



Blended Learning as an academic writing intervention programme for first year students' academic writing

By

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Signed

Date: 12 March 2021

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DEDICATION

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to explore blended learning as an intervention process for first year's students' academic writing. The 21st century foci on technology and the unprecedented 2020 academic year, presented an ideal opportunity for the use of digital platforms as a space for students to learn, particularly those students who might be struggling with academic writing and who would appreciate not being publicly exposed to the stigma of struggling in a class or in the lecture room. With blended learning, most students are not restricted to the classroom nor the university timetable. This is because the uploaded content on the digital spaces gives these students the freedom to learn according to their individual needs. The students are also at liberty to learn at their own paces or at the pace of their peers in class. The aim of the blended learning writing intervention is to ensure that students are able to write texts independently in the topics they define themselves. Needless to say, that by using suitable guidance and the skills gained through their engagement and interactions with the face to face and digital space.

The study is framed theoretically in the Community of Inquiry based on Bourdieu's structural constructivism theory and Lauillard (2013) six steps of blended learning. These six steps include: acquisition, inquiry, discussion, collaboration, practise and production. The study is premised and conducted through a qualitative Interpretivist paradigm that involves a population of 32 people. Using a purposive sampling of 30 first year English Home Language students and 2 Intermediate Phase Language Lecturers were selected. The data was collected through document analysis, blended learning process and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis informed the analytical tool for the investigation. This study is of paramount value, because it would inform and assist the teaching of academic writing through blended learning.

Keywords: Academic Writing, academic literacy, writing challenges, blended learning pedagogy, English home language, multi-modality, multilingualism, translanguaging, Blackboard, digital literacy

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction/Background:

Staker and Horne (2012) describe blended learning as an online conveyance of content and teaching which gives the student partial control over time, place and path. This kind of pedagogy is one which allows the student to learn at their convenience. In this case, the student is not only restricted to the classroom nor only to the university. On the contrary, the timetable and the uploaded content gives them the freedom to learn according to their individual needs. The students are also not forced to learn at the pace of their peers in class. The aim of the Blended learning writing intervention is to ensure that students are able to write texts independently in the topics they define themselves, by using suitable guidance and the skills gained (Karasu 2018: 116). During the writing of texts, the manner of implementation and duration of the stages vary. This may be implemented through intensive action of the facilitator as a model, or drafts may be written by students individually, after the pre-writing stage is completed. Writing is an essential part of life that plays a vital role in teaching and learning as it is used to gather knowledge (Harris, Graham & Friedlander 2013:538).

Furthermore, writing is used by learners to demonstrate knowledge, which therefore makes it imperative for the learners to develop skills for the different kinds of writing strategies (Harris, Graham & Friedlander, 2013:539). Given the importance of writing across the curriculum and for academic purposes, this study seeks to understand and identify barriers encountered. In view of this, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) compiled a qualitative analysis of the Annual National Assessments (ANA) 2011 Results, in which they determined the difficulty in the level of questions and learner's responses in terms of competencies, skills and knowledge (DBE, 2011). The report reflected that the average score for language and mathematics was 30 percent and lower which is why some form of intervention is required to boost language and Mathematics. Learners had a low competency level in literacy and basic language skills which is why when they enter institutions of higher education, they struggle to cope with the literacy demands. They had poor comprehension skills and were not able to infer meaning and evaluate questions

critically. Nor could they write creatively despite being given visuals to stimulate their imagination (DBE, 2011). Van der Berg (2015) identifies learning deficits across the education system and how these deficits affect the school career. The results of the research proved a distinct gap between children from advantaged and non-advantaged backgrounds prevalent in Grade 4 and that this reflected similarly amongst the grade 12s. Access to university could be pre-determined by grade 4 performance and that interventions based on the ANA results should not be done in grade 9 but in grade 4.

This apparent failure of the ANA results means that there is no current language proficiency indication available to the National Department of Education or its teachers. The impact of this is that no remedial interventions are put in place. This results in learners with low English language adeptness being given access to Higher Education, but not necessarily being able to cope with the level of English proficiency that is required in an academic forum.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no current research that will give an indication of this factor, but from my observed reality over the past two years, it is apparent that the majority of our non-English language students are challenged by the English Language policy of the institution. Several of them cannot participate in class discussions and critical debates, and the level of their written language exercises is a strong indication that these students are severely hampered, not by their intellects, but by their inability to think, process and meaningfully write in a language that remains foreign to them. The acknowledgement of this fact is what has driven me to carry out this investigation with the hope of coming up with some interventions that may pitch first year students to the level of Higher Education.

1.1.1 The transition from schooling to tertiary education:

Post 1994, South African HEIs have become racially and culturally diverse (Chetty & Pather, 2016). The heterogeneous students, with diverse needs and expectations ultimately require HEI's to adapt and cater for students coming from extreme inequalities in terms of their schooling, race, class, and socio-economic resources (Nelson, Clarke, Kift, and Creagh, 2011). Similarly, Boughey and Mckenna (2016) argue that students' understanding of, and how they should adapt to, academic literacy, is a pertinent attributing factor in the

demeanour they require to transition into higher education institutions (HEI). In view of this, Tinto (1993) also argues that students can integrate academically and socially at universities if the space is created by the institution for this to take place. It is in this light this investigation believes that Blended Learning could be ideal to create such an environment. For instance, a student who does not perform well academically might be able to easily integrate socially (Tinto, 1993). Many researchers have used Bourdieu's work, *Theoretical Tools* (1990) to study students' diverse higher education experiences in terms of gender, race, and class.

Bourdieu (1990) takes students' integration a level further. He investigated black, minority, and low-income students to understand the environments in which they were raised, their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and how these influenced their ability to cope with HEI discourses. Pather (2016) developed a holistic integrated framework named *the Conceptual Model* by using both Tinto and Bourdieu's works. In her findings, she discovered that students' sense of belonging is shaped by the environments in which they were raised. Pather (2016) identified the gap between school and the HEI in students' transitioning process and encourages social interaction by building extra-curricular activities into the academic timetable to build and strengthen students' first year transition from schooling to HEIs. Her argument is that, should the transitioning gap be closed, fewer students are likely to drop out. This study intends to use blended learning as a social space to reduce fear and anxiety in the students where Blackboard comes in very handy.

Results from the Benchmark Test Project National Report of 2016 showed that the academic literacy levels of students intending to study teaching are low and that these students have attained only the basic levels of reading and writing due to their poor literacy skills. A major concern highlighted in this report is that these learners who envisage studying teaching are ultimately confronted with numerous challenges, one being their lack of preparedness for the rigorous demands of higher education and exposure to technology.

Students pass through a set of stages during the improvement of writing skills. While they are more dependent on their lecturers at the beginning of this process, they gradually improve their writing skills with the facilitator's acting as their model and guide (Tompkins, 2007). Blended learning intends to evaluate the success of teaching students face to face

in the classroom and using the digital method of recording short videos based on Academic Writing, which are uploaded on Blackboard, for students to learn at their own pace. Students whose home language is not English are for the most part expected to cope with the demands of a university degree without any intervention from their lecturers (Ravichdran, Kretoivics, Kirby & Ghosh, 2017). Although Academic Literacy is compulsory at HEIs its main objective is improving students' academic writing, but due to students' tight class schedules, they struggle to find the time to attend classes (Tran, 2013). Therefore, blended learning should be specifically designed to improve particularly academic writing in English first additional language.

Students at universities of Technology find it difficult to write well and proficiently using academic discourses because of their linguistic and language backgrounds and their attitudes toward academic writing (Pineteh, 2013). Although academic discourse practices are not being taught at secondary schools in South Africa, a high proficiency is required/expected from students at tertiary level. Many first-year students are found to fall below in the required proficiency level for 'home language' or the language of preference at higher education institutions (DHET, 2017). This alludes to first year students at HEIs struggling to cope with the standard of home language proficiency defined by and required at HEIs. Pineteh (2013) highlights the gap for multi-modalities and its potential to reach students who are struggling with academic writing. Furthermore, very little research has been conducted about academic spaces being created for first year students, transitioning students to practise academic writing skills in order to hone their academic writing practices. In this course the 'English Home' Language class for the past year, my observation of their formal assessments highlighted the fact that the students in this class cannot necessarily be categorised as 'English Home Language speakers'. The researcher intends to implement the multi-modal pedagogy by teaching face to face during lecture times and creating the digital space on the *Blackboard Learner Management System (LMS)* to hone the academic writing skills of a group of first year English Home Language students.

The South African National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 was developed with the stated aim of equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary for higher education (DoHE, 2012). According to the Language Policy (DoHE, 2012), most

students who enter HEIs are not fully proficient in the main languages (English and Afrikaans) being used for teaching and learning in higher education. Many first-year students are found to fall below in the required proficiency level for 'home language' or the language of preference at higher education institutions (DHET, 2017). This alludes to first year students at HEIs struggling to cope with the standard of home language proficiency defined by and required at HEIs.

In South Africa, the minimum requirement to pass the National Senior Certificate (NSC) in one's home language is 40%, while the minimum requirement for higher education in home language is 50%. Results from the Benchmark Test Project National Report of 2016 show that the academic literacy levels of students intending to study teaching are low and that these students have attained only the basic levels of reading and writing. A major concern highlighted in this report is that these learners who envisage studying teaching are ultimately confronted with numerous challenges, one being their lack of preparedness for the rigorous demands of higher education. The findings of this report provide clear indication of the need for HEIs to provide a literacy intervention programme to support students that are at risk (Pearson & Naug, 2013). This also clearly indicates that secondary education institutions and higher education institutions are not aligned in terms of their minimum requirement to pass 'home language'. Thus, students achieving the minimum NSC home language requirement will either never enter HEI's or they will struggle with the officially designated home language once having entered at an HEI.

Based on his research, Pineteh (2013), a South African HEI lecturer, recommends the following strategies to address the challenges experienced by undergraduates: integration of academic literacies in disciplinary curricula, the promotion of multimodalities of teaching and assessment, and, in particular, collaboration between language lecturers and core specialists. He further recommends intensive academic reading and writing workshops, as well as increased formative feedback (Pineteh, 2013). His findings suggest that there is an urgent need for intervention classes for those students who struggle with academic literacy, of which academic writing is a component.

Given that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a vital requirement in educational institutions in the 21st century, most HEI learning and teaching pedagogies

have evolved from traditional face-to-face classes to blended learning that is teaching and learning using face-to-face classes in combination with online learning. Distance education institutions continue to implement e-learning in which technology is the sole pedagogical practice. It is important that HEIs, not only those, such as University of South Africa (UNISA), which are based exclusively on a distance learning model, take advantage of the benefits of e-learning to improve teaching and learning platforms, and to cope with the increasing demand for higher education and training (Al-Qahtani & Higgins, 2012). Using digital technology in higher education can further augment effective implementation of curriculum policy and create a learning platform in which students are keen to participate and to engage with the content (Waghid & Waghid, 2016). The 21st century focus on technology presents an ideal opportunity to use the digital platform as a space for students to learn, particularly those students who might be struggling with academic writing and who would appreciate not being publicly exposed to the stigma of struggling as they would be in a class or lecture room. On the digital platform they might experience the freedom and space to learn, and to learn at their own pace.

In May 2018, the South African Minister of Higher Education Naledi Pandor, in her speech introducing the Department of Higher Education and Training's 2018 Budget Vote, placed emphasis on the implementation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the implications this is likely to have for education (DHET, 2018). The Fourth Industrial Revolution is progressing at a rapid pace and is set to significantly transform the systems of the world as we know it today. This new digital age advanced technology is characterised by merging technology with the physical, digital and biological spheres (World Economic Forum, 2016). The Minister's speech reinforces the need to move forward with the Digital Age. On this basis, the researcher's academic writing intervention is intended to take place on a digital sphere, *Blackboard*. The students participating in the research have access to *Blackboard* and it is convenient for them use this educational space created for their learning.

1.2 Problem Statement:

According to Moodley and Singh (2015), a substantial number of students drop out of universities each year due to a lack of academic support. Students whose home language is not English are for the most part expected to cope with the demands of a university

degree without any intervention from their lecturers (Ravichdran, Kretovics, Kirby & Ghosh, 2017). Intervention classes to improve the language proficiency, particularly in writing of second language English speakers are optional and students end up struggling to attend these classes due to their tight class schedules (Tran, 2013). Based on the findings of these researchers, and the researcher's own experience with first year Intermediate Phase students. It is evident that these students are not prepared for the transition from schools into institutions of tertiary education. The subject under investigation is to see how blended learning can be implemented as a digital intervention programme for first year students' academic writing in South African Universities.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Main research question

How can Blended learning be implemented as an intervention programme for first-year students' academic writing?

1.3.1.1 Sub-questions

- 1) What is the nature of first year student's academic writing?
- 2) Which strategies are used in HEI to address students' academic writing challenges?
- 3) How do language lecturers address academic writing challenges?
- 4) How is blended learning currently implemented in the regular teaching and learning to improve first year students writing?

1.4 Aim/Objectives

- To determine the nature of first year student's academic writing
- To explore the strategies used in addressing student's academic writing
- To investigate the how lecturers, address first year student's academic writing challenges
- To find out how blended learning is currently implemented in the regular teaching and learning of first year students

1.5 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore how Blended learning can be implemented as an intervention programme for first-year students' academic writing?

1.6 Delimitation (scope) of the study

This study investigated blended learning as an intervention programme for 30 first year students' academic writing in the Intermediate Phase of the Education Faculty, at a university of technology in the Western Cape.

1.7 Significance of the study

Very little study has been done on blended learning at this university. It is important to mention that no study has been conducted to explore blended learning as an intervention programme for the first-year students in the Intermediate Phase of the Education Faculty at Mowbray Campus. This study is unique in the fact that this research was conducted during a pandemic which has never been done before. The study is imperative to students' academic attainment and useful to the first-year lecturers teaching academic writing or language since the findings of this study may provide lecturers with an intervention programme for students writing and strategies to teach writing. This research provides lecturers with insights into the first-year students' academic writing experience and highlights the challenges they faced with academic writing. Furthermore, very little research has been done on multi-modality pedagogy and this study highlights the valuable contribution it has to academic retention and success.

1.8 Chapters outline

The study consists of the following chapter outlined below:

Chapter 1 provides the background to the study and outlines the problem statement, research questions and objectives. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology that was used in this study.

Chapter 2 provides the relevant literature that contributes to understanding the study; including the theoretical framework of the theories that underpin this study.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology that was used in this study. Detailed description is given of the procedures followed to collect data from participants. How the gathered data were analysed is described. The research site, sampling method and research instruments are explained. Ethical issues and trustworthiness is addressed.

Chapter 4 presents data collected from the participants.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis and discussion of the data collected from the participants.

Chapter 6 concludes the study and makes recommendations based on the investigation.

1.9 Summary

This chapter explained the necessity for this study. It furthermore explains the purpose, objectives and significance of the study.

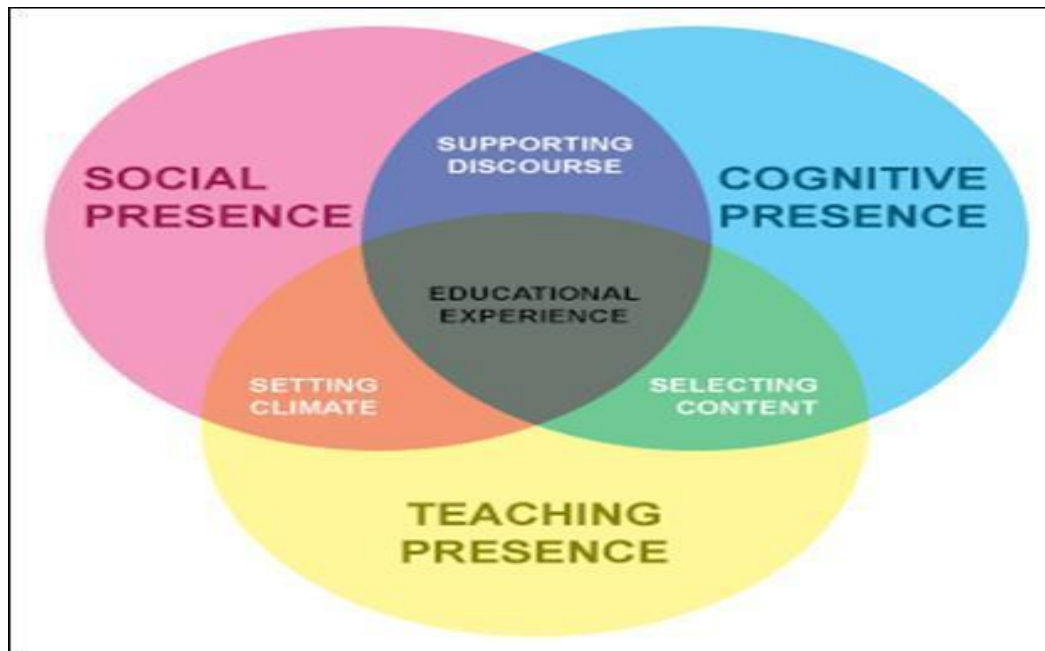
CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides an overview of recent research on barriers to academic writing and blended learning as an intervention for academic writing. The chapter focuses on the Community of Inquiry as a theoretical framework and its applicability to the study. To foreground this, I would discuss what multi-modal pedagogy is the best approach for teaching academic writing through blended learning. In addition, I also discussed the difference between academic literacy and academic writing, followed by an overview of the language policy at CPUT. To give a context, there is a discussion on bilingualism; multilingualism and translanguaging and digital literacy and digital intervention.

2.2 Theoretical framework



Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000)

The theoretical framework is informed by Bourdieu's work, *Theoretical Tools* of structural constructivism (1990). This theory was used to study students' diverse higher education experiences in terms of background, gender, race, and class. Based on this, Bourdieu (1990) takes students' integration a level further. He investigated black, minority, and low-income students to understand the environments in which they were raised, their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and how these influenced their ability to cope with new discourses. This provides a good context for the students under study and in a way clues the lecturers on the way forward. In line with structural constructivism, Garrison, Anderson and Archer's (2000) Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework integrates three elements, overlapping 'presences', to reach successful educational experiences in HEIs. These elements are:

- 1) cognitive presence,
- 2) social presence and,
- 3) teaching presence.

Garrison et al. (2001) define the cognitive presence within the Community of Inquiry framework as the degree to which learners can construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and dialogue with one another, and the course content. Garrison et al. (2001) categorised the cognitive presence into a four-phase process of practical inquiry:

- a triggering event, which refers to when an issue or problem is identified and needs to be resolved.
- exploration, which refers to when students exploring the issue both individually and corporately through critical thinking and dialogue.
- integration, which refers to learners moving from higher level critical thinking to developing their ideas; and
- resolution, which refers to when learners apply the knowledge gained in an educational context.

Apart from students reflecting on their own academic writing, the lecturer created a conducive platform of blended learning in class and on *Blackboard* for the students to use their critical thinking skills by deliberating and challenging one another's academic writing.

Collaboratively, students need to develop problem-solving techniques by sharing their opinions and challenges with their peers and lecturer in the classroom as well as online. Students will be asked to peer assess each other's work by identifying five challenges that they may be experiencing with writing. The peer then must resolve those identified challenges. The role of the lecturer would be to facilitate this exercise. Spiller (2012) states that students can help each other to fill the gaps in learning and make sense of formal learning. This means that when students discuss content among themselves, they use a simplified way of explaining, one that their peers would understand. For example, the lecturer may discuss the concept of pedagogy and perhaps not all the students grasp the concept. However, when the students are placed in groups there might be one that understood the concept of pedagogy and can explain it to their peers in a simple manner by perhaps saying that pedagogy refers to various teaching approaches. This simple explanation might make the concept clearer for their peers to understand. Cooper, Ashley and Brownell (2017) concur that group work creates the space for students to listen to one another and present opinions as they work towards a solution.

Randy and Arbaugh (2007) define social presence in online learning as the ability of learners to communicate, contribute and connect on a social and emotional level with others. This means that learners create group cohesion by bringing their own capital to the online platform, they bring their unique personality into a community of inquiry by expressing their emotions, having the freedom to communicate openly and freely. This consolidates interpersonal connection and motivates the members to participate readily Garrison et al., (2000), Annand (2011). The role of social presence has been studied at length in both online and face-to-face educational settings Randy and Arbaugh (2007). According to Garrison and Anderson (2003 cited in Annand, 2011), social presence plays an important role in collaboration and critical discourse as it makes it easier for learners to reach cognitive objectives. Learners place a high value on being able to "share ideas, to express views, and to collaborate" (Annand 2011:.76).

Although literature denotes the importance of social presence, Shea and Bidjerano (2009) state that asynchronous group-based communications cannot lead to an effective community of inquiry. However, Annand (2011) refers to several COI studies that measured the impact of social presence, teaching presence and cognitive presence. All the studies referred to, indicated that social presence did not have a great impact on learners' cognitive levels. What was evident in all the studies conducted was that teaching presence had a greater impact on learners' cognitive levels. However, Shea and Bidjerano (2010) introduced a fourth presence to the COI Framework, namely the learner presence. Learner presence depicts how efficient and how much effort they each bring to the learning experience. Teaching activities designed to promote individual intellect had a greater impact on the cognitive presence. Annand further refers to several studies conducted by Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia and Jones (2009) on online, blended and classroom strategies and all of these studies reflect that successful online metacognition takes place with individual efforts in self-reflection, explanation and monitoring. Annand (2011) identified that there was a lack in measuring peer to peer learning input and how this would add to learners' cognitive presence.

The learner presence gap identified by Shea and Bidjerano (2010), and Annand (2011) is addressed in this study through the blended learning strategies Lauillard (2013) implemented in teaching and learning to measure the various presences of COI. The blended learning strategies look at learner collaboration, feedback and reflection. The classroom setting as well as Blackboard is conducive for students to communicate with each other face-to-face and online, and this allows them to build relations and strong connections with each other. Blackboard (BB) is the university's Learner Management System (LMS). It is an interface used by lecturers to upload content, collect assignments, tests and do grading. It is also a platform on which students can engage and collaborate with their peers, as well as their lecturers. Students are automatically linked to Blackboard once they are registered with the university. BB is easily accessible and offers students reliable synchronous learning. Garrison (2001) and Cooper, Ashley and Bronwell (2017) state that social presence can be linked to an emotional sense of belonging, a sense of

community that lead to interpersonal relationships and having a shared identity. Thus, reducing fear and anxiety.

2.3 Language learning as an online social practice

Learning through technology has proliferated over the last decade and several studies conducted on technology and learning have proven the opportunities to improve teaching and learning (Bransord, Brown & Cocking, (2000). Of these studies, have researched the effects of Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR and VR) and how it has motivated language learning (Li and Chen, 2014, Bonner, Euan, Reinders and Hago (2018). AR and VR are hyponyms for information technologies that enhances the real world with digital tools. Digital environments are created with AR such as play station games and VR create platforms for users to engage with each other and access information as between such and BB. For years, engineering students were tasked to work with virtual tools using AR (Ortega, 2010). Similarly, history students could virtually visit historical artefacts and museum via AR (Pollalis, Fahnbulleh, Tynes & Shaer (2017) while science students could experiment mixing substances virtually within a safe environment (Sahin & Yilmaz, 2020).

AR has also proven beneficial to language learning in a study conducted by (Holden & Sykes (2011) where students had to use AR to navigate their way around a town to find clues of a story. Gadelha (2018) states that VR is advantageous to students learning as they are absorbed in the VR. This helps to reduce distractions that generally takes place in the classroom. Meyer (2016) also supports learning via VR by using videos because students can understand subject matter and how it impacts reality. Bonner, Euan, Reinders and Hago (2018)) mention several other advantages of AR and VR language learning such as the benefit of mobile learning where the students can move around with their devices and practically study from any location that suits their needs, thus promoting individuality. Finally, students can access information and resources to scaffold their knowledge at their comfort and convenience as well as actively partake in their learning.

2.3.1 Asynchronous vs Synchronous learning

E-learning and distance learning has become prominent of the past years but more so in 2020 when the world experienced the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, and teaching and learning was moved onto this platform (Kim, 2020). According to the World Health Organisation (2020), Covid-19 “is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus” <https://www.who.int>. On the 17th March 2020, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology ordered the early recess of universities and post-school institutions as a measure to contain the spread of Covid-19. This was after the president of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa announced that all schools had to close. The minister said that universities had to “identify and explore digital online methodologies for teaching and learning” <https://www.universityworldnews.com>. Universities around the world including CPUT had to convert the face-to-face classes to online synchronous and/asynchronous teaching online. In order for students to access content and teaching, they had to use multi-modal devices ranging from smart phones, to laptops and tablets to be connected. This proved to be a huge problem as several students did not have access to smart phones or devices at home.

None the less, HEI’s had to quickly resolve this issue as the academic year could not be lost. Ultimately, teaching and learning proceeded via distance learning/e-learning. Since academics were new to teaching online during the pandemic, they had to use pedagogy that would have maximum engagement with students. Academics had to decide between using asynchronous learning vs synchronous learning. According to Tuominen and Leponiemi (2020), Covid-19 presence will continue to be a learning experience for the educational community. This means, hence forth, academics would need to embrace the online platform as life takes on a new normal in the educational sphere. Asynchronous learning refers to engaging students via e-mail and discussion groups facilitated by the instructor (Buxton, 2014). Later, pre-recorded videos were accepted as well and students had control over where and when they would learn (Griffiths and Graham, 2010, (Watt, 2016). Watt (2016) highlights the transactional distance created by online learning as students need to be engage and interact with their peers and instructor.

Transactional distance refers to the psychological and disconnected gap that students feel whilst studying online. The theory of transactional distance (Moore 1993) was underpinned by three factors: 1) the dialogue between teacher and student; 2) the flexibility of the structure of the course; and 3) the extent to which the student had control over their learning. Isolation learning can cause students to become frustrated, feel despondent and hopeless which leads to lack of motivation and drop out of class. The challenge with online learning was to make both students and academics comfortable with online learning (Dokter, 2016). Watt (2016) embarked on a research to determine whether asynchronous learning was more successful than synchronous learning. Buxton (2014) describes asynchronous learning as engagement between students and instructors via e-mail and discussion boards in which the facilitator plays a major role. Later, Griffiths and Graham (2010) and Watt (2016) added that pre-recorded videos also formed part of asynchronous learning as students can learn at their own pace and convenience. This form of learning was more popular for e-learning than synchronous learning. Synchronous learning referred to the live recording of a lesson with video and audio. Students receive immediate feedback (Giesbers, Renties, Tempelaar & Gijsselaers, 2014). At HEI's this would refer to the LMS systems used for teaching and learning such as BB Collaborate which allows lecturers to conduct a live video lesson with their students.

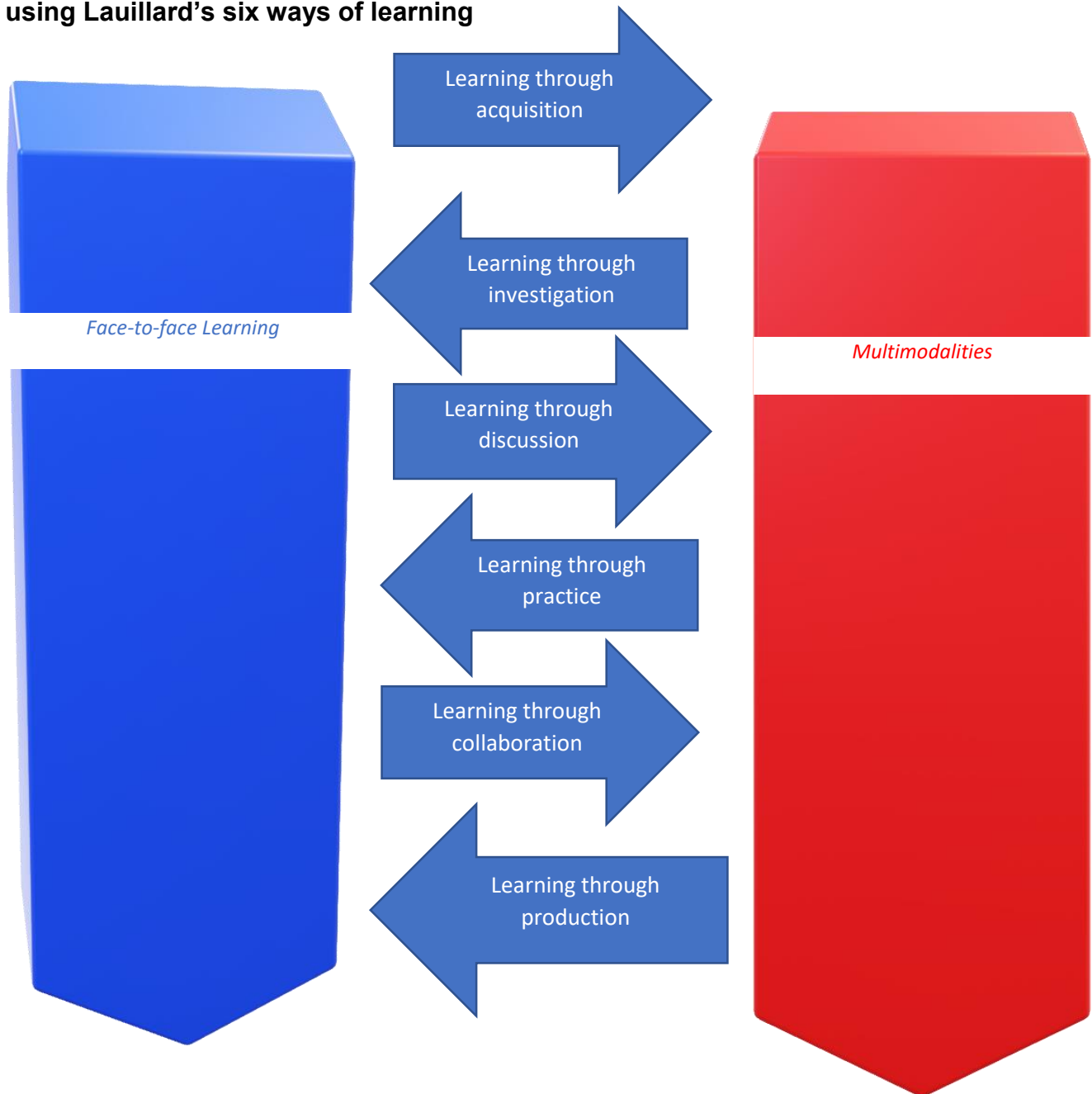
Watt (2016) concluded that both asynchronous and synchronous learning methods made students feel connected to their online learning experience and displayed high levels of motivation and engagement which resulted to better grades and a deep satisfaction. The success behind both these types of learning lies in the instructor being cognisant of the students' diverse needs and motivation by understanding their learning environments, their access to devices and technological support. This study is undertaken during Covid-19 and the lecturer made use of both asynchronous and synchronous pedagogies by uploading videos of academic writing to BB and being available online to give instant feedback to students. This further lends itself to the teaching presence of instructors and students.

Anderson, Rourke, Garrison and Archer (2001) describe teaching presence as the facilitation of the social and cognitive presence to have meaningful educational learning outcomes. Anderson et al. (2001) categorises teaching presence into three important roles for the facilitator:

- Firstly, design and organisation of the learning experience before the course started and while the course is taking place.
- Secondly, it is the instructor's responsibility to create, implement and facilitate activities that encourage student to student, student to lecturer and student – content engagement.
- Thirdly, instructors contribute academic knowledge and relevant experiences by giving direct instruction.

These three presences create the platform for engagement and new knowledge to be built. In these three social presences, the students need to engage with the lecturer and their peers in the classroom and online (BB). This would be done by actively contributing, interacting and giving constructive feedback to build on their own knowledge. This stems from the Constructivist Theory which emphasises that individuals must actively build new knowledge and skills by growing their current knowledge, skills and experiences. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1997) highlights the importance of social engagement as people construct and reconstruct knowledge when they interact with others. Vygotsky also emphasises the importance of teachers taking students from their current knowledge to their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is where new knowledge is added/constructed to previous knowledge (core). Lauillard (2013) developed the Conversation Framework in which she established that there are six types of learning that can take a student from their current knowledge to their ZPD: learning through acquisition; learning through investigation; learning through discussion; learning through practice; learning through collaboration and learning through production. These types of learning can be applied in the conventional and digital classroom. This study intends to reach the students ZPD by using Lauillard's (2013) six ways of blended learning and teaching.

2.3.2 How blended learning is currently implemented in teaching and learning using Lauillard's six ways of learning



2.3.2.1 Learning through Acquisition

This is using digital technology to present content in the form of a story that students become familiar with. Lauillard (2013) refers to this as 'narrative representation' of content. In the conventional classroom, the narrative representation would be students who listen to

the lecturer face-to-face, watch a video/reading books, newspaper articles/listening to audio clips in class. In the digital classroom, it may be students listening to a podcast, watching a video online, PowerPoint presentation/listening to audio clips online/ sourcing resources from websites.

2.3.2.2 Learning through Inquiry

This is a more active form of learning than learning through acquisition. Students are encouraged to create their own ideas by comparing and evaluating various types of texts. In the conventional classroom, learning happens through inquiry when students explore, compare and critique printed texts/documents/resources based on the concepts/ideas being taught. In the digital classroom, students explore online advice /analyse digital resources/compare digital texts and use digital tools to evaluate information.

2.3.2.3 Learning through Discussion

Students' learning is extended by taking what they have learnt through acquisition and inquiry to discuss with peers and lecturers. In the conventional classroom, students voice their ideas and questions and challenge/respond to their lecturer and peers in tutorials and pair-work/group discussions/seminars. In the digital classroom, students voice their ideas and questions online in discussion groups. They may challenge/respond to their lecturer and peers during online tutorials/seminars/discussion forums/email and web-conferencing.

2.3.2.4 Learning through Practice

Students apply what they have learnt through acquisition, inquiry and discussion. Goal-orientated learning is supported by meaningful feedback. Practice in the conventional classroom enables the learner to adapt their actions to the task and use feedback to improve their next action. Feedback may come through self- reflection or face-to-face peers/lecturer feedback. It may come from practicing activities in class. Practicing in the digital classroom through online activities may occur through self-reflection online or feedback from peers/lecturer online.

2.3.2.5 Learning through Collaboration

Learning may occur through acquisition, inquiry and discussion. Each of the students contributes to the process of learning. They Negotiate meaning with one another and work together towards one goal. Students collaborate in the conventional classroom by embracing discussions, practice and production. They build knowledge through investigation and acquisition through group projects. In the digital classroom, students collaborate by embracing online discussions, practice and production.

2.3.2.6 Learning through Production

This deals with producing an activity that illustrates the understanding of all the previous types of learning. In the conventional classroom, the lecturer motivates the students to consolidate what they have learnt through articulation or by applying the knowledge in practice. This can be done by making statements and or writing an essay/report. In the digital classroom, the lecturer motivates the students to consolidate what they have learnt through PowerPoint slides/creating videos/uploading pictures/e-portfolios/blogs.

It is therefore important to note that the six learning types are applicable to blended learning. This reinforces what the Col Framework outlines and the interconnected presence required to construct new knowledge. The student's cognitive presence is established through acquisition of learning, investigations/discussions/collaborations/practice and production which is facilitated by the social presence and ultimately influences the teaching presence during self-reflection, peer and lecturer feedback.

2.4 Academic Literacy and Academic Writing

Academic Literacy research is critical in the field of inquiry as it is of epistemological value to social practices (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Jacobs (2013) concurs with Lillis and advocates that a shared ontology for Academic Literacy may only be remedied through shared global good practice and research. She also states that being academically literate is understood differently in various contexts at universities and that Academic Practitioners such as lecturers or writing units who assist students with the development of Academic Literacy practices should do so. That is, Academic Literacy for Mathematics will differ to Academic Literacy for Language. In the case of Mathematics Literacy, students may have to display

deep understanding of the teaching and learning methodologies of mathematics. They would need to use mathematical concepts to illustrate their understanding by explaining and justifying. This ultimately means that they need to be proficient in mathematical jargons. Although mathematics has a linguistic aspect to it, students may use graphs or illustrations to convey their understanding of Mathematics. Whereas in Academic Writing for language, there is much focus on the linguistic aspect. This refers to being proficient in reading and writing to be able to analyse, summarise, compare as well as contrast ideas. Academic development practitioners need to align their practices and research so that students can write well for the various disciplines. Practitioners may do so by being content specific and applying methods that are discipline specific (Clarence & McKenna, 2017). Barton and Hamilton (2005) state that academic development should have two objectives: 1) A basic inclination to guide students and lecturers to socio-historical and socio-cultural practices shaped by the norms and values of the academic contexts of universities. 2) To train students and lecturers about the structure of content/knowledge in each discipline as norms, values and written practices stems from. Clarence and McKenna (2017) critique synchronising the structure of disciplinary knowledge to the values, norms and literacy practices that generates new knowledge as it may affect the development of academic writing by overlooking vital conventions of how students are trained and assessed. Thus, Academic Literacy development places great importance on finding improved developing literacy tools and pedagogies for reading and writing. By moving away from face-to-face learning only to blended learning which incorporates various micro-teaching approaches, the students have multiple opportunities to learn. Maton and Moore (2010) argue that although contexts differ from discipline to discipline, the content knowledge is subject specific and that the social values and norms are restricted to the contexts. Knowledge shapes contexts and therefore literacy needs to be applied within contexts. Although knowledge structure is one component of academic literacy development, it should be linked to the development of knowledge as it is deemed a vital aspect.

2.4.1 The nature of students' academic writing

Academic writing is not a skill which comes naturally to most students but a practice which is constituted by various disciplines (Archer, 2010; Lillis, 2001; Street, 2004). Lea and Street

(2004) define the acquisition of the practice of academic writing according to three approaches. Firstly, the 'study skills' approach where students are taught academic literacy skills on the basis of their needs to apply these skills to various subjects in their curriculum. In this study, the lecturers teach the students the principles of academic writing in class and on Blackboard. Secondly, the 'academic socialisation' approach according to which the lecturers expect students to be able to write academically once they are at tertiary institutions and 'assimilated' by these institutions. After the students are taught the principles of academic writing, they are given an academic writing assignment. The third approach is the 'academic literacies' approach which encourages the practice of academic literacy in a specific space and the honing of that skill or practice within that space. The students are given the opportunity to practise their academic writing by submitting a follow-up assignment after they received feedback from the lecturer and their peers. Clarence (2011) embraced the academic literacy approach in her research and discovered that ultimately, the first two approaches discussed by Lea and Street are condensed into the third approach. Clarence argues that these approaches cannot be practised in isolation. She found that when tertiary academic writing spaces are created, students perform better in academic writing. She encourages both lecturers and writing centres to engage each other on the issue of academic development and together to find the common ground to enhance student writing skills and practices.

Pather (2016) developed an academic writing conceptual framework focusing on social integration based on the writings of Tinto (1993) and Bourdieu (1990). The framework outlines the ways in which students' transition into HEIs can directly affect their academic success. Pather (2016) argues that when students successfully move into HEIs, the likelihood is high of these students attaining academic success. The kind of transitioning she describes is one where students who have a strong sense of belonging are confident and are not afraid to ask help with academic writing, rather than those students who are experiencing a sense of alienation which is often the case within the HEI (Pather, 2016). Wilmot (2018) highlights that in South Africa there has been a rapid increase of students at HEI's which results in a broad spectrum of diverse cohorts. These diverse cohorts who are identified as coming from previously disadvantaged areas struggle with the historical

conventions and principles of academic writing. Boughey (2002) states that HEIs in SA have misunderstood students' under-preparedness in academic writing because they have not embraced students' socio-cultural orientations (Wilmot, 2018). Wilmot concludes by stating that all students need support regardless of their linguistic capabilities or background.

In my experience over the past two years, I have discovered that there are students who come with a strong sense of self-esteem and are highly motivated to achieve their goals. These students are goal driven and eager to complete their studies successfully. However, I have also discovered that there are CPUT students who come from various parts of South Africa struggle to integrate into an academic lifestyle. This is because they do not have a sense of belonging given that their families are not around to support them. In some cases, the students are not familiar with the academic writing culture and HEI's are not adapting their courses to embrace diversity and offer the unique support. This ultimately has a negative impact on student's academic success as it may lead to anxiety and academic underperformance. What these students need is a sense of belonging. Gao, Liu and Li (2017) define a sense of belonging as an individual contribution made to an environment which is fundamental to them feeling as part of that environment. Once students felt like they belong, they were keen to share their knowledge with their peers on virtual platforms. Virtual community citizenship and sharing knowledge greatly impacts the growth of VRs (Chou, Lin and Huang, 2016). HEI's are no longer restricted to physical learning environments (Garner & Rouse, 2016) but have the privilege to using multiple technologies to positively contribute to pedagogy (Keppell, Souter & Riddle, 2012). This study intends to use multimodal pedagogy by implementing blended learning styles through the COI Framework to create a strong sense of belonging among the students, to create a social presence that improves their academic writing.

2.4.2 Multimodal pedagogy

Youngjoo and Tuba (2016) define multimodal pedagogies as an umbrella term for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices that rely on a mode to effectively communicate in a learning environment. In order to understand and apply multimodal pedagogies, it is important to understand the underpinning theoretical ideas on which it is

based: multimodality and multiliteracies. Communication and representation emanate from multiple modes for making meaning (Youngioo & Tuba, 2016). Multiliteracies were supposed to close the gap in traditional language-based approaches to teaching literacy by using multiple communication channels and media. Multimodality and multiliteracies are often used interchangeably. However, Rowsell and Walsh (2010) define multimodality as the field where individuals make meaning by using various kinds of modes and multiliteracies as a pedagogy that affords the tools of communication used in multimodalities. For the purpose of this study, multi-modal pedagogy was implemented by using multiliteracies for teaching face to face during lecture times and creating the digital space. It also made use of the digital method of recording short videos based on Academic Writing which are uploaded on the *Blackboard Learner Management System (LMS)* for students to learn at their own pace and to hone their academic writing skills.

2.5 Blended Learning

The aim of the blended learning writing intervention is to ensure that students become able to write texts independently in the topics they define themselves by using suitable guidance and the skills gained (Karasu 2018: 116). The term blended learning is also known as e-learning, virtual learning and cyber learning with a brick-and-mortar element which is a teaching and learning space away from home. A blended learning course is characterised by partially being online and partially through various other connected modalities. That is, what the students learn online informs what they may learn face to face. In a layman's term, an educational curriculum combines online digital media with the traditional classroom teaching methods. Blended learning is a broad approach, which includes e-learning and micro-learning. The difference between traditional instruction and e-learning is that traditional learning is structured and focuses on face-to-face learning which is teacher-centred. Although e-learning is a structured program as well, it is also student-centred as learning materials are uploaded online and students determine their time, place and pace of learning.

Online learning can be informal and/or fulltime. Informal online learning is when a student uses technology to learn aside from the university program by watching educational videos. On the other hand, fulltime online learning is when teaching and learning takes place in a

virtual space and not in a classroom. There are four models of blended learning: Rotation Model, Flex Model, Self-blend Model and Enriched Virtual Model. The Rotation Model is a course in which the students have a fixed schedule when they rotate between online learning and other pedagogies such as face-to-face learning and teaching. The Rotation Model is sub-divided into four categories: 1) Station Rotation is when the students rotate between online learning, face-to-face learning, group activities in class and assignments. In this study, the students moved between the face-to-face learning to working in pairs and then moving onto the online learning on Blackboard. 2) Lab Rotation is when the students have a fixed timetable and moves between the classroom and labs to do online learning. 3) Flipped Classroom is when students have a fixed timetable for face-to-face learning in the classroom and have access to the course content online after the university day at their preferred time and place. Students have a fixed timetable and a designated time for the face-to-face teaching of English. In this case, students have access to the online materials at any time. They may choose to use the university computer labs or they may choose to work from their own devices at home and at their own convenience. 4) Individual Rotation is when the students have a personalised timetable to move between learning pedagogies. The Flex model allows the students to have a fluid timetable moving between online learning and face-to-face learning. The Self Model allows students to choose either to do the course online or face-to-face in the classroom. For the Enriched-Virtual model, students move between learning on campus and online. For the purpose of this study, the students made use of the station rotation when they moved from face- to- face learning to working in pairs after they had written the first draft of their assignment. The students also made use of the individual rotation when they move from the face-to-face learning which is in their fixed timetable to a fluid timetable online to watch the videos at their own pace.

The advantages of blended learning are that the learner is engaged and in control of their learning. By mixing the traditional classroom with the online classroom, students are interactive and use their senses and skills other than merely listening to the lecturer. The face-to-face interactions followed by the online interaction strengthens the benefits of each. Knowledge gained in both the traditional and online classroom develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By using multiple learning platforms, it allows the students to

have access to information in a variety of ways such as videos, podcasts etc at their leisure. Students' knowledge retention improves dramatically due to the interactive elements of the learning process which is the built-in assessment, feedback and practical implementation. Blended learning offers a richer learning experience as students apply what they have learnt and use the feedback given by the lecturer to improve their work <https://www.pdagroup.net/en/spotlight/7-ways-blended-learning-will-inspire-you>.

E-learning has been criticised as it does not allow students to socialise face-to-face. Based on this, Picciano (2006) stipulated that blended learning bridges the gap by integrating face-to-face learning and online learning. As previously stated, Blended Learning is an umbrella approach to learning which includes E-learning and several micro-learning approaches. These micro-learning approaches are Face-to-face learning, virtual classroom, webinars, links, simulations, assessment and one-on-one coaching work <https://www.pdagroup.net/en/spotlight/7-ways-blended-learning-will-inspire-you>. For the purpose of this study, the students received videos and links to videos about academic writing prior to the face-to-face teaching in class. After the face-to-face learning, the students were expected to do their writing assignment which was assessed by the lecturer. Once the assignment was assessed, the lecturer gave feedback to the students during individual consultation and in class with the rest of the students. Having done the assessment, the lecturer was able to determine which aspects of writing needs to be addressed and hence, uploaded short videos about each of the respective aspects on Blackboard. Blackboard became the virtual classroom in which students had the opportunity to learn and engage with the lecturer and their peers and some got a follow up assignment. The lecturer again assessed the students and gave them feedback individually during consultation times and in class with the rest of the students. Each of these micro-learning approaches strengthened blended learning.

Colin and Moonens (2001) state that online learning is an extension of the face-to-face learning. From another perspective, Ginns and Ellis (2009) concur by stating that the online learning completes the face-to-face learning. The advantages of blended learning are that it eliminates the gaps in e-learning, offers a variety of pedagogies, is student-centred and increases learner outcomes (Tayebnik & Puteh, 2014). The online learning platform builds on the face-to-face learning in the classroom. Students are engaged and interactive with

the lecturer as facilitator. The more students are involved in their learning, the more receptive they become as well as being keen on adapting their work based on constructive feedback given by their peers and lecturers. Rovai and Jordan (2004) did a comparative study to measure the sense of community on e-learning platforms, face-to-face learning and blended learning. Their findings concluded that students had a much greater sense of community using the blended learning pedagogy than solely e-learning or face-to-face learning. During e-learning, students may feel isolated whereas a blended learning encourages students to engage with one another in the classroom and continue collaborations online (Lu & Chiou 2010). Based on this perspective, blended learning therefore, provides students with a sense of community (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

Gourlay, Hamilton, and Lea (2014) state that digital technologies play an integral role in contemporary learning and that literacy (reading and writing) remains at the core of formal education. In this regard, educators need to combine these two (print and digital) technologies to deliver successful futuristic education. In English, reading and writing are fundamental skills taught in the classroom. However, learning literacy is not confined to the classroom only; blended learning presents a platform which can be utilised too. In this study, students were taught literacy principles in class with prints and on Blackboard with videos. Understanding these core issues might help to investigate the challenges that first year students have with academic writing and how a digital intervention might bridge the gap in assisting the students who are experiencing academic writing challenges. It is imperative to plan the blended learning well as poor planning and teaching can regress students learning when using technology (Howard, Ma & Yang, 2016). For this study, the virtual learning that takes place after the classroom learning reinforces what was previously taught in class and aims to address the challenges which the students encountered with writing.

2.6 CPUT Language policy

The aim of the language policy is to embrace regional languages as well as Sign Language to create a multilingual environment by 2025. The policy sets out the strategic framework to guide departments on how to implement and adapt multilingual practices in all forms of communication within the context of the policy. Among the objectives, the policy seeks:

- *To ensure that the existing language of instruction facilitates teaching and learning in an inclusive manner.*
- *To promote a multilingual environment that recognises CPUT's unique African identity and historical injustices.*
- *To recognise valid linguistic injustices and needs.*
- *To increase effect to the equal constitutional status of the three official languages of the Western Cape, (isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans) and SASL, while promoting other national and foreign languages.*
- *To empower both students and staff with inclusive language skills to find meaning to their productive participation in the academic environment, industry/workplace and society. (Cape Peninsula University of Technology Language Policy (version 0.1), 2019)*

The policy at the university prescribes three official languages: English, Afrikaans and Xhosa as mediums of instruction. Being proficient in English is a criterion for admission to the university but it also considers the students' achievement in their home language which may be any other language other than English. This inevitably means that those whose mother tongue is not English are obliged to choose one of the institution's official languages as their medium of learning. This may result in students not doing well due to their poor academic writing skills in the chosen medium of instruction. It is important for; and expected of students to have good academic discourses and writing skills at tertiary level as this contributes to their academic success (Sparks, Song, Brantley, & Liu, 2014). In my experience, I have found that some of the first year Education students that are registered for 'English Home Language' are not English First Language speakers and they struggle with writing skills which leads to poor academic performance. The policy further stipulates that students whose home language is not English, should do a diagnostic test and be given academic support. Although the policy recognises the three official languages as the medium of instruction, the policy also recognises that students come from sensitive multilingual linguistic backgrounds and mandates academics to adapt teaching pedagogies as guided by the Language Implementation Plan (LUP, 2016) to create multilingual environments in the classroom. These multilingual environments will allow epistemological access to all students. This study therefore seeks to create a multilingual environment, and

explore a blended learning pedagogy that may intervene as well as assist students to improve their writing skills. Although it is an English class, the lecturer was sensitive to the students' multilingual backgrounds and allowed these students to embrace their multilingualism to achieve success in academic writing.

2.7 Bilingualism

Bilingualism is described as the ability in which a person is capable of using two languages in different contexts. Bilingualism has proven to have cognitive and academic advantages to students whose home language is not English. Bilingual education is defined as the use of two languages for educational purposes, mainly used to educate the language minority to understand and develop competence in the main language (Garcia & Lin, 2016). Allowing students to use their home language in addition to English supports them in developing bilingualism which enables these students to bring along their cognitive, academic and cross-cultural benefits to the context and promotes self-esteem and cross-cultural understanding (Rodriguez, Carrasquillo & Lee, 2014). Bilinguals can transfer skills from one language to another to complete academic tasks. By allowing students to use their bilingual identities in class may help students feel included and comfortable to participate in class. According to Rodriques, Carrasquillo and Lee (2014), there is research that proves that bilingual students perform better than monolingual students. However, they also state that there are researchers who believe that bilingualism may hamper the mastering of English. None the less, it is important to note that bilingual students compensate for their low proficiency in English and this may help students progress academically (Hsin & Snow, 2017). Bilingual education develops the student's own language portrait by identifying other linguistic features, thus enabling the student to equally participate and practise (Garcia & Lin, 2016). Although the focus of this study is academic writing in English, it may prove beneficial to allow students to use their bilingual linguistic ability to encourage class engagement.

2.8 Multilingualism

Aside from bilingual students at university, we also have multilingual students. Multilingualism is being fluent in more than two languages (Rodriguez, Carrasquillo & Lee, 2014). Multilingual education is an extension of bilingual education especially in the South African context in which two languages may not be enough. The use of many languages may help students understand the subject better as well as the main language (Garcia & Lin, 2016). In the field of academic writing, there has been a great interest in students' languages, their cultures and attitudes. Multilingual students' human capital should be regarded as a resource for writing rather than a challenge. When lecturers are cognisant of students' previous literacy experiences, they better understand how to assist students to hone their different academic skills and to extend knowledge (Morton, Storch & Thompson, 2015).

Multilingual students have a rich pool of multiple resources for thinking about their writing and have multiple ideas of what good writing should look like (Pomerantz and Kearney, 2012). At CPUT, great emphasis is placed on adapting pedagogies in class to accommodate multilingualism in the CPUT Language Policy. Since South Africa has eleven official languages, it is most likely that several students at the university are multilingual. The national language framework (2002) along with the Language Policy Framework for South African Higher Education (2001) stipulates that African languages should be used alongside English and Afrikaans. By doing so, a multilingual South Africa materialises (Language Implementation Plan, 2016). CPUT's Language Implementation Plan (2016) stipulates that the CPUT Language Unit (Fundani Centre) is tasked to promote multilingualism within the institution. This objective is aligned to the Minister of Higher Education and Training's view of promoting multilingualism at universities. The policy states that:

... requiring proficiency in an African language as a requisite for a range of academic fields of study and offering short courses in African Languages as part of staff development strategies... (Ministry of Education Language Policy, 2002).

The CPUT Language Policy (2016) further mandates academics to make a meaningful contribution to the production and repository of knowledge which ultimately becomes common practice for multilingual teaching at the university.

2.9 Translanguaging

Gorter and Cenoz (2015) state that translanguaging is a concept that has developed rapidly over a short period of time but is used broadly in various contexts. It refers to the fluid use of languages in which the social context needs to be considered as it specifically caters for the inclusion of minority languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019). Translanguaging empowers both students and teachers by eliminating power relations in class (Li Wei, 2018). However, if learning spaces are not created for minority speakers, the majority speakers may benefit more (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015). They propose five principles to develop translanguaging in the classroom: 1) Create functional spaces for the minority language; 2) develop the need to use the minority language through translanguaging; 3) Create a metalinguistic awareness by using all multilingual resources to support minority languages; 4) promote language awareness and 5) link translanguaging in teaching activities. It is easy for students to practise translanguaging as they do so in social and domestic context as well as in classrooms without the teachers' knowledge. Using translanguaging for speaking purposes is far easier than for writing purposes as writing is strictly assessed with regards to language and grammar. Gracia, Johnson and Seltzer (2017); Garcia and Kleyn (2016) have proven that students who engage in translanguaging have provided students with access to content and have built stronger relationships between students and their peers as well as their teachers.

Capitalising on students' complete linguistic ability, Garcia, et al., (2017) believe that all students should be given the opportunity to access their full linguistic ability to make meaning and for their socioemotional wellbeing. Seltzer (2019) believes that English should not be taught apart from other languages, but teachers should take a translanguaging pedagogy that consciously draws on students translanguaging abilities by being flexible and creative in developing their language portraits. Classrooms should become a safe environment in which students feel free to learn without the anxiety of being penalised. Moving towards embracing new pedagogies of teaching academic English to minority-

language students by acknowledging student's capital of language, power and identity through translanguaging. The purpose of this study is to teach academic writing in English in a flexible multi-modal approach by granting students the freedom to use language fluidly in the classroom and on the digital platform in order to get them to confidently engage, interrogate and negotiate meaning.

2.10 Digital Literacy

The concept of digital literacy (DL) extends beyond the knowledge of knowing how to operate a digital device. It encompasses complex, cognitive, motor, sociological and emotional skills which is needed to operate devices proficiently in digital spaces (Eshet-Alkai, 2004). These skills are critical for students to have as they allow them to access, manage and create new information (Price, Becker, Clark and Collins, 2011). According to Eshet-Alkai (2004), the new perception of DL is that it is used to determine the quality of students' work in digital spaces like the Blackboard. Students and developers of DL have easier access to communication and informs developers to create user-friendly digital spaces.

Blackboard/My Classroom is the institutional Learner Management System (LMS). The Centre for Innovative Educational Technology Unit (CIET) manages the LMS. Blackboard provides a secured accessible virtual space for online teaching and learning. LMS is hosted in a Cloud and can be accessed at any time from any location via the internet. In 2018, CIET introduced the Blackboard Mobile App to make the LMS more accessible. The mobile app is cheaper to access than the website and can be downloaded from the Google App (www.cput.ac.za/services/ciet). Given that technology comes with this period, it may be assumed that students would be attracted in this intervention because its virtual nature reduces fear and anxiety.

2.11 Digital Intervention

Digital Technology has become a core element of HEI's (Barak, 2018). According to Cooke (2016), for students to survive at HEI's in the 21 Century, they need to have Information Literacy skills (IL) such as how to access information and resources. Meyer and Land (2013) agree that (IL is a critical component for students' success at HEI's. Price, Becker,

Clark and Collins (2011) state that there is a misconception about students who are technologically savvy and those who have IL skills. As previously stated, students need to know how to manage and create new information. Cooke (2016) conducted an intervention study for IL and stated that interventions need to take place early during a course. The results of the study proved that the more students practised IL, the more proficient they became especially when they were aware that the assessment were informal and not for marks. Students were less anxious knowing this.

According to Aksel and Gurman-Kahraman (2014), technology presents the space for students to collaborate, interact and learn outside of the classroom. Moreover, Kitsantas and Dabbagh (2011) are of the view that students learn more easily on a social digital platform. Learning in this way, students are more confident in sharing ideas, and in developing and participating in self-regulatory testing. When digital engagement is done at their pace, they become more competent through preparing and managing their own learning (Saks & Leijen, 2014). Saks and Liejen (2014) attribute the skill of self-learning to the success of e-learning. Therefore, according to their argument and findings of other researchers, creating a digital space for students to learn, bridges the gap between this kind of learning and the traditional classroom where the students are restricted to time and space (Liaw & Huang, 2013). Lear, Li, and Prentice (2016) found that in this context, students developed various strategies to cope with learning online and taking responsibility for their own learning. Colin and Moonens (2001) like Ginn and Ellis (2009) advocate that the digital learning platform is an extension of face-to-face learning and that extension creates a sense of community online. In a study conducted by Lane and Sharp (2014), students who did not conceptualise content in class welcomed a blended learning approach as they had access to resources at any given time. They attributed the blended learning approach to improving their confidence.

2.11.1 Writing Centres

With the increase in the number of students at HEI's and the loaded academic loads that lecturers experience, students are more than often referred to writing centres to assist students with their academic writing. The main function of the writing centres is to offer remedial assistance for academic writing and to assist the students to integrate into

academic discourse. Archer and Parker (2016) investigated the effectiveness of writing centres interventions on academic writing. From the onset, these researchers highlighted the challenges that writing centres experience. Among the challenges are getting students to use their metacognitive skills to analyse and synthesise information, academic writing has a specific form of writing – using lexicogrammatical structures and the various dialects embedded in each discipline. The greatest challenge being able to teach students the principles of writing academically and simultaneously naturalising students to academic discourse. In the study conducted, the consultants at the writing centre were either lecturers or involved in academic development. These consultants admitted that students get lost among the masses in class if they do not engage the lecturer. The lecturer assumes that the content is understood by all students in a blanket approach. In addition to challenges that students may encounter with writing, Lea and Street (1998) found that students were being sent off to writing centres to improve their academic writing. They refer to the Literacies Approach which highlights that students cannot transfer generic academic writing skills across subjects, subjects may have different academic writing requirements or place emphasis on different academic writing principles. One may look at the basic structure and the connecting words, others would focus on how an argument was presented, was there a point made, evidence presented and correct analyses made. The academic requirement needs to be explicitly stated and demonstrated by lecturers/tutors. Another very important aspect is constructive feedback. Based on the data received from the students that participated in their studies, students complained of the lack of feedback or rather the lack of timeous feedback. They would receive feedback on a previous module once they started a new module. Presenting feedback after a module has been completed is futile, as the student has now moved onto the next module and did not receive a fair opportunity to improve their work within that module. Furthermore, constructive feedback is important, Lea and Street (1998) found that lecturers/tutors would use orthographic markers such as a question mark or an exclamation mark without qualifying these markers instead of explicitly stating what may be wrong or perhaps ask critical questions/ make suggestions that may assist the students to critically annotate.

However, writing centres offer students a space that is student-centred in which the student receives individual attention as they are mentored by a peer. Researchers concluded that

writing centres are critical spaces to mentor academics, not only were consultants able to assist students to improve their academic writing but it improved the consultants writing, research and teaching pedagogies as well. Although CPUT has a writing centre, it is only directed to assist undergraduates and sadly based on one campus. This means that students from other CPUT campuses do not have direct access to the writing centres. In this case, they must travel to from their base campus in order to get wiring assistance from the writing centre. This is not a feasible option for students who are already battling with keeping up with their daily timetables and not being able to spare time to spend at the writing centres.

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter has critically reviewed students' nature of writing and the barriers to successful academic writing in HEI's. It has highlighted the gap for a blended learning intervention using a multi-modal pedagogy within the community of inquiry framework.

The next chapter outlines the methodologies applied to gather and synthesise data for this study.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology on which this study is based. It also presents motivation for the use of the interpretive paradigm as a way of telling and retelling the story of the use of blended learning as an intervention process into first year student's academic writing. In addition, the description of the site is also factored in to give a clear context based on the case study. The chapter expounds on the sampling procedure and goes further to clarify how the data were collected and analysed. The chapter wraps up by bring in Ethical considerations and the methods used to assure credibility and trustworthiness are covered as well.

The main aim of this study is to establish whether blended learning can be implemented as an academic writing intervention programme for first year students' academic writing. The approaches used in this study were selected with the intent of answering the following research questions:

- 1 What is the nature of first year student's academic writing?
- 2 Which strategies are used in HEI to address students' academic writing challenges?
- 3 How do language lecturers address academic writing challenges?
- 4 How is blended learning currently implemented in the regular teaching and learning to improve first year students writing?

3.2 Interpretive Paradigm

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) define a research paradigm as "a particular worldview that defines, for researchers who hold this view, what is acceptable to research and how this should be done." A paradigm determines the following decisions: 1) What type of questions are supposed to be asked, 2) What can be observed and investigated, 3) How to collect data and 4) How to interpret the findings.

In view of the above, this study is set within an interpretive paradigm because the main aim of it is to understand and explain insightful social action and experiences. Rahl (2017) asserts that Interpretive research aims to acquire an in-depth understanding of a perception and the interpretive researcher examines the world through the eyes of the individuals observed (Du Plooy-Cillier, 2014: 28). This is to suggest that the story being told by the researcher is the researcher's understanding of the views of the respondents. Interpretive researchers focus mainly on qualitative data as the qualitative approach is used to gain the in-depth details of a particular subject (Rahl, 2017).

Betram and Christiansen (2017) state that the aim of an Interpretivist design is to understand social behaviour, and how people make meaning of their experiences. Interpretivists consider the nature of many social "realities", locally and specifically constructed. Their nature of knowledge is created through interpretations, and consensus may be pursued through dialogue. They undergo explorative methods in authentic situations. Theory is created concepts linked into "explanations" of behaviour, motives, perceptions and experiences. Explanations are convincing, trustworthy (to other researchers and/or participants) and authentic. The voice of the researcher comes to the fore as being a passionate participant, a facilitator of multivocal reconstruction. The quality of the criteria is trustworthy (credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability) and authentic. This researcher aims to understand the nature of first year's academic writing and to explore a blended learning approach as an intervention. The study is situated within an interpretivist paradigm as it allows the researcher to observe through the student's eyes and interpret their lived learning experiences by thus re-evaluating teaching practice, in order to improve it. There is a distinct relation between the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology, and both deemed to understand the perceptions of people. In order to determine whether blended learning could be an academic writing intervention, it was necessary for the researcher to do action research with the student participants and interview three first year lecturers.

3.3 Research Approach

The study made use of a qualitative research approach. An interpretative paradigm is most common in qualitative research (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine & Walker, 2019:14). According to Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020), the objective of qualitative research is to gain the understanding of behaviours, beliefs and motivation within a specific context. This would mean understanding the CPUT first year students' efforts and practices in their academic writing and seeking interventions that may lead to their development in literacy. The objective of qualitative research is to study the experiences and social context in its natural setting (Rule & John, 2011). Based on this, the rationale for this study is to see how blended learning may become an intervention in first year's students' academic writing. This objective is achieved by understanding why? How? And what the process is as well as what influences the context. Qualitative research gives the researcher an insight into student's academic writing, their behaviour, their amount of motivation to engage within their specific context, what they experienced in the classroom and their online support. The data for this study was collected using the blended learning process to teach the students, document analysis of their scripts, and semi-structured interviews with the first year Intermediate Phase lecturers.

Based on the above, the study should best be understood through action research. The data was presented in the form of words and the study population was a small number of participants who are purposively selected, generally referred to as the participants or the interviewees. This researcher aimed to develop an understanding of the nature of the first-year students' academic practices within their academic learning context at university. Data collection was done by taking students through a blended learning process for academic writing and semi-structured interviews with lecturers. In summary, qualitative research seeks to obtain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon by concentrating on the entire picture rather than breaking it down into variables and doing numerical analyses (Ary. Et. al. 2019:12). It is in this light that the researcher thought it wise to get the views of other language lecturers on blended learning as an intervention to academic writing of first year students in the Intermediate Phase. The data that was collected and analysed reflects the individual's reality subjectively (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Although these students have commonalities of being first year education students, their individual experiences in the

classroom and online differ from person to person and therefore warrants a good understanding of their different perspectives to provide an intervention that would address all their needs. Therefore, the data analysed was interpretive meant to explore how a blended learning intervention for academic writing, can influence the development of the first years in their academic writing and overall academic performance.

3.4 Research Design

The research design is a methodical plan of how the researcher gathered and analysed data to answer the research questions (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). It is the blueprint of how data were collected and analysed. Since I wanted to improve my teaching pedagogies and find an agile manner to teach academic writing, the design used for this study was action research. Action research is a type of research undertaken by practitioners to study a specific context and use the findings to adapt practice (Ary et. al., 2019). Hence, the outcome of this study would inform my academic writing teaching for first years at university. Metler (2016) stipulates that action research has three major components:

- 1) the research is done in a local context
- 2) the research is conducted by and for the practitioner and
- 3) the research results in an action or a change implemented by the practitioner.

It begins with a problem that has to be solved. In the case of this study, it is the academic writing of first year students in the Intermediate Phase of the Faculty of Education in CPUT. Hence, according to Betram and Christiansen (2017), the researcher is researching their own practice and investigating how to improve it. As a lecturer at CPUT, I was concerned about the first years' academic writing and sought to explore blended learning as an intervention to improve their writing. Action research is an imperative manner for lecturers to be involved in professional learning, adapting the way of teaching which is more learner centred (Betram & Christiansen, 2017). This would be achieved meticulously and methodically observing my practice, process and results by examining what I teach, how I teach it and the outcomes of my teaching. According to Betram and Christiansen (2017), action research is constituted by four steps of action research. I have incorporated Lauillard's six ways of learning to fit into the four steps of action research.

Betram and Christiansen (2017) hold that there are four steps involved in action research which should be followed by the researcher.

Step 1: Strategic planning:

I developed a plan of critically informed action to improve and synergise what was already happening as far as academic teaching was concerned. I would upload the curriculum for the year which would include the topics and assignments. The objectives for the year were to get students to be able to critically discuss topics to improve their reading and viewing skills, enhance their listening and speaking skills as well as their writing skills. Students were informed that for the year, they would be doing Short Stories, Poetry and Writing. The assignments for the year would be a descriptive essay, short test, reading journals, diary entry and a class activity assignment.

Step 2: Act to implement the plan.

According to Lauillard's (2013), the implementation plan according to the steps of blended learning would be through acquisition, inquiry and discussion. Students learn through acquisition by reading through or watching the uploaded material which is either the Short Story/Poetry/PowerPoints/Videos on BB prior to the lesson in preparation for the face-to-face learning. By the time the students get to the face-to-face learning, they would have engaged by reading through the uploaded notes, watching the video clips and doing the online quiz based on the content and acquired the necessary knowledge to inquiry in class. For the lesson on the Short Story, the Mask. I uploaded the story to BB. Students had to read through the story, understand the elements of the story, know who the characters are, be able to identify the setting and the era in which the story is set. They are also expected to identify and critically respond to the various themes in the story such as Identity; Institution such as family and school; rebellion etc. Finally, they are required to be able to identify the plot starting with the exposition to the resolution. Then students move onto the short quiz which is made up of contextual questions based on the story. Once students are in the classroom, they actively participate by creating their own ideas by comparing and evaluating the content. Students engaged in class through inquiry and participated in robust discussions about the elements of the story with their peers and myself. Students then received an academic writing assignment based on the short story *The Mask*. They had to

write a descriptive essay titled *Who am I?* In this task, students had to write about their identity, who they were, which teachers impacted their schooling career and why they wanted to be teachers. Students had to complete the draft at home and bring the draft to class for the next lesson.

Step 3:

Observation, evaluation and self-evaluation of the effects of the critically informed action within the context in which it occurs. According to Lauillard's (2013), steps of the blended learning process would be collaboration and practice. Students brought their assignments to class and shared it with their peers. During this stage, students collaborated and highlighted five challenges that they may have encountered whilst writing the assignment. Amongst other challenges, students misinterpreted the title, they would relay the story and not give a personal recount of their own life. A few students struggled with the structure of the essay by including points that should be in the body and placing it in the introduction. Students struggled with linking words, not using firstly or in addition or finally. Many students used colloquial language by using contractions such as cannot instead of cannot or I'm instead of saying I am. Some students wrote in a solid piece without paragraphs. Their peers would have a look at their work offer possible solutions based on what we had previously discussed in class in terms of personal recounts, structure and language.

Step 4:

Reflection on the process and making the net cycle of action research by reflecting on the effects as the basis for further planning, subsequently critically informed action, through a succession of stages. According to Lauillard's (2013) steps of the blended learning process, this would be production. I returned the assignment and gave the students feedback. The purpose of the feedback would be to identify the parts of their pieces that needed to be reworked and improved. I would explicitly state that they needed to edit their work or that they need to move a point from the introduction to the body of the essay or underline grammatical errors. During this time, students also did self—reflection. The self-reflection would entail reading through the comments that I have made on their essays and the general comments about mistakes that I mentioned in class and learn how to improve their next piece of writing. Thereafter, I uploaded a new set of videos to Blackboard after

reflecting on my teaching practice and the student's feedback, I was at least able to identify the writing principles which students struggle with. Students received a second chance to re-do the writing assignment, on a different topic *Behind my mask*. I gave the student a different topic to see whether they were able to apply the writing conventions to a different topic.

Although the subject may be different the structure and language would remain the same. I decided to give students a checklist as well which they need to complete after writing their assignment before submitting, to ensure that they were on the right track. The checklist would entail ticking off the following: have I planned and drafted my writing? Do I have an introduction, body and conclusion? Have I given a personal account? Have I edited my work before submitting? The assignments were assessed and compared to the first assignment to determine whether students writing had improved. Students' marks were compared to gauge whether there was an improvement. As mentioned before, the subject may have changed but the structure and language for a descriptive essay would remain the same. Using a rubric, I assessed both essays. With the first essay the weakest student got 50% the average student got 60% and the best student got 70%. I did choose not to fail any student because it was their first assignment for English, and I did not want to discourage them. Majority of the students averaged on 60% and the best essay I gave 70% because I felt that students would not try harder if they got an excellent mark. In comparison to the first essay, students did much better in the second essay as the weakest learner had 53%, most of the students averaged at 67% and the highest mark was 75%. These results clearly reflect that there was an improvement from the first essay to the second one. In summary, to gain the desired results, I needed to apply the four steps to observe my teaching practice. Therefore, as the English lecturer, I applied the six types of blended learning (Lauillard, 2013) within the four steps of the action research. I evaluated my academic writing practice, did reflection and adapted my teaching to improve my teaching practice.

3.4.1 Research Site Selection and Study Context

Site selection is determined by being able to identify and justify the location of participants in a study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The site for the study was the Intermediate

Phase of the Faculty of Education, CPUT, a university of Technology. Since CPUT's vision is to promote technology education and innovation, this proved to be a suitable site to determine whether blended learning was suitable as an academic writing intervention to assist the diverse first-year students. The face-to-face learning took place in the classroom during the English periods. The classroom which is in the main building of the Mowbray campus could accommodate about 45 students. However, there were 30 students in my class. Students were seated at desks and chairs, two students next to each other. The desks were divided into three rows. The classroom had a blackboard and a white board. For the virtual teaching, the students had access to *Blackboard*, using multi-modal tools of communication via the computer laboratory on campus, their laptops, tablets and cellular phones. *Blackboard* is the digital platform that I used as part of the blended learning to implement the academic writing intervention. Blackboard also has a mobile app that students could download to their smart phones or tablets for easy access. A few of the students did not have smart phones nor a laptops or tablets. These students could make use of the campus computer laboratory to complete their task. As I previously explained in Chapter 2, CPUT makes use of Blackboard (BB)/My Classroom which is the institutional Learner Management System (LMS) and is managed by the Centre for Innovative Educational Technology Unit (CIET). BB provides a secured accessible virtual space for online teaching and learning and was easily accessible to students at any time and from any place. Students had the choice of working on campus or off campus as it suited them. To make LMS more accessible and convenient, students could also use the Blackboard Mobile App which was less expensive.

3.4.1.2 Physical setting

The Education Faculty at CPUT has two campuses, one is situated in Wellington which is about 73 kilometres outside of Cape Town. The other campus is based in Mowbray, Albert Road. The campus is situated quite close to public transport (bus terminus; taxi rank and train station). There are lots of foot and road traffic in Mowbray, it is a busy hub. Many people travel to Mowbray to change their route to -different part of Cape Town. Either going toward the Southern Suburbs or Central Cape Town. I teach at the Mowbray Campus. There are two buildings that constitute the Mowbray Campus, one is the main building –

where most of the teaching and learning take place and across the road is the Arts Building in which students receive their arts and technology classes. The library and gym are also located at the main building. Although both the Arts Building and Main Building have fences around it controlled by security, people who may not be students have easy access to the campus. Mowbray has become a less safe area over the years and CPUT staff have experienced several incidents regarding break-ins and theft. Students have easy access to the library from the road. Students need to scan their student cards to gain access to the library. The library has two levels. It has sufficient space to study alone and tables to conduct group work. The campus is controlled by campus security. At the main gates, vehicles are controlled. The security access room is at the entrance of the main building.

There are two departments within the Education Faculty, General Education and Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET). I teach in the GET Department. The GET Department is further divided into Phases Foundation Phase (FP) (Grade R-Grade 3) and the Intermediate Phase (IP) (Grade 4-6). I teach English Home Language to the first-year cohort in IP. The main building is divided into three floors. My office is on the ground floor, this is where my face-to-face consultations are done on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Mowbray Campus has various teaching venues. There are theatre-like venues, classroom venues and lecture hall venues. I teach in the classroom venue using both the blackboard and the white board. I have no teaching assistants and was given a tutor in the final term. The tutor was mainly responsible for assisting students at risk. I would identify who these students are and ask the tutor to assist them with their tasks.

3.5 Population and Sampling

Population refers to the total number of people who were involved in the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). The researcher was cognisant of the population from whom she collected the data from. The population for this study were 32 participants, comprising all the 30 first year IP Faculty of Education students and 2 language lecturers. It was imperative for me to determine which sampling technique was appropriate for the study as the type, nature and purpose of the study determined its sampling technique (Etkan, Musa & Alkassim. 2016). In this regard, I thought it was needful to use the entire class as respondents in the study. Sampling entails deciding which people, setting,

events/behaviours are included in the study and how many individuals/groups are being observed (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). The sampling included all IP first year students in the English class and two language lecturers. For the purpose of this study, I used convenience and purposive sampling. The respondents for the qualitative study were 30 English first year students selected from the CPUT Education Faculty, a university of technology in the Western Cape, South Africa. Academic writing is part of their English Curriculum. It is important to mention that both convenient and purposive sampling were used in this study. Since convenience sampling entails selecting a sample which is easy for the researcher to reach (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017), I selected a campus that was easily accessible to me as a lecturer at CPUT. On the other hand, purposive sampling depicts that the researcher makes specific choices about the individuals/ group included in the sample for a specific purpose (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017) For the purpose of this study, I used purposive sampling where I selected 32 respondents, 30 first year students and two IP language teachers. In addition, to the written task from the students, two language Intermediate Phase lecturers were interviewed to give their views of first year students' academic writing and blended learning. These lecturers were interviewed to determine which strategies they apply to academic writing and to investigate whether they used blended learning in their language teaching practice.

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Blended Learning Process

As I explained in chapter 2, Blended Learning can also be referred to as E-learning, virtual learning and cyber learning with a classroom component to it. Hence, blended learning is constituted of being partially online learning and partially face-to-face learning. It has moved away from the traditional learning in the classroom which was teacher-centred to being learner-centred and learning online. Picciano (2016) sees blended learning as bridging a gap by integrating face-to-face learning and online learning. Colin and Moonens (2007) view blended learning as an extension of face-to-face learning. Ginns and Ellis (2009) believe that it completes face-to-face learning. As previously stated, I implemented the six ways of learning within the four steps of action research to evaluate and adapt his/her teaching and the students' learning.

Step 1 Learning through acquisition: The lecturer strategically uploaded academic writing videos to Blackboard for students to engage with the content and acquire knowledge prior to the face-to-face lesson.

Step 2 Learning through inquiry and discussion: Action was taken in class when the students inquired and discussed in class whilst doing their assignment.

Step 3 Learning through collaboration and production: Students collaborated and did their assignments. The lecturer assessed the assignment and gave feedback to the students. Students did self-reflection. The lecturer was able to observe academic writing challenges and adapted her approach by uploading videos onto BB to assist the struggling students. Students had the opportunity to redo assignment with a different topic.

Step 4 Learning through practice: The lecturer assessed and compared the students' assignments to the previous ones. I was then able to reflect on the blended writing process.

3.6.2 Document Analysis

Researchers analyse documents using a method named document analysis. This means that the text is analysed for themes or patterns (Bertram & Christensen, 2017). Document analysis aims to definitively and systematically define the problem and find an effective solution to the problem (Manuel, 2015). I analysed students' assignments which were generated by the following plan: I uploaded academic writing videos and reading material based on good academic writing principles such as Tone, Evidence, Paraphrasing and Structure onto Blackboard and asked the students to watch the videos and read through the reading material in preparation for class. During class, students participated in robust discussions with their peers and I about the content that was uploaded onto BB. Thereafter, I gave the students an academic writing assignment and the rubric which I used to assess their assignments; they needed to write a Descriptive essay of 400 words titled: *Who am I?* Students were asked to bring their assignments to class the next week and share it with a peer.

During the peer collaboration, students had to highlight five challenges that they encountered whilst writing the assignment and their peers had to give feedback on their attempt and offer solutions to the challenges highlighted. At this point, I could monitor the

discussions, and based on the feedback given I identified the writing principles that needed attention to assist the students. Students needed to take the feedback given by their peers and edit their assignment to be submitted onto Blackboard and a hard copy presented in class the following week. I marked the essays according to a rubric (addendum 4) and written feedback was given to the students on their scripts and in class. Based on my observation during the peer assessment and marking, I identified the principles the students struggled with. I then created short videos of 5-7 minutes of myself teaching those academic writing principles using PowerPoint and uploaded them on Blackboard. Thereafter, the students were given a new assignment with a different topic to complete with the corrections in mind. The students were informed of the videos that have been uploaded, as well as the discussion group created. The discussion group on Blackboard was the virtual space where students would have the freedom to consult with each other and/or with the lecturer should they have any questions about the topic. By uploading my teaching and creating a space for learning on Blackboard, this would be my Blended Learning Intervention. After interacting with students on Blackboard, I took snapshots/pictures of the interaction created in the virtual space between the student-to-student and student-to lecturer and this formed part of my data. The texts were then analysed according to the themes or patterns emerging from the data.

3.6.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) define interviews as a conversation between the researcher and the respondents. They stipulate that interviews are a good instrument tool to collect data on what a person knows, what they like or dislike and to understand what people think. Semi-structured interviews are predetermined questions which allow the researcher to adapt the arrangement of the questions, the wording and decide whether or not to include or exclude questions (Van Teijlingen, 2014) Three language lecturers from the Intermediate Phase were interviewed to get their opinions on student's academic writing challenges and what interventions they used to remedy these challenges. They also gave an insight to their use of blended learning as an intervention to academic writing. Their views and intervention methods were used to triangulate what I did with my students. In view of this, the interviews were necessary because a diverse view of blended learning

could emerge and helped to expose the necessary intervention programme needed in the Intermediate Phase.

The interviews were semi-structured with specific questions to ascertain specific information as a guide for the researcher. The interest was to see what challenges existed and what interventions were used to overcome these challenges. It was also of interest to know if they used blended learning and to what affected them. Betram and Christiansen (2017) list the advantages and disadvantages of interviews. An advantage is that the researcher is present in the interview and can make questions clearer, which may be unclear. This cannot be done with a questionnaire. However, the disadvantage would be that the power relations could influence the interview process. In this study, I interviewed my colleagues who are my peers. These are colleagues who have longer experience than me and they have post graduate qualifications in Masters and Doctorates, hence there was no power relations element.

Another advantage was that the interviewees could ask more questions to obtain more information or clarification if the respondent gave insufficient detail. The disadvantage to this is that it may generate large amount of textual data. My questions were clear and unambiguous which led to interviewees not needing to ask for clarification. In addition, it is generally easier for the respondents to speak with the interviewer than writing down responses. However, interviews are often self-reported data which the interviewee reflects on their own experiences to the interviewer. This may cause the interviewer having to do an observation to fully understand and relate to the interviewee. My colleagues have a full teaching load and they do not have much time in their hands so it was less time consuming for me to speak with them than them having to write which may be laborious. Since we teach the same cohort, I completely understood their references and comments and did not need to sit in on their lectures to completely understand. Finally, interviews generate more descriptive and detailed data and is a good method to obtain in-depth information from a small number of participants. In my case, I had three IP lecturers who generated extensive, intimate and thorough data.

Below is the interview schedule for the interviews with the lecturers:

Interview Schedule Analysis

The interviews scheduled were to understand lecturers lived experiences of the blended learning pedagogy, as an intervention and their use of multi-modal teaching. It further examined the value of Translanguaging.

Question 1.

What is the nature of students' writing?

The intention of this question was to determine the standard of writing of the first-year cohort and to ascertain whether there was a need for intervention.

Question 2.

Are you pleased with their writing?

The intention of this question was to ascertain how the state of students' writing and how dire a writing intervention was needed.

Question 3.

What strategies to you use to teach them writing?

The aim of this question was to determine the lecturer's pedagogy to teach writing.

Question 4.1

Which interventions strategies do you use to improve students writing?

The aim of this question was to determine which intervention strategies these lecturers apply after identifying that students were struggling with writing. It was also to determine what they were doing in addition to class time with the students.

Question 4.2

Would the intervention be one on one? Or would it be pockets of students that you take?

This question was asked to give clarity on how interventions took place.

Question 5.

Do you use E-Learning/Blackboard to teach writing?

The purpose of this question was to gauge whether lecturers embraced virtual teaching.

Question 6.

Do you think that your students writing has progressed or regressed to this point?

The intention of this question was to determine whether lecturers felt like their students writing had improved since the start of the year, considering all the teaching and intervention that have been done thus far.

Question 7.

What is your opinion on blended learning?

The aim of this question was to determine how lecturers felt about blended learning.

Question 8.

Do you apply it to your teaching?

The intention of this question was to determine whether these lecturers used blended learning as a pedagogy themselves

Question 9.

Do you think that blended learning is an effective way to teach writing?

The intention of this question was to investigate whether blended learning could be a good pedagogy to teach writing. As the process of writing is generally done in the classroom, face-to-face as both lecturers explained earlier in the interview.

Question 10.

