

**Acquiring academic reading practices in History 1:
An ethnographic study of a group of foundation year students
at Rhodes University**

Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a critical, ethnographic investigation into the reading practices of a group of 14 foundation year students at Rhodes University in 2002. The university had identified all the student-participants as 'underprepared' for university learning: they were from poor, socio-economic backgrounds, used English as an additional language, and had been educated in township or rural schools. Using the Socio-cultural model of literacy (Heath, 1984; Gee, 1990 & Street, 1993), the study explores the culturally-shaped attitudes and assumptions about reading that the students brought with them into a tertiary learning context from their homes, communities and schools. It reports on their subsequent efforts to become academic readers in the disciplinary context of History. Framing Theory (Reid and MacLachlan, 1994) was employed to analyse the kinds of matches and mismatches that arose between the students' frames about the nature and purpose of reading, and those implicitly accepted as normative by teachers in the History department. It accounts for the students' difficulties in achieving epistemological access in terms of a conflict of frames: both the students and their teachers usually failed to recognise each others' constructions about the nature and purpose of 'reading for a degree'. The study's critical purpose required that its potential for generating emancipatory consequences needed to be investigated. Thus the study reports on how both sets of participants began to reframe their understanding of academic reading, by describing the ways in which they reflected on the findings in the final stages of the research process.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
BAF	Bachelor of Arts Foundation
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency.
DET	Department of Education and Training
ELAP	English Language for Academic Purposes
E1L	English 1 st Language
EAL	English Additional Language
LOLT	Language Of Learning and Teaching
PGCHE	Post Graduate Certificate of Higher Education
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
SSR	Sustained Silent Reading
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1

FRAMING THE RESEARCH: MOTIVATION, CONTEXT AND AIMS

1.1 Overview

This thesis reports on an ethnographic study of the reading histories of a group of 14 Bachelor of Arts Foundation Year (BAF) students at Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape. It explores the sorts of matches and mismatches that arise between the students' prior reading experiences and the kinds of reading that are required of them in the process of becoming accomplished academic readers at a university, particularly in the discipline of History. Broadly, it deals with the students' potential for epistemological success in terms of the role that reading plays in their development into fully acculturated members of the academy.

1.2 Motivation for the research

The motivation for this research arose out of my experience of tutoring students on an academic development programme designed to meet the specific linguistic and cultural needs of students at foundation year level.¹ Despite the fact that most of these students were taking four or even five years to get their degrees, their chances of throughput to degree level appeared to be significantly lower than those of students in the mainstream.² This was in spite of the fact that their academic results at school indicated that they were clearly capable, hard-working students. In South Africa only four out of ten school-goers ever reach their final year of schooling (Monare, 2003) and in 2001, the year that most of the participants in this study matriculated, only 15% achieved a university endorsement nationally (Statistics South Africa, 2002). This percentage was 6.5% in the Eastern Cape (*ibid.*), the home province of most of the students in this study. Seen from the national perspective the students who were accepted into Rhodes University in 2002 are a part of an 'elite' body because they represent less than 2% of their original school year group. The fact that between only a quarter and a third of these high-achievers go on to graduate at Rhodes University provided the stimulus for this thesis. It was clear that the quality of these students' experiences of teaching and learning during their first year in a tertiary context needed to be explored.

Morrow (1993, 1994) distinguishes between 'formal' and 'actual' access to higher education. 'Actual' access, he says, means epistemological access; real access to the goods which the university distributes. 'Formal' access implies simple admission to academic courses. The question of how students gain full, epistemological access to the kinds of knowledge and

¹ At Rhodes University the name of this course is English Language for Academic Purposes (ELAP).

² Of the Rhodes University Humanities and Commerce students who took ELAP as a subject between 1994 and 1998 only between 25.6 % and 38.7% eventually went on to complete their degrees. Further evidence of the relative underperformance of BAF (Bachelor of Arts Foundation) students is offered on the basis of their pass rates in History 1 and Sociology 1. In 2001, of the 12 BAF students who registered for these subjects, only six passed History 1 and four passed Sociology 1, all with grades below 60%.

competencies offered by the academy is a complex one. Common sense suggests that the under-performance of foundation year students could be explained by the fact that they all use English as an additional language (EAL). This has implications for their ability to cope academically at tertiary levels where success is dependent on the reading and writing of academic texts in English. Other reasons why students fail may be because they are too lazy, not intelligent enough, or that their “literacy levels” are low – lecturers often explain student failure in these terms (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988; Johns, 1997; Boughey, 2000). However, I have explored the issue of students’ epistemological access from an entirely different perspective. I have understood literacy as a socio-cultural phenomenon and have looked at the ways in which the literacy practices that the students bring with them from their homes and schools intersect with the literacy practices of a representative Humanities discipline, in this case History. I have postulated that neither side can make any sense of each other’s literacy practices and that this means that satisfactory teaching and learning cannot proceed. It is the students who suffer the consequences of this disharmony, and, as the research will show, some students suffer more than others do.

This study rests on the assumption that reading is at the heart of academic success (Pretorius, 2002:a). However, in South Africa, whilst a considerable amount of research has been done into the difficulties that novice academics experience as they come to *write* in new knowledge communities (Paxton, 1993; Moyo, 1995; Orr, 1995; Boughey, 2000), similar research into *reading* has been markedly absent. Given the centrality of reading at university, particularly in the Humanities, (students are traditionally understood to ‘read for a degree’), one might expect research into reading to be much more common. Yet when Pretorius (2002:b) conducted a small literature survey of four South African Applied Linguistics journals between 1990 and 2002, she discovered that only 17 of the 1 202 articles in the journals dealt with reading – 1.4% of the total research output.

Yet good academic writing relies on wide reading. Baijnath suggests that:

... with unsuccessful writers there is a poverty of input at the reading stage ... This results in the development of inadequate text worlds, lacking the richness of understanding and insight that is necessary to deliver a competent piece of writing ... Consequently, the [poor] quality of the product is determined at this stage (1992:75,76).

It would seem that academic reading is pre-eminent: it precedes academic writing and determines its depth and quality. The fact that it is so important to successful studenthood suggests that lecturers should devote more time to the teaching of academic reading skills, strategies, values and expectations. Yet McCormick says that “... teachers [at universities] do not regard themselves as involved with teaching reading” (1994:5). Reid, Kirkpatrick and Mulligan’s series of rhetorical questions elaborate McCormick’s view:

... how common is the expectation that students ... will learn on their own to adjust their learning habits and literacy practices to an ... academic environment? Is it generally assumed that students who are non-native speakers of English should, by their own efforts, just "keep up" with native-speaking students in reading and writing for the same course? How widespread, and how effective, is the practice of establishing dialogue between lecturers and students to delineate their respective responsibilities regarding literacy issues? How explicitly do teachers indicate the literacy conventions that are normative in academic culture? Are they knowledgeable enough about linguistic matters to do so? (2003:2).

To sum up, the rationale for this research rests on the three premises expressed above: firstly, that reading is under-researched in this country; secondly, it is a vital means of academic access, at least as important as academic writing; thirdly, lecturers seem to pay very little attention to explicitly teaching reading in their disciplines.

1.3 The research context and participants

All 14 students who were registered for both History 1 and ELAP in 2002 were invited to take part in this research and all agreed to do so. I will now introduce the students (who I refer to as the 'student-participants') and the two first-year courses for which they were registered.

1.3.1 English Language for Academic Purposes (ELAP)

ELAP is a credit-bearing first year course at Rhodes University and is taken alongside two other first-year subjects such as Politics 1, History 1 or Sociology 1. The students who are registered for this course are known as Bachelor of Arts Foundation (BAF) students and are expected to take four years to complete their degrees: in a sense they are on a 'reduced curriculum'. The Dean of the Humanities faculty makes the final decisions about which students should be admitted as BAF students. They have usually passed their Matriculation examinations with a university exemption but their results are quite poor compared to those of the majority of 'mainstream' students entering Rhodes University. The Dean looks particularly at their English Second Language results: any symbol below a 'B' suggests that they need to be registered for ELAP, but they are usually interviewed before the final decision is made.

The students who do ELAP are from similar backgrounds: they are usually Xhosa home-language speakers and their parents are poor and frequently unemployed. So, although their socio-economic backgrounds could be described as 'working-class', and this term is a useful 'gloss', their parents do not usually have work in the formal sector of the economy. ELAP students are usually on full bursaries, yet they still find it difficult to locate the financial resources to meet their routine needs such as the photostating of readings, printing out of their essays, transport, books or stationery and so on.

ELAP students' schooling has usually taken place in 'ex-DET' (Department of Education and Training) schools. Such institutions still suffer the long-term effects of Apartheid education policies, both ideologically in terms of how they understand knowledge and learning, as well as in terms of their physical resources (see Section 2.6.1: 'South African schools and the heritage of Apartheid'). They are under-resourced in multiple ways: there is often a shortage of textbooks, libraries, equipment and computers; the teachers are often poorly motivated and under-qualified and the classes very large (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999). Even though English is officially the Language of Learning and Teaching ('LOLT'), most of the learners are taught in a mixture of languages and their exposure to Standard English is quite limited, partly because the teachers' own command of Standard English is inadequate (Hartshorn, 1992).

Rhodes University's response to meeting the needs of students underprepared for tertiary education was to set up ELAP in 1994. The course has remained substantially the same over the last nine years although the idea of a Foundation Year for underprepared students is presently being reconceptualised with an entirely new course planned for 2004. The course as it is currently conceived aims to help the students to adjust to the demands of the university curriculum cognitively, linguistically and culturally. It teaches reading by means of a variety of academic-level texts; how to take notes from readings and in lectures; how to write academic essays; and how to construct arguments from a variety of competing opinions; and how to take part in formal, oral debates. The students are encouraged to read extensively and to keep journals about their reading experiences. They conduct an academic research project, collecting their own data and writing up their findings. In other words, the ELAP course aims to develop the range of literacies that fall roughly into the category of what is termed 'academic literacy'.³ The content of the course aims to build up their knowledge of world affairs and issues, the sort of broad 'content schemata' (see Section 2.2 for a description of this term) that would be required for a Humanities degree. Such issues include gender, culture, language and the environment.

1.3.2 History 1

ELAP constitutes part of the 'background' to this research, whereas the History department at Rhodes University is in the 'foreground'. Its lecturers and tutors (referred to as the 'teacher-participants') are important protagonists in this research story. History was selected on a number of grounds. Firstly, it is a representative Humanities discipline in the sense that it expects its students to become wide, critical readers during the course of their first year at university. Secondly, my own undergraduate degree included History 1 and History 2: I am interested in History and have some, albeit limited, acquaintance with the discipline.

³ This term describes the set of implicit "rules and conventions" (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988:8) that are the agreed ways to read and write in the academy. But it does not simply refer to textual conventions but also to how knowledge is understood and constructed within the university as a whole and within specific disciplines.

Furthermore, the Head of the History department generously gave me access to first year tutorials, lectures, and all the written documentation related to the course, such as handouts, booklists and so on. Finally, it was important, in keeping with the ethnographic nature of this study, to observe the students reading within a mainstream discipline, rather than in an 'add-on' course, such as ELAP, or in some other decontextualised research setting. This ensures the authenticity or 'situatedness' of the data.

I observed and interviewed both the student- and the teacher-participants during the course of an academic year, from February to November, 2002. History 1 is semesterised, that is, it is taught in two halves, History 101 and History 102. Not all of the original 14 student-participants went on to complete the whole course. In fact, only nine of them did both History 101 and History 102. Furthermore, these two courses are substantially, although not radically, different. Thus the research settings and population, both teachers and students, varied during the course of the year – some students dropped out and some teachers taught on one course but not on the other. However, ethnographers watch people living out the normal course of their lives and no attempt was made to manipulate a more predictable, consistent research context (see LeCompte and Schensul, 1999, in Section 3.2).

Finally, it is important to determine the scope of this research at the outset. It is concerned exclusively with the reading and learning experiences of between nine and 14 students out of a much larger student group. There were 202 students in History 101 and 329 students in History 102 in 2002. The critical mass of first-year History students at Rhodes University is from wealthier, predominantly middle-class homes. Their responses to the new learning environment are sometimes recorded incidentally but are not the focus of this thesis. Nevertheless, although the primary interest of this thesis is in the reading experiences of poor, working-class learners, this population is far more representative of the majority of South African students when viewed from a broad, national perspective. So whilst these research findings may or may not be generalisable in terms of the History course at Rhodes University, they could well be applicable in other courses or universities in this country. I will address this issue more fully in Section 3.5.3.

1.4 The theoretical framework for the research

The ideological framework which this research has adopted for understanding and exploring students' reading is the Socio-cultural model. McCormick (1997), Johns (1997), Cope and Kalantzis (1993) and others have identified the three fundamental paradigms in which the nature of learning and literacy are understood. These paradigms are variously named but they describe similar ideas. Because McCormick focuses particularly on reading, I will usually employ her terms and definitions. She discusses reading within 'Cognitivist', 'Expressive' and 'Socio-cultural' models. Each model of reading has been used as a point of reference in

this research but I have approached the research data and its analysis mainly within a socio-cultural paradigm.

The basic assumption of this approach is that literate behaviours of any kind are cultural phenomena, and that people are socialised into particular ways of using reading and writing in the experiences of their homes, communities and schools. Literacy is understood in terms of 'practices' rather than 'skills'. Therefore the issue of unequal student access to the academy is not conceptualised as a 'language' or 'skills' problem, but in the broadest sense it is an anthropological and cultural one as well (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988; Boughey, 2000).

Seeing reading as a form of cultural socialisation has had important implications for how the research was conducted. It employs ethnographic approaches and methods because it is interested in building up a rich, detailed picture of the cultural meanings and uses of literacy in two main sites: firstly, in the homes and schools of the student-participants and, secondly, in a university department. Ethnographies, most essentially, interpret culture (Wolcott, 1987). But the way in which I use and understand the term 'culture' in this thesis needs definition. I will not be exploring the general cultural characteristics of these particular sites. Rather, I will be looking more narrowly at the ways in which the participants' uses of and attitudes towards print have developed within the context of their shared experiences of life, work and education. Even so, I hope to avoid crass cultural determinism. Although this thesis is essentially a case study of student-participants from similar socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds, it records diversity and variation within those contexts.

However, this research is not a classic, but a *critical* ethnography. South African researchers in the field of education cannot avoid an awareness of the multiple inequalities that are inherent within our schools and universities. Critical ethnographers, such as Carspecken (1996: x), "... are all concerned about social inequalities and direct [their] work towards positive social change". They "... use research to uncover the subtleties of oppression so that its invisibility to those affected by it might be removed; so that oppression might become challenged and changed" (p.7). This research will seek answers to the problems of unequal epistemological access not only in reading histories of the students themselves. I will argue that they have indeed been underprepared for university on the basis of their literacy experiences at home and school. But, even more crucially, the students are disadvantaged by the wider, institutional contexts in which they attempt to make their way. In this research these wider contexts are represented by the History department, the Humanities faculty, and Rhodes University. These structures, in turn, fit into the larger South African society which is still, in many ways, constrained and influenced by the history of Apartheid. So I will argue that the 'problem' of unequal access is as much in the structures as in the students. The *critical* purpose of this research is to give a largely silent, powerless and excluded minority

group at Rhodes University more of a voice in the way their educational needs are accommodated in a historically white, middle-class institution. Clark and Ivanic claim that:

Powerless social groups are excluded from contributing to the collective store of knowledge, cultural and ideological activity; from the production and projection of ideas that fundamentally shape society. Whole social and ethnic groups are largely voiceless ... they remain 'receivers' and are not encouraged to be 'transmitters'... [but] they are not less 'intelligent'. The reason for this inequality ... lies in the dominant class, gender and ethnic relations in our society ... (1997:55).

Another theoretical framework for this research has been 'Framing Theory': it has helped in the organisation of the data and in its analysis. Frames are 'expectations' and Tannen, (1993) showed that speakers bring expectations or frames about the context or activity in which they are taking part from their prior experiences. Watanabe (in Tannen, 1993:178) says that, "frames guide interactants to appropriate interpretations of what is going on in situations at each moment". In the case of this research the "interactants" are readers rather than speakers because they bring particular expectations to texts which help or hinder them in interpretation. This chapter, Chapter 1, is deliberately entitled "Framing the research: motivation, context and aims", because it is setting up appropriate frames by which the readers can make sense of what is to come.

Appropriately for an ethnography such as this, Framing Theory has its origins in Anthropology primarily in the work of Bateson (1972). Others built on his ideas, like Gumperz (1982) who was a linguistic anthropologist, Tannen (1993) and Reid and MacLachlan (1994). Reid *et al.* were the first to use Framing Theory in relation to reading and the categories they devised for the particular kinds of frames that readers bring to textual interpretation have been particularly useful in this research – they refer to 'extratextual', 'intertextual', 'circumtextual' and 'intratextual' frames (see Section 3.8.1). Framing Theory and Schema Theory have much in common: frames act in similar ways to schemata (see Section 2.2.1 for an explanation of Schema Theory). However, I will show (in Section 2.2.3) that the subtle differences between the two are significant, and that Framing Theory provides a more helpful and appropriate analytical framework for the data in this research.

1.5 My role as researcher

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) claim that the ethnographer is her own primary tool of data collection. This is not a comfortable idea for those who believe that research is an 'objective' science and that the presence of the researcher in the field may bias the results. Critical ethnography explores the ideologies, implicit motivations and subjectivities of all the research participants, including those of the ethnographer herself. It seems important, therefore, to

explain who I am and to openly declare my own interest in this research and to define, as much as it is possible, my own ideology.

I am a white, middle-class, middle-aged South African woman and I understand my role as teacher and researcher as one of providing redress to communities of learners who were deliberately and systematically disadvantaged, and continue to be disadvantaged, by the educational policies of Apartheid. Taylor and Vinjevoold (1999, see Section 2.6.1) show that Apartheid is a 'heritage' in many South African schools and that the new South African order has not yet been able to change the way most children learn in this country. I suggest that this could be equally true in universities. They too often resist change, although they are usually well-resourced, and staffed by competent, well-educated, liberal-minded people, unlike most schools in this country which do not have these advantages. My motivation for conducting this research emerges from an uncomfortable sense that black students from poor, working-class backgrounds in the Humanities Faculty at Rhodes University are not often provided with clear and sufficient epistemological access to the educational 'goods' offered by tertiary education. I sense that lecturers often seem to ignore diversity in the student body. They sometimes appear ignorant of the learning practices and values that accompany students into the university, assuming that their own middle-class practices and values are the 'normal', 'common-sense' ones. It seems that their curricula are often contingent on such middle-class attitudes and assumptions and I postulate that this means that they are therefore setting up the poor, working-class students for ultimate failure. I observe lecturers often blaming student failure on poor language skills, bad schooling, or even lack of intelligence, but not always taking responsibility for teaching students in imaginative, empowering or accessible ways. My research seeks to test the reliability of these perceptions, and, if they are confirmed, to encourage dialogue and change amongst the participants.

My situation as the student-participants' tutor in ELAP meant that I knew the students well and interacted with them frequently, setting and discussing readings with them, assessing their work, teaching writing, and monitoring their educational and cultural adjustment to the university throughout the year. I had a personal interest in them and a concern for their welfare. Therefore I cannot claim objectivity or neutrality as a researcher. However, Blair (1998:20) believes that, "Whatever passes for neutrality in social research is no more than a mask ...". No researcher, he says, can ever be objective – we are all, inevitably, constrained and shaped by our own cultural socialisation. So whilst I do indeed aim to be a careful and thorough ethnographer and to produce valid and reliable data, I can never hope to do so as an 'objective' or 'neutral' observer. I prefer to understand my personal, subjective interest in the participants' lives, their successes and failures, as adding depth and empathy to the research. I also hope that by adopting a self-reflective stance from the outset and by sustaining an awareness of myself as a constructed, situated, subjective observer (Foley, 1998), I might

avoid skewed, untrustworthy findings and interpretations. Furthermore, as I will show in Section 3.5, I have subjected this research to rigorous checking and auditing, both by the student- and teacher-participants themselves, and by two 'outsiders' – colleagues whose experience in similar fields gives them authority to challenge or confirm the findings.

1.6 The research goals

To sum up, therefore, this research set out to achieve the following broad objectives:

1. Using a Socio-cultural framework for understanding the nature of literacy, I sought to explore the reading histories and experiences of 14 first-year students at Rhodes University. All the participants were registered for both History 1 and ELAP – the significance of the latter subject is that all the participants use English as an additional language, were deemed to be inadequately prepared for university-style learning, and are from poor, working-class homes. Assuming the centrality of reading as a primary means of epistemological access, I focussed on the values, attitudes, assumptions and expectations about reading that accompany such students into the university context. I understood and referred to this combination of values, expectations *et al.* as '*frames*' (Reid and MacLachlan, 1994).
2. I wished to identify the frames about reading that are considered normative and desirable by the teachers in a representative Humanities discipline, History, and to observe the ways in which these frames were either explicitly or implicitly taught within the discipline.
3. I aimed to describe the kinds of matches and mismatches that arose between the students' reading frames and those that are expected of them by their teachers, and to account for the students' relative underperformance in the academy in terms of a conflict of frames; theirs and their teachers'. I thereby hoped to challenge the common-sense view that student failure is a simple language or literacy problem.
4. My thesis had an emancipatory goal. Thus, as the teachers and learners involved in this research participated in it, read and reflected on it, I hoped to facilitate a changed consciousness in both groups. Ideally, as a result of research, the students would develop a meta-awareness of the complex processes of acculturation that are expected of them in the new learning environment, especially as regards reading. Furthermore, I hoped that the teachers would begin to reconceptualise themselves as teachers of reading and, more broadly, as educators in a new order where diversity is the norm and redress an imperative.

Whether or not I can claim success in all four of these objectives will be addressed in the final chapter.

1.7 Chapter outlines

The following chapter, Chapter 2, explores in detail the theories of literacy and learning and the specific instances of reading or literacy research that have helped me to shed light on the four goals described in the previous section.

In Chapter 3, I describe the research methodology. Firstly, I explain the general approach that I adopted – critical ethnography – and justify this choice in terms of the research objectives: I believe that these were best served using ethnographic methods within a critical paradigm. I then explore the issues of validity, generalisability and ethics that were raised by this approach. The practical details of the execution of the study follow in the final sections of the chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the research data in terms of the four goals outlined above. Firstly, it describes the reading practices of the student-participants. In the second phase I focus on the History department's expectations for reading and the ways in which their frames are communicated to the students. Thirdly, I explore the interface between these two understandings about the nature of academic reading through a description of the student-participants' efforts to read for a particular assignment in History 102. Finally, I report on the ways in which the participants responded to the data in order to assess whether or not I have been able to meet the fourth goal, that is, a changed consciousness in either group.

The final chapter sums up the research findings, again addressing each of the four goals in turn, and explores what they mean and imply both on a practical and a critical level. Avenues for future research are also considered.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORIES, MODELS AND RESEARCH

2.1 Introduction

In order to make sense of the ways in which reading practices impact on epistemological access I will first provide an overview of the broad paradigms in which educational theorists have understood and researched reading over the past 30 to 40 years. I will use McCormick's three models of reading (1994) all of which, although conceptualised in roughly historical terms, are still more or less relevant to the ways in which teachers and lecturers understand reading today. I will also give examples of particular studies, both international and South African, which have been done within these paradigms and which closely pertain to this research.

The three models, (which McCormick terms 'Cognitive', 'Expressive' and 'Socio-cultural'), are not diametrically opposed, discrete categories but may be seen more usefully in a loose, dialectical relationship with each other (McCormick, 1994). Similar phenomena are observed in each but are given different interpretations and emphases, or "significations" (p.14), to use McCormick's term. There is a roughly similar division in the way Johns describes the three predominant theories of literacy: 'Traditional', 'Learner-centered', (in which she includes Expressivist and Psycholinguistic/Cognitivist understandings), and 'Socioliterate' (1997). The ways in which reading has been researched and taught in educational institutions of all kinds have developed within these three broad understandings about the nature of literacy.

I will refer extensively to all three models in this research but I will use the Socio-cultural framework to make sense of the research participants' reading practices, both at home and at university. I will explain why I have reservations about the other two models and will justify my choice of the Socio-cultural model as a general framework on the grounds that I believe it fits more comfortably with the particular context and objectives of this study. I will then describe the latter model in some detail, focussing mainly on the work of three theorists: Heath (1984), Street (1993) and Gee (1990).

This will be followed by a section in which I will discuss a Vygotskian theory of learning (1978), the 'zone of proximal development' ('ZPD'). I will relate this theory to teaching in Higher Education in South Africa and show how it could help in the development of curricula and pedagogical practices that meet the challenge of diversity and redress in this country.

Context is a crucial factor in socio-cultural understandings of literacy. In the latter sections of this chapter I will overview some studies into three aspects of context relevant to this

research: schooling in South Africa (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999); the literacy experiences of two South African homes, one working-class and one middle-class (Dison, 1997 and Bloch, 1997); and, thirdly, I will review two research articles into the teaching of History in South African universities (Nuttal and Luckett, 1995 and Leibowitz and Witz, 1995). All three of these contexts – home, school and the ways in which History is taught at universities – have very important consequences for students' epistemological access. Finally, I will report on two studies that have addressed the specific ways in which reading is shaped by socio-cultural factors (Parry, 1996 and Mines, 2000).

Descriptions of the three models of reading follow below.

2.2 The Cognitive Model

This theory is the oldest, and belongs within a traditionalist curriculum which "... was virtually unquestioned for centuries ... from the time of the rise of humanist education since the Enlightenment" (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993:41). It held a dominant place in educational research until the late 1960's and is still the model underlying the teaching of reading in most South African schools (Bloch, 1997). All of the participants in this study were taught to read within this paradigm but it also underlies many of the assumptions about reading that prevail amongst university lecturers, as both Johns (1997:72) and McCormick (1994) have observed. For example, McCormick claims that the idea of "... the reader as social subject and the text as social production" has not really been absorbed into the academic community (p.4).

The Cognitive model is rooted in the objectivist tradition and sees reading as a neurological phenomenon which can be quantified and dissected. Learning to read is seen as mastering a hierarchy of skills, from micro-level skills, such as letter and word recognition, to learning to read larger and larger units, such as sentences and paragraphs, before moving on to whole texts, such as stories – essentially a 'bottom-up' process¹. In this model, a child learns phonics first, before reading for comprehension and meaning, and comprehension will consist of "... simply adding up the meaning of words to create the meaning of the whole" (McCormick, 1994: 17). A key metaphor for this way of understanding reading is that of the computer, which illustrates the fact that reading is seen as a mechanistic *skill*, or *set of skills*, which are essentially neutral and can be applied to any situation requiring literacy. Demonstrating her alignment with cognitive conceptions of literacy, Pretorius (2000a: 170), a leading researcher into reading in South Africa, describes reading as "... a cognitive-linguistic activity comprising several component skills". It is a "scientific, positivist, 'factual' view of literacy" (Johns, 1997:6) in which reading is seen to be acquired mainly through teacher-directed practice of language and textual forms.

¹ In 'bottom-up' processing the reader creates a unit-by-unit mental translation of the text with little reference to his/her background knowledge.

The two main components of reading ability are seen as, firstly, *decoding*, whereby written symbols are translated into language, and secondly, *comprehension*, whereby the meaning of the text as a whole is constructed by the reader within sentence units, between adjacent sentences and across larger units of text. The distinction between these two processes is important because whilst decoding is undoubtedly a linguistic and perceptual *skill*, usually accomplished in the first two or three years of schooling, achieving reading comprehension is much more than a skill. It is a complex, higher order *process*, and is even, as I will show later, a socio-cultural *practice*. Skills in decoding text do not necessarily result in comprehension (Yuill and Oakhill, 1991). In fact, researchers have observed large discrepancies between them (Daneman 1991: Yuill *et al.*, 1991).

Anderson (1983) and Carrel (1985) have attempted to account for the complex phenomenon of comprehension in reading. Although McCormick categorises them both as researchers essentially within the Cognitive tradition, they challenged the notion that reading comprehension is simply a matter of adding up the meaning of phonemes, words, phrases, sentences and so on. Borrowing from research done in cognitive psychology by Bartlett in the 1930's, they developed the notion of Schema Theory for reading. This theory maintains that comprehension occurs only when a reader can access a *schema* that explains the whole message (McCormick, 1994). Research (e.g. by Barnett, 1989; Carrel and Eisterhold, 1983; Johnson, 1983) has demonstrated that readers constantly call up their background knowledge of the world (their *content schemata*) and also of the ways texts are organised and constructed rhetorically (their *formal/textual schemata*) to make inferences and connections when reading. Knowledge of the language itself – the ability to decode word meanings and how they fit together in a sentence – is also understood as a type of schema – *linguistic* schema. In short, all the abstract, mental representations of readers' past experiences, whether content, textual or linguistic, are the schemata which form the basis of every act of comprehension and memory. Comprehension occurs when readers can connect what they know of the language and its forms with appropriate background knowledge, that is, their content schemata.

Research within the Cognitive paradigm is usually quantitative. Quantitative research conducted by Carrell in 1987, (reported in Singal, 1998) has demonstrated the significance of culture in the development of both content and formal schemata. This well-known study, which subsequently generated many similar ones, involved 28 Muslim Arab and 24 Catholic Hispanic students, all of whom were involved in an intensive English programme at an American university. Each student read two texts, one with Muslim-orientated content and the other with Catholic-orientated content. They were then given a series of multiple-choice comprehension questions and were asked to write down what they remembered of each text. The results suggested that the readers better understood and recalled the texts that were

culturally familiar to them. Other similarly designed studies produced similar results (eg, Carrell, 1981; Johnson, 1981, 1982; Steffensen and Joag-Dev, 1984; Ammon, 1987; Shimoda, 1989; in Singal, 1998). Interestingly, further evidence from these studies seems to demonstrate that the readers' schemata for *content* affect levels of comprehension more significantly than their *formal* schemata for text organisation. Research by Johnson (1981, in Singal, 1998) also suggests that culturally-based content schemata have a more profound impact on comprehension than the syntactic or semantic complexity of a text – the *linguistic* schema. Carrell's 1987 study also implied the pre-eminence of familiar content over familiar form in comprehension.

Another feature of the Cognitive reading model is that it assumes that reading ability is something that can be accurately measured, and that appropriate reading levels, even *scores*, can be assigned to particular ages or maturational stages for both 1st language or 2nd language learners. Thus, for example, Lesiak and Bradley-Johnson (1983) describe 3 levels of reading: *independent* level (in which the reader has 98% decoding accuracy and 95% comprehension of a text); *instructional* level (which means 95% decoding accuracy and 75% comprehension); and finally *frustration* level (90% decoding accuracy but 60% or lower comprehension).

However, assigning reading scores to learners may not be useful or fair for the following reasons. Firstly, testing is not helpful when an in-depth analysis of students' reading problems is required and, according to Dubin, Eskey and Grabe (1986), the identification of problems is probably the most compelling rationale for testing. Secondly, many reading tests ignore the context and culture in which they are being conducted and, as Carrel (1987) showed above, schemata are culture-related. This will obviously have a significant impact on the reading comprehension of students from non-mainstream cultures whose content schemata are different from those represented by the tests and the testers. Therefore they may be unfairly disadvantaged by such assessments. Another disadvantage of reading tests is the fact that whilst they can describe *how* students read, they can never account for *why* students read, or do not read. This is a socio-cultural issue that a cognitive approach cannot fully address.

However, despite these drawbacks, it is important that the contributions of research done within the Cognitive model, which often involves the assigning of reading scores or levels, are not overlooked. The centrality of cognitive-linguistic concerns such as word recognition skills, automaticity, fluency, vocabulary knowledge, discourse knowledge or reading speed cannot be ignored. For example, a quantitative study into the number of words that should be available to students beginning tertiary study showed that 23,550 headwords represent an ideal number, providing 95% coverage for most reading materials (Hazenburg and Hulstijn, 1996). Their study was conducted in Holland where most of the EAL students who passed a

reading test had an average word knowledge of 11,813 words. They concluded that EAL students in Holland would need a basic minimum of 10,000 headwords to read university level texts. However, I will show in the next section that many EAL students in tertiary study in South Africa have vocabulary levels well below this basic minimum suggested by Hazenburg *et al.* Cognitive research of this kind, and of the kind that follows in the next section, provides a useful backdrop for my own study despite the fact that I have chosen to explore student reading from a different set of assumptions about the nature of literacy.

2.2.1 South African research within the Cognitive model

Much of the South African research into reading has been done within the Cognitive model. Given the caution, explained above, that I believe reading tests and levels should be viewed with some reserve, I will now overview some of the more important findings of the reading research community in South Africa. They provide strong evidence for significant reading problems in our learning communities and a powerful rationale for any kind of further research into reading in this country.

The Threshold Project Reports (Macdonald, 1990) document the poor reading skills of black primary school pupils for whom English is an additional language. In this large, comprehensive study pupils were found to have relatively high decoding skills but poor comprehension, vocabulary and English proficiency levels. Strauss (1995) reports a similar scenario. The Grade 6 EAL pupils she researched also had good decoding skills but less than 30% comprehension levels. Both Macdonald and Strauss report that there is a tendency among children from historically disadvantaged communities to be trained into becoming “sound-centred readers” (Devine, 1988), efficiently decoding print but at the same time paying little attention to meaning.

The READ Annual Report (1999) provides evidence that in secondary schools in rural areas of the country, whilst the average age of Grade 8 pupils is 14.4, the EAL reading levels are equivalent to children of the age of 7.6. In tertiary education, too, there is evidence of very poor reading levels. Perkins (1991) reports the results of the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test given to a new intake of students at the University of the Transkei. The results showed that only 13,8% of the students had the reading skills necessary to understand textbooks typical of first-year study. Webb (1999) showed that many EAL students in their first year at Pretoria University had reading levels of Grade 7 – 8 learners. Pretorius (2002b) found that the average reading levels of first year Psychology and Sociology students at UNISA² was 53%, which would, according to Lesiak and Bradley-Johnson’s reading levels, mean that the students were reading at ‘frustration level’. Similar research among 81 first-year MEDUNSA³

² UNISA is an acronym for the ‘University of South Africa’.

³ MEDUNSA is the ‘Medical University of South Africa’.

students showed only marginally better results – their comprehension levels were shown to be 57% (Pretorius, 2002a). Hough and Horne (2001) conducted a standardised English literacy test on 766 Grade 12 school-leavers applying to a teacher training college. 95% of them were discovered to be reading at below Grade 8 level, 3% at Grade 8 level and 2% above Grade 8 level. These students qualified as teachers in 1998 and are now teaching English and/or content subjects through the medium of English in South African schools (Pretorius, 2002a). Work done by Cooper (2000) on the vocabulary size of some first-year, EAL, UNISA and Vista University students showed that most of them recognised no more than the 2000 most common English words. They did not even approach the minimum requirement suggested for the reading of university texts by Hazenbarg *et al.* in the previous section (1996).

Although such findings have limitations on the grounds that they largely ignore socio-historical or socio-cultural factors, and that they problematise the learners rather than the teachers, curricula or institutions, taken as a whole they paint a horrifying picture of reading dysfunction in this country. They represent a starting point for this thesis: many students undoubtedly do have very poor reading skills. That is a 'given'. However, this research attempts to make sense of *why* some students have such difficulties with reading and what reading dysfunction actually means in the particular context of a university discipline. Research from a cognitivist perspective is limited by the fact that whilst it can often provide good, empirical evidence for problems, it avoids the broader, socio-cultural questions posed by this research. In the next section I will examine the reasons why the Cognitive model cannot provide satisfactory framework in which I can explore the goals that I have set for this particular study.

2.2.2 A critique of the Cognitive model

The Cognitive model assumes that literacy is a generic skill that can be applied to any situation, the "single literacy view" (MacKay, in Johns, 1997:72). It also constructs the notion that students are either 'literate' or 'illiterate', that students can read or write for academic purposes or they cannot (Johns, 1997: 72). However, students are clearly not 'illiterate'. They can all read and write in particular ways, "... but they may need some assistance in reading and writing in the genres of their chosen disciplines and in understanding the values and research practices of their professors" (ibid.). As I will show later in my discussion of the Socio-cultural model in Section 4.1, the idea of literacy as a unitary concept is challenged by the notion of a plurality of 'literacies' (Street, 1993:1). This encourages a more inclusive approach: students are better understood as 'multi-literate', and, whilst the particular literacies that they bring into the academy may be appropriate or inappropriate, teachers should certainly acknowledge and understand them. Furthermore, learners' actual literacies could be used as frameworks within which new literacies, such as disciplinary literacies, could be developed. This is not an impossible idea, as seen in the work Parry (1999:127,128)

conducted in schools in Uganda where students produced their own reading materials on the basis of their own kinds of cultural knowledge. Another example is from the classrooms that Heath (1984) researched in the Piedmont region of South Carolina, where students learned to read by finding out and teaching their teachers about the practices of their local communities. In both cases curriculum development was grounded in a thorough, ethnographic grasp of the cultural resources and existing literacies that the learners were bringing with them into the classrooms. Whilst these kinds of interventions may only be a starting point, they provide learners with a better chance of extending their levels of reading literacy. Parry says that,

As linguists, we should learn as much as we can from our students, so that they too, when and if they go out to teach, can perceive and respect their own students as sources of information. And when students realize that what they have to say is valued, they will become far more interested in learning how to ... write it. They will learn, too, first in the classroom and then beyond it, to listen to, and read, what others have to say (1999:128).

Seen from this point of view, the student-participants in this study are not 'deficient' and 'problematic'. Certainly they are 'underprepared' for academic reading tasks but it is the responsibility of the academy to work creatively and realistically with what they bring with them in order to bridge the gaps between their literacies and those of the academy. The Cognitive model does not accommodate such a shift in perspective.

2.2.3 A critique of Schema Theory.

Both McCormick and Johns locate Schema Theory in the Cognitive paradigm, but McCormick conflates the Cognitive model and traditional approaches to reading, whereas Johns understands cognitive conceptions of reading as belonging more within learner-centred, psycholinguistic ideas about literacy. However, I am following McCormick's framework and therefore include it here within my discussion of the Cognitive model. This is appropriate because Schema Theory derives from a cognitive tradition that assumes that there are 'correct' and 'incorrect' readings of a text on the basis of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' schemata which make 'true' interpretations of texts available to the reader. However, it is important to point out that Schema Theory in fact spans all three models although, as I will show, it is somewhat differently understood in each.

One of the important consequences of Schema Theory was that it led to the conceptualisation of readers as social beings with rich and varied cultural and personal histories. Although originally generated within a cognitive paradigm, Schema Theory very soon challenged the idea of reading as an abstract skill and began, rather, to see it as social action taking place within particular interpretive contexts. This is a notion that was more fully developed by the New Literacy theorists (see Section 2.4). They claimed that the schemata available to any given reader are highly dependent on multiple socio-cultural factors which make a single,

definitive reading of a text impossible. As Anderson (1985:374) points out: "The schema that will be brought to bear on a text depends upon the reader's age, sex, race, religion, nationality, occupation – in short, it depends upon the reader's culture". Thus Schema Theory began to accommodate a more socially situated view of literacy. However, in a cognitive conception of reading, schemata are conceptualised as fairly static, fixed systems of 'correct', 'appropriate' knowledge. This is problematic in the South African context because teachers in tertiary institutions in this society need to acknowledge the diversity of schematic representations of the world that their students bring with them into the new learning environment. In a fractured, multi-cultural, multi-lingual society teachers cannot afford to be unaware of the schematic resources available to students whose backgrounds and prior learning experiences may be very different from their own. They need to be adaptive and imaginative in using the resources that all their students bring whilst, at the same time, providing structures for developing the kinds of schemata that are needed for academic success in their particular disciplines.

Tannen (1993) distinguishes between 'schemata' and 'frames'. Both ideas are very closely related, but they are subtly different. Both, she claims, are "structures of expectations", but "... knowledge schemata ... refer to participants' expectations about people, objects, events and settings in the world" (p.60). But she describes frames in looser, more fluid terms: they are "... alignments ... negotiated in a particular interaction" (ibid.). The original conception of schemata in the work of Bartlett (1932) was that they *should* be seen as intrinsically dynamic. He felt the term 'schema' was too fixed and preferred the term "active, developing patterns" (p. 16). He claimed that the notion of constant change was lost in the term: "The past operates as an organised mass rather than as a group of elements each of which retains its specific character" (Bartlett, 1932: 197). But later conceptions of schemata were developed in artificial intelligence and cognitive psychology and Bartlett's original ideas about the interactive and complex notion of schemata were taken in a different direction. Therefore the idea of schemata now carries the implication that it refers to something fixed, static and essentially functional.

Framing Theory, on the other hand, was developed initially within the discipline of Anthropology and frames, therefore, are understood more 'socio-culturally' (Tannen, 1993). Frames also seem to be more fluid and relational than schemata. They are conceived as doing something all the time and are constantly undergoing reframing. Frake (in Tannen, 1993:19) sees the notion of framing as essentially metaphorical. People, he believes, are mapmakers, "... whose culture does not provide a cognitive map, but rather a set of principles for mapmaking and navigation", resulting in a "whole chart case of rough, improvised, continually revised sketch maps", overlapping, intertwining and developing. Students in their first year at university experience dynamic shifts in perception and the idea of frames seemed

to accommodate notions of flux more easily than Schema Theory. Framing theory, and the way I have used it, will be described in greater detail in Section 3.8.1.

2.3 The Expressive Model

This model is rooted in the individualistic, student-centred views of education first propounded by Montessori and Dewey in the early 20th century. It also grew out of the work done in the 1960s and early 1970s by Goodman (1982) and Smith (1978) in Psycholinguistics and Whole Language pedagogics. The latter emphasised the use of whole books, rather than 'textoids' or parts of texts and believed that reading should always be for authentic purposes. They believed that reading should always be meaning-driven, and never simply practised as a skill from standardised, basal readers. It should be motivated by personal interest and individual learners must be liberated from outside constraints so that they can read and write freely and creatively (Johns, 1997).

Whole Language classrooms look very different to traditional classrooms. There is no deliberate language, vocabulary or spelling teaching, no structured reading programmes, no grading of learners or learning materials and no reading scores. Learners are assessed individually. The teacher is non-directive and is seen as a guide and facilitator rather than an authoritative expert who consciously leads and manages the learning process. Reading is not seen as mastering a hierarchy of skills but rather it is learnt informally through extensive, unmediated *exposure* to print. Smith believed that "To learn to read children need to read", and that no method worked any better than another. In fact, he even claimed that "... children cannot be taught to read" (1978: 6). He believed that for a child to learn to read there were two basic necessities: there must be an availability of a variety of interesting reading materials in the child's environment (a 'print-rich' environment) and there must be an understanding adult to act as mentor. The conditions for learning of all kinds, he believed, are "autonomy and playfulness" (ibid.). Reading must be for authentic purposes motivated by individual readers' particular needs, ambitions and interests.

In a different sense to the Cognitive model, the Expressive model also sees the importance of schemata in reading comprehension although it is seen less as discrete elements of background knowledge and more as whole life experience. Thus Smith refers to prior knowledge as "the world behind the eyes" (1978:15). Like the Cognitive model, it also does not ignore the importance of the readers' cultural context. But unlike the Cognitive model it sees the consequences of this understanding as being much more powerful. An expressivist view of reading acknowledges that readers all have unique experiences and backgrounds and must therefore develop their own individual, 'authentic' responses to texts (McCormick, 1994). Texts are not conceived as having 'correct' and 'incorrect' meanings but all responses

to and interpretations of texts are deemed valid, depending on whatever interests and experiences are available to the reader.

According to Goodman (1982) and Smith (1978) the eyes play a relatively minor role in reading. Their theories privilege 'top-down' processing,⁴ giving particular emphasis to the role played by broad background knowledge in the creation of meaning from texts. The visual, graphic display on the page that texts provide is less important than the non-visual information that is already available (or indeed unavailable) "behind the eyes" (Smith: 1978: 15). Readers use their prior knowledge to *guess* and *predict* and *check* meaning as they read. Goodman (p. 33) describes reading as "a psycholinguistic guessing game". This guessing or predicting function operates from the micro-level of morphology, to larger units such as sentences and discourse structures. Close, textual processing is almost redundant because there is far more graphic information on the page than is actually needed. But the acquisition of non-visual information, the world 'behind the eyes', is essential to becoming a competent reader, and cannot be formally taught. They claim that these kinds of background, world knowledge are developed without conscious effort, but quite naturally and painlessly through wide exposure to a rich variety of reading experiences. This understanding of learning results in what Starfield refers to as "osmosis pedagogy" (1994:17).

There are, however, a number of problems with the Expressive model. In the following four sections I will discuss each in turn.

2.3.1 A critique of 'top-down' processing

Whilst the debate over 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' reading strategies occupied the research community for some time, the work of such theorists as Rumelhart, Eskey, Coady and others (in Carrell, Devine, Eskey, 1988) started to question the validity of expressivist understandings of reading, especially in relation to EAL readers. They began to question whether EAL readers actually do conform to this model of reading, postulating that this model was more descriptive of fluent E1L readers. Most E1L children, by the time they learn to read, have already developed a sophisticated control over the syntax of their mother tongue, as well as usually having a vocabulary of 5000 words (Singer, in Carrell, Devine and Eskey, 1988). The same cannot be said of most EAL students' reading in English, as the reading research into South African learners (reported in Section 2.2.4) clearly demonstrated. This distinction separates the reading of E1L and EAL students because it cannot be assumed that the necessary syntax or vocabulary is available to EAL students (Grabe in Carrell *et al.*, 1988). In fact, reading comprehension in each group seems to be accomplished differently. Eskey (in Carrell *et al.*, 1988) developed the idea of a 'language threshold' which EAL students have to

⁴ 'Top-down' processing in reading refers to the ways in which a reader brings a set of expectations to a text which s/he uses to confirm or reject the hypotheses proposed by the text.

pass if they are to become effective readers in a second language. It would seem that EAL students need to pay close attention to *both* the textual features *and* the broader context simultaneously in order to become good readers. Thus researchers, beginning with Rumelhart, proposed an *interactive* model of the reading process in which lower-level ('bottom-up') and higher-level (top-down') processes work interdependently during reading. Eskey explains that:

Top-down models ... have limitations. They tend to emphasize such higher-level skills as the prediction of meaning by means of context clues ... and background knowledge at the expense of such lower-level skills as the rapid and accurate identification of lexical and grammatical forms ... The model they promote is an accurate model of the skillful, fluent reader, for whom perception and decoding have become automatic, but for the less proficient, developing reader – like most second language readers – the model does not provide a true picture of the problems such readers must surmount (1988:93).

2.3.2 The over-emphasis on individualism in the Expressive model

The heavy emphasis on personal response to texts in Expressive model is problematic because it conceives of readers as individuals rather than social subjects. This means that students' responses are limited: they do not understand texts as social productions, and themselves as social subjects (McCormick, 1994). Such insights would enable them to trace their own responses and the text's context of production and therefore become more genuinely 'critical' readers. McCormick claims that reading pedagogy that emerged from expressivist ideas "... appears to give students a voice, but it also leaves them unaware of the determinants of that voice and powerless to develop or interrogate it" (1994:47).

Thus it would seem that the opportunity for students to become critical readers could be compromised if they are taught in the Expressive paradigm. This is an important point, given that at Anglo-style universities (like Rhodes University) students are expected to develop rapidly into critical readers and thinkers during their first year of study, as my data demonstrates. Teaching reading from within the Expressive model can fail to provide students, especially those who come to university ill-prepared, with the sorts of specific guidance or explicit teaching that would enable them to become more efficient, independent and critical readers.

2.3.3 A critique of 'natural' language development

According to the Expressive model, learning to read is a natural process provided teachers or parents support learners by creating an interesting, print-rich environment which is relevant to their needs. However, this view has been contested by the New Literacy Theorists, such as Baynham, who has argued that "... language development is not natural but socially constructed in interaction, in specific social practices and contexts" (1995:184). He quotes the work of Cook-Gumperz and her associates, who have shown that so-called 'natural' language

learning turns out to be highly constructed within particular cultural formations (p.185). Furthermore, Pretorius (2000a) – using Cummins’ distinction between context-embedded Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and context-reduced Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (1986) – has argued that reading ability is a CALP skill and usually does not develop naturally in interpersonal interaction, but is more often consciously developed in academic contexts (2002). She claims that whilst general language proficiency may well be a BICS skill that may appear to have developed ‘naturally’, reading is more likely to be a CALP skill which needs to be developed consciously and deliberately.

Delpit (1988:4) believes that learners whose backgrounds are not part of the “culture of power” need explicit instruction in the “rules of the culture of those who have power”. Such learners have not been exposed to these implicit rules and have not acquired them ‘naturally’ in their own cultural interactions at home. Therefore, she says: “Unless one has the leisure of a lifetime of ‘immersion’ to learn them, explicit presentation makes learning immeasurably easier” (ibid.). What is implicitly understood and ‘naturally’ acquired by children raised in mainstream cultures needs to be deliberately taught to children from non-mainstream cultures. It would be dangerous to assume that “osmosis pedagogy” (Starfield, 1994:17) would work equally well for the latter group.

2.3.4 The cultural bias of the Expressive model

In terms of Rhodes University, the student-participants in this study are from ‘non-mainstream’ cultures. They have usually had neither the print-rich environments nor the supportive adults during their early reading years that Smith claims are the two conditions for becoming an effective reader. It seems that in South African society, very few students do any self-motivated, pleasure- or recreation-driven reading outside of the specific learning context. For example, Mashawa (1994) studied the reading preferences of 238 Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) students from four colleges and a university. He found that only 5% of these students did any reading for pleasure. There were very few opportunities for extensive reading⁵ in the homes and schools of most of the students in this study, as this research will show. Yet Elley’s study (1991, reported in Grabe and Stoller, 2002) provides strong evidence for the centrality of extensive reading in the development of a second language. So Smith’s ideas about reading, it seems, assume a Western, middle-class view of literacy where reading in a print-rich environment for many and varied purposes, including for pleasure, is a cultural norm (1978). Most South African students have had neither the opportunities, nor the cultural support, for the sorts of reading behaviours considered normative and desirable by Smith and other researchers from within this model (ibid.). Johns,

⁵ Extensive reading is an approach to the teaching and learning of reading in which learners are encouraged to read large quantities of written materials that are well within their linguistic competence.

(like Delpit, 1988, in Section 2.3.3), believes that whilst Smith's learner-centred views may work well for middle-class students they do not work so well for students from less privileged circumstances. She refers to the "insidious benevolence" of learner-centred classrooms which may "promote a situation in which only the brightest, middle-class, monolingual students will benefit" (1997:14).

All four of the reservations about the Expressive model discussed above pertain to the data because, as I will show, many of the History department's assumptions about the way students learn to read in the academy are undergirded by the ideas that characterise this paradigm.

2.4 The Socio-cultural model

A different approach to understanding the nature of literacy in general, and reading in particular, emerged in the late 1980's and early 1990's in the work of the New Literacy theorists, such as Heath (1983), Gee (1990), Street (1993) and Baynham (1995). Whilst the models described above drew on Psychology to understand the reading process, the New Literacy Theorists have provided insights into literacy from a variety of other disciplinary perspectives, mainly Linguistics and Social Anthropology. Reading from within this paradigm is seen less as a cognitive skill and more as a *practice*, a form of socially-constructed behaviour which is the result of complex cultural socialisation. Whilst the Expressive and Cognitive models do also contend that a reader's social context is important, the Socio-cultural model privileges and deepens the notion of reading as a social process and practice. Literacy is seen as "... a complex of actions that take place inside a web of social relationships and social assumptions" (Resnick and Resnick 1989:192). In Hallidayan terms, the Expressive model emphasises the 'context of situation', the interaction that takes place between the immediate text and the local and personal resources available to the reader, "the orderings of knowledge behind the eyes" (Baynham, 1995:205). The Socio-cultural approach, on the other hand, accounts more rigorously for the 'context of culture' in which the reading occurs, exploring the social world in which those orderings of knowledge originally developed.

This model draws extensively on the work of Halliday in other ways as well. Thus language is understood as a social semiotic, essentially functional, a resource employed to transmit the conventions and patterns of culture which are realised in the valued texts, or *genres*, of that culture (1985). Thus Johns (1997:14) claims that a socio-cultural understanding of the ways in which particular literacies, such as academic reading, are learned involves "... exposure to discourses from a variety of social contexts", and that "... through this exposure, individuals gradually develop theories of genre". It is genre knowledge, therefore, that would enable aspiring students to become full members of academic communities, such as, in the case of

this study, the discipline of History. A teacher's role would be to introduce and mediate texts from genres that represent the epistemology of the discipline, enabling students not only to deconstruct textual forms and meanings but also to understand and perform their new *roles* as academic readers and to make sense of the *context* in which a text was produced. Students would learn, with increasing confidence, the ways of working and knowing that characterise a disciplinary culture, not only how to read or write within it, but also how to assume the appropriate ways of valuing and behaving as readers and writers in that culture. I will elaborate further on this point in my discussion of Gee's work in the section below.

In Socio-cultural theories of literacy, schemata are understood differently to the ways in which they are conceptualised by the cognitivists or the expressivists. Schemata are not simply prior knowledge of language, content or form or 'the world behind the eyes' (see Sections 2.2 and 2.3). Rather, schemata are understood as genre knowledge which, as Johns says, includes "... knowledge about context, about readers' and writers' roles, and about values and registers of cultures and communities" (1997:15). Thus schemata include a thorough-going knowledge of contextualised discourses, their social purposes, histories and conventions. Becoming a university student would mean knowing the "rules and conventions" (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988:8) which guide them to read and write in certain "socially-approved" ways according to a kind of implicit, academic "community contract" (Johns, 1997:17).

2.4.1 Gee's theory of 'Discourses'

Gee's seminal work, *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses* (1990), illuminates a socio-cultural understanding of the nature of literacy still further. I will discuss his theories in some detail because they provide a useful framework for developing a critical understanding of the notion of 'advantage' and 'disadvantage' in South African universities.

For Gee, what is important is not language, nor even grammar. A person can know the grammar of a language and yet be unable to use it appropriately. What is important is "... saying the 'right' thing at the 'right' time and in the 'right' place" (1990:139). There must be a perfect fit between the form and function of the language. One must know not only *how* to say something but also what to *be* and *do* while one is saying it. So having the 'right' beliefs, values and attitudes is equally important. These combinations of speaking, writing, doing, being, valuing and believing are what Gee calls "Discourses" (p.142). He distinguishes these from 'discourses' used in the usual linguistic sense to mean connected stretches of language that make sense. Discourses are "... ways of being in the world", a sort of "identity kit" or even a "club" (ibid.). The mastery over a particular Discourse indicates membership of a social group or network, what Gee has more recently characterised as "an affinity group" (2002:2). Northedge (2003:20) distinguishes between "Discourse communities" and

“knowledge communities”. A Discourse community can refer to any informal community but a knowledge community refers to a community with more specialist, academic interests and it thus a useful term for this research. In all Discourse and knowledge communities, however, there are “insiders” and “outsiders” or “pretenders”, those that have mastered the “design grammar” of the “semiotic domain” of these communities and those that have not (Gee, 2002:2). A socio-cultural understanding of the nature of ‘academic literacy’ would, involve “... knowing how to speak and act in academic discourses” (Boughey, 2000:281).

Gee sees Discourses as inherently ideological. They are closely related to the distribution of power, wealth and status in any given society. Certain Discourses and knowledge communities are more dominant and influential than others and the ‘insiders’ have access to social goods and advantages that are not available to the ‘outsiders’.

In terms of Gee’s theory it is also important to discuss the two ways in which a person can become a member of a Discourse: either through “acquisition” or through “learning” (p.146). A Discourse is *acquired* subconsciously, through exposure to models and by plenty of practice within the relevant social group and without formal instruction. However, a Discourse can also be *learnt* consciously, which would involve formal teaching, explanation and analysis. Acquisition is better for performance whereas learning is better for meta-level awareness and knowledge. Gee (1990:159) believes that a “mushfake Discourse”⁶ can be consciously and usefully learnt but it never appears entirely authentic. Acquisition, through social practice, acculturation or ‘apprenticeship’, is the more effective route because in order to indicate membership of a Discourse, the flawless performance of an ‘insider’ is fundamental.

Gee distinguishes between primary and secondary Discourses (p.151,152). All human beings naturally become members of a primary Discourse as part of their initial socialisation within their families or immediate communities. Secondary Discourses are acquired later through interaction with the institutions of the wider community, such as schools, workplaces, churches, or businesses. Secondary Discourses can be more or less compatible with primary Discourses, and it is a very great advantage when a child’s primary Discourse is congruent with the secondary Discourses that they encounter in schools and further education, as I will demonstrate in my data.

More recent work by Gee (2002) emphasises another very important characteristic of Discourses or “semiotic domains”: they are “networked” with other domains in multiple, complex ways (p.5). So some domains “precursor” others because elements of one domain, with its associated values, norms and practices, resemble and so facilitate the acquisition of

⁶ ‘Mushfake’ is prison slang, meaning to make do with something when the real thing is unavailable (Gee, 1990).

other, related domains (ibid.). This, he claims, has important consequences for schooling because "... children who come to school looking 'gifted' at schooling ... have been immersed in a wide variety of precursor domains, and they continue to be immersed in ever newer precursor domains, in and out of school, for domains they will face later in school and life" (2002:5). Furthermore, he believes that "... children who come to schooling looking 'behind' ... have been immersed in semiotic domains that are not fruitfully networked ... to school-based domains [and are therefore not] introduced in an ongoing fashion to other precursor domains, in and out of school, which would facilitate success in the later, discipline-specific areas of schooling" (p.6).

Another reason why Gee believes that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds find it so much more difficult to adapt to mainstream, academic Discourses, is the fact that Discourses are inherently ideological and therefore represent values and social histories. Membership of a Discourse will mean complicity with those values and histories. For some people there are tensions or conflicts between their primary, home Discourses and the secondary ones they are in the process of acquiring, for example, in a school. This, according to Gee, deters acquisition. So the children of non-mainstream backgrounds have not only a much heavier cognitive load in acquiring a new knowledge Discourse, such as academic History, but also have to deal with inner conflicts of values, as well as the anxiety of feeling that they are being assimilated or "colonised" (2000:155). Research by Cantrell (1999:4) in tertiary institutions in Australia notes a similar phenomenon. He observes that, "Indigenous students [who] were coming from cultures significantly different to the dominant culture of their campus [developed an] insufficient collective affiliation to the academic and social systems of the university", and were therefore much more likely to fail or drop out of university. In South Africa this point has particular poignancy: a black student acquiring the Discourses of the university must experience fear of losing the identity and the values of his home Discourses, as well as the fear of colonisation into the 'club' of former oppressors. This emerges clearly in the data (see Section 4.1.3).

It is an interesting question whether Gee's work applies to the South African context in the same way that it does in America. Ex-DET schools are not middle-class or mainstream in the sense that American schools such as those researched by Heath (1984) usually are. This will be shown in the account of ex-DET schools in Section 2.6.1. Many South African schools are 'networked' with the values and practices of the communities in which they operate. Taylor and Vingevoold's research (1999, in Section 2.6.1) certainly suggests this. On the other hand, most universities worldwide are, in a sense, middle-class, because academic Discourses have been shaped by mainly middle-class people for hundreds of years (Burke, 2000). This means that for students from poor, working-class homes and ex-DET schools the acquisition of university Discourses is significantly more difficult, as neither their homes nor their schools

precursor them for tertiary education. Thus the tensions and lack of congruence when they arrive at university much later all the more painful and serious. Therefore it seems that Gee's theories do indeed apply to South African society, although for many students the mismatch between primary and secondary Discourses is more acute at a tertiary level. For this reason I have explored both the home-based and school-based literacy practices of the participants because I suspected that neither had precursored the students in ways that would be useful to them for reading at university.

2.4.2 Street's 'autonomous' and 'ideological' models of literacy

One of Street's contributions to new understandings of literacy was his theorisation of a distinction between 'autonomous' and 'ideological' models of literacy (1993). Texts that are 'autonomous' are seen as detached from their context of production, separate from the cultural and power structures in society – thus essentially 'neutral'. Reading and writing are seen as technical skills which are necessary not only for the cognitive development and social mobility of individuals, but also for national development and progress. For example, he cites Anderson (1966) who claims that a society requires 40% literacy rate before a national economy can 'take off'. An 'autonomous' model of literacy encourages notions of a 'great divide' between literate and illiterate people and between 'modern' and 'traditional' societies (1993a:7). Literate people are 'advanced' and illiterates are 'backward' and 'primitive', an assumption based on the notion that literacy facilitates cognitive processes, abstract thought, formal language, elaborated codes and so on. This model also tends to be based on a Western 'essay-text' form of literacy which, although a narrow, culturally specific literacy practice itself, is generalised and privileged by most academics and teachers. Furthermore, Street claims that an 'autonomous' conception of literacy is a homogenising force, and "... fails to do justice to the complexity of the many different kinds of literacy practice prevalent in different cultures" (1993:2).

On the other hand, an 'ideological' model of literacy "... provides a more theoretically sound and ethnographic understanding of the actual significance of literacy practices in peoples's lives" (ibid.). In the 'ideological' model it is important to recognise the specific and variable meanings and uses of literacy in any given society. "What practices are taught and how they are imparted depends on the nature of the social formation" (Street, 1993:1). Rather than a 'great divide' between literacy and illiteracy, this model recognises the overlap and interaction of oral and literate modes and values the complex strategies and competencies of people who cannot read or write in 'schoolled' ways. Street uses the term 'ideological' rather than 'cultural' or 'pragmatic' because he believes that literacy practices are also intimately linked with the power structures that are operating in any given institution or society. In the 'autonomous' model these power structures are implicit, as though its understandings of literacy were benign, natural and inevitable. But, as the name suggests, in the 'ideological'

model the ways in which conceptions of literacy empower or disempower particular groups are made explicit.

These concepts can be linked to the concerns of this research. Thus in the 'ideological' model, academic literacy, as it is understood within Anglo-style universities, would not be understood as a natural or universal concept because it is shaped by the history and culture of British and American universities and their imitators. Nevertheless academics unconsciously generalise this particular, narrow style of cultural literacy – often because they were raised and educated within it. They understand it 'autonomously' and so it becomes a homogenising, exclusionary force. Because they assume that their own ways of knowing and communicating as benign, innocent and 'natural', lecturers cannot acknowledge the different literacies of their students, and this has an impact on the way they teach. At worst, this serves the interests of academic communities who can preserve their own hegemonic interests by ignoring other literacies. They exclude 'outsiders' or 'pretenders' who do not easily and 'naturally' acquire the literacy that resembles their own. Furthermore, they can mask the rules and conventions of their disciplines thereby preserving their own social power and exclusivity. An extreme example of this kind of process can be illustrated by Ramsden's portrait of some university teachers:

The archetypal arrogant professor, secure in the omnipotent possession of boundless knowledge, represents a tradition that dies hard. Certain lecturers, especially new ones, seem to take delight in trying to imitate him. ... They are under pressure to show toughness, stringency and inflexibility in the face of student mystification; they are full of the haughtiness that their mastery of their subjects permits (1992:97).

The implications for pedagogy of Street's 'ideological' model

Understanding literacy as 'ideological' rather than 'autonomous' leads to a more thorough-going theorisation of readers as socially situated. They can make meaning only in terms of the resources provided by the complex interplay of cultures and communities to which they have had prior access. This idea has begun to have an impact on pedagogy as educators begin to take into account the 'multiliteracies' of learners. In South Africa, where diversity is the norm, understanding learners as 'multiliterate' could have a dramatic impact on the ways on teaching and learning.

An example of this impact has been in the Wits Multiliteracies Project,⁷ which focuses on "... multimodality, creativity and culture, especially the intersection between local and global cultures, and how these issues can be nurtured in relation to ... the taking of agency and the development of personal and civic responsibility" (Newfield and Stein, 2002:155). This project works with learners in a variety of educational and social settings, including a

⁷ 'Wits' is the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

foundation year course at the University of the Witwatersrand between literacy practices and the formation of identity. Newfield multimodal pedagogies which provide learning opportunities across not only the linguistic, (written and spoken), but also the visual, performative, and sonic. They "... allow learners to seize a space for the assertion of culture, identity, history, memory and language through multiple forms of representation" (p.157). In this country most learners "... exist in alternative worlds of multiple languages, complex code-switching and mixing". Some school children on this project, for example, used these rich and complex linguistic resources in the improvisation of 30-minute plays. Yet later they found it difficult to write down their stories experiencing "profound loss" as they struggled to make meaning in the language (English) imposed on them by school and parental authorities. One of the students said: "If you paint another language on my skin, my soul cannot breathe" (Newfield, 2015).

If you paint another
language on my skin,
my soul cannot
breathe (Newfield
2015)

The 'non-traditional' competencies of learners are seldom acknowledged, let alone employed as learning resources, in the classrooms of this country. Yet good teaching necessarily involves an active engagement with the real life-worlds of learners who must be able to *identify with* and *participate in* the process (Barton, 2000). A more 'ideological' conception of literacy would allow South African educators to acknowledge and use the diverse range of communicative resources that their students bring with them into the academy and this could result in pedagogical practices and curricula that facilitate South African learners' "agency, creativity, access and activism" (p.155) as never before.

2.4.3 Heath's ethnographic literacy research

Because they wish to do justice to the complexity of the many different kinds of literacies that prevail in different cultures, researchers within the Socio-cultural model are usually ethnographers (see Section 3.1 for a more extended discussion of this). Ethnographers look for 'thick' data, "... the settings and contexts in which reading occurs, what counts as reading, who does it and what reading does", seeking out "... the diversity and specificity of reading practices" (Baynham, 1995:186). An influential, early example of this type of research was conducted by Heath (1984). The relevance of Heath's work to this research is that it is specifically concerned with the interplay between home- and school-based literacy practices and what this can mean for children's academic success. Although her study is now somewhat dated, it still provides a model for the kind of rich, ethnographic descriptions of literacy practices that is the focus of this study.

Heath describes the children of three different communities being socialised into particular ways of learning and using language as speakers, readers and writers. She lived as a participant observer in three neighbouring communities: Trackton, a black mill community, of recent rural origin; Roadville, a white working-class mill community; thirdly, a mainstream,

middle-class community of both black and white 'old timers' and 'newcomers', a group she refers to as the 'townspeople'. Heath analyses the ways in which these three different social groups 'take' meaning from the environment. Although it oversimplifies the complexity of the uses of literacy, the scope of this research requires that I concentrate mainly on the way in which Heath describes *reading* within each of the three communities.

The Trackton parents did not buy books for their children, nor did they model private reading as an interesting or desirable activity in itself. Reading was more often a public, group affair in which the meanings of the text might be synthesised in the group through negotiated oral discourse. Magazines and the Bible were read, but the perception of private reading was that it was anti-social or even strange. Reading was more often associated with immediate action or with decision making of some kind, rather than for personal reflection or pleasure. Trackton children had no books, but found their reading in everyday tasks, such as going to the store. They 'read to learn', rather than 'learnt to read'. Reading was associated with whatever they needed to know in their daily lives. The children and adults often told stories. Often the stories were loosely based on real events, but were creatively embroidered and involved humour, exaggeration and language play.

The Roadville parents did collect a lot of print in their homes and they did read to their children but these were not often sustained narratives and not often discussed or commented on much thereafter. There was a lot of Bible and Christianity-based literature in the home, in keeping with the fundamentalist religious traditions of the area. Reading was a praised ideal but the parents did not model it much. Stories were often didactic, with a moral at the end. The children related 'non-fictional' stories and the facts were expected to be true and chronologically accurate or else they were 'lies'. The Roadville children had relatively little exposure to fanciful, imaginative literature. Dison comments that the consequence of this tendency to value reality rather than fiction is that "... the children do not often experience the shifting of the context of items and events which is characteristic of fictionalisation and abstraction" (1997: 57).

In the middle-class homes of the townspeople, the children were expected to take an interest in books, and information derived from books, from an early age. Book reading activities involved a lot of question and answering routines, naming objects and their attributes. The children were expected to read and make up fantasy stories and they learnt early on that they should not interpret some oral and written texts literally: things that have been written do not necessarily have a connection with people or events in the real world. This means that, "Children learn the distinctions between contextualised, first-hand experiences and decontextualised representations of experience so that they come to act like literates before they can actually read" (Heath, 1984:256). Heath observed the middle class children

developing habits of talk about written materials in which they would reflect on the meanings of episodes in books thereby becoming interpreters of their reading experiences. They were also encouraged to make links with other books in their experience and with their 'real' lives. Adults and older siblings modeled many different kinds of reading. Heath observed the children being coached in the rules around reading and readers, through remarks like "Don't bother Daddy until he finishes his report" or "I'm reading. We'll play later" (Heath, 1984:257).

Heath tabularises the types of uses of reading in each of the three communities (1983:198,258). I will briefly describe her framework as it will be useful for the analysis of my own data in Section 4.1.2. The framework Heath developed involves a number of categories for types of reading: '*instrumental*', (reading that accomplishes life's practical goals, such as notices, memory aids, directions, telephone entries, street signs and so on); '*news-related*', (such as reading to gain information about third parties or political events); '*confirmational*', (for example, reading to gain support for attitudes or beliefs, instruction, or to check or confirm facts, such as reading wills, income tax forms, Bible reading or brochures); '*recreational*', (reading for pleasure, such as extensive reading); '*social-interactional*', (reading to gain information pertinent to social relationships, such as family letters or greeting cards); and '*critical-educational*', (reading to 'improve the mind' or develop views and opinions about events). Not all of these uses for reading were observed in all the communities. For example, the 'critical-educational' use was not observed in Roadville and Trackton. Furthermore, each category was used differently, and to different degrees, in each community.

The children of all three communities carried their culturally shaped 'ways with words' to school and although the parents of all three communities had great faith in education and the role schooling could play in their children's lives, propelling them "... up and out of Trackton and Roadville" (Heath, 1984:265), in fact only the learned literacy practices of the middle-class children transferred smoothly into the educational context. The mainstreamers found congruence between their homes and schools in the patterns of using oral and written language – they were thoroughly "networked", to use Gee's term (2002:5). However, what seemed natural to townspeople's children was not natural for the children of Trackton and Roadville, who found that their patterns of language use were at odds with what was considered normative in school. In the second half of her ethnography, Heath observes teachers and learners beginning to recognise and use each others' literacy practices to bridge their different ways.

In the sections above I have described the three major models by which people have understood literacy and justified my choice of the Socio-cultural model for this thesis on the grounds that it can afford fuller answers to the particular kinds of questions posed by this

study, which seeks reasons and meanings rather than definitions. It also provides a framework by which I can later offer a critique of the kinds of pedagogical help that the students are offered in the History department as they attempt to read in appropriate ways for a new knowledge community.

2.5 Vygotsky's learning theories.

According to Vygotsky (1978) and the many educational theorists who followed him and extended his ideas about the nature of learning, all new knowledge is constructed within frameworks provided by old knowledge. These frameworks are "socially formed and culturally transmitted" (p.126). In child development, social and cultural experiences come first and are then later internalised. Vygotsky explains this: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice, on two levels. First, on the social, and later on the psychological level; first *between* people as an *interpsychological* category, and then *inside* the child as an *intrapsychological* category." (1978:128). The mediator between these two categories, the external and the internal worlds, is language. Language leads and facilitates cognitive development, not the other way round, as in Piaget's model of cognitive development (Wertsch, 1984). This way of understanding learning has implications for my own research because most of the participants' educational experiences, such as the formation of concepts and the development of higher order thinking, have taken place in a mixture of 1st and 2nd languages. The fact that most of their prior learning occurred in languages that were poorly understood and developed would undoubtedly have had an impact on their capacity to become fully acculturated academic readers. Reading (as Pretorius explains in Section 2.3.3) is a CALP skill because it is inherently context-reduced and often cognitively demanding. So it is highly dependent on the interplay of cognitive and linguistic factors (2002a).

The Vygotskian notion of the 'zone of proximal development' ('ZPD') relates to the idea of old and new frameworks. He defines the zone as the difference between a child's "... actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving", and the higher level of "... potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978:86). So, the ZPD defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state (ibid.). He introduced this idea to deal with two practical issues in educational psychology: the assessment of children's abilities and the evaluation of pedagogical practices (Wertsch, 1984). The latter issue is of more concern to this study. Vygotsky claimed that:

... instruction is only good when it proceeds ahead of [development, when it] awakens and rouses to life those functions that are in the process of maturing or in the zone of proximal development. It is in this way that instruction plays an extremely important role in development" (1956: 278).

It seems, then, that learning can only take place when a learner is able to relate new material to already existing cognitive structures and these structures channel and frame all subsequent learning. Educators must be aware of, and build on, these structures and frames or learners will be unable to make the sorts of connections that would enable them to proceed to the next, more sophisticated ZPD. Thus the role of educators is to provide the sorts of pedagogic interventions that would *scaffold* new learning. Although scaffolding was not a term used by Vygotsky himself, education theorists such as Ninio and Bruner (1978) have used it as a metaphor to refer to an essentially Vygotskian idea. It describes the kinds of graded pedagogical support that allow learners to successfully practise complex skills, and as they become independently competent, the scaffolding is gradually withdrawn. An example is the guidance that a skilled artisan provides to apprentices as they learn a specialised task. The teacher models and explains each activity in a task and the learners watch and listen. They then practise the activity whilst the teacher guides them to do it accurately (Rose, Gray and Cowey, 2000). This idea of scaffolding is a very significant point of reference in this thesis.

Taber (2001) has devised a “typology of learning impediments”, extending the Vygotskian idea of ZPD. He claims that learners often have alternative prior concepts that are long established and well-integrated but which may be at odds with new information. Such existing frameworks may not match consensual, or more dominant, views of what constitutes knowledge. So there are two main reasons why learning can fail to take place: firstly, learners cannot make sense of new knowledge because vital frames may be missing; secondly, the frames they already have may contradict, or conflict with, the new knowledge. Some established frames may have to be ‘unlearned’ before new learning can take place because the old learning is obstructive in some way. An educator would have to be aware of both kinds of problems: *absent* frames or *inappropriate* frames, and would have to accommodate such awareness in the development of curricula.

To illustrate the above principle in terms of this research, first-year students may frame the study of History as ‘a discipline that concerns facts about the past gleaned from textbooks’, a view that would usually not accord with university-style History. Such a frame would have to be tactfully dismantled, and new understandings would have to be consciously and carefully scaffolded before the student could be led towards more academic notions of History as *constructed* from a variety of competing perspectives.

2.5.1 The implications for teaching in Higher Education.

Northedge (2003) carries the Vygotskian principles described above into the arena of Higher Education. He sees the primary target of learning as the ability to *participate* in what is said and written within a knowledge community. At first, novice academics participate passively

by listening and reading and by absorbing the appropriate ways of speaking and behaving in the target community. But they participate “peripherally, vicariously and with variant understanding ... as onlookers” (Northedge, 2003:21), according to their ZPDs. But, in time, in order to become full members of a knowledge community a novice must acquire the capacity to participate “... generatively and with convergent understanding” (ibid.). Through generative participation the new member will gradually internalise the underlying goals and values of the community, and “... a workable identity [will] gradually form” (ibid.). Northedge urges the creation of appropriate environments in which novices can participate. Educators must “... construct intermediate levels of discourse, which model key aspects of target discourses, but which [also] allow relatively unskilled participation” (ibid.). Novice members need bridges into specialist discourses and it is the role of educators to be aware of the ZPDs that could either facilitate or prevent such bridge-crossings. To sum up, Northedge believes that:

Higher Education needs teachers who know how to use their academic knowledge to guide and support travelling bands of diverse students as they learn to participate in unfamiliar knowledge communities and acquire usage of their powerful discourses (2003:179).

Morphet, Lazarus, Hunter and Scott (1989), writing in the context of the final years of Apartheid when Higher Education in South Africa was beginning to address issues of diversity in student bodies for the first time, also make use of Vygotskian learning principles. For them, the fact that some students are ‘disadvantaged’ in terms of their prior learning experiences is indeed true “... in a literal and familiar way but it is not necessarily a truth that is educationally informative” (p.158). They claim that “... students from disadvantaged backgrounds may be overprepared in the sense that what impedes their progress at university is not new learning but relics of what Vygotsky calls ‘fossils’ of old learning” (ibid.). They do not, in terms of Taber’s typology, bring no frames, but rather inappropriate ones (2001). Morphet *et al.* believe that the university’s role is to help not only ‘disadvantaged’ students, but all students, to “unlearn ... to untie the knots of previous learning – in order to create space for new kinds of learning” (1989:158). Students, they claim, need opportunities to construct new frameworks as well as to deconstruct old frameworks, thereby developing a meta-awareness of how they previously understood knowledge. But this process of reframing needs to be undertaken by the educators as well as the students. Universities too, say Morphet *et al.*, are ‘underprepared’. It is not only the students that need to adapt to the university with its “alien task demands” (ibid.) but the universities themselves which should adapt their frames to the educational realities of what the students are bringing with them into the academy. University lecturers, therefore, must also take into account their own ZPDs and learn newer, more just and relevant ways of sharing disciplinary knowledge with students.

This perspective underlies the critical aspects of this research because it explores the reasons for students' failure partly in terms of the ways the academy fails them, not simply in terms of the students' own 'disadvantages' and 'deficits'.

2.6 Three elements of the socio-cultural context of this research

The central significance of *context* in the Socio-cultural model means that descriptions of the elements that make up the various contexts of this research, and the ideologies, genres and Discourses that represent them, must now be discussed. I will first describe a relatively recent research project into South African schools conducted by the President's Education Initiative (PEI)⁸ (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999). I will then discuss two curriculum initiatives in History departments at the Universities of Natal and the Western Cape (Nuttal and Luckett, 1995: Leibowitz and Witz, 1995). They provide examples of contrasting ways in which the challenge of diversity can be met in the teaching of History at tertiary level in this country. Finally, I will describe two, small-scale ethnographies that have explored the literacy practices of two South African homes, one black and working-class, the other white and middle-class (Dison, 1997 and Bloch, 1997). Tsholofelo, in Dison's research, and Chloe, in Bloch's, represent the diversity of literacy practices in South African society. These studies show that the literacy experiences of each home gave the children a very different set of frames for learning.

2.6.1 South African schools and the heritage of Apartheid

Taylor and Vinjevold (1999) show that during the apartheid years the doctrine of fundamental pedagogics was the underlying ideology of the Department of Education and Training (DET). The DET trained the teachers and ran the schools that the majority of black students attended in South Africa. They describe fundamental pedagogics as essentially authoritarian in style: teaching is by means of a series of propositions which allow no analysis or critique.⁹ Critical reflection is disallowed, innovative strategies are blocked and teachers trained in this paradigm fail to develop "... an understanding of the relationship between education and the context in which knowledge [is] created and shared" (1999:133). Although the liberatory ideology which now underlies Curriculum 2005 should change the nature of teaching and learning in South African schools in time, Taylor *et al.* have shown that the legacy of fundamental pedagogics is still pervasive (ps.133-161). Examples of the persistence of this

⁸ This research project is described in *Getting Learning Right: Report on the President's Education Initiative Research Project*, edited by Nick Taylor and Penny Vinjevold (1999). The research was conducted on behalf of the Joint Education Trust.

⁹ In an interview with Bulelwa Nosilela, a member of the African Languages department at Rhodes University who had herself attended an ex-DET school, she confirmed that asking questions in ex-DET schools means that you are testing the competence of the teacher and that you would be considered 'too big for your boots' if you did so. She remembers an incident from her schooldays when a learner asked a question in class and was subsequently beaten by the teacher who considered that his authority was being challenged.

ideology, as well as the dysfunction that characterises schools of the ex-DET variety, now follow.

The PEI projects showed that black children in school spend most of their time in class listening to the oral input of teachers and, in the primary schools, chanting responses. They reported that most classroom learning is geared to recalling information, rote-fashion, and involves little higher-order cognitive thinking. The lessons are generally unstructured and learning is not sequenced in ways that would help learners to acquire and practise concepts and skills incrementally. Furthermore, students spend little time reading or writing, either in their first, or their additional language. Students' writing involves principally copying the teachers' notes from the board and tests are often one-word answers. Schollar (in Taylor *et al.*, 1999) found that only 4% of classroom time is spent on reading. The teaching of reading is "incidental and sporadic" (p.152). Students' poor reading and language development in English means that they are unable to process the textbooks that they encounter. There is no culture of reading either for academic or recreational purposes. The teachers' conceptual and knowledge bases are also limited, as are their reading levels, and the PEI report postulates that as a consequence they resort to a pedagogy of memorisation. Institutional and management inefficiency is also problematic. For example, many teaching days in an academic year are lost for a variety of reasons, from slow starts to terms, absent teachers, strikes, or weeks of 'time off' for the students to study for their examinations.

The above descriptions are generalisations: there are many exceptions, such as the creative work done in the schools involved in the Wits Multiliteracies Project described in Section 2.4.2. These exceptions give some hope. It is difficult, however, not to see the literacy practices that may develop in schools such as these in terms of 'disadvantage' and 'deficit'. Yet it is important not to understand them entirely in this light. Cummins says: "We view children, and particularly children of poverty, as relative intellectual incompetents, ignoring our everyday experience of their creative intellectual energy and imaginative powers" (1986:22). Furthermore, he says, "When we frame [children] ... only in terms of deficit ... we expel culture, language, identity, intellect and imagination from our image of the child" (2002:125). As Street shows (in Section 2.4.2.), if literacy is understood 'ideologically', rather than 'autonomously', whatever literacy practices have developed within communities should be understood as the creative ways in which they have sought to make meaning and meet their own needs. So whilst some "knots of previous learning" may well have to be "untied", and "fossils" of old learning discarded (Morphet, *et al.*, 1989, in Section 2.5.1) it is also important to seek out the creative frameworks for learning that may have grown out of such contexts. It is important to discern the 'multiliteracies' of learners from ex-DET schools. For example, learners who have valiantly overcome the discouragement of dull, dysfunctional or under-

resourced schools may have developed individual and shared resources for learning that are worthy of respect and encouragement.¹⁰

It is the task of this research to recognise and describe both the positive and negative reading practices that have accompanied the research participants into tertiary education. Whilst some practices may indeed need dismantling and replacing, others could be useful for learning. Furthermore, it is important not to judge literacy practices on the basis of one's own 'normal' ones. Lecturers who judge their students' resources simply in terms of deficit may be in danger of ignoring potentialities that could afford students epistemological access in non-traditional, 'abnormal' ways.

In the following section I will describe two examples of curriculum reform within History departments at the University of Natal and the University of the Western Cape.

2.6.2 Learning History: two curriculum innovations

Nuttal and Luckett's discussion of the epistemological and pedagogical issues that face lecturers of first-year History students at the University of Natal is premised on the assumption that clear links must be developed between students' literacy practices and the literacy practices appropriate for History (1995). Furthermore, these links must be recognised by both students and lecturers alike. Their article is based on a 1993 survey of mostly EAL students' experiences of reading and writing in first-year History at the University of Natal.

Nuttal *et al.* claim that teachers of History at university must develop clear descriptions of ways to read and write 'academic' History. "The assumptions, expectations, conventions, structure and methods of History discourse often remain implicit in the way History is taught. The aim of effective teaching is to make these intelligible, so students can recognise them and develop their own proficiency as thinkers, readers and writers of history" (1995: 83,84).

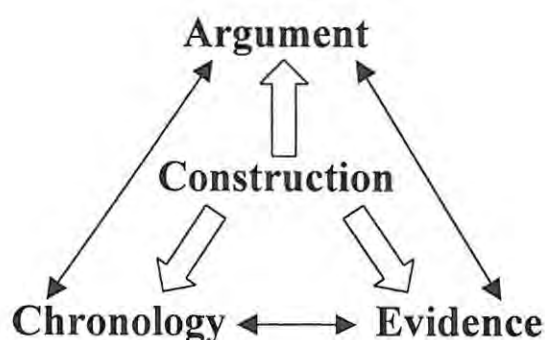
Some of the values and attitudes of the History department at the University of Natal are similar to those expressed by the History department in this research, affording a useful means of comparison (see Section 3.7.2). In both departments, History is not understood as a body of knowledge to be transmitted and then reproduced by the students. Rather, it is understood as constructed and politically interested. Both departments understand this 'constructivist' approach to learning History as particularly apposite for South Africa because the truth about the country's past is often contested. History is developed out of a set of competing perspectives.

¹⁰ An ex-ELAP student remembers setting up study groups with his peers when teachers were missing or absent. He also found out the timetables of the best teachers in his area and cycled to their schools to get lessons from them.

Like the student-participants in this research, the EAL students in Nuttal *et al.*'s study were also mainly from ex-DET schools and they had come to university with text-book orientated, authoritarian attitudes to History from their school experiences. History was seen as a body of uncontested knowledge and this meant that the notion of 'History as argument' was quite new to them. Nuttal *et al.* also noted that many of their ideas of History grew out of the popular media, family or community environments or from the political discourse of the anti-apartheid struggle (1995:87). They set out to build on the reality of these kinds of prior knowledge, but also to challenge and modify their students' frames.

Students were weaned off textbooks and were assigned readings that presented different perspectives on issues. There was a heavy reading load on the course, mostly in the form of books and articles from the library, and the students were also expected to conduct their own individual research. An extra reading load fell on the EAL students who tried to read to fill in the gaps left by their inadequate lecture notes. However, the researchers noticed that the notes taken from the texts showed they could not select materials appropriate to their needs and they could not summarise efficiently. They found the readings too abstract and complex and they often had to spend many hours painstakingly decoding, reading and re-reading texts to try and make sense of them. Nuttal *et al.* estimated that whilst the E1L students took roughly 9 hours to read for an assignment, EAL students often took 40 hours (p.89). But very slow reading is inefficient (Anderson, 1999). The EAL students often had to read word for word and were thus unable to develop a hierarchical, or global sense of the points being made. Because all their energy had been expended on 'bottom-up' processing, they were unable to develop a 'top-down' perspective (see my explanations of these terms in Sections 2.2 and 2.3.1). So they were unable to develop a sense of the key points being made in the reading and reflect on them critically. For these reasons, their essays were often "... chunks of undigested text" or "... patchworks of excerpts" (p.89), copied down verbatim from the readings. Nuttal *et al.* also saw examples of mismatches of frames or schemata. "When confronted with a historical theme about which they have minimal prior knowledge, students would reach boldly for inappropriate and highly speculative analogies" (p.92). These inappropriate frames served to interfere with their understanding (see Taber, 2001 in Section 2.5).

Nuttal *et al.* attempted to address these problems in a number of ways. For example, the students were presented with the following diagram:



Model 1: The discourse of History

(Nuttal and Luckett, 1995:95).

Nuttal, who was the teacher of the course, explained it thus: '*Construction*' is at the centre of the triangle. Thus History is not just 'the past', but it is "... shaped by the preoccupations, circumstances, and ideologies of the person producing it ..." (p.95). '*Argument*' is at the top of the triangle. History is not just description of events but also *how* and *why* they happened. '*Chronology*', a sense of cause and effect, is also a key concept of the discipline, "... a key semantic mechanism of historical narrative" (p.96). A chronological structure or sequence is often the backbone of a historical text. Finally there is '*Evidence*', which involves the selection, ordering and referencing of material from records of the past. This diagram represents one way in which Nuttal began to introduce the students to the "disciplinary sub-culture" or "dialect" of History (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988:6,7).

Nuttal also gave eight orientation lectures at the beginning of the course. He showed the students how to analyse the wording of History essays and exam questions to see what kinds of arguments were being elicited. He showed them History books, their structure and features, and he showed the students how to find their way around them and to take notes from them. They wrote paragraphs in the style of History text and he demonstrated the unusual style of referencing used in History. (History uses the 'Cambridge' rather than 'Harvard' style of referencing). Assignments were specifically designed to inculcate the capacity to develop a historical argument, to assess debates, to think chronologically, and to select relevant evidence. Later, he introduced the concept of the 'review lecture' in which the ground covered would be debated and assessed with the oral participation of the students.

Leibowitz and Witz (1995) have criticised Nuttal *et al.*'s approach, claiming that it is essentially 'skills' teaching which does not allow for the full acculturation of students into a History 'club', as in Gee's understanding of Discourses (see Section 2.4.1). "To become an academic historian ultimately means acquiring first provisional, then full, membership of the history club. Access is not simply an issue of individual cognitive development, but ... one of socialisation and acculturation; of initiation into a specialised interpretive community"(p.104). So whilst Nuttal's approach was through explicit explanation of the 'rules and conventions'

for reading and writing in the discipline, at the University of the Western Cape Leibowitz *et al.* used alternative methodologies. For example, Witz and a colleague demonstrated in a dramatic way the concept of History-as-argument by each of them taking up polarised, divergent positions on a selected topic and then conducting a spirited, oral debate with each other during a lecture (1995). In this way they served as live models of how the new Discourse could be spoken. Students then enthusiastically took part in the debate from the floor, imitating their lecturers, using evidence to substantiate their views and developing lines of argument, thus actively assuming the *roles* of historians. Furthermore, Leibowitz *et al.* used the idea of a dialogic journal as a complementary writing activity in History 1 to help students, in an informal way, to find their voices as historians and to develop opinions.

Both Nuttal *et al.* and Leibowitz *et al.* experimented with different developmental approaches to the teaching of History at tertiary levels. Both sets of lecturers show specific kinds of pedagogical practices that can be developed in an academic discipline when there is a commitment to working with students' real potentialities and inducting them into new Discourses. Nuttal *et al.*'s approach was to provide students with 'mushfake' strategies that would help them to 'make do' during the process of becoming historians, essentially a *learning* process (see Gee, Section 2.4.1). There is less emphasis on *participation* in the *acquisition* of new Discourses (see Northedge, 2003, in Section 2.5.1 and Gee, 1990, in Section 2.4.1). Leibowitz *et al.*'s approach does accommodate the element of passive, then active participation, as the students first watched, then took part, in historical debates. But their approach is essentially expressivist, as they themselves acknowledge, and thus it may suffer from some of the problems of the Expressive model (see those outlined in Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3). Students may not be given sufficient explicit guidance in the 'rules and conventions' of the Discourse. But both pairs of lecturers demonstrate possible ways of engaging with first-year History students. Both consciously attempt to induct students into a Discourse of social and academic power. Finally, both recognise that most students do not arrive at university with the appropriate identities and practices already in place.

I will now turn to the third important element of context for this research: the home.

2.6.3 The literacy practices of two South African homes

Greany (1996:13, in Grabe and Stoller, 2002:69) claims that home environment is "... the single most important factor in the development of literacy". His study shows that the amount of voluntary reading and the quantity of reading material in a child's home can be positively correlated with later academic achievement. Pressley (1998) and Cummins (2002) also describe environments that support emergent literacy in children. These include such characteristics as rich, interpersonal literacy experiences with parents and others; physical environments that include plenty of literacy materials (such as storybooks and writing

materials); a high positive regard by parents and others for literacy and its development in children; storybook reading during the preschool years; an early interest in reading; and, finally, early experiences of success in reading. Extensive reading and Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)¹¹ are also very important for developing reading fluency in the early years.

The centrality of the home in the development of literacy practices led me to seek out research that described the ways in which South African children were enculturated into reading and using print at home and how such ways might impact on learning in schools later on. I have already described Heath's American study but I had some difficulty in locating similar, more recent South African research. However, the following two accounts, although small in scale, do describe research projects that have the advantages of being socio-cultural in orientation, ethnographic, and of describing two South African homes that are culturally and socially very dissimilar. They represent the range and diversity of reading practices in South African homes.

Chloe's home-based reading experiences

Bloch (1997) painstakingly observed and recorded her daughter, Chloe's, pre-school experiences with print, both reading and writing. Chloe, like many children growing up in highly literate families, engaged spontaneously and naturally with written language before she went to school. From early on in her life, Chloe found herself interacting with people who included her in their many and varied uses for reading and writing. As a cultural value in her home, her parents shared books with her in loving and nurturing ways. Books were associated with play, sitting on laps, cuddling and undivided attention. Her name, 'Chloe', was written as a sign on her bedroom door, and she recognised it early and was excited by it. She had a tape recorder for listening to stories and as a toddler learnt to use the 'PLAY', 'REW' and 'FF' buttons.

Chloe's environment was 'print rich'. There were regular visits to the local library for stocks of books and Chloe would often read them for an hour at a time, entertaining herself quietly. Her mother would write down the stories that Chloe would dictate to her and would read them back to her. She was encouraged to write real letters, and send them off, stamped, to real recipients. Bloch also describes the way Chloe experienced the different moods that were part of the literacy practices of a home, such as paying bills, which involved a different kind of emotional investment to writing or receiving letters. So by the time Chloe got to school, she had acquired strongly developed notions about print and its uses and had a wide experience of different kinds of reading.

¹¹ SSR is classroom (or home) time devoted to the silent reading of personally chosen materials without instruction, evaluation or interruption.

Like the mainstream children in Heath's study (see Section 2.4.3), Chloe had developed the values and behaviours of a literate person before she went to school. These kinds of literacy experiences had given her access to Discourses that were 'networked' (see Gee, in Section 2.4.1) with school practices in ways that would later give her a significant advantage. This picture of Chloe's early experiences of print seem to lend credence to expressivist theories about how children learn to read 'naturally' if they are afforded plenty of exposure to print and supportive adults. But, as Bloch points out: "While many will recognise Chloe's early literacy experiences from their own families, others will not. We do not all have the same reasons for reading and writing, nor is there any reason why we should. Different communities have their own ways of using written language" (1997: 4). In fact, Chloe's 'natural' literacy development was consciously and deliberately constructed by her family.

Tsholofelo's early literacy experience

Dison's micro research project *The Acquisition and uses of literacies within social contexts: Tsholo Mothibi's story* (1997) is not directly comparable with Bloch's. It is less extensive and it was based on interviews rather than direct observation. It does not concentrate exclusively on the pre-school years but also includes accounts of Tsholofelo's high school literacy experiences.

Tsholofelo lived with his grandmother in the rural Transkei when he was a child. She was able to read and write and had a basic school qualification but was also rooted in strong oral traditions. There were no books in the house apart from the Bible, and many of Tsholofelo's first reading experiences were in church or in church-related home activities. His grandmother told him many stories based on the Bible and tradition. These stories had the function of instilling values and were consciously understood by Tsholofelo as having a clear didactic purpose. In his home great emphasis was placed on being able to memorise and repeat Bible readings. He remembers coming back from Sunday School and having to recite the lessons he had learnt there for his grandmother. Tsholofelo started to read in an independent, self-directed way in his 7th year of schooling when he went to boarding school in an urban area and found that in order to gain acceptance in the peer group he needed to keep abreast of political and sports events. So he started to read the newspapers that were available in the school and this gave him some exposure to current affairs. Besides these experiences, Tsholofelo had become, during the course of his young life, proficient in a range of languages – Xhosa, Sesotho, Setswana, English and Afrikaans – and he was adept at code-switching and mixing from one language to another.

Tsholofelo was accepted into Rhodes University on a reduced curriculum Bachelor of Arts degree. He did ELAP on the grounds that he was deemed 'underprepared' for university study. He did go on to graduate and in his final year became president of the Students'

Representative Council (SRC), the consequence, perhaps, of having developed a secondary political discourse earlier in his educational experience.

It is easy to see that the semiotic domains which Chloe seemed to have had such easy and 'natural' access to would precursor her in appropriate and fruitful ways for the academy and that Tsholofelo's experiences had precursored him in ways that were not networked with the semiotic domains of further education. Therefore, the fact that the university decided that he was 'underprepared' for tertiary study was probably fair, but only in the sense that he brought a different kind of preparedness, one which was not directly or traditionally networked with academic Discourses.

Section 2.6 above has reviewed three important contexts that shed light on central concerns of this research. Dison and Bloch will provide useful points of reference as I come to describe the home-based literacy experiences of the participants in this research. Nuttal *et al.* and Leibowitz *et al.* have shown, in different ways, the efforts of university teachers to develop curricula that take the prior learning of novice students into account. Taylor *et al.*'s mostly negative account of learning in ex-DET schools in this country is important for a realistic assessment of many students' prior learning, but, in the light of Street's 'ideological' model and 'multiliteracies', the challenge of new and positive approaches to teaching and learning in Higher Education in this country can be undertaken.

In the final section of this chapter, I will report on the specific ways in which reading is shaped by socio-cultural factors.

2.7 Two studies into the influence of culture on reading practices

I have clearly shown in the ethnographies of Heath, Bloch and Dison above that literacy practices do indeed differ across groups as a consequence of cultural socialisation. I will now discuss two studies that are specifically concerned to identify *how* and *why* reading practices and textual interpretations vary from one cultural group to another. Parry (1996) compares differences in reading *strategies*, and Mines (2001) looks at how three groups of children use their socio-cultural frames to *interpret* a particular story in divergent ways.

2.7.1 Parry: Culture, Literacy and L2 Reading

Parry conducted qualitative research into the reading strategies and habits of a group of 20 Nigerian schoolchildren and 25 Chinese university students. She looked at the literacy practices of their homes and the ways in which they had been taught to read at their schools (Parry, 1996). Although much was very different about the two groups' backgrounds in terms of their ages, gender, the educational levels of their parents and their socio-economic and political circumstances, Parry reached some conclusions about the different ways in which

each group approached reading. She showed that while both groups read interactively, using both higher-level schemata (top-down processing) and low-level textual cues (bottom-up processing), the Nigerians used the former much more readily and were "... tolerant of ambiguity in their interpretation of individual lexical items" (p.67). On the other hand, the Chinese students "... consciously looked for precision at the lexical level and, once equipped with a representation of each word, used their knowledge of English syntax to work out how the words fitted together" (ibid.). Only after a painstaking decoding process did they feel able to relate what they had read to their background knowledge or personal experiences. Parry concluded that the Nigerians read primarily by means of top-down processing. They made extensive use of their background schemata, although sometimes inappropriately, and they seemed often to ignore textual cues, sometimes with disastrous results. But the Chinese students were unwilling to use their broad knowledge schemata and relied mostly on bottom-up processing, also with poor results. They seemed to be unable to relate texts to their world knowledge, thereby impeding their own comprehension.

Parry is aware of the dangers of cultural determinism and is at pains to illustrate individual variation within these groups. However, she looks to the socio-cultural contexts of each group in order to account for these broad, general variations in approach.

She reports that Nigeria has nearly 400 indigenous languages and many of them are unrelated to each other. For most of them orthographies have been developed only within the last 100 years and many have only a limited range of written texts. There are a number of indigenous 'lingua franca' in Nigeria, but English is a 'supra-language', the language of politics, commerce and education. In China, although there are many different dialects, many of them are mutually intelligible. Besides, all the dialects have a common writing system which is a unifying factor. The writing system is 2000 years old and China has a rich literary tradition in terms of written texts.

The Nigerian students, like many black South Africans, spoke at least three languages. Codeswitching among languages was extremely common. Because they frequently communicated in their additional languages, and with others who were also using additional languages, linguistic accuracy was never expected. Thus they did not look closely at linguistic forms when a comprehension problem arose. Rather they would consider general meanings from the tenor and context in which the communication was taking place (Parry, 1996:682). In China, however, English is hardly ever spoken in everyday life. Students encounter English mainly at school or university and mainly in its written form.

Parry believes that the Chinese students' approach to reading in English is probably influenced by the ways they learnt to read and write in Chinese. Even the children of poorly

educated parents are taught to read and write a little before attending school (p.684). At school, reading is taught in a highly analytical way as each character is built up in a formal sequence using bottom-up strategies. The assumption seems to be that the textual cues had to be properly understood before the whole could be appreciated. On the other hand, the Nigerian students seldom encountered print before school. Reading was entirely a school-based activity. Global, top-down methods for the teaching of reading, using largely oral methods, were common. Parry observed that teachers would read out a passage, the students would chorus it and finally each student would read the passage out aloud in front of the rest of the class (p.682). Obviously, this led to memorisation of the text and the careful distinguishing of phonemes and individual words was hardly ever required in the early years of school. Thus they were never trained to make use of textual cues. Parry claims that this top-down processing method was reinforced later in the learners' school experiences because all the textbooks were in English and there were generally very few of them anyway. They responded by memorising passages and extracting salient points.

Parry's study has a direct bearing on the concerns of this research. The literacy experiences of the Nigerian students have clear and obvious links with the experiences of Black learners in this country as this research will show (see Section 4.3.5). Her study is a reflection on the ways in which socio-cultural conditions, such as multilingualism, the absence of a tradition of written texts, the dominance of English in education and public life and strong traditions of orality and memorisation all affect the reading strategies of learners in particular ways. Mines's research, (2001) which I will describe below, is also relevant to this thesis, but in a different way. Whilst Parry explores reading *strategies*, Mines looks at the different ways in which three different groups use their socio-cultural frames in *interpretation*. Although her research was conducted with British and Bangladeshi children in their first year of schooling, Mine's use of Framing Theory to make sense of the various ways in which different groups take meaning from print affords a useful model for interpreting my own data later on in Chapter 4.

2.7.2 Mines's study: using frames to interpret textual meanings

Mines's research (2000) was concerned with British schoolchildren and their responses to a particular storybook, *The Tunnel*, by Anthony Browne. One group of children was born in Bangladesh, the children of recent immigrants to Britain (Group A). A second group was also Bangladeshi, but had been born in Britain, and had been, to some extent, enculturated into British society (Group B). Both these groups were from orthodox Muslim families and all the children, besides attending 'normal' school, also attended Mosque school and Bengali classes several evenings a week and were thus exposed to quite a variety of cultural literacies. A third group was from a rural school in Sussex and are described as being more traditionally British (Group C). Mines made repeated readings of *The Tunnel* over several years to small

groups of children from within these settings. She found that the three groups of children interpreted the story differently in three ways: firstly, in terms of the intertextual frames, secondly, in terms of the ideology of the text, and thirdly in terms of their responses to the fantasy world within the text. The latter two categories relate to extratextual framing¹².

The Tunnel refers, either pictorially or in the text, to several children's stories which are integral to the European cultural tradition, such as Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk and Hansel and Gretel and also to an Old Testament event. Group A noticed none of these references and in the shapes of the trees in the pictures saw dragons and snakes, more typical of their own tradition, rather than the wolves and bears of European tradition. Group B, more embedded in British culture through television, films and books, did recognise the intertextual allusions in the story although they noticed different details to the other groups. Group C, the more 'English' group, did read the text in terms of the intertext: Red Riding Hood and Jack were 'old friends' and they were surprised to meet them in new and strange ways in the context of *The Tunnel*.

In their responses to the ideology of the text, Group A responded with shock to the sibling rivalry between the two main characters of the book, Jack and Rose. They brought a different set of extratextual frames to the story which did not allow them to accept that Jack bullied and mocked his younger sister, Rose. In Bangladeshi society there is an expectation of duty and care between siblings and Group A were the most condemnatory of Jack. Probably for the same cultural reasons, they were also more ready to accept the redemptive power of Rose's love for Jack than Group C was. This is despite the fact that the girl is the rescuer of the boy in this story – one of the ways in which Browne challenges gender stereotyping in this story. Thus the strong cultural support given to the idea of the family in the children of Group A both prevented them from accepting Jack and Rose's tense sibling relationship, but at the same time drew them closer to another important aspect of the story in which one family member redeems another. The attitude of Group C was quite different. The cultural frames they brought to bear on the story meant that they easily accepted the notions of sibling rivalry, the boys even taking on some of Jack's tough attitudes towards Rose. Ironically this meant that they found it difficult to accept the role of Rose as the courageous saviour of her brother. Thus, on the basis of *their* frames, they resisted the book's ideological challenge and so missed some aspects of its spiritual meaning.

Finally, the groups interpreted the fantasy or secondary world that the story presents in contrasting ways. The children in Group B had encountered fantasy worlds in the English

¹² Intertextual framing is when a reader links other readings with her present reading to help make sense of the present reading. Extratextual framing occurs when a reader uses her background knowledge and experience to interpret a text (Bell, 2002). Fuller explanations follow in Section 3.8.1.

stories and films they had experienced, but both they, as well as the children in Group A, conceptualised the 'world beyond the tunnel', a sort of parallel world in the story, as an actual place. In fact, the children of Group A regarded it with horror describing it as "... very very very dangerous" and they accepted the magical events that take place 'beyond the tunnel' as unquestionable fact. The reasons for this, Mines suggests, could be that "... fantasy is not an integral part of their literature". It could also be because of "... the importance of text in their culture and the attention they are expected to pay to accuracy" (Mines, 2000:42). Their 'extratextual' frames about the nature of text as representing literal truth, probably a signification that they would have gleaned from their Q'ranic lessons, may have had a part to play in these literal responses. There is a link with the fundamentalist approach to texts and stories noted in Heath's study of the Roadville children. The students in this study also show a similar attitude: texts represent literal and serious truths.

The English children in Group C were much more "lighthearted and playful" (p.42) in their approach to the story and clearly expected the 'place beyond the tunnel' to be a fictional place. Mines says "... they appeared to see the story as a textual construct and had some awareness of its metafictional quality" (2000:42), a quality Heath identified as important for making distinctions between "contextualised first-hand experiences and decontextualised representations of experience", so that children "... come to act like literates before they can read" (Heath, 1984:256). The idea of imaginary, alternative worlds is central to English children's literature and that this could provide an explanation for these interpretative differences. Group C were more detached, even cynical, about the story. This sort of detachment could provide a potential entry point, even a ZPD (see Section 2.5), for the kind of objectivity, or distance, that would later be required if the children were ever to become critical readers. Mines shows that some of the 'non-traditional' frames that Groups A and B brought to the story meant they were able to interpret it in valid and enriching ways. But the more detached, less literal approach of the English children probably provides a more useful 'precursoring' for critical reading later on.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed three different understandings of the nature of reading and has justified the selection of one of them, the Socio-cultural model, as the primary framework for this research. The valuable insights, as well as the limitations of the other two models were reviewed, although both will also be useful points of reference. I have described Socio-cultural understandings of the nature of literacy with reference to Street's theory of 'autonomous' and 'ideological' models of literacy, Gee's notion of 'Discourses', and Heath's example of ethnographic research into culturally-shaped literacies in different communities. In Section 2.5 I looked at Vygotsky's theory of the 'zone of proximal development', especially as it relates to teaching in Higher Education in South Africa. In the Socio-cultural

model context is particularly significant, so I then explored three elements of context that I believe to be pertinent to this research: South African schools; experimental pedagogies for the teaching of History to first-year students; and the literacy practices of two South African homes. Finally I reviewed articles by Mines and Parry that focus on the specific ways in which reading strategies and interpretations are shaped by socio-cultural factors.

The research and the theories I have discussed in this chapter cannot all be directly transferred to the particular context or concerns of this research, but all will have a strong bearing on it. The socio-political history of South Africa and the impact that this has had on homes, schools and universities make it a unique research setting. Furthermore, the tendency that most reading researchers in this country have had to focus mainly on the cognitive-linguistic aspects of reading has meant that what follows charts relatively new territory.

The next chapter describes my research methodology.

Chapter 3

THE METHODOLOGY: CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

3.1 Introduction

Researchers who espouse a Socio-cultural approach to the analysis of literacy generally adopt an ethnographic methodology. This is because ethnography is “rooted in the concept of culture” (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999:8) and these researchers are primarily interested in the cultural meanings and uses of literacy that have developed over time within complex webs of social relationships and assumptions (see Resnick and Resnick, 1989, in Section 2.4.). It seems that ethnography affords the sorts of rich and detailed descriptions of the uses of literacy as socio-cultural phenomena that no other methodology is able to do as effectively. Heath’s research (described in Section 2.4.3) is an early example of the alliance between literacy research and the ethnographic approach. Likewise, Street, who was trained as an anthropologist, conducted ethnographic research into the ‘maktab’¹ literacy of an Iranian village in the early 1970’s (1984:132 – 157) and his research strongly influenced subsequent literacy research of this kind. More recently, Breier and Prinsloo’s ethnographic studies in *The social uses of literacy: Theory and practice in contemporary South Africa* (1996) explore the meanings and uses of literacy in a variety of contexts, both rural and urban, in the Western Cape. It provides another, South African example of the ‘natural fit’ between research into literacy practices and ethnography. The purposes of this research are also best served by means of ethnography because it aims to describe and interpret the student-participants’ prior reading experiences and their efforts to become academic readers in terms of cultural behaviour, cultural adjustment and even, at times, cultural conflict.

What follows then is a description of what I understand by ‘ethnography’. However, this thesis is not a classic ethnography because it is also *critical*, an orientation which harmonises with my avowed allegiance to an ‘ideological’, rather than ‘autonomous’ understanding of literacy (see my discussion of Street’s models in Section 2.4.2.). The ‘ideological’ model not only understands literacy in terms of its socio-cultural context but also in terms of its political significance – literacy practices of all kinds are implicated in the distribution of power and goods in any given society. So, secondly, I will explain what constitutes a critical orientation to research and why I consider such an orientation appropriate for my purposes. Finally, I will weave these two strands together and discuss the nature of *critical ethnography*, a research orientation that I believe mostly closely characterises the method and approach I adopted.

In the second half of the chapter I discuss the problems of validity and generalisability in critical ethnography and how I responded to these challenges. The ethical issues raised by this

¹ ‘Maktab’ literacy is taught in Q’ranic schools.

research project are then addressed. Next, I describe the more practical aspects of how, where, when and with whom I conducted this study. Finally, I explain how I set about analysing the data I had collected with specific reference to Framing Theory.

3.2 What is ethnography?

As an approach to research and as a method, ethnography has its roots in Anthropology in the early part of the 20th century. What is taken for granted among anthropologists, but is not so often recognised among educational researchers employing ethnographic methods, is that the essence of an ethnography is to “describe and interpret cultural behaviour” (Wolcott, 1987: 43). It is this crucial characteristic that distinguishes it from other kinds of qualitative or naturalistic research. Ethnographers analyse and interpret what people say, do, or believe using the concept of culture as the primary hermeneutic. Without this emphasis on culture, a study can have many of the other attributes which are usually listed in a definition of ethnography, and still not be ethnographic (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999:21).

Given this important proviso, LeCompte *et al.* (1999:9-27) identify six characteristics that mark a study as ethnographic. They are as follows. Firstly, ethnographies should always be conducted in naturalistic settings, that is, there should be no control or manipulation of the field setting. Secondly, they involve developing fairly intimate, mutually trusting, long-term relationships with the research participants over a period of time. Thirdly, ethnographers are interested in the ‘insider’ perspectives and interpretations of the participants, the ‘emic’ perspectives. These insider systems of meaning and views of reality are at the heart of ethnography. On the other hand, ‘etic’ perspectives are the external, social scientific, or theoretical perspectives. Ethnographers constantly move between the participants’ subjective, emic perspectives and the analyst’s objective, etic perspectives in a recursive, dialectical process. The next point is related to this: an ethnographer uses inductive processes of data collection. In other words, ethnographers often start by going into their chosen field and collecting ‘emic’ data. They then generate hypotheses or themes on the basis of the collected data and only then relate it to theory – the ‘etic’ perspectives. They return to the field and check the hypotheses against further ‘emic’ data, and so on, in a cyclical fashion. A fifth characteristic of good ethnography is that it makes use of multiple data sources, whether the sources are qualitative or quantitative. Ethnographers are “... data collection omnivores” (Wolcott, 1987:51) and they seek to provide ‘thick’ descriptions of research sites, that is, to capture a lot of detail. Finally, good ethnography constantly considers the socio-political and historical context of the research. Because it aims at holism, it attempts to cover all angles and sees each scene as multi-layered and interrelated with other contexts. Rich contextualisation helps ethnographers avoid simplistic accounts of phenomena and compels recognition of the idea of multiple realities.

These then are the essential, theoretical characteristics of ethnography. I will show in the latter sections of this chapter the ways in which I instantiated the theory in practical ways. However, as Wolcott (1987) is at pains to point out, the six attributes or qualities such as those described above cannot, of themselves, produce ethnography. It is not simply a methodology, a series of techniques, good description, rapport with participants, or length of time in the field. It is most essentially an *interpretive approach* that has the idea of culture at its heart.

Erickson (in Rubio, 1997) suggests that there are two ways in which people's cultural knowledge can be studied: firstly, by asking them and, secondly, by watching them. Thus the two main research methods of ethnography are open-ended interviews, usually of the semi-structured or unstructured variety, and participant observation, using extensive field notes to record events, conversations, personalities, behaviours or vignettes from within the research setting. Other methods, such as questionnaires, audio-visual methods, or focus-group discussions are also employed but this research mainly employs the classic methods of interviewing and observation, although the project was initiated with a questionnaire.

Ethnographers search for the "regularities or patterns" (Wolcott, 1987:46) in the quantities of complex and detailed data that are collected in the field. These patterns operate largely unnoticed in the day-to-day situations that constitute the ethnographer's field, "... much as grammar operates in language" (Fetterman, 1989:28), and the ethnographer's task is to uncover and describe them. These patterns have also been described as "key concerns" (Agar, 1986:164), "themes" or "cultural themes" (Wolcott, 1987), or even "rules" (Estroff, 1981), in the sense of tacit guidelines for social behaviour. All these terms give a sense of the "... implicit, underlying, mutually-understood-yet-never-examined assumptions and expectations that guide behaviour ...", essentially the culture, which an ethnography must document (Wolcott, 1987:46). It is the aim of this research to uncover these implicit patterns and themes of cultural behaviour in the student-participants' reading practices and in the academic values or "rules" that inform the discipline of History.

Ethnographers work with *one* of whatever they study: one informant, one family, one tribe, one village or one society (p.49). In effect they always conduct some kind of *case study*, that is, they are concerned with specific phenomena in a "bounded system" (Smith, quoted in Faltis, 1997). Ethnographers consider nothing from within the boundaries of the case irrelevant, however small or informal it may seem. The case that I have chosen to study is 'bounded' in a number of different ways. Firstly, it involves a group of students in their first year of university study, so they are all novice academics. Secondly, all the students were deemed underprepared for mainstream university study either because of the poor quality of their prior schooling or inadequate Matriculation performance. At the same time, they were



judged to have the potential to succeed at university if they were given an extra year to complete their degrees and an initial tertiary access course (see Section 1.3.1 for a description of the ELAP course at Rhodes University and how the students came to be registered for it). Thirdly, the case is 'bounded' by the discipline of History, particularly in terms of the kinds of academic reading it values. Finally, the students' History tutors and teachers are part of the bounded system: they are the 'gatekeepers' whose dealings with the students have an impact on whether or not they are afforded access to the new knowledge community.

Wolcott (1987) asks how it is possible for ethnographers to work with one individual, or, as in this case, one relatively small group, and still manage to fulfil the central requirement of ethnography, that is, cultural interpretation. He believes that the answer lies in the concept of *generalisation*, or even *stereotyping*. Some degree of both, he maintains, is integral to ethnographic accounts. Although ethnographers often "... make whopping generalisations from rather modest observations of a few cases", good ethnographers know their own cases very well and also know the difference between generalising and over-generalising (1989:50). "The ethnographer must *reduce* and *crystallize* a world of observation to produce a clear picture of a community ... [she must] ... *boil down* all the information, observations, interviews, theories, and patterns that emerge during fieldwork to produce the *essence* of a culture" (Fetterman, 1989:34) [my italics]. It seems, therefore, that a degree of generalising, or even stereotyping, is inevitable "... abhorrent as that notion has come to be in our new-found and self-conscious pluralism" (Wolcott, 1987). However, there is an important proviso: Fetterman (1989:34) points out that there is always a degree of "intracultural variation" in any given case, and that it is important not to ignore this.

My own research is an educational ethnography; that is, it applies the principles of ethnographic research to the study of learning behaviours in a formal educational setting. Ethnographic methods for educational research emerged in England in the 1960's and 1970's, initially in relation to bilingual education. At the same time, in the United States, ethnographic research began to be used in response to a national crisis about how to overcome educational inequalities for ethnic minority children (Watson-Gegeo, 1997). Attention was turned to contrasting patterns of culture and language use in classroom settings – Heath's research was an example of this. It became clear to some researchers at that time that the prevailing, deterministic models of research, such as quantitative or experimental research designs, were inadequate to address the complexity of classroom life, and the 'insider' perspectives of both teachers and learners.

The early educational ethnographers' concerns about the causes and meanings of educational disadvantage also underlie this study because, in a similar way, it explores the relative academic failure of a group of students who are black, poor and working class. It is interested

in the complexity of life in a tertiary classroom and provides a rich and detailed picture of the ways in which the reading culture of academic History intersects with the 'already-in-place', culturally-formed reading practices of the first-year students.

3.3 What is 'critical' research?

As I have shown in the previous section, a classic ethnography is essentially *interpretive* in orientation, its main purpose being to describe and interpret culture. However Carspecken and Apple challenge the notion that ethnographers can be simply descriptive and interpretive because culture is not only social construction but it also concerns the way in which some groups "... enhance their own authority, to regulate others and to control the social space for their own benefit" (1992:507). So, "Culture and power are not part of different language games but, rather, form an indissoluble couplet in daily life" (p.508). Whilst interpretive research describes a cultural status quo, critical research explores the powerful socio-political constraints that inhere in a context, thereby laying foundations for an emancipatory interest in the research endeavour (Gibson, 1986:2).

At the outset of this study I imagined that it would be essentially interpretive in orientation. However, it soon became clear that any research which is set in post-Apartheid South Africa and which attempts to account for *why* black, working-class students entering a formerly white, middle-class university often fail, does not invite ideological neutrality. I realised that there were issues of justice and ethics that should not be ignored. I began to feel that my research needed to make a difference, to effect change. I therefore decided to develop a more *critical* approach to the ways in which I was collecting and making sense of the data. What follows, then, is an account of the origins of the critical perspective to research and how it applies to my own study.

Historically, the critical orientation drew on the materialist perspective of Karl Marx. Orthodox Marxism holds that *base* (material or economic conditions) determines *superstructure*, represented by institutions such as the law, education, religion and so on (Gibson 1986). Thus *base*, that is, material and economic relationships, dictate all aspects of life in the *superstructure* and there is little sense that individual agency can bring about change. Societal structures profoundly determine individual behaviours and consciousness. In much the same way Vygotsky, himself a Marxist, believed that in child development external social processes come first and are later transformed to create internal psychological processes (see my discussion of this Vygotskian principle in Section 2.5). However, Critical Theory², although essentially neo-Marxist, has a different understanding of the relationship

² Critical Theory was developed by a group of radical, anti-Fascist academics at the University of Frankfurt in the 1920s. Many of them were Jewish and escaped to the USA in the 1930s where a strong, critical tradition was then established (Janse van Rensburg, 2001).

between the individual and society. It challenges the Marxist notion that the individual is the mere puppet of wider economic forces. It stresses individual endeavour, and argues for the role of the individual's "... intentions, powers and purposes in shaping society" (Gibson, 1986:10). Thus whilst classic Marxism is "materialistic", Critical Theory is more "ideational" (Fetterman, 1989:16). This means that people's ideas, beliefs and knowledge *can* produce change in the status quo. This ideational perspective forms the basis of critical research's emancipatory interest. A critical researcher can, and must, hope that as the ideas and knowledge generated by her research are shared with the participants and the community, change can follow.

Critical Theory "... adopts a perspective of social and cultural relations which highlights the role of ideology in sustaining and perpetuating inequality in particular settings" (May, 1997:197). In order to understand how this works, it is important to explain two important concepts, '*ideology*' and '*hegemony*', and to discuss how the two operate together to create and sustain inequalities.

Gibson believes that the meaning of ideology is "... elastic and elusive ... it can signify 'beliefs' or 'false beliefs'; 'values' or 'passions'; 'political dogma' or 'religious faith'; 'styles of thought' or 'structures of feeling'; 'ideas' or 'ideals'" (1986:11). However, Gibson's understanding of ideology, and one to which I also subscribe, is that it does not so much signify major systems of political or religious belief but rather it is implicit in "... everyday life, familiar assumptions, mundane practices and beliefs" (ibid.). Thus ideology emerges in what we think of as ordinary or natural in such contexts as the family, workplace or classroom: our practice is shot through with ideology.

Ideologies operate in a hierarchy: there are dominant ideologies, just as there are dominant social classes and groups. These more powerful groups "... project [their] meanings and practices as universal, as 'common sense'" (Clark and Ivanic, 1997: 21). In this way, they build and maintain their power, not by coercion, but by consent, because the practices and interests of the dominant groups are represented as the 'normal', 'common sense' ones. Thus, hegemony is "... ideological supremacy to the exclusion of other values, ideas and practices", in other words, "... conceptual-cultural domination" (Janse van Rensburg, 2001:26). However, Clark *et al.* (1997:22) maintain that, "The struggle for hegemony is ongoing and its outcome is not fixed for all time". Hegemonic practices *can* be challenged and emancipatory change *can* be effected. There are ways to "... resist, challenge and transform the overall shape of the cultural field" (Lankshear, 1999:21). My own research is part of that endeavour because it hopes to bring about the kind of transformed consciousness that could lead to a more equitable distribution of educational opportunities and access for one kind of student, at least, in the "cultural field" of History at Rhodes University.

To sum up, critical researchers are interested in how the dominant ideologies of formal institutions, such as schools or universities, exert hegemony over particular groups, often minority groups. They uncover the inequalities inherent within such systems. Therefore, any research that claims to be critical would have to "... develop an understanding of the processes and mechanisms by which macro forces are mediated [through human actors] at the level of an institution" (Angus, 1996:4).

A critical researcher is a "change agent" or an "intellectual advocate or activist" (LeCompte *et al.*, 1999:45). Change occurs as all the participants in the research process bring to consciousness and reflect on the ways in which they are ideologically driven, either to accept subordination or to perpetuate their own hegemonic dominance. The process by which ideology is uncovered is termed *reflexivity*. As the research participants, the students and educators, come to recognise and reflect on the ways in which they either passively and silently accept subordination, or perpetuate dominance, the possibility of a more equitable learning community can begin to emerge. The change need not be large-scale or dramatic. In fact, my own research aims to effect change in "... low-key, incremental ways" (Le Compte *et al.*, 1999:46)

However, Critical Theory demands reflexivity not only of the research participants, but also of the researcher. The researcher herself is a subject, a participant, implicated at every stage, consciously and deliberately reflecting on her own "... class status; racial, ethnic and gender orientation; and power relationships *vis-a-vis* research participants" (LeCompte *et al.*, 1999:47). A researcher's own ideological biases and constructs and how they may impact on the research outcomes, are not exempt from review. Critical research is, as Gibson remarks, "... openly ideological" (1986:2).

For this reason, I explicitly declared the principles and convictions that I believe had generated my research at the outset of this thesis in Section 1.5. I also openly discussed the ways in which my role as an ELAP tutor to most of the student participants in the research gave me alternative access to them in another context, and, even more importantly, a personal interest and concern for their welfare. I explained that whilst I realised that this might prejudice the research, it may also enrich it. I was both 'insider' in terms of my personal knowledge of the students as their ELAP tutor, but also an 'outsider' in terms of the History department. Whilst I strove for objectivity and fairness in my ethnographic, *interpretive* role, at the same time, I was strongly subjective and personal in my role as a *critical* researcher, as an "intellectual advocate and activist" (LeCompte *et al.*, 1999). I will address the ways in which this could have affected the validity of the research findings in Section 3.5. Like many critical researchers before me, I could not separate the roles of objective observer and

subjective advocate and reconciled myself to moving from one position to the other in an uneasy, but possibly creative, dialectic.

In the light of Critical Theory it becomes probable, even desirable, that the reflexive research process could also shift my own ideology and practice in surprising ways and lend an entirely different set of frames and principles by which I could reconceptualise myself as teacher and researcher. Whether or not this study has indeed effected a changed consciousness, either in the researcher or in the researched, will be a topic of further discussion in Sections 4.4 and 5.5.

3.4 Critical ethnography: drawing together the two research traditions

The different strands of research described in the two sections above were integrated relatively recently, in the 1980's, by such educational researchers as Masemann, (1982), Angus, (1988) and Weis (1985) (in May, 1997), thus creating a new approach to social science research. Critical ethnography is situated in the broad ethnographic tradition and reflects many of the characteristics of classic ethnography as described in Section 3.2. However, it is also markedly different. Whilst conventional ethnographers tend to be inductive and data-driven, critical ethnographers are more deductive and adopt an explicit theoretical stance *a priori*, usually based on the principles of Critical Theory (May, 1997). Critical ethnographers claim that it is specious to divorce ideology and theory from data collection and analysis. They believe that all research is value- and theory-laden anyway, and the interpretive concern with describing a social setting 'as it really is' assumes an objective, 'common sense' reality where none really exists (ibid.). Critical research, as I showed in the previous section, postulates that social reality is, in fact, cultural construction and is linked to wider power relations in which some are privileged and others are not. So critical ethnography has a broader focus than classic ethnography because it incorporates such variables as ideological premises and hegemonic practices. It differs from critical research because of the specifically ethnographic approach and methodology it employs.

To sum up, critical ethnography has a double focus: it is concerned both with describing social settings, as in ethnography, and also with changing them to create a more equitable distribution of power, as in critical research. Thus it is simultaneously hermeneutic and emancipatory.

A critical, ethnographic, multiple case study research design such as this one will inevitably raise concerns about research validity and generalisability, which could threaten the trustworthiness and wider applicability of this endeavour. In the following section I will describe these concerns and respond to them.

3.5 Research validity and generalisability

Validity is generally defined as "... the trustworthiness of inferences drawn from data" (Eisenhart and Howe, in LeCompte, Millroy and Preissle, 1992:664). Walker (1986) defines it as "truth conditions", in other words, the match between the conclusions drawn and the reality from which they were taken. Generalisability refers to the extent to which the results of the research can be applied or transferred to other settings (Yin, 1986). Both issues need to be addressed in order to secure the place of this study in the wider community.

3.5.1 Validity in critical research

The fact that critical ethnographers are explicitly and openly theory-driven has been criticised by some who believe that this approach raises questions about research validity. Critical ethnographers are accused of "theoretical piety" (May, 1997: 202), and the desire to replace the 'false' perspectives which they critique with their own, equally contestable, perspectives (ibid.). The critics also claim that critical ethnographers overstate the role of theory in influencing practice (for example, Hammersley, 1992). However, I subscribe to May's response to this critique when he says that "... the goal of critical ethnography is not to replace one particular ideology with another but to highlight the *role* of ideology in the construction of social and organisational settings" (1997:202). So the aim of this research is not to assume the 'moral high ground', but rather to raise awareness of the ways in which ideology implicitly shapes practice. May also points out that critical research often draws attention to the malign influence of unequal power relations in a given research setting but seldom offers practical advice or help about how to effect change. For this reason this thesis will indeed offer a practical response to the issues raised by this research in the final chapter, in Section 5.6. But it must also be acknowledged that neither institutional nor personal change is often immediately discernible. It occurs slowly and incrementally in the consciousness of individuals and is thus difficult to chart.

3.5.2 Validity in ethnographic case studies

Research validity is also seen to be problematic in ethnographic case studies such as this one. Cohen and Manion (1994) suggest that these problems could result from the researcher's biases and subjectivities resulting in observations that are superficial, impressionistic or idiosyncratic. This is seen to be a particular problem in educational ethnographies because the researcher is often so close to the context that she may be blind to the peculiarities that she is investigating. Equally true, however, may be the fact that an insider's view may add richness and empathy to the research account. It can also help in the establishment of trust and rapport between the researcher and the researched, as it evidently did in Boswell's ethnographic research 'at home' in her own Creole community in Mauritius, where she deliberately made good use of her intimate, familial links with the community (2003). She also openly acknowledged that, as a Mauritian Creole herself, her decision to research Creole identity was

an “emotional choice”, and that her subjectivities were integral, even necessary, to the research process (2003:7). In a similar way, I have openly declared and explored my own emotional commitment and subjective stance in relation to the concerns of this research in Sections 1.5 and 3.3. I believe that this has, on the whole, enhanced my empathy as an ethnographer. However, I have also subjected this research account to rigorous external validation and triangulation³ as I will now show.

I have made sure that validation has come from authorities from *within* and *outside* the case. The ‘insiders’ were those who directly participated in the research, the student- and teacher-participants. The ‘outsiders’ were colleagues whose experience of a similar background or field of research gave them authority to comment on my findings.

Firstly, I distributed relevant sections of the research, mostly Chapter 4, to the students and teachers who had directly participated in it. I asked them to comment not only in terms of “truth conditions” (Walker, 1986) but also in terms of the ways in which the insights may, or may not, have changed their awareness of themselves as students or teachers. This was a delicate process because my study aims to represent *their* truth and *their* stories and the express aim of critical research is to disturb. In relation to the students, this approach had an unexpected benefit: it seemed to have a democratising effect because the students were being invited to evaluate my writing, just as I had previously, the year before, evaluated theirs. This increased the sense that the study was a mutual, collegial endeavour. I shared my findings with the History department in the same spirit.

Secondly, I asked two ‘outsiders’ to comment on Chapter 4. Bulelwa Nosilela, a Xhosa teacher at Rhodes University, whose home and educational background are similar to those of the students in this study, read and reflected on the findings and was a very significant source of validity. Furthermore, I invited Ntombomzi Mbelebele, a senior, mature History student, formerly an ELAP student herself, to evaluate the data in terms of her own experiences as a History student at Rhodes University. In a sense these ‘outsiders’ became participants as well, as they extended, challenged or confirmed my claims in useful ways.

In Section 4.4 I report on all the participants’ broad evaluations of the ways in which I represent their truths and their stories. I have incorporated, as footnotes, some of their reactions to specific details in the data during the course of Chapter 4.

Critical ethnographers such as Carspecken (1996:56) define validity in terms of consensus to truth claims. Truth, they claim, can only be determined by the agreement of a “cultural

³ Cohen and Manion define this term as the use of two or more methods of data collection in a study of human behaviour.

community”, even though such community agreement is not infallible. This kind of validation is similar to what LeCompte, Millroy and Priessle (1992) term “consensual validation”, the “... agreement of competent others”, seeking from them “... not a single uniform view but a diversity of valid and useful views” about the research (p.748). I have shown that I actively sought the views of the “cultural community” and “competent others”, from both within and outside the research context and that my findings and interpretations have undergone rigorous checking.

The significance of these efforts to secure validation are confirmed by Erickson (1986, in LeCompte *et al.*, 1992), who says that the basic validity criterion of qualitative research is “*the immediate and local meanings of actions*, as defined from the actors’ point of view” [italics in original] (p.119). He says that the “actors” are both the readers and the participants. But he adds a further dimension to the issue of validity. He believes that validity can be assessed not only by the authenticity of the way in which the ethnographic story is told, but also by the way in which it is linked to the underlying theoretical position adopted by the research: Thus, he says:

The [story] persuades the reader that things ... were in the setting as the author claims they were because the sense of immediate presence captures the reader's attention and because the concrete particulars of the events reported in the [story] instantiate the general analytic concepts [that] the author is using to organise the research report ... In sum the richness of detail in and of itself does not make a [story] ethnographically valid. Rather it is the combination of richness and interpretive perspective that make the account valid (1986:150).

I have ensured, therefore, that in a number of ways, the findings of this research have been thoroughly triangulated. However, Denzin and Lincoln (1998), in their discussion of validity in qualitative research, do not see triangulation as a strategy of validation but as an alternative to it. The diversity of research settings and participants and the richness and detail with which they are described are sources of validation in themselves in this kind of study. However, in Section 3.7.4 below I will show that I have also used a variety of data collection techniques which provide triangulation of a more traditional kind.

3.5.3 Generalisability

In ethnographic research any report must be seen in relation to other research done in similar fields and aim not to be definitive, but rather to add incrementally to a broad, shared knowledge base. Potentially, other researchers in the field can find links with their own particular concerns and apply whatever they find useful. Thus, Yin (1984), for example, does not believe that qualitative case study research needs to be widely generalisable, in the sense that positivist, experimental research claims to be. Rather, it becomes generalisable in the process of taking its place amongst similar research where colleagues can use it or not as they see fit. Similarly, Erickson (1986) claims that generalisability is not the goal of any kind of

interpretive research – that such an expectation is an artifact of positivist, statistically driven research. So long as the research can claim internal validity in the ways described in the previous section, it can be said to be potentially generalisable.

An interesting question in relation to this research is whether or not its findings apply to the broader first-year student community, or whether it can claim generalisability only for students from similar socio-economic backgrounds to those described in this study. In other words, does its relevance extend only to students from poor, working-class homes and ex-DET schools? This thesis has a limited scope as I have focussed only on the particular concerns of students from this kind of background. However, students' levels of preparedness for university vary along a continuum and it is possible that the findings could be extended to some other students at least. Many South African students, even those from relatively privileged homes and schools, could benefit from having their epistemological access into complex, new knowledge communities carefully planned and staged. MacCarthy (1987, in Starfield, 1994) describes a white, male EIL student with good Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, negotiating the different disciplinary environments of first year at college in North America as a "stranger in strange lands" (p.16). Nevertheless, the need for deliberate scaffolding is certainly more acute in students from lower socio-economic groups – Delpit's views (1988, in Section 2.3.3) would endorse this. But, ultimately, it will be for colleagues who read this research to assess how its findings might apply to wider communities.

3.6 Addressing the ethical concerns

Researchers are bound by codes of ethics to protect the people they study from the potentially harmful effects of their research findings. According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999), these effects could be physical, financial, emotional or in terms of reputation. It is therefore important to gain informed consent from all the participants in the research, and to explain to them the possible consequences or risks involved in being an informant. They must be assured of their rights to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. There are particular risks for ethnographers because they interact with people over long periods of time and this gives them access to intimate details of the participants' lives, which, if revealed in the community, could do them harm. Furthermore, there could be ethical consequences resulting from the fact that the boundaries between friendship and professional research conduct easily become blurred during the ethnographic endeavour (ibid.). In critical research, the role of advocate has to be particularly sensitively managed because the research results could offend or hurt some participants who may be shocked by the fact that they are acting in exclusionary or hegemonic ways. I will now describe how I responded to these challenges.

I was honest and open with all the participants at every stage. I never attempted to maintain cover, or hide my role as researcher, or disguise the purposes of my research. I promised, and

kept my promise, to share the results with the participants (see Appendix C). On the basis of their reactions to the findings, I extended or reinterpreted the data in places or presented their views if they were different from my own. I gained consent, sometimes informally, but usually formally, from all the participants to use their data. (In Appendix A there is a copy of the formal consent form that I asked all the student-participants to sign at the outset of the research). I afforded full anonymity to those that asked for it, changing names whenever I was asked to. I changed the names of the student-participants who have since left the university and who could not be consulted. Furthermore, participation in this research was entirely voluntary. Sometimes particular students were available for interviews and sometimes they were not. However, on the whole, I received an extraordinary degree of goodwill and co-operation from all the participants, who gave generously of their time, and I made every effort not to abuse their kindness. I offered small financial rewards to the student-participants.

I developed strong bonds with most of the student-participants, but because I was their ELAP tutor and because I was frequently explicit about my role as researcher, the relationship was never intimate and there was some degree of emotional distance between us. So whilst the student-participants were generally open and relaxed with me, there was seldom the awkwardness of personal or incriminating data being shared, except in one instance when I discovered a case of plagiarism in an informal interview. In this case I sought the permission of my informant to discuss the matter in my data and I concealed the identities of both the plagiariser and the informant (see Section 4.3.5). I maintained bonds with the participants during following year in which I wrote up the research. The fact that five of them were available and willing to read the research, a year after the data collection and their ELAP year, is evidence of their commitment to the research.

The first half of this chapter captures the nature of ‘critical ethnography’ and the concerns that research of this kind raises in terms of validity, generalisability and ethics. In the latter half of the chapter I turn to the practical aspects of the research process. What follows are detailed descriptions of the participants, the context and the methods of data collection.

3.7 The research process

3.7.1 The research participants: the students

The only criteria for the selection of students to participate in this study was that they should be in their first-year of study at Rhodes University and registered for both History 1 and ELAP. The significance of the fact that they were ELAP students was that they were usually from poor, working-class homes, had been to ex-DET schools, and that they all use English as a second or third language. Originally, the research participants consisted of all fourteen of the students who met these criteria. However, it is important to understand that the first-year History course at Rhodes University is semesterised which means that not all of the students

who begin History at the beginning of the year choose to register for History 102 in the second semester. In fact only 9 of the original group of 14 completed both History 101 and History 102, the other five choosing to register for a different course, Politics 102, in the second semester. So the original research group of 14 fell to 9 in the second half of the year. Furthermore, not all of the students were equally available at different stages during the year and so some of the student-participants were more intensively interviewed or observed than others, depending on such practical considerations as the times of their History tutorials or whoever was available for closer study. Thus data from some of the students is much more prominent than from others. In the first semester there were eight main actors: Khaya, Tali, Vuyo, Thembisa, Ongama, Sindi, Fundile and Phakama. In the second semester, Tali, Vuyo and Ongama dropped out of History but I continued to observe the others and added Mandoro, Rabo, and Mpumezi, again, simply on the basis that they had continued with History into the second semester and were available and willing to help me with my research. These, then, are the main student protagonists to whom I refer most often, although I sometimes discuss the group as a whole or refer to participants who played less prominent roles such as Sonwabo, Madoda and Mkululi.

The fact that the nature and size of the research group altered during the course of the year was inconvenient but, as an ethnographer, I simply accepted it as a naturalistic condition and worked with the variety it offered. It is also true that some of the participants provided much richer, 'thicker' data than others. This could have been because I was able to build up a stronger rapport with some participants than with others. Another consideration was that data from some of the participants were limited by their competence in English whilst others were more competent English speakers and more confident interviewees. Mpumezi, Phakama and Sindi, in particular, struggled to express themselves in English in interviews, but in other contexts they provided rich data. I accepted this too as part of the naturalness and variety of the context.

3.7.2 The research participants: the History department

The History lecturers and tutors are also central protagonists in this research story and in this section I will briefly describe their home backgrounds and educational histories. I will briefly describe their experiences of reading in their homes, schools and universities as these are likely have had an impact, often subconsciously, on how they in turn design reading tasks for their own students (Johns, 1997:1). The critical nature of this study requires an understanding of the lecturers' ideological foundations in order to trace the ways in which these may have affected their reading pedagogy.

All three of the lecturers involved in teaching the first-year History course were interviewed and observed giving lectures. I will refer to them as 'Professor M' (who is the Head of

Department), 'Professor C' and 'Dr W'. Professor M and Dr W designed and taught the History 101 course in Term 1 and Term 2 of the first semester and Professor C was responsible for History 102 in the second semester. What follows are brief introductions to these three important personalities.

Professor M's experience of self-reliance as a History student seems to underpin his educational values: he maintains: *"I've learnt from my own research rather more than what lecturers told me"*. Professor M went to school in England and to university in South Africa and Canada. He was a student of Winnie Maxwell, a renowned History professor in South Africa and internationally. His parents were educated, but not, he says, intellectuals. His father, a farmer, read newspapers and his mother mostly romantic fiction. Professor M is himself a broad general reader besides reading extensively in his discipline. He was, but is no longer, an active member of the African National Congress (ANC).

Dr W is an American from a home that resembles Heath's townspeoples' rather than those of Roadville or Trackton (1983). Her mother was interested in literature and often read to her two daughters. A Christmas gift might consist of a Chemistry set with complex instructions to follow. Dr W's first degree was from a mid-Western college and her postgraduate degrees were from Yale and Columbia. Besides her academic reading she "... always has a novel on the go". One of the attractions for her of History as a discipline is the huge variety of what can constitute historical sources. History, she says, *"... comes from all different kinds of directions ... the challenge of looking at a document or novel [is] you can get a particular intimacy, a certain first-hand sense of something ... [In a novel, for example] nothing may be true in a literal sense, but there are descriptions of ... places or attitudes that create a context"*. Thus Dr W believes that it is important that students are introduced to the idea that we understand the past by means of a great variety of textual genre, not simply by means of factual History books containing descriptions of past events. This value emerges strongly in the way she assigns readings for the 2nd term of History 101. Dr W is presently a busy ANC councillor in Grahamstown.

Professor C is an Englishman raised in London during the 1940's and 1950's, a period of British culture he admires as being characterised by *"justice, fairness, hard work and discipline"*. He went to grammar school in London and later the University of London. His father was an intellectual, an artist and a poet, and there were many books in his house. He remembers being taken to a children's library every Saturday morning and getting out such books as *"Biggles"*, *"Barbar the Elephant"*, and Enid Blyton's *"Castle of Adventure"* and *"Island of Adventure"*. Saturday afternoons were spent pleasurably reading the new books. He remembers university typically as a time *"spent in a favourite armchair reading"* or in a comfortable corner of a library. He was a member of the ANC during the 1980's.

Besides the lecturers, I observed three tutors in particular: Amanda, a History Honours student, and Glen and Nomalanga, both 3rd year students. Later I also interviewed both Glen and Nomalanga (see Appendix E). Although the tutors, like the lecturers, were all from middle-class, well-educated homes, Nomalanga's background was qualitatively different. Her parents are both politicians and doctors and were part of the liberation struggle. She went to a private school where she describes herself as having been the 'General Knowledge Queen' and an 'Internet junkie'. She herself had thrived in History 1, getting 85% for Professor C's course in her first year. Because she is a South African black woman with a liberation background, she has significant links with both worlds described in this research: she had full access to the academic world of the History department by virtue of her privileged education, but could also thoroughly empathise with the world of the black students in this study by virtue of her family's experiences of oppression and struggle. Partly because of this unique position, she features prominently in the data.

In the final term of the year the History department set up a series of 'special' tutorials for the ELAP students and one other EAL student all of whom appeared to be struggling with the History 102 course. Besides 'mainstream' tutoring, Nomalanga agreed to conduct these ten extra tutorials⁴ as well and I observed her teaching most of them. Her approach to these tutorials was distinctly different from the usual departmental tutoring style. I will show that they seemed to be informed by an alternative understanding of the students and their needs.

All the above information about the research participants and the main sites in which they were studied is represented graphically in the following table.

⁴ These special tutorials were set up on the advice of the ELAP co-ordinator who was anxious that her students were not coping with History 102.

	Lecturers: Interviewed and observed	Tutors: Interviewed <i>or</i> observed	Students: Questionnaire	Students: Observed in tutorials	Students: Interviewed
History 101: 1 st Semester, 2002	Professor M: Head of Department (Term 1) Dr W (Term 2)	Amanda	Fundile, Tali Sindi, Rabo, Phakama, Thembisa, Khaya, Mandoro, Ongama, Mpumezi, Vuyo, Mkululi, Sonwabo, Madoda	Fundile, Tali Phakama, Sindi	Fundile, Tali, Phakama, Sonwabo, Thembisa, Khaya, Vuyo
History 102: 2 nd Semester, 2002	Professor C (Terms 3 and 4)	Glen Nomalanga		Fundile, Phakama, Thembisa, Mpumezi, Rabo, Sindi, Mandoro, Khaya	Fundile, Phakama Thembisa Mpumezi, Rabo, Sindi Mandoro, Khaya

Table 1: The research participants

3.7.3 The research contexts: History 101 and 102

I will now introduce the two courses, History 101 and 102, particularly with regard to the ways in which they frame their reading expectations for the students.

History 101

The first four weeks of this course deals with Historiography and ideas about History as ‘constructed’ by different interest groups in different contexts. The rest of the content of History 101 is deliberately African: it concerns, first, early African history and then later, in the second term, the colonial experience in Africa and the struggles for independence in various states. Initially readings of some three or four pages in the form of tutorial handouts are assigned for each tutorial. But later the students are assigned two or three readings per week, often each about 20 pages in length. In the second term all these readings can be accessed on the departmental website. The students attend three lectures and one tutorial a week.

In their first lecture of the year the History students were told by the Head of the Department that the emphasis of the course was on developing “*a good, enquiring critical mind through engagement with a range of books*”. The use of the university library was encouraged for finding resources relevant to the course. There is no textbook set for this course, only one recommended reading, Shillington’s *History of Africa* but the use of this book is de-emphasised.

In fact, both in my interview with him *and* during the first lecture of the year, Professor M spoke in rather derogatory terms about set texts. The thinking in the department is that there can be no single, definitive reading of historical events and the sooner students are weaned off the idea, usually inherited from school History, the better. Professor M believes that far better [than a textbook] is “... *to read the odd chapter from a book in the Library*”. One body of knowledge or one interpretation of historical events cannot be privileged over another. The students must learn to manage the library, use the [online] catalogue, browse the shelves and the Internet for relevant reading materials. In History 101’s tutorial book, the students are told: “*At undergraduate level, a bibliography of 5 – 6 books is the minimum requirement [for an essay]*”. Although in interviews with both Professor M and the tutors, they explained that this meant 5 – 6 articles or chapters from books, and admitted that two or three sources would be sufficient for the students’ first essays, this is, nevertheless, the way in which reading expectations are overtly framed by History 101.

History 102

History 102 is a popular course attracting almost 400 students from all Faculties in the university. It is entitled “The World Crisis and its Historical Origins” and Professor C describes it as a “*broad, high-flying overview of the History of the species*”. He makes an important distinction on the course between “history-history”, which is information-based, school-style history, and “History”, which is more interpretive and critical.⁵ In fact, “history-history” is a term of contempt on this course.

Professor C does not assign particular readings for tutorials or assignments but does publish a list of some 250 books related to the idea of ‘World Crisis’. They include books of many different genres, including a few novels, covering a huge variety of topics. Taken at random, the list includes, for example: Birdlife Africa 2000: *Threatened Birds of the World*; Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*; Robert Bly, *The Sibling Society*; Victor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*; Amory Starr, *Naming the Enemy: Anti-corporate Movements Confront Globalisation* and many others (see Appendix G). The books, (for example, about the Holocaust, or globalisation), are not grouped according to topic, but are listed randomly. There are also no annotations to help the students to prioritise texts or to mediate their reading in any way. The list is entitled “Some Books”, rather than “Recommended reading/s”. The students may, or may not, find it useful. Any other interesting, related books they may discover could also be considered valid course reading. Therefore, instead of *readings*, Professor C says: “We try and make them read a [whole] book ...” As I will show in the following chapter, the principles of Whole Language teaching, which value the authenticity of whole texts, rather than decontextualised parts of texts, or ‘textoids’, are clearly at work in the way reading is understood in History 102.

⁵ Professor C later added that “History” represents “a total overview” kind of History.

Professor C's examination is unusual: it is based on 50 short phrases which the students must relate to the notion of 'World Crisis' in a few lines and in approximately 3 ½ minutes (see example in Appendix H). Examples taken from the trial examination are, "The planet earth seen from space", "Straight lines and progress", "Agriculture and the 1001 things", "Clocks, firearms and books" and "Football". Each response is assessed out of 2 marks. Professor C describes his mode of examining as "... a bit like an x-ray". It has a "tremendous predictive advantage" and is able to distinguish "... the type of students I've got ... the top 5 or 6 are fine, fine students".

Clearly, the reading expectations of these two courses' are framed somewhat differently, but, as I will show later, the differences are of degree rather than of kind – they vary along a continuum. A researcher in the Cognitive model may have found these inconsistencies threatening. However, as an ethnographer I valued and explored them, and, in the end, found them helpful. The students performed significantly less well in History 102 and I was able to explain their failures in terms of these very differences.

3.7.4 The research methods

I initiated the study by inviting all 14 of the student-participants to complete an open-ended questionnaire at the end of the first term of 2002 (see Appendix A). They all agreed to do so, and many of the students took their questionnaires home with them for their first, short, 10-day vacation and completed them in the context of their homes and families. This worked well. All of the students returned the questionnaires and many of them answered the questions fully and thoughtfully. Although I had not planned that the questionnaire should provide more than a 'test run' for possible questions and approaches, in fact it yielded rich and useful data. Afterwards I accounted for this success firstly in terms of the timing, and secondly in terms of the students' English proficiency. The timing was fortunate because many of the questions involved the participants' reflections about their early, literacy experiences and doing so in the context of their homes seems to have prompted their memories. Secondly, questionnaires give EAL students unpressured time to think about the best way to express an idea: some may have found the questionnaire less intimidating than the interviews.

During the second term, I developed another, more probing series of questions to extend the information gleaned from the questionnaire, seeking 'thicker' data about some of the interesting issues that had been raised by the students' responses. These questions were then used in semi-structured interviews with seven of the students (see Appendix B). During the same period I also interviewed Professor M and Dr W about their own reading backgrounds and their values and ideas about reading in the discipline of History (see Appendix D). All these interviews were transcribed and although the full transcriptions are not included in the Appendices in this report, they are all available for more detailed inspection on request.

During my periods of observation in tutorials I paid particular attention to the ways in which the values about reading were being framed, either explicitly or implicitly. In the 1st semester there were four ELAP students amongst a larger group of 14 mainstream students. During my periods of “hanging out” in the History department (Boswell, 2003:9), I read the noticeboards outside the tutorial rooms and gathered whatever handouts, booklists, assignment sheets or other documentation the students were given. I took note of the students’ responses, non-verbal behaviours, (for example, the ways in which the student-participants always seemed to physically group themselves together in tutorials). I also paid particular heed to their levels of participation in tutorials. For the reasons outlined above in Section 3.6, I did not attempt to maintain cover during tutorials. I occasionally took part in the discussions because I felt that it would be more honest and natural than trying to seem invisible. On a number of occasions after tutorials I would discuss what had been said with the student-participants informally, thereby picking up useful insights into their experiences.

In the second semester, Professor C set a particular assignment which I used as a focus for observation and interviews. I interviewed eight students as they were reading for this assignment in the second semester (see Appendix F). I collected the essays that they had written on the basis of their readings of particular books (see Section 4.3 for a description of this reading-to-write assignment). I recorded the ways in which the tutors had assessed and responded to this task. During the second semester I also interviewed the tutors, Glen and Nomalanga, and later Professor C, (see Appendices E and D respectively), and I observed most of Nomalanga’s 10 extra tutorials for the ELAP students. I kept records of the all the students’ performances in tests, essays and the final exam. All these later interviews were transcribed as well.

A final aspect of the data emerged during the writing up of this research. At this stage, as I sought the agreement of the “cultural community” (Carspecken, 1996:56), I interviewed a number of participants and others (see Section 3.5.2). I record their valuable responses to the data in Section 4.4.

In the section above I have traced my main data collection methods over the period of a year. Some approaches were planned and formal and some were unplanned and informal depending on whatever came up in the context. The result was a large quantity of data in the form of taped, transcribed interviews with a variety of informants; notebooks of observations, reflections and informal comments; lecture notes (mine and the students’); the students’ essays with their tutors’ comments; handouts and documentation from both courses and full records of the students’ performances throughout the year. Producing ethnographic research reports is notoriously difficult. LeCompte and Schensul remark:

Data analysis means figuring out what to do with the mountains of data that ethnographic research projects generate ... [these] must be organised, sorted, coded, reduced, and patterned into a "story" or interpretation that responds to the questions that guided the study in the first place ... (1999:148).

In the final section of this chapter I will describe the ways in which I sorted, analysed and finally presented the research story.

3.8 Analysing the data: the organising principles

Looking at the data broadly, it seemed logical to analyse and discuss it in four stages. These stages relate to the four main goals of this research described in Section 1.6.

1. Firstly, I sorted and analysed the data that concerned the student-participants' reading in their homes and schools. These data were based on the initial questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews with the students (Appendices A and B). Four 'themes' or 'patterns' emerged from the data:

- the students' early reading experiences;
- their assumptions about the nature and purposes of reading;
- their attitudes to reading and readers;
- issues of identity in reading.

In describing the second of these themes, the students' assumptions about the purposes of reading, I found Heath's typology for the uses of reading a very useful organising principle (see Section 2.4.3).

2. The second body of data deals with the History department. The data for this stage were based on the 5 semi-structured interviews I had conducted with the three lecturers and two tutors (Appendices E and D) as well as all the field notes taken during tutorials and lectures, the handouts, handbooks, booklists and assignment sheets that had been distributed by the department during the course of the year.
 - I analysed History 101 and 102 separately because, as I explained earlier, these courses are different and the student-participants achieved higher grades in History 101. In each course I first examined their explicit and implicit frames about academic reading. Secondly, I identified and discussed instances of these frames being enacted in various lectures, tutorials and in the documentation.
 - I then discussed Nomalanga's extra tutorials: I identified *her* frames and the ways in which they were enacted in her tutorials.
3. In the third stage I analysed all the data to have emerged from the History 102 assignment in the second semester.
 - First of all, I explored the significance of the ways in which the students-participants had selected their books for this assignment.

- Secondly, I described the ways in which they made sense of their books in terms of Reid and MacLachlan's four kinds of textual framing (1994): I explore their 'extratextual', 'intertextual', 'circumtextual' and 'intratextual' frames in turn. I used Reid *et al.*'s model to give underlying structure to this third stage and to generate a systematic analysis of the ways in which the students coped with their various texts. However, despite this very specific use of Reid *et al.*'s model within Framing Theory, I have employed the broader notions of Framing Theory throughout Chapter 4. A more detailed description of this theory follows immediately below this section.
4. Finally, I reported on the interviews and consultations that I conducted towards the end of the research process in an effort to establish:
- firstly, the trustworthiness of this study;
 - secondly, the extent to which it can be said to have begun to fulfil its emancipatory goal.

3.8.1 Framing Theory

According to Tannen (1993), the basic idea of Framing Theory is that we interpret messages on the basis of the various framing devices, or "structures of expectations" that we bring to any communicative event. She expresses it thus:

The only way we can make sense of the world is to see the connections between things, and between present things and things we have experienced before or heard about. These vital connections are learned as we grow up and live in a given culture (1993:14, 15).

Reid and MacLachlan (1994) were the first to use this theory in relation to reading. Frames, they say, are used for storing and organising everyday knowledge which readers automatically draw on in any act of comprehension or interpretation – we have frames for all the countless ordinary activities of our lives. Reid and MacLachlan showed that there can be 'matches' or 'mismatches' of frames between those assumed by any given text and the frames that readers have available to them on the basis of their cultural or individual prior experiences. I will now explain Reid *et al.*'s four aspects of textual interpretation (1994).

Extratextual frames

Extratextual frames refer to the kind of *outside* information or experiences that a reader brings to a text in order to make sense of it. This information is unspecified by the text but presupposed by it: the writer assumes that the relevant frames are available to the reader. Extratextual frames are the "... whole world of external information, experiences and assumptions" that enable readers to comprehend texts (Reid, Kirkpatrick and Mulligan, 1998:1). These include attitudes, expectations or preoccupations – even attitudes to the act of reading, the nature of it, or the point of it. Extratextual frames depend on whatever personal stock of knowledge and experiences are available to readers on the basis of their

individual and cultural experiences. However, Reid argues that extratextual frames are not as individual a matter as might be assumed in expressivist understandings of reading. He argues that the kinds of knowledge or experiences that represent any reader's 'stock' stem more from socio-cultural knowledge or institutionalized reading practices than from individual experience (1998).

Circumtextual frames

A reader can also employ the details that immediately *surround* a text to help in comprehension. This could include the paying attention to the title of a book or chapter, the cover, an abstract, footnotes, the index or accompanying diagrams or pictures, maps or dates of publication. Some readers make more use of these peripheral elements than others. Reid *et al.* also argue that what surrounds a text is not only textual information but also the context in which the reading takes place, whether it is in a classroom, bedroom, library or waiting room (1998). Even the physical circumstances in which we read affect the ways in which we make sense of texts.

Intertextual frames

Interpreting texts appropriately often involves the ability to see a text's links with other texts, to assign it to a particular genre or 'Discourse' of some kind, or to be able to pick up influences from or allusions to other texts. "Intertextual frames relate one text or text-type to another" (Reid *et al.*, 1998:3). This can be particularly difficult if a reader is not a member of the culture from which the text emerges. Being an 'insider' implies an easy, often subconscious recognition of the cultural artifacts, textual or otherwise, that represent the values of that culture.

Intratextual frames

Reid *et al.* describe this category as referring to the information provided on or within the pages of the texts themselves, in other words, whatever interrupts the flow of words, such as paragraph breaks, headings, sub-headings, section numbers, typographical changes, change in styles, or cohesive markers. I understand intratextual framing to be closely related to 'bottom-up' processing because it involves paying careful, unit-by-unit attention to the graphic display on the page itself, decoding the grammar or vocabulary, for example, without reference to 'outside' knowledge. Intratextual framing occurs as readers make use of micro-aspects of the text to make better sense of the whole. Any of the many ways in which readers make use of internal signposting, (such as sectional changes or italics), or micro-linguistic cues (such as punctuation or grammar knowledge) to create expectations of meaning is included in this aspect of framing.

Using Framing Theory

However, this strong classification of different types of frames is not as tidy as it might seem. According to Reid *et al.*, all four kinds of framing work together, *interactively*, during any act of interpretation (1994). The 'interactive' model of reading (described in Section 2.3.1) postulates a similar phenomenon: *both* 'top-down' *and* 'bottom-up' processing work together during comprehension. In the same way, all four categories of frame discussed above interact in complex, fluid ways. They form a matrix of elements that work simultaneously to facilitate comprehension. A simple example of this could be when a novice academic reader takes note of a circumtextual frame, such as a date of publication. S/he may only understand the full implication of this date if s/he can relate it to an extratextual frame that gives it its historical significance, or to an intertextual frame that relates it to other important texts published in that year. Efficient readers are able and willing to bring all the four aspects of framing to bear on a text and allow one kind of frame to shape or extend another. I will show later that inefficient readers use one aspect of framing, but not another, thereby negatively affecting their comprehension or interpretation of texts. They may reach for inappropriate, misleading extratextual frames and ignore important circumtextual or intratextual evidence, which could lead to skewed readings.

The data in the next chapter shows that the framing expectations that the student-participants brought into the tertiary context were often, but not always, an impediment rather than a help in their attempts to read academic texts. On the other hand, Reid and Mulligan (2003) claim that university departments and teachers often signal *their* frames indirectly or not at all. They suggest that academic teachers often struggle to identify the rules and conventions of their disciplines for themselves, let alone for their students. They believe that what a teacher claims to be poor performance in a student may not be at functional level at all, but the result of a difficulty in recognising the metacommunicative frames in a particular situation, perhaps because they have not been articulated explicitly enough by the teachers. Reid and Mulligan (2003) maintain that unless tertiary courses put a spotlight on their own framing assumptions there will be two consequences: firstly, students will overlook or underestimate cross-cultural variations in the shaping of knowledge, and secondly, they are unlikely to develop a reflexive awareness of their own reading practices.

Whether this observation is confirmed by the research story that follows will emerge during the next chapter. A full description and interpretation of my research data now follows. It will be presented within all the theoretical frameworks that I have constructed in this and the preceding chapter.

Chapter 4

THE RESEARCH STORY: DATA AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The students' reading experiences

Although I will outline some frames that seem to be common to almost everyone in the student-participants' group, there was a degree of particularity, or "intracultural variation" (see Fetterman, 1986, in Section 3.2) in the reading experiences of individual students. Some were significantly more advantaged than others in terms of the support they had received from the adults in their homes as they learnt to read, in the economic or emotional stability of their families, or in the kinds of teaching they had experienced in school. I will present some of these more unusual stories, thereby building up a picture of their heterogeneous, multi-faceted experiences of reading. However, clear commonalities do emerge and some generalisations can, I believe, be drawn from the data.

4.1.1 Early reading experiences at home and school

Most of the student-participants' first encounters with books or reading appear to have been more school- than home-related. In most of the play or games of their early lives at home, printed materials, drawing, writing with crayons or pencils on paper or boards, books, and board games seldom feature and these activities are interpreted as "schoolwork" rather than as "play". Khaya, when asked if he had writing or drawing materials available when he was growing up, replied, *"I was not familiar with those things. I liked playing ... I didn't have time to use those things"*. Instead they report play that involved outdoor, communal activities, such as street soccer or cricket, skipping games, rounders, boxing, hide-and-seek, marbles, catching snakes, hunting birds in the bushes, playing with sand or *"... with tin toys made by my father ..."* or *"... with dolls made from the tree"*. Vuyo mentions playing 'schools' because her 'cousin-sister' had a board and chalk and they could therefore role-play teachers and pupils¹. Mandoro remembers traditional games: *"... a game for praying for the rain"*, and *"... playing with sticks to train for war"*.

The physical contexts of the student-participants' childhood homes were not conducive to quiet, individual play activities, such as those reported by Bloch about Chloe in Section 2.6.3 where Chloe's play involved a great deal of reading and writing games, both alone and with her mother. Khaya reports having no quiet place to read in the small township home where he lived with his parents and three other children: *"I would be reading here, and someone would be doing this other thing there, or watching TV, which was not good"*. Referring to later in his

¹ Bulelwa Nosilela, when she read this chapter, added that in these school role-playing games, the child who was the 'teacher' would often carry a stick rather than chalk or a pencil.

life, he recalls: "*If I want to read I have to go to school [but] at school there is a lot of chaos ... when you arrive at school there are kids playing and they are confusing me*".

Questions about the kinds of reading materials available in the student-participants' homes yielded a very consistent result in one regard: in almost all 14 homes the book that was most commonly available was the Bible. Other religious literature, as Vuyo reports, "... *about the life and death and victories of Jesus Christ*", was also often mentioned. Bible reading was the most frequently reported literacy practice among the adults in the home and several participants reported that Bible reading was the only other reading they did outside of the school curriculum. This is echoed in Dison's account of Tsholofelo's home where reading and reciting the Bible passages was a frequent literacy practice (see Section 2.6.3).

Other home reading materials that the students mentioned "... *were books most related to our culture and tradition*", such as *Chosi Makhulu*, and books of Xhosa, Venda or Sotho folk tales. These stories were sometimes read, but more often told to the children, usually at bed time. The other kinds of books they remembered almost always had their origins in the schools that they or their siblings had attended: Shakespearian plays, *Wind at Dawn*, *Troubled Waters* and *Umakhwekhwetha*, a Xhosa detective story, are all school setbooks. However, although *Umakhwekhwetha* is a school setbook, it was described in some detail and with great affection and interest by several participants – it seems that it represents one of the few experiences of recreational reading that they had ever had.

The exception to this picture was Fundile's home. His father's job involved the maintenance of schools in the Eastern Cape. The work meant that he had ready access to reading matter for children and he brought home a motley range of books which had been rejected by the schools. Fundile recalls *A Horse and his Boy*, *Kid Colt*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Fun over Hill and Dale* (an old basal reader), some folk tales and Afrikaans stories. Ironically, Fundile also remembers *Biggles*, as Professor C had done (see Section 3.7.2). He said that: "*My mother placed them in a box and I used to read them every evening*". If Fundile didn't understand a book, (often because it was in English), his father would read it first and tell his son what it was about beforehand. This practice was a sort of 'framing': it afforded Fundile access to the books' meanings. Interestingly, he is the only student-participant who mentions an English book as a favourite, treasured book during his childhood: *A Dog Called Nelson* by Bill Naughton. He says it is a book he still owns. It is also worth noting that Fundile was the only one of the participants who chose to study English (literature) in his second year at Rhodes University.

Other kinds of reading took place in the participants' homes. Newspapers were read, often depending on the relative prosperity of the family and on the news itself: they might buy a

newspaper, as Tali reports, “... in some occasion when there was an event took place”.² *Bona* and *Drum*, which are both Xhosa-language magazines, were in some homes. They also mention letters from relatives, accounts and letters from furniture shops or from the schools about meetings. Mkululi reports: “My mother used to be cross when [my father] reads his accounts, telling everyone in the house about the mistake that particular shop has made on his account”.

The student-participants’ memories of learning how to read at school were all remarkably similar. Fundile describes his experiences thus: “The teacher would point with a stick to [the] blackboard where there would be alphabets, [and we had to] call after him. When he say ‘a’ we say ‘aaa’. It was fun and boring.” Later he was less ambivalent, describing the process as very tiring and boring: “... to keep on calling and calling ... It was too much, it was too much”. It seems that very early reading was from phonic symbols on a blackboard, not from books, and was a matter of memorization, through communal chanting of the phonic symbols which would later be combined to form words and then simple sentences. Rabo confirms this: “I read letter by letter. Later I combined them to make a word ... I was forgetful and have to memorise often ... I have to sing a word ... so that I don’t forget it”. Phakama relates: “They told me several times a word, and I said yes, I know it now, but when it comes to ask me that word, I really don’t remember what they told me”. She remembers being beaten for forgetting words.

In sum, it seems that learning to read had very little to do with comprehension and was taught by means of rote and drills. Thus in the participants’ experience learning to read took place exclusively within the Cognitive model where reading is understood more as a neural, decoding *skill* and less as a complex, comprehension *process* and *practice* in which all of a child’s personal and socio-cultural resources come into play. The tendency of learners from ex-DET schools to become “sound-centred readers” (Devine, 1988, in Section 2.2.1) is confirmed by these accounts. Rabo’s singing of written words seems to have been an attempt to give the symbols affective links and meanings.

It is clear that reading, at least in the initial years of schooling, was not expected to be a matter of comprehension, but rather of *decoding* – the word used repeatedly by the participants in relation to reading is ‘*pronunciation*’. It occurs so often as to be highly salient. Tali saw reading as a struggle to “... pronounce words ... and differentiate word tones”. Ongama says: “The teacher reads before you and you repeat what she says ... I could not [at that stage] understand what was read, even though it was in my mother tongue”. On several occasions, reading is even equated with ‘*recitation*’. Vuyo remembers being taught to recite poems by her ‘cousin-sister’ as a child, an activity she understood as ‘reading’. Reading is also

² Bulelwa reports that newspapers are bought most often when the Matriculation results come out.

associated with 'memorisation'. Phakama, like Tsholofelo in Dison's study (1997, in Section 2.6.3), recalls having to memorise her Sunday school stories and then to recite them to her grandmother later, after church.

Khaya, who had a Ghanaian teacher as a mentor in his later years at school, remembers the teacher recognising this phenomenon of reading without comprehension and telling him:

You are reading now but you don't know what you are reading. So he tried to take me off that pattern of reading and introduced a new thing ... close reading ... you must make sure that you are not just memorising what you are reading, you must read so that you understand what is happening and then be able to give your own examples. So ... I must imagine, I must have that picture in my mind.

This is the first time that Khaya, aged almost 18, was explicitly introduced to the idea that reading could be about "a picture in my mind", and be meaningfully linked with his own life experiences.

Learning to read was often, although not always, described as a struggle. Phakama reflects: "I was forced to read, I was not doing that because I want to ... I was not interested to read anything". Mpumezi says: "Reading was boring to me ... sometimes I used to run away when my grandmother wants to teach me some new words". On the other hand, Vuyo recalls that she loved learning to read. However, for Khaya reading was undoubtedly a struggle, as the following excerpt from an interview illustrates:

Sometimes my mother will ask me to read, then I will say no mamma, you don't know how to read, but you are making me to read – why? If you can't read then how can I read? Then she was explaining, that is why I am taking you to school so you can be able to read and write unlike me – I didn't have that chance to go to school ... you must go to school and read. So even when I am coming back from school, sometimes I want to go and play, but she would say no, you are not going to play, you are going to be here, you will read this thing.

There was no private, individual reading with the teacher during which s/he might check on a learner's progress. But the learners were expected to stand in front of the class in turn and read out aloud in the sense of a public performance. For some participants this was remembered as a deeply humiliating experience. Tali remembers his mistakes being mocked by the girls in the class. For others, like Vuyo, it was a confidence-building practice, because she was good at it – "I have no fear of reading" – and later she was identified as 'the class reader'. Madoda also remembers being assigned a similar role: "I was always picked by my teachers to go in front of the class and read aloud to the other students, not only in the English class but in History, Biology, Geography". It seems that the class reader is a celebrated person: the less competent readers listen to her/him. This practice also shows how reading is often valued as a public, oral performance. The practice of reading privately to an

adult, such as a parent, who is encouraging and checking on a child's progress was never mentioned, nor was reading silently, for fun. When I asked Ongama whether his mother ever listened to him read at home, he was surprised and replied: *"No, because my mother knew that I am a clever guy. That is usually done for a person who is lazy at school"*.³ However, children were expected to read aloud at home, but for entirely different purposes. Ongama mentions he was often required to read the Bible for his grandmother. Others remember having to read the family letters aloud to the adults, even in families where both parents could read themselves. There are parallels here with Heath's account of the Trackton families where reading was often a public affair in which the meanings of texts would be negotiated orally in the group (see Section 2.4.3). In the student-participants' homes, it seems that when a child read aloud at home it was also understood either as a service to the family, or as a form of display, a shared celebration of the child's new-found literacy. Mpumezi recalls: *"My parents were surprised that I can read"*.

The detail in which I have presented the early home- and school-based reading experiences of the participants above is because they are the matrix out of which the attitudes and assumptions about the purposes and nature of reading developed later. Greaney (in Grabe *et al.*, 2002: 69) reminds us that the home environment is "the single most critical factor in the development of literacy". He also shows that "... the amount of voluntary reading and number of reading materials in the home are positively correlated with reading achievement". It is also worth remembering Pressley's account (*ibid.*) of the nature of environments that support and encourage emergent literacy – very few of these characteristics (described in Section 2.6.3) were common in the participants' homes as they were growing up. But even more significantly for this research, the home and school environments described above generated the students' reading behaviours and values and thus their potential for academic success. In the following section I will discuss the student-participants' assumptions about the purposes and nature of reading that emerged from the data. I will link Heath's categories of uses for reading (see Section 2.4.3) with the idea of frames (in Section 3.8.1).

4.1.2 The student-participants' frames for the purposes and nature of reading

As might be assumed from the almost ubiquitous presence and use of the Bible and other religious literature in the students' homes, religious practice and the development of moral character frame notions of literacy in these contexts. This is what Heath describes as 'confirmational' or 'instructional' types of use for reading (1983: 198, 220). In this category reading has the purpose of gaining support for beliefs already held or for increasing knowledge of a topic. The responses to questions about what the students felt they had learnt from their Matriculation setbooks demonstrate this frame repeatedly: Thembisa says: "[From

³ Bulelwa adds here that teaching reading is hardly ever understood as a parental matter: it is entirely the teacher's domain.

my setbooks] ... *I learnt that someone must be satisfied with what God has given them and must not do evil things in order to have things because sooner or later it will come back to you*". Khaya responds similarly: "*You must know what you want for yourself and work for it. You must not do everything in front of you, you have to know what is right and ... wrong. You have to think before making a decision*". Tali refers to an article he had read in the *Sowetan* newspaper which had taught him the importance of young people learning to respect their own parents and family first before they can offer a similar respect to others. So the notion that reading is closely related to the building of moral wisdom occurs frequently in the data.

The dominance of the 'instructional' frame in the students' thinking about reading may also have developed out of the powerful tradition of oral story telling in the students' cultural backgrounds. The Xhosa 'iintsomi', and other Venda and Sotho folktales, seem to have the purpose of developing moral character in children. Vuyo says that iintsomi "*... were useful to me, because they left messages and warnings against doing anything wrong or that broke the law*". Mpumezi says: "*Sometimes if I did something wrong [my grandmother] used to tell me a story which is similar to that thing I have done. She was trying to convince me how bad that thing is and I must not do it again*". It is interesting, however, that the stories were not heavily didactic or moralistic in tone. They are described as both frightening and amusing, seeming to combine the appeal of both ghost or horror stories and comedy, a combination that is quite unusual in traditional Western children's stories. Vuyo remembers her grandmother acting out characters, dancing and singing. She describes the following story as very funny. It was

... about a woman who was cruel, eating the meat of humans. One day she was visited by her brother's children. [This was despite the admonitions of the children's parents]. She pretended as if she was kind. While greeting them she kissed them and bit the mouth of the youngest. She planned to wake up in the middle of the night to take all of them and kill, but she was unsuccessful because the children went to their father ... this woman was eaten by dogs while she was trying to catch the children ...

Iintsomi, the participants told me, are always told after dark. If they are told before the sun goes down they are believed to bring a curse on the family. It seems that iintsomi are not simply 'light entertainment', but have very strong links to the culture's belief systems. They are taken very seriously: in much the same way, the Bangladeshi children in Mines's study (2000) understood the fictional place in the story of *The Tunnel* as "... very, very, very dangerous" (see Section 2.7.3).

Apart from the religious or moral motivation for reading, the student-participants also framed the uses of reading in 'instrumental' terms, another of Heath's categories (1983). Instrumental reading is used to achieve practical goals in daily life, although I will also use this category to refer to achieving any of life's practical goals, including long-term goals. When asked what they learnt from their setbooks at school many of the participants cited an improvement in

their language skills as a benefit, referring often to improvement in vocabulary knowledge and, again, pronunciation. Some think that the reading improved their grammar, mentioning specifically their use of tense and punctuation. Another common response was that reading prevents laziness: Vuyo says “... *it protects me from becoming lazy*”; Khaya suggests that “... *it stops my mind from becoming rusty*”, and Thembisa says “... *it exercises my mind*”. This frame draws attention to the strenuous effort involved in reading: it is mental exercise that is useful for getting on in life but not necessarily enjoyable.⁴ Tali, too, claims not to have found reading enjoyable, but “... *I just want to pass*”. A similar frame is seen in Phakama’s comment about the usefulness of reading: “*It will help you to find a job*”. Both comments indicate a powerfully practical and instrumental frame for the uses of reading and must be understood in the context of the students’ lives in which poverty and unemployment are daily realities (see Section 1.3.1 which describes the students’ socio-economic backgrounds).

Finally, a frame for the uses of reading that was referred to, although it is much less dominant than the previous two kinds of frame, was Heath’s ‘news-related’ category (1983). This is an important frame for the ability to make ‘extratextual’ inferences when reading. Reading, the students say, helps one to get “*up-to-date*”, and “*get information about the world*”. Vuyo remembers a teacher who sometimes brought them a Sunday newspaper: “*He wanted us to know what was happening around the world because he said we don’t know anything and we had to understand these things because we were doing History*”. The same teacher told them “... *about 9/11*” and “... *the presidents of other countries*”, but she says, laughingly, “... *I didn’t like politics*” and that she would rather read Revlon advertisements about skincare and make up. Khaya’s teacher made them all contribute 20 cents each week with which he would buy the class a Sunday newspaper, sections of which would be shared amongst the class members. However, it is clear that there was never wide, habitual access to newspapers in the student-participants’ lives prior to university.

The categories from Heath’s framework for the types of uses for reading which are largely absent from the data I collected are the ‘recreational’ and ‘critical’ uses (p.258). None of the students referred to the joys of recreational reading, of entering imaginatively into a “text world” (Kucer, 1985:318), apart from their appreciation of the book *Umakhwekhwetha*. This confirms Mashawa’s findings about South African students’ lack of engagement in reading for recreational purposes (1994, see Section 2.3.4). Elley’s research (1991, Section 2.3.4) demonstrated the powerful effects of extensive reading on improved EAL student reading performance. But clearly there was a dearth of interesting, recreational reading in most of the student-participants’ homes and the absence of school libraries, and poor funding generally, meant that schools were unable to do much to compensate for this. Thus the instrumental and instructional categories dominate in the data because, as Fundile says:

⁴ Bulelwa confirms this perception: she says reading and learning are perceived as “necessary pain”.

Xhosa books are really interesting, [but] it's just that you are not encouraged to read them. Because there is this thing that you are going to need English more than your home language. So you find many times that you just put the Xhosa books aside and read the English books.

The 'critical' category, