal preference (did not capture my interest/not interesting) and incorporating more objective arguments based on actual events and characterisation within the novel, and linking them to his personal context. The gradual improvement of his argument across the assessment drafts, when taking into account the topic under discussion, and evidenced by assessment categories 'purpose', 'field' and 'tenor', was marked. For example, with regards to 'field', Aaron was able to describe why the novel was relevant (historical context); and with regards to 'tenor' he was able to offer an objective opinion instead of a subjective reason for the novels inclusion in the curriculum (historical relevance to his community).



## Context

Initial baseline assessment for Aaron's work showed no evidence of any formal academic essay structure at all, evidenced by the 0/3 scored for both 'staging' and 'phasing'. Further, Aaron offered no indication of prior thought or planning of the essay. Figure 5A.1 in the appendices illustrated this well. For example, Aaron's baseline essay offered no introduction in which he states the thesis statement. Because he had no thesis statement, he was unable to offer the reader an indication of how he would unpack his argument. Further, Aaron did not offer a conclusion in which to sum up his main points of argument. The required length of the essay also appeared problematic (too short) showing evidence of Aaron being unsure of what to actually write about. This may also be indicative of not having read the novel, or hardly having understood the text. After extensive modelling and assignment draft feedback of appropriate academic essay structure (See Appendix Two for model text), Aaron appeared to make huge gains. This was evidenced by the marked increase in his essay structure - as evidenced in improved scores awarded to categories 'staging', 'phasing' and 'presentation'. For example, if one reads Aaron's introduction and conclusion extracts in Figures 5A.2 and 5A.3 in the appendices, there is clear evidence of an opening controversial statement, followed by background information and a thesis statement. Similarly, the conclusion opens with a discourse marker highlighting the transition to a conclusion, followed a restatement of the thesis statement in past tense and a summing up of the argument. By the time Aaron submitted a final post-intervention essay; good quality essay format was noticeable. Good structuring also concealed, to some degree, flaws in other aspects of his writing. Although the essays presented for the process and post intervention task were not flawless, they did indicate a much better grasp of essay structure.

## Discourse

Aaron's baseline submission showed little evidence of appropriate writing for Aaron's age group or language group (EAL). The argument appeared to be written in a more oral/conversational style with limited content words related to the essay topic presented in the argument. For example, instead of using content words related to major themes in the novel, such as 'Land Areas Act', 'segregation', 'historical relevance' and so forth, Aaron substituted these for personal descriptors such as 'interest me' and 'catches my interest'. This was evidenced by the weak scoring of categories 'mode', 'lexis' and 'appraisal'. See Chapter

Three, Section 3.4.3 for a brief discussion of these concepts. However, again, after intensive feedback and text modelling (as described in Chapter Seven, Section 7.5), Aaron showed a marked improvement with categories ‘mode’ and ‘lexis’. With ‘mode’, his writing style moved towards a more academic written style of language. With ‘lexis’, his choice of words for the argument were more objective, abstract and relevant to major themes of the novel. However, even after the final essay, evidence indicates that Aaron would still need more assistance in offering a more persuasive argument. This would also entail intensive teaching about the novel because Aaron is unable to write about issues he has not read, or studied. The most substantial improvement for this student was a move away from a conversational style of argument to a more academic form of argument. See Figures 5A.2 and Figures 5A.3 in the appendices.

### **Grammatical Features**

Aaron started with an adequate use of ‘conjunctives’, ‘reference techniques’ in and between sentences, ‘grammar’, ‘spelling’ and ‘punctuation’. It was not perfect but left much less reason for concern than did the features noted as ‘topic parameters’, ‘structure’ and ‘discourse’. There was a light increase in the skills presentation of ‘punctuation’ and in the use of ‘conjunctives’ and ‘referencing’ in and between sentences but it was not marked. This was evidenced by an increased use of demonstrative pronouns such as ‘this’ in referring to concepts in a preceding sentence or paragraph. As a result reading comprehension was not marred by an incoherent style of writing, often a casualty of poor within text referencing and poor use of conjunctives. Improvement in these sub-categories could be better with longer term intervention.

### **Summary**

In summarising the above findings, it appears that Aaron’s structural organisation of the academic essay did improve, as did his ability to employ more appropriate academic ‘register’. Further, Aaron appeared to show a slight improvement in his writing in terms of correct usage of ‘reference techniques’. As a result, Aaron was able to compile a more coherent and cohesive essay, a marked difference from his baseline assessment. By this I mean Aaron’s essay flowed a little easier with ideas following on from one another, either due to improved essay structure, or better use of referencing techniques such as

demonstrative pronouns. Aaron was also able to move beyond a more subjective argument to a more objective analysis of the novels relevance with adequate evidence offered. Aaron successfully moved from a performance located within the first quartile (bottom performing set of students within the class) to a final assessment located within the fourth quartile. (See Chapter Six, Table 6.7).

**Case Study Two: Bryan (Student No. 72) Class C****Table 5.2: Case Study Two: Bryan (Student No. 72) Class C**

Assessment criteria	Student no:	Description	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4
<b>Context</b>	Purpose	Appropriate for genre and writing assignment?	1/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Staging	Are there appropriate stages? How well developed is each stage?	0/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Phases	How well developed is each phase?	0/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	2/3
	Field	Does the writer construct the plot, settings and characters (narratives); explain the field (factual texts), or describe the issues (argument)?	13/	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Tenor	How well does the writer engage the reader (narratives) or persuade the reader (argument)?	1/3	1/3	3/3	2/3	2/3
	Mode	How well written is the text for the school age? Is it spoken or written language?	2/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
<b>Discourse</b>	Lexis	Content words related to the field.	1/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Appraisal	How well is appraisal used to engage/persuade/evaluate?	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Conjunctives	Is there a clear logical relationship between sentences?	2/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Reference	Is it clear who is referred to in each sentence (pronouns, articles, demonstratives)?	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Grammar	Have grammatical conventions of formal English been used accurately?	2/3	2/3	2/3	3/3	2/3
<b>Graphic features</b>	Spelling	How accurately are core words and non-core words spelt?	2/3	2/3	2/3	3/3	2/3
	Punctuation	Has punctuation been used accurately and consistently?	1/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Presentation	Paragraphs? Legible writing? Clear layout?	1/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>36</b>

## Topic

Bryan started off discussing the relevance of the novel in an appropriate manner but appeared to veer off topic very quickly and instead, offered a discussion of the relevance of the novel purely from a personal perspective. For example, in Figure 5A.4 (Appendices), Bryan started mentioning the relevance of the novel due to its historical importance but soon thereafter argued from a personal perspective sighting the novel's level of difficulty with regards to the language. In arguing from an academic perspective I was hoping Bryan would mention significant themes emanating from the novel to highlight its academic and historical importance to the Grade 11 curriculum. This demonstrated a weaker grasp of the novel's thematic relevance. Thus, Bryan scored very poorly with regards to 'purpose', 'field' and 'tenor' for the pre-intervention baseline score. With regards to 'field', Bryan failed to offer an objective reason for the novel's exclusion within the curriculum besides personal preference. With regards to 'tenor', given that Bryan failed to provide an objective reason, with evidence as to why the novel should, or should not be included, his level of persuasion was weak. Consequently, he failed to meet the genre requirements of the academic argument essay (to persuade a point of view), shown by a weaker score for 'purpose'.

With intensive scaffolding via text modelling, purposive classroom interaction and rigorous assessment draft feedback (See Chapter Seven, Section 7.5) Bryan showed evidence of drastic improvement in terms of whether the assignment fitted the 'purpose' of the genre (academic essay) and assignment purposes. There was a slight improvement in the category 'field' (describing the issue at hand and offering evidence for the argument) but any further development appeared to be hampered by a lack of reading comprehension or completion of the novel. In other-words, Bryan had not read enough of the novel to be able to offer evidence from the novel to back his argument. This was confirmed by his linguistic biography questionnaire whereby Bryan stated that he did not read a lot. However, there was a slight improvement in his ability to persuade the reader through a more well thought out argument which clearly linked back to the essay question. This was important as Bryan not only stated his point of argument and gave the evidence, but he was also able to link these elements back to the essay topic. See Figure 5A.5 (Appendices).

## Context

Bryan's pre-intervention baseline assessment score showed little evidence of any knowledge of basic academic essay structure. This was evidenced by the very weak score for the 'staging', 'phasing' and 'presentation' categories. For example, Bryan's baseline assessment draft did not include any paragraphs. Even in his one long paragraph, there was no evidence of an introduction, body or conclusion See Figure 5A.4 (Appendices). Further, Bryan's baseline assessment was just a little under half of the required one page essay. Again, this may be indicative of having very little to write about given the fact that Bryan had not completed his reading of the novel yet. It must be noted that this was still the first novel prescribed for this class from the first term and yet, in the third term, Bryan had still not been able to read to completion.

After carefully guiding Bryan through appropriate academic essay argument schematic structuring, via whole class discussions and individual assessment feedback, Bryan did show a marked improvement. His presentation improved drastically as he was able to divide his essay into very clear paragraphs. Further, he showed a better understanding of 'staging' and 'phasing' of the academic essay. For example, Figures 5A.5 provided evidence of this. Bryan was able to offer appropriate staging (introduction, body and conclusion) as well as phasing (controversial statement, background information, thesis statement, topic sentence, evidence, elaboration and so forth) of the academic essay. This awareness was carried through to the final re-write, evidenced by Figure 5A.6 (Appendices). Even though the final re-write showed less thought for the conclusion, it was still a marked improvement from the baseline.

## Discourse

Pre-intervention baseline assessment scores for 'lexis' (content words related to the topic) and 'appraisal' (words used to show attitude, levels of engagement and graduation) showed that Bryan did not make use of appropriate content words related to the essay topic at hand. For example, Bryan made reference to personal attitude in his argument (unfortunately; great) demonstrating a subjective stance. It would be more appropriate if his levels of attitude could be downgraded to offer a more objective argument removed from his personal preference. Additionally, points of argument were restricted to personal opinion and interest as well as language issues instead of thematic relevance to students' political context. See Figure 5A.4.

However, Bryan's use of evaluative markers (appraisal) did show signs of improvement in later assignment drafts as his ability to stay clear of subjective points of view was lessened and replaced by objective facts. See Figure 5A.6. With regards to the complexity of the argument, and the nature of Bryan's writing style, there was improvement as Bryan was able to move away from a more conversational/spoken style of writing to a more formal written style of writing. Further, he demonstrated appropriate age and English as an Additional Language (EAL) writing characteristics by the end of the intervention. It was still not a flawless essay but in comparison to extracts from Figure 5A.4, 5A.5 and 5A.6 showed clear evidence of improvement.

### **Grammatical Features**

Bryan appeared to struggle a bit with the use of conjunctives in his baseline assessment in that there were not any. Although reading was not impaired, the use of them was few and far between. 'Grammar' and 'spelling' also needed attention with 'punctuation' not excessively bad, but still needing attention. Through intensive draft feedback, better usage of 'conjunctives', 'referencing' and 'punctuation' showed evidence of improvement but 'spelling' and 'grammar' took longer before any signs of improvement became visible. Post-intervention, the use of 'conjunctives', 'referencing' and 'punctuation' were much better but 'spelling' and 'grammar' still needed assistance.

### **Summary**

In summarising the above findings, similar to Aaron, through careful scaffolding and modelling of exemplar texts, together with intensive feedback, Bryan appeared to be able to improve aspects of his essay writing skills. Content words (lexis), and thus overall content for the essay improved which helped this student rectify his first attempt which was off topic and too subjective in nature. Schematic structuring was probably the most noticeable improvement with Bryan offering a near perfect structure, which in turn, allowed for a more cohesive and coherent essay. This was aided by an improved grasp of 'conjunctives'. Discourse was a marked improvement too but 'grammar' and 'spelling' took longer to show signs of improvement and still need considerably more improvement. Bryan started in the first quartile (bottom set of students with regards to performance) and managed to move up into the second quartile.

**Case Study Three: Chris (Student No. 33) Class B****Table 5.3: Case Study Three: Chris (Student No. 33) Class B**

Assessment criteria	Student no:	Description	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4
<b>Context</b>	Purpose	Appropriate for genre and writing assignment?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Staging	Are there appropriate stages? How well developed is each stage?	1/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Phases	How well developed is each phase?	1/3	3/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Field	Does the writer construct the plot, settings and characters (narratives); explain the field (factual texts), or describe the issues (argument)?	1/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Tenor	How well does the writer engage the reader (narratives) or persuade the reader (argument)?	1/3	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Mode	How well written is the text for the school age? Is it spoken or written language?	1/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	2/3
<b>Discourse</b>	Lexis	Content words related to the field.	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Appraisal	How well is appraisal used to engage/persuade/evaluate?	1/3	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Conjunctives	Is there a clear logical relationship between sentences?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Reference	Is it clear who is referred to in each sentence (pronouns, articles, demonstratives)?	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Grammar	Have grammatical conventions of formal English been used accurately?	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	2/3
<b>Graphic features</b>	Spelling	How accurately are core words and non-core words spelt?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	2/3
	Punctuation	Has punctuation been used accurately and consistently?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Presentation	Paragraphs? Legible writing? Clear layout?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	<b>Total</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>36</b>



## Topic

Chris showed a good basic grasp of the topic at hand. For example, he attempted to offer an objective argument by recounting important events that took place within the novel and relating the relevance of that event to students' current affairs. This included a mention of the love relationship that is developed in the novel. Figure 5A.7 in the appendices shows evidence of this. Chris also made an effort to offer a form of evaluation based on the events that took place to validate his argument but this evaluation was weak and lacked any substantial form of elaboration with regard to the argument. For example, although he mentions the love relationship and that the characters would do anything for each other; this is not substantiated with evidence from the novel. For this reason, Chris did not score very highly with the categories 'field' and 'tenor'. If he had described the argument in more detail (field) and offered evidence to elaborate further (tenor), his argument might have been more persuasive. See Figure 5A.7. Once explicit instruction was given on how to argue objectively and critically, and modelled through a model text (See Appendix Three – model text), Chris showed great improvement. Through intensive feedback, Chris was able to effectively enhance his argument (improve 'field'). This was evidenced in Figure 5A.8 and Figure 5A.9. For example, in both extracts, Chris was able to state his point (tyrannical rule and proof of substance abuse), provide evidence (President Snow and why kids abuse alcohol) and elaborate further. However, his level of persuasion with the evidence and subsequent elaboration of the evidence could have been fleshed out a bit more and thus has room for improvement. Nevertheless, the overall improvement with categories 'purpose', 'field' and 'tenor' were marked as the student progressed through the intervention. See Figure 5A.7, Figure 5A.8 and Figure 5A.9.

## Context

Initial baseline assessment for Chris showed an elementary grasp of the academic argument's 'structure'. As evidenced by Figure 5A.7, Chris was able to structure the initial essay into two distinct paragraphs but the 'purpose' of each paragraph was not clear and there was no clear introduction, body or conclusion. In other words, Chris did not provide background information and set the thesis up in the introduction or provide a summary of the argument in the conclusion. The overall length of his initial essay, together with the content of his essay was indicative of a possible misunderstanding of what constituted a good academic argument

– provide a point of argument and persuade the reader to take on the argument. However, Figure 5A.8 and Figure 5A.9 showed that Chris was able to make improvements throughout the duration of the intervention with a marked improvement in ‘schematic structuring’ of the essay and overall presentation. For example, just in Figure 5A.8 alone, Chris was able to include the following phases into his stage 1 of the essay (introduction): background information, thesis statement and controlling ideas. See Chapter Three, Section 3.4.2, Table 3.9 for expected stages and phases of an academic argument. As Chris progressed and incorporated the advanced feedback given with each assessment draft, his ability to structure appropriate ‘stages’ and ‘phases’ found within an academic argument was good. His introduction and conclusion were particularly good with an excellent presentation of the ‘phases’ of both paragraphs. The body of the essay possibly needed more attention with Chris still struggling to grasp how to make a clear link between the paragraph’s topic sentence and introduction’s controlling ideas (Figure 5A.8) but this seemed to improve in the post-intervention essay in Figure 5A.9. Overall, the progress with ‘staging’, ‘phasing’ and ‘presentation’ was marked.

### **Discourse**

Chris’ baseline essay showed little evidence of age and language (EAL learner) appropriate writing conventions (Figure 5A.7). Although the writing style was not conversational, it did not present elements of formal academic writing and at times, appeared elementary (‘mode’). For example, the use of the personal pronoun (me) and use of contractions was evidenced in the baseline essay. In other words; the writing style presented in the baseline essay could have been attributed to a student of a much younger age. However, his choice of ‘lexis’ was adequate and fitting for the topic at hand. I say adequate because Chris attempted to link his argument to sub-themes (love) instead of personal preference, such as, ‘interest’, ‘boring’ and so forth.

With intensive feedback given throughout the duration of the intervention, Chris did appear to improve considerably within categories ‘mode’ and ‘lexis’ but only limited improvement was evident with the category ‘appraisal’. With ‘mode’, Chris transitioned to a more academic, written style of language. With ‘lexis’ in both Figure 5A.8 and Figure 5A.9, he made use of content words related to the more academic points of argument instead of

personal preference points of argument (tyranny, hopelessness, rebellions). Given that the academic essay was only taught over one semester, it was expected that students' might not have made noteworthy improvement with elements of their writing related to 'appraisal'. This is because the teaching of language resources used for elements of graduation, attitude and engagement can be complex and given that the students in the research programme had a low base of understanding of these concepts, the amount of time needed to build this knowledge set is beyond the scope of the research.

### **Grammatical Features**

Chris showed a good grasp of the use of 'conjunctives'. In addition, he did not appear to struggle with 'spelling' and 'punctuation'. Throughout the entire intervention, he scored highly with the categories 'conjunctives', 'spelling' and 'punctuation'. It must be noted that although he scored highly for the use of 'conjunctives', there is still room for improvement. He did present irregularities with regards to 'grammatical rules' and conventions ('is the world' instead of 'the world is'; 'the two characters doesn't want to') but these are not out of the ordinary when considering that Chris is an EAL student. However, with intensive feedback, he did appear to make substantial improvement. See Figure 5A.7 – Figure 5A.9

### **Summary**

In summarising the above findings, it appeared that Chris' ability to structure a genre appropriate academic essay improved drastically. The modelling of an appropriate text and constant feedback appeared to have provided him with a better understanding of what an academic argument is, and what content is more appropriate for an academic argument. Further, Chris showed elements of adopting more appropriate academic 'discourse'. Improvement in 'grammatical features' of his writing was limited though. Nevertheless, Chris was able to move from a performance level located within the first quartile (bottom cohort of student performance) to the third quartile.

**Case Study Four: Dennis (Student No. 53) Class B****Table 5.4: Case Study Four: Dennis (Student No. 53) Class B**

Assessment criteria	Student no:	Description	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4
<b>Context</b>	Purpose	Appropriate for genre and writing assignment?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Staging	Are there appropriate stages? How well developed is each stage?	1/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Phases	How well developed is each phase?	1/3	1/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Field	Does the writer construct the plot, settings and characters (narratives); explain the field (factual texts), or describe the issues (argument)?	1/3	1/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Tenor	How well does the writer engage the reader (narratives) or persuade the reader (argument)?	2/3	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Mode	How well written is the text for the school age? Is it spoken or written language?	2/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	2/3
<b>Discourse</b>	Lexis	Content words related to the field.	1/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Appraisal	How well is appraisal used to engage/persuade/evaluate?	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Conjunctives	Is there a clear logical relationship between sentences?	2/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Reference	Is it clear who is referred to in each sentence (pronouns, articles, demonstratives)?	2/3	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Grammar	Have grammatical conventions of formal English been used accurately?	1/3	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
<b>Graphic features</b>	Spelling	How accurately are core words and non-core words spelt?	2/3	2/3	2/3	3/3	2/3
	Punctuation	Has punctuation been used accurately and consistently?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Presentation	Paragraphs? Legible writing? Clear layout?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>

## Topic

Dennis attempted to offer at least three separate reasons for the relevance of the novel's inclusion in the English First Additional Language curriculum. These included: “the book teaches life lessons”, “the romantic and intense scenes teach us how to approach those moments in life” and “it increases vocabulary”. See Figure 5A.10. However, none of these reasons presented an objective, academic argument with appropriate evidence and elaboration (See Chapter Three, Section 3.4.2, Table 3.9). Rather, Dennis approached the argument from a subjective stance offering an argument based on personal attributes such as level of enjoyment. Dennis' level of engagement in arguing from a personal perspective was thus weak as evidenced by his low mark with categories ‘field’ and ‘tenor’. The low mark for these two categories was also due to a lack of evidence in explaining the relevance of the novel in detail (what romantic scenes or what intense scenes and how were they relevant?) and thus an inability to persuade the reader that his argument is valid. On the contrary, he did understand the purpose of the task at hand and although the argument was not of an appropriate academic nature, it did nevertheless fulfil the ‘purpose’ of the academic argument genre to some extent. For example, Dennis did attempt to answer the question by saying the novel was relevant. Figure 5A.10 also showed evidence that he started offering a reason, although poorly.

As Dennis progressed through the semester, his level of persuasion and engagement with the topic improved drastically as he was able to offer a more objective argument linking the themes of the novel to the everyday lives of the students. For example, Figure 5A.12 shows clearly that Dennis was trying to link the idea of a tyrannical ruler, and the consequences of such a leader on the mindset of the people of the community which can lead to a rebellion. Dennis also very clearly linked this to the current political context of South Africa. It would appear that the extensive feedback given in class, together with the offering of a model text (See the model text in Appendix Three) helped Dennis hone his argument substantially and this was carried through to the final re-write with Dennis noticeably more adept at offering an objective argument. He could still improve on his level of persuasion but it was an improvement.

## Context

Dennis demonstrated an elementary awareness of essay structure in his baseline essay. See Figure 5A.10. For example, although it appears as if he has managed to organise his essay into a beginning, middle and end, these paragraphs did not meet the criteria (purpose) of an introduction (background information, set thesis and explain how argument will be unpacked<sup>42</sup>), body (provide a point of argument, provide evidence and elaborate how it links to the argument) and conclusion (summary of the argument). However, an understanding of the importance of presentation was good. This was evidenced by clear, separate paragraphs. Further, these paragraphs did appear to offer an individual point of argument per paragraph, again, showing evidence of strong presentation skills. However, an understanding of schematic structuring with regards to staging and phasing of an academic argument was weak. With clear guidelines offered throughout the semester, Dennis made significant improvements. This was evidenced by an almost flawless schematic structure in his final draft of Task 5, and the post-intervention re-write. See Figure 5A.11, Figure 5A.12 and Figure 5A.13. Table 3.9 in Section 3.4.2 of Chapter Three offers an example of what was expected of students for their schematic structuring. It must be noted that the post-intervention re-write marking was slightly more lenient than the final draft of the preceding task given that students' handed in a final academic argument with no guidance whatsoever. The topic was different to Task 4 and Task 5. Students merely had their previous essay as a guide. The essay topic might have been slightly easier too given that it encouraged students to talk about alcohol and substance abuse, a phenomenon most likely more situationally relevant than issues within the novel.

## Discourse

Dennis' pre-intervention baseline essay showed an adequate level of writing for the student's age and language affiliation (EAL student) as evidenced by a relatively higher than normal mark for the category 'mode'. However, given that his baseline argument was more subjective, it resulted in less appropriate content words (lexis). For example, instead of talking about thematic concepts, Dennis chose to talk about his perceptions of the level of vocabulary presented in the novel. Consequently, this affected his score for the category 'lexis'. With extensive feedback given on multiple drafts, and explicit instruction into

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<sup>42</sup> These are rudimentary explanations. These paragraphs are obviously more detailed than this.

effective academic writing, Dennis did show a marked improvement. This was particularly the case with Dennis' choice of content words as he was able to incorporate terminology linked to more complex themes from the novel into his argument. For example, content words used in the essay included, 'tyrannical', rebellion, politics, and so forth, resulting in him making use of more advanced content words. See Figure 5A.12. This had a positive effect on Dennis' writing making it more academically appropriate, evidenced by a higher mark for the category 'mode'. Overall, Dennis' final draft for Task 5 was a significant improvement with a slight decline in performance for the post-intervention academic essay. But, as mentioned with the preceding student, that is to be expected given that students were not given any advice or guidance on their final Task.

### **Grammatical Features**

Dennis showed adequate evidence of 'conjunctive' usage or effective 'referencing techniques' rendering the pre-intervention essay adequate in terms of cohesiveness. 'Spelling' was a minor issue as was 'grammatical errors'. As Dennis slowly incorporated the feedback given during his multiple essay drafts, there appeared to be a considerable improvement, most noticeably with the categories 'spelling', 'punctuation', 'conjunctives' and 'referencing'. However, multiple spelling errors crept into this student's final post-intervention essay as well as one or two grammatical errors. See Figures 5A.10 – 5A.13.

### **Summary**

In summarising the above findings, a similar pattern has emerged to that of Aaron, Bryan and Chris. The most gains appeared to have been found within the 'schematic structuring' of Dennis' essays with a noteworthy level of improvement in his ability to effectively use the academic essay's 'stages' and 'phases' appropriately. Further, he appeared to have made a marked improvement in understanding the purpose of the academic essay which resulted in an improvement in categories 'field' (he was able to really unpack his point of argument in detail) and 'lexis' (as a result of being able to unpack the argument his choice of words were more appropriate to the themes embedded within the novel). A better understanding of the purpose and structuring of the academic argument genre also resulted in a more coherent and cohesive argument which appeared to give evidence of much 'better' writing skills. Although there was an improvement in the student's grasp of correct 'grammatical usage', this did

appear to fade away with the final essay assignment. This could have been due to motivational issues or the fact that extra time on task was needed to assist further with graphic features such as spelling and punctuation. Nevertheless, Dennis was able to improve from an initial placement within the first quartile for the pre-intervention baseline essay to placing within the third quartile demonstrating strong evidence for a convergence theory.



**Case Study Five: Erin (Student No. 6) Class A****Table 5.5: Case Study Five: Erin (Student No. 6) Class A**

Assessment criteria	Student no:	Description	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4
<b>Context</b>	Purpose	Appropriate for genre and writing assignment?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Staging	Are there appropriate stages? How well developed is each stage?	2/3	2/3	3/3	2/3	2/3
	Phases	How well developed is each phase?	1/3	1/3	2/3	1/3	2/3
	Field	Does the writer construct the plot, settings and characters (narratives); explain the field (factual texts), or describe the issues (argument)?	1/3	1/3	2/3	2/3	3/3
	Tenor	How well does the writer engage the reader (narratives) or persuade the reader (argument)?	2/3	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Mode	How well written is the text for the school age? Is it spoken or written language?	2/3	1/3	3/3	1/3	3/3
<b>Discourse</b>	Lexis	Content words related to the field.	2/3	2/3	3/3	2/3	3/3
	Appraisal	How well is appraisal used to engage/persuade/evaluate?	2/3	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Conjunctives	Is there a clear logical relationship between sentences?	2/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Reference	Is it clear who is referred to in each sentence (pronouns, articles, demonstratives)?	1/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Grammar	Have grammatical conventions of formal English been used accurately?	2/3	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
<b>Graphic features</b>	Spelling	How accurately are core words and non-core words spelt?	2/3	1/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Punctuation	Has punctuation been used accurately and consistently?	2/3	1/3	2/3	3/3	3/3
	Presentation	Paragraphs? Legible writing? Clear layout?	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	<b>Total</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>36</b>

## Topic

When looking at Erin's pre-intervention baseline essay, Erin showed clear evidence that the baseline assessment was written for the purposes of an academic argument. He showed an understanding of the requirements of an academic essay which is to argue a certain viewpoint. For example, he stated early on that he was going to argue that the novel in question was relevant to the curriculum and he also provided the parameters for his argument – to argue that elements of morality and hardships in life represented in the novel are relevant to us all today. See Figure 5A.14. However, the manner in which it was argued with the baseline essay was elementary, as evidenced by his opening statement of 'I agree'. The simplistic construction of his essay was further evidenced by a one line conclusion with Erin stating that he had proven numerous points for why he agreed with the statement but without actually reminding the reader of the viewpoints (Figure 5A.14). Hence, Erin scored poorly for the categories 'field' and 'tenor'. This is because he was unable to describe in detail, his points of argument with evidence from the novel (field) and was thus unable to offer a truly persuasive argument (tenor). Evidence of improvement with regard to Erin's level of argument (field) and thus level of persuasion (tenor) was present towards the end of the intervention as he offered a more detailed explanation and elaboration of the argument in the final post-intervention essay. For example, Figure 5A.16 demonstrates Erin's heightened awareness of offering a point of view for his argument and elaborating on that point of view further. Erin's final post-intervention essay was not perfect and although it did present a more detailed argument, it was still lacking in substance and there is still room for more improvement. Erin's linguistic biography did highlight a lack of motivation for participation in this particular programme and given that Erin is already identified as a strong student, by virtue of being included in the academically stronger Grade 11 class at his school, his level of performance might be due to a motivational factor.

## Context

Erin did demonstrate a clear understanding of essay structure in that there were clear separate paragraphs for what is meant to constitute an introduction, body and conclusion in the pre-intervention essay (Figure 5A.14). However, these three paragraphs did not meet the requisite 'staging' and 'phasing' criteria of an academic argument. See Chapter Three, Section 3.4.2, Table 3.9. For example, the baseline essay offered no thesis statement, controlling ideas,

topic sentence or sign-posts linking ideas between paragraphs. Further, as mentioned in the category above, points of argument were not elaborated on with clear evidence from the novel. If these were indeed in the baseline essay, the handwriting hid these. There appeared to be a slight improvement in Erin's level of presentation and ability to fulfil the various 'stages' of an academic essay but limited improvement in his grasp of 'phases' within the stages of an academic essay as the intervention progressed. For example, Figure 5A.15 shows an improvement in offering a point of argument and then elaborating further on that point but this is not improved further in his post-intervention essay (Figure 5A.16). Nevertheless, the difference in essay submission between the final post-intervention and the pre-intervention essay did show a change in academic performance even if marginal.

### **Discourse**

The pre-intervention baseline essay showed evidence of Erin writing at an adequate level for his age. It was a level of writing and abstraction that I would have expected of my previous Grade 11 students. This fulfils the category 'mode'. The writing style was not conversational and Erin did attempt to offer an objective argument. However, given that this was supposed to be the top-performing English class, the choice of 'lexis'; and thus, level of difficulty with regard to his argument was perhaps below par. I would have expected a level of argument above adequate. He did improve slightly but it fluctuated. However, this did improve significantly with his choice of 'lexis' within the final post-intervention re-write, thus resulting in the degree of complexity with regard to the student's argument improving.

### **Grammatical Features**

Erin did not show evidence of major problems with regards to 'grammaticality' and 'spelling', however, given that this is an English Home Language class, the level at which he was performing at, could have been better. His spelling performance did drop in his Task 5 assignments though. See Figure 5A.15. There did not appear to be considerable improvement in his 'spelling' after Task 5 (Figure 5A.16) but his rushed handwriting could have indicated a level of complacency. Punctuation was also not on par at the onset (Figure 5A.14), but improved throughout the duration of the intervention (Figure 5A.16). An area of improvement with his writing was with 'referencing', and to some degree, the use of

‘conjunctives’, which did lead to a slightly more cohesive and coherent essay towards the end of the intervention.

### **Summary**

In summarising the above findings, unlike the student’s above, where the greatest improvements were found with the schematic structuring of the essay, Erin already had a generally good idea of how to structure the essay. This may have been due to the class teacher having a good command of how to teach academic writing. The greatest level of improvement was with the ‘grammatical features’ with Erin showing a slight degree of improvement with ‘punctuation’, ‘use of conjunctives’ and ‘referencing’ resulting in a more coherent and cohesive essay. Further ‘discourse’ was another area of improvement with this student showing a greater level of understanding with regards to choice of ‘lexis’ and writing style in creating a more persuasive essay. Erin started in the first quartile and moved up into the third quartile of performance.

**Case Study Six: Frank (Student No. 4) Class A****Table 5.6: Case Study Six: Frank (Student No. 4) Class A**

Assessment criteria	Student no:	Description	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4
<b>Context</b>	Purpose	Appropriate for genre and writing assignment?	3/3	Dnf	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Staging	Are there appropriate stages? How well developed is each stage?	1/3	Dnf	2/3	3/3	2/3
	Phases	How well developed is each phase?	1/3	Dnf	1/3	3/3	2/3
	Field	Does the writer construct the plot, settings and characters (narratives); explain the field (factual texts), or describe the issues (argument)?	1/3	Dnf	2/3	3/3	2/3
	Tenor	How well does the writer engage the reader (narratives) or persuade the reader (argument)?	1/3	Dnf	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Mode	How well written is the text for the school age? Is it spoken or written language?	2/3	Dnf	3/3	3/3	2/3
<b>Discourse</b>	Lexis	Content words related to the field.	2/3	Dnf	2/3	3/3	3/3
	Appraisal	How well is appraisal used to engage/persuade/evaluate?	2/3	Dnf	2/3	2/3	2/3
	Conjunctives	Is there a clear logical relationship between sentences?	3/3	Dnf	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Reference	Is it clear who is referred to in each sentence (pronouns, articles, demonstratives)?	3/3	Dnf	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Grammar	Have grammatical conventions of formal English been used accurately?	2/3	Dnf	3/3	3/3	2/3
<b>Graphic features</b>	Spelling	How accurately are core words and non-core words spelt?	2/3	Dnf	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Punctuation	Has punctuation been used accurately and consistently?	3/3	Dnf	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Presentation	Paragraphs? Legible writing? Clear layout?	0/3	Dnf	3/3	3/3	3/3
	<b>Total</b>		<b>26</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>

## Topic

Through a careful analysis of Frank's pre-intervention baseline essay, he showed clear evidence of understanding the purpose of an academic argument from the onset of the intervention. He was able to clearly, and objectively attempt to offer a persuasive argument for the relevance of the novel to the Grade 11 curriculum. See Figure 5A.17. However, although the 'purpose' of his baseline writing was evident (argue the relevance of the novel to the grade 11 curriculum), aspects of his argument relating to 'field' and 'tenor' were not as well defined. For example, Frank was able to present his argument very well but he failed to provide explicit evidence from the novel to substantiate his point of argument. Because he failed to provide evidence from the novel, his elaboration was not as strong. This was because his argument and linkage back to the essay topic was not clear. See Figure 5A.17. Frank did make slow progress at first as he was absent for a writing session but the end result was a marked improvement. With his Task 5 essay submission, Frank was able to argue much more objectively and provide evidence for his argument, elaborate on its relevance to the lives of the Grade 11 students and link it the essay topic. This resulted in a good final Task 5 essay, clearly meeting the purposes of an academic argument. See Figure 5A.18.

## Context

Frank did not demonstrate a clear understanding of structural requirements of an academic essay in his pre-intervention baseline essay. Although elements of an introduction, body and conclusion were evident with regard to the content of the baseline essay, the structure was weak. For example, in Figure 5A.17, Frank did not make clear a thesis statement. He also did not sign post a transition to a conclusion, nor did he offer a summation of key elements of his essay. Further, Frank offered no separation of the text into paragraphs. With intensive feedback on numerous drafts handed in, and explicit modelling of what constituted an academic essay, Frank made a marked improvement with 'staging', 'phasing' and 'presentation'. For example, Figure 5A.18 not only showed skill in correctly using the three stages of an academic essay (introduction, body and conclusion) but he also showed skill in incorporating the various phases as well. See Chapter Three, Section 3.4.2, Table 3.9 for an overview of the expected stages and phases. However, the improvement was short-term as Frank appeared to fail to take into account feedback given throughout the intervention resulting in a final post-intervention re-write with excellent presentation skills but small

errors in the ‘staging’ and ‘phasing’ of the essay. For example, the introduction lacked a controlling idea, no evidence was given in the body to back up the argument and new information was offered in the conclusion. See Figure 5A.19. Although the final re-write was significantly better than the pre-intervention baseline essay, I was rather disappointed in Frank as he displayed good writing skills during the intervention. Perhaps complacency crept in. This could be corroborated with Frank's Linguistic Biography questionnaire as Frank felt he did not need academic writing help and thus did not feel too motivated to take part in the intervention.

### **Discourse**

Frank displayed an adequate level of writing for his age category and language affiliation. His writing style was appropriate for academic writing with equally appropriate word choice. For example, content words chosen for argumentation with early essay drafts ranged from ‘morals’, ‘life lessons’, ‘leadership’ to ‘responsibility’. The degree of complexity with regard to his argument did improve through more careful choice of content words which enhanced his level of argument. For example, a later draft used words such as ‘atonement’, ‘redemption’ and ‘transitional’. Frank did not necessarily carry this level of improvement through to the final re-write but it was to be expected given that no feedback was given to enhance the students’ effort for their final re-write. Further, the post-intervention essay topic was less cognitively demanding meaning students chose less abstract terminology for their argument. Nevertheless, the rate of improvement between the pre-intervention, final process task and post-intervention essay was marked. See Figures 5A.17 – 5A.19.

### **Grammatical Features**

Given that Frank was within a top performing class and an English Home Language student, it was plausible that his pre-intervention baseline essay showed good language skills. This was evidenced by the high marks with categories ‘conjunctives’, ‘reference’ and ‘punctuation’. ‘Grammar’ and ‘spelling’ were minor issues, that when pointed out during extensive feedback, were attended to. These errors may have crept in due to complacency or the fact that Frank was rushed.

**Summary**

In summarising the above findings, the greatest level of improvement for Frank appeared to be with the schematic structuring of his essays. He started the intervention with a relatively good idea of what an academic argument was in that the purpose of the genre was fulfilled but this was not adequate enough as he failed to argue competently with strong evidence and an elaboration of the evidence and its link to the topic. Thus, schematic structuring was not correct. Once he attained a better grasp of the correct 'stages' and 'phases' of the academic argument, aspects of 'field', 'tenor' and 'lexis' improved markedly. It is just a pity this was not carried through to the final re-write assignment. Frank started in first quartile of performance and ended in the second quartile.



**Case Study Seven: Greg (Student No. 50) Class B****Table 5.7: Case Study Seven: Greg (Student No. 50) Class B**

Assessment criteria	Student no:	Description	AO	A1	A2	A3	A4
<b>Context</b>	Purpose	Appropriate for genre and writing assignment?	3	3	3	3	3
	Staging	Are there appropriate stages? How well developed is each stage?	1	2	3	3	2
	Phases	How well developed is each phase?	1	1	2	2	1
	Field	Does the writer construct the plot, settings and characters (narratives); explain the field (factual texts), or describe the issues (argument)?	1	2	3	2	2
	Tenor	How well does the writer engage the reader (narratives) or persuade the reader (argument)?	1	2	2	2	2
	Mode	How well written is the text for the school age? Is it spoken or written language?	1	2	2	2	1
<b>Discourse</b>	Lexis	Content words related to the field.	1	2	3	3	2
	Appraisal	How well is appraisal used to engage/persuade/evaluate?	1	2	2	2	2
	Conjunctives	Is there a clear logical relationship between sentences?	3	3	3	3	2
	Reference	Is it clear who is referred to in each sentence (pronouns, articles, demonstratives)?	3	3	3	3	2
	Grammar	Have grammatical conventions of formal English been used accurately?	1	3	3	2	1
<b>Graphic features</b>	Spelling	How accurately are core words and non-core words spelt?	1	3	2	3	1
	Punctuation	Has punctuation been used accurately and consistently?	3	3	3	3	2
	Presentation	Paragraphs? Legible writing? Clear layout?	3	3	3	3	3
	<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>26</b>

## **Topic**

Through a careful analysis of Greg's pre-intervention baseline essay (Figure 5A.20), there was evidence of an understanding of the purpose of an academic essay. Greg was able to offer some form of an argument for the relevance of the novel in question but the depth of his argument was lacking. For example, his point of argument was more along the lines of personal opinion leaving his argument subjective (novel was boring). Throughout the duration of the programme Greg continued to show evidence of fulfilling the purpose of the academic essay genre but his development of the categories 'field' and 'tenor' was slow going. Greg's final assignment (Figure 5A.21) seemed to show a regress in his ability to argue objectively so although he showed evidence that he understands that he has to provide an argument, his ability to offer objective, valid points of argument were weak. This could have been due to complacency as Greg improved substantially for a small part of the programme but seemed to have gotten bored.

## **Context**

Greg struggled at first with the staging requirements of the academic essay as he failed to structure his essay into a clear introduction, body and paragraph. Despite guidance on this aspect of academic writing, he was slow to transform the schematic structuring of his essay. Although he was able to better offer clearer sections of the introduction, body and conclusion, the phasing requirements of each stage were weak. For example, Greg struggled to incorporate an appropriate thesis statement or controlling idea statement into his essay and at times what was actually argued in the body did not match with his thesis statement, when it was offered. In general, staging showed a marked improvement and there was a slow, gradual improvement in the category 'phases' but this slow rate of improvement was not evident in Greg's final submission. Presentation was excellent throughout as Greg understood the need to separate his extended writing into paragraphs, but what was incorporated into each separate paragraph was weak. Again, it appears if complacency and a sense of boredom for the task at hand impacted on Greg's performance.

## **Discourse**

Greg initially displayed an elementary style of writing for his age group and language affiliation making the comprehension of his initial assignment tough. There were numerous

grammatical issues which will be discussed in the next category but his choice of lexis was also elementary, possibly indicating a limited verbal repertoire. This is evidenced by an initial low score for categories ‘mode’, ‘lexis’ and ‘appraisal’. The degree of complexity with regard to his argument did improve through more careful choice of content words which enhanced his level of argument. For example, a later draft used words linked to thematic aspects of the novel such as tyranny, tyrannical rule and rebellions. However, the use of these words appeared to offer more of an increase in the surface features of the novel as Greg failed to discuss aspects of the themes in more detail. Greg did improve slightly within the programme, especially with the category ‘lexis’ but he did not necessarily carry this level of improvement through to the final re-write. Although Greg showed a promising rate of improvement, he lost motivation towards the end of the programme and failed to perform higher than the weaker performing cohort.

### **Grammatical Features**

Given that Greg was in an English Additional Language class, it was not surprising to see him start the programme with poor spelling. With specific guidance on spelling, Greg showed a marked improvement but again, this dropped significantly with the final assignment. In other words, Greg did not demonstrate an improved awareness of some grammatical aspects of academic writing. On the contrary, there appeared to be no major issue with poor ‘between-sentence’ referencing and presentation was adequate.

### **Summary**

In summarising the above findings, the greatest level of improvement for Greg appeared to be with the schematic structuring of his essays. He started the intervention with a poor idea of what an academic argument was in that the purpose of the genre was not adequately fulfilled and he failed to argue competently with strong evidence. Once he attained a better grasp of the correct ‘stages’ and ‘phases’ of the academic argument, aspects of ‘field’, ‘tenor’ and ‘lexis’ improved markedly. It is just a pity this was not carried through to the final re-write assignment. Frank started in first quartile of performance and ended in the first quartile. In this particular case therefore, the RTL cannot claim having brought significant improvement, even if overall the performance of the learners did confirm the program’s achievements.

**Case Study Eight: Harry (Student No. 96) Class C****Table 5.8: Case Study Eight: Harry (Student No. 96) Class C**

Assessment criteria	Student no:	Description	AO	A1	A2	A3	A4
<b>Context</b>	Purpose	Appropriate for genre and writing assignment?	1	3	3	3	3
	Staging	Are there appropriate stages? How well developed is each stage?	0	1	2	3	2
	Phases	How well developed is each phase?	0	0	1	2	2
	Field	Does the writer construct the plot, settings and characters (narratives); explain the field (factual texts), or describe the issues (argument)?	1	1	2	2	2
	Tenor	How well does the writer engage the reader (narratives) or persuade the reader (argument)?	1	1	2	2	2
	Mode	How well written is the text for the school age? Is it spoken or written language?	1	1	2	2	1
<b>Discourse</b>	Lexis	Content words related to the field.	1	1	2	3	2
	Appraisal	How well is appraisal used to engage/persuade/evaluate?	1	1	2	2	2
	Conjunctives	Is there a clear logical relationship between sentences?	1	1	2	2	2
	Reference	Is it clear who is referred to in each sentence (pronouns, articles, demonstratives)?	1	1	2	2	2
	Grammar	Have grammatical conventions of formal English been used accurately?	0	1	2	2	1
<b>Graphic features</b>	Spelling	How accurately are core words and non-core words spelt?	1	2	2	2	1
	Punctuation	Has punctuation been used accurately and consistently?	0	2	2	2	1
	Presentation	Paragraphs? Legible writing? Clear layout?	3	3	3	3	3
	<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>

## Topic

Harry struggled to argue within the parameters of the baseline topic (Figure 5A22) and appeared to offer more of a recount of the novel. This was an inappropriate genre for the assignment task, and off topic. This type of recount of the unfolding events of the novel is common with students who are unfamiliar with the purpose of a persuasive argument. For example, instead of offering an objective argument for whether the novel was appropriate for a Grade 11 study, (its historical relevance might be important given the history of Black South Africans during Apartheid), Harry's entire baseline essay merely retold the story. Limited reference was made to events within the novel and its subsequent impact on students' perceptions of Apartheid policy. This kind of difficulty was encountered in the work of numerous students who indicated that the novel had not been read in its entirety due to a lack of interest in the subject matter, or poor English proficiency, leading to comprehension issues. With this particular student, the class teacher did indicate severe language barriers as the student was not a native South African and had joined the school not too long ago. With regards to the student offering an essay that met the purpose of the academic essay, there was significant improvement. However, this did not translate into improved staging and phasing, discussed below.

## Context

Initial baseline assessment (Figure 5A 22) for Harry's assignment showed little evidence of any formal academic essay structure, evidenced by the 0/3 scored for both 'staging' and 'phasing'. Further, Harry did not display any evidence of appropriate planning of the essay. For example, Harry's baseline essay offered no introduction in which a thesis statement is offered. Further, there appears to be no consistency in content of each paragraph. Harry did not seem to offer a conclusion in which to sum up his main points of argument either. The required length of the essay also appeared problematic (too short). This may also be indicative of not having read the novel, or hardly having understood the text. But at least Harry did show understanding of the need to have separate paragraphs (presentation). After extensive modelling and assignment draft feedback of appropriate academic essay structure Harry appeared to still struggle. This was evidenced by a small increase, and later a decrease in essay structure - categories 'staging', 'phasing' (Figure 5A 23).

## **Discourse**

The pre-intervention baseline essay did not show much evidence of Harry writing at an adequate level for his age or language affiliation. It was a significantly lower level of writing and abstraction that I would have expected of a Grade 11 EAL student. This was evidenced by a low score for the category 'mode'. The writing style was more conversational. Further the choice of 'lexis'; and thus, level of difficulty with regard to his argument was perhaps below par. Harry did improve slightly, particularly with the choice of 'lexis', but the improvement fluctuated. However, this did improve significantly with his choice of 'lexis' within the final post-intervention re-write, thus resulting in the degree of complexity with regard to the student's argument improving.

## **Grammatical Features**

Given that Harry was in an English Additional Language class, it was not surprising to see him start the programme with poor spelling, referencing techniques and almost zero evidence of any punctuation. Already mentioned in a section above, the poor demonstration of grammatical features could also be due to severe language barriers experienced by this student as the student was not a native of South Africa and had only very recently moved to South Africa from Africa. With specific attention given to spelling, punctuation and referencing techniques during feedback, there appeared to be a slight improvement but this was very short-lived as both spelling and punctuation skills regressed with Harry's final assignment.

## **Summary**

In summarising the above findings, the greatest level of improvement for Harry appeared to be with the schematic structuring of his essays, and to some extent, the choice of appropriate lexis with extra tutoring on thematic aspects of the novel. He started the intervention with a poor idea of what an academic argument was in that the purpose of the genre was not adequately fulfilled and he failed to argue competently with strong evidence. Once he attained a better grasp of the purpose of an academic essay, his essay assignments improved somewhat. Harry started in first quartile of performance and ended in the first quartile. In this case, again, the learners progress was not as good as had been envisaged.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

Chapter Five offered a description and analysis of the qualitative data for this study. Qualitative data was collected in the form of student responses to a linguistic biographical questionnaire, as well as student writing portfolios. The student responses to the linguistic biographical questionnaire was presented and analysed first, followed by a description and analysis of select students writing portfolios in the form of selected case studies. The discussion of specific writing portfolios was done with a view to showing more qualitatively and in fine detail how individual students responded in different ways to the same program. Chapter Six will present the quantitative findings.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **QUANTITATIVE DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter Five offered a description and analysis of the qualitative data. This included an analysis of the student biographical questionnaires and an analysis of selected students' writing portfolios. The selection of the students for the case studies was born out of data from this chapter even though the presentation and analysis of this chapter is actually offered after the chapter incorporating the case studies. This chapter now moves away from an analysis of contextual factors and pays more attention to the numerical scores given to students' written work. RtL makes use of very specific teaching strategies that are meant to assist students in the development of academic writing skills. Therefore, assignments set for this intervention naturally consist of multiple writing drafts. The assessment of these writing drafts was done according to a specially designed marking rubric. Although the use of marking rubrics is central to classroom assessment practices, if we used the South African curriculum specific marking rubrics, they would not have the necessary categories to assess specifically what RtL tried to address with regards to academic writing skills. For this reason, the rubric designed for RtL was done to ensure that what was being taught explicitly was being assessed. The analysis of students' writing could have been done qualitatively but this would have been vastly different to other studies of RtL and would not have allowed for a comparison of findings which is an objective of this study.

This chapter reports the results and findings for the quantitative analysis of data in the form of various descriptive and test statistics for each piece of writing assessed for the narrative essay genre and the argumentative essay genre. These statistics were generated using PASW (SPSS) version 17.0. The reporting of the findings is not intended to be exhaustive in its scope, but aims largely to establish general patterns emerging from the data and possible implications for the RtL process. Furthermore, it is important to note that these findings are not necessarily intended to be externally valid (generalisable to all contexts), but are only valid for the grades, schools and contexts specific to this study. On the other hand, this is not to say that interesting theoretical propositions or empirical relationships cannot be gleaned



from studies of this nature: quite the opposite. Small-scale quantitative (and qualitative) studies are useful conduits through which to investigate various propositions or relationships in a deeper way, prior to possibly doing so in a larger-scale context, giving the emerging patterns a greater degree of external validity.

## 6.2 Descriptive Statistics

For the descriptive statistics which follow in Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3<sup>43</sup>, it is important to note that all written ‘literacy’ scores are out of a total possible score of 42 and hence, all descriptive statistics (except the measures of kurtosis and skewness) reported can be computed as percent scores quite easily by converting the raw scores. For example, a mean value for N0 of 19.24 (see Table 6.1) can be converted to a percent as follows:  $(19.24/42)*100 = 45.81\%$ . Regarding the sample distributions N0, N1, N2, N3 and N4; A0, A1, A2, A3 and A4, graphical representations of the data distributions (histograms with normal distribution super-imposed) are given in Appendix Ten. In terms of ‘telling a story’, so to speak, regarding these various distributions, one can refer to the kurtosis and skewness statistics (see Tables 6.1, 6.2 & 6.3), in particular to confirm that, for the most part, all data

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<sup>43</sup> For the descriptive statistics reported in Tables 6.1, 6.2 & 6.3, the following notes have reference.

N\* and A\* refer to the various assessed pieces of writing for the narrative essay genre and the argumentative essay genre, respectively. N0 and A0 refer to the baseline assessment for each genre, respectively. N1, N2 & N3 refer to the narrative pieces of assessment, and A1, A2 & A3 refer to the argumentative pieces of assessment throughout the scaffolded reading and writing (i.e. RtL) process. N4 and A4 refer to the final pieces of assessment of each essay genre.

Std Dev. refers to the standard deviation. For interest sake and to give an idea of distributional spread of the data points, according to the empirical rule, if the data are more-or-less normally distributed, then approximately 95% (99%) of the data points lie within 2 (3) standard deviations either side of the mean. However, for distributions which are not necessarily ‘bell-shaped’ or normally distributed, Chebyshev’s (Tchebycheff’s) Theorem offers a more conservative estimate in that approximately 75% (89%) of the data points lie within 2 (3) standard deviations either side of the mean.

IQR refers to the interquartile range, and is the difference between the values for the 75<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> percentiles.

Kurtosis and Skewness refer to measures of shape. Kurtosis is a measure of peakedness of a data distribution, where a mesokurtic (normal) distribution has a value of 0. A negative value for kurtosis represents a platykurtic (too flat) distribution with too few data values in the tails. A positive value for kurtosis represents a leptokurtic (too peaked) distribution with too many data values in the tails. Skewness is a measure of symmetry of a data distribution, where a symmetrical distribution has a value of 0. A negative value for skewness represents a negatively skewed (or left-skewed) distribution with most of the data values located in the higher score range; one that has a longer tail of low values with the bulk of the distribution falling in the upper-range of values (i.e. mode > median > mean). A positive value for skewness represents a positively skewed (or right-skewed) distribution with most of the data values located in the lower score range; one that has a longer tail of high values with the bulk of the distribution falling in the lower-range of values (i.e. mode < median < mean) (see Field, 2009, p. 788; 794).

The n (Missing) and n (Valid) refer to sample size for those who did not submit a particular piece of written assessment and those who did, respectively.

distributions are generally not normally distributed therefore, confirming the use of nonparametric (distribution-free) techniques to analyse the data values. For example, in a large proportion of cases, the measure of skewness is negative, which implies the median is greater than the mean descriptive statistic (see Tables 6.1, 6.2 & 6.3 to confirm this result). More formal tests for distributional normality, such as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, were not used. However, simple graphical analysis (histograms) and descriptive statistics were used to inform the choice of test (i.e. Wilcoxon signed-rank test). Regardless, in small sample settings, such as those presented in this study, the aforementioned test is a preferred research method. The descriptive statistics reported in Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 are only part of the story, but to assess whether meaningful differences exists between these data distributions, a more formal testing procedure is needed (See sections 6.3).

**Table 6.1: Descriptive Statistics for Class C**

	Narrative Essay Genre					Argumentative Essay Genre				
	N0	N1	N2	N3	N4	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4
<b>Mean</b>	19.24	27.31	34.64			18.91	25.45	33.57	35.48	35.14
<b>Std Dev.</b>	4.321	4.262	4.980			2.821	4.684	3.989	4.324	2.973
<b>Median</b>	20	26	36			19	26	34	37	36
<b>IQR</b>	5	7	3			2.75	8.5	6	4.5	3.5
<b>Min.</b>	6	21	14			12	19	22	22	26
<b>Max.</b>	29	36	40			24	34	39	41	38
<b>25<sup>th</sup> Percentile</b>	17	24	34			17.25	21	31	34	34
<b>50<sup>th</sup> Percentile</b>	20	26	36			19	26	34	37	36
<b>75<sup>th</sup> Percentile</b>	22	31	37			20	29.5	37	38.5	37.5
<b>Kurtosis</b>	2.342	-0.570	10.098			0.556	-1.300	0.922	3.317	2.579
<b>Skewness</b>	-0.788	0.623	-2.935			-0.533	0.207	-0.949	-1.669	-1.510
<b>n (Missing)</b>	2	1	3			4	3	6	3	7
<b>n (Valid)</b>	34	35	33			32	33	30	33	29

Table 6.1 presents the descriptive results for Class C. Note that written assessments N3 and N4 were not completed because of teaching and time constraints. For this reason, descriptive results (and pairwise comparisons) for these two pieces of assessment were excluded for the narrative essay genre. The most noticeable finding was the steady and marked improvement in the aggregate (median) writing scores across both essay genres (from 20/42 for N0 to 36/42 for N2; from 19/42 for A0 to 36/42 for A4), where students started from a similar, relatively lower (as compared to the Class A and B cohort of students) base of written ‘literacy’ skills with respect to both the narrative and argumentative essay genres. Said another way, these results represented substantial improvements for a cohort of students who generally tended to exhibit weaker performance at the start of each genre-specific

intervention, but were able to make great gains, which could be ascribed to intensive scaffolding.

Another interesting result, also somewhat exhibited by the results for the other two classes (See Tables 6.2 & 6.3) was the generally reduced variation around these median scores as shown by a progressively smaller interquartile range (IQR) from the second piece of assessed writing onwards – I use the median and IQR simply because of the general non-normality of the data distributions in question. Whether this was purely an artefact of more consistent marking practices or a genuine tighter clustering around the median performance (the centrally-located score) might be difficult to say with certainty. But, given that all pieces of written assessment were (i) marked by the same person, (ii) blind of what previous scores achieved by each student were, (iii) independent of any alphabetical ranking of students' surnames, and (iv) using the same marking rubric for the entire data collection procedure (all mechanisms to ensure internal validity of the 'literacy' scores obtained), one might reasonably assume the latter. If the finding of more tightly clustered performances rather than consistent marking was indeed the case, this further affirms the RtL intervention as it implies that students were not only improving individually, but their respective performances were also tending to be more similar to one another. In other words, to exaggerate for the sake of making the aforementioned point more explicit, at the beginning of the RtL intervention, the tendency was for students to exhibit wildly divergent patterns of performance (the quality of their written submissions were very different). However, throughout the intervention (for both genres of writing), it was increasingly the case that patterns of performance were tending to be more consistent with one another (the quality of their written submissions were better, and increasingly similar to one another), in overall performance terms, not in content terms (i.e. improved performance was not observed to be because students were copying one another's work).

**Table 6.2: Descriptive Statistics for Class B**

	Narrative Essay Genre					Argumentative Essay Genre				
	N0	N1	N2	N3	N4	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4
<b>Mean</b>	20.3	31.71	33.1	37.43	33.48	28.54	32.16	35.97	35.71	33.79
<b>Std Dev.</b>	3.871	4.362	4.221	2.233	4.582	2.546	5.298	3.431	4.428	4.350
<b>Median</b>	21	32.5	34.5	38	35	28	33	37	37	35
<b>IQR</b>	6	7	5.25	3	6	1.75	10	3	7	6
<b>Min.</b>	12	20	21	31	22	24	23	28	26	24
<b>Max.</b>	27	38	39	40	40	36	39	40	40	39
<b>25<sup>th</sup> Percentile</b>	18	28	30.75	36	31	27.25	27	35	32	31.5
<b>50<sup>th</sup> Percentile</b>	21	32.5	34.5	38	35	28	33	37	37	35
<b>75<sup>th</sup> Percentile</b>	24	35	36	39	37	29	37	38	39	37.5
<b>Kurtosis</b>	-0.500	0.321	1.042	1.741	0.445	4.237	-1.431	0.413	-0.313	-0.330
<b>Skewness</b>	-0.187	-0.893	-1.086	-1.114	-0.950	1.653	-0.274	-1.132	-0.958	-0.798
<b>n (Missing)</b>	8	7	5	12	4	7	3	3	1	2
<b>n (Valid)</b>	27	28	30	23	31	28	32	32	34	33

Tables 6.2 and 6.3 present the descriptive results for Class B (Grade 11A) and Class A (Grade 11E). Like Class C (see Table 6.1), there also tended to be a steady improvement in the (median) ‘literacy’ scores across both essay genres for both classes. Although for both classes A and B their pre-intervention scores for the narrative essay genre (21/42 and 26/42, respectively) were substantially lower than their pre-intervention scores for the argumentative essay genre (28/42 and 31/42, respectively), this may be more indicative of these two groups of students being better equipped to tackle an intervention focused on the argumentative essay genre as opposed to the narrative essay genre - the narrative being a genre of writing that students seemed to find a bit obscure and consequently, could have reduced their enthusiasm to participate. However, on aggregate a marked increase in the median scores pre- and post-intervention (albeit with less improvement across the argumentative genre versus the narrative genre), were similar to the patterns exhibited by the Class C. Once again, the smaller improvement (when comparing pre- and post-intervention writing scores) across the argumentative genre may have a lot to do with the fact that students from Class A and B were most likely already well-versed in tackling an essay task of this nature and hence, started from an already higher base of ‘literacy’ skill insofar as academic writing was concerned. On the whole, across all three cohorts of students (Class A, B and C) – representative of two very different socioeconomic and linguistic school contexts – a noticeable finding was the marked improvement in students’ demonstration of their written ‘literacy’ skills. This was evidenced by a marked increase in the median scores.

**Table 6.3: Descriptive Statistics for Class A**

	Narrative Essay Genre					Argumentative Essay Genre				
	N0	N1	N2	N3	N4	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4
Mean	26.29	33.3	36.26	36.92	35.39	29.84	33.78	35.18	36.87	35.29
Std Dev.	5.197	4.772	1.723	3.393	5.123	4.079	4.852	4.691	2.986	3.046
Median	26	34	36	37.5	37	31	35	36	37	35
IQR	8	7	3	3	4.75	5.5	8	4	5	4
Min.	17	22	33	26	21	19	24	18	30	30
Max.	35	40	39	41	40	36	41	40	41	41
25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	23	30	35	36	34.25	27	30	34	35	33
50 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	26	34	36	37.5	37	31	35	36	37	35
75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	31	37	38	39	39	32.5	38	38	40	37
Kurtosis	-0.883	0.143	-0.974	3.516	2.510	0.454	-0.886	6.680	-0.458	-0.327
Skewness	-0.172	-0.873	-0.045	-1.679	-1.788	-0.615	-0.422	-2.326	-0.646	0.499
n (Missing)	1	2	5	6	4	7	9	4	1	1
n (Valid)	31	30	27	26	28	25	23	28	31	31

### 6.3 Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Findings

This section reports the results and findings for the Wilcoxon signed-rank test given in Tables 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6. The test results represent the most substantive component of the quantitative analysis in terms of establishing statistically significant patterns in the process of ‘literacy’ skills development. Under the null hypothesis of no difference in the sample distributions when making pairwise comparisons, one can test whether a meaningful improvement, stagnation or even decline in students’ demonstrated ‘academic literacy’ skills has taken place (‘literacy’ scores being a proxy for the genre-specific writing tasks) by not only assessing the significance (or not) of any difference, but also interpreting the descriptive statistics which accompany the computed test statistic.

**Table 6.4: Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Class C**

	Pairwise Comparisons							
	N1-N0	N2-N1	N2-N0	A1-A0	A2-A1	A3-A2	A4-A3	A4-A0
z-statistic	-5.020	-4.653	-4.847	-4.787	-4.546	-3.184	-1.825	-4.715
p-value (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.068	0.000
No. Negative Ranks	0	1	1	0	0	4	16	0
No. Positive Ranks	33	31	30	30	27	22	8	29
Mean Negative Rank	0	15.5	1	0	0	12.63	13.34	0
Mean Positive Rank	17	16.53	16.5	15.5	14	13.66	10.81	15
Sum of Negative Ranks	0	15.5	1	0	0	50.5	213.5	0
Sum of Positive Ranks	561	512.5	495	465	378	300.5	86.5	435
Ties	0	0	0	1	2	2	5	0
n (Valid)	33	32	31	31	29	28	29	29

Of the three (Class C, Class B and Class A) pairwise test comparisons the results for the Class C students were most convincing, as shown by the very low  $p$ -values in Table 6.4. This indicates that the sample distributions in all pairwise comparisons were statistically (meaningfully) different from one another, except for the comparison A4-A3, which is only significant at the 10% level. In other words, what a significant difference in the pairwise sample distributions is tantamount to saying is that the mean or median performance for each respective assessment was meaningfully different, except in the case of A3 (median of 37/42) and A4 (median of 36/42) from Table 6.1, which did not seem to be too different from one another – the Wilcoxon test confirms this finding. However, bear in mind these two sample distributions are significantly different at the 10% level ( $p$ -value of 0.068). The overall *positive* finding can be substantiated by the fact that the number of positive ranks and mean positive rank are always greater than the associated number of negative ranks and mean negative rank, except in the case of comparison A4-A3. The most salient finding from Table 6.4 is that students from Class C showed significant improvements throughout the intervention (the process), and most importantly, insofar as the argumentative essay genre is concerned, students were better off post- intervention, as reported by the highly significant comparison A4-A0. [Note that students were also better off post-intervention for the narrative essay genre, although only a partial intervention was administered, as shown by the highly significant comparison N2-N0].

**Table 6.5: Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Class B**

	Pairwise Comparisons									
	N1-N0	N2-N1	N3-N2	N4-N3	N4-N0	A1-A0	A2-A1	A3-A2	A4-A3	A4-A0
<b>z-statistic</b>	-4.379	-2.178	-3.707	-3.136	-4.377	-3.356	-4.357	-0.149	-3.171	-4.319
<b>p-value (2-tailed)</b>	0.000	0.029	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.881	0.002	0.000
<b>No. Negative Ranks</b>	0	7	2	16	0	5	3	13	21	2
<b>No. Positive Ranks</b>	25	16	20	2	25	20	27	15	6	25
<b>Mean Negative Rank</b>	0	9.57	6.5	9.81	0	7.6	7.17	16.12	15.26	4.75
<b>Mean Positive Rank</b>	13	13.06	12	7	13	14.35	16.43	13.1	9.58	14.74
<b>Sum of Negative Ranks</b>	0	67	13	157	0	38	21.5	209.5	320.5	9.5
<b>Sum of Positive Ranks</b>	325	209	240	14	325	287	443.5	196.5	57.5	368.5
<b>Ties</b>	0	4	0	3	0	1	1	4	6	0
<b>n (Valid)</b>	25	27	22	21	25	26	31	32	33	27

For Class B as shown in Table 6.5, one can see that most pairwise comparisons are significant, implying a meaningful (positive) difference in students' performance. However, comparison N2-N1 is only significant at the 5% level, and comparison A3-A2 is not

significant at all, meaning that in the case of the latter, in general terms, there was no difference in students' demonstration of 'literacy' skills across these two pieces of written assessment. Across both the narrative and argumentative essay genres, on the whole, students showed improvement as was evidenced by the highly significant pairwise comparisons, N4-N0 and A4-A0. The trend of 'literacy' gains throughout the intervention was exhibited in this class too.

**Table 6.6: Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Class A**

	Pairwise Comparisons									
	N1-N0	N2-N1	N3-N2	N4-N3	N4-N0	A1-A0	A2-A1	A3-A2	A4-A3	A4-A0
<b>z-statistic</b>	-4.467	-2.893	-1.494	-1.255	-4.469	-1.450	-2.067	-1.830	-2.520	-4.010
<b>p-value (2-tailed)</b>	0.000	0.004	0.135	0.209	0.000	0.147	0.039	0.067	0.012	0.000
<b>No. Negative Ranks</b>	1	7	4	13	2	7	7	8	20	1
<b>No. Positive Ranks</b>	29	17	14	9	26	9	15	14	9	23
<b>Mean Negative Rank</b>	15.5	7	12.88	12.69	3.5	5.71	9	8.81	16.68	10
<b>Mean Positive Rank</b>	15.5	14.76	8.54	9.78	15.35	10.67	12.67	13.04	11.28	12.61
<b>Sum of Negative Ranks</b>	15.5	49	51.5	165	7	40	63	70.5	333.5	10
<b>Sum of Positive Ranks</b>	449.5	251	119.5	88	399	96	190	182.5	101.5	290
<b>Ties</b>	0	2	4	2	0	1	1	6	2	0
<b>n (Valid)</b>	30	26	22	24	28	17	23	28	31	24

From Table 6.6, one might be inclined to view the RtL intervention with some scepticism as only 6 of the 10 pairwise comparisons report significant differences at the 5% level or less. However, these insignificant differences were found during the process of the RtL intervention (i.e. N3-N2 and N4-N3; A1-A0 and A3-A2, which was still significant at the 10% level), and can be partly explained by the classroom-based observation that, being the brightest and most academically capable of the three cohorts of students, were often bored, and lacked motivation to participate in the intervention. In some sense, these results comprise the least convincing of the three classes, but nonetheless, still show the same highly significant pairwise comparisons, N4-N0 and A4-A0. Therefore, in general terms, across all three cohorts of students, regardless of showing marked improvements throughout the RtL process of scaffolding 'literacy' skills these improvements were most noticeable when comparing pre- and post-intervention writing scores for both essay genres.

A common finding, attributable to all three school cohorts, and which was seemingly against expectation, was that in all pairwise comparisons of the second last and post-intervention (final) pieces of written assessment (i.e. N4-N3 and A4-A3), the common trend where the

number of positive ranks outweighs the number of negative ranks was reversed (see Tables 6.4, 6.5 & 6.6). However, this finding can be explained by the fact that the topic for the final piece of written assessment was new, and a technically more complex demonstration of necessary skills was required of students. For example, students were not given any guidance with the creation of this new essay. Students were meant to make use of guidance from all previous written assessments to see if they had internalised skills taught throughout the intervention (tantamount to being at stage three of Vygotsky's ZPD – see Chapter Three, Section 3.4.4). Despite a slight drop-off, the results between the pre and post assignment were positive showing evidence that students had developed a form of academic autonomy. The next section presents an account of what is referred to as 'literacy' skills convergence, otherwise known as the 'catch-up' effect.

#### **6.4 An Explanation of Literacy Skills Convergence**

The following section (Table 6.7, in particular) details a more nuanced view of what the aggregate descriptive statistics conceals. As opposed to the descriptive statistics reported in Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3, which "lump" the data together, Table 6.7 comprises a consolidated (all three school cohorts) view of pre- and post-intervention performance, which now "splits" the data by showing the performance for certain individual students – those students who started in the lowest or first quartile (less than or equal to the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile) of written 'literacy' skills for both baseline (benchmark) tasks, N0 and A0.



**Table 6.7: The *Within* School Cohort ‘Catch-up’ Effect**

School (Cohort)	Student Code	Narrative Essay Genre		Argumentative Essay Genre	
		(Pre-) N0	(Post-) N4	(Pre-) A0	(Post-) A4
Class C	72			17	36
	73	17	39		
	74			16	35
	75	17	33		
	76	17	30		
	79	16	36		
	80	12	21	14	AB
	81			17	34
	84	16	33		
	85	17	35		
	90	17	36		
	91	10	35		
	92			17	38
	95			13	28
	96	6	33	12	26
	98			15	35
	99	17	38		
Class B	33			27	36
	38	18	37	27	33
	39	16	37		
	42	17	34		
	43			27	33
	45	16	22	26	AB
	50			24	26
	53	18	32	25	37
	54	14	AB		
	58	18	33		
	60	15	31		
	61	12	23		
	67	27	33		
Class A	3			27	35
	4			26	35
	6	20	21	27	36
	8	23	40		
	14	20	36	26	34
	16	17	33	24	33
	17	23	37		
	18			19	AB
	24	18	24	27	32
	26			27	36
	29	17	36	27	30
	31	23	AB		
	32	19	34	27	32

Notes: For the Class C cohort, “N4” refers to N2, because this cohort did not complete the entire writing process for the narrative essay genre. However, for this cohort, we can still make a pre- and post-intervention comparison based on their respective N0 and N2 scores. Regarding the various quartiles (25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles): see the respective descriptive statistics given in Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3. The “Student Code” refers to each student’s unique personal identification number (PID) used for research purposes to maintain anonymity. The “AB” code refers to students who were unfortunately absent or did not complete the post-intervention writing task, but did nonetheless fall into the lowest (first) quartile (25<sup>th</sup>) for the pre-intervention (baseline or benchmark) tasks.

What Table 6.7 boils down to saying is that we know on the whole, students across all three school cohorts generally improved in their respective written ‘literacy’ skills pre- and post-intervention for both genres of writing. The descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon test results show this quite clearly, but this (positive) effect is very clearly shown for various individual students, too (See Table 6.7). However, for RtL to be a truly “democratising” ‘literacy’ intervention, it would need to not only show that students improve in *absolute* terms (i.e. an improvement in each student’s written ‘literacy’ scores), but also that when compared to better-performing students, their ‘literacy’ scores have improved in *relative* terms. For example, suppose Student A is a weaker student who achieves a pre-score of 17 and a post-score of 28, and Student B is a stronger student who achieves a pre-score of 27 and a post-score of 38. Then, in absolute terms, both have improved markedly by 11 points out of 42. But, in relative terms, the gap between the weaker student (Student A) and the stronger student (Student B) is still maintained. In other words, the status quo of inequality would be maintained if students who started in the first quartile (worst) performance (25<sup>th</sup>), finished in the first quartile of performance whereas, students who started in the fourth quartile (75<sup>th</sup> - best) performance, finished in the fourth quartile of performance. In theory, this is a plausible outcome, but in reality, it is more likely the case that the improvement (marginal gain) a student accrues through exposure to an intervention, such as RtL, tends to diminish the greater is a student’s accumulated ‘literacy’ skills.

Table 6.7 tends to confirm the concept of ‘literacy skills convergence’ (catch-up) across students by classroom context, because in all three school cohorts considered and for both genres of essay writing, most (not necessarily all) of the students who started in the first quartile performance, tended to transition to progressively higher quartiles of performance on completion of the intervention. This implies that, in some sense, ‘literacy skills convergence’ has occurred. This would be contrary to performance gap maintenance in a classroom that uses an incremental learning model (Discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.4.4).

**Table 6.8: The *Between* School Cohort ‘Catch-up’ Effect**

Student (Cohort)	Statistic	Narrative Essay Genre		Argumentative Essay Genre	
		(Pre-) N0	(Post-) N2	(Pre-) A0	(Post-) A4
Class C	Median	20	36	19	36
Class B		21	34.5	28	35
Class A		26	36	31	35

One can also explicate a between school cohort catch-up effect, where such an effect is nicely demonstrated through a simple comparison of the three groups of students for the comparable pre- and post-intervention stages of the narrative essay genre (N0 and N2) and the argumentative essay genre (A0 and A4). I do so to establish an empirical regularity across school cohorts with respect to writing tasks which required comparable levels of complexity, irrespective of school cohort. From Table 6.8, one can see that, on aggregate, Class C started from a significantly lower academic ability for the argumentative essay genre, in particular, and less so for the narrative essay genre, as compared to Classes A and B. But post-intervention (in both genre writing cases), the Class C students managed to achieve ‘literacy’ scores more-or-less equivalent to Classes A and B. This is not to say that RtL cannot benefit everyone: on aggregate, even academically stronger students (Class A) stand to benefit, but not necessarily to the same extent as academically weaker (e.g. Class C) students. Hence, the fulcrum finding of what RtL aims to do. The empirical evidence from this investigation seems to suggest that the gap between weaker and stronger students insofar as ‘academic literacy’ skills are concerned can be minimised, by accelerating the speed of development for weaker students (or weaker cohorts of students) versus stronger students (or stronger cohorts of students) over a similar time period.

## 6.5 Summary

There are two points of interest, which summarise the salient take-home message from the descriptive statistics and results reported. Firstly, with respect to the Wilcoxon test results, one might conclude that the pairwise comparisons for the Class C students were the most ‘convincing’, followed by the Class B students, and least convincing, the Class A students. We can make this judgement based purely on the number of significant comparisons and size of the probability value across both genres of writing for each group of students [i.e. Class C

had 7 of 8 significant comparisons; Class B had 9 of 10 significant comparisons; Class A had 6 of 10 significant comparisons]. In some sense, we could say that the improvement one *should* most likely see in a scaffolded intervention such as RtL, was most clearly demonstrated by how much the arguably academically weaker cohort of students (Class C) improved when compared to the progressively stronger cohorts of students (Class B and A, respectively). This result is confirmed by a simple comparison of the median scores given in Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3. One might expect such a result with an intervention that is designed to “democratise” the classroom and accelerate the development of ‘academic literacy’ skills for students who start from progressively lower bases of ‘academic literacy’ ability.

Secondly, and most importantly, the empirical evidence tends to support the phenomenon of “catch-up” documented in other studies conducted in Australia, Sweden and South Africa. What the catch-up phenomenon hypothesises is that students who start from lower bases of ‘literacy’ skills tend to grow faster in terms of the demonstration of their (written) ‘academic literacy’ skills, vis-à-vis students who already supposedly have higher bases of the same skills. This is tantamount to saying that academically weaker students tend to not only improve in *absolute* terms, but they tend to also improve *relative* to their academically stronger peers too. The phenomenon of “catch-up” was shown by distinguishing both a *within* cohorts effect (Table 6.7) and a *between* cohorts effect (Table 6.8). In some sense, we can say that ‘literacy’ skills convergence (the “catch-up” effect) has taken place both within classroom contexts and across classroom contexts for the three schools examined in this study.

An important proviso from these results and findings must be made. In advancing RtL as an ‘academic literacy’ intervention, I am not saying that it can remedy problems related to language proficiency or necessarily improve linguistic ability. Although this may be a by-product of the process itself. However, what RtL does attempt to do is provide students with a set of necessary tools (skills) to achieve more highly in genre-specific writing contexts, writing contexts which, socio-linguistically speaking, represent powerful forms of knowledge, which signal something of value about a person’s abilities, and are skills valued more highly in the workplace and broader society. In other words, it provides access to a

more formal educational ‘discourse’ previously unattainable to students from lower socioeconomic circumstances.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This chapter reported on the quantitative findings of the data. It started with an offering of descriptive data patterns and transitioned to an offering of analytical data patterns, obtained through the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. Initially, data patterns per class, and thus School Site was offered. This was followed by a discussion of within class, and across school performance of students’ changing ‘academic literacy’ performance. This chapter highlighted the positive trend in students’ ‘academic literacy’ performance whilst the intervention was in use. Further, this chapter offered a phenomenon called the “catch-up” or “convergence theory” which provided evidence that RtL can “democratise” the classroom and give all students an equal opportunity of performing equally well regardless of socioeconomic circumstances.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Chapters Five and Six offered detailed descriptions and analysis of the data. This was sub-divided into three sections of which the first two have been given in Chapter Five and the last in Chapter Six. Chapter Five presented a description and interpretation of the most salient points disclosed by information obtained from the student biographical questionnaire, and a description and analysis of six students' work across the period of the intervention, as a means of illustrating how RtL was taken up by students in the different groups. Chapter Six gave a description and analysis of the quantitative data as a means of showing how student writing was graded in a manner which allowed one to quantify the kinds of progress students made between the first and last assignments of the intervention.

Chapter Seven now will offer an interpretation of the particular findings given in Chapters Five and Six, together with a discussion of their implications for an assessment of RtL within a South African context. The discussion will be sub-divided into six clear sections. Firstly, the discussion will revisit the study's research questions and objectives including the initial research hypothesis set out at the beginning of the study. Secondly, this chapter will offer a discussion of the findings of this study, located within a selected South African context. This is indeed a study on a micro-level in that although it does not cover a representative sample of the South African Grade 11 population, it does represent a relatively typical division between different kinds of school communities and gives insight into the different learning and teaching cultures within which each is embedded. Such a limited sample of students in the intervention has allowed for dealing with detail that is critical to understanding the challenges of 'literacy' development in this post-apartheid society. The study has been designed and conducted to enable comparing the study's findings to that of similar studies of RtL Australia. This will be followed by an explanation of the positive trend which was evident in the data patterns as set out in Chapter Six. Fourthly, a discussion of an innovative literacy intervention designed for a non-South African student population would not be complete without a discussion of limitations to the implementation of RtL within a South

African context. Fifthly, this chapter will attempt to theorise the findings of the study by relating pertinent aspects of the outcomes to a possible future role for RtL in South Africa. This chapter then draws to a close by briefly offering recommendations concerning the use of RtL at an FET level of schooling in South Africa followed by a conclusion to the chapter.

## 7.2 Revisiting the Study's Research Questions and Hypothesis

Most research is born out of curiosity, an uncertainty as to the outcome of various questions posed (Thomas, 2009:3). In some cases, the research questions arise from personal experience and a genuine need for clarification and not necessarily the need to prove a point. But in other cases, the questions might be born out of the need to disprove a particular viewpoint. The backdrop to the origin of this study is one of personal experience. With past experience of teaching Academic English at both a school and university level, and with research evidence pointing towards rapidly declining 'literacy' performance of students at school and university (MacGregor, 2009; Unesco, 2011; Howie et al, 2012), the need to find alternative approaches to the teaching of academic writing at a school level (or in my classes) became important to me. As an educator, tasked with the responsibility of ensuring all my students, regardless of socioeconomic, geographic and racial circumstances are equipped to succeed; the need to continue with research in the field of 'literacy' development became central to my identity as a researcher and educator (lifelong learner). Given the purported global success of RtL (Rose et al, 2004; Rose et al, 2008; Millin & Millin, 2014) it stood to reason that I wanted to test its efficacy within a South African context (even if on a limited scale), as to date no primary research has been undertaken of RtL within a South African school context. Consequently, two research questions were raised to provide the parameters for this study. The research questions put forward in Chapter One (Section 1.3), and reiterated in Chapter Four (Section 4.2) were:

**Research Question 1:** Would there be statistically significant improvements in the measurable component of Grade 11 students' 'academic literacy' skills, as proxied by their written 'literacy' scores, when the RtL intervention was used? Further, would individual case studies offer a means to triangulate quantitative findings and would information pertaining to

students' situational context offer insights into barriers one might expect within specific types of classrooms in South Africa.

**Research Question 2:** In comparison to applications of the RtL approach in Australia, would the improvements or lack thereof, in 'literacy' scores of students within RtL South Africa be similar or different?

Given my training in the use of RtL pedagogic practices, together with my own personal experience of being taught academic writing at an undergraduate level through the RtL methodology, and the results of a pilot study in 2010 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, it was plausible to hypothesise that a positive upward trend in the written 'academic literacy' scores of students within this particular research project could be realised. However, a number of reservations about the practicality of an intervention like RtL within the South Africa secondary school curriculum still needed to be clarified. This stemmed from previous experience as an English High School teacher. These reservations ranged from school time constraints, a limiting national DBE curriculum, student complacency, through to a lack of teacher buy-in at schools. It was thus decided that to gain a better understanding of the implementation of RtL in South Africa, and put to rest questions regarding the practical applicability of RtL, one would need to embark upon a study of the dedicated use of RtL in selected South African school classrooms.

The two research questions recapped above form the basis for the discussion and interpretation of the data patterns in the sections to follow. Section 7.3 will answer research question one, and Section 7.4 will answer research question two. Sections thereafter serve to enrich the discussion of the efficacy of RtL in general. A discussion of the emerging trends will be informed by the literature review (Chapter Two and Three) and the description of the data findings presented in Chapter Five and Six. The literature review offered a detailed discussion of some of the more important theoretical features which comprise RtL, but not a detailed discussion of 'academic literacy' pedagogies, or academic language acquisition in general. Therefore, the discussion to follow will be restricted to a discussion of aspects related to the conceptual framework of RtL only. As a reminder, the assessment marks generated for this study were done with a purposefully designed holistic marking rubric



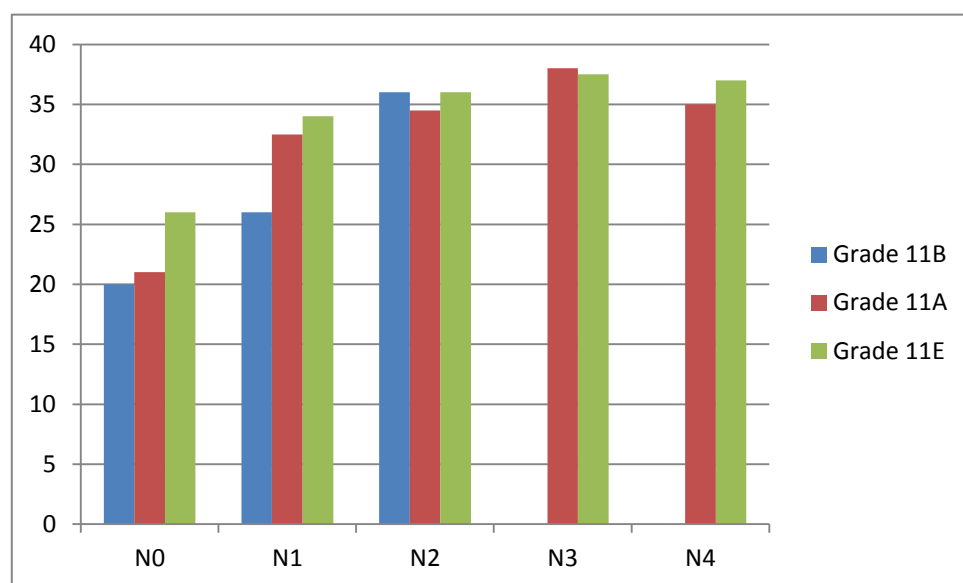
specific to the RtL intervention (See Table 4.1, Chapter Four, Section 4.7). This rubric was used to ensure that what was being taught specifically (selected ‘academic literacy’ skills) within the intervention was in fact being assessed to maintain construct validity. Furthermore, this particular marking rubric was employed to ensure that some form of comparison between RtL South Africa and RtL Australia could be made seeing that studies of RtL in Australia used the same marking rubric. However, as discussed in Chapter One (Section 1.5) there is reasonable caution with the reporting and discussion of the results, as the use of marking rubrics can be subjective in nature. Even though subjectivity is supposedly eliminated through the use of equivalent marking categories, the marker still has to use personal judgement to some degree in deciding which category to choose. This does still make the process less objective.

### **7.3 Discussion of Changes in Students’ Writing Skills**

Numerous trends have been disclosed by the analysis of the data under investigation (See Chapter Five and Six for a detailed presentation of these findings). In answering research question one of the research project (See Chapter One, Section 1.3; Chapter Four, Section 4.2, and Chapter Seven, Section 7.2) there were statistically significant improvements in the measurable component of students’ ‘academic literacy’ skills during the implementation of the RtL intervention. In other words, there were marked changes in students’ written performance, implying that the patterns observed were meaningful and not simply a random occurrence. In this particular instance, I assume that the improvement was related to the RtL intervention as no other ‘literacy’ support was being offered to students at the two school sites. I am aware that this conclusion cannot be stated with certainty as one is not necessarily able to control for extraneous factors at play outside of the RtL classroom. Nevertheless, as illustrated in Tables 6.1-6.6 (Chapter Six, Sections 6.2 and 6.3), there is reason to believe that the positive upward trend in students’ written performance was largely as a result of RtL. For example, Figure 7.1 below offers a graphic representation of the findings described in Chapter Six of students’ change in written performance for the narrative essay. Median scores per assessed task were used to compile Figure 7.1. Note that in the figures which follow (Figures 7.1 and 7.2) and the associated discussion thereof, both the across and within class performances are shown. For instance, the multiple bars together per assessed task show

(notionally) comparative performance across the three class cohorts, whereas tracking the same colour bars in each figure shows within class performance over each writing genre

**Figure 7.1: Across and Within Class Performance for the Narrative Essay**



\* Note: Class C = Grade 11B low SES school and multiple home languages

Class B = Grade 11A higher SES school and Afrikaans home language students

Class A = Grade 11E higher SES school and English home language students

Given that Class C and Class B were both English First Additional Language classes<sup>44</sup>, one may be able to make some sort of comparison with regard to students' performance as the same assessment standard was used for these two classes. Although, to some it may be contentious to engage in making comparisons between the two groups of students with diverse socioeconomic circumstances, and from diverse school contexts, the Class C and Class B students will inevitably write the same English First Additional Language paper during their matric (Grade 12) year in 2015. This means that their performance will inadvertently and indirectly be compared during the matric final examination process anyway. What is more, given that Class A was an English Home Language class, more

<sup>44</sup> Both these classes make use of the same English First Additional Language Curriculum Policy document and thus cover the same curriculum material. Further, the teachers from these two classes make use of the same Curriculum Assessment Policy Standards so using these two classes to offer a comparative view, for the purpose of this study, seems plausible. One needs to bear in mind that to evaluate the efficacy of an intervention, one needs a comparative control. In this case, because Class C and Class B are both English First Additional Language classes, on the basis of linguistic similarity, a comparison can be made. However, because other variables such as the socioeconomic contexts are different and not controllable, I exercise caution in making any inferences.

stringent assessment criteria were used. This class had a different English Curriculum Policy and English Curriculum Assessment Policy Standard. Again, when comparing performance of the three classes, I am most interested in noting the rate of change between assessed tasks of each individual student, as it occurs within the confines of each separate Grade 11 class' own context. To explain, this would be akin to assessing the performance of two golfers, one playing off a scratch handicap and the other off an 18 handicap where the scratch golfer shoots a gross par of 72 and the 18 handicap golfer shoots a gross 90. For all intents and purposes, the two golfers are net the same in performance. The use of a handicap system allows players of different abilities to be compared, and compete on an equal footing. In the same way, the use of the separate English (prescribed) curriculum assessment standards allows for the classes to be assessed within the confines of the separate assessment standards.

In figure 7.1 Class C (blue – low SES) was not able to complete the narrative cycle in term two of the 2014 academic cycle. The reason for this is discussed in detail in the section below on limitations to the implementation of RtL. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Class C started with a much lower baseline skill set for the narrative, together with the substantial teaching disruptions experienced in the second half of the narrative cycle, it is assumed that through the use of RtL strategies, Class C was still able to demonstrate a very strong 'catch-up' effect, referred to as 'convergence'. In other words, despite initial limited exposure to narrative writing, through explicit modelling of the narrative text, and intensive feedback on assessment drafts (scaffolding), these students appeared to have demonstrated that they were able to write as well as students from Class B and Class A. Again, this is a relative comparison and is within the boundaries of the assessment standards for that specific class. Figure 3.8 in Chapter Three, Section 3.4.2 illustrates what was expected of students in terms of schematic structuring for the narrative. Appendix One offers a modelled narrative text that was given to students during the explicit teaching of the narrative phase.

An interesting observation during classes with Class C's content for the narrative was that stories created were mostly based on factual/concrete events that had already taken place in the life of the student, possibly indicating a struggle to work with language at an abstract level. This might explain, to some degree, the level of difficulty the Class C students experienced when writing their academic essays. Already mentioned in Chapter Five (Section

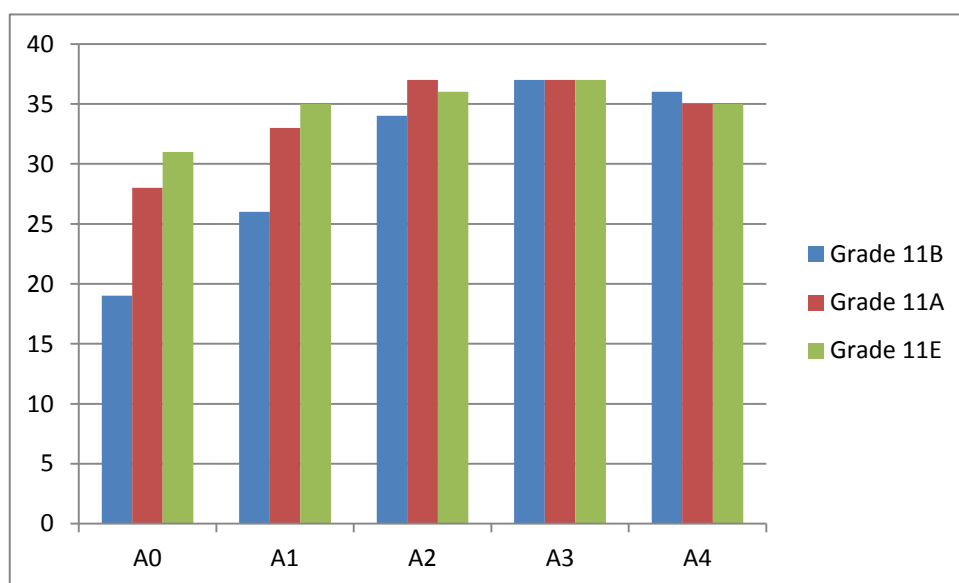
5.2.3), given the low English proficiency of Class C students, the choice of lexis, and thus content for the academic essay was at times elementary and lacked abstraction. This does correlate somewhat with the responses of Class C students and their linguistic biography. Students felt that their English academic proficiency was a hindrance to their reading comprehension, which meant reading was not high on their priority list. In this particular case, it appeared as if a vicious cycle was at play: students did not read much due to comprehension issues. They mentioned that they were frustrated readers (Chapter Five, Section 5.2.6). But reading often is a prerequisite for improving English proficiency. Reading was encouraged in class by the class teacher, but not enforced, resulting in only one set-work novel having been given out to the Class C students for the entire academic year. This had not been completed either. This was contrary to the reading practices of Class B and Class A. Although these students also did not read a lot out of school time, reading in class was mandatory and at least three set-work novels had already been read by the third term.

What is very clear from Figure 7.1 is the upward trend in nearly all students' 'literacy' performances across all three cohorts throughout the duration of the intervention for the narrative. Tables 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 in Chapter Six (Section 6.3) makes this clearer with Class C presenting 94/96 positive changes in writing performance; 2/96 negative writing performances and no ties for the pairwise comparisons (Table 6.4). The number of total assessments handed in added to 96. Class B presented 88/120 positive changes in writing performance; 25/120 negative writing performances and 7/120 ties (Table 6.5). Class A presented 95/130 positive performances; 27/130 negative performances and 8/130 ties (Table 6.6). Ties refer to the number of students who made no gains or losses in 'literacy' performance between one assessed piece of writing and the next. This could mean that the student/s was/were unable to improve their assessment draft from guidance given during feedback, possibly due to poor feedback, or lack of motivation to take part in the study. The positive changes obviously refer to improvements in writing performance and negative changes refer to a drop in performance.

Already pointed out in Chapter Six, the greatest level of improvement with the narrative was found with Class C (blue – low SES school), followed closely by Class B (brown – high SES school). On the one hand, low performance early on can more easily show improvement than

performance that, at the start, was already high, but, one needs to guard against overinflating the findings in that one must also consider other possible factors contributing to the improvement. Class C started with a very low skill base, thus as an ‘academic literacy’ tutor, I offered extra lessons which explicitly modelled narrative writing. Such extra attention could assist students in achieving a steep rate of improvement. Then, whether this steep rate of improvement can be attributed solely to RtL, is open to debate. But again, given that there was no other ‘literacy’ support taking place at the time of the study, it is plausible to ascribe the improvement largely to RtL. In addition, the Class C teacher did indicate a feeling of inadequacy with regards to her own skills in the teaching of writing. Because I am a specialist writing teacher, the steep rate of improvement may have just been due to the teacher-tutor’s heightened awareness of good writing procedures (which would translate into more efficient teaching of writing). Nonetheless, what was taught still was a component of the RtL process.

As already mentioned, in an effort to eliminate any confounding effects, I made sure that no other ‘literacy’ intervention was being used during the same time period of the RtL intervention, meaning that any other variation in ‘literacy’ performance may be considered as purely random (not systematic) in nature. As a result, it is plausible to attribute any change to the RtL intervention. The rate of improvement across the three classes was not only noticeable with the narrative essay. Figure 7.2 shows a similar pattern with the academic essay. Again, median scores per assessed task were used to compile Figure 7.2.

**Figure 7.2: Across and Within Class Performance for the Academic Essay**

\* Note: Class C = Grade 11B low SES school and multiple home languages

Class B = Grade 11A higher SES school and Afrikaans home language students

Class A = Grade 11E higher SES school and English home language students

Similar to the narrative, scores across and within class performance appeared to show a positive upward trend with all three cohorts showing evidence of ‘academic literacy’ improvement between assessments A0, A1, A2 and A3. See Table 4.3, Chapter Four, Section 4.8 for a breakdown of the assessments. The drop in performance between A3 and A4 will be discussed later in this section. Although Class A showed a smaller margin of improvement (median scores 31, 35, 36, 37, 35) (See Table 6.3 in Chapter Six) this smaller rate of change could possibly be attributed to a ‘ceiling effect’. This refers to a scenario whereby the baseline skill set was already higher than anticipated leaving little room for improvement. A possible explanation for this phenomenon might be attributed to teacher capacity. The teacher for Class A showed a keen interest in academic writing pedagogy, and might have already equipped this particular class with more advanced forms of academic writing prior to the RtL intervention. Further, a higher number of these students’ parents were in possession of a postgraduate level of education and this might have also had a positive effect on students’ baseline ‘academic literacy’ skills. See Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2 for parental education. I mention parents’ qualification(s) amongst a host of possible intervening factors influencing baseline performance. As a result of such contextual factors, the Class A students’ grasp of

appropriate academic essay writing as evidenced by their high baseline essay marks was considerable.

Even with the high baseline scores, small measures of improvement were still evident, showing that RtL strategies employed within this class (highest achieving class) were still able to assist students already deemed to be strong academic writers. This is an important finding because a strong criticism of RtL has been that it is designed only to benefit weaker students. The biggest area of improvement in this high achieving class was in their schematic structure. It has been noted already that with this particular class, levels of motivation for taking part in the research project were poor because most students did not categorise themselves as struggling writers who needed support in the form of a special intervention. This attitude resulted in higher levels of complacency and reluctance to participate at times.

Importantly, just like the modelling of narrative essay scores in Figure 7.1, the upward trend with regards to ‘academic literacy’ performance of Class C was pronounced, providing clear evidence of the ‘catch-up’ or ‘convergence’ effect for which RtL has supposedly become well known for (See Chapter Three, Section 3.2). Again, just as with the narrative essay, the Class C students’ baseline performance indicated a very weak conceptualisation of what constituted an appropriate academic essay argument. Students’ writing samples showed little evidence of an appropriate introduction, body and conclusion. Arguments were often subjective in nature and the level of argumentation was elementary. The Class C teacher did express concern at her own ability to effectively teach the academic essay, and indicated that her own poor understanding of what comprised a good argument often left her students ill-advised. Both Class C and Class B students cited comprehension problems when reading the set-work novel, rendering their ability to answer the academic essay less effective. This finding correlates with these particular students’ answers to the lack of reading that took place during and after school. See Chapter Five, Section 5.2.6.

When looking at the patterns emerging from Figure 7.1 and Figure 7.2, it becomes clearer just how inequitable learning opportunities are across these schools. Class C, a poorly resourced township school, started with the lowest ‘academic literacy’ skills base (see Table 6.8, Chapter Six, Section 6.4). This could be the case for a number of reasons. Firstly,

students' English language proficiency is of a much lower standard than that of students from Class B, or Class A. This was confirmed by the class teacher who informed me of the urgent need to teach in isiXhosa<sup>45</sup> (despite the school's English medium of instruction policy), because students lacked the necessary English proficiency. The problem with this scenario is that according to national policy all written assessment is conducted in English, leaving students underprepared from a language perspective to write English-based assessment tasks. Further, given students' reported levels of multilingualism from the linguistic biography (See Chapter Five, Section 5.2.5), one has to question whether the Class C students are developing a deeper proficiency in all three to four languages (CALP) or whether they are merely developing a superficial mastery of the wide variety of languages instead (BICS). (See Chapter Three, Section 3.4.4) I suspect (though could not test) the latter. This could be causing students to be ill-prepared to undertake more advanced academic studies in English, or in fact in any other language in their repertoires. This provides the basis for the next possible reason for the low 'academic literacy' base for the Class C students, which is a lack of access to crucial orientations to English.

According to Bernstein (1996) and Rose (2004), the flaws within the literacy development curriculum of the secondary schooling system often create situations whereby resource poor students experience unequal opportunities for quality linguistic stimulation. This is compounded further by living in more linguistically diverse contexts. In this case, socioeconomic circumstances relate to poor educational performance due to a lack of linguistic stimulation. (Cross, 2002; Smith, 2011; Spaul, 2013). This creates a vicious cycle, where poor development of the language used for learning and teaching results in students abandoning their learning tasks due to the higher levels of language difficulty. For example, students expressed great stress at having to show their reading comprehension of content material. Their difficulty in achieving this apparently limited the amount of reading taking place during and after school, which resulted in limited knowledge acquisition and limited grasp of the content (story line and thematic aspects) of the set-work novel. Thus they found the task of tackling the academic essay effectively quite overwhelming. Nonetheless, despite

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<sup>45</sup> This popular perception is actually a red herring as many individuals do not recognise the lack of developed terminology, genre, materials, etc. in the indigenous languages, as well as the very limited buy-in of the speech communities for such development. It is a fallacy to assume that switching to isiXhosa will remove the current difficulties in academic development.



this major hurdle, there was still evidence to show ‘literacy’ improvement through RtL. As discussed above, Figure 7.1 and Figure 7.2 clearly show evidence of an improvement in students’ academic writing abilities. This was described in detail in Chapter Six. However, Figure 7.1 and Figure 7.2 also show evidence of a drop-off in students’ writing performance between assignments N3 and N4 (narrative) and A3 and A4 (academic essay). For example, Table 7.1 summarises the median scores for the four assessment tasks.

**Table 7.1: Summary of Median Scores for Assessments N3/N4 and A3/A4**

Class	English	N3	N4	A3	A4
Class C	EAL (low SES)	N/A	N/A	37	36
Class B	EAL (high SES)	38	35	37	35
Class A	HL (high SES)	37.5	37	37	35

\* The median scores for the Table above were extracted from Tables 6.1, 6. 2 and 6.4, in Chapter Six.

See Table 4.3, Chapter Four, Section 4.8 for a description of these assessment tasks. Students were required to submit 10 assessment pieces across the duration of the intervention. These assessment pieces formed students’ writing portfolios. Furthermore, these 10 assessment pieces were subdivided into 6 Tasks. N0 formed the baseline (diagnostic) assessment and was labelled Task 1. N1, N2 and N3 represented separate drafts for the narrative and were jointly labelled Task 2. The same narrative topic was used for Task 1 and Task 2. However a new topic was given to students for N4 (Task 3) and this was the final assessed piece of writing for the narrative cycle. The same process was followed for the academic essay. Students were not given assistance in developing N4 (or A4) and were expected to make use of extensive feedback from N0 – N3 (or A0-A3) in compiling N4 (or A4). The purpose of N4 (and A4) was to gauge whether students had been able to internalise writing skills taught during the semester. As a result, the level of difficulty with N4 and A4 was marked. This was because students were expected to combine all aspects of writing taught and modelled during the semester into the final assessment task, without specific guidance. This would equate to stage three of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development – internalisation and automatisisation. See Chapter Three, Section 3.4.4 (Figure 3.12) for a detailed discussion. Students were essentially

tasked with the sole responsibility of essay conceptualisation, compilation and editing. Consequently, a slight drop off in performance would not be unexpected. What is noteworthy about the drop-off in median scores of N3 and N4, and A3 and A4 is that they were not excessive. This could provide further evidence that throughout the intervention, students were given a greater chance of developing academic autonomy. In other words, when left to develop academic writing tasks on their own, after intensive scaffolding, students showed a greater likelihood of completing writing tasks, at a more advanced level more successfully.

#### **7.4 A Comparison of Findings for Reading to Learn South Africa and Australia**

A strong reason for the selection of RtL for this particular study was because of its reported success rate globally. Not only has it reportedly improved the ‘academic literacy’ performance of university level students (Rose, 2008; Rose et al, 2004; Rose et al, 2008; Millin & Millin, 2014) but it has also been shown to have a positive impact on the ‘literacy’ skills on younger learners (Grade 1 – 7) globally (Rose, 2004; Rose & Acevedo, 2006; Acevedo & Rose, 2007; Acevedo, 2010). But the context of the studies which did report an element of success, were vastly different to that of the South African context giving rise to research question two of this study. In any area of research, evaluating the efficacy of an intervention would not be possible without some comparative measure. In this case, assessing the efficacy of RtL at the two school sites in the Winelands District is measured against studies of RtL efficacy in Australia. This is done with caution though, due to differences in various variables of RtL South Africa and RtL Australia. Six points of interest will be used for the comparison of RtL South Africa and RtL Australia, which include linguistic variation, sample selection, research methods applied, assessment of writing tasks, overall student performance and the convergence phenomenon. The first three points of comparison illustrate the high variation in situational context of RtL South Africa and RtL Australia. Raising these points is not intended to discredit one context or the other by the comparative nature of this study; rather these considerations introduced by comparison of different studies are included to raise caution as to what can and what cannot be transferred when the same intervention is applied in different communities. The last three points of comparison illustrate the comparative aspects of RtL South Africa to RtL Australia and are more important in answering research question two.

### 7.4.1 Linguistic Variation

Students attending School Site A (Class B and Class A) had very similar linguistic attributes to the English students in Australia. In both cases, home language affiliation was offered as the language of learning and teaching at school. However, this was not the case with Aboriginal students in Australia, or the African students in South Africa. One of the main reasons for the development of a ‘literacy’ intervention like RtL was to remedy the slow ‘academic literacy’ development of Aboriginal students in Australian schools. It was hoped that the highly intensive, purposefully designed interactive cycle of RtL would assist Aboriginal students in the advancement of the requisite ‘academic literacy’ skills needed to succeed at school (Rose & Acevedo, 2006). In the context of this study, a similar rationale existed for the African students or students from lower socioeconomic homes in general. But unlike the South African schooling context, Aboriginal students already have access to a dialect of English – Aboriginal English (Malcolm & Sharifian, 2005; Sharifian, 2008). Although the aboriginal dialect differs in some aspects to that of Standard Australian English, Aboriginal students still had some common underlying exposure to English. This was not the case at School Site B (Class C).

A large majority of the Class C students have had a very limited exposure to Standard English outside of the schooling environment. In fact, despite the school adopting an English Language-in-Education Policy, the students also had very limited exposure to English within the classroom because teachers largely used isiXhosa as the language of teaching. Furthermore, students’ parents had limited English capabilities and grandparents reportedly only spoke the native language (See Chapter Five, Section 5.2.3 and 5.2.5). Consequently, these students very rarely got to hear or speak Standard English, the English used in formal education. This particular stumbling block highlighted a major difference in the South African sampling population’s linguistic make-up to that of the sampling population in the Australian study. This could have rendered the implementation of RtL in South Africa more difficult. Or, it could also highlight the need to alter the way RtL is used within a South African context to meet the needs of a different type of “linguistically struggling” student than what the intervention’s intended target audience was.

### 7.4.2 Sample Selection

Ordinarily, when trying to compare the findings of one study to another, as many variables as possible from both studies need to be similar, or controlled for. However, given that this study was based in a school setting, there were always going to be aspects of the two studies that differed. For example, the sampling process and sampling population were not necessarily similar. This is largely due to availability of classrooms, teachers and students for the study. This does not mean that one cannot compare the findings of an intervention like RtL that took place at two separate school contexts and with different types of students. It just means extra caution needs to be taken when trying to extrapolate the findings of the study.

This particular study sought to investigate the efficacy of RtL at a Grade 11 level. However, there does not appear to be a study of RtL with Grade 11 learners (senior high) in Australia. There is ample research on the use of RtL at a foundation phase, junior high and some smaller studies of RtL at a university level. But one must bear in mind that the intensity of the intervention, and number of RtL strategies employed for a class of much younger learners would be very different to the intensity employed for Grade 11 learners. Therefore, comparing the South African study to an Australian study that used much younger students would not be ideal. As a result, I decided to make use of Australian research data that incorporated first-year and undergraduate students in Australia as a means of comparison (Rose et al, 2004; Rose et al, 2008). Again, I exercise caution in my comparisons and merely look at the overall rate of change in students' academic performance when trying to make a comparison of RtL's efficacy within a South African context as opposed to an Australian context. In other words, for this particular study, the sample selection and sample group were not identical in nature to that of the Australian context. See Chapter Three, Section 3.5 for a brief discussion of these other studies used for comparative measures.

### 7.4.3 Research Methods

The studies from Australia that have been used for comparative purposes do not articulate very clearly whether parametric or nonparametric procedures were used (Rose et al, 2004; Rose et al, 2008). In fact, it looks like only descriptive statistics were used to make a judgement about their studies, with an exponential trend line being used to identify the data patterns. However, an exponential smoothing line does little more than put in a line of best fit. No statistical inferences are made about the data. So the line of best fit is essentially a process of eye balling<sup>46</sup> the patterns. See Chapter Three, Section 3.5 for a brief overview of these studies. My study attempted to take the evaluative procedure one step further by looking at the levels of significance with the relationships between pairwise comparisons. It was not good enough just knowing what the data patterns were (or looked like), I wanted to know whether the emerging relationships were statistically significant or not. For this reason, my study went a bit further and ran both descriptive and inferential statistical tests. Furthermore, the Australian studies used a pre and post data collection process whereby a baseline test and later a post intervention test were written. The difference in performance between these two data sets was used to give an indication of the intervention's efficacy. The problem with this type of data collection is that a lot of what happens during the intervention is lost in translation. To rectify this, I made use of a pre, post and process based approach in data collection. The pre and post data sets gave an overall indication of the efficacy of RtL but the data patterns in between gave a better idea of what was happening to students' academic performance during the RtL intervention. See Table 4.3, Section 4.8, Chapter Four for a breakdown of assignment data collected for this study.

### 7.4.4 Assessment of Writing Outcomes

The university based studies which are used for comparative purposes, made use of a similar holistic marking rubric to assess students writing samples (Rose et al, 2004; Rose et al, 2008). This rubric is presented in Chapter Four, Section 4.7 (Table 4.1). The Australian studies provide little description as to how the marking was undertaken and whether the marking rubric was given a mark out of 42 like this study. Nevertheless, on the grounds that the same

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<sup>46</sup> Eyeballing refers to drawing a conclusion about the data by simply looking at the raw data.

categories and criteria for the rubric categories were used, it is assumed that the assessment process is near similar enough to serve as a comparison. Again, an absolute comparison is not done as contextual barriers inhibit an honest level of comparison between RtL studies in Australia and RtL studies in South Africa. The various studies can merely be compared as a guide.

What is similar between the various studies is that the writing samples were codified into quantitative scores and those scores used to assess the efficacy of the intervention. Students writing served as a proxy for assessing rate of change in academic performance. In some of the school based studies of RtL with junior high school students in Australia (only referred to but not used for comparative purposes), pre and post scores were used for analysis, and in some cases assessment during the intervention was used. Further, in the school based studies in Australia, students' writing was also analysed and codified using the same holistic marking rubric. In this case, given that the various studies of RtL in Australia used similar processes for the collection of students' writing, and very similar marking rubrics were used, with qualitative data being codified, it is plausible to make the comparisons. Because this was one of the study's research questions, I tried to ensure as far as possible, that how the data was analysed was similar to most studies of RtL in Australia.

#### **7.4.5 Positive Change in Academic Performance**

Already referred to in this chapter is the overall positive upward trend found in the 'academic literacy' performance of students engaged in the RtL 'literacy' intervention (Section 7.3 and 7.4). All students, whether English First Additional Language, English Home Language, weaker performing students, or stronger performing students, from a poorly resourced school or a better resourced school, all students showed significant improvements in their 'academic literacy' performance as proxied by their writing assessments. Furthermore, on closer inspection of students' writing portfolios, students generally showed greater skill in the creation of more cohesive and coherent pieces of writing. Schematic structuring of texts according to genre conventions were significantly more advanced and content of both the narrative and academic essay improved exponentially also in terms of the ability to use content materials in the essay. Criticality appeared to be improving, but mostly with Class B

and Class A. Most importantly, students' confidence levels in tackling more advanced academic writing tasks had increased. These patterns were similar to the data pattern trends found in the Australian study.

Although the Australian studies do not report the findings in detail, instead opting to offer more of a quantitative description, the patterns do tend to be of a similar nature. For example, the studies which reported on student performance at a junior high level reported an overall improvement in students' writing. Better resourced students were able to extend their 'academic literacy' skills even though they started with a high baseline assessment. At-risk students' or weaker performing students made the greatest gains with the achievement gap between stronger and weaker students decreasing significantly. Further, the studies on junior high students reported an increased level of confidence in writing performance, increased awareness of cohesive and coherent writing and an increased willingness to engage with academic writing tasks (Carbine, Wyatt & Robb, 2005; Culican, 2006; Rose, 2006).

With regards to the Australian university studies incorporating RtL into the academic support programmes, similar results were also reported. Again, the overall reporting of the findings are very superficial and do not provide rich, in-depth analysis of both qualitative and quantitative patterns. Nevertheless, both Rose et al (2004) and Rose et al (2008) reported an upward trend in students' 'academic literacy' performance. Rose et al (2004) reported a rapid improvement in both reading and writing skills of students registered at the Koori Center, University of Sydney. Similar to the findings of this study, the two University based studies in Australia mentioned an improvement in writing confidence, more advanced organisational patterns in students writing, increased awareness of using module content in academic essays and a more objective, academic style of writing.

#### **7.4.6 Convergence Phenomenon**

Already discussed in Chapter Three (Section 3.2), the long term goal of the RtL 'literacy' intervention is to eliminate educational oppression by providing equal learning opportunities for students regardless of what type of school they find themselves situated in. This is not only applicable to students emanating from lower socioeconomic schools, but it also applies

to students normally categorised as intellectually weaker than better performing students in well resourced classrooms too. Given the highly intensive scaffolding cycle of RtL (See Chapter Three, Section 3.3), all students are supposedly given ample support and feedback to write as well as better performing students. This is in direct contrast to the incremental learning model of schooling which maintains the achievement gap in classrooms (Rose & Martin, 2012: 11-12). This explains why RtL is often described as a ‘literacy’ intervention that is able to democratise the classroom (Acevedo, 2010; Millin, 2011; Rose & Martin, 2012).

**Figure 7.3: Literacy Convergence in Australia**

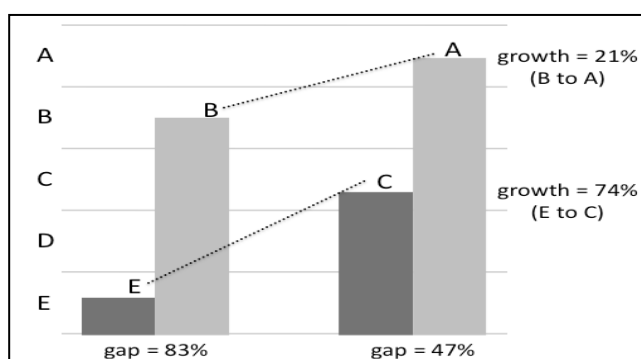


Figure 7.3 illustrates the closing of the achievement gap for a large-scale research project of RtL in over 90 schools across Australia (Acevedo, 2010). Although the study was much larger than this project, and the student grades studied far more widespread, this graph illustrates very well the effect of the RtL intervention on student achievement in Australia. Weaker students were equipped to ‘catch-up’ in performance in comparison to better performing students, a feat ordinarily not catered for in classrooms which make use of the incremental learning model. See Chapter Three, Section 3.4.4 for a brief mention of the incremental learning model. Culican (2006), in his smaller study of RtL found a similar pattern with weaker (at-risk) Australian students making the most significant gains in ‘academic literacy’ performance. A very similar convergence pattern was found with the study of RtL at a South African University (UKZN) in 2010 (Millin, 2011). More importantly, this is similar to the convergence pattern found with this study. Table 6.7 in Chapter Six (Section 6.4) offered a description of student performance for all students, across



all three classrooms, who started in the first (lowest) quartile. In other words, these were the weakest performing students based on base-line assessment.

For Class C, 11 students were clumped into the first quartile for the narrative essay, and 8 students for the academic essay. Of the 11 students for the narrative, 6 were able to move out of the first quartile. For the academic essay, 4 of the 8 students moved out of the first quartile. Similarly for Class B, 9 students were clumped into the first quartile for the narrative essay, and 6 students for the academic essay. However, 5 of those students in both the narrative and the academic essay managed to perform themselves out of the first quartile. For Class A, 8 students were clumped into the first quartile for the narrative essay and 9 students were in the first quartile for the academic essay. Four of the students for the narrative moved out of the first quartile and 5 students moved out of the first quartile for the academic essay. Effectively, for both genres, and all three classes, a total of 49 students were categorised as the weaker cohort of students based on base-line assessments. However, 29 of those students, through intensive scaffolding, support (text modelling) and feedback on writing drafts were able to move out of the first quartile (lowest performing group of students) and into a higher performing quartile. See Table 6.7, Chapter Six, Section 6.4. That effectively means 59% of all weaker performing students were given an equal opportunity of performing as well as stronger performing students. In this case, it appears that the evidence very clearly shows that RtL, in this micro setting, was able to democratise the classroom. Consequently, when answering research question two of this study, one is able to articulate that the findings for RtL South Africa were largely similar to the findings of RtL Australia.

### **7.5 Discussion of Why Convergence is Likely to Occur with Reading to Learn**

As discussed in the previous section, in general, there exists evidence of a positive upward trend in students' written 'academic literacy' performance, as proxied by the change in assessment scores of students writing. Further, evidence presented showed that some students who started with a lower 'literacy' base were able to catch up to students who started with a higher 'literacy' base. This 'convergence theory' was introduced in sections above. How this 'convergence theory' is realised within classroom practice through RtL is multifaceted. There are three chief reasons which can be advanced to explain why one could attribute this positive

change to RtL and these include (but are not necessarily limited) to (i) the degree of support and scaffolding offered to students, (ii) the use of modelled texts to illustrate schematic structuring within the two different writing genres, and (iii) differentiated pedagogic processes and practices.

### **7.5.1 Support and Scaffolding**

A large component of the RtL methodology is the highly intensive scaffolding offered to students. Ordinarily, classroom practice in South Africa is governed by the incremental learning model, formalised through the work of educational psychologist Piaget (See Chapter Three, Section 3.4.4 for discussion). This requires teachers to provide information in smaller pieces so as to not overburden the student. Furthermore, the level of difficulty of classroom assessment tasks are governed by students' individual abilities which often results in highly differentiated learning tasks. This in itself is not theoretically problematic, but what it does create, is vastly different opportunities for learning. Students assessed as being academically strong, receive different input and or assessment tasks than students perceived to be struggling. Therefore, the 'ability' gap is rarely closed. Stronger students remain stronger and weaker students remain weaker. RtL aims to break this mould by providing the same level of input to all learners, but by offering different amounts of support and feedback during the writing process. Weaker students are given equal opportunities of performing more on a par with stronger students. Already discussed in detail in Chapter Three (Section 3.4.4), through the differentiated, intensive scaffolding, RtL supposedly provides a classroom environment conducive to democratising the classroom in that weaker students can 'catch-up' to stronger students. See Figure 3.11, Section 3.4.4, Chapter Three. This ideology formed a strong component of the research project.

Highly intensive, purposefully designed classroom materials were created for this research project to assist students in acquiring a better grasp of what narrative and academic writing comprise. See Appendices One – Four as well as Figures 3.8 and 3.9 (Chapter Three). For example, in conducting a basic needs analysis using the baseline assessment task for the narrative, I became aware of the fact that students in all three classes did not have a clear idea of the distinction between a narrative, recount, exemplum or anecdote. This is discussed very

briefly in Chapter Three, Section 3.4.2. Although all three fall within the category of creative writing, if a final examination asks students to write a narrative (as opposed to a recount or an anecdote), almost three quarters of the sample cohort would not be able to provide a narrative. The same was found with the academic essay. Although Class A had a better grasp of academic essay structure, and conventions of language usage for persuasive writing, Class B and especially the Class C students showed very little evidence of understanding what this writing genre entailed. It became very clear at the onset of the research project that highly intensive, explicit teaching of schematic structuring was going to be needed, especially for Class C. See Table 6.8, Section 6.4 in Chapter Six for a presentation of the unequal baseline scores for each class.

Because of the above, classroom instruction was designed to provide maximum levels of support to ensure that what students could do on their own (evidenced through baseline assessment and falling very short of expected curriculum assessment outcomes) was supported in such a way that students, at the end of the programme, were able to meet expected curriculum assessment standards on their own, without support. Chapter Three, Section 3.3 provided a discussion of the scaffolding process. In practical terms, and within the context of this study, this meant I had to provide purposefully designed modelled texts, which expertly demonstrated schematic progression of the narrative and academic essay genres. This will be discussed briefly in section 7.5.2 below. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 in Chapter Three, Section 3.3 offered a detailed discussion of the RtL cycle through which the scaffolding was offered. This cycle offers a number of strategies that the educator may use to scaffold more advanced academic reading and writing skills.

In the context of this study, the classroom practice entailed offering students an overview of what each modelled text was about before unpacking the text. This provided an opportunity for the overall purpose of the text to be highlighted showing students very clearly that each text genre needed to fulfil a specific purpose, and that purpose was realised through very careful structuring of the text. The level of detail offered with this section of the RtL cycle differed according to the needs of the students in each different class. For Class C, the learning curve was steep as detailed modelling of an appropriate text, together with intensive text discussion and exhaustive feedback on writing drafts, meant students were able to

radically rethink their understanding of what constituted a narrative and academic essay. Ordinarily, classroom practice that I am accustomed to would necessitate a less difficult text being designed for Class C given their comparatively lower baseline scores, but this would mean an inferior quality output would result. Consequently, the status quo of inequitable quality of educational outcomes between students from better resourced schools versus those from poorer (or less well) resourced schools would persist. Evidence has shown that a move away from this more traditional pedagogic approach, to the use of RtL has remedied this scenario. Discussed in Chapter Six.

### **7.5.2 Text Modelling**

In Chapter Three, Section 3.4.2, genres were defined as a type of discourse comprising of very specific patterns (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). These patterns follow very specific rules of organisation, and function to convey meaning in a specific context (Martin, 1984). In other words, the schematic structuring of texts serves as a communicative function. Often, the intent of the communicator creates the social purpose of the text which in turn, prescribes how the text should unfold. Knowledge of genre theory is a component of the National English curriculum as students are required to understand the different social purposes of different text types and demonstrate an ability to reproduce writing samples which clearly display this knowledge. However, during the marking process of the intervention, and an analysis of selected student writing portfolios (Described in Chapter Five, Section 5.3.2), it became very clear from the onset, that neither students, nor the class teachers had a very clear grasp of schematic structuring of genre text types. For example, when students were asked to produce a narrative, nearly all students produced some form of a recount. Impromptu discussions with selected students during class visits revealed that the teachers themselves often required narrative writing during both formative and summative assessment tasks but failed to correct students when a recount was produced instead of a narrative. Similarly, a clear lack of knowledge with regards to the academic essay genre was uncovered during the baseline assessment tasks. Schematic structuring of the academic argument was non-existent in baseline assessments and most students failed to provide a persuasive argument demonstrating a lack of awareness for the social purpose of the academic essay.

Chapter Five (Section 5.2.4) presented a description of students' perceived linguistic proficiency. From the linguistic questionnaire, unequal opportunities to develop English language proficiency became evident. At the same time, baseline assessment of students' narrative and academic essay writing highlighted an unequal preparation for genre specific writing tasks (See Table 6.8, Chapter Six). Both Rose and Bernstein (Chapter Three, Section 3.4.5) discuss in detail the consequence of assumed competency in 'academic literacy' practices at school. For this reason, teachers often fail to teach explicitly academic writing at school. This very scenario was confirmed by two of the class teachers with one teacher taking the problem a step further and articulating that she did not feel adequately prepared to teach academic writing to adolescent students whose writing skills equate to much younger students. Because RtL makes use of strategies that make explicit genre patterns of different text types and models language tools for meeting specific genre texts' social purpose, access to information that was assumed to be present in students' writing skills repertoire is made available.

By modelling schematic structure and language tools for genre specific writing, concrete examples are given to students to show them how to better develop their writing. Some students within the programme referred to the modelling process as a type of recipe which gave them clear instructions on how to "make the perfect cake". In this case, it was a recipe, or road map, offering detailed instruction on how to successfully reach the end goal – a narrative or persuasive academic essay. For the weaker cohort of students (Class C), who had received little to no instruction on aspects related to the genre of texts, by offering clear, concrete examples of what a narrative or academic essay was (looked like), appears to have proved successful in scaffolding writing skills. Furthermore, given these students low levels of English proficiency, the standard 'talk-and-chalk' style of teaching might have been lost in translation. But because the discussion on effective narrative and academic essay writing concluded with actual writing samples, the teaching and learning process appears to have been enhanced.

### 7.5.3 Differentiated Processes and Practices

Differentiated learning in language classes is very common, and often refers to the application of different teaching strategies, content, assessment tasks and expectations. This is discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.4.4. The teacher usually gauges implicitly student levels of engagement, ability to cope with the learning materials and what practices must be offered in class to ensure teaching and learning are best suited to the individual needs of the students. However, in this case, the skills gap rarely closes. A common, often misconception of RtL is that it is a ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy, and is implemented in classrooms without any form of deviation. Although this may be true for some RtL practitioners, this tends to be the case with RtL practitioners who have limited experience. The RtL intervention necessarily requires context-specific flexibility. For example, initially, for the research project, I set up clear timetables for curriculum coverage but baseline assessment tasks soon revealed major inconsistencies with regard to levels of readiness between the three classes. Given that a large majority of students from Class C indicated limited reading after school, limited comprehension of English reading texts and very little reading and comprehension of the set-work novel, it was clear that the RtL process with this particular class would need to be adjusted.

Given that reading of the set-work novel and comprehension of said novel was imperative for successful teaching and learning of the academic essay, given the nature of the essay topic, the teaching of academic essay writing skills for this class had to include an element of teaching of the actual novel. A key aspect which led to the development of RtL is the idea that often students with limited reading comprehension, struggle to read to learn. If students fail to read to learn, they fail to acquire subject content and thus have very little to write about. See Chapter Three, Section 3.2. Therefore, the first element of differentiation with the implementation of RtL at the two school sites was the additional content added to the RtL curriculum for Class C. This was time consuming as students needed to go home and do some background reading, but I (the researcher) also needed to read and study the set-work novel. This did not appear to be an issue with Class B and Class A (the two high socioeconomic classes) and student comprehension of the set-work novels clearly indicated

that a thorough analysis of the novel was conducted in their respective English literature classes.

Not only did I need to augment the envisaged RtL programme for the (weaker) Class C students, but additional time was also needed to further scaffold elements of academic essay writing. Chapter Three, Section 3.3 discuss' the various strategies one might employ for different student needs. Given the extremely low baseline skills, and the seemingly very low level of understanding of what academic writing entailed, additional time was required for Class C to complete various tasks. Class B and Class A showed a higher level of understanding of academic essay writing, and only required two 45 minute lessons for every ten day cycle. This was adequate time to cover curriculum materials designed for the RtL intervention. However, this time was not adequate for Class C and students appeared to really struggle with not only the interpretation of my lessons, but also struggled to integrate the modelled text into their own writing drafts. I found that for the first two or three sessions, additional lessons were needed to help students. Consequently, instead of two lessons every 10 day cycle, Class C required two 45 minute lessons for every six day cycle.

Lastly, with regards to differentiated learning, the adoption of the six RtL strategies, illustrated in Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4 (Chapter Three, Section 3.3) were altered slightly for each different class. Ordinarily, the number of strategies employed out of the RtL cycle is dependent upon the needs of the students. Given that Class A was an English Home Language class, their need for more technical assistance (grammar, sentence construction and spelling) with the narrative and academic essay construction was not as big. For this reason, preparing before reading, joint reconstruction and independent writing were adopted. Schematic structuring was highlighted through the modelled text, and various more technical language tools were fore-grounded. This included elements of modality and use of conjunctives, for example. However, given that Class B and Class C were both English First Additional Language classes, a detailed reading stage was added to the classroom practice. This included a detailed analysis of each paragraph, highlighting stages and phases of text construction, whilst simultaneously stressing word choice and register. See Chapter Three, Section 3.3 for a detailed discussion. Class A appeared to cope with a level of detailed reading at a paragraph level, whereas Class C needed a detailed reading or unpacking of the

modelled text at a sentence level. Thus, the process was more time-consuming for Class C. In spite of this, the additional time invested in Class C, appeared to have paid off. Figure 7.1 and Figure 7.2 show evidence of Class C making the greatest level of improvement in their academic writing skills.

Given the above discussion, it is clear that the level of differentiation found within more traditional classes often involves the “dumbing down” of class materials and expected task output for weaker students. However, with RtL, the differentiated process involves the addition or augmentation of materials, support and tasks as well as an increase in expected academic output/outcome of weaker students. This allows students to perform at a higher academic level with specialised support to enable them to do so.

### **7.6 A Discussion of Limitations to Reading to Learn**

The implementation of RtL at the two school sites in the Winelands District was not implemented without any complications. I feel that a discussion of these problems is very important as a study on the efficacy of RtL within a South African context would be biased if the contextual limitations were not identified. Some of these limitations may be rectifiable with careful thought and consideration for future implementation at schools. However, some of the barriers are institutionally ingrained, and unless a significant overhaul of cultural practices (teacher accountability; teacher professionalism and teacher motivation) and educational governance (support from management and student discipline) are undertaken at a school level, the successful implementation of RtL (or any ‘literacy’ intervention for that matter) has little chance of improving students’ ‘academic literacy’ skills. The discussion to follow will thus consider limitations that might be easier to overcome, followed by a discussion of limitations that might be more difficult to overcome. The discussion of the limitations experienced during this research project will be discussed within the framework of Christie and Potterton’s paper on School Resilience (1997) together with Abadzi’s paper on the seven pillars to efficient learning for the poor (2006).



### 7.6.1 Limitations that Might Be Overcome

Researching, compiling and then implementing school-based ‘literacy’ interventions to reduce the growing ‘literacy’ crisis at secondary schools in South Africa should be a top priority. But that does not necessarily mean the process will be easy. Tried and tested, successful interventions in one geographic context may not necessarily translate into similar rates of success in another. Or, one ‘literacy’ intervention, designed with one particular geographic location or population in mind, might not have the same results in another. Furthermore, where one purposefully designed intervention can be easily assimilated into an already functioning educational context that same intervention may prove problematic with implementation in another educational context. Although the RtL ‘literacy’ intervention proved to be generally successful within a very specific (micro) South African context, as discussed above, one must bear in mind that I had full responsibility for the implementation thereof. However, if this were not the case, several factors may have impeded RtL’s successful implementation, most important of which, relates to teacher competency (or lack thereof).

In a report published in 2009, the newly appointed director for the Centre for Education Policy Development, South Africa (CEPD), Martin Prew stated that under-qualified teachers, or teachers lacking subject specialisation skills was a strong factor in the underperformance of students in schools. This was not too dissimilar to the situation I found during the data collection process. The baseline performance of students at the two separate school sites was vastly different, as seen in Table 6.8: The *Between* School Cohort ‘Catch-up’ Effect (Chapter Six). Students from the better resourced school (School A – Class B and A) appeared to have a better grasp of the academic argument as opposed to students from the less well resourced school (School B – Class C). Incidentally, all three teachers from the two schools are English First Additional Language matric markers, and one would thus expect a similar level of subject content expertise. Yet, the teacher from the peri-urban township school (School Site B – Class A) expressed great distress at not knowing how to teach academic essay writing. Similarly, the same teacher, along with her colleagues at the same school felt ill-equipped to teach academic writing at school where students have such low ‘literacy’ skills. To clarify, independent international testing of ‘literacy’ skills across South Africa has shown that

students are generally performing a couple of grades below required expectation (Unesco, 2011), so it stands to reason that the teachers from School Site B, trained to teach students supposedly already able to read and write, are anxious about having to teach students how to read and write with limited training on how to do so.

The successful implementation of RtL hinges on teacher expertise in academic reading and writing pedagogy. Given that I am an ‘academic literacy’ consultant and trained in the intricacies of RtL content, methodology and theoretical aspects, it stands to reason that part of the broadly successful implementation of RtL was attributed to me, as the researcher, being arguably more skilled vis-a-vie the teachers. Further, given that rural school teachers are having to deal with very low levels of ‘literacy’ skill attainment of students at an advanced stage of secondary schooling, and that training for either the Bachelor of Education (FET phase) Degree, or the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (FET Phase) fails to provide FET teachers with the requisite training and skills to deal with the current low levels of ‘literacy’, it stands to reason that ‘literacy’ subject specialisation is a problem. Although RtL has been designed to assist teachers specifically for this very scenario, in the current context, teaching students with such low levels of ‘literacy’ skills, giving rise to a drop in teaching confidence due to a lack of skills, could pose a significant barrier for teachers. Therefore, a major criticism of the use of RtL at largely township schools in South Africa relates to a gap in training capacity of teachers to deal with the level of ‘academic literacy’ development for their students. In other words, there is a mismatch between the levels of training being offered to future teachers based on the type of students township schools are to expect versus the type of student coming through the system in terms of ‘literacy’ development.

The above scenario is not to say that the teacher the researcher worked with is not sufficiently prepared to teach academic writing. Rather she just felt unprepared to deal with the severely low levels of ‘literacy’ skills not normally associated with Grade 11 learners, leaving her at a loss as to where to start. Given the success of RtL at this particular school, with me implementing the intervention, long-term, intensive training would be needed for the teachers at this school to feel sufficiently equipped to deal with remedying ‘literacy’ related problems. This is not to say better-trained teachers, in schools with higher levels of ‘literacy’ skills will necessarily find RtL easy to implement. Rather, better-trained teachers would help to

minimise the barrier posed by a lack of skills development when implementing RtL. Given the above, I wonder to what degree similar results would be found in a future study like this where the teachers take full responsibility for the study.

All three teachers involved in the year-long RtL ‘literacy’ research project indicated a lack of knowledge with respect to genre pedagogy or systemic functional grammar. Even if the teachers did express having knowledge of genre theory, the student writing portfolios told quite a different story. This was evidenced by the low baseline narrative scores for all three classes, regardless of school site shown in Table 6.8: The *Between* School Cohort ‘Catch-up’ Effect (Chapter Six). Even though genre theory is mentioned in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Standards for English Home Language and English First Additional Language, none of the three teachers confirmed that they had knowledge of teaching writing from a genre theory perspective. To the best of my knowledge, very few, if any, Bachelor of Education programmes across South Africa offer modules in genre theory and/or systemic functional grammar for language teachers. This is contrary to the Australian context, where most of the teacher training programmes are heavily grounded in genre theory and systemic functional grammar. Furthermore, a brief examination of the Australian educational curriculum shows extensive coverage of genre theory and systemic functional grammar.

### **7.6.2 Limitations that Might Be More Difficult to Overcome**

The level of success reported in preceding sections offers more than ample reason for one to consider the use of RtL within a secondary school context regardless of the number of constraints that one needs to overcome first. However, there are constraints that might be more difficult to overcome and although they are discussed in the context of an evaluation of RtL in a South African context, these limitations are not limited to RtL only. The limitations discussed in this section are limitations that may hinder any intervention and I feel that any serious attempt at remedying the growing ‘literacy’ crisis in South Africa, regardless of what intervention or programme one adopts, would be constrained by the two following issues: school governance and level of teaching and learning. By school governance, I refer to a sense of responsibility for the school and its environment by staff, the community and learners, level of leadership offered within the school, and school discipline and level of

authority. Here, by mentioning teaching and learning, I refer to a commitment to good and effective teaching that will encourage success in learning, and a culture of concern by the teaching staff (Christie & Potterton, 1997).

Within the context of this research, and when perusing the constraints placed on the current and future efficacy of the implementation of RtL, or any other ‘literacy’ intervention for that matter, the variable which had the biggest impact on the implementation of RtL was the level of discipline and authority at the schools. School site A (well resourced, quintile 5 school) had very strict disciplinary measures in place, very good timetables set with movement between classes purposeful and monitored. Staff were constantly supervised with a very visible school principal at all times and school tardiness such as truancy, substance abuse and disrespectful behaviour dealt with in an appropriate manner according to clear policy guidelines. This allowed teaching and learning to take place without any hindrance which meant the RtL programme could be carried out to its full.

On the contrary, School site B lacked any form of leadership or discipline. The principal was very rarely on-site, timetabling seemed to change constantly, and students’ movement between classes was poorly carried out and hardly monitored, with some students, at times, arriving 20 minutes after the bell had rung for class. Staff were not monitored and often appeared to have given up on dedicated teaching. This was visible also in the high rate of truancy and disrespectful, often violent, behaviour of students due also to substance abuse. One particular class at School Site B was notorious for substance abuse and according to staff, were left alone from a certain time of the day onwards each day as their behaviour became too erratic and dangerous. On one particular visit to School Site B, class was disrupted due to a tear gas attack. Staff were visibly afraid and I was warned to stay in the classroom. The reason for the tear gas attack was the weekly drug run whereby community members provided drugs to school students. In this particular case, both leadership and the community had grossly failed the school system – inertia in the face of student drug-taking seemed to be negatively affecting teaching and learning.

Given the lack of leadership and authority at School Site B (Class C), the planned teaching and learning for the narrative genre had to be halted, and at one stage threatened to put the

study in jeopardy. Further, staff absenteeism due to family issues resulted in teaching and learning being halted for over six weeks for the intervention as the teacher's class was no longer available whilst she was away. In this particular context, again, a lack of authority, discipline and community engagement had a major impact on the implementation of the RtL intervention (or any other educational programme). Although generalisability to the greater South African school context is not possible given the sampling of this study, anecdotal reports from elsewhere do bring questions regarding the lack of infrastructural support at poorer schools and their impact on 'literacy' interventions like RtL. The experience of School Site B (Class C) at times appearing to be dysfunctional is not an isolated experience as I have had dealings with other schools of this nature in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, demonstrating similar negative impacts on teaching and learning.

With regards to teaching and learning, according to Christie and Potterton (1997) schools which have high standards of teaching and learning as their focus, tend to function well despite extraneous variables working against the school. One might think the above statement is commonsensical but because of the severe disruptions to schooling that a lot of impoverished schools experience, focussing on actual teaching and learning is not necessarily a primary concern. This appeared to be a direct result of low morale and dissatisfaction at general working conditions. Given the lack of support from management, ill behaviour of students, a lack of teaching resources, and generally unsafe and unsanitary working conditions, teachers at this school, and particularly the teacher working with me, appeared tired and burnt out. The teacher's level of professional conduct was exemplary but her willingness to fight an ill functioning system appeared to have taken its toll.

School site A did not appear to have any of the above mentioned issues. Rather, the disruptions to RtL were due to an over-abundance of resources. Because School Site A (Class B and A) was a very well resourced school, numerous extramural activities were constantly taking place. At any given time, at least 2-3 students were absent due to a sport tour, subject specialist excursion or whole school absenteeism due to sporting derbies. Although this was mostly only visible on a Friday, it just so happened that one of the 45 minute lessons for the two classes at this school fell on a Friday. Nevertheless, given the strict discipline at this school, together with strong leadership, time was easily made up in extra classes. Students

were also always on time in class which meant extra time was available for the educational process.

### **7.7 Recommendations for Reading to Learn at an FET Level**

Given the reported success rate of RtL at the two school sites discussed in sections above, it is plausible to put forward RtL as a possible ‘literacy’ intervention for remedying the ‘literacy’ crisis at secondary school contexts in South Africa. It is a tried and tested intervention with reported success rates globally (Rose et al, 2004; Rose et al, 2008; Acevedo, 2010; Millin & Millin, 2014), and now with comparable success rates at the two school sites chosen for testing purposes. However, I feel strongly that it is not the type of ‘literacy’ intervention that can be easily bundled into an additional subject resource package, and given to teachers to use as an additional resource within the National CAPS curriculum. This is largely due to the specialised nature (subject content) of RtL. Further, given an already heavily loaded curriculum, it could place further constraints on teachers when it comes to the teaching and learning work load (multiple drafts of writing to mark). Some compromises will have to be made if an intervention like RtL is to be embraced fully in classrooms like the two school sites used for the study.

Historical evidence and personal experience has shown that curriculum change in South Africa is often met with large scale, “crash courses” on the new changes. These ‘crash courses’ tend to take place over school holidays just before teachers are required to return to school for the start of the new academic year. Furthermore, “cascade models” of training tend to be more favoured over long-term, intensive professional development. These “cascade models” of training require selected staff from the DBE, mostly subject specialists, and heads of departments from schools, to attend short courses. These individuals are then requested to return to their place of employment and initiate their own form of training. Personal experience has shown that these forms of training lack depth, breadth and fail to give teachers a true grasp of the new curriculum materials, or in the context of this study, a true grasp of not only RtL methodology, but subject knowledge required to successfully using RtL. This tends to result in overburdened teachers, ill-equipped to implement the new curriculum, or intervention.

For RtL to realise its true potential in a secondary school context, as an ‘academic literacy’ support intervention, intensive, on-going training needs to take place. Because, unlike the Australian context, where genre theory and systemic functional grammar are an integral component of teacher training, this is not the case in South Africa. This is not an unrealistic ask. Reading to Learn South Africa already runs intensive teacher training modules at various schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal to teachers or whole schools wanting to equip themselves with alternative approaches or practices to teaching ‘literacy’ in their classrooms. An intensive professional teacher development course is also run during school holidays through the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Reading to Learn South Africa. Further, given that the DBE has made on-going professional development mandatory from 2015 onwards, if further, larger studies of RtL show similar rates of success, then RtL could form part of future mandated professional teacher development programmes. In other words, although the study showed positive attributes of using RtL for ‘academic literacy’ development support, a massive roll out of RtL at schools in South Africa will require intensive teacher training and on-going support. This would include the development of materials for a South African context too.

On-going curriculum reform is one of the biggest hindrances teachers face in the classroom. With constant curriculum change and an ever increasing workload placed on teachers and students by the National CAPS document, most teachers struggle to find the time to complete the requisite workload in time for June and November exams. Given this level of pressure, teachers often focus on content coverage and separate this from teaching vital skills such as reading and writing. However, with research highlighting the dismal ‘literacy’ skills acquisition of students in the secondary school context (Unesco, 2011; Millin, 2011), the absence of explicit teaching of reading and writing skills, even at an advanced stage of the secondary school context (Grade 10-12) cannot be passed over. A positive attribute of RtL is the fact that the teaching of curriculum content can be amalgamated with the explicit teaching of reading and writing skills. Convincing teachers to take on this approach to teaching and learning needs work. Furthermore, convincing teachers to designate one or two periods per ten day timetable cycle to the teaching of reading and writing is even more important. My own teaching experience in a secondary school context, and that of the year spent in schools for research purposes, highlighted a growing fear by school teachers to spend time away from

content coverage prescribed by the curriculum. Very few teachers would spend quality time developing essential skills such as reading and writing among the learners. Comments made by teachers ranged from “students should be able to read and write by now” to “there is no time set aside in the curriculum to focus specifically on reading and writing”. These kinds of attitudes could withhold teachers from fully embracing an ‘academic literacy’ intervention like RtL. Already mentioned, for the implementation of RtL to truly take off in schools, there would need to be buy in from the DBE and a strong motivation given to teachers to embrace an alternative approach to ‘literacy’ development. However, this is not to say that RtL cannot be used on a smaller scale with individual teachers making the decision to expand their repertoire of ‘literacy’ development strategies. In this case, emphasis would need to be placed on the fact that RtL is a ‘literacy’ development strategy that can be used whilst teaching curriculum based subject content.

If one could summarise the recommendations for a strong motivation for the future use of RtL in secondary schools across South Africa, one would have to advise a move away from an outcome based perspective on teaching and learning which focuses largely on teaching towards the test. There would need to be a move towards a process approach to teaching and learning whereby teachers focus on the process of acquiring content and skills needed to successfully negotiate assessment processes. At present, too much time is spent on teaching easily rote-learned content material outlined by external, standardised assessment guidelines such as matric final examination marking memorandums.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

This chapter opened with a reiteration of the research questions set out in Chapter One and Chapter Four which were central to this study. This was deemed important as this chapter’s main goal was to answer these questions in light of the results described in Chapter Four. This was followed by a detailed discussion of the data findings in line with concepts put forward in Chapter Three- the literature review. In other words, a discussion of why the findings showed a positive upward trend was presented with reference to the data findings and discussions on how the RtL implementation was realised at the two different school sites. This was followed by a discussion of limitations that were experienced during the role out of



RtL at the two school sites. This chapter then closed with a discussion of recommendations for the future implementation of RtL at secondary schools in South Africa. Chapter Eight, to follow, will offer a concluding discussion of this thesis.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Seven, a discussion of the findings from the data presentation and analysis in Chapters Five and Six was offered. Chapter Seven consolidated some of the more important findings of the study of RtL at two school sites in the Winelands District. The discussion, which set out to answer two research questions, also offered an element of reflection with regards to the research process. In addition, it offered the researcher's insights into some of the possible limitations of the study. Chapter Eight now combines the various components of the preceding chapters to offer an overview of the following: how the study was conceptualised; what the major findings and conclusions of the study were; the various contributions the study has made to knowledge; and recommendations concerning the implementation of RtL as well as further research. Particularly, suggestions on advancing the body of research on the RtL intervention within the field of Educational Linguistics in South Africa are presented. A discussion of the study's theoretical (and empirical) contributions to knowledge as well as recommendations stemming from the research, are important amidst the multiple calls for interventions to remedy the growing 'literacy' concerns in secondary schools in South Africa. Lastly, a brief mention of certain limitations of the study and some points of self-reflection, are detailed.

#### **8.2 Research Origination, Questions and Objectives**

Chapter One of this study provided an overview of a growing body of evidence detailing the on-going problem in South African schools with regards to students' poor 'academic literacy' skills. International and national 'literacy' testing across the secondary school phase of education and the university sector, reveal lower than anticipated 'academic literacy' skills being demonstrated by South African students. Consequently, the transition of students from secondary school into university shows their difficulties to cope with more academically complex learning materials. This results in a high student attrition rate at university. As an English high school teacher and Academic Literacy Development lecturer at university, the

mismatch in ‘academic literacy’ skills (i.e. the disparity between what secondary school leavers have acquired and what universities require of their entry-level students) is of serious concern. As a reflective practitioner in the secondary school context, I am always looking for alternative pedagogic strategies to use in my teaching that might be able to influence students in a positive way, and minimise or even eliminate, a mismatch in skills. The RtL intervention was introduced to me in 2006, and since then, I have always been interested in testing its efficacy in a secondary school context. Hence, the inspiration for undertaking the present study.

Most research originates from an interest in a particular phenomenon. In this case, it was a particular ‘literacy’ intervention. Because I had been taught academic writing as an undergraduate student through RtL methodologies, and had been involved in RtL teacher training prior to the conception of this study, I already had expectations about its efficacy. But, these were just notional expectations with no supporting research evidence. My expectations were also derived from a small-scale pilot study I conducted using RtL at a university level in South Africa as part of a Masters research project (See Millin, 2011; Millin & Millin, 2014). This prior experience and promising findings from the pilot study, added to the growing body of international research evidence on RtL as a ‘literacy’ development initiative, allowed me to hypothesise a positive upward trend in the ‘academic literacy’ performance of students for the present study as well. However, given my close involvement in RtL prior to commencing this study, I have subsequently taken more distance to RtL by choosing to reduce my involvement in the institutional structures of RtL South Africa – also in order to have a neutral approach in this particular research. I do accept that remaining totally impartial or objective is difficult, but nonetheless, I have tried to take steps to minimise possible bias given my past affiliations.

The developers of RtL have presented the intervention as an ‘academic literacy’ intervention designed to scaffold access into the ‘Discourse’ of formal schooling. It was originally designed for students coming from low-literate Aboriginal homes in Australia. The fundamental objective of RtL is to reallocate categories of language awareness that are generally linked to the ‘Discourse’ of higher socioeconomic communities to societal groups alienated by middle-class pedagogic ‘(D)iscourse’ and ‘(d)iscourse’ practices. Chapter Two

offered a brief discussion of the mismatch in the ‘discourse’ practices of students from working-class families to that of more formal schooling domains where it is generally understood that a failure to assimilate easily and quickly into the ‘Discourse’ of the educational domain can result in students struggling to succeed. This is not a direct reflection on students’ innate biological intellectual abilities, but rather a result of a ‘hidden curriculum’ that can be hard to penetrate if explicit assistance is not offered. As ‘literacy’ skills continue to decline in the secondary schooling sector, it becomes even more important to find alternative ‘literacy’ strategies that teachers in a secondary school context can use to bridge the ‘literacy’ divide before students enter the university sector. With that in mind, this study set out to test the efficacy of RtL as one of many possible solutions to the growing ‘literacy’ concerns in South Africa. The two research questions that had reference relate to the following:

**Research Question 1:** This research question sought to uncover whether students did show statistically significant improvements in their academic writing skills during and at the end of being subjected to the RtL intervention. The objective was to use both descriptive and more advanced statistics to assess the rate of change recorded and assessed in students’ academic writing skills. Furthermore, a linguistic biographical questionnaire was administered to students to unpack students’ situational context. This was done to better understand complexities within classrooms and students home background that could influence the results of RtL. But more importantly, an analysis of selected student’s writing portfolios was done as a case study approach to triangulate the quantitative findings.

**Research Question 2:** This research question sought to compare the rate of change in students’ ‘academic literacy’ scores from this study, to that of similar studies of RtL in Australia. A comparison with Australia makes sense, because this is where RtL was originally developed and has reported the largest success rate to date. I wanted to test whether similar rates of success could be achieved in South Africa. The objective was to use both descriptive and more advanced statistics to assess whether the reported improvements of this study were comparable to results reported for other studies of RtL, Australian studies in particular. Aspects of the findings from the case studies would also add to this comparison.

In presenting a summary of the findings of this study, a brief overview of the methodological approach to inquiry must be given. Although the study largely comprised a small-scale quantitative inquiry (making it more comparable to studies in Australia), there are other aspects of qualitative inquiry which were just as important to the study. Insofar as the process of inquiry was concerned, I collected students' assessed pieces of writing at various stages throughout the implementation of RtL. I also used a linguistic biography, largely consisting of qualitative information about each student, as a tool to describe the situational context of students' writing. One way to analyse the qualitative data generated from the linguistic biography was to use simple count data to assess the frequency of students' responses to various questions. Then, and most importantly for the study's purposes, students' pieces of writing were assessed using a holistic rubric, which made use of codified categories to convert the qualitative information into quantifiable measures, so that comparisons could be made with other studies of RtL following a similar approach. Furthermore, I used a qualitative description of selected students' writing (content analysis) in conjunction with, where necessary, the materials developed and how RtL was implemented (curriculum analysis), and combined these aspects with the general quantitative data findings into a mixed methods case study framework. Simply put, the study essentially sought to investigate the kinds of educational settings in which RtL South Africa may be introduced, and in a pilot testing of the intervention, tested also whether RtL works (can help to improve 'academic literacy' skills), and whether the results were comparable to other similar studies.

### **8.3 Summary of Findings**

The first research question for this study sought to delve into a description and discussion of what RtL is (theoretical component of the study), and investigate its efficacy as a possible 'academic literacy' intervention for selected Grade 11 students from the Winelands District (applied or empirical component of the study). Chapters Five and Six offered a description and analysis of the data findings, and Chapter Seven used those findings to discuss the efficacy of RtL within the specific context of this study and the contemporary literature. Therefore, the first research question sought to investigate whether there would be improvements in students' academic writing skills when implementing RtL at the two school sites (3 classes).

From a quantitative perspective, the data did show general positive upwards trends in students' writing performance for the duration that the RtL intervention was being implemented (see Figure 7.1 & Figure 7.2, Chapter 7, Section 7.3). These positive changes in 'literacy' performance, as proxied by students' scores for their assessed pieces of writing, were shown to be statistically significant (See Tables 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 in Section 6.3). In other words, the positive upward trend in students' writing performance was deemed meaningful, and not due to some random occurrence. Given these data patterns were exhibited throughout the implementation of the RtL intervention, it is plausible to assume the positive change in students' writing performance was attributable to RtL. However, I make this judgement with caution, because one is never really able to control for all other extraneous variables, which might have had an intervening or a confounding effect on students' writing performance (See Chapter Seven, Section 7.3 for a detailed discussion of data findings). Nevertheless, at the particular schools, no other 'literacy' intervention was being run concurrently and neither were any of the classes receiving additional 'academic literacy' support whilst RtL was being implemented. In other terms, any other variation in students' 'literacy' performance might well have been considered as good as 'random', and not systematically related to other extraneous factors not controlled for in the present study. Although quite a strong assumption to make, it is nevertheless a qualitatively reasonable one to make, given the lack of available information to the contrary.

With both the narrative and academic argument essays, in general, most students made gains in terms of those features that I systematically measured. Class C (township school) started with the lowest 'academic literacy' skills base as determined by the baseline assessment scores. This could have been directly related to these students' inability to successfully assimilate into the 'Discourse' of the school, or might be linked to factors associated with lower socioeconomic circumstances, which cannot be ruled out as having an impact on students' 'academic literacy' development. This particular class also showed a greater level of experiencing difficulty with regards to the use of English as the language of learning and teaching. Nevertheless, despite such a low 'literacy' base pre-intervention, this class showed a very clear 'catch-up' effect, resulting in this initially lowest performing class performing on par with the better performing classes in terms of the demonstration of their 'academic literacy' skills post-intervention. Again, this is reported with a degree of caution as the three

classes were not identical in their make-up so that a direct comparison remains debatable. But given that assessment standards for the marking of the RtL assignments were within the boundaries set out by the class-specific South African Curriculum Assessment Policy Standards (CAPS), on the basis of certain cohorts of students being handicapped (i.e. English FAL versus English HL), they did seem to perform comparably. The quantitative data findings were subsequently triangulated using an analysis of selected students' writing portfolios. Again, there was strong evidence in the close, qualitative analysis of students' writing portfolios to demonstrate an improvement in 'academic literacy' performance.

Generally speaking, there seemed to be clear evidence that students' 'academic literacy' performance improved over time using RtL. All students, regardless of ability level as determined by pre-intervention baseline assessments, showed evidence of 'academic literacy' improvement. In the analysis of selected students' writing portfolios, the greatest improvement was within the broad categories 'context' and 'discourse'. With the broad category 'context', nearly all students made marked improvements with the schematic structuring of their essays together with aspects related to 'field'. This meant there was also a marked improvement in the creation of texts suitably appropriate for the 'purpose' of the texts' genre. This finding provides evidence that RtL can improve students' access to the 'discourse' of formal education, because patterns of language usage were made explicit to them. According to the results of the curriculum (and programme) analysis, access to the 'discourse' of formal education was improved largely through intense support and scaffolding, achieved through text modelling, intensive assessment feedback, and differentiated processes and pedagogic practices throughout the implementation of RtL. Differentiated processes and pedagogic practices were formulated based on an on-going needs analysis for the three classes at the two different school sites. Furthermore, evidence does appear to support the phenomenon of 'academic literacy' skills convergence over time.

The term 'convergence' was coined to explain the phenomenon of 'academic literacy' skills improvement, whereby the gap between weaker performing and stronger performing students was narrowed. For example, Table 6.7 (see Chapter Six, Section 6.4) showed evidence that roughly 59% of all students who were in the (lowest) first quartile of performance, pre-intervention, were able to transition into the (progressively higher) second, third or even

fourth quartile of performance, post-intervention. This observed phenomenon shows that, through the use of RtL, students deemed initially weaker in their respective ‘academic literacy’ skills, were given an equal opportunity of improving those skills, even to a level almost on par with stronger performing students, thereby illustrating RtL’s ability to ‘democratise’ the classroom.

These results are contrary to current classroom practice in South Africa, which makes use of an incremental learning model. The latter model provides student support according to the intellectual abilities of individual students, which arguably maintains the status quo between students; the abilities gap between stronger and weaker students then remains intact. For instance, in contrast, RtL aims to provide students with differentiated support, meaning that weaker students are supported more than and differently to stronger students, so that tasks which require an intellectual outcome way beyond where weaker students currently are can be achieved. Therefore, RtL might best be described as a convergence learning model of ‘academic literacy’ skills acquisition. How RtL goes about achieving this fundamental goal is to provide access to ‘discourses’ not normally made available to students from low-literate homes, and in doing so, provide access to categories of language awareness normally associated with middle-class homes. The evidence derived from this study seems to be supportive of convergence in ‘academic literacy’ skills acquisition across the board.

The second research question for this study sought to compare the findings of this study to other studies of RtL in Australia so as to make some kind of value judgement about the comparable, context-specific success thereof. In comparing the results of this study to other Australian studies, four separate subheadings were outlined to discuss the similarities or differences in various factors. There are four factors which have important reference here for comparison purposes, namely linguistic variation, sample selection, research methods, and overall student performance. The first three factors relate largely to the situational context of the research undertaken; the fourth factor relates to the general patterns of behaviour observed in the data. Sample selection and research methods are combined below.



### 8.3.1 Linguistic Variation

Students from wealthier homes in Australia appeared to have similar linguistic attributes to the South African students from middle-class homes – English was generally accessible and English proficiency was reasonably good. However, the linguistic attributes of the Australian Aboriginal students did differ somewhat to those of the African students in this study. Aboriginal students appeared to have access to an Aboriginal dialect of English, thus they had some English stimulation before they started formal schooling. But students from the township school had comparably less English stimulation before they started formal schooling and during their school-going years. Therefore, in contrast to the Aboriginal students in Australia, African students<sup>47</sup> (in particular) in South Africa, suffered from poorer English language proficiency in all respects (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing). With relatively weak English language proficiency amongst the African cohort of students in this study, both conducting the research and using English as a language of teaching and learning, made direct comparisons more tenuous, and imposed a barrier of sorts to the study.

### 8.3.2 Sample Selection and Research Methods

With respect to sample selection, this study made use of Grade 11 students – equivalent to senior high school Australian students. However, most of the studies of RtL in Australia were conducted using foundation phase learners, junior high school learners or first-year university students. Given the variety of ages of students in the Australian studies, this study sought to compare results with the closest approximate age group of learners – first-year undergraduate students. With respect to the research methods used, the Australian studies all made use of basic descriptive statistics only, and attempted to make judgements about the efficacy of RtL using pre- and post-intervention test/assessment scores only. In contrast, this study went one step further by making use of pre-intervention scores, process-based scores (throughout the RtL intervention) and post-intervention test/assessment scores. In addition, data patterns were analysed using both descriptive and more advanced, inferential statistics. I chose to use more

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<sup>47</sup> I accept that it is difficult and contentious to categorise students into homes with poor linguistic resources based on racial lines only as I am very aware that there might be English students also experiencing poor linguistic resources. This could be due to very busy professional parents who have little time to engage with their children after work.

advanced statistical analysis in order to make a judgement about whether the data patterns emerging were indeed (statistically) meaningful or robust patterns, something the Australian studies did not seem to do. However, similarly, all relevant studies in Australia and South Africa (the present study included) collected writing samples (qualitative data) and codified the writing samples into numerical scores (quantitative data). Thus, the numerical scores acted as a proxy for student performance. In all studies, the process of ‘codifying’ students’ pieces of writing involved using a similar holistic marking rubric, which aims to ensure reasonable comparability across various studies of RtL.

### **8.3.3 Overall Student Performance**

This study and studies of RtL in Australia found a positive upward trend in student performance. Across both writing genres, students made gains in terms of their demonstration of written ‘academic literacy’ skills (as the outcome variable). Further, all students, whether initially deemed weaker performing or stronger performing (academically speaking), were able to benefit from the RtL intervention. A very strong pattern of similarity between this study and studies in Australia was the phenomenon of convergence in student performance, both within and across classroom cohorts. For instance, initially weaker performing students, through intensive scaffolding, were able to improve their written skills *faster*, and thus close the skills gap between themselves and already stronger performing students – a phenomenon of convergence in ‘academic literacy’ skills acquisition consistent across all the aforementioned studies of RtL.

## **8.4 Contribution to Knowledge**

Doctoral research, by definition, entails adding to the growing body of knowledge within a particular field of study. This study is located within the broad field of Applied Linguistics, with its area of application in education for literacy development. It seeks to add to the body of knowledge in two ways: firstly, by advancing the body of research regarding ‘academic literacy’ development through a dedicated programme, and secondly, by extending our understanding of the role RtL can play in advancing ‘academic literacy’ skills in diverse

school contexts, with specific consideration of the social context of local communities. The study has made a meaningful contribution in the following ways:

#### **8.4.1 The Role of Reading to Learn in South Africa**

Although there are a growing number of research papers detailing the efficacy of RtL globally, given that the use of RtL is still in its infancy in South Africa, there is a dearth of empirical evidence that investigates the efficacy of its implementation in schools or universities across South Africa. There are currently two Masters level studies of the efficacy of RtL, both situated at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The one study investigated the use of RtL with an academic writing module within the Social Sciences (Millin, 2011) and the other study researched the efficacy of RtL within a Bachelor of Commerce Extended Degree programme in 2011 (Steinke, 2011). Other than these two research papers, there exists very little research in the use of RtL in South Africa. Therefore, this study offers one of the first research papers on the efficacy of RtL at a Senior High School level. As a result, the study addresses a gap that was identified in the literature.

#### **8.4.2 A Process-Based Research Method**



RtL research globally tends to make use of pre and post test scores only and offers mostly descriptive statistics in drawing conclusions about the efficacy of RtL. This study took these processes a step further and has evolved the methodological approaches by offering a process approach whereby pre, process and post test scores are used. This highlights a novel way of testing the efficacy of a ‘literacy’ development intervention generally, and RtL particularly. The method is novel in that data patterns throughout the *entire* implementation of RtL programmes are used. This is useful because it can highlight both the successes and flaws of RtL implementation at any given point during the implementation process. For example, pre and post test scores may show an improvement in student performance, but within a RtL programme, students may have ‘dipped off’ in performance at selected points within the programme due to curriculum or pedagogic constraints. This was the case with the final assessment task of this study and allowed for interesting data patterns to emerge.

### 8.4.3 Documenting the Narrowing of the ‘Literacy’ Skills Gap

The field of ‘academic literacy’ development is a topical area of research given the concerns about student performance in South Africa as mentioned above. A large body of the research in this field investigates ‘literacy’ acquisition or development. Included in this, are studies of approaches to ‘academic literacy’ development alternative to standard school programmes. How this study contributes to this body of research is that it not only introduces an alternative approach to ‘academic literacy’ development that has been piloted, but it puts out information on an approach that in its application has been able to close the achievement gap between weaker-performing and better- or stronger-performing students. In a country that has a high level of social and distributional inequality in education, this is an important point to consider. This finding has directed the theorising of the ‘convergence theory’ of RtL within a South African context. See Section 8.4.4 below.

### 8.4.4 A Theory of Convergence in ‘Academic Literacy’ Skills

**Table 8.1: A Theory of ‘Academic Literacy’ Skills Convergence**

	STAGE 1 (Short-term)	 STAGE 2 (Medium-term)	 STAGE 3 (Long-term)
<b>Student Description</b>	Differentiated ‘academic literacy’ Skills demonstrated	Growing ‘academic literacy’ skills autonomy	Equalisation of ‘academic literacy’ Skills
<b>Classroom Description</b>	Polarisation (Inequality)	Convergence (Transformation)	Democratisation (Equality)
<b>RtL Description</b>	Because of polarised skills, intensive and differentiated scaffolding is required at each stage of the RtL cycle. RtL aims to empower students beyond the short-term, by investing in ‘discourse’ specific acquisition of skills	Differentiated learning and repetition result in <i>faster</i> development of academic autonomy, reducing the skills gap between formerly ‘weaker’ students and their ‘stronger’ peers	Greater equalisation of learning opportunities results in a tendency towards equalisation of student outcomes, thereby democratising the classroom

Note: Author’s own compilation – theoretical model developed out of this study

Table 8.1 outlines a basic theory of RtL, born out of this study, which attempts to conceptualise the process-based approach to ‘academic literacy’ skills development associated with the intervention that this study adopted. RtL can be viewed as spanning three distinct stages (indicative of the ‘process’ RtL follows over time), with three different descriptors associated with the student, the classroom and RtL methods at each stage. Stage 1 is characterised by students with diverse and differentiated ‘academic literacy’ skills, which gives rise to polarisation of classroom environments – the ‘haves’ and the ‘have not’s’ as such. This kind of classroom environment is not unique to the typical RtL classroom, but is characteristic of most classroom environments, for which any targeted intervention for that matter is designed. Stage 2 is characterised by a narrowing of the ‘academic literacy’ skills gap, a gap formerly observed between academically ‘weaker’ and ‘stronger’ students in Stage 1. Stage 3 is characterised by a (theoretical) equalisation of ‘academic literacy’ skills, in which the distinction between academically ‘weaker’ and ‘stronger’ students is increasingly blurred, and classroom environments are democratised.

Very importantly, moving from Stage 1 to Stages 2 and 3 in Table 8.1 is predicated on the assumption that the process of scaffolding is correctly organised and administered to appropriately target individual students’ needs. Violating the assumed conditions, implies RtL would most likely fail, and Stage 1 inequality would persist – Stage 1 ‘literacy’ skills stagnation or ‘literacy skills trap’. In other words, RtL aims to invest in students’ long-term educational welfare by carefully scaffolding ‘academic literacy’ learning.

RtL attempts to remedy, through a scaffolded process, three aspects of ‘academic literacy’ development. First, by focusing on *how* learning takes place (i.e. using different amounts and types of scaffolding based on various students’ needs that focus on ‘discourse’ specific acquisition of skills), there is a greater chance the intervention might be successful beyond the short-term. Second, through intensive scaffolding and repetition, students become increasingly able to do alone in the medium- to long-term, what they previously could only do with expert assistance in the short-term. Third, the process of scaffolding is not a one-size-fits-all process of teaching and learning, but is differentially targeted using RtL, meaning, academically ‘weaker’ students are more likely to improve their skills *faster* than their

formerly academically ‘stronger’, more competent peers. The abovementioned three points are reasons why RtL predicts ‘academic literacy’ skills convergence over the long-term.

From an empirical perspective, the (theorised) pattern of ‘academic literacy’ skills convergence is not only likely to be exhibited *within* classrooms. To the contrary, on aggregate, one might expect more discernible patterns of convergence or ‘catch-up’ *across* classrooms (and especially across schools). For example, the noticeable patterns of convergence in ‘academic literacy’ skills across the two school sites evidenced in this study are no coincidence. Students from more socioeconomically impoverished communities are more likely to suffer from poor linguistic stimulation (impoverished linguistic stimulus), meaning their ‘academic literacy’ skills base is likely to be relatively lower, giving these school-based cohorts of students a relatively greater scope for improvement. An important implication, and what this study has shown most powerfully, is that ‘academic literacy’ skills convergence can transcend socioeconomic boundaries. In other words, with respect to ‘academic literacy’ skills, socioeconomically poorer communities of students can most likely catch-up to their wealthier counterparts – not only ‘democratising’ their own classrooms but more importantly, effecting the equalisation of skills differences across diverse socioeconomic school communities. This is as a result of making explicit, access to the ‘discourse’ of formal schooling, and not necessarily because of any improvement in socioeconomic circumstances.

## 8.5 Recommendations

In the opening chapter of this thesis, I undertook to contribute to the growing body of research in the field of ‘academic literacy’ development. This included an investigation into the efficacy of the RtL ‘literacy’ intervention as a possible approach to ‘academic literacy’ development within a secondary school context. Given the conclusions drawn and the research methodology used, I now offer several recommendations.

Firstly, given the overall positive findings discussed in Chapter Seven, it stands to reason that a major recommendation emanating from this study is that RtL should be considered as an additional approach to ‘academic literacy’ development at a secondary school context. It

includes a number of strategies that could be utilised in the classroom by teachers to ensure all students have an equal opportunity of accessing classroom ‘discourse’, and thus of succeeding. RtL also incorporates educational pedagogic theory that can aid teachers in their teaching practice, that even without a full utilisation of RtL in its entirety, teachers could still advance student performance. However, with current teacher capacity not as strong as would be the ideal in South Africa, the use of RtL in classrooms would require considerable time and effort in the training of teachers for this purpose. Teachers would need to be informed on how to effectively use the various RtL strategies, together with the dissemination of content knowledge in genre theory and systemic functional grammar. But these could very well be incorporated into an Education Degree or Postgraduate Certificate in Education. Most Education Degrees already require trainee teachers to enrol in a module that educates them in the effective use of classroom strategies for the teaching of subject content in the medium of English. A module of this type could incorporate aspects of the RtL methodology as well. Further, should RtL be utilised by primary or secondary school teachers, more curriculum resources, developed in line with genre theory and systemic functional grammar might need to be developed to provide more RtL relevant classroom materials.

Secondly, future studies can be conducted to test the replicability of this study’s findings. It is hoped that a larger, more representative study of RtL can be conducted to test the efficacy of RtL within a larger sample cohort at secondary schools in South Africa. However, rather than directly replicating, there are elements to this study that, if changed, might benefit a future study of RtL. The first relates to the time afforded for the use of RtL in the classroom. The use of RtL methodology in Australian classrooms for the teaching of subject related content happens at least three times a week. Instead of using RtL methodology for designated reading and writing lessons only, as this study did, teachers in Australia make use of the methodology to teach subject content too. RtL methodology was only used once a week for this study; increasing the RtL time on task in a future study might greatly enhance the efficacy of the intervention. However, this suggestion in itself is not without problems. Given that curriculum coverage is already under severe pressure, teachers may be reluctant to offer more time. A way around this could be to offer to teach subject content simultaneously as the teaching of reading and/or writing skills. Or, selected teachers could volunteer to undergo

intensive RtL teacher training and their inclusion of RtL strategies within their own classroom practice, to cover all curriculum content, could be assessed.

Thirdly, and lastly, another recommendation for future implementation (and research into the efficacy of RtL) might be to limit the number of genres used in the process. Given that genre pedagogy and systemic functional grammar do not feature strongly in the South African school curriculum, more intensive scaffolding could greatly enhance access to language patterns and schematic structuring of genres presented in class. Although students' showed marked 'academic literacy' skills development in this study through RtL, I am not sure if the skills that were taught have actually been internalised by the students just yet. But at the same time, this cannot be said definitively as I have not been able to assess students 'academic writing' post the intervention. To better control results, a recommendation for future research would be to limit the instruction time to one genre but increase the time used to teach that genre.

### **8.6 Limitations to the Study**

The limitations section of a study's conclusion generally includes reference to circumstances that may have had an influence on the findings of the research but are considered to be out of the control of the researcher. The discussion on limitations to this study did indeed include such points of interest that were out of my control; however, I also briefly mention two aspects that were controlled and done by choice (quantitative approach and using 'literacy' scores) and could still be considered as limitations. There were very good reasons for these choices which I will discuss shortly. For this particular research project, I felt there were four limiting factors that are worth mentioning.

Firstly, this study adopted a small scale, largely quantitative investigation into the efficacy of RtL as a possible intervention in addressing the growing 'literacy' concerns at a secondary school level in South Africa. This quantitative study was augmented with qualitative data, which was used to expose more subtle data patterns. So in essence the study could be described as a mixed methods approach. Even so, the primary interest of the study was to produce the quantitative data patterns. Given that a vast majority of the research on the



efficacy of RtL globally used such quantitative measures to demonstrate positive effects on student ‘academic literacy’ performance when RtL is used, and given that my pilot study on the efficacy of RtL at a university context in South Africa used such an approach, also showed some positive effects, it seemed plausible to follow through with a similar hypothesis. When trying to prove, or disprove a hypothesis of this kind, it is generally considered good advice to make use of quantitative methods (Muijs, 2011). Quantitative research methods allow data to be collected according to statistical procedures that are run to enable a more inferential analysis to be conducted. This enables making a sensible decision as to whether a hypothesis can be accepted or reject. This was the primary reason for the focus on quantitative data procedures.<sup>48</sup> The use of quantitative procedures might be criticised. This leads me to the next anticipated criticism of this study.

Secondly, I use ‘literacy’ scores as a proxy for written skills as an outcome variable. Insofar as measuring these skills are concerned, I accept that using some or other quantitative measure as I do, can be contentious and obviously not without criticism. The introductory chapter of this study highlighted the criticism of adopting a very Western notion of ‘academic literacy’ which ascribes the notion of the academically literate to an individual in possession of the ability to read and write. In educational contexts, we then assess “ability” by assigning a “score” to a student’s assessment task. So I acknowledge this contentious issue. However, in keeping with current classroom assessment practices which assesses student ability by assigning numerical scores, this study also assigned a numerical score to an assessed piece of writing. Further, in reporting the findings of this study to interested Educational Boards, relevant parties will want to see the progression of ‘scores’ throughout the implementation of RtL. Because the second objective of this study was to assess comparability of the efficacy of RtL with similar studies in Australia, to ensure comparability, I needed to make use of similar testing procedures – which was the use of numerical scores.

Thirdly, a limitation to this study, which was out of my control, was the unavailability of formal school exam marks which could have functioned as an external form of

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<sup>48</sup> As a researcher, I also wanted to be able to diversify my research skills and felt that undertaking a study which focussed more on quantitative procedures might enable me to develop the skills to do quantitative studies at a later stage so that, with an already established capacity to make use of qualitative procedures, I would feel confident of making use of either quantitative or qualitative procedures for future research. This would enable me to choose the best method for the particular kind of research I embark on.

benchmarking. It was hoped that the formal June and November exams for all three Grade 11 classes would be utilised as an extra form of assessment, external to the RtL assessment, with regards to students' change in 'academic literacy' performance. This could have provided an external form of validity to the study. The exam marks would have been used cautiously given that the teachers would have been marking the exams and would probably have used different marking rubrics. Even so, it might have been beneficial to conduct a focus interview session with the teachers to assess their perceptions with regards to the change in students' performance in their academic written abilities with the end exam processes. However, DBE protocol did not allow students' exams to be utilised as an additional form of assessment due to ethical considerations. A possible suggestion for a future study of this nature then is to make use of major term tests which, if scheduled to be written at the very end of the term, could function in an almost identical manner to the formal end of term exams. This was an option for this study but there were too many disruptions to teaching and learning towards the end of the school year which put two out of the three teachers who collaborated on this project under pressure. This meant they were not willing to take part in this external form of assessment.

Fourthly, researcher bias needs to be noted as a possible limitation to this study. I was an ex-officio board member of RtLSA in 2012, but stepped down as a board member to avoid a conflict of interest in this study. Although I was no longer a member of the RtLSA board whilst conducting this study, my experience of and special interest in the intervention remained. To ensure minimal subjectivity I put into place strict measures of control. This included, but was not limited to, blind marking to ensure I was not aware of a student's previous mark, or performance on their previous drafts. This was to ensure I was not inadvertently ensuring an increase in assessment score. I conducted blind marking procedures in that I was not able to link a writing portfolio to a student (coding system was used) which might have allowed an additional element of subjectivity to creep in. I also made use of double marking procedures for selected scripts. After each marking session I randomly selected assessment drafts to re-mark to check my marking standards were consistent.

## 8.7 Self-Reflection

Reflective practices are essential for advancing good practice in research as they create an opportunity for a study of one's own work, research procedures and goals. Reflection also allows one to identify ways of enhancing one's practice. Self-reflective practices essentially require the answering of two key questions. First, what advice would I give to other researchers wanting to embark on a similar study, or wanting to replicate this study? Second, if I had to go back and do this study again, what would I do differently?

In answering the first question, given that knowledge of genre pedagogy and systemic functional grammar are not as prominent in South African educational contexts as one would find in the Australian educational context, trying to assess the efficacy of an intervention that makes use of genre theory (genre patterns in texts) and systemic functional grammar can be problematic. The teachers in the classrooms could not have had shared knowledge of the theories underlying this intervention, which means students would also have had hardly any experience of working with texts from a genre theory and systemic functional grammar perspective. To provide suitable background to the approach, would require a lot more intensive teaching and so also more time on task for students to truly internalise patterns of language usage in texts. Therefore, any further studies of the efficacy of RtL might benefit from a longer time frame allocated to the teaching of each genre. Whether this would require additional class sessions per week, or a focus on one genre per year for research purposes, would be at the discretion of the researcher and dependent upon school constraints.

In answering the second question, upon reflecting on how I would conduct this study differently if given the opportunity to do it again, I would possibly change how the intervention was implemented. The goal of the study was to test the efficacy of RtL, and although the study showed evidence that it was successful in assisting students in the development of 'academic literacy' skills, I wonder to what extent a similar level of efficacy would have been found if classroom teachers actively took part in the implementation process. Given that I have extensive training in RtL methodologies and have some knowledge of genre theory and systemic functional grammar, this might have contributed significantly to the outcome. This study has provided a basis for understanding the efficacy of RtL within a

micro South African context where it has been beneficial. But perhaps a study of whether an intervention like RtL could have been as successful with ever-day classroom teachers implementing it might have been more useful as finally it is the teachers themselves at the coal face and not researchers like me.

Finally, I would still see this study as valuable for its attention to and trying out of 'literacy' interventions within the secondary school context. I consider the study as a basis for further research into the use of 'literacy' interventions alternative to what is currently being used in classrooms across South Africa.

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## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix One: Narrative Model Text for all Three Classes

### The Crazy Tiger

Once upon a time, in a dark, misty forest jogged a youthful petite framed girl with her equally minuscule, short-haired Jack Russell. The girl might have been young, but she was energetic. She was a good runner and loved to spend hours after school running through the pine scented forest, leaping off rocks and sliding down the steep mountain bike tracks. Timbo, her Jack Russell, was quick and agile, and darted from rock to track, back and forth, back and forth as his attentive nose guided him. He was a loyal dog and loved nothing more than running and exploring with his master, Lucy. The forest; however, was dark and cold and as the leaves of the trees whispered during the erratic wind storms, one could be forgiven for thinking that they were talking about something - something that should be made known to all those who set foot in the forest.

Perhaps Lucy should have paid closer attention to the untamed whisperings of the trees because suddenly, without warning, Timbo stopped dead in his tracks. Lucy, not used to sudden stops on her runs nearly fell hard as she tripped over Timbo in front of her. Lucy carefully and slowly got up and looked in the direction of Timbo's glance. There it was - tall, slender and brown rosetted. Magestic! Timbo growled as it slowly walked towards them. Lucy, partially blinded by the airborne dust from her fall, was terrified to the core. Where on earth did the infant tiger come from? Was it going to eat Timbo? Would she be able to out run it? Lucy's head was spinning. Perhaps she bumped her head as she fell? She tried to think of a way out of the situation; when, out of the blue, she heard a loud, low.....MEEEOOW.

Lucy thought she was now hearing things. Since when do Tiger's meow? Lucy plucked up the courage to have a closer look and you will never guess what her tiger was. It was in fact a young male Bengal kitten. Lucy was ecstatic and overcome with joy as she realised the tiger cat was in fact her neighbours courageous and inquisitive Bengal cat, Tarzan.

Lucy made a mental note to herself to stop reading stories of tigers and bears attacking unsuspecting hikers before bed in the future. Lucy realised that this experience also made her appreciate the importance of why her mom told her not to run alone in the deserted forest.

## Appendix Two: Buckingham Palace (Class C) – Academic Essay Model

### Essay Question:

**In no more than one page (500 words), argue whether the novel ‘Buckingham Palace’ by Richard Rive is relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum according to its historical context.**

Buckingham Palace is deemed a literary master piece of its time as it keeps alive the history of one of the most notorious yet dynamic communities of South Africa during the Apartheid era. The setting of the novel is District Six, an inner-city dwelling in Cape Town, home to largely the coloured population of Cape Town. The novel is divided into three clear time segments; namely, morning, afternoon and evening with the mood of the novel taking on a darker tone as the time periods progress. As you jump through time, as the sunset gradually falls on this district, its characters and their homes are erased from the physical realm of Cape Town due to the infamous Group Areas Act of 1966. Despite tragedy and adversity, the community maintains its kinship. The Group Areas Act of 1966 was a move by the Apartheid government to declare District Six a whites-only area forcing nearly 60 000 people from their homes to the desolate Cape White flats. It is for this historical perspective alone that Buckingham Palace is considered an important and relevant novel for the Grade 11 curriculum. Therefore, this essay will argue that Buckingham Palace is relevant and should remain as part of the Grade 11 curriculum. In doing so, this essay will draw links between historical events of the Group Areas Act of 1966 and events in the novel.

The Group Areas Act of 1966 left hundreds of District Six families homeless due to forced removals by the Apartheid government. The reason for these removals, according to the government of the time, was that District Six was a slum and provided the perfect grounds for crime such as gambling, drinking and prostitution. For example, Zoot is the leader of the gang ‘The Boys’ (pg 79), responsible for various petty theft crimes, and Mary, with ‘the girls’, runs the ‘Casbah’ brothel (pg 101). Despite the people of District Six feeling happy within their community, the government still declared it a no-go and started with forced removals. This event is highlighted in Richard Rives novel with the bulldozing of many houses in District Six (pg 200) and the forced removal of thousands of people to the desolate Cape Flats (pg 210). In writing about the events of District Six, and the emotional turmoil that the characters experience, Richard Rive is wanting to keep alive the memory, whether good or bad, of the real historical events leading up to the forced removals which are not too dissimilar to countless forced removals which still happen in South Africa today, regardless of the racial group affected. This is a stark reminder that history does repeat itself and hence the importance of being reminded of past events. Therefore, by reading a novel such as Buckingham Palace, one not only learns about the past, but may be taught how to avoid a similar act of cruelty in the future.

In concluding, this essay argued that the novel 'Buckingham Palace' is considered relevant and should remain part of the Grade 11 curriculum. This is largely due to the historical relevance of the novel as it portrays the events of the infamous Group Areas Act of 1966 which saw scores of District Six residents forced from their homes and moved to the Cape Flats. Richard Rives wanted to ensure, through the reading of this novel, that the bad aspects of Apartheid were kept alive thereby ensuring past mistakes are not repeated.

### Appendix Three: Catching Fire, Hunger Games (Class B) – Academic Essay Model

#### Essay Question:

**In no more than one page (500 words), argue whether the novel ‘Catching Fire’ by Suzanne Collins is relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum.**

‘Catching Fire’ is the second novel within Suzanne Collins’ ‘Hunger Games’ trilogy. The novel is set within a dystopian, post-apocalyptic society driven by a ruthless, power-hungry government. The ‘Capitol’ is extremely wealthy; whereas, the twelve districts outside of the Capitol have different types of poverty. Katniss Evergreen, the novel’s protagonist, survives the first round of the hunger games and finds herself, once again, at the mercy of the Capitol when she is re-selected to represent her district – Appalachia. Dystopian societies are often defined as communities full of misery, oppression and disease (Oxford, 2000). Given the dictatorial rule of the Capitol in ‘Catching Fire’ and its relevance to present-day political disruption, this essay will argue that the novel is relevant for the Grade 11 curriculum. In doing so, this essay will explore the idea of tyrannical rule in the novel.

A tyrannical ruler is a leader who exercises total power and authority over a group of people and does this in a cruel, unjust and unfair way. For example, the Capitol and its leader, President Snow, illustrate characteristics of a tyrannical leader in how he controls the way the various Districts are run and governed (pg 100). The Capitol also controls the availability of food and resources to the Districts despite plenty resources being made available to the people in the Capitol (pg 200). This can often lead to feelings of misery and hopelessness which may ultimately lead towards a rebellion. For example, Katniss, after her rebellious victory at her first appearance in the ‘Hunger Games’, becomes the symbol (mockingjay) of a rebellion (pg 250). Rebellions are not always a bad thing but can lead to an unnecessary loss of life, bringing turmoil, pain and grief along with the process. Given the ‘unstable’ political context of South Africa, it is important to understand how rebellions can start and what their consequences can be, rendering a reading of this novel appropriate for the grade 11 curriculum.

To conclude, this essay argued that the novel is relevant for the Grade 11 curriculum. This is largely due to the relevance of the use of tyrannical rulers in the novel which highlights the cruel, unjust and unfair treatment of marginalised people by these types of rulers. The description of President Snow and his harsh rule over the poorer people of the districts illustrates very well how feelings of misery and hopelessness can easily give rise to rebellions which is a stark reminder of the political context of South Africa, rendering a reading of this novel relevant.

## Appendix Four: The Kite Runner (Class A) – Academic Essay Model

### Essay Question:

**In no more than one page (500 words), argue whether the novel ‘The Kite Runner’ by Khaled Hosseini is relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum.**

‘The Kite Runner’ is set in Kabul, a quaint town in Afghanistan and follows the lives of Amir, the son of a wealthy Pashtun, and his friend, Hassan, the son of Amir’s father’s servant. The novel spans a time period of approximately thirty years and follows the changing relationship between Amir and Hassan given the tragic event that Amir has to witness, giving rise to his later search for redemption. Redemption is often defined as an act of redeeming or atoning for past mistakes (Oxford, 2000). In other words, atonement is an act of making amends for past sins (Merriam-Webster, 2000). Given the relevance of the need for acts of atonement in our daily lives, this essay will argue that the novel, ‘The Kite Runner’ is applicable to the Grade 11 Curriculum. In doing so, this essay will explore the idea of redemption in the novel.

Redemption is an act of atonement and offers one a way of making right for past wrongs. Given that we encounter wrongful acts on a daily basis, some having bigger consequences than others, it stands to reason that a novel which deals with the idea of redemption is relevant for the Grade 11 curriculum. How one goes about the process of redemption is also personal in nature leaving the idea of redemption subjective. For example, both Baba and Amir felt the need to atone for their different ‘sins’, leaving the act of redemption similar yet so different. On the one hand, Baba, in an attempt to make right the affair he had, chose to treat Hassan as his son, making sure he was looked after (pg 105). Amir, on the other hand, needed considerable time to realise his need to atone for his act of not helping Hassan in his time of need. Although his act of redemption came much later in his life, he still felt the need to make right his past wrong (pg 200). Given that we all make wrong decisions on a daily basis, reading a novel which deals with the act of making amends for our negative actions renders the novel ‘The Kite Runner’ suitable for the Grade 11 curriculum as it helps us understand the process of redemption.

To conclude, this essay argued that the novel, ‘The Kite Runner’ is applicable to the Grade 11 Curriculum. This is largely due to the fact that one of the major themes running throughout the novel – redemption, and the need to atone for ones sin/s, is a major occurrence in the lives of most people today. By reading about both Baba and Amir’s need to atone for their past sins, one is able to better understand that wrongful acts can have negative consequences which require an act of redemption, rendering a reading of this novel relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum.

**Appendix Five: Marking Rubric**

Student no:	Category Description	3/3	2/3	1/3	0/3
Purpose	Appropriate for genre and writing assignment?	Excellent grasp of genre conventions. Meets purpose of genre.	Adequate grasp of genre conventions. Working towards meeting purpose of genre.	Weak grasp of genre conventions. Extended writing does not meet purpose of genre.	No awareness of genre conventions. Extended writing does not meet purpose of genre.
Staging	Are there appropriate stages? How well developed is each stage?	All stages of genre presented and very well developed.	Most stages of genre presented and adequately developed.	Limited presentation of stages of genre. Needs further development.	No awareness of stages of genre. Needs significant development.
Phases	How well developed is each phase?	All phases of genre presented and very well developed.	Most phases of genre presented and adequately developed.	Limited presentation of phases of genre. Needs further development.	No awareness of phases of genre. Needs significant development.
Field	Does the writer construct the plot, settings and characters (narratives); explain the field (factual texts), or describe the issues (argument)?	Excellent development of points of argument.	Adequate development of points of argument.	Limited development of points of argument.	No evidence of points of argument presented.
Tenor	How well does the writer engage the reader (narratives) or persuade the reader (argument)?	Excellent, objective argument beyond personal reason and linked to broader topic.	Adequate, near objective argument and linked to broader topic.	Mostly a subjective argument with slight evidence of objectivity developing.	Weak argument due to subjective nature of argument and not linked to the broader topic.
Mode	How well written is the text for the school age? Is it spoken or written language?	Well written, advanced level for age and language affiliation. Evidence of appropriate written style.	Adequate level for age and language affiliation. Emerging evidence of written style of language.	Poorly written for age or language affiliation. Mostly spoken style of language with evidence of emerging academic written style.	Poorly written for age or language affiliation. Mostly spoken style of language.
Lexis	Content words related to the field.	Excellent use of content words appropriate to thematic development of novel.	Adequate use of content words appropriate to thematic development of novel.	Limited use of content words appropriate to thematic development of novel.	Poor evidence of knowledge of content words related to thematic development of novel.



Appraisal	How well is appraisal used to engage/persuade/evaluate?	Excellent use of appraisal techniques appropriate to genre.	Adequate use of appraisal techniques appropriate to genre.	Inconsistent and poor use of appraisal techniques.	Very poor use of appraisal techniques for genre.
Conjunctives	Is there a clear logical relationship between sentences?	Excellent use of conjunctives.	Adequate use of conjunctives.	Poor use of conjunctives.	Erroneous use of conjunctives (or absence of conjunctives).
Reference	Is it clear who is referred to in each sentence (pronouns, articles, demonstratives)?	Excellent grasp of in-text referencing.	Adequate grasp of in-text referencing.	Limited use of in-text referencing.	Erroneous use of in-text referencing.
Grammar	Have grammatical conventions of formal English been used accurately?	Excellent use of grammar.	Adequate use of grammar.	Weak grammar skills.	Erroneous grammar skills.
Spelling	How accurately are core words and non-core words spelt?	Excellent spelling.	Adequate spelling.	Weak spelling.	Non-existent spelling.
Punctuation	Has punctuation been used accurately and consistently?	Excellent punctuation.	Adequate punctuation.	Weak punctuation.	Non-existent punctuation.
Presentation	Paragraphs? Clear layout?	Excellent presentation.	Adequate presentation.	Weak presentation.	Very poor presentation.
Total					

### General category descriptions and mark allocation continued

3/3 – Excellent. Criteria for category descriptions fulfilled. Reading process made easy due to very good grasp of categories and limited errors.

2/3 – Good grasp of category requirements. Reading process made easier but still room for improvement. Assistance needed.

1/3 – Weak. Limited knowledge of category requirements. Reading is made difficult by errors. Student needs substantial assistance.

0/3 – Inappropriate assignment. Categories not fulfilled. Reading severely impaired due to multiple errors.

With the 14 rubric categories, the broad, generic category descriptions were used to ascertain which numerical score to award to a piece of assessed work. One needs to be reminded that this is not equivalent to a conventional classroom practice of 100%. Also, the above broad

categories were just that, very broad and given that I was looking at very detailed aspects of students writing, it was difficult to write a clear description, in such a small space that would neatly fit all aspects of students writing. So the above descriptions are merely guidelines to help remind me what I was looking for. Therefore, in some cases, awarding a mark within a category was a lot more complex than merely ticking a box. Further the above is not without criticisms. As mentioned in Chapter One, even the use of marking rubrics to assist in making the marking process more objective and rigorous, elements of subjectivity can still creep in because my judgement of whether a category has been met may differ to another marker. But because I was the only marker, this allowed for consistency. And because I blind marked, and double marked selected texts, even if subjectivity did creep in, I am hopeful that this was consistent.

## **Appendix Six: Teaching Schedule**

The following teaching schedule is the generic schedule used for the implementation process. Due to differing needs from the different classes, this acted as the teaching guide to ensure consistency with regards to materials coverage. It was altered slightly for each class but this alteration would have been a ‘time-on-task’ alteration. Bear in mind that this is not the lesson schedule. How each lesson was unpacked is explained within the thesis. This teaching schedule merely serves as a guide to orient the reader as to how each lesson would have run over the duration of each semester. I have deliberately called each segment a unit as one unit could require one lesson, two lessons, or even three. This is dependent on learner needs and pace. Therefore, the teaching schedule acted as a guide to remind me what still needed to be covered with each class to ensure equitable coverage of materials.

### **Unit One – Narrative**

- Welcome students.
- Introduce the project aims and objections and provide a rationale for student participation.
- Students to complete the assent forms.
- Hand out work books and discuss how programme implementation will run.
- Students to write baseline assignment (Task 1 – N0).

### **Unit Two – Narrative**

- General feedback on baseline assessment.
- Unpack stage one (orientation) of the narrative in detail.
- Students to construct own stage one (orientation) (Task 2 – N1).
- Completed drafts to be handed in at end of each unit for detailed feedback before the next lesson.

### **Unit Three – Narrative**

- Hand out work books and go over general feedback.
- Allow time for individual student queries.
- Unpack stage two (complication) of the narrative.
- Students to make use of feedback for stage one (orientation) and rewrite stage one as well as construct stage two (complication) (Task 2 continued – N2).
- Completed drafts to be handed in at end of each unit for detailed feedback.

### **Unit Four – Narrative**

- Hand out work books and go over general feedback.
- Allow time for individual student queries.
- Unpack stages three and four (resolution and coda) of the narrative.
- Students to make use of feedback for stage one and stage two (orientation and complication) and rewrite stage one and two as well as construct stages three and four (resolution and coda) (Task 2 continued – N3).
- Completed drafts to be handed in at end of each unit for detailed feedback.

### **Unit Five – Narrative**

- Hand out work books and go over general feedback.
- Allow time for individual student queries.
- Hand out final post-intervention topic.
- Students to compile post-intervention narrative (Task 3 – N4) – all students were given one lesson only for this task.

### **Unit Six – Academic Essay**

- Hand out academic essay topic.
- Students to write baseline academic essay (Task 4 – A0).

### **Unit Seven – Academic Essay**

- General feedback on baseline assessment.
- Unpack stage one (introduction) of the academic essay in detail.
- Students to construct own stage one (academic essay) (Task 5 – A1).
- Completed drafts to be handed in at end of each unit for detailed feedback before the next lesson.

### **Unit Eight – Academic Essay**

- Hand out work books and go over general feedback.
- Allow time for individual student queries.
- Unpack stage two (body) of the academic essay.

- Students to make use of feedback for stage one (introduction) and rewrite stage one as well as construct stage two (body) (Task 5 continued – A2).
- Completed drafts to be handed in at end of each unit for detailed feedback.

#### **Unit Nine – Academic Essay**

- Hand out work books and go over general feedback.
- Allow time for individual student queries.
- Unpack stage three (conclusion) of the academic essay.
- Students to make use of feedback for stage one and stage two (introduction and body) and rewrite stage one and two as well as construct stage three (conclusion) (Task 5 continued – A3).
- Completed drafts to be handed in at end of each unit for detailed feedback.

#### **Unit Ten – Academic Essay**

- Hand out work books and go over general feedback.
- Allow time for individual student queries.
- Hand out final post-intervention topic.
- Students to compile post-intervention academic essay (Task 6 – A4).

## Appendix Seven: Student Linguistic Biographical Questionnaire

### Student Linguistic Biographical Questionnaire

1. Name and surname: .....
2. High school name: .....
3. Gender (mark with a ✓): Female ☐ Male ☐
4. Age: .....
5. In which suburb or community do you live permanently? .....
6. How many people, including yourself, currently live in your household: .....
7. What is the highest qualification of your: Father ☐ Mother ☐ Legal Guardian ☐  
(e.g. Grade 8; 12; Degree)
8. What is the occupation (job) of your:  
  
Father .....; Mother.....  
  
Legal Guardian .....
9. What primary school did you attend: .....
10. What was the language of instruction at your primary school (language the school used for learning):  
  
**Grades 1 – 3:** English ☐ Afrikaans ☐ isiXhosa ☐ other: .....  
**Grades 4 – 11:** English ☐ Afrikaans ☐ isiXhosa ☐ other: .....
11. Which of the languages given below do you know?  
Use a number on a scale of 1 to 5 to indicate how you rate your ability in each column:  
1 = not at all (I really struggle to understand)  
2 = not good (I still struggle but not as much)  
3 = satisfactory (I am ok)  
4 = good (I understand the language)  
5 = very good (I understand the language very well)

	Listen	Speak	Read	Write
English				
Afrikaans				
isiXhosa				
Other (list)				

12. Which language do you use in each location/place? (Use a √ in the correct column)

	<b>Classroom learning</b>	<b>Studying on my own</b>	<b>School grounds</b>	<b>Parents and other family</b>	<b>Friends (outside school)</b>	<b>Religion / Church</b>
English						
Afrikaans						
isiXhosa						
Other language (which one)						
I use more than one language (name which ones)						

13. Which languages does your family use at home (not only speaking to you)?

	<b>Siblings</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Grandparents</b>	<b>Other members</b>
English				
Afrikaans				
isiXhosa				
More than one				
Other (specify)				

14.1. Do you use the same language with your family at home as you do at school with friends?

Yes:
No :

14.2. If you answered NO to question 14.1, please explain why:

.....

.....

15. If you had a choice, would you prefer your schooling through the language of?

English	
Afrikaans	
isiXhosa	
Other	

16. Do you read a lot? Yes ☐ No ☐

17.1. How many hours do you spend reading per day (for school or for fun)?

17.2. How many books do you read in a month?

18. What language do you mostly read the following books in?

School books

Reading for fun

Newspaper or magazines

19.1 Do you enjoy reading? Yes

☐

No

☐

19.2 Please explain your answer to question 19.1.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire ☺**

## Appendix Eight: Questionnaire Coding Sheet

### Linguistic Biography Coding Sheet

<b>Q1</b>	Blank					
<b>Q2</b>	PR - 0	KH - 1				
<b>Q3</b>	M - 0	F - 1				
<b>Q4</b>	Real age					
<b>Q5</b>	Real Suburb	Blank - 0				
<b>Q6</b>	Real number	Blank - 0				
<b>Q7</b>	> Matric - 0	Matric - 1	Undergrad - 2	Postgrad - 3	Blank - 4	
<b>Q8</b>	Labourer - 0	Professional - 1	Blank - 2	Stay at home - 3	Unemployed - 4	
<b>Q9</b>	Real name					
<b>Q10</b>	English - 0	Afrikaans - 1	isiXhosa - 2	Other - 3	More than 1 - 4	Blank - 6
<b>Q11</b>	Rating scale					
<b>Q12</b>	English - 0	Afrikaans - 1	isiXhosa - 2	Other - 3	Blank - 4	More than 1 - 5
<b>Q13</b>	English - 0	Afrikaans - 1	isiXhosa - 2	Other - 3	Blank - 4	More than 1 - 5
<b>Q14</b>	Yes - 0	No - 1	No answer - 3	Both - 4		
<b>Q14.2</b>	Descriptive					
<b>Q15</b>	English - 0	Afrikaans - 1	isiXhosa - 2	Other - 3	Both - 4	
<b>Q16</b>	Yes - 0	No - 1				
<b>Q17</b>	Actual number					
<b>Q18</b>	English - 0	Afrikaans - 1	isiXhosa - 2	Other - 3	Blank - 4	More than 1 - 5
<b>Q19</b>	Yes - 0	No - 1	Yes & No - 2	Blank 3		
<b>Q20&lt;</b>						



## Appendix Nine: Writing Portfolio Extracts

Table 4.3 in Chapter Four outlined the multiple writing tasks set for the data collection process. Extracts below offer a snapshot of selected writing drafts used in the selected Case Studies. But to orient the reader to the various topics set for the writing tasks, the following tasks had the following topics set for students:

**Task 1:** In no more than 1 page, you are required to write a narrative. The following words must appear in your narrative – ‘*This experience has made me realise that.....*’ (the words were given as a hint to students as to what a narrative comprises of and I was hoping to see the words used as part of the coda)

**Task 2:** The same narrative topic as Task 1.

**Task 3:** Students were allowed to select their own narrative topic.

**Task 4: Class C:** In no more than one page (500 words), argue whether the novel ‘Buckingham Palace’ by Richard Rive is relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum according to its historical context.

**Task 4: Class B:** In no more than one page (500 words), argue whether the novel ‘Catching Fire’ by Suzanne Collins is relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum.

**Task 4: Class A:** In no more than one page (500 words), argue whether the novel ‘The Kite Runner’ by Khaled Hosseini is relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum.

**Task 5:** Task 5 used the same topic as Task 4.

**Task 6:** Alcohol and substance abuse are becoming a problem amongst the youth in South Africa. The government wants to raise the legal drinking age to 21. Do you agree with this? In no more than 1- 1 ½ pages, motivate whether you agree with this.

## Appendix Nine Continued: Writing Portfolio Extracts (start with a 5 as they link to Chapter 5)

### Case Study One: Aaron (Student No. 92) Class C

Figure 5A.1: Baseline Academic Essay Extract (Task 4)

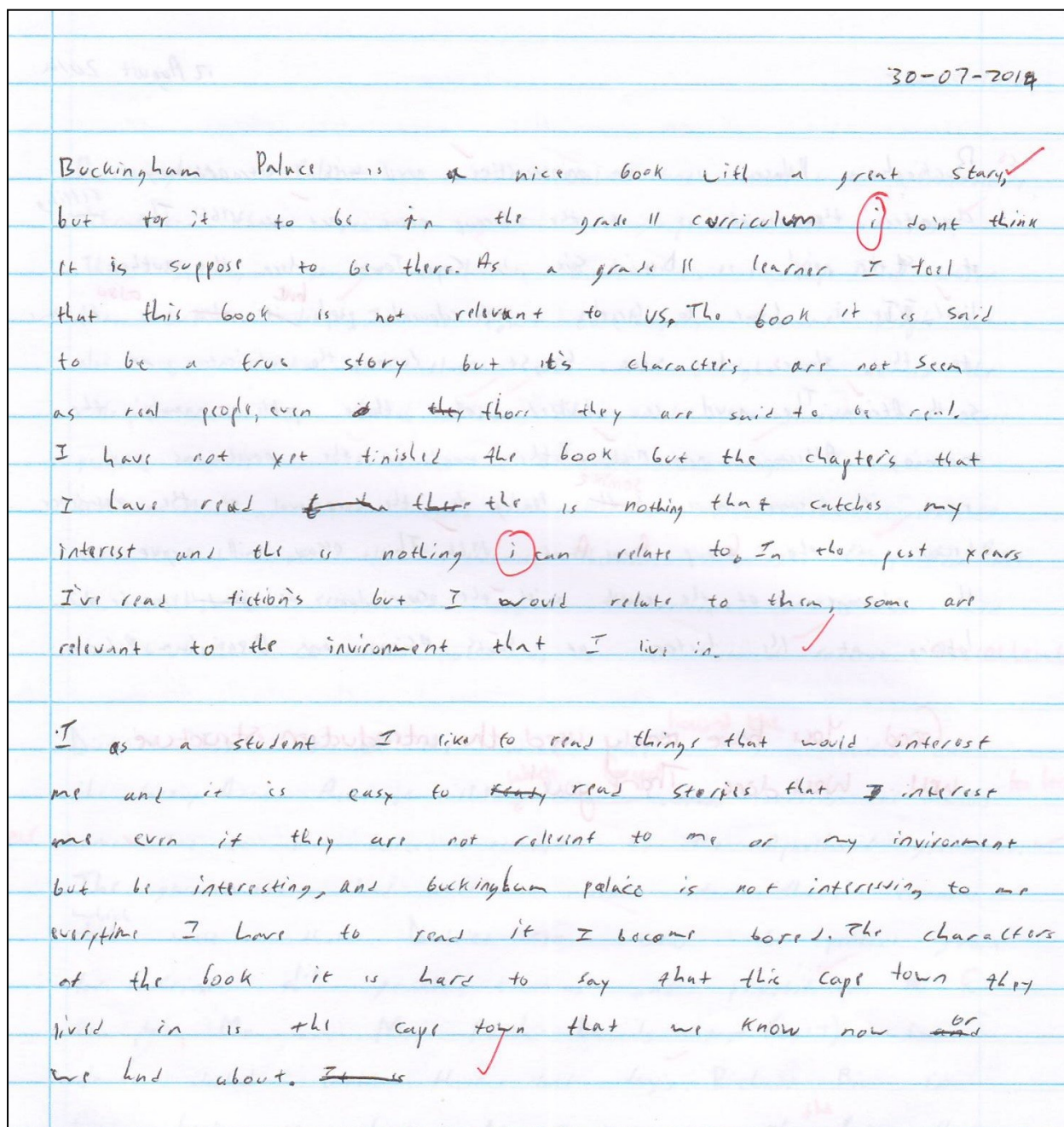


Figure 5A.2: Introduction Extract (Task 5)

29-08-2014

Buckingham Palace is an uninteresting novel with extraordinary characters that reminds us of the group areas act of 1996. The setting of the novel is District Six in Cape Town where the author lived. It is home to largely coloured people but also home to the slaves who were brought in during the colonisation of South Africa. The novel is divided into three parts namely the morning, afternoon and night. The mood of the novel as you read it becomes more somber leading to the removal of the residents because of the Group Areas Act of 1996. This essay will argue the relevance of the novel with the Grade 12 curriculum according to its historical context. **Excellent**

Figure 5A.3: Conclusion (Task 5)

In concluding, this essay argued that the novel is relevant to the grade 12 curriculum according to its historical context. This is due to the historical relevance of the novel that as it has portrays the infamous Group Areas Act of 1996 which saw hundreds of District Six residents removed forcibly from their homes. Richard Rivey wanted to remind the South Africans about their history thereby ensuring past



## Case Study Two: Bryan (Student No. 72) Class C

Figure 5A.4: Baseline Academic Essay Extract (Task 4)

English	30 July 2014
<u>Class-Activity</u> <u>Argument</u>	
<p>Buckingham Palace due to my understanding is a little bit relevant but it would be suitable for grade 12's. This novel has deep English words, it is also interesting to the people who loves the history of South Africa. This novel needs someone who has a dictionary to look for the words that one does not understand, unfortunately <del>we</del> most of us don't have dictionaries. In order to understand it one must dedicate his/her self and his/her time, because it requires more attention. This novel needs to be read every period in order to try and finish it, but for us it's not that easy to do so because we got other things besides this novel. When I say it is a little bit relevant, I'm trying to say this book has chapters so we can study one or two chapters here and finish the novel in grade 12. English has standards of understanding and it would be great if this book can be shared by grade 11 and grade 12's.</p>	



Figure 5A.5: Body and Conclusion (Task 5)

The Group Areas Act of 1996 wiped all houses <sup>and</sup> left memories of many people who lived there. The forced removals left many people homeless and as mentioned that they were poor, and could not afford to buy themselves houses. These removals took place because the government of that time considered Barking Palace a crime zone for Gambling and Prostitution. For example: There was a brothel that was owned by Mary <sup>(pg 29)</sup> ~~Page 29~~ and crimes such as stealing by Pretty Boy <sup>(pg 11)</sup> ~~Page 11~~. Therefore by reading this novel one can be aware of the history of South Africa in times of <sup>the</sup> apartheid system and one can be encouraged to have a positive mind set. History is important as it has shaped the present <sup>and</sup> we learn from our past mistakes. ✓ **Good.**

To conclude, this essay argued that the novel "Barkingsham Palace" is relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum. This is largely due to historical events of the Group Areas Act of 1996 which wiped the homes of many people forcing them to move to the Cape White Flats. By reading this novel people will not again repeat the cruel acts and they can encourage rainbow nation together. **Excellent conclusion. Well done.**



Figure 5A.6: Post-Intervention Introduction and Body (Task 6)

17 October 2014

Argument

Substance and alcohol abuse is overused by the youth especially boys. These boys join gangs and want to fit in or be cool ~~the~~ for example teenagers become Skhothanas. Skhothanas are a group of children that compete with each other with clothes, money, girls and how much alcohol they drink on each weekend. These teenagers put a lot of pressure on their parents and even more pressure on their peers at school. In arguing this point of view, this essay will argue that it is necessary to increase the legal buying and drinking age to 22 on the next three years to come.

On the next three years to come, the law will already considered that 18 year old's teens are not yet matured to drink ~~only~~ <sup>but</sup> they can buy alcohol with special permission. The state can have a ~~dro~~ gangsterism rate dropping suddenly. 18 year old teenagers are still dependant and if the state increases the buying and drinking age to 22, then each person who is allowed to drink would be independant. The risk of dropping out at school would decrease and most children can finish their matric and tertiary education before they get into contact with alcohol or substance abuse.

To conclude, this essay argued that it is necessary to increase the legal buying and drinking age to 22.

## Case Study Three: Chris (Student No. 33) Class B

Figure 5A.7: Baseline Academic Essay Extract

2014.08.08      Argument

According to me, the Hunger Games book is relevant for the Grade 11 curriculum. ~~This will be proven in the~~ The book is telling us about the future, where human kind is heading to. According to me, (is) the world actually going that way. The love story that is being told in this book is a ~~typo~~ ~~tipeset~~ typical relationship that we can relate to. ~~The~~ The relationships can teach us a few things. ✓

The two characters ~~are~~ <sup>do not</sup> ~~doesn't~~ want each other to die and would do anything for each other. ~~In~~ In all relationships the couple would do anything to stay together and not let anything happen with the ~~other~~ other person. ✓



Figure 5A.8: Introduction and Body (Task 5)

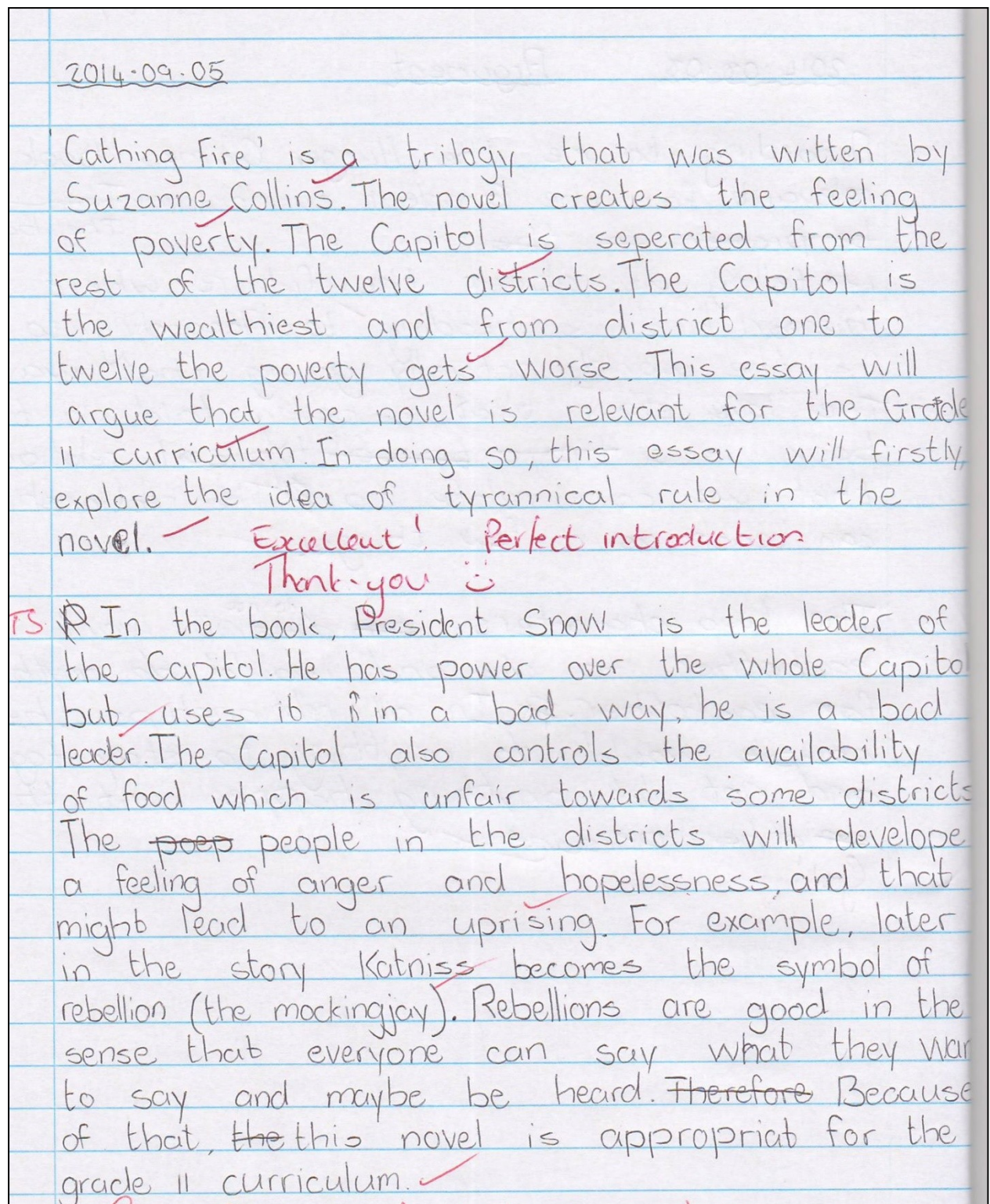




Figure 5A.9: Post-intervention Introduction and Body (Task 6)

~~So~~ Substance and alcohol abuse is becoming a bad thing in the youth of South-Africa. Parties can not be ~~enjoyed~~ <sup>enjoyed</sup> if there is no alcohol or substances. The youth thinks that you need to abuse substances or alcohol to be cool. This essay will argue ~~whether~~ whether the age to buy alcohol must increase to 21. In doing so, this essay <sup>11</sup> firstly ~~argue~~ give proof of substance and alcohol abuse. ✓ good

Substance and alcohol abuse in South-Africa is getting out of hand. More and more children are starting to abuse alcohol at an ~~illegal~~ age. The youth thinks that ~~is~~ it is cool to abuse alcohol and substances and they must therefore be excepted. A lot of families have been ~~ruined~~ wrecked because of ~~the~~ <sup>abuse</sup> ~~use~~ of alcohol and substances. Children had

## Case Study Four: Dennis (Student No. 53) Class B

Figure 5A.10: Baseline Academic Essay

Is the Hunger Games <sup>relevant</sup> ~~fea~~ for the 08/08/14  
Grade 11 curriculum

I think ~~this~~ the Hunger Games book is relevant for the Grade 11 curriculum because the book <sup>teaches</sup> ~~learns~~ you a lot of life lessons and gives you a good imagination. ✓

In the book there <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ different scenes ~~that~~ like one ~~se~~ scene is were it is very romantic and one is intense and scary. These different scenes can give us different aspects of how we must ~~approach~~ ~~approach~~ approach that ~~spesi~~ moment and how to react <sup>at</sup> ~~ca~~ it. ✓

This book also increases ~~&~~ your vocabulary and it is a very ~~interi~~ ~~t~~ interesting book to read, because it keeps you on reading and it is very realistic. ✓

So I think there is more ~~positie~~ positive things about this book than negative and I would say it is relevant for a Grade 11 curriculum. ✓



**Figure 5A.11: Introduction (Task 5)**

'Catching fire' is the second novel in the "Hunger Games" trilogy. The novel is to show the ruthless power that the Capitol has over the 12 Districts. It also shows differences between the Capitol and all the districts. Katniss Evergreen, the novel's protagonist, survives the first round of the Hunger Games but now has to do it all over again under the ruthless Capitol's power. This essay will argue ~~that~~ whether ~~it is~~ <sup>it is</sup> ~~a~~ <sup>it's</sup> relevant to the Grade 11 curriculum ~~or not~~ and ~~in this essay~~ doing so, this essay will firstly, explore the idea of unfair ruling in the novel. Excellent!

**Figure 5A.12: Body (Task 5)**

An unfair ruler (tyrannical ruler) is a leader that has all his power over the people that have less power and authority and this unfair tyrannical leader is usually a very cruel and unfair person or persons. For example, in the novel the Capitol and President Snow shows the typical tyrannical leader because they control all the

Districts and the people that lives in the Districts. President Snow and the Capitol also controls all the resources that is available for the Districts to survive. ~~Because~~ Because of all this non-availability of food, resources etc. <sup>leave this out of academic essays</sup> the people in the District start to become ~~rebel~~ rebellion towards the Capitol. and For ~~Presit~~ example, after Katniss' victory in the Hunger Games the mockingjay becomes a symbol of rebellion towards the Capitol. ~~Rebellions~~ In South Africa we get have a lot of rebellions but it is not always a bad thing but the ~~very~~ actions what they deliver can be unnecessary ~~exp~~ for example, breaking stuff, killing people etc. So this novel can also be important to us to understand why and how rebellions react towards the problem and ~~what~~ the consequences can be ~~could be lead to~~ could be. So Because of the ~~bad~~ and rebellions towards the political of South Africa this ~~bee~~ novel is ~~also~~ ~~app~~ could also be appropriate for the grade 11 curriculum.



Figure 5A.13: Conclusion (Task 5)

To conclude, this essay argued that ~~this~~ the novel, Hunger Games, is relevant for ~~the~~ Grade 11 curriculum. The novel is largely due of all the unfair ~~power~~ and cruel ~~rulers~~ tyrannical rulers in the novel. The ~~Capitol~~ ~~Capitol~~ description of the Capitol ~~over the~~ and his power ~~at~~ ~~over~~ the poor people is very unfair and cruel. ~~and shows his~~ The picture that the novel <sup>illustrate</sup> tells us about the districts & ~~unhappy~~ hopelessness and that they don't have

any say ~~in it~~ to change their lifestyles. The districts rebellion towards the Capitol got worst. This is why it is relevant to the grade 11 curriculum because it is very political and is ~~rele~~ is a reminder of the political ~~center~~ context of South Africa.

## Case Study Five: Erin (Student No. 6) Class A

Figure 5A.14: Baseline Academic Essay

Yes I agree that the kite runner is relevant to the grade 11 curriculum. I will be focusing on the following topics: morality, ~~historical impact~~, real life and compassion. ~~throughout~~ Throughout this paragraph I will explain through these three main points why I agree with the statement. ✓

The Kite Runner is an all known book and I am focusing on one ~~of the~~ <sup>of the</sup> main aspects - the ~~effectiveness~~ effectiveness of displaying ~~the hardships~~ <sup>of</sup> real life. It shows us how cruel people can be and how all ~~around~~ <sup>around</sup> the world you see evil and criminals. It helps teach ~~children~~ <sup>teenagers</sup> that life isn't that great and that life is hard. ✓

The moral aspect of the book shows how different groups/cultures have a different set of morals and the pros and cons of the eastern and western society's. ✓

throughout the essay I have prove my points and my reason for agreeing with statement. ✓



Figure 5A.15: Body (Task 5)

Compassion is the emotion one feels feel in response to the suffering of others that desires a response to help. It is related since ~~we~~ feel compassion for the ones around us on a daily basis. It shows that maturity of emotion by showing compassion is related to the grade 11 curriculum since a teenager is growing up and learning to control his or her emotions.

Through out the book Baba, Hassan and Amir have shared compassion. Baba in his love for Hassan and how his feeling of guilt that overwhelmed him to help Hassan and take care of him. Amir helps receives a ~~telephone~~ phone call from Rahim Khan and learns that he is suffering a dying and finds out that Hassan was his brother and his son Sohrab is being tortured by terrorists and hearing this makes him fill up with a feeling of helping, giving, and compassion.

or Good Body!

TOPIC



Figure 5A.16: Post-intervention Academic Essay (Task 6)

~~the~~ I disagree with the <sup>topic</sup> ~~stat~~ Question. <sup>today the</sup> Many youth of South Africa have a problem with substance abuse, mainly the use of alcohol. The problem is not the age limit but the availability and easy access to alcohol. I will elaborate on the 2 following points, availability and ~~street~~ <sup>distribution</sup>.

The Youth of today struggle with alcohol abuse because it is extremely easy to walk in a store and buy alcoholic substances, any child looking old enough will be sold alcohol and ~~sometimes~~ <sup>many times</sup> it's just because the shop keeper doesn't care and views it as a source of income. Alcohol is just too easy to obtain in South Africa and has caused many social problems amongst today's youth.

There is no following up on the purchase of alcohol and this causes the children to gain access to the substance easily. The effectiveness of the shop owners, police and Gov is very low. They see it as apart of society and life, but do not realise how their failure to persecute the teenage criminals.

to conclude alcohol abuse among south african youth is increasing extremely ~~quickly~~ <sup>density</sup> but changing the age limit is not going to stop



stop the illegal use of alcohol, rather  
that the gaining of alcohol is too easy  
to access and this should be changed  
to create stricter laws on prosecuting  
under age drinking.

**Case Study Six: Frank (Student No. 4) Class A****Figure 5A.17: Baseline Academic Essay**

Is the kite runner relevant to the grade 11 curriculum? I believe that many of the themes are morals that occur throughout the book relate very well to many of the life lessons we are currently learning this year. The book take you on a middle-eastern adventure and teaches the value of friendship and atonement and many of the terrible ~~strife~~ brought about by war. In this grade 11 year we are slowly starting to take leadership as we gradually get closer and closer to our final matric year and I think that this book takes about ~~ab~~ change in a very relatable way as we see how the main character grows as a person, takes responsibility for his action and eventually establishes his authority and accepts his role of leadership. I think the book is a very fitting and ties in nicely with our grade 11 curriculum.



Figure 5A. 18: Full Academic Essay Task 5

The Kite Runner is this year's setwork book; which takes us on a middle eastern adventure following the life and times of Amir Jan and the unlikely friendship / brotherhood with his servant friend Hassan. The book has many themes including redemption and atonement, and in this essay I will argue that the themes in this book and the book as a whole is relevant to grade 11 learners and applicable to the grade 11 curriculum. *Good*

Atonement and redemption are themes that stand out strongly in the book, and as grade 11 learners we are constantly having to reflect upon our actions and even seek to right our wrongs. The book also deals with the subject of becoming ones self and in the same way as Amir must learn to become his own person after the death of his father, we as young men are in a transitional phase where we must become our selves. In this way I would

say that the book is very  
releateable ✓ Good

To conclude, ✓ in this essay argued  
that the grade 11 setwork book  
"the kite runner" is relevant and  
applicable for grade 11's. The themes  
in this book as well as the  
life lessons can easily be applied  
in our lives. Many of the struggles  
Amir faces can be indirectly  
applied to us as grade 11's  
and for this reason I would say  
the book is suitable. ✓



Figure 5A.19: Post-intervention Academic Essay (Task 6)

With rising levels of substance ~~and~~ alcohol abuse amongst the youth in our country the question arises on how to combat this problem. One method currently being looked into is ~~that~~ a possible increase in the legal buying age and drinking age to 21. In this essay I will be arguing against increasing the legal buying age/ drinking age. *Good no CS*

I feel that an increase in the legal age will only be postponing the problem at hand, and create an even bigger group of people who can fall into "under age" drinking. In this way an increase in the legal age will be doing more harm than good. *Toxic?*

In conclusion I believe that alternative solutions such as creating *new info* awareness and implementing *new info* "big brother" programs would be more effective. This essay argued against an increase in the legal age.



## Case Study Seven: Greg (Student No. 50) Class B

Figure 5A.20: Pre-Intervention Academic Essay

08/08/14

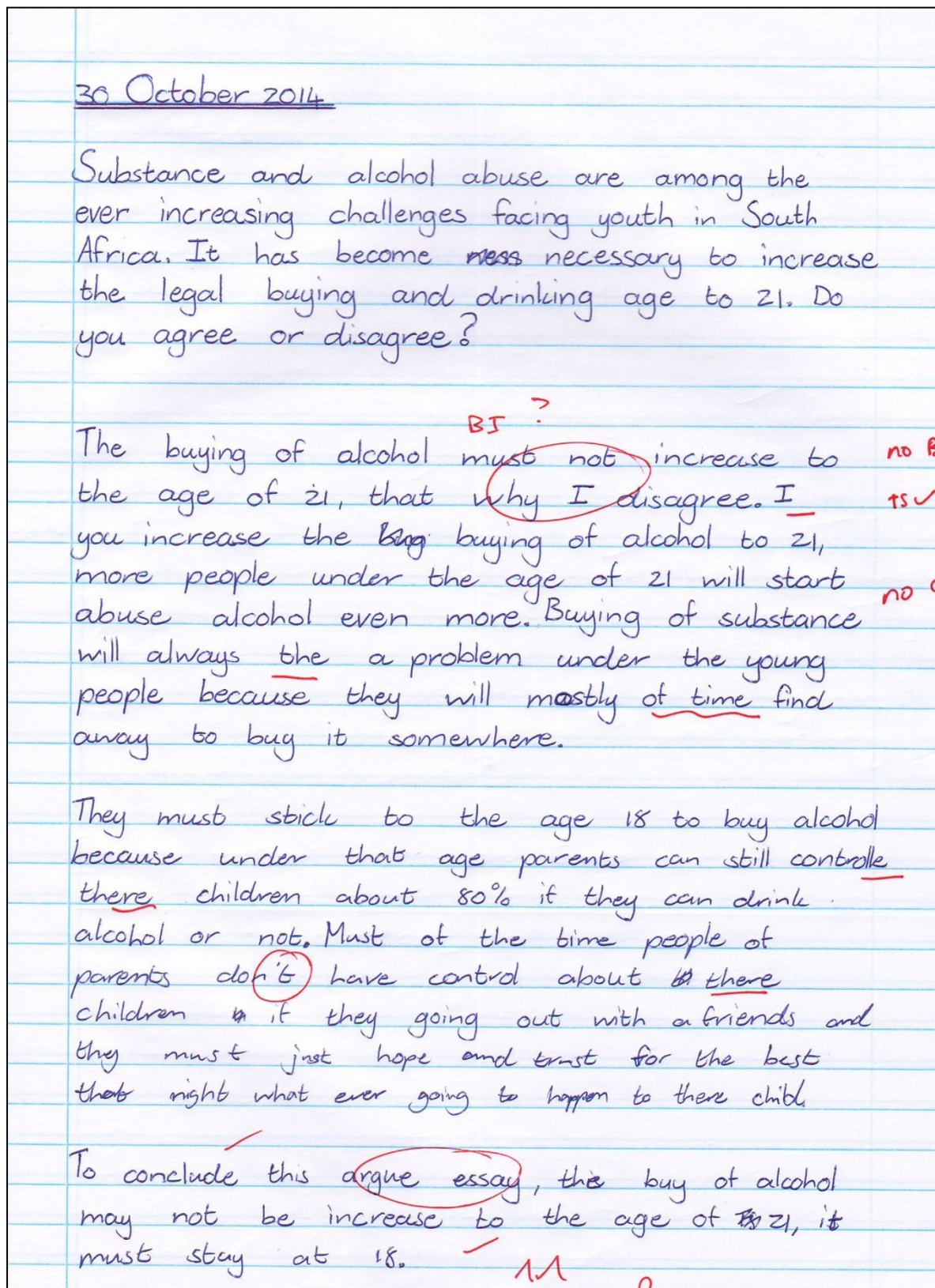
In no more than page, argue whether the novel.

The Hunger Games is relevant for the Grade 11 curriculum.

The Hunger Games must not be in the curriculum, because it a boring book which doesn't insturant boy in Grade 11 for Paul Roos of the ~~age~~ age between 16 to 18 year old. They must pick a book that will get the boys ~~at~~ ~~to~~ to like and to love reading ~~to~~ the book. ~~They must not just~~

I think they must ask to boys which book will they love to have in the curriculum. In Afrikaans all or mostly of the boys LOVE the curriculum. So why can't they do the same in English.....??

Figure 5A.21: Post-Intervention Academic Essay





## Case Study Eight: Harry (Student No.96) Class C

Figure 5A.22: Pre-Intervention Academic Essay

In no more than one page, argue whether the novel Buckingham palace is relevant for the Grade 11 curriculum.

write an essay that discusses the effectiveness of the ending of the story.

~~The~~ Buckingham palace is <sup>a</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>novel by the</sup> relevant of grade 11 <sup>TS</sup> curriculum, because it teaches us more information about ~~the~~ bad behaviour and good. Buckingham palace ~~have~~ the family of Mary. Mary is the daughter and the girls of Zoot pretty-boy and cousin of the ~~for~~ Abraham's family. Buckingham ✓

Buckingham palace is a dinky row of four house into the heart of District Six, a notorious slum area at the foot of Table Mountain overlooking Cape town. On the Buckingham palace have ~~other~~ <sup>which</sup> traces the community ~~thru~~ <sup>thru</sup> its moments of despair its loves, its ~~in~~ churches. ✓

In the story have a girl called Mary this girl she was clever and she lovely church and <sup>the</sup> good things. This girl she ~~closed~~ <sup>closed</sup> to pastor of church and he love him. But this girl when was grow she changed ~~our~~ <sup>her</sup> ~~displine~~ <sup>displine</sup> because of change a place to another place. At the end she is married. And the boy called Zoot he is dangerous boy in our place. he bugler in our area then he left the places he visited



Figure 5A.23: Pre-Intervention Academic Essay

Argue :-

Substance and alcohol abuse is increasing in South Africa country an expecial the youth. But it is not necessary to use a substance and alcohol. and it's it is not supposed to use substance and alchoe before 22 years.

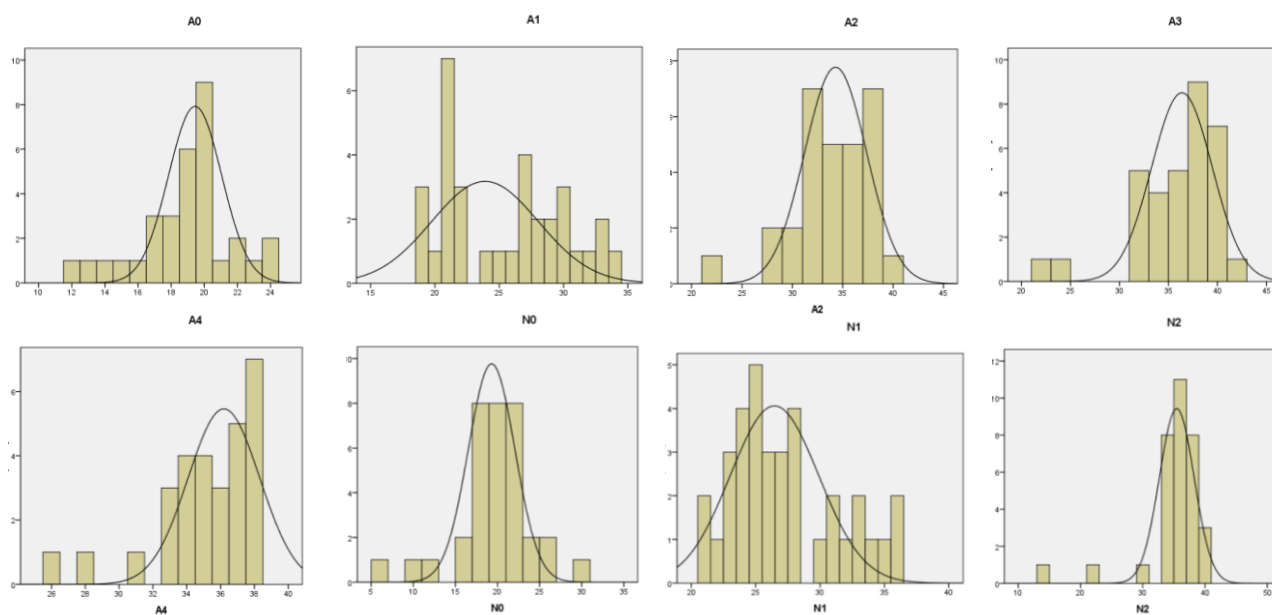
Substance and alcohol is abusing the youth an expecial in South Africa. And it is increase but it's not necessary to. The youth of South Africa will using substance and alcohol. And will buying this before 22 years and drinking it. But it is not good to do us. The substance and alcohol is abusing our mind and kill our self. it is not good to using the substance and alcohol because you affecting your self and dissatisfied. The example of substance abuse and alcohol abuse to not supposed to use is, glue, BB, and bangs, drinking alcohol etc. Because will affected your life.

**To conduct**

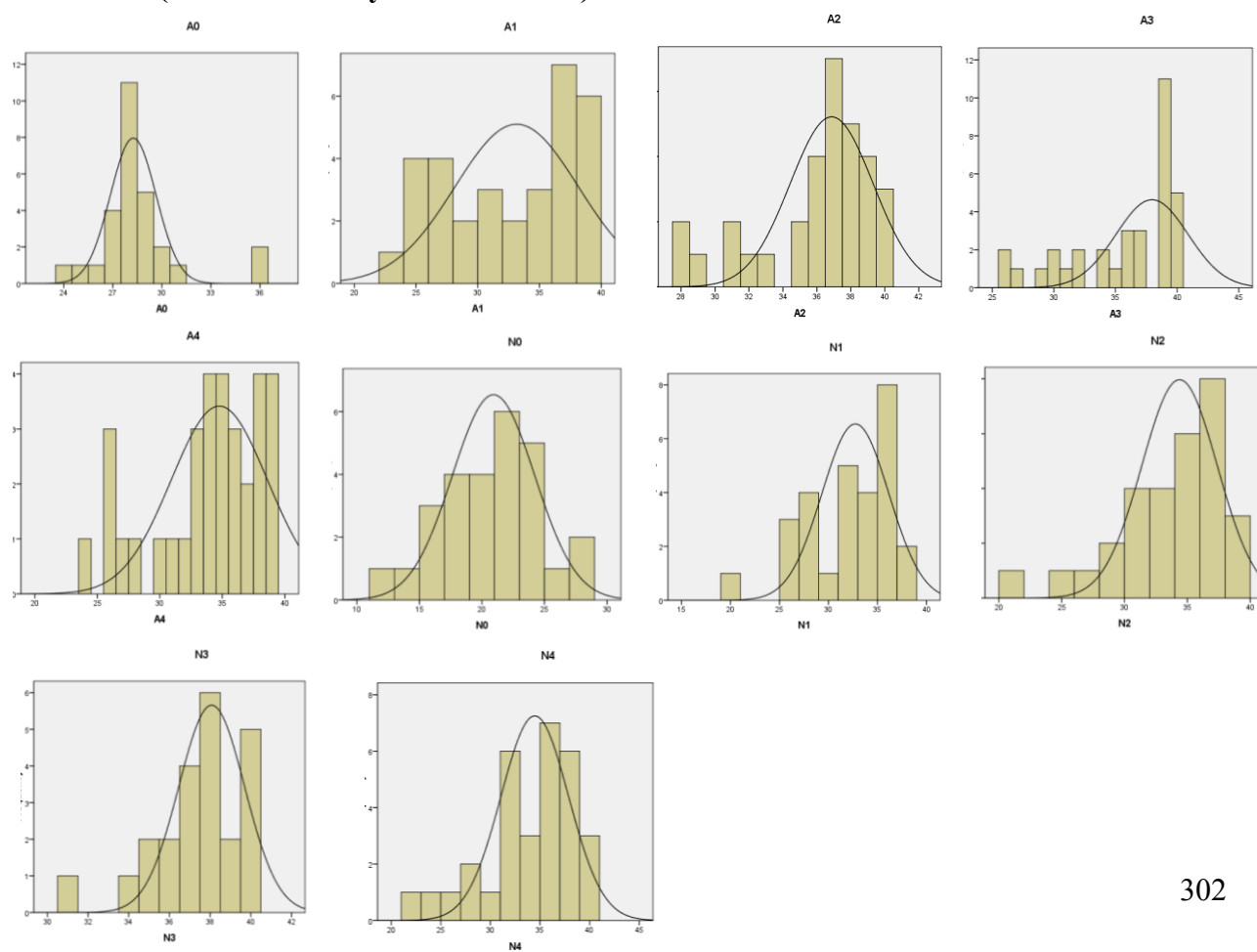
it is not important to use substance and alcohol. Because substance and alcohol will abusing our self. will dissatisfied our mind and affecting our life. And it is not necessary to using substance and alcohol. And it is not good to buying substance and alcohol before 22 years. The substance and alcohol abuse is the challenge facing the youth of in South Africa.

## Appendix Ten: Histograms

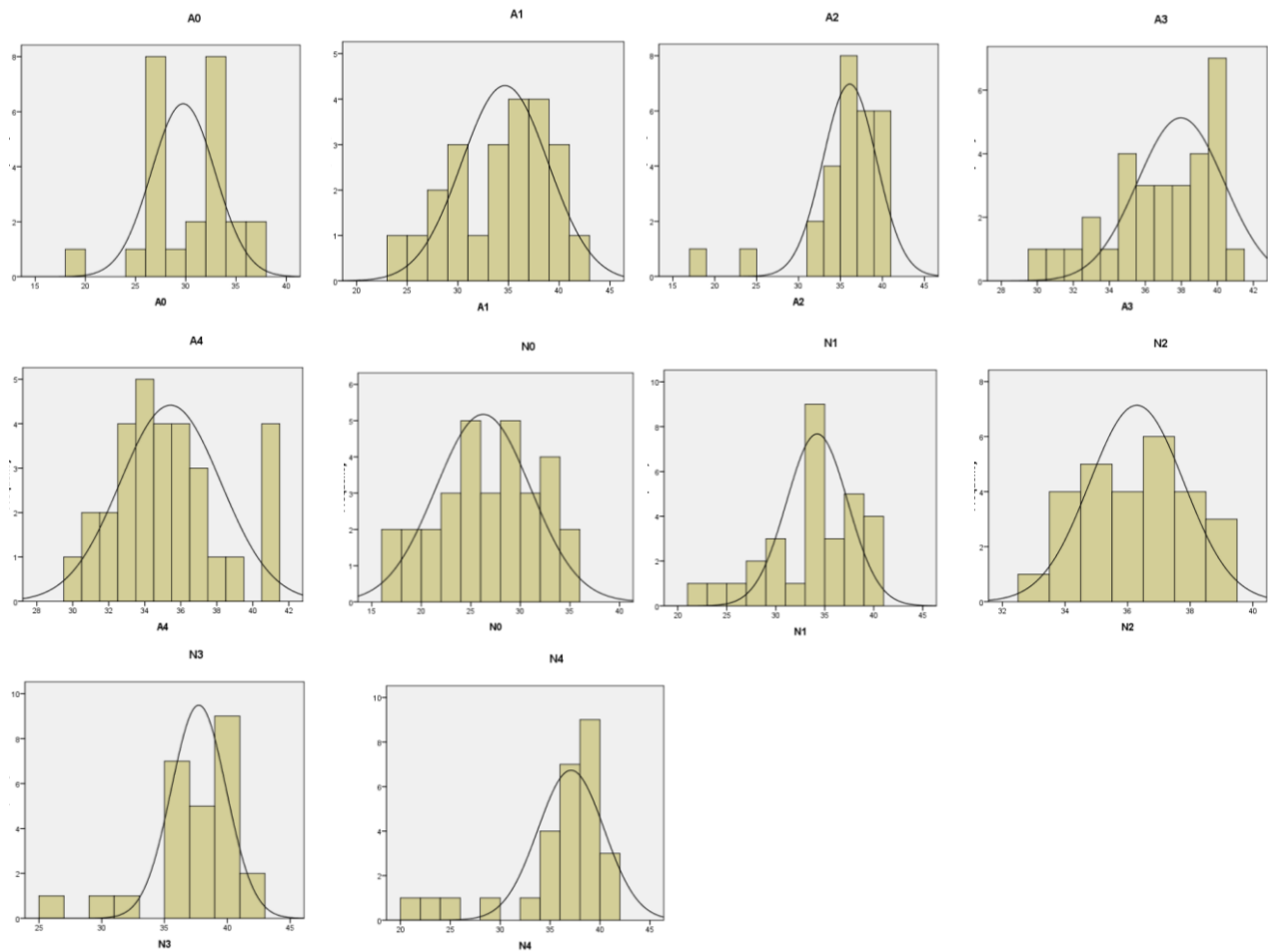
### Class C (Academic Essay and Narrative)



### Class B (Academic Essay and Narrative)



**Class A (Academic Essay and Narrative)**



**Appendix Eleven: Raw Data files****Class C Raw Data (Numerical Scores)**

Code	N0	N1	N2	N4	A1	A2	A3	A4
67	20	28	36	20	21	37	36	33
68	18	26	36	18	21	31	34	36
69	20	27	34	20	32	34	37	38
70	22	36	37	19	28	ab	38	38
71	22	28	36	17	31	38	39	36
72	17	31	39	24	30	38	40	37
73	29	36	ab	16	33	37	38	35
74	17	27	33	18	21	38	31	31
75	17	26	30	22	22	36	34	37
76	18	24	ab	20	ab	36	Deceased	
77	21	25	38	20	30	36	39	37
78	16	23	36	Deceased				
79	12	ab	21	14	19	27	34	ab
80	19	27	34	17	20	dnf	41	34
81	23	34	39	23	27	37	39	38
82	23	24	38	19	24	27	32	33
83	16	21	33	20	27	32	32	33
84	17	25	35	24	25	32	37	37
85	20	25	37	20	27	34	40	34
86	21	33	38	21	22	32	35	38
87	21	28	33	20	28	38	39	35
88	21	23	36	22	29	36	38	38
89	17	21	36	19	27	31	36	34
90	10	24	35	ab	21	34	ab	ab
91	22	35	40	17	34	34	38	38
92	20	26	37	19	26	31	39	35
93	25	32	ab	20	33	ab	34	ab
94	20	22	14	13	22	22	22	28
95	ab	24	37	ab	21	ab	23	ab
96	6	23	33	12	19	29	32	26
97	20	28	34	15	19	31	37	35
98	17	25	38	19	21	34	36	34
99	19	30	34	19	21	36	38	37
100	22	25	35	18	29	30	37	36
101	26	33	36	20	30	39	35	38
102	ab	31	35	ab	ab	ab	ab	ab

\* Note – N4 for this class was actually N2. They did not complete the narrative cycle so their N2 was used as if it was N4.

**Class B Raw Data (Numerical Scores)**

Code	N0	N1	N2	N3	N4	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4
33	ab	ab	ab	ab	ab	27	38	39	39	36
34	ab	ab	ab	ab	35	28	ab	ab	37	37
35	19	35	36	38	36	31	35	40	37	38
36	24	35	34	40	28	30	29	37	39	35
37	19	ab	25	36	40	dnf	32	38	40	34
38	18	37	36	37	37	27	37	39	39	33
39	16	34	34	37	37	30	36	38	40	38
40	ab	30	32	ab	27	ab	27	31	27	26
41	ab	35	35	38	35	28	25	36	26	30
42	17	26	30	35	34	29	35	39	36	35
43	ab	ab	21	ab	30	27	27	32	39	33
44	21	36	32	ab	32	ab	ab	ab	ab	ab
45	16	ab	ab	ab	22	26	23	28	29	dnf
46	22	34	30	39	37	29	30	37	26	27
47	24	32	36	40	38	28	39	39	39	36
48	23	25	36	38	32	28	36	37	39	36
49	22	35	35	40	36	ab	24	33	34	34
50	19	25	29	37	26	24	34	37	36	26
51	ab	ab	26	ab	32	ab	28	29	32	28
52	21	32	36	38	35	28	ab	36	34	38
53	18	31	36	ab	32	25	27	38	39	37
54	14	32	32	34	dnf	28	32	35	32	35
55	27	38	35	38	36	ab	36	37	39	34
56	22	33	37	39	39	29	38	37	40	38
57	20	36	39	40	38	29	36	38	35	35
58	18	34	37	35	33	28	30	37	40	39
59	24	35	31	ab	34	28	38	36	36	32
60	15	28	35	37	31	28	25	35	31	24
61	12	20	ab	31	23	ab	26	31	30	26
62	24	27	33	40	ab	28	37	36	39	39
63	27	35	38	36	37	29	30	dnf	37	34
64	ab	28	38	ab	39	36	39	40	39	39
65	25	32	28	ab	31	28	24	28	30	31
66	21	28	31	38	36	27	37	38	40	33



**Class A Raw Data (Numerical Scores)**

Code	N0	N1	N2	N3	N4	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4
1	ab	ab	ab	ab	ab	ab	36	34	37	31
2	28	34	dnf	36	37	33	33	36	39	34
3	25	35	35	ab	39	27	ab	35	35	35
4	24	38	39	40	ab	26	dnf	35	40	35
5	28	nf	36	39	39	32	ab	34	38	39
6	20	27	37	36	21	27	24	35	31	36
7	34	39	38	40	37	33	35	36	39	41
8	23	32	36	37	40	31	30	37	36	34
9	24	34	38	39	38	29	38	39	40	36
10	33	34	34	39	39	36	38	38	41	41
11	33	37	39	41	39	ab	39	40	40	41
12	25	37	35	36	37	32	28	37	36	33
13	26	34	39	35	40	36	31	39	39	37
14	20	30	37	ab	36	26	36	40	35	34
15	29	33	37	39	35	34	40	32	40	36
16	17	30	34	38	33	24	35	33	37	33
17	23	29	35	35	37	32	27	33	30	35
18	26	34	33	26	23	19	ab	ab	ab	ab
19	24	27	37	39	ab	ab	33	36	33	34
20	31	36	34	ab	34	30	29	35	35	33
21	33	40	dnf	41	38	32	38	39	40	41
22	32	35	38	38	35	ab	34	39	38	33
23	27	39	34	30	40	ab	41	38	40	35
24	18	34	35	36	24	27	26	24	35	32
25	28	39	38	ab	36	32	39	37	36	37
26	35	37	dnf	39	38	27	ab	32	32	36
27	31	34	37	37	29	35	37	36	39	31
28	29	22	36	36	39	ab	30	38	38	37
29	17	23	dnf	32	36	27	ab	ab	34	30
30	30	37	35	37	38	ab	dnf	18	40	38
31	23	25	36	DNF	DNF	32	ab	ab	37	34
32	19	34	37	39	34	27	dnf	ab	33	32



**All Glory to God!**

**Hebrews 12: 1-2**