What are the intervention strategies used with blended learning?

The purpose of this question was to determine how these lecturers used blended learning as an intervention strategy.

Question 11.

What are the challenges with blended learning?

The intention of this question was to highlight what hindered students from successfully learning using blended learning.

Question 12.

How can we overcome these challenges?

The purpose of this question was to find out first-hand information from those who were experiencing challenges with blended learning and what they may suggest as possible solutions. They have engagement students who encountered challenges with blended learning and may have the recommendations to address those challenges.

Question 13.

What are the advantages of Blended Learning?

The intention of this question was to highlight the benefits of blended learning.

Question 14.

Do you use multimodalities in your teaching?

The intention of this question was to ascertain the different modes used to teach as multimodality is an imminent feature of blended learning.

Question 15.

How does multi-modality inform your teaching?

The purpose of this question was to determine whether multimodalities have a role to play in teaching and learning.

Question 16.

Can you share some of the intervention strategies applied in the classroom?

The intention of this question was to ascertain best intervention strategies practices.

Question 17.

Do you use Translanguaging in your classroom?

This was a pertinent question to determine how flexible the lecturer was in terms of teaching language and students acquiring language which may not be their first language.

Question 18.

How has Translanguaging benefited or not benefited your teaching and your students?

The purpose of this question was to determine the value of being flexible in teaching language.

Question 19.

What is your overall opinion about blended learning?

The intention of this question was to weight up the pros and cons of blended learning.

3.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). It is a form of pattern recognition within the data where emerging themes become the categories of the synthesised analysis. For the blended learning process, data were collected through learning and teaching throughout the year. Teaching and learning took place face-to-face and on the virtual platforms. The blended learning that took place throughout the academic year were coded and categorised under genres and modes used to teach. These were further analysed according to the six steps of blended learning (Lauillard 2013): Acquisition, Inquiry, Discussion, Collaboration, Practise and Production and the COI framework (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000). The assignments were analysed using document analysis. Extracts of the student's assignments are presented in chapter 4 and the document analysis conclusively defined the nature of the problems in the documents and discussed resolutions which addressed them. The semi-structured interviews were analysed into recurring themes stemming from the six steps of blended learning and the Community of Inquiry Framework by addressing

the cognitive, teaching and social presences of students and the academic staff. Commentary and analysis are made about the data presented in chapter 4 and further discussed in chapter 5.

3.8 Trustworthiness

According to Gunawan (2015), trustworthiness can be reached in a study by using triangulation through the use of different instruments in the data collection process. This gives credibility and is most likely to address issues, thereby ensuring transferability, dependability and constructing confirmability. Triangulation refers to the collection of data from various sources (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017) In this study, data were collected from the students and the lecturers to triangulate and authenticate the information gathered.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility has been underpinned as one of the important indicators for qualitative research. It involves a thick description of the phenomenon of interest (Marshall & Rossma, 2011). Yarbrough (2011) states that credibility has five characteristics: utility, feasibility, property, accuracy and accountability. Accuracy refers to judging the accuracy of the findings and the conclusions. Accountability requires sufficient documentation and reflection of the evaluation process. Credibility techniques can determine how true the data and conclusions are (Marshall & Rossma, 2011). According to Polit and Beck (2014), findings are the most important factors in a study. Therefore, credibility depicts the faith in the truth that is revealed in the study. Without credibility, findings and conclusions cannot be made as such credibility comes from the sources satisfaction with the interpretations made by the researcher (Gill, Gill & Roulet, 2018). I did not interfere with the data collection, hence ensuring the data's credibility.

3.9.2 Transferability

The main aim of transferability is to determine whether the findings found in the study within a specific context could be applied within a different context (Flick, 2018). Since the study used action research as its methodology, to study a specific group of students at a technical university, this study could be transferred and be applied to any academic institution.

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability means that I was able to explain why there may be disparity in the study by comparing one case to another or by comparing this study to a previous study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017).

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability exposes the fundamental presumptions of a study (Gill et. al., 2018). Its function is to prove that the interpretations of the findings are truly those of the sources and not of the sentiments of the researcher (Korstjens & Moses, 2018). This can be achieved by making the research process transparent by having an audit trail of the data collected and the analysis process as well as the researcher examining for any bias (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). The process of the data collection as well as the analysis are descriptively defined in the consent form.

3.9.5 Triangulation

Carter, Bryant-Lukosuis, Censo, Blythe, and Neville, (2014) define triangulation as multiple methods or data sources used in qualitative research to acquire a full understanding of a phenomenon. It is also regarded as a qualitative strategy to test validity through convergence from different sources. Bertram and Christiansen (2017) define triangulation as collecting data from several different sources. It was important for me to acknowledge the various sources from which I collected data. I collected data on blended learning as an intervention for first year cohorts, reflecting their lived experiences. I interviewed two lecturers to understand their experience and application of blended learning in their classrooms and I used my own experience of blended learning with the first years to see whether the data collected from the lecturers confirmed or contradicted the data from my own experience or practise. Also, by asking the two lecturers the same questions, I was able to see whether their responses agreed with one another or contradicted each other. The lecturers could answer honestly because they were assured that their identities would be anonymous, and pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities. Furthermore, it was important that the lectures understood what blended learning and multi-modality entailed or else the data gathered would not be valid. During the interview with Thandeka,

she asked me to give a clear explanation of what I meant by multi-modality. By collecting data from the students' writing and observing students' lived experiences via the blended learning process, doing document analysis of students written work and by conducting interviews with the two Intermediate Phase Language lecturers, I was able to triangulate the data and confirm creditability and trustworthiness.

3.10 The Researcher's Position

The researcher's position should not bias a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I am a staff member at the HEI where the study is conducted. The researcher was neutral and objective throughout the study.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

Hammersley and Traianou (2012) state that there are five core ethical issues to consider within education research: reducing harm, respecting autonomy, protection of participants' privacy, offering co-operation and fair treatment. I applied for ethical clearance from the CPUT Ethics Committee since this research involved collecting data directly from people. The research was scrutinised by the committee to ensure that the design of the research had appropriate measures in place to protect the interests of the participants of the research thus, presenting no harm to the participants (Denscombe, 1998). Ethical clearance was obtained from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Permission was requested from the first-year students and a consent form was signed by the participants who took part in the study. A letter was issued to the participants informing them about the research and that they were given a choice of participation, before giving informed consent to participate on a voluntary basis. Participants had autonomy to withdraw at any time from the research. Participants' identities were protected as the data collection was coded anonymously. The documented data was treated with confidentiality. Only my supervisor and I had access to the data to ensure that privacy and confidentiality of the respondents were guaranteed.

3.12 Limitations of the study

Face-to-face learning only took place during term one due to COVID-19. WhatsApp was the preferred platform to teach initially as some students had no data or devices to use to log onto Blackboard Collaborate sessions. I only had one contact period per week for one hour and fifteen minutes in which I had to teach both English Content and Methodology. I would split the time to teach both subjects. Time was never enough to do justice to both subjects. As the year progressed, I allocated more time for the subject that had more content for that specific week. I created PDF from the PowerPoint presentations because it took less data. Although BB had the test tool available, I preferred giving the students assignments which meant that students would less likely copy from each other because they needed to submit online and complete a declaration form. When I set up the assignments on BB, I added the SafeAssign component, this component would flag students writing that I may have plagiarized. Although it highlighted which students plagiarised, it did not flag students who may have copied from each other. This may be a flaw in BB.

Marking took longer because the assignments were written pieces that took time reading and marking online. The time I spent marking a hard copy was much less time than time spent marking online. Their assignments would be uploaded to BB. Twenty of the thirty students would log onto the WhatsApp group during teaching time, a few logging on during the lesson or at the tail end of the lesson because they had data issues or due to load shedding. During term three there were often power outages due to load shedding. I was unable to penalise students for not participating during the contact time because many of these students faced challenges out of their control which prohibited them from participating. The institution also took on the motto that no student would be left behind and this meant that lecturers had to accommodate students as much as what they possibly could in terms of getting the content to students who may not have devices or accepting late tasks. A few students always submitted tasks late due to no data or no devices. Many students logged onto BB after midnight because they received a data package from the

university which offers data that should be used at night. Many students used this time to download content and materials or do research.

Since the first-year cohort were new to BB, many struggled to upload their assignments correctly to Blackboard which made marking difficult. With a few assignments I was unable to make the track changes or comments online. I had to download the document then assess it which took double the time it generally did whilst marking online because I would need to go back to the online rubric and give feedback online. Students who experienced difficulty with uploading to BB would email their assignments to me. I preferred that students submitted online so that I could easily have access to their work in the Grade Centre. If they emailed their assignments, I was worried that it may get lost among my other emails and not be assessed. This meant that after marking an assignment I had to note which of the students did not submit their assignments on bb and then check my emails to see whether they submitted via email. Students were not supposed to directly message me on WhatsApp. They had class representative whom they had to WhatsApp if they experienced any problems and the class representatives would in turn contact me. This was to eliminate the overwhelming messages/texts from students. As the year progressed, I realised that students needed immediate feedback, hence I allowed them to continue to text/message me directly. The year felt exhausting because I never really switched off, I taught virtually, prepared notes, uploaded content, responded to emails 24/7 whereas as if I was physically at campus, there would be more structured time for planning, teaching and marking.

Although the Education faculty had given lecturers autonomy over the curriculum, we still had to produce the standard of curriculum that would not compromise the students and give assessments that would give students as many opportunities to be success at the end of the year. This was taxing, having to mark all the assessments, especially marking it online. Not being able to see students face-to-face whilst teaching meant I was unable to pick up on the body language as to whether they understood the content. I would generally gauge by the type of questions they asked during our W/A session if they understood or not. Consultations were done via BB Collaborate, as I was not allowed onto campus to do the face-to-face consultations due to COVID-19 regulations. The interviews with the Intermediate Phase lecturers could not take place face-to-face and was scheduled to be done virtually. This could only be done when the lecturers were available as they too were

teaching several classes online. Interviews with the lectures were conducted via Microsoft Teams and were recorded but once I tried to transcribe the data, I realised that the video footage was faulty and had to redo the interviews. This meant having to reschedule the interviews again at a time convenient to the lecturers. These interviews were set up via BB Collaborate and recorded as I had no trouble with the lessons, I recorded with my students prior. I also did screen recoding from my laptop to make doubly sure that data would not be lost.

3.13 Conclusion:

This chapter gave a thick description of the procedures and motives for using a qualitative research which is embedded in the interpretivist paradigm. Furthermore, the chapter has outlined the collection procedure and protocols by discussing the research topics: paradigm; qualitative research design; provided information on the sampling and the population; data collection method and analysis; trustworthiness and ethical clearance.

Chapter 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, led by the objectives of the study as a collective, the data collected for the study is presented and analysed in conjunction with Blended Learning as an intervention process for first years academic writing in the Education Faculty at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in the Western Cape. A Blended Learning pedagogy, constituting of six steps within the four steps of action research, were applied to the first years English Curriculum as a writing intervention to achieve the following outcomes:

- Reading and understanding
- Relate to the story
- Retell the story from a critical perspective

Document analysis was used to evaluate students' assessments and semi-structured interviews were used to collect in-depth descriptions from Lecturers to ascertain writing interventions used and to what degree they are making use of Blended Learning and Multi-modal teaching as a pedagogy. This chapter seeks to demonstrate the link between the data collected, research and the theoretical framework, in order to answer the following research questions:

- What is the nature of first year students' academic writing?
- Which strategies are used in HEI to address students' academic writing challenges and how lecturers addressed these challenges?
- How is Blended Learning currently implemented in the regular teaching and learning, to improve first year students writing?

To provide a good context for the study, it is seen needful to provide the course guide which projects the content and objectives (outcomes) of the course.

The place of English in the First Language 1: English Course (FEN151S):

Students are required to attain acceptable levels of communicative performance, as well as competence in English:

- *as a language through which medium, they may need to teach.*
- *as a language, which itself has to be taught at first language level.*
- *as a language that provides personal growth through meta-cognitive perspectives on gender issues, social relationships, stereotypes, the environment and register.*

1.1 English is a compulsory subject in the first year and second year.

1.2 FEN151S First Language: English 1 is taken by all students. Those who do not achieve 50% in the classification test administered at the beginning of the course will be requested to attend the academic support programme.

1.3 The course is designed to contribute to the development of knowledge, understanding, skills and values of teacher trainees.

1.4 The success of this course will be determined by the measure to which a student is capable of integrating and applying the base, practical and reflexive competences of the roles of the teacher in presenting the learning programme.

The Purpose and Outcomes of the subject:

2.1 The roles of the teacher from the vantage point of Languages, in particular English.

2.2 The position of CAPS in the learning programme and the outcomes for Intermediate Phase.

2.3 Course content is the result of serious consideration regarding the selection of literature and language study in order to achieve effective teacher training.

2.4 Content should not be an end, but rather bear a relationship to general principles of educational aims. Course content should thus form the duct along which spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social and cultural growth can take place,

- 2.5 Course content bridges the divides between theory, life as we experience it, and the practice of teaching.
- 2.6. Selection of course content should allow scope for self-appraisal, as well as respect for others. Principle issues should be separated from tangential issues.
- 2.7 It is imperative that students actively participate in meaningful rigorous academic discourse where the following moments of brain integration become manifest: input, processing, output and feedback; and
- 2.8 Instruction will be given according to tried and proven didactic principles, but will also allow scope for experimental and innovative approaches.
- 2.9 Academic reading and writing skills (*Scholar, researcher, and lifelong learner, leader, administrator, and manager*)

What is it?

The ability to demonstrate reading and writing skills within an academic context and with the necessary intellectual rigour.

What does it do?

It provides a means for effective communication

2.9.1.1 Listening skills

- Demonstrate the ability to overcome barriers to effective listening.
- Demonstrate the ability to use a variety of techniques for effective listening.
- Demonstrate the ability to teach listening skills effectively.

2.9.1.2 Reading skills

- Demonstrate the ability to overcome barriers to effective reading.
- Demonstrate the ability to teach reading skills effectively.

2.9.1.3 Writing skills

- Demonstrate the ability to use a particular style of expression.
- Demonstrate the ability to write lucidly, use writing, excellent grammar and a consistent stylistic approach.
- Demonstrate the ability to teach writing skills effectively.

2.9.1.4 Critical thinking skills (*Mediator, Curriculum designer, Specialist*)

What is it?

The ability to “push the boundaries of what is taken for granted from a particular value position” [Christie, P.2008. *Opening the doors of learning*. Johannesburg: Heinemann. pp108 – 109.

What does it do?

It creates dis-ease in order to facilitate change

2.9.1.5 Demonstrate the ability to create a learning environment in which critical and creative thinking is encouraged.

2.9.1.6 Demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate different programmes in real contexts and/or through case studies, both in terms of their educational validity as well as their socio-political significance.

2.9.1.7 *Demonstrate the ability to critically examine a variety of management options, making choices based on existing and potential conditions, and defending these choices.*

2.9.1.8 *Demonstrate the ability to identify and critically evaluate what counts as undisputed knowledge, necessary skills and important values.*

2.9.2 Creative thinking (*Mediator, Curriculum designer, Specialist*)

What is it?

The ability to think beyond the limitations of the obvious

What does it do?

It stimulates curiosity and promotes divergence

2.9.2.1 Demonstrate the ability to create a learning environment in which critical and creative thinking is encouraged.

2.9.2.2 Demonstrate the ability to make educational judgements on educational issues arising from real practice or from authentic case study exercises.

2.9.2.3 Demonstrate the ability to use a variety of and appropriate intervention strategies to cope with learning and other difficulties.

2.9.2.4 A professional (ethical) disposition

What is it?

The ability and willingness to explore, enquire and critically engage with teaching and learning issues across all divides and within a shared ethical framework. The ability to identify and address ethical issues based on critical reflection on the suitability of different ethical value systems to specific contexts.

What does it do?

It helps to create a supportive environment where learners are encouraged to take intellectual risks, to recognize other viewpoints and to become familiar with the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship.

- 2.9.2.5 *Demonstrate the ability to articulate an own vision of a particular kind of student learning and understanding.*
- 2.9.2.6 *Be the embodiment of a solid sense of the purpose of teaching, displaying motivation, willingness, commitment and an appropriate disposition to make intelligent, informed and effective changes.*
- 2.9.2.7 *Demonstrate the ability to practice and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others.*
- 2.9.2.8 *Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively, showing recognition of and respect for the differences of others.*
- 2.9.2.9 *Demonstrate the ability to reflect on their own and others` experiences in terms of cognitive and dispositional development. They should also evince a willingness and motivation to accept change, enacting and initiating renewal for change, while simultaneously and continuously evaluating and be reflective in order to learn from these experiences.*

2.9.2.10 *Demonstrate the ability to know how to teach learners to think about what they understand, what they need to learn and what strategies they can use to acquire the information they need.*

2.9.2.11 *Demonstrate the ability to act in accordance with the ideals and values of their profession and to behave in a way that enhances the dignity and status of the teaching profession.*

2.9.2.12 Demonstrate the ability to do professional duties with a very high level of commitment and integrity.

REFLECTION ON LEARNING AND TEACHING PRACTICE (METACOGNITION)

What is it?

It is the ability to reflect on your own and others' thinking processes

What does it do?

It enables the learner to articulate, monitor and regulate these processes.

2.9.2.13 Demonstrate the ability to reflect individually and collectively on own visions of the desirable and the possible.

2.9.2.14 Demonstrate the ability to reflect individually and collectively on their willingness and motivation to change and personal development in order to become successful teachers.

2.9.2.15 Demonstrate the capacity for intelligent and adaptive teaching, thereby addressing barriers to learning. To this end the novice teacher should be

able to identify, foster, measure, revise and sustain effective practices while simultaneously understanding that such skills will develop over time.

2.9.2.16 Demonstrate the ability to reflect on their own and others` experiences in terms of cognitive and dispositional development. They should also evince a willingness and motivation to accept change, enacting and initiating renewal for change, while simultaneously and continuously evaluating and be reflective in order to learn from these experiences.

2.9.2.17 Demonstrate the ability to understand how educators learn to monitor and regulate their own thinking.

2.9.3 Enhanced performance

2.9.3.1 Possess a clearly articulated vision of where teacher development is directed, as well as maintaining a standard against his/her and others` thoughts and subsequent actions, which are to be evaluated.

2.9.3.2 Demonstrate the ability to use different strategies and take part in a variety of activities which will enable evaluating, reviewing, self-criticising and learning from experience.

2.9.4 *Applied competence*

What is it?

The ability to apply appropriate practical, foundational and reflexive competences to everyday challenges in a teaching and learning environment

What does it do?

It allows the learners to develop the ability to see the connections between the what, the how and the why in order to facilitate satisfactory learning outcomes.

Applied competence is the overarching term for three interconnected kinds of competence:

2.9.4.1 **Practical competence:** *Demonstrate the ability, in an authentic context, to consider a range of possibilities for action, make considered decisions about which possibility to follow, and to perform the chosen action.*

2.9.4.2 **Foundational competence:** *Demonstrate the ability to understand the knowledge and thinking that underpins action taken.*

2.9.4.3 **Reflexive competence:** *Demonstrates ability to integrate or connect performances and decision-making with understanding and with an ability to adapt to change and unforeseen circumstances and to explain the reasons behind these adaptations.*

2.9.4.4 *Making educational judgements on educational issues arising from real practice or from authentic case study exercises.*

2.9.4.5 *Researching real educational problems and demonstrating an understanding of the implications of this research.*

2.9.4.6 *Reflecting on the relations between subjects/disciplines and making judgements on the possibilities of integrating them.*

2.10 Outcomes

The following learning outcomes will be addressed in the course:

- *To attain acceptable levels of communicative performance, as well as competence in English*
- *As a language through which medium students need to teach.*
- *Language and literature which have to be taught at home language level.*
- *As a language that provides personal growth through meta-cognitive perspectives on gender issues, social relationships, stereotypes, the environment and register.*

- *Wide reading of texts – personal literacy – engaged reading – towards a critical literacy.*
- *Emergent and basic literacy – leading to child literacy (home and school) and adolescent Literacy.*
- *Literature circles – aesthetic and efferent reading*
- *An awareness of the structure of language; how meaning is created – looking at lexis and syntax.*
- *The learner is able to demonstrate an informed understanding of the core areas of English disciplines or practices and an informed understanding of key terms, concepts, facts, general principles, rules and theories of English practice and discipline.*
- *This course enables the student to fulfil the 7 ROLES OF THE TEACHER from the point of departure of Languages.*
- *This course emphasises:*
 - *The roles of the teacher from the vantage point of **Languages**, in particular **English**.*
 - *The position of CAPS for the Senior and Intermediate Phase.*
 - *that course content is the result of serious consideration regarding the selection of literature and language study in order to achieve effective teacher training.*
 - *that content should not be an end in itself, but rather bear a relationship to general principles of educational aims. Course content should thus form the duct along which spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social and cultural growth can take place.*
 - *that course content bridges the divides between theory, life as we experience it, and the practice of teaching.*
 - *the selection of course content should allow scope for self-appraisal, as well as respect for others. Principal issues should be separated from tangential issues.*
 - *that is absolutely imperative that students actively participate in meaningful rigorous academic discourse where the following moments of brain integration become manifest: input, processing, output and feedback; and*

- *that instruction will be given according to tried and proven didactic principles but will also allow scope for experimental and innovative approaches.*

The following is an indication of the content that was covered during the year.

Description of Subject Content:

- Children's Literature: Overview, Fairy Tales, Fables, Fantasy, criteria for good books.
- Short Stories: Overview of Short Stories, Novel : Introduction to Dystopian literature and fantasy: Detailed study of a dystopian novel in class (Rowling, JK. 1997. Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone)

Short Stories: Behind

Poetry introduction: Collection of Poems

Language: Sociolinguistics, revision of grammar, phonetics, presentation skills, research skills, academic writing

Creative Writing: Descriptive Essay

Transactional Writing: Diary Entry

Reading Journal

Term 1: (Week 1- 8) Theme: Identity – Course introduction and SA Education Context

Language and Language in Education

Genres in Children's Literature

Short Story: *Behind the Mask* by Anneli Visser

Poetry: *My Name* by Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa

Term 2: (Week 9- Week 17) Novel: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by JK Rowling

Term 3: (Week 18 – Week 25) *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by JK Rowling

Poetry: *Stop bullying* by Johny Nkgaelel; *Used to it* by Kgwedi

Albertina

Short Story: *Tjieng Tjang Tjerries* by Jolene by Jolyn Phillips

Term 4: (Week 26 – Week 29): Short Story: *The Box* by Jolyn Phillips.

The above course guide frames the content and provides the outcomes but it is up to the lecturer to use his/her teaching philosophy to achieve these objectives which is the rationale for this action research based on blended learning.

4.2 Using Literature to teach writing

The following genres are covered in the First Language 1: English (FEN151S) Course: Collection of Short Stories, collection of poetry, novel and writing (long and transactional). It is also needful to stress at this junction reading and writing are two sides of the same coin. Thus, one cannot be taught without the other. Based on this, the focus of my teaching is based on how students can read a text and respond to the text which is why the use of literature is needed in the teaching of writing to make it appear as a kind of social practice.

4.2.1 Essay Writing

During the first English lesson, students were given the outline for the year and taught about South African Education in Context, which looked at the state of Education in South Africa. This led to a discussion about why students decided on studying Education and how educators are remembered, for impacting their lives. Since this was a new cohort and I was unfamiliar to their standard of writing and critical thinking, I asked the students to write a one-page essay introducing themselves and to write about how their teachers impacted their schooling career and how they intend to make an impact on the lives of their students. I decided on this topic as these were education students that are embarking on their studies. Once qualified, these students would be teaching in communities and have the power to impact and make a difference in the lives of children. I wanted the students to understand the pivotal role they would play in once they qualified and started teaching. We looked at the basic structure of an essay on the blackboard, I asked them what it should look like and wrote it on the blackboard. Students indicated that an essay must have an introduction and body and a conclusion.

We further discussed the writing process and I referred them to the CAPS Document Page 19. The writing process involves planning, drafting, editing and re-writing. Students had to

submit their essay onto Blackboard. This activity was used as a baseline assessment activity, to gauge the students' standard of writing and would not count towards their formative assessment so no rubric was used to assess the students work. After looking at their essays it was clear that the majority were able to perform the task well, but their writing could improve somewhat more. At the next lesson, I gave general feedback to all the students about structure and using linking words in an essay. Using words such as firstly, secondly, however and so forth. These are basic writing principles that are expected to be taught at high school. However, these principles I reinforced with every creative writing lesson. For the rest of the lesson we looked at language and language in education. We looked at the statistics of the official languages in the SA Curriculum and how South African children whose first language is not English are taught in their home language until grade 3 and in grade 4, they are expected to be taught in English. The class had a robust discussion about how difficult it is for these young children to transition to English from their home language.

4.2.2 The Reading Journal

In the third lesson, I taught the importance of reading to young children, the elements of a story: characters; setting; plot; themes, as well as reading strategies. To teach the reading strategies, I brought several children's books along to class to demonstrate the application of the reading strategies. I would take a book and ask students make predictions based on the title, demonstrations by skimming the book or the blurb. We further spoke about how connections are made with a book, how to appreciate a book and how to evaluate it. This lesson was important as the students were tasked to write six book reviews on children's books. Hence, the aim of this lesson was to prepare students for the Online Reading Journal Assessment which they submitted throughout the year. As a language teacher it is important to know children's literature as you need to have a classroom library filled with good reading books as well as be readily able to recommend good reading books to parent for further reading for their children. students were taught the characteristics of good language teachers from the prescribed book *Introducing Children's Literature* (Evans, Joubert and Meier (Eds), 2017). One of these characteristics is that teachers need to equip themselves with knowledge on popular and good reading materials for their students. At

the end of the lesson, students were given the instruction for the reading journal as well as the rubric, which I uploaded to BB. Students needed to use an A5 Hardcover for the reading journal but because of Covid-19 and no face-to-face teaching was taking place, students then had to create an online reading journal and submit it via BB.

The instructions were as follows:

Online Reading Journal Instructions:

Each time I give a task to students, I usually begin by giving clear instructions like the one below to make sure they know exactly what I expect from them.

Your first half of your Reading Journal is due on Monday, 15th June 2020.

- 1) *Type your book reviews in Arial Font, size 12pt, one and half spacing.*
- 2) *Collate your 3 book reviews into a PDF Document.*
- 3) *Create a cover page which includes your name, surname, student number, course code, class group, assignment title and due date.*
- 4) *You may scan/copy the cover page and title page. However, this is not compulsory.*
- 5) *You are submitting 3 book reviews (ages 9-12 years old, Intermediate Phase) of which 1 must be an e-book (compulsory). However, if you were not able to collect books before Lockdown, all 3 your book reviews, may be e-books.*
- 6) *Create headings and discuss the Elements of the story: Characters, Setting, Themes, Plot*
- 7) *Create headings and discuss the Reading Strategies: Predictions, Questions, Connections, Appreciation, Evaluation* 6) *Set 5 Contextual Questions based on the 5 Cognitive Levels.*
- 8) *Due Date: (**Online Submission**) Monday, 15th June 2020*

Students could choose their own children's literature to review appropriate for IP students or they could select books from the list of books uploaded to BB. I further uploaded websites from which the students could assess reading books as part of the instruction was that two of the books had to be e-books since we are in the technological era and children have access to books on their Tablets. The first three reviews of the reading journal on children's literature were due first week of the second term. I explained the rubric in class so that the students had a clear understanding of how they would be assessed. The rubric assessed four aspects: firstly, the format, layout and overall neatness (10 marks). Secondly, the elements of a story (10 marks)– evaluating whether students were able to identify and discuss all the elements of a story well. Thirdly, application of the reading strategies (10 marks) – evaluating how well students were able to make the predictions; create questions; make connections; evaluate and appreciate the book. Finally, language and grammar (10 marks) were assessed. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 students could not submit their reading journals in person and I had to adapt the assignment to an Online Reading Journal. I was empathetic towards students as they had no access to libraries as they were all closed during lockdown, so students could review books they found online if they did not have the tangible book. The online reading journals were assessed online, and each student received individual feedback.

An example:

I asked students if they remembered what needs to be done during the pre-reading questions. I reminded them that they need to work from the basis that their students have not read the All the students can see is the title, the images on the cover, the font of the title and the blurb. So based on those premises, they need to set pre-reading questions. I reminded them that they could not ask students to comment about the final paragraph in chapter 3, or what they thought of one of the characters based on what they read. This would imply that the student had already started reading the story.

When I am doing the reading strategies, they need to make sure that they indicate the value it would be to these students. The main objective would be to show how these students may connect with the story and to comment on how the structure and language is conducive to these students. Currently all I saw was what they appreciated and how they connected

with the story as adults. It was important for them to imagine what connections their 9-11 years students would make with the books. What their students would appreciate of the book. What an adult would appreciate of a book and the connections made by a 9-11 year would be worlds apart due to general knowledge and lived experiences. For instance, a children's book written on the childhood of ex-president for South Africa Nelson Mandela might not resonate with the 9-11 years old as they were not aware of who the ex-president was and why a story about his childhood growing in the Eastern Cape would be something that they would relate to nor not necessarily make the connections with who that young child eventually became and the significant role he had to play in South Africa. However, the teacher would be able to make these connections although many of them were not born yet in 1994. The school curriculum covered several issues that dealt with the South African democracy and Nelson Mandela. Tandeka told them to ensure that they were setting their contextual questions at the five cognitive levels (which they would find in the IP English HL CAPS document Page 91).

The purpose of the reading journal being a writing assessment, was to teach students to summarise, analyse and respond to literary texts. Students had to comment on the structure of the books by describing the text by commenting on the elements of the text, the characters, key incidents and stylistic features. Evaluate the work by expressing an opinion or judgement of the book. Furthermore, they had to comment about the language.

4.2.3 WhatsApp Groups

The students selected two class representatives whom I would be in contact with via WhatsApp. These class representatives would forward any information given by me onto the larger group who was in a class WhatsApp group. Students would also contact their student representatives via W/A if they had any questions and these questions would be forwarded to be via W/A if they were unable to answer the questions. Although students had to reach out to their class representatives with questions, they would message me directly and I would respond immediately. Students enjoyed the immediate feedback that they received on the W/A group as well. During our lecture on W/A they would answer each other's questions too or ask for clarity. Although they were not receiving their learning face-

to-face the real time feedback was equally appreciated. The class representatives would also download materials I posted on BB to forward it to the class W/A group to make it easier for everyone to access since students struggled initially to get connected to BB. Eventually, the W/A platform became a crucial mode for my teaching during the Lockdown because of Covid-19. HEI's had to move their face-to-face teaching and learning to online methods. Using W/A proved to be a more cost effective and convenient form of learning for the students because several of them struggled with no data to connect to the internet or laptops.

Smartphones could be used for the W/A teaching and students could make use of the BB Mobile App. During Covid-19 the IP Education Faculty created a new timetable to accommodate for online teaching. Lecturers would get one hour per week to teach their students. Lecturers could choose how they wanted to teach their students either via BB Collaborate which would allow the lecturer and students to see each other and view the lecturer's teaching. These sessions could be recorded and posted on BB for students to revert to the recording of the lesson, whenever they wished to. Although BB Collaborate was the perfect teaching platform for students and lecturers, it proved to be data heavy and most lecturers opted to use W/A as a teaching platform. I mostly used the W/A platform to teach and BB to upload content. I used the BB Collaborate for Methodology which is the didactics of the subject. My session to teach English and Methodology was on a Wednesday at 10:30am-11:45 (one hour and fifteen minutes). I would divide the session into two parts, to teach both subjects. Having to teach two subjects within the space of one hour and fifteen minutes meant that I had to ensure that the content and material that I uploaded prior to the lesson, which was in preparation for the lesson was concise so that I did not have to spend too much time during the W/A session on a Wednesday. I would split the one hour and fifteen minutes into two so that I could teach both the content for First Language 1: English and the Methodology. I would prepare summarized points for the W/A session so that the session could be cover the main aspects of the content or materials uploaded as well as allow time for students to ask questions. Students had to type their names and student numbers at the start of sessions, this was the register. I decided to send all my students the content that I had taught via mail. After the mail was dispatched

several was returned to the university because for some or other reason students never collected the printed notes. This led to the Intermediate Phase Education Department securing USBs to upload all content for all subjects and then make this available to the students who had to collect the USBs from campus. By this time, the national lockdown had moved to level one and students could now access the campus following the COVID-19 screening protocols

4.2.4 Short story

The objectives for teaching the short story were to Improve educational intellect; cultural awareness and tolerance; conceptual development; as well as linguistic development. The students should be able to apply the reading strategies of skimming and scanning texts for information. Make predictions, ask critical questions, make personal connections with the story for personal development. Appreciate the moral of the story. Distinguish between the main and secondary characters and make commentary about them. Critically respond, analyse and discuss the story by identifying the plot of the story by recognizing the exposition, the rising action, the climax, the falling action and the resolution thus ensuring conceptual development.

The theme for term one was Identity and before the next lesson, I uploaded a short story *Behind My Mask*, which the students had to download and prepare for class. This story written by a matriculant who battled with having to mask her real identity because of her very conservative parents. In class, I asked the class to break into groups of five. I gave each student a number and that is the group they were assigned to. Generally, students tend to group with their friends and in this way, they could learn to work with their peers and get to know them better. Each group was given a paragraph or two to discuss among themselves and make notes. They had to appoint a scribe and speaker. The speaker would present the points raised in the group to the rest of the class. After all the presentations we had a discussion on identity and how our identities are shaped by our environments. Then I taught the components of a Descriptive Essay. The purpose of a descriptive essay is to describe something in a vivid way. The structure generally gives orientation to the subject which in the case of the topic of the assignment would be their mask. They would need to

describe it by detailing characteristics/features that constitute their masks, perhaps even literally describe what their masks look like.

Furthermore, I taught the language features of a descriptive essay that it may be written in the past or present tense, the adjectives and adverbs used should create a vivid picture in the reader's mind. Figurative language should also be incorporated to make the essay come to life. The students were tasked to write a descriptive essay titled *Behind my Mask*. This was not an interpretation of the story but how they identified and related to the story. I assured students that I was the only one that would be reading their essays, so they need not be afraid to unveil their true selves. I also told them to not include anything that made them feel uncomfortable to share. This assignment gave me a good bird's eye view of the students that I teach. The assignment as well as the rubric was uploaded to Blackboard. The rubric assessed three aspects: firstly, content (20 marks) (students' response and ideas, purpose and audience). Secondly, language and style (5 marks) (language use, punctuation and spelling) and finally, paragraph and sentence structure (5 marks). Students were asked to submit on BB and bring a hardcopy to class. We spoke about the writing process which we previously spoke about in the second lecture, how they needed to plan, draft, edit and rewrite their pieces before submitting their final pieces.

On the whiteboard, we looked did the planning together looking at what impacts our identity and why we wear masks. I then asked the students to complete the rest of the process at home. They now needed to complete their planning and then take all the ideas and structure their ideas into an introduction, body and conclusion for the draft. After completing the draft, students had to read through their drafts and edit their work or get someone to edit their work. I too was available during my consultation times if they required assistance. I referred to the feedback I had given them after they had done the first writing activity. How sentence structure, paragraph structure and essay structure is important. How linking words are important throughout and essays give the essay an easy flow and make reading and comprehension easy. The second last week, students had to bring their hard copies of their assignments to class and write a term test. The reason for two submissions of the essay is because in the past, students claimed to have submitted assignments online and there

would be no evidence online to prove it. Hence, they were compelled to submit online and hand in the hard copy. I marked the Descriptive Essay online and students would receive their individual feedback once their essay was assessed and mark submitted. I, furthermore, gave general feedback of how the students performed. Overall, students understood the assignment and did well but there were a few who completely misunderstood and wrote in general without writing about their own lives.

4.2.4.1 Extract from student's essay that was awarded 50%:

Since this was the first assignment given to the students, I decided not to fail any student and therefore the lowest mark was 50%. The reason for not failing any student was to not to discourage students since it was their very first attempt at an assignment for English. Generally, I found that if students failed their first assignment one of two things would happen. One, they would become a catalyst for wanting to improve their work or two, they tend to give up at the start already and decide to put no further effort into their assignments because they might think that they just are not good at the subject. They would say things such as that they did better at their second language at high school than their first. As if that would justify the poor performance.

Most people are always pretending they are innocent, and they are good children to their parents but behind all that they want to do things they parents will never allow them to do.

There is a high school. She is a top student...she wants to quite school because she does not understand the meaning and what it will do for her.

She is a neat girl...She wants tattoos that in many years to come she will regret.

4.2.4.2 My Feedback to the student:

My response to the student was that their assignment was a satisfactory attempt. However, that they misunderstood the instruction. They were supposed to describe their life behind their own mask. A reflection of their own life and not regurgitate what was in the story by relaying what was behind the main character's mask. For instance, we wear various masks

at home; we wear a specific mask that is acceptable and conducive to wear around our loved ones and family. We do not necessarily wear the same mask around our peers because we have a very different relationship with them. Around our family, we may feel accepted for who we are but around our peers we may feel that we need to project a certain persona to fit in with them and to be accepted by them.

4.2.4.3 Extract from a student that was awarded 60%

The average aggregate for the first essay was 60%. Students understood what was expected of them in terms of the content but battled with structure and language errors. These students moved to 67% in their second essay.

Behind my mask is a completely different person, each and every person hides behind a mask of their own. Let me tell you what is behind my mask.

The person I am when I have my mask on is a quiet, weak and scared person. With my mask on, I allowed people to walk all over me. My mask is seen as a “yes” person. With my mask on people do not see me as someone who can have a backbone.

Behind my mask is someone that many few people have seen. Behind this mask is not the perfect female. Behind this mask is a girl that always makes mistakes, a girl that can sometimes disappoint the people close to her.

The person I am behind this mask is also an extremely strong female who is filled with many strong emotions. Some of these emotions includes rage, anger and fierceness. Behind this mask is a girl that does not allow anyone to step over her, a girl that can stand up for herself and a girl that has many opinions that is better kept to herself.

The girl behind this mask is not as dull as many thinks she is. The girl behind this mask is a fun, imaginative girl, with many outgoing interests and with an adventurous free spirit.

This is a girl with many talents and a lot of experiences. The mask I wear limits me from sharing my ideas or opinions. The reason for this is because people only see my mask I immediately get shut down because it is me. The only reason I would hold back is because many do not take me seriously with my mask on and it becomes so frustrating.

4.2.4.4 My feedback to the student:

Their attempt was satisfactory but too many reckless errors which would suggest no proof-reading and editing before submitting. Very neglect writing.

4.2.4.5 Extract from a student essay that was awarded 70%

Since this was the first years' first assignment, I generally do not give very high marks because I feel that students may relax and not continue to give their very best work always. In this way, the goal post is shifted, and the student would aim to do much better than what they have done previously to get that Cum Laude Merit. This was evident as this student achieved 75% in their next essay.

Behind my mask is an array of emotions even I might not fully understand. I am scared; I am worried; I am a dreamer.

Behind the mask of a calm, collected, mature adult lies a frightened, insecure young woman, that still feels like a child at heart. A young woman who wants nothing more than the comfort of her mother's arms. I want to achieve so much and yet fear has me trapped within its icy grip. I fear failure, I fear disappointing my parents and even more so myself. I am angry that I allow fear to cloud my thoughts and judgements.

Behind the mask of a supportive daughter, cousin, sister and friend is someone who is confused, frustrated and worried. Here is a girl relying so deeply on her faith, praying and believing that things will work out the way they are supposed to even if she does not see it right now. I want to scream and cry out of anger and pain, that they deserve happiness and

not heartache. I want to hold them close and encircle them in a cocoon of warmth and happiness to ward off the grey clouds lurking ahead.

Behind my mask lies a girl who is trying her best to make it through life, day by day, week by week. A girl who wants to appreciate the small moments in life instead of worrying about whether the big ones will happen. Behind my mask, lies so much more and all of it is me.

4.2.4.6 My feedback to the student:

That their attempt was a very good attempt but that it had a few reckless language errors.

Unfortunately, due to student's protests that were happening classes were forced to be suspended and students could not hand in their hard copies. Due to the student protests, the term ended abruptly. Further unbeknown to the world a deadly virus hit the world and all South African as did many other countries around the world went into lockdown. This meant that classes could not resume face-to-face and learning and teaching had to be done online. This was a great challenge for many lecturers who depended on face-to-face teaching. Several webinars were conducted for academics to become ofay with online teaching. As previously mentioned, teaching online was not only challenging for the academics but for the students themselves too. Students had to return home due to Covid-19, many of them returning to homes in rural areas where there were limited resources and access to the internet. This became a huge concern for HEIs and they had to make resources such as laptops available to students without smartphone devices or laptops as well make data available to all students. HEIs took on the motto *that no student would be left behind*. Once most students were equipped with devices and data, teaching and learning proceeded online. I decided to use multi-modality to teach my students so I prepared Power Points and saved these as PDF's at it would use less data for the students. These would be uploaded to BB before we have a W/A lesson, which took place once a week.

A timetable was drawn up for the Intermediate Phase so that all the lecturers would have a session to have contact time with their students. My lesson was scheduled for a Wednesday morning and I was expected to cover two subjects within that given time – First Language 1: English and Methodology of First Language: English. The lesson would take place once a week for one hour and fifteen minutes on the WhatsApp group to which the whole class was added. Since the contact time was limited, I created discussion groups on bb for the students to ask questions or make comments about the content or reading material. These discussion groups on BB, I would monitor daily and respond to students. Since the university took on the motto that no student would be left behind it was important to identify students who were not engaging during contact time and/or not submitting assignments. The university source the services of speed mail and had ask lecturers to print and package all the content and reading materials so that it could be sent off to the students that lived in the remote areas and had no access nor smart devices. When some notes had returned to the university, they further decided to load all content and reading materials for all subjects onto USBs for each and every student. Students had to collect these USBs as the lockdown had moved to level 1 and students now had access to the campus complying with the Covid-19 protocols. Students' temperatures were taken, names and student numbers were logged whenever they accessed the campus. The institution gave lecturers the choice of whether they wanted to be back physically at campus or continue to teach remotely for the final term. The Arts, History, Science and Technology lecturers opted to be back at campus to accommodate for the practical assessments which they had to conduct with their students. I opted to continue teaching remotely because it had been working well thus far and because I did not want to put myself at risk of catching the virus.

4.2.5 Discussion Groups

In addition to loading the materials onto BB, I created discussion groups on BB. On BB on the left panel is the heading discussions. I clicked on the heading and created a discussion group for each week so that students could ask any question that they may have about the content or comments that they may have. Threads would be created with each new contributor. These threads would be visible to the whole class and their peers could respond to them too. I monitored BB for any engagements. I would generally start the thread with a

question as a start to a thread and students would respond. An example of a thread after the first lesson in term two:

During the break students had to read a novel in preparation for term two. They had to read Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. Before Covid-19 students were encouraged to purchase the novel but due to Covid-19 many of them were not able to get the book. I downloaded the PDF from the internet and uploaded it to BB so that all students would have access to the novel.

4.2.6 The Novel

The objectives for the novel were to be able to identify the genre according to its purpose, structure and language. Critically respond to issues highlighted by the themes of the novel. Be able to discuss the various characters in-depth and explain how the character's persona relates to the other literary elements of a novel such as the themes or setting. Be able to discuss how the round characters (main characters) evolve from the beginning of the novel to the end of the novel. Be able to infer the author's purpose for writing the novel. Explain how the plot develops in the story from the exposition to the resolution. Make personal connections with the characters and the theme of the novel. The specific skills that are taught are the reading strategies and the elements of a story.

The novel: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by JK Rowling had seventeen chapters that had to be covered over eight weeks, so I covered two chapters per week. Students had to read the chapters and do a short quiz online in preparation for class. On the W/A we would discuss the vital elements of each chapter, the characters, the setting the themes and the plot. The quiz was not used as a formative assessment but merely a consolidating activity. Students enjoyed the quiz after reading, as it gave them a good sense of how much they understood the chapters. After each lesson on W/A, I would put a Power Point presentation together on all the pertinent points highlighted during the lesson and save the PP as a PDF and upload it on BB for the students to refer back to it. I enjoyed the W/A groups, students were very engaging and based on their feedback, and comments in the discussion groups on bb, they were happy about the method of teaching because they could always refer back to the material posted on BB.

4.2.7 Short test and Diary entry

The objective of the short test was to determine whether they could identify the Harry Potter and the Philosopher's stone themes and critically discuss these themes in relation to the characters. The objective the Diary Entry was to test their writing skill and personal response to the literary text, use the correct structure and language applicable to the genre.

For term two students had to write a short online test on the novel and do a Diary Entry. The Diary Entry had to be written from a character's perspective. Again, I revised the writing process that we did during the first term face-to-face. The purpose of the diary entry was to write from the perspective of one of the characters and reflect on their personal journey and experiences. I uploaded the structure of a diary entry as a PDF prior to the lesson and reiterated that the text structure that entries are dated and is a personal recount. The language is written in the past tense, has an informal style and that the writer is writing for themselves. Students had to submit their Diary Entry assignment on BB. The rubric was made available along with the assignment on BB. The rubric assessed three aspects, firstly, the content and point of view. Secondly, the structure and organization and thirdly the descriptive language, spelling and grammar. Along with the assignment I uploaded a list of character traits that could be used in the diary entries. The short test was created on BB via Assessments.

4.2.8 Poetry and Short Stories

The objectives of teaching poetry were so that students could distinguish between literal and figurative connotations; identify the theme and message; identify and critically analyse imagery and sound devices. The objectives for teaching short stories were mentioned above at 4.2.4.

For the third term, we concluded Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone and did some poetry: *Stop the bullying* Johny Nkgapele and *Used to it* by Kgwedi Albertina and a short story: *The legend of the Tjieng Tjang Tjerries* by Jolyn Phillips. I uploaded the materials onto bb as PDF documents and the students had to prepare for the lesson by reading the materials and doing the consolidation quiz thereafter. The quiz is created on BB, on the

content page there is a sub-heading for assessments. By clicking on the assessments tab, I selected a mobile quiz and then built the quiz with multiple choice/true or false/short questions. The quiz would be questions about the genre to determine whether the student read the comprehended the text. The students were only given one attempt to do the quiz, so I constantly reminded them to be thoroughly prepared before attempting the quiz. I stopped with the discussions on BB because it was the very same students engaging that engaged in the W/A class. I felt that it was repetitive in that case. Due to the fact taught my students methodology as well. I arranged two BB Collaborate sessions for them. Many of them were shy to speak over their mics so I allowed them to be engaged in the chat. This they enjoyed and they felt free to pose questions or make comments about the lesson. The WhatsApp lessons proceeded for the literature. I would ask questions and they would respond or ask questions which either I would answer, or their peers would answer. Background on the poem: *Used to it*. The poem denotes that women are caught in the cycle of violence become desensitized to the abuse and society enables the abuse to go on unchecked and create stigma for women who seek help to leave.

An example from the W/A Chat:

I asked the students whether they agreed with the speaker's stance in the poem and whether they thought that women can help themselves out of abusive situations.

Student 1 agreed but stated that they think that it can be difficult when people are saying they should stay and that women can feel obligated to stay.

Student 2 agreed because they said that there are so many places and facilities to Help women to get out of their situation but also disagreed to some extent because many women find themselves trapped in those relationships due to financial dependence an also for the sake of the children and that some women did not see that they have choices.

I further asked why would women/men feel obligated to someone who was hurting them?

Student 1 said that this could be due to financial dependence or for the sake of children or because they see no other choice.

Student 2 stated that women/men might start feeling that they deserve to be in that position.

I asked the students whether they thought that these women/men have choices?

Student 1 said that sometimes they do, there are homes for women in these situations and that they can make a case at the police station but the only problem with making a case is that they would need a lot of evidence and to the police these instances are seen as “minor offenses”.

Student 3 responded by saying that they have seen the outside of the home for abused women and children in Wynberg and that the home was not noticeable that it is a shelter unless you knew that what it was, it looked abandoned.

I asked the students what they thought the speaker was advocating to women and what advice would they give someone in such a situation? What if it were one of their peers?

Student 4 replied and said that they would firstly help their peer understand that what was happening was not due to any wrongdoing on their part and that it was not their fault. The next step would be to help them gain some semblance of independence.

Student 1 responded by saying that they would get them in contact with someone who survived and came out strong.

4.2.9 Final Term:

For the final term, the students had one short story to read and complete a quiz on. Thereafter it was discussed in the W/A group. I once again created the discussion group to see whether the students would use that platform, but they waited for the W/A lesson instead. The final online reading journal was due at the end of the first week of the final term. Students would email or W/A me directly for clarity about the reviews but it seemed like

there was much less uncertainty as to what was expected in the final three reading reviews after I had given them individual feedback, some asked clarity on the feedback as an example I asked a student to flesh out the themes. The student W/A me to ask what “flesh out” meant and I could respond in real time and explain what I meant and expected.

4.3 Data from the interview with the lecturers

The purpose of the interviews was to triangulate my own teaching strategies and methodologies. I thought it was very needful to get other language lecturer’s perspective to see if there is something, I could learn from them as well as see how they teach their classes. To make sure that this was juxtaposed with my own experiences, I prepared semi-structured interviews as a guide from my practices also informed by the literature.

For the purpose of this study and to ascertain anonymity and confidentiality, I decided to give the two lecturers that I interviewed pseudonyms to keep their identities concealed. In view of this, I named the Afrikaans lecturer Amy and IsiXhosa lecturer Thandeka. The transcripts of the interviews will be indented and italicized to distinguish it from any other form of writing. The responses are guided by the semi-structured interview schedule.

4.3.1 Research Questions used

Question 1: What is the nature of students’ writing?

The intention of this question was to determine the standard of writing of the first-year cohort and to ascertain whether there was a need for intervention.

Amy: *When I think about students writing, I tend to make a distinction between the content of the writing and the style of their writing. So, when I think about content, I'm talking about like can the students formulate kind of a rational argument, are they making good points that relate to the question that they're writing about, are they expressing themselves in a kind of logical and effective. I want to say not effective but in a way that like has an impact in terms of just topic. And that for me is one area, and then completely distinct on from that area is like their technical mastery of writing, and that refers to*

things like spelling, punctuation capital letters. All the kind of, I must want to say things that school teaches you in some ways, structure organization, all of that stuff. In terms of the format, the content. And I would say that I've got a pretty average group of students. I'm not worried about them. There's definitely room for improvement in terms of the content, but they're pretty much where I want them to be. With regards to the style the technical mastery of writing they're really not where I want them to be. It's hard to make this generalization because it's not like I've worked at that many universities that students are kind of a lot of the students are unable to produce kind of the level of writing that's almost like a bare minimum for university and by that I mean I receive assignments or work without punctuation, without spelling without, kind of, sometimes it's almost not even coherent like their grammatical kind of mastery is a little bit weak to the point where it's actually not clear what they're trying to say. I know this is obviously because many of the students are second language speakers. And maybe their English marks from high school not fantastic, but it's really going to be a big problem for them at the university. And so, I would say from that perspective, the students writing is pretty weak.

Tandeka: *In terms of writing, it is not so bad in Xhosa. The challenge that I come across sometimes will be spelling errors, grammatical errors in terms of following the Xhosa orthography of writing. At times, the points that they tend to make they mix the structure by putting a point that was meant to be in the introduction, in the body. So, they need guidance in terms of structuring their writing first in point form then, then how to use connecting words. In Xhosa there are not many words as what there is in English. When I start with a topic then we have a discussion about it, which is then followed up with planning. I advise the students to start with a mind map, whereby they write down all their ideas then ask them to arrange them according to what they may think should be in the introduction, body and conclusion so that there is a coherent flow. I*

also write with them so that they can see, what exactly, it is sort of needs to come out from that topic and that piece of writing. But one has to differentiate between the types of genre that you are writing on, because genres have different styles of writing, if it's a narrative, the language should speak to the narrative, if it's a report, a language should speak to the report, if it's a description, the language should speak to that.

Both Amy and Tandeka agreed that their students, standard of writing was average.

Question 2: Are you pleased with their writing?

The intention of this question was to ascertain how the state of students writing and how dire a writing intervention was needed.

Amy: *Of course, there are some kids who are fine. Probably, in terms of like 10% of the class is like they're great, they're perfectly okay then I'd say there's probably like 20 to 30% of the class that's like a little bit weaker than I want them to be. But I'm confident that with a little bit of help and support they can get to where they need to be. But then I would say there's like a good 60% of the class that like really, unlikely. This is going to be a barrier for learning for you because they're writing all of their assignments. Obviously in English and I feel like a lot of lecturers are going to be really dissatisfied with their work across the board, not because they're not able to understand the subject material but just because their, the quality of their writing is kind of impeding their ability to communicate their thoughts and ideas. Of course, of course.*

Thandeka: *I can say yes, or no, because there are a few, that write quite very well. And I think some of them are those that come fresh from high school. But then there's also another group that have not been to school for a long time. And, you know, sometimes our kids, they, they, they, they, they work hard when it's taught in assessment or an exam to they only managed to remember or write code at a particular time. But with as you're saying, it's a process, you know, as fast as you try to ease out and bring in as simple as possible examples so that they can keep on remembering, but you, I always pick up those errors in there. Because they continue doing the same things, but it is a process, I am fairly happy that there are those whom I can group them with the others and say, please assist this one, like, Oh, please work with that one, doing this particular task.*

Both Amy and Thandeka agreed that the minority of students can write well

Question 3: What strategies to you use to teach them writing?

The aim of this question was to determine the lecturer's pedagogy to teach writing.

Amy: *So, I'm specifically in Academic Literacy. I began the year by looking at kind of genres in general and trying to sensitize them to the fact that at the university there's obviously a very particular kind of writing kind of language that students are expected to use, and then kind of the next step I think for me was to give them a piece of academic writing to read. And then they were supposed to kind of reflect on it and so the first writing assignment wasn't a very. It wasn't like a full-blown University writing assignment, it was kind of almost like a scaffolded assignment where I gave them a short article and then I gave them very specific guidelines of what to focus on in academic writing because I believe, students improve writing by reading, you know they need to be exposed to the kind of writing that they need to produce in order to get a sense of, you know, what's expected of them. And, you know, when*

they're starting out, you have to offer them a lot of explicit guidance on what to focus on what to be paying attention to when they read, and then kind of the rest of the classes started to give them kind of really direct instruction on like different aspects of writing so we started looking at kind of what strategies do you use when you read and like can you skim read and then like you can read thoroughly and detail and you can read to make notes like I kind of bought some lectures about that we looked at how do you make notes kind of how do you annotate the text, how do you kind of study from a particular text, then we moved from there, I want to say almost started like with receptive, kind of receptive focus so I was like before you guys can even produce meaningful writing. I need to make sure that you're comprehending writing, because I think that's also quite a barrier for a lot of students especially in terms of the second language ones just the vocabulary. The sheer volume of new words complicated words, technical words really like not easily accessible grammar, I think is a real struggle for them and I'm actually always a little bit. I'm not surprised but I am a little bit concerned with how much first year students struggle to read. Like I will give them a relatively short article what I consider to be shorter it'll be like three or four pages, and they'll tell me it took them forever to read. And why was the article so long and why was it so difficult and I'm like guys really this is one of the most accessible readings, kind of on the spectrum of what you're going to encounter at university, and for them because they're not used to academic reading or reading in general, it's just really a struggle for them. So, I start with a, with a focus on kind of more like them, understanding academic things. And then from there we then move into doing lessons about how do you make an argument, at university because I think there's like almost like there's a conceptual level where you have to have some ideas that you want to express, and those ideas should be logical they should be persuasive whatever. And then the next step is to take those ideas in your head, and kind of put them down on paper in a way that's effective so I start with the, what's in your head. So it's things like looking at brainstorming, looking at making

mind maps looking at kind of taking your thoughts and making sure you're engaging critically and asking questions and so the lessons will be about like what kinds of questions should you ask when you read an academic text, or if you get an essay topic, how should you be thinking about this topic you know so I'm just trying to train their critical perspective, and then kind of towards the end of the year almost I want to say, I get into the mechanics of writing, and then we will look at. Kind of the writing process, and then we'll talk about things like how do you paraphrase How do you reference how you knock almost like the technical aspects that are, that you just really need to practice and apply then I'll look at things like, um, what else do we look at, um, essay structure. Also looking at things like where do you get kind of reliable information from kind of what are sources that you should be using because obviously you at the university also don't want the kids to be kind of sucking things out of their thumb. So, it's kind of that balance between it needs to be your work, it needs to be your work, supported by credible sources. So, we look at that and we kind of don't. When I say we look at it I mean I have a PowerPoint presentation, I have obviously because of this year with COVID I have voice notes. And then I have small tasks and exercises to take them through what I've kind of given them the theory of and then they must try and apply themselves.

Thandeka: *It has been, the mind mapping is a strategy. Yeah. And again, I write the first writing with them, so we write together and make the corrections together. And then the other strategy is looking using those sharper writers from the class, if I may use that word, or those that are able to at least write something that is expected of them to sort of cropping them with the weaker ones in a group. The other strategy is when you when I look into the different types of text, for them to see a well written text, a text that is genre based. So, working with those different types of things is also a strategy for me, and for them to identify the difference. I also give them notes, you know, on the process of*

writing, even though I haven't done that much with online learning, of cut many things I was aiming to do writing and looking at the different genres. Now towards the end, which I started at the beginning, if you remember we had a workshop with Professor Wallace and I started practicing them immediately, you know, but I had to cut them short in realign

Both Amy and Thandeka looked at various genres, the purpose, structure and language thereof.

Question 4.1: Which interventions strategies do you use to improve students writing?

The aim of this question was to determine which intervention strategies these lecturers apply after identifying that students were struggling with writing. To determine what they were doing in addition to class time with the students.

Amy: *I always start with an assignment that I've marked from which I've identified the problems in their writing. I would give general feedback to the class and just explain some things on the board. So, for example in class I'll identified a particular problem with punctuation and grammar and say that most students failed to use full sentences in their writing and I'll give them an example of what an incomplete sentence looks like and I'll teach that on the board. But I also give individual feedback to students in the form of comments on their writing, so I'll underline or circle parts of their writing and say elaborate or indicate spelling and grammar errors. If I feel that it's a big issue that needs to be addressed. So, I'll give both the general and individual feedback but also give another task close to the previous task for them to redo and have a chance to apply the feedback previously given. That's generally how I deal with problems. If I really feel that something is weak in the class, then I'll spend*

a lecture on perhaps paragraphing or structure. I can generally forecast what students will struggle with and create lectures around it, but every class is different and may not struggle with writing in the same way.

Thandeka: *One strategy that I use is to give them a well written text, or a not so well to text and then say, let's look at this text together. When I mark their assignments, I pick up so many things, but I cannot take the pieces and discuss it with the whole class without getting permission from them. So, I usually take a text or sometimes I use their texts, but cut the names. Then, I showed them the way that the paragraph is supposed to be structured. I tell them to look at the grammar, look at the spelling, look at the language rules. And ask them if this how this is supposed to do be. Some will say yes, some will say no. And then I would work with them. That is what it is supposed to be you know, rearrange it with them, that is the strategy that I'm using. And then I would instruct them to go and look for a text and see if they can identify what we had discussed. If not, I would ask them how they would improve this kind of writing.*

The two lecturers used different strategies to achieve the same goals.

Question 4.2 Would the intervention be one on one? Or would it be pockets of students whom you take?

This question was asked to give clarity on how intervention took place.

Thandeka: *I find it challenging to divide them. Sometimes I would do a one on one, in my feedback to their written tasks I would request that they consult with me. Especially if the writing is bad and there is no improvement at all. But usually, I generalise in class because sometimes I pick up that mistakes are common, you know, amongst them, so if they have many common mistakes, then I share it in a in a classroom situation. But if I can see that it's too in depth then I would call the learner in to*

consultation with them. And sometimes I appoint my tutors because students would write in Zulu or who would bring in English or put in Sotho words because they don't know the equivalent word in Xhosa. I use my tutors in that case when I am unable to go in depth with those students. So, the tutors come in very handy when it comes to that.

Both lecturers had similar interventions strategies in their teachings.

Question 5: Do you use E-Learning/Blackboard to teach writing?

The purpose of this question was to gauge whether lecturers embraced virtual teaching.

Amy: *Yeah. So, all of the PowerPoints, and the voice notes I kind of sent to the students either via Blackboard or WhatsApp so that's kind of pretty much all digital like when we were on campus. I would have PowerPoint presentations. But I would give them their like class activities and exercises in a hardcopy format and some of the activities and exercises, they would do there in the classroom or it would be like a take home thing. But of course, now because there wasn't contact learning. I had to make things more kind of digitally accessible. And so, what I would do. Instead of in class I might do something like give them a question and then have them discuss it, kind of, in pairs or whatever in the lecture hall. Whereas now what I did is I would kind of ask them some questions and tell them to think about it but then I would say okay now, submit a small little activity for me online. And then I would also include like quizzes, like electronic quizzes so they've read through the slides. Now I'm going to give them a short quiz to test how much of the theory, they kind of understood. And then I also had not a lot because of the data implications, but I did make use of videos where I would kind of record myself annotating a text and kind of explaining*

to students how to go through that process. And then, I sent that to them as well so that was kind of how e-learning and Blackboard featured in my teaching.

Tandeka: *No, I don't want to lie. I've never used a platform but when it comes to e-learning. What I did sometimes is I would download videos from YouTube to demonstrate to the students the sequence of a written text. I would use PowerPoints to teach. There are lots of stories and writing, there are lots of videos that support the foundation phase, so I use these for the intermediate Phase classes as well, because they are applicable. There are not many online resources for Intermediate Phase. I'm not that clued up on e-learning myself and need to educate myself in that respect. I am sending notes on BB. I hope in the future to use the platform more often.*

Both Amy and Tandeka made use of E-learning.

Question 6: Do you think that your students writing has progressed or regressed to this point?

The intention of this question was to determine whether lecturers felt like their students writing had improved since the start of the year, considering all the teaching and intervention that have been done thus far.

Amy: *So, I can't provide like very solid evidence but I would say I think they are progressing in their writing, and it actually has more to do with the fact that when I get them at the beginning of the year, I tend to give them very basic and simple tasks because I feel like that's kind of where they're at and what they can cope with, but then as the year moves on the tasks that I get them get increasingly more complex at all. By the end of the year, they're obviously expected to write a full-blown academic essay. So, although I haven't got like samples of*

writing where I can say here you can see the writing was weak here, it got stronger here, got even stronger. It's more like the complexity of what they are having to produce is definitely kind of like an upward trend. And so, because students are still engaging with me and still producing the work, I feel like they're still kind of on board, maybe not as on board as I'd want them to be but they're definitely in a better position than what they were say in beginning of this year.

I think you get different types of students or different groups of students. I think the ones who kind of, have a fair amount of like English ability already are able to read. I want to say engage quite easily. And as a natural by-product of that engagement, I feel like they breathe and that's not just in my subject I think that's across the board because obviously academic reading and writing is something that they do in every single one of these subjects and just by virtue of the fact that they have to deal with academic reading and maths and in language and education, and in, you know, human movement or whatever the variety of the subjects. I find that when I get them, in January they know nothing academic and they don't even know what academic writing is the by the time you, you kind of engage with them in June. They have read a few articles, it had to do kind of do readings for lots of different subjects and so they just have a better sense of what they're dealing with now. And that also kind of in some senses equips them to produce that writing, then you get a different set of students who are very weak. I just want to say though, they're so weak that they can't benefit from engaging, because that makes sense. When like, engaging with the articles makes them feel overwhelmed and anxious and stressed because they're not making sense of the work and they feel intimidated by it. And those are the ones that I think progress, less because for them. the gap between where they are and what's expected of them is so large that they, you know like, I don't know, you're like I'm thinking like the zone of proximal development,

like, there's a zone at which some of the kids are at where like, they're able to cope with what's put before them, and they progress. And I see that in terms of the kinds of questions they asked you know when they're able to ask me like really, I just want to say sophisticated questions about referencing about making an argument about how they should structure their writing. But then, you know, I will get very basic questions from students, which kind of indicate to me that they, they're not even at the level yet where they can engage with the complexities of the task, they're still like just grappling with the most basic parts of producing work. And it's also you know like little conventions when they submit work like little things this is a strange one to say because it's not an assignment but like when I'll get emails from students and it's also to do with like their technological kind of, I guess, confidence because some kids obviously better with cell phones and computers and word processing than others, but you know I'll give kids who email me with a whole email is in the subject line of the email, instead of like in the actual textbox. And that's, you know, it's kind of like, for those kids like just being able to submit an assignment on Blackboard is in and of itself a whole challenge, never mind getting into the intricacies of writing at the level that they're expected to does that make sense

Thandeka:

There's a few that write better, but a lot of them have sort of stepped back, because they keep on doing the very same mistake, I don't know, if it is the pressure, or maybe because they can't go to the library. Or maybe they have challenges with data, most of them make up stories about the data. It might be true, or it may not be true. But I do see that now with the online teaching and learning, many of them have all sort of requests. I feel that I've done enough, with them, they're supposed to show some improvement, but I don't see improvement in many of

their writings. Sometimes, I feel that they have they have done their work at the last moment, a situation where they submit an unedited piece. And they just do it in a rush so that I have it., I've had two pieces that were badly written, and I went back to the students. And I told him that I am going to give them a zero. It iss like they submitted a draft that was crashed in something. It is very untidy, very mess. They apologies but I make it very clear that it is unacceptable and that unfortunately, I don't have time for them to resubmit.

Amy felt that her students had improved although she was not able. She felt confident that there was an improvement in their writing. In contrast, Thandeka felt like her students writing had somewhat regressed and identified several reasons for this.

Question 7: What is your opinion on blended learning?

The aim of this question was to determine how lecturers felt about blended learning.

Amy: *Blended Learning is neither a good thing or a bad thing, in and of itself, I think it first of all depends on kind of what technology you have available. The subject like the nature of subject, and then also the lecturer's confidence in the student's confidence with a technology, if that makes sense. So, yeah, so you need, have the one on one with them. As a lecturer if I'm not kind of very confident with kind of all the different software available to me to kind of create teaching kind of resources for students. And that's a big barrier. That's not the fault of blended learning, and it's just a function of kind of what my no knowledge and skills and expertise are. And I think that's been a big challenge for lots of lectures this year who are kind of more traditionally used to being in front of a group of students in a lecture hall, you know, it's just technologies of teaching and they're now, not too confident when it comes to PowerPoint or word or, I don't know, audio recordings*

and so personally for me like that's not a big challenge for me because I quite like technology, but it is something that depending on where your lecturer is at it can be a barrier. And then the same goes for the students you know if the students are able to kind of access the staff and know how to use all of the materials, then that's great and I mean, also data kind of resources come in here Do they have a computer. Do they have access to the internet, do they have data on their phones can they produce the kinds of things that I want them to produce with the technology that's available to them. So, for some kids that's not a problem at all. For others, it is more of a challenge. Having said that everybody needs to become kind of proficient to some degree because that's just the workplace world we're in now to even the students who aren't that confident I feel like it's necessary for them to experience, kind of those. I guess almost want to say growing pains of having to learn how to use the email properly and learn how to use word processing and excellent whatnot. And so, in that sense I think blended learning is something that people have to get on board with. But like I said, you can do the same lecture, you know, depending on, at least for my subject. I can do a fantastic lecture in person with kids, using when I say kids when I like students without using any technology at all. I mean I say that I like having a PowerPoint in general because it makes prep easier, but I can totally achieve the same outcomes by using a blackboard or a whiteboard. I can also have a really excellent lesson online completely online with no face to face. And so whether blended learning is effective or not really is a function of who is doing it and what they're putting into it and how much the kids are able to get out of it so it really for me, it depends on the people. In the context of COVID it's really been like an essential support like if we didn't have access to all of these kinds of technologies, it would have been so hard to kind of continue with learning I mean there are still challenges, no doubt, but like at least this year hasn't been lost. It's a pandemic we

can't see students face to face, and we had no other avenues that would have been really hard.

Thandeka: *Blended learning is a very good tool to use, you know, but even myself, I'm not that comfortable. Or maybe a ready to use it. Yes, there has been trainings that are coming in, but I feel that they're their last, you know, because now we are in the situation. And I don't have time to practice that in depth. Hence, I end up choosing working with WhatsApp. More. I think if I were better at technology, I would have been comfortable to use a variety of resources like Blackboard*

Both Amy and Thandeka agree that blended learning is a good teaching and learning pedagogy.

Question 8: Do you apply it to your teaching?

The intention of this question determines whether these lecturers used blended learning as a pedagogy themselves.

Amy: *Yes. So I would say I applied much more now just because of the circumstances we find ourselves in, and I've had to learn a lot like even if I say I was somebody who was confident with tech before even my technology kind of skills have had to improve a lot, because of the greater demands that this year is placed on me. And when I say that I also mean like learning how to use apps like WhatsApp to my advantage in order to leverage kind of different things. So I applied a great deal more, I did apply it, even before, as I said I would always have PowerPoints in my lessons I would have videos I would upload things onto Blackboard, but things like interaction, mostly happened in the classroom. And then Blackboard was just kind of a support an avenue for if students were absent or they wanted to go back and review, whereas now interaction has had to take place on Blackboard,*

to some degree, where they do their quizzes there where they submit passes there. And so that has definitely I would say gone from like a point in percent take 80% face to face, to like, no face to face.

Thandeka: *Yes, you say it definitely to that. Because I would give them a task for to do, a project, like creating a video. They would upload that video after I've explained to them what I expect of them. And I use Blackboard for submissions of assignment, which is used, other than me sending notes and sending tasks to them, is another step further now to submit. But I'm still struggling to mark online. Work has been submitted, waiting to be marked, I need to find help with that. But other than that, I use it to mark online it is a tedious process though, it takes a while, but it can be done.*

Both Amy and Thandeka applied blended learning to their teaching. More so this year, than previous years due to the pandemic and having to teach remotely.

Question 9: Do you think that blended learning is an effective way to teach writing?

The intention of this question was to investigate whether blended learning could be a good pedagogy to teach writing. As the process of writing is generally done in the classroom, face-to-face as both lecturers explained earlier in the interview.

Amy: *So, it actually is again neither here nor there. You can teach writing via blended learning. And some aspects of blended learning give you an advantage. I suppose in the sense that, that end up but I still, I still maintain that you can achieve everything kind of via computer that you could in person. So, to take an example. The video that I had of myself annotating a text that I thought was a really useful resource for the students, because it was a kind of first person perspective of what it looks like to engage with the text, particularly mechanically What do*

you actually do and what are you supposed to be thinking. So that was a great video and so in that sense it was a really powerful blended learning resource for teaching writing. And, but then were I not on the computer what, but even then I suppose it's technology because when what I would have done in class is I would use something like my iPad, my pencil like with overhead projectors so that I'm in the lecture hall and the students and so I guess that's also blended learning, whereas like if I just had a chalkboard like I would have had electrons, I would have had to rewrite the whole little text again on the blackboard, and then trying to annotate in class which would have been the very labour intensive in some ways. So there are definitely things, but to be honest with you, the majority of teaching students writing, I think, is, is it in the feedback process where you kind of give them something to attempt, you know, you kind of teach them a principle then you give them a task, and then a lot of the learning happens in them, attempting the task and then you marking it and giving them feedback, and that you can do, face to face, you know they like writing on a piece of A4 paper and they hand it in to you and you mark it and you get back the next lecture, or it can happen online where they submitted electronically you give them feedback. So, it neither channel kind of lends itself to being a better channel one way or the other. I mean, I would say, I prefer marking things in hardcopy than online. And so, in some ways it's easier. And I definitely think there's an unfair advantage right now. There are some kids who are great at writing but really bad at using computers. And so, for them. This whole process of going online has been a lot of a struggle because, you know, they haven't been able to kind of engage with writing, it's like they have two barriers, it's like, either writing tasks. But then on top of that do it on a computer. Yeah, you know, so like for some students I actually had to make the conversation like write your assignment out in on a piece of paper and then take a photo of it and submitted, okay, because you know they didn't have access to being

able to type it out. So yeah, I like it's not one or the other. I definitely think you can teach it using blended learning. I think it's effective, because ultimately it affords you an opportunity to kind of approach the writing with like a number of different angles, you know, so I can use videos I can, and it saves me time whereas I would have to do stuff in a kind of more intensive labour-intensive way before I guess I would summarize.

Thandeka: *Yes, I think so. I have watched many webinars whereby the person that is presenting is sharing a screen. So, I think, using that technique of sharing a screen, my learners can practically see what do you add to it, and it can come in handy. There's a platform for them to engage with you to ask questions to write down. If they don't feel like talking. Similar to the classroom, you are able to raise your hand, if you want to say something. And I think it's a good way of doing it. One has to ensure that they have access in terms of data, and everything for it to work brilliantly. Otherwise, it's a very good It sort of helps with a face-to-face interaction. You know, it makes you feel that you are with them. Of course, and you can answer any questions that they may have.*

Both Amy and Tandeka were able to use blended learning to teach writing.

Question 10: What are the intervention strategies used with blended learning?

The purpose of this question is to determine how these lecturers use blended learning as an intervention strategy.

Amy: *I think intervention strategies would probably be like definitely some video clips to model specific parts of the writing process like annotating a text, like I don't know focusing in on essay structure so to just break down the, the writing process into smaller luck building blocks and then to be able to focus in a short video clip on just that. And but then also,*

as I said, I think it's to cover some theory, and then provide like a small task for them to apply it. So, one example of that would be, I would talk about structuring an argument in a logical way, when I'm talking about essay structure. And then what I might do is I might take an existing essay and scramble it, and then tell them to try and rearrange the essay so what I do is I put that online, and then they're able to you know with some of the kind of affordances of the quiz function on Blackboard you can give them the ability to rearrange kind of pieces of text, and then that can then give them an opportunity to try and apply that principle so it's always about and again you could do that in a lecture hall. But at the end of the day, it's to take things that I think that they're struggling with and then to give them like a specific piece of theory or direct instruction regarding it, but then to also give them an opportunity to try and apply it and see whether they can do so successfully or not.

Thandeka: *Oh, yes, it can be used. Remember, if you've uploaded something, they can revisit later on, it is an intervention. You can also maybe a few groups of learners that are struggling group them together in a special presentation again, for them on using using blended learning. Make the recording again available for them. If they want to look at it,*

Both Amy and Thandeka were able to use blended learning as an intervention strategy.

Question 11: What are the challenges with blended learning?

The intention of this question is to highlight what may hinder students from successfully learning using blended learning.

Amy: *I think there's a couple of challenges I think the first challenge is just how confident they are with technology in the first place, and whether they have the resources to engage with technology in terms of a kid*

who's sitting in front of a computer with a stable internet connection is much better equipped to learn. Using blended kind of learning than a child who's just got a phone and who has unreliable, kind of detail or doesn't have a phone at all that children completely excluded. So that's the first thing. And then I also mentioned the challenges of if your lecture is not particularly confident. I mean, with technology it's constantly changing and growing so even if you're somebody who is confident like if you six months and then maybe you've kind of become you've fallen behind in terms of, there's a new in a new piece of software that could maybe teach this better or do this better. So, it's that kind of constantly to keep updated as well. But then the other challenges, I think, are probably the lack of face-to-face interaction means that you sometimes are not able to track where your students are at, you know, sometimes in a lecture hall, I can be engaging on a particular topic, and I can see immediately at students are really struggling to follow what I'm talking about, or they're not really able to give me a response when I pose a question. And then I know that I'm going too quickly or this topic is more challenging than I anticipated and then I'm able to in real time, receiving that feedback respond to the needs of the students by kind of revising whatever recovered or slowing it down or altering kind of the direction of the lesson, I can't really do that online, because I'm preparing everything in advance and then I'm just sending it to students I don't get that immediate feedback, like latest students can come to me and they can say like look I really struggled with this, but there's that distance sometimes mean that students don't tell me things they maybe don't share with me when you know they're just like, they're a bit more passive in some ways. And so, that's one of the drawbacks. I mean there's another side to it, but I'll speak about that later. And then I think also some students really need a bit of one-to-one kind of support so like I sometimes in the lecture hall would assign a task like, you know, read through this paragraph

and try and identify the main and sub points, maybe that's a small pause, but give. And then what I could do is I could go up and down through the aisles and check students and see who who's struggling and then I can kind of stop and pause and have an interaction with that student, and be like okay do you understand what's expected of you, and maybe give them a little bit more support. I can't really do that remotely, or I can't do that. And like blended learning does it lend itself to that kind of individual support because it's this thing of I put something online, or I put something there and I'm not able to see how the students. You know, I can see that they have or have not interacted but I'm not able to see how they interact. Not all students will tell you that they're struggling, you can sometimes as a teacher have to spot it.

Thandeka:

The challenge is that the quick fix and then they're rushing, and with me being slow with technology, I ended up choosing what works best for me, which I might in that process, you know, I'm robbing learners of getting more from that learning. And the challenge might be next network and not enough data and they might not have resources or smartphones to access that which limits the lecture it to use a more of what then let what sharing of the screen and all those kinds of things. And yes, we do have recordings of the webinars, but the costs are to think it is sort of in the rush. No time to go back into that with the workload. I have to teach a foundation phase, an intermediate phase, puts one in a very, very awkward situation where one only ends up focusing, you know, on teaching and not on applying what I have learnt so those are the challenges for me and for some of the students.

Both Amy and Thandeka highlighted the challenges students may have if they have no devices to access and engage on the virtual platform. Furthermore, the institution had to transfer from the traditional classroom to the virtual platform overnight.

Question 12: How can we overcome these challenges?

The purpose of this question is to find out first-hand from those who were experiencing challenges with blended learning what they may suggest as possible solutions. They have engagement students who encountered challenges with blended learning and may have the recommendations to address those challenges.

Amy: *I have not overcome those challenges to be honest with you like the tragedy of this. This form of learning as I'm like they may indeed be students who are really in a bad situation. And I'm just not aware of it. I think the. The only thing you really can do is kind of once assignments are in. And you can see a sample of the writing or you can actually see that they just didn't submit the assignment at all. That's when you can kind of try and individually make contact with them via an email or via WhatsApp message and kind of approach them kind of on I would say in quotation marks a one to one fashion online, and then be like Hi, I see that you didn't submit this or Hi, I can see that you're struggling with this, but that's not something that I've been able to do nearly as much as I would have liked this year just because of the volume of students and other challenges that we encounter. So I feel like that's still, that's kind of an unresolved challenge for me, in some ways. One of the other things that's become I think of a bit of a stumbling block for blended learning if I put it that way. It's the time factor things take longer. When you do them online than they would and maybe that's just an experience then you know maybe if we were more experienced with online we first read it, but it takes me longer to mark online than it does the hard copy. I mean I think it takes me longer to test than it*

does, it does take me longer to make the voice recording and then I've got to edit the voice recording. I've got to make the file size smaller I've got to upload it I've got a name the file like that whole process for each and every subject for each and every lesson has just taken longer than it would have in a normal lecture, of course, and that's has piled up and means that you don't have as much time to be focusing on the students because a lot of your time is taken up with just trying to get the content to them.

Thandeka:

Seeing the first thing that we need to take into consideration is the change of mindset. I need to change my thinking to say now, that the 10 times that we're in, you know, acquire one to be technologically proficient, you know, empower yourself, upskill. In the fourth industrial revolution technology is taking over. So, I need to empower myself and I need to practice again. As they say practice makes perfect, and it takes time, you know, for me to practice those kind of skills so that I am able to meet the standard and not compromise, you know, the standard for my module for the students as well, are there but the challenge that comes to the resources, unfortunately, I there's nothing that I can do when it comes to that, other than maybe a student's strengths to invest or the university, but the government has try to, in providing enough students with resources or unlimited data, you know, something that will make my life easy.

Amy felt that she never overcame the challenges of blended learning, but blended learning is one way to keep track of students' progress and whether they submitted assignments or not.

Question 13: What are the advantages of Blended Learning?

The intention of this question of to highlight the benefits of blended learning.

Amy: *So, one of the advantages and this kind of almost contradicts what I was saying, you know, it depends on the student and the circumstance, is that there are some students that weirdly feel comfortable reaching out to me via a platform like WhatsApp that maybe wouldn't have been comfortable with the face-to-face interactions. So, there's a certain level of anonymity. Also, because you know we have these large groups with a whole class on it because the students have access to my number, they can kind of message me privately. And I think that privacy is a bit of a safe space for them where they can ask a question without the rest of the class knowing about it, and then they're not embarrassed you know because they don't have to be afraid that the classmates are going to judge them for, I don't know, asking a stupid question. And there's probably a lot of students who don't ask. But then there are all those who do, and so I have gotten a lot of students coming to me, one on one, via WhatsApp, and saying like listen Jeanette. I don't understand this or can you please explain this or can you just help me with this, and they're I'm able to offer them support that I maybe wouldn't have done in the classroom you know because the lecture is an hour and then the time runs out, but go to the next lecture, you don't, you know, the unlined means the students engaged with the work when they're ready when they have time. And then I think there's a certain level of relaxation. That means that they can then focus on it, and maybe engage with the material better than say if they're in a lecture hall with their classmates and they're tired and they're bored and they're hungry. And actually, they want to be at home, or they're worried about something, you know. There's as much face to face has benefited it also can be quite difficult for students to*

always get themselves into the right learning framework. Yeah, I think that's true as well at home like I mean, it kind of it's a back and forth thing like maybe homes if they're not set up in a way that students have a quiet space and a computer that can be distracting, but like, both can be distracting and I just know that some students have I think definitely benefited from being able to study later at night, or being able to kind of message me on the side and say like listen about this I'm not really sure what's happening here can you re explain it to me, and voice notes have been great in that regard as well you know a student will send me a question or send me a voice note and then I can take a minute and quickly give them an individual voice note which they can listen to more than once, if necessary. And I think that's also great for kids with, you know, second language learners who maybe because I speak quickly. Maybe they need to listen to me explain something two or three times. And that's also the advantage of the voice notes for the lectures, the students can open the lecture at their own pace. It can pause the kind of grapple with the concept, maybe read something off maybe look up a word, they can go back and listen to something a second time, or a third time, or fourth time, if they need to. And that's not something they can do on campus, you know the lecture happens and if they miss it, they can see the slides afterwards but they can't hear my verbal explanation that has been a huge advantage I think of ended learning is that the kids can kind of suit, they can use the resources in a way that's kind of matched to their needs because that's the other thing in a lecture hall, you're always pitching at the average student. Yeah, but then you have weaker students and you have stronger students and then the class doesn't really meet their needs, with blended learning like I have students who don't listen to the voice notes, they just read the slides, because that's enough for them. And then they don't have to be you know that's a faster process than they, they're confident in the English and then they can move on to a subject

they're struggling with like maths, and then they will maybe find it to English or academic writing as a real challenge for them, and they can slow the process down and go through the lecture multiple times without kind of in some senses inconveniencing a classmate. And that flexibility is really, really nice.

Thandeka: *The advantage is working with multimodal texts at the same time, because you can speak it's the audio-visual part of it, it's beautiful. And the fact that you can engage with them at any time. Students are able to access the content virtually at midnight You can network with other institutions, to establish best practise. This engagement may not have been possible face-to-face. And then the other thing that helps you is that the data are able to weigh within it print range of resources like while on this you can go in find information immediately, you can immediately get screenshot sent to them immediately.*

Both Amy and Thandeka highlighted advantages of blended learning.

Question 14: Do you use multimodalities in your teaching?

The intention of this question was to ascertain the different modes used to teach as multimodality is an imminent feature of blended learning.

Amy: *Yes, so definitely audio clips and video clips, I do a lot of effort to make sure that the slides I send on to just text, but that they also have images because I think especially. Yeah, especially for kids who are like I say not kind of at the level where they need to be at university if you just open up a slide and it's just theory, it can be overwhelming. So, I kind of try and make the PowerPoint slides like a little bit more interactive if I can support what I'm talking about with a picture or an image. I try*

and make sure that that's in there, because I think that that kind of multimodal experience just makes the learning more stimulating and engaging for them. I don't use it kind of as much as I could, but I do kind of make a conscious effort to try and incorporate it.

Thandeka: *I try I try. We are using the text. I have a literature book that I'm using. But with that literature book, there is a video that explains exactly what is happening in the context. So now it makes my life easy for me to say they look at the text and see if there are any contradictions or omissions in the video.*

Tandeka had a different understanding to Amy of what multi-modality was.

Question 15: How does multi-modality inform your teaching?

The purpose of this question is to determine whether multimodalities have a role to play in teaching and learning.

Amy: *So, that's interesting, like, I think, I mean writing in itself is a modality right. And I think for me. What I try and do is I try and get students to move across mode so like if I give them a writing task. And, you know, because like my feeling is the more modes you teach something in, the better chance you're going to get of the child grasping the concept. So, let's say we have a topic. Let's talk about the topic. First, let's maybe watch a video clip about the topic. Then, let's try and draft it. And then let's turn it into a piece of academic writing so to transition between those different spaces there's different modes of engaging with the same concept. I think kind of fleshes out a student's understanding. Because writing is really actually quite complex and difficult and it's a lot of technical skills that you're applying at the same time. And if you, if you struggle with just what you're going to write about if you're not*

confident with your topic. Then, then you're already in a difficult position but if you can at least make sure that the kids are clear about what they want to say, and they can focus on how they're going to say it.

Thandeka: *It also is a summation of what I'm saying, to say that I'm not the only person who is using this there are other reliable sources or sources that are also following this kind of right and maybe even something really, you know, within it within your writing that would also give us an opportunity to discuss, you know, and convey what I'm saying versus what is being shown in the video.*

Both Amy and Thandeka felt that multi-modality informed their teaching.

Question 16: Can you share some of the intervention strategies applied in the classroom?

Amy: *I think definitely. I mean, not only does this count as an intervention strategy to like, give them a task, and then kind of give them some feedback on kind of the way that they've done that poses like some of the feedback with writing is quite specific like you might say to a kid like, you know while marking assignments and say like, work on your capital letters, you know like just technical stuff. But then I might read a whole group of students' works. And I might be like everybody is struggling with paragraphing, whatever and then what I do is then I end up having to kind of change, the next lecture by adding in kind of a section where I kind of respond to the fact that I think this is a particular weakness. So, I guess in that sense it's an intervention where I say, I have to, I can't intervene until I've seen a piece of writing. Yeah, so the problem, I think is, you address it but not, you don't always get like you said a task. The class struggles with it, you come back you re-engage on a particular topic, and then maybe part of the class improves but*

then there's a part of the class that doesn't improve and at that point you kind of have to move on because you can't keep stopping at the same topic, but there is definitely some degree of like, well actually, is easy and they find it hard and then there's being able to kind of see, which particular things they're struggling with, and then adjust myself in terms of what content I teach and then maybe setting a second task. And often giving them that opportunity. So again, that's something I've done less this year just because of the volume of work but that was definitely something I was doing last year when I had them in the lecture hall and would be like doing it and then coming back and talking about the task that we've done and talking about what my expectations. You know like when I say to them. This was really bad in general in the class. All of you didn't do this particular section well and then I sit in the lecture hall and I'm like, let's go through the section. What did I want you to do, because then each student can look at what they did do and measure it against what I'm telling them they should have done and kind of try and bridge the gap.

Thandeka:

In the classroom besides one-on-one feedback. There is one thing that I also use. I remember last year when Dr. Phosa taught Academic Literacy. I would speak to her about what I am teaching. And noticed that she was teaching that same in English. I would say to the students that they should take note of what Dr. Phosa is teaching. Because most of the things are also applicable in the Xhosa course. That would help them to see that we are working together with someone who's teaching Academic Literacy. I would ask another colleague of mine to assist me with introducing writing to the foundation phase. So, she would have a session with them. I would be present so that I could follow up and continue with the lesson. She would show them the basics of writing.

Dr Phosa is just an imaginary name for the purpose of anonymity and confidentiality. Both Amy and Thandeka highlighted the importance of giving feedback as an intervention strategy.

Question 17: Do you use Translanguaging in your classroom?

This is a pertinent question to determine how flexible the lecturer is in terms of teaching language and students acquiring language which may not be their first language.

Amy: *So, I am not using translanguaging in a sense. I am proficient in English and Afrikaans, but I think the majority of the kids who are struggling with English are probably Xhosa speakers and tragically I'm not great with Xhosa. But what I do think is really important is giving a space for the students to use their home languages in the, in the lecture hall if necessary. And so often what I find is 10 students tend not always but they tend to sit in groups together with people who speak the same home language, but as I'll find the Xhosa speakers tend to group together in some sections of the lecture hall. And then when you give them a task, and you say talk about it. And then people talk in their home language. You know like there are some people who are like, you know, if it's a English class like they may only use English, I don't think that's beneficial, especially if kids are second language learners and they need to kind of make sense of what you're talking about. So, I think in that sense translanguaging exists on the part of the students, of course what they produce at the end of the day is always kind of has to be in English, but also like it's weird. This is a strange thing to say but like when we were starting at the end of the year and we had a class on Genre. You know, like you can talk about Genres and you can say, okay, there's poetry and then you talk music and there's like R&B and there's rock and there's pop, but like strangely. I don't even know if this is translanguaging, as much as it is*

like, cultural, but like then allowing the students to say, Okay, what are other genres that they're familiar with and they'll tell me like genres that actually come from Xhosa music or like other, you know, kind of cool language groups and then I put it on the board. And then, kids feel like, okay, cool, my language, my lived experience is represented in this academic space. And I think that's also quite empowering and important for them. Otherwise, university becomes this alienating space with a country never relate to it. So, I think translanguaging is like letting them use their language in the classroom but if I had more time, I would try and use it more I think, I think it's beneficial.

Thandeka: *Yes, and no. I'm saying yes. Because as I've told you that I do have none home language speakers in my class the suit. But for some reason, they don't seem to understand what I do, they would answer a question in their own language. I allow them to use their language, as their input always leads to discussions. They would give Xhosa equivalent to you know, and then that makes them feel good about their language. In terms of class discussion, even the way they're pronouncing the way or saying the Xhosa words may be incorrect but the essence of language remains the same. I do allow that they then put it in the context of their own language first.*

Both Amy and Thandeka view translanguaging as being beneficial in the language classroom

Question 18: How has translanguaging benefited or not benefited your teaching and your students?

The purpose of this question is to determine the value of being flexible in teaching language.

Amy: *I think there's a fine balance and I say this because I have worked in Japan as an English teacher, and I had a good command of the Japanese language and so for me I was able to use Japanese or English kind of, as I preferred. And I think there's a point at which you use a child's home language too much. So definitely, it can become excessive, but I think if you get it just right and that's a such a hard thing to do but if, especially for kids who are weaker you know you might go to a kid who's weaker and kind of engage with them in their home language about what you want them to do, and then kind of provide that scaffolding for them. I think that's what happens currently in my lectures, is kids who have a better understanding, a better command of English but speak Xhosa might then go to a student who has less understanding and there's some peer-to-peer learning that's happening there where they're kind of translating some of what happened in the lecture, translating some of the ideas and concepts for their classmates and engaging in kind of a discussion about it. And I think that's hugely beneficial both for the person teaching and the person listening. And so, in some senses I'd love to be able to do that for the students, but I can't. And I think there comes a point at which you also need to be aware that the students, ultimately have to produce their work in English, in a kind of standard dialect of English because that's what they're going to be assessed on. So, it's always kind of taking that space of like use your language but then bringing it to a place where production needs to be in the target language that ultimately, and it really becomes like don't let them rely too much on their home language that they never really push themselves to grow with the target language.*

Thandeka: *The allowing of translanguaging it builds vocabulary, you know, for other students as well it exposes them to other languages. They are able to identify the similarities and differences. An advantage for the*

students is knowing that there are students that they may reach out to that speaks their home language, that may be able to assist them. They may experience language barriers and this may be a disadvantage because when they have to write in Xhosa, some of them they do put in something in their home language which is in brackets, so that I understand. Yeah. I would do a follow up with those and then put it is a call said right. It is a toss-up for them or say to them read suppose that with easy-to-read books, the more you read, the better your writing improves as well. Another thing that I usually did with one of our students who now passed away during the online teaching, when he had to do a test, I would go around in the venue, and asked him whether he understood the questions on the question paper. And I would translate it in pencil on the question paper for him to understand.

Both Amy and Tandeka were agreed that blended learning benefited their teaching and their students.

Question 19: What is your overall opinion about blended learning?

The intention of this question is to weight up the pros and cons of blended learning.

Amy: *My overall opinion is that it's here to stay. It's kind of I don't think learning, especially in the tertiary space is ever going to just be face to face I think more and more the nature of kind of how people are engaging kind of in the workplace, but just in life is kind of partially online partially digital. And so, more and more we kind of have to make peace with the fact that we need to become proficient in using these technologies and leveraging them for face-to-face learning, I mean for learning of any kind, and then I think become aware of what works better online, and what works better face to face because I, you can*

do everything, each way, but some things are easier, face to face and some things are easier online. So, I think definitely like quizzes and stuff you know, you can give kids a quiz in class, but then you're going to collect those quizzes and you're going to mark it manually. That's an unnecessary waste of time. If it's a simple quiz, do it online, computer market for them you save yourself some time, and make sure that you do actually I think have resources where students can go back and go through the content a second or a third time, not just a PowerPoint but maybe a voice note, so that the students who are struggling or weaker has that as a new to kind of go and get additional support.

Thandeka: *Overall I think it is a good thing, a very good resource. It is a very good way of teaching, but I need to upskill myself. I am worried that blended learning may completely take away, face-to-face to and learning. Moving to technology means that there may be no need for people. People will lose jobs; each time a machine is being introduced. It may only need one person to drive the machine who previously required the expertise of five people. However, it is accessible to students and fortunately I still have a role to play.*

Although both Amy and Tandeka are optimistic about blended learning and what the pedagogy has to offer, Tandeka was worried about how technology might negatively affect academics in the future.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented the data collected during the academic year through the interviews with IP language lecturers, students' assignments and observation. Data in this chapter are arranged according to the academic timeline for First Language 1: English Course and the questions listed on the semi-structured interview schedule. Signposting and commentaries were made to guide the reader to a precursor of what would be discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION OF DATA

5.1 Introduction:

This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter where I as the researcher attempt to retell the stories of my respondents the way I understand it. The focus of my discussion is subjectively based on the use of blended learning as an intervention process in teaching writing to first years CPUT IP students. Given that this chapter is a sequel to chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 of this exploration, my role as the researcher would be to interpret the interpretations of my respondents which signifies my perspective or stance of discontent that underscore my attempts to raise my thinking and practice to a higher level of understanding through interpretation. Based on the discontent, I understand how my stance positions itself in favour of a context-based than on a positivist notion of language learning. This suggests the teaching of language as a social practice where fear and anxiety are taken away completely to make create a relaxed environment for engagement and participation.

To re-enforce my views and perspective, I have attempted to discuss the following themes:

- The structuring a piece of writing,
- Intervention strategies using blended learning
- The writing process,
- The six steps to blended learning
- The use of eLearning
- The use of Technologies in teaching
- The use of Blackboard
- Online texts and feedback
- The use of Multi-modalities
- Blackboard challenges
- Online teaching is time consuming
- The advantages of blended learning
- Teaching and learning pedagogies

- Pockets of good practices
- Benefits of Translanguaging
- Monotony of blended learning

In view of the above themes, I used the research approaches to contextualise and re-contextualise the objectives of this study.

5.1.1 Narration as a way of experiencing their experiences

The investigation pointed out that all knowledge is perspectival and cascades within the ethical practice of action research. In view of this, learning plays out as a social practice in line with the community of inquiry as seen in the literature review, methodology and data analysis. Considering this, this chapter relives and retell the story and experiences of the respondent's notion of teaching writing.

Based on the above, this chapter is seen as retelling the stories of teaching academic writing using blended learning. As such, I am attempting to explain and theorise to qualify this research as a creative act of enquiry. Therefore, I would attempt through retelling their stories, propose meaning and knowledge through interpretive explanation of what is taking place in this action research. At this juncture, I would attempt to use the themes mentioned in 5.1 above to interpret the data collected.

5.2 Structuring a piece of writing

Based on justifiable evidence from sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, first year Students can only structure a basic piece of writing as they were taught in high school. In view of this, these students need guidance with structuring as they would muddle points in an illogical manner. It was interesting to note that both lecturers in their interviews highlighted the problem with the technical aspects of writing (Street, 2004). It was noticed that students were still getting the basics of academic writing wrong in terms of punctuation and grammar. The fact that Amy regards their technical competence of writing as weak, is a major concern that needs some form of intervention. Hence, both lecturers in their interviews, affirmed my experience with the first-year cohorts that their standard of writing was average, and that intervention was needed. Likewise, my students were able to write as response to the short story, poetry

and novels taught in class but needed guidance with paragraphing, structuring and other grammaticality. The data collected compliments Archer (2010) and Lillis's (2001) assertion that the skill of academic writing does not come naturally but must be taught and practiced. This is meant to suggest that, such a skill requires to be honed. If this is done consistently, the student would improve in their writing not only in the language class, but also in all their content subjects. Thus, this would be practiced and improved throughout the year using blended learning.

5.3 Intervention strategies

Furthermore, the postulations from 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 focused on students' state of writing and interventions. Needless to say, that if the majority of students were not going to be assisted, it would affect all of their academic subjects, as they needed to be competent in writing in all of their modules (Street, 2004). Having assessed the first-year students writing, Amy and Thandeka were confident that they needed an intervention for the first-year cohort's writing. This assertion is in line my observation of my classroom and talks to the need for intervention or the use of blended learning in our daily teachings in this era of 4IR. Above what we as lecturers were experiencing, for the past three years that I have been at the university, lecturers would complain about the state of students' academic writing at Faculty board meetings as if it was only the duty of the language lecturers to address academic writing challenges which is not true because every subject has its own language. Such an assumption deviates from the argument that every lecturer is a language lecturer because every discipline has its own language. The Faculty Board meeting is where the whole Education Faculty would meet to discuss matters of importance which happens once in every term. This led me to question, whose responsibility it was to teach academic writing. Is it solely the responsibility of the Academic Writing lecturer? It is in this light that academic writing is seen as collaborative pursuit across subjects to hone the skill in the students. This assertion concurs with Clarence and McKenna (2017) that academic development practitioners need to align their research and practices so that students can write well across disciplines. To achieve this goal, blended learning is required as an intervention to polish student's academic writing because it provides a conducive space for the students.

5.4 The writing process

Moreover, the averment from 4.3.4, is that each of the lecturers conducted the process of writing from the planning, drafting editing and the final piece of writing. The process of scaffolding students' knowledge is pertinent in taking them from one step creating building blocks for the next step. Amy would give her students smaller take-home tasks whereas Thandeka felt it necessary to practice writing with her students and to critically analyse and note the distinction between a good piece of writing and a bad piece of writing. In addition, Amy makes a very important point that reading assists with writing however students are overwhelmed with the minimum required reading of academic texts which may hinder their ability to write. Therefore, the more students are exposed to different texts, the more these students can identify with good structure and language. The exposure to different kinds of texts is believed to improve their way of writing. Implementing the six steps of blended learning in my teaching gave students the much-needed opportunity to improve their writing by practicing and giving feedback. To this effect, section 4.3.4 concurs with Lee and Street (2004); Clarence (2011) who argue that academic writing should be practiced. Students should be given the opportunity to practice, receive feedback and then be given a second chance to do a follow up assignment where they factor in their development. Consequently, students can apply their knowledge of writing by improving their writing based the feedback receive from their peers and lecturers.

5.5 The six steps to blended learning

In addition, the pronouncements from 4.3.4 suggests that both lecturers administered intervention equivalently as what they would whilst teaching writing by identifying the problems. Based on this, giving feedback, showing comparative writing texts and practicing are in view of implementing the six steps of blended learning (Lauillard's, 2013). With my class, I uploaded content and reading materials for students to acquire and inquire new knowledge before coming to the classroom or before the virtual class. Secondly, this is followed-up by the contact sessions, either in the classroom or during the virtual session where students had the chance to discuss new information. Thirdly, students needed to collaborate with each other and to practice new knowledge by completing activities which either had to be brought to class or submitted online. In line with Amy and Thandeka, after

assessing students work, I was able to give them feedback and a follow-up assignment where the students were expected to apply the feedback given which led to their development. Thus, resulting in production which is the final step in the six steps of blended learning. Therefore, the affordance of guidance and honed skills which students gained, enabled them to write texts independently (Karasu 2018: 116).

5.6 The use of E-learning in teaching

Further, the contention from 4.3.5, shows how Thandeka utilised E-learning much less than Amy, as she seems to require upskilling herself with E-learning. On account of Amy's fair proficiency, she felt comfortable with transferring teaching from the traditional classroom context to e-learning, utilising a variety of modalities to assess students' knowledge. On these grounds, I believe that Amy was doing better in terms of being more flexible in her teaching pedagogy especially since we are in the era of technology. Hence, being unable to cope with E-learning proved to be a greater challenge for Thandeka since the Department of Higher Education expected all educational institutions to move to E-learning during Covid-19 in 2020. To this end, Thandeka acknowledges that she relies mostly on WhatsApp and barely loads content onto BB. However, for as much as she would like to be able to utilise the tools that BB offers to teach her students such as BB Collaborate, she feels as if she was denying her students the opportunity to learn through multi-modality due to her lack of eLearning skills. Moreover, she stated that she was not able to grade her student's work as fast as she would perform during the face-to-face classroom. As such, this may pose to be a setback for students because they were not receiving the required feedback in time to apply in their next assignment. Similarly, I found it easy to move from the traditional teaching to virtual teaching as I am fairly proficient in using virtual teaching tools. In this regard, I used BB in uploading content, assignments and production of marks. Subsequently, I registered for every webinar offered on BB as I was not completely competent in using BB as a teaching platform. Respectively, I must agree with Thandeka that all the webinars became overwhelming. In light of this, I discovered that the more I explored BB on my own, the more I became comfortable with using the platform for my teaching. Culminating in being able to do a BB Collaborate with my students for Methodology and doing consultations with the students via BB Collaborate too. In as much

as Covid-19 was a traumatic year, it presented the affordances of enhancing our technological skills and advanced virtual teaching as well as highlighted the importance of being proficient in teach virtually.

5.7 The use of Technologies in teaching

In line with 5.6, sections 4.3.6 and 4.3.7 relayed how the virtual platform can be used successfully if the user is skilled in the technologies or software. Price, Becker, Clark and Collins (2011) state that there is a misconception about students who are technologically savvy and those who have (IL) skills. We often take for granted that students today know how to use technology because they are constantly on their phones. However, Cooke (2016) concurs that the success of blended learning greatly depends on students' access to devices and knowledge of software and the LMS. In addition, I believe that it is important that students receive orientation on the use of BB as I discovered that even to the end of the year students were still battling to upload documents successfully. In light of this, Thandeka is not comfortable using blended learning as a pedagogical tool because of her inability to use technology. Amy felt that she would not give blended learning preference to traditional teaching as she could accomplish the same outcomes with her students in the traditional method of teaching and learning.

Ironically, Thandeka acknowledges the success of blended learning but argues that it lies in the competence of the lecturer to engage their students on virtual spaces. To this end, the success of blended learning lies in good planning. By virtue of poor planning and teaching, students learning may regress with the use of technology (Howard, Ma & Yang, 2016). Symmetrically Amy appears to concur that there was no other way this year but to use the virtual platform to save the academic year. Based on this, blended learning researchers feel that the classroom is still very teacher centred whereas virtual learning offers students flexibility to access BB at their convenience and learn at their pace. During the classroom lesson every student only has the lecturer for the allotted time. However, on BB, the student may go back to the content to rehash content that they may have misunderstood or missed. Each year's activities are developed for the curriculum but not necessarily recorded. Now we have all our lessons for the year recorded and at the end of

the year, it would be easy to do reflection on our teaching and to adapt the curriculum where necessary.

5.8 The use of Blackboard

By the same token, 4.3.8 provides empirical evidence that what was previously used as support for students learning, uploading content to BB has now become a crucial means of engagement for teaching and learning. Favourably the data for this study appears to suggest that by mixing the traditional classroom with the online classroom, students are interactive and tend to use more of their senses and skills instead of learning passively or being merely receptors of knowledge. Hence, face-to-face teaching and learning followed by the online interaction bolsters the benefits of each. To this end knowledge gained in both the traditional and online classroom develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Therefore, the extension of learning improves the retention of students' knowledge because of interactive elements of the learning process which is the built-in assessment <https://www.pdagroup.net/en/spotlight/7-ways-blended-learning-will-inspire-you>. Thus, Amy, Thandeka and I used the university's Learner Management System (BB) as the primary space to conduct our virtual teaching which has been very beneficial during COVID 19.

5.9 The use of online text and feedback

Evidence gathered from 4.3.9 attests that online text was easier than having to transcribe a text onto the blackboard because it is tedious and takes much time that could be spent engaging the students. Although, a few of Amy's students had challenges submitting online, she asked them to submit a jpeg of their work. Supplementary to that, Thandeka felt like she could use the online platform to teach writing by sharing her screen with her students via BB Collaborate. Both lecturers attest to the advantage in being able to give students immediate feedback online. Feedback is a method of intervention to develop student's writing. As such, feedback helps students to be able to see their mistakes and are given the corrections during the feedback. The feedback here, is mainly from the lecturer but students would have the platform to comment and give feedback on each other's work. Feedback is an essential step in implementation of blended learning. According to the steps of blended

learning <https://www.pdagroup.net/en/spotlight/7-ways-blended-learning-will-inspire-you>
this pedagogy presents a richer learning experience as students apply what they've learnt and use the feedback given by the lecturer to improve their work.

Furthermore, although it may take a longer time to create materials for teaching by creating PowerPoints, it is much elaborate than having to annotate the text onto the blackboard which is what normally happens in class during the interactive session. In my practice, I would chalk students' ideas and thoughts onto the blackboard. In addition, I could see that my students progressed with the immediate feedback they received either via W/A; Email, Online Discussion Groups or on their assessments because the quality of production of assignments had improved and their marks were improving as well. The student that got 50% for the first essay, achieved 63% in the next essay. The feedback had motivated the student to try harder and do better. In view of this, the feedback received by the students played an important role in determining their understanding of the content and improving in their writing. The fact that the student asked for clarity highlighted the flaw with teaching via W/A, not being physically in front of the students to gauge whether they understood the feedback or not. However, even though the students could not receive the face-to-face feedback, I was happy that they were keen to understand exactly what I meant in the feedback that I had given. This exhibited to me that the students were eager to learn and improve their next assignment. Subsequently, when I assessed the student's second set of reviews, I could see that the student had applied the feedback given previously and the student gave a thick description of the themes when she discussed the elements of the story in the online reading journals. By and large, students online reading journals had improved significantly. This, I attributed largely to the individual and class feedback I had given them before they submitted their final online reading journals. To conclude the year, the students had to write a test on the literature covered in term three and term four.

5.10 Multi-modality

Their positive feedback made me feel confident that blended learning methodology of creating content and uploading on to BB was working. What they had learned face-to-face in the classroom was further consolidated by virtual learning.

5.11 Multi-modality

With reference to 4.3.10 and 4.3.14, Amy is able to show videos on how to structure a piece of writing where she gave students the opportunity to apply the technique that they viewed in the video to a writing task. Additionally, Thandeka felt that since the lessons are being recorded, students can go back to the recording and watch again. With this in mind, it is believed that struggling students with the learning pace during a face-to-face lesson, would be able to view a virtual lesson at their convenience and space. Multi-modality teaching granted students access to information in a variety of ways such as videos, podcasts etc at their leisure. The various modes of teaching or resources makes learning easier. Some students may not be good at comprehending text, but they enjoy watching a video. In that way, they can grasp the content. In this way learning may be informal yet educational. <https://www.pdagroup.net/en/spotlight/7-ways-blended-learning-will-inspire-you>.

Adopting multi-modality in teaching granted students the affordance to access various modes of information. In conjunction, some students may find that they understood better with the interaction and collaboration during the W/A sessions whereas others may feel that they still need to spend more time comprehending by going back to the video recordings or the PowerPoints. Thus, this offered them several opportunities to learn.

5.12 Blackboard Challenges

Section 4.3.11 reveals that several lecturers were not confident in using basic technologies in the classrooms, let alone on the virtual platform. Although virtual training webinars were offered by the institution, these webinars became overwhelming with an overload of information within a short space of time to practice what was learnt. The webinar together with the academic load of the lecturers, made it difficult for the lecturers to go back to these webinars to practice and upskills themselves. This concurs with Rowsell and Youngioo (2010); Tuba (2016) who stated that the field of teaching through multi-modalities need to be used correctly and clearly because students make meaning by what is communicated and represented in these modes. Deductively if lecturers are not proficient in using the multi modes optimally, this may prove to be a challenge for students who may ultimately

misinterpret the content. Coincidentally, it was interesting that Amy highlighted the point of students who may not comprehend the content. In the same manner I agree with Amy that it is easier to gauge whether students are with you or not in the classroom; thence address it immediately in class.

However, since I was not able to see the students' response to the content, it was difficult to determine whether they understood the content or not. Pragmatically, I relied on the way they posed questions as a determinant of perhaps not understanding the content of the lesson. Although BB Collaborate offered the video feature, it consumed lots of data that hindered too many students from participating. Unfortunately, I was not able to gauge students' body language via W/A as I could not see the students. Due to students not having data or smart devices to log onto the W/A sessions, it meant that the institution had to find an alternative to getting the content to the students especially those in rural areas who had no access to data or devices. The notes and reading material that we uploaded on BB now had to be printed and posted to students. This placed an extra administration burden on Academics. Having to go back and check up on every student, compile the list and then avail themselves for packaging. Strangely enough, there were students who had access to smart devices who also opted for printed notes because they could study better from those than seeing it on the small screens on their smart devices. I must admit that I felt that students were done an injustice with having to learn virtually, not being prepared for it with adequate devices and data. Our institution is a face-to-face teaching university that had to become a virtual teaching university overnight. Neither lecturers nor students were prepared for this mind shift. At least if students applied to universities that does distant learning, they are prepared for remote learning when they register with these institutions and they are would position themselves to have the smart device and data required for remote learning. Thus, blended learning appears a good breeding ground to prepare students for both face-to-face and virtual teaching and learning.

Moreover, I felt that the virtual pace that I was conducting the content at, was much slower than what it would be if I were at university in the face-to-face teaching or a combination

of the two. Due to the challenges experienced during the pandemic, the institution had adopted the “no student will be left behind” motto and this meant that lecturers had to accommodate students no matter what their situation was. Consequentially as lecturer, I could never really work towards a deadline because there was always the possibility of the students still submitting way after the deadline or students appearing out of the blue to now complete the year’s work. In their case, I felt that these students had regressed with virtual teaching. A few students responded to emails for various reasons.

5.13 Online teaching is time consuming

Inference from 4.3.12 suggests that virtual teaching and learning can prove to be a challenge because marking online and teaching online consumes more time than face-to-face teaching. Since time is spent creating online materials and uploading it than teaching it. Also, the assessing component is a long and tedious process. Regardless, Thandeka feels that because we are in the fourth industrial revolution it is imperative that both lecturers and students upskill themselves in technology. Gourlay, Hamilton and Lea (2014) highlight the pertinent role that digital technologies play in contemporary learning and that literacy (reading and writing) remains at the core of formal education. They also say that educators need to combine these two (print and digital) technologies to deliver successful futuristic education. Equally, I think virtual learning and teaching is a tedious process but we are living in a progressive era where students enjoy multi-modality interaction because it forces them out of their passive states. Based on this, Bruner (1990); Piaget (1972); Vygotsky (1978) state that students should learn through active construction of knowledge.

5. 14 Advantages of Blended Learning

Justifiable evidence from 4.3.13, highlights a few advantages of blended learning. As Amy pointed out that students in classrooms are restricted to the allotted time for the lesson and they may not be receptive at that time. Whereas the virtual platform was available after hours, perhaps when the households are quiet, students may find it easier to engage with the content. These students may enjoy anonymity to some extent that the virtual platform presents to them. students who are not brave enough to address me in the face-to-face classroom setting may feel less anxious to contact me via WhatsApp or email. This

reciprocates what the Community of Inquiry framework social presence addresses that by using the virtual platform the students are less anxious and by interacting with their peers on WhatsApp or other modes of learning, students develop a sense of community and are keener to participate and engage on the said platforms (Ashley and Bronwell, 2017). The interpersonal connection becomes the impetus for the members to participate readily (Garrison, Anderson & Archer's, 2000; Annand, 2011). Over and above this, engagement with colleagues at other institutions to ascertain best virtual teaching practices is an added advantage for virtual learning. Evidently, this engagement may never have taken place if the pandemic never struck.

5.15 Teaching and learning pedagogy

Interestingly, 4.3.15 reveal that multi-modality presents various opportunities to grasp the content and to verify own teachings. Similarly, as I implemented the six steps of blended learning Lauillard's (2013) through the use of multi-modality the students were given a fair chance to improve their work and I was able to reflect on my teaching practice at the same time. During the acquisition and Inquiry stages of learning, students read through the uploaded notes or PowerPoint or watched the PowerPoint or videos uploaded. They had discussions in their WhatsApp groups and collaborated with their peers when given an assignment. These students had the opportunity to practice by completing tasks and receiving feedback before they finally produce their own work. By having access to information through various modalities, students take charge of their learning. At this juncture, I am inclined to believe that students' retention of knowledge is greater when they interact with various modalities. During the third term, I observed the nature of students' comments and it was evident that these students were able to analyse and synthesize literary texts. In addition, they were able to explicitly engage with the texts in terms of their personal experiences. They could also distinguish and compare the ideas/attitudes/actions of characters based on their understanding of the text. Also, they were able to critically discuss the poet/authors intentions and the effectiveness of figurative language or the writer's style and the use of literary and poetic devices in a poem.

In view of this, I hasten to conclude that students learning shifted dramatically in comparison with what their learning was at the start of the year when we dealt with the first short story. Students were not afraid to challenge/express and critically discuss views because they did so confidently without the fear of being judged. They were able to empathize with the characters.

5.16 Pockets of good practices

from the evidence from 4.3.16 showed that students were able to apply the feedback received in their next assignments and both Amy and Thandeka saw the improvement in students' production. I also saw improvement in my student's writing where students would respond to the feedback given saying that they now had a clearer idea of what was required of them especially with the online reading journal assignment. It was interesting to see how Thandeka consciously tried to make students see the connection across subjects and that the students can apply the writing strategies learnt in Academic Literacy to how they write in isiXhosa. During the practice step of Lauillard's (2013) six steps of blended learning, students get the opportunity to receive feedback from their lecturer and peers, thus enhancing the success of their follow up assignments by applying the given feedback to the final stage of production. Furthermore, Clarence (2011) encourages all lecturers to work together on their teaching plans as the skills in one subject are applicable in another subject and that learning and teaching does not take place in isolation but in collaboration. The above addresses my earlier question about whose responsibility it is to teach academic writing. Adversely, it is not the sole responsibility of the academic writing lecturer but the principles of writing that are taught in all and applied in all subjects across the curriculum.

5.17 Benefits of Translanguaging

Motions from sections 4.3.17 and 4.3.18 note that translanguaging made students to understand that their own language is important and may afford them the opportunity to assist their fellow classmates that may be struggling with the language being taught. This is in accordance with Seltzer (2019) who argues that English should not be taught in isolation from other languages, but should present an opportunity for students to be flexible and creative in developing their language proficiencies. Translanguaging celebrates

students' diversity and strengthens power relations in class (Li Wei, 2018). Furthermore, all languages need to build stronger relations between lecturers and students (Garcia & Kleyn 2016). As such, Translanguaging aligns with the CPUT's Language Policy that the institution must create a multilingual environment that promotes the institution's unique African identity, conducts inclusive teaching and learning and address the historical injustices (CPUT version 0.1, 2019). The isiXhosa students were eager to educate their English, Afrikaans and Zulu peers as well as myself, using translanguaging during the lesson in which I taught the poem *My Name* by Magoleng wa Selepe. Although it was an English lesson, we could create translanguaging glossaries on the blackboard and appreciate the isiXhosa speakers to rely on their explanation of the isiXhosa words in the poem. Similarly, when I taught the short stories from the *Tjieng Tjang Tjerries and Other stories* by Jolyn Phillips, the Afrikaans students could assist the isiXhosa students with the Gangsbaai dialect in which a sentence consisted of English and Afrikaans syntax. Ultimately the impetus of allowing translanguaging in the language class, is that it is one way to reach the students whose home language is different from the language of teaching and learning.

5.18 Monotony of Blended learning

There was evidence coming from section 4.3.19 which highlighted the momentousness of blended learning in the 21st Century which is in favour of blended learning. Considering all the advantages that blended learning has presented in terms of learning and teaching, it would do students injustice to solely use traditional teaching methods or virtual teaching and learning only. However, the combination of both as Picciano (2006) bridges the gap which traditional teaching and virtual teaching present on its own by integrating face-to-face learning and online learning. Unequivocally, blended learning pedagogy has a role to play as intervention for academic writing (Gourlay, Hamilton & Lea, 2014).

5.19 Summary of the chapter

Generally speaking, the indulgent trajectory that I have advanced so far aided by the findings from this investigation, convinced me to believe I need cognitive and social interactive, affective skills, strategies and behaviours to become a competent academic

writing teacher. Over and above that, using blended learning as an intervention strategy for teaching academic writing to first years in particular seems to be the most convenient way of bridging the gap between high school and all other institutions of higher learning, if not the single drive which can motorize the procurement teaching academic writing using blended learning as an intervention tool.

Chapter 6

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Overview of the study

Having discussed the findings of the investigation in the previous chapter, I would appraise this chapter before relating the findings of the study to the research question. I would further attempt to look at the implications of the study to throughput and to teaching and learning. Based on the above, this chapter draws final conclusions about a research investigation into blended learning being an intervention for Academic Writing for the first-year students at a university of technology in the Western Cape. This chapter provides an overview of the course of the study and reflections of the findings. Chapter 6 ascertains whether and to what extent the objectives of the study have been achieved and proposes recommendations for possible research in the future.

This study's aim was to investigate blended learning as an intervention for academic writing for the first-year students by understanding the nature of their writing; investigating the strategies used by HEI to address students' academic writing challenges; examining language lecturer's best practices addressing academic writing challenges and determining how blended learning was currently being applied as a pedagogy. In order to investigate and examine the previously mentioned determinants the COI Framework (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000) and the six steps of blended learning (Lauillard's, 2013) were implored and relied upon throughout the thesis to understand and interpret the data.

This study made use of a qualitative research approach. Qualitative methods were used to collect data from first year students; language lectures and myself. The data collection process included the application of the blended learning process to teach the 30 first year students; document analysis of the 30 first-year students' assignments and semi-structured interviews conducted virtually via Blackboard Collaborate with the two language lecturers. In order to analyse the data the study used the interpretative analysis approach. Themes emerged gradually from the raw data.

Data collection and analysis were conducted with the aim of answering the research questions that directed the study: structuring a piece of writing; interventions strategies; the writing process; the six steps of blended learning; the use of E-learning in teaching; the use of technologies in teaching; the use of Blackboard; the use of online text and feedback; multimodality; Blackboard challenges; resolutions; advantages of blended learning; teaching and learning pedagogy; good practice; translanguaging and the benefits thereof and blended learning.

- 1) What is the nature of first year students' academic writing?
- 2) Which strategies are used in HEI to address students' academic writing challenges?
- 3) How do language lecturers address academic writing challenges?
- 4) How is blended learning currently implemented in the regular teaching and learning to improve first year writing?

6.2 Relating the findings of the study to the research questions

Concerning the synopsis from the research that is presented in the previous chapter, I believe that it can serve a capitulatory function. The previous chapter revisited the principal parts of the investigation explaining what the study did and what ensued as a result. The following explanations need to be seen as confirmations that support the relevance of context to human behaviors, as the centrality of the subjective belief systems of those involved in the process and outcomes of research. In line with this, the conclusions should not be seen as “a temporal affirmation of objective knowledge that has accrued from traditional/scientific and rationalistic explorations” (Sivasubramaniam, 2011 p 36). In other words, it should be seen as context-based, context dependent confirmation of a community of enquiry knowledge suggested through the subjective perspectives of the respondents in the study through their lived through experiences in the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Therefore, I hasten to suggest that this study is the re-enforcements, not generalisations of what I have perceived as the context-based characteristics of perspectival/speculative knowledge evidenced from the data analysis.

6.2.1 The nature of the first-year students' academic writing

The nature of the first-year students' writing is concerning. The inquisition made to determine the students' standard of writing at the point of entry to HEI, emulates that these students coming from high school, have a general proficiency to write. Although students have a basic proficiency to write, this may not be sufficient to ensure academic success at HEI. Hitherto, writing academically is a honed skill that must be practiced. Hence the delineation reflects that a vast majority of the first-year cohort is in need of a writing intervention to ensure academic attainment as students need to apply the academic writing skill across subjects.

6.2.2 Identifying academic writing challenges

The inquisition of assessing students' initial writing assignments manifested a struggle with structuring writing and the technical aspect of language. In addition, students struggled with critical thinking skills which impacted their writing. Furthermore, students struggled with the minimum reading which has a direct effect on how they write. The inquest reflects that the first-year students may have a misconceived perception of what academia is and what their contribution should be. This may be brought on by the accepted precedent set at high school.

6.2.3 Addressing academic writing challenges

The investigation illustrates that lecturers start with giving the students a writing assignment. The assignment is assessed, and feedback is given on the students' scripts and general feedback is given in the classroom identifying common errors. Thereafter students do reflection on the feedback given. Lecturers would upload various reading materials and encourage students to read extensively to improve their writing and scaffold topics in several lessons in preparation for the follow-up assignment. The role of scaffolding knowledge proved to be of great value to enhance the quality of producing adequate writing

pieces Finally, students get the opportunity to apply the feedback given, as well as the new scaffolded knowledge, to the next assignment.

6.2.4 Strategies used in HEI to address students' academic writing challenges

Lecturers set writing assignments as a baseline assessment to gauge students' standard of writing. Thereafter, lecturers identify areas for improvement and create lessons around these topics. Students are presented with the opportunity to discuss and collaborate with their peers. This is followed up with the opportunity to practice their writing, thereupon receive constructive feedback from lecturers which can be applied in their next assignments. Lecturers use multi-modality to teach their students by making use of PowerPoints, PDF documents, video clips and voice overs which were uploaded to BB. The face-to-face interaction was emulated on the Blackboard Collaborate platform in which students are able to see and engage with one another. WhatsApp was used extensively as this was the most far-reaching platform for majority of the students. Emails were used to reach non-responding or engaging students to follow-up on them. Lecturers were flexible in allowing students to use translanguaging to build language and improve writing.

6.3 Responses to research questions

In this section, I am going to attempt to answer the research questions from chapters 1 and 3. This would be eased by the main findings based on the data collected for this study.

6.3.1 How language lecturers address academic writing challenges

The findings from the research show that language lecturers identify common errors from students writing and dedicate lessons addressing these areas. Furthermore, these lecturers give students comparative texts so that the students are able to analyse what a good piece of writing looks like so that the students can emulate. Viewed in this light, a good piece of writing may guide students as to what is expected of their writing. Students are given the opportunity to practice and hone their writing skills along with the lecturer who practice with them. Furthermore, lecturers may be able to identify students that are struggling with academic writing and offer personal assistance and guidance in their one-on-one consultation sessions.

6.3.2 Strategies used by lecturers in addressing students' academic writing challenges

The inquest demonstrates how lecturers used blended learning for teaching and learning throughout the year. Additionally, they used multi-modality to grant students access to information in various formats and platforms. Furthermore, Improved language use among second language speakers, is a derivative of encouraging translanguaging.

6.3.3 How lecturers address academic writing challenges

Academic writing is not the sole responsibility of academic writing lecturers, but the collective responsibility of each lecturer that teaches the first-year cohort. It is important for lecturers to point out how the basic principles of writing academically can be applied in any other subject. The findings from this investigation demonstrates that lecturers present students with feedback. Lecturers also conduct writing interventions by practicing writing along with their students. In addition, lecturers also present comparative texts which reflect good and poor writing to show students what academic writing should look like. Last but not the least, lecturers are flexible in granting students the opportunity to do follow-up assignments to improve their marks.

6.3.4 How blended learning can be used to improve first-year writing

It is apparent that blended learning is currently being implemented as a regular teaching and learning pedagogy to improve first-year student's academic writing. Lecturers apply the six steps of blended learning starting from acquisition and inquiry by uploading content onto BB and in the classroom so that students can read through the content and do the necessary research prior to lessons. Lecturers teach the content in class face-to-face or virtually using multi-modality. At the end, learning is r extended to critical discussions with peers and the lecturers face to face or virtually. Students can collaborate with their peers either in the classroom face-to-face or on the virtual spaces such as BB or W/A. Thereafter, these students can then practice writing in class or at home and upload their writing onto

the LMS platform BB. Lecturers assess assignments online and students are given constructive feedback and the opportunity to correct their mistakes in the next assignment.

6.4 Recommendations

The findings from this study have revealed that there is a place for blended learning in the 21st Century. Being mindful of the diverse students that the university has, it is imperative to afford students all possible opportunities and means to access information whether it is face-to-face or virtual. To this end, the academic staff need to be proficient and comfortable with teaching virtually and be proficient in using the virtual tools available to create learning and teaching spaces for optimal and effective learning. HEIs need to ensure that their academic staff is adequately trained to use the virtual tools at their disposal. I sincerely appeal to HEIs to reconsider offering teaching and learning workshops to academics during teaching times but perhaps block off times on the timetable during the day or a day in the week for these workshops so that academics are free to attend without compromising their students contact time. In the same breath, the first-year cohort should spend sufficient time being oriented about BB and other virtual academic spaces. This should extend to the first six months of the first-year's academic calendar in which they are compelled to attend BB training on how to upload their assignments. Otherwise, overwhelming academic staff with webinars as has been the case during COVID 19, can do students and HEIs no good. Based on this, there is need to be thorough in planning the time table of these webinars so that webinar times do not encroach on academic time. Time tabling should therefore be spaced as well as paced over a practical period. The unprecedented year was not only taxing on our students but on academic staff as well having to juggle planning materials, teaching, assessments and attending webinars.

6.5 Suggestions for Further studies

Whilst conducting this research, whilst there was extensive research around blended learning as a pedagogy there was limited research existed around blended learning as an intervention strategy; multi-modality and translanguaging. This highlights an explicit gap which may add value to existing knowledge Furthermore should the recommendations be

implemented; it would be interesting to re-examine the trajectory of first-years academic writing.

6.6 Conclusion

The inquisition has highlighted the need for blended learning as a writing intervention to address all academic writing challenges that first year students encounter at HEIs. The chapter has drawn conclusions based on the data conferred in chapter 4 to answer the research questions presented in chapter 3. The study identified the following themes: structuring a piece of writing; intervention strategies; the writing process; the six steps of blended learning; the use of e-learning in teaching; the use of technologies in teaching; the use of Blackboard; the use of lone text and feedback; multi-modality; Blackboard challenges; resolutions; the advantages of blended learning; teaching and learning pedagogy; good practice; translanguaging and the benefits thereof and blended learning.

The inquest is consistent with the existing literature based on blended learning as a writing intervention for academic writing. The study further contributes invaluable findings to existing research as it highlights first year students, in particular a university of technology in the western cape, lived experiences and challenges with academic writing. With respects to the sum of conclusions, the study has made recommendations to address the challenges that first year students face with academic writing at HEIs by emphasizing the need for a blended learning writing intervention.

The implementation of the recommendations will improve first year's academic writing and result in the retention of students and ultimately academic success. Furthermore, it will result in proficient and skilled lecturers to teach in the modern day.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview schedule with the lecturers

Interview Schedule

Question 1.

What is the nature of students' writing?

Question 2.

Are you pleased with their writing?

Question 3.

What strategies to you use to teach them writing?

Question 4.1

Which interventions strategies do you use to improve students writing?

Question 4.2

Would the intervention be one on one? Or would it be pockets of students that you take?

Question 5.

Do you use E-Learning/Blackboard to teach writing?

Question 6.

Do you think that your students writing has progressed or regressed to this point?

Question 7.

What is your opinion on blended learning?

Question 8.

Do you apply it to your teaching?

Question 9.

Do you think that blended learning is an effective way to teach writing?

Question 10.

What are the intervention strategies used with blended learning?

Question 11.

What are the challenges with blended learning?

Question 12.

How can we overcome these challenges?

Question 13.

What are the advantages of Blended Learning?

Question 14.

Do you use multimodalities in your teaching?

Question 15.

How does multi-modality inform your teaching?

Question 16.

Can you share some of the intervention strategies applied in the classroom?

Question 17.

Do you use Translanguaging in your classroom?

Question 18.

How has Translanguaging benefited or not benefited your teaching and your students?

Question 19.

What is your overall opinion about blended learning?

Appendix B: Ethical clearance from CPU



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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

On the **14 July 2020** the Chairperson of the Education Ethics Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology granted ethics approval **EFEC 4-9/2020** to **G Lentz** for research activities related to the degree **Masters in Education** at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title:	Blended learning as an academic writing intervention programme for first year students' academic writing
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Comments:

Permission is granted to conduct research within the Faculty of Education only. Research activities are restricted to those details in the research project. Ethical clearance for this study is granted until the 31st of December 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Livingston".

Date: 14 July 2020

Dr Candice Livingston

Research coordinator (Wellington) and Chair of the Education Faculty Ethics Committee

Faculty of Education

Appendix C Student's paper with 50%



SURNAME: KILI

NAME: SANELISWE

STUDENT NO:219410240

LECTURER: MS LENTZ

MODULE: ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

CODE: FEN151S

DUE DATE: 08 MARCH 2020

TOPIC: BEHIND THE MASK

BEHIND THE MASK

Most people are always pretending they are innocent and they are good children to their parents but behind all that they want to do things they parents will never allow them to do.

There is a high school, she is a top student, but she is saying no one understands her at home, school and everywhere, she wants to get away from these people. She wants to quite school because she does not understand the meaning and what it will do for her.

She is a neat girl everything about her is perfect. But behind that she wants to wear shapeless black clothes, change the natural colour of her hair, make her body suffer by wearing heavy chains and have rings on part of her body. She wants to have tattoos that in many years to come she will regret because she wants to experience things she will end up regretting.

She is a girl that stays at home, does not drink and party. But deep down she wants to drink unpleasant alcohol with unpleasant people at unpleasant places. She wants her home to be dark filled with smoke and loud music. She wants to have a boyfriend and ride a motor bike with him in the high way.

She is a girl that everything about her is in order her room is clean and organized. She wants to paint her room into black, curtains to be closed, paste magazines people on her wall and everything upside down, clothes everywhere that she can even fall and sit for hours on her cellphone and do nothing, make her parent lives miserable so they could say she is naughty because she is a teenager, she wants to ruin her life and regret it in many years to come.

As we teenagers we want to do things that will cost our lives in many years to come, but in the end we can't do things we want because of our parents and we want to obey our parent's because it is for our safety and future.

Brittney Sulyman: 220226016

IntermediatePhase1B

DescriptiveEssay

Ms.G.Lentz

FEN151S

Behind my mask is a completely different person, each and every person hides behind a mask of their own. Let me tell you what is behind my mask.

The person I am when I have my mask on is a quiet, weak and scared person. With my mask on, I

allow people to walk all over me. My mask is seen as a "yes" person. With my mask on people do not see me as someone who is capable of having a backbone.

Behind my mask is someone that many few people have seen. Behind this mask is not the perfect female. Behind this mask is a girl that always makes mistakes, a girl that can sometimes disappoint the people close to her.

The person I am behind this mask is also an extremely strong female who is filled with many strong emotions. Some of these emotions includes rage, anger and also fierceness. Behind this mask is a girl that does not allow anyone to step over her, a girl that can stand up for herself and a girl that has many opinions that is better kept to herself.

The girl behind this mask is not as dull as many thinks she is. The girl behind this mask is a fun, imaginative girl, with many outgoing interests and with an adventurous free spirit. This is a girl with many talents and a lot of experiences.

The mask I wear limits me from sharing my ideas or opinions. The reason for this is because people only see my mask I immediately get shut down because it is me. ~~The only reason I would hold back is because many do not take me seriously with my mask on and it becomes so frustrating.~~

There is a girl behind this mask who wants to explore this world, a girl who wants to experience more things in life, a girl who wants to meet different people across the world, a girl who wants to enjoy her youth and a girl who mostly wants to be free without being judged by the people around her and the people who does not really know her.

I hope to take off this mask for the world to see, but for now behind this mask I will be.

(379 WORDS)

Appendix E: Student with 70%

First Language 1: EnglishFEN151S

Behind My MaskMs. G. S. Lentz

8 March 2020

Behind my mask

Behind my mask is an array of emotions even I might not fully understand. I am scared; I am worried; I am a dreamer.

Behind the mask of a calm, collected, mature adult lies a frightened, insecure young woman, that still feels like a child at heart. A young woman who wants nothing more than the comfort of her mother's arms. I want to achieve so much and yet fear has me trapped within its icy grip. I fear failure, I fear disappointing my parents and even more so myself. I am angry that I allow fear to cloud my thoughts and judgements.

Behind the mask of a supportive daughter, cousin, sister and friend is someone who is confused, frustrated and worried. Here is a girl relying so deeply on her faith, praying and believing that things will work out the way they are supposed to even if she does not see it right now. I want to scream and cry out of anger and pain, that they deserve happiness and not heartache. I want to hold them close and encircle them in a cocoon of warmth and happiness to ward off the grey clouds lurking ahead.

Behind the mask of a patient, enduring student, I desire the future me. The person that has achieved the things I can only dream of at this stage in my life. The person that has her life figured out, that can support her family and lessen the burdens placed upon her parent's shoulders. Behind the mask of a homebody, lies an aspirant traveller. I long for a different country. A place where there is less suffering and heartache. However unrealistic, I long for it. I long for a place where children can walk safely in the streets and are not forced to grow up sooner than they have to. I want to feel happiness when I think about the world not anger, frustration and disbelief. I want to feel safe.

Behind my mask lies a girl who is trying her best to make it through life, day by day, week by week. A girl who wants to appreciate the small moments in life instead of worrying about whether the big ones will happen. Behind my mask, lies so much more and all of it is me.

Total words: 38

Appendix F: Consent form



Faculty of Education

Ethics informed consent form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Category of Participants (tick as appropriate):

<i>Principals</i>		<i>Teachers</i>		<i>Parents</i>		<i>Lecturers</i>		<i>Students</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Other (specify)</i>									

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Ms Genevieve SuzannLentz from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The findings of this study will contributetowards (tick as appropriate):

<i>An undergraduate project</i>		<i>A conference paper</i>	
<i>An Honours project</i>		<i>A published journal article</i>	
<i>A Masters/doctoral thesis</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>A published report</i>	

Selection criteria

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an Intermediate PhaseFirst Year Student.

The information below gives details about the study to help you decide whether you would want to participate.

Title of the research:

Blended Learning as an academic writing intervention programme for first year students' academic writing

A brief explanation of what the research involves:

The research involves using a blended learning approach as a digital intervention programme for first year's students' academic writing. The study involves a population of 33, of which 12 first year English Home Language students will be identified through purposive sampling and 3 Phase language lecturers. The data will be collected through document analysis, focus group discussions and interviews.

Why is this research important?

Benefits of research

(Researcher please briefly describe any foreseeable benefits of the study)

This study will inform lecturers teaching and learning methods and assist students who are at risk with academic writing.

Incentives

(Research please describe what if any, incentives will be offered to the participants)

N/A

Procedures (duration)

(Researcher please describe the procedures and the duration of the procedures)

The population of the study is 33 participants, 30 first year students and three IP language lecturers. After four weeks face-to-face teaching, on good academic writing principles to the 30 students, these students will receive an assignment and will be assessed, based on a rubric, that will cover the content, of the four weeks' teaching (4 weeks). The students will be provided with short videos that deal with writing, then they will be given reading material for research before lectures take place. For the assignment, they will need to write an academic descriptive essay of 350-400 words. Students will need to submit their assignments on Blackboard (digital space) and present a hard copy in class (1 week). The assignment will be marked and feedback to the students on a face-to-face encounter, as well as on the digital space (Blackboard) (1 week). The marked essays will be divided into three categories of low, average and high; low will range from 56% to 70% and high will range from 71% and above. 4 students will be selected from each category to make up a total of 12 students, who will participate in two focus group discussions of 2 each from low, average and high (1 week). This way, the different abilities are represented in the two focus groups. In addition, three language lecturers from the intermediate Phase will be interviewed to give their views of first year students' academic writing and blended learning. They will also be able to give insight to their use of blended learning as an intervention to academic writing. The interviews will be semi-structured with specific questions to elicit specific information as a guide for the researcher. The interest will be to see what challenges exist and what interventions are used to overcome these challenges. It will also be of interest to know whether these lecturers use blended learning and to what effect (1 day). Based on the rubric I will be able to identify which principles provided the greatest challenge to the students. I will then create short videos of 5-7 minutes of myself teaching those academic writing principles using PowerPoint. These videos will be uploaded onto Blackboard and the students will be given a new assignment with a different topic (1 week). The students will be informed of the videos that have been uploaded, as well as the discussion group that will be created. The discussion group on Blackboard with the virtual space where students will have the freedom to consult with each other and /or with the lecturer, should they have any questions about the topic. After interacting with students on

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Blackboard, I will take snapshots/pictures of the interactions created on the virtual space between the student-to-student and student-to-lecturer; this will inform my data (1 week). Duration of study 7-8 weeks.

Right to withdraw/ voluntary

(Researcher please describe how you will explain to the participants how the study is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time)

Participants will receive a letter and a consent form, informing them about the research, stipulating

the choice of participation before giving informed consent to participate voluntarily. Participants will have the freedom to withdraw at any time from the research.

Confidentiality and anonymity

(Researcher please describe how you will explain to the participant that their identity and the data will remain confidential and anonymous)

Participants' identity will be protected as the data collection will be coded anonymously. The documented data will be treated with confidentiality. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data to ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents are guaranteed.

Potential risks, discomforts or inconveniences

(Researcher please briefly describe any foreseeable risks, discomforts or inconveniences likely to affect research participants)

I can foresee no physical or psychological risk. However, should participants be concerned about losing their confidentiality, the consent form details their anonymity and the right to withdraw at any time during the research. The participants will also be assured that the data collected will be seen only by the researcher


and the supervisor.

What will happen to the data when the study is completed?

Kindly complete the table below before participating in the research.

Tick the appropriate column		
Statement	Yes	No
1. I understand the purpose of the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. I understand what the research requires of me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. I volunteer to take part in the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. I know that I can withdraw at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. I understand that there will not be any form of discrimination against me as a result of my participation or non-participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Comment:	<p><i>I, <u>Dillyne Petersen</u> understand what the research is about and what the research requires of me.</i></p>	

Please sign the consent form. You will be given a copy of this form on request.

	29 November 2020.
Signature of participant	Date

Researchers

	Name:	Surname:	Contact details:
1.	Genevieve Suzann	Lentz	lentzg@cput.ac.za
2.			

3.			
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Contact person: Genevieve Suzann Lentz

Contact number: 0748163404	Email: lentzg@cput.ac.za
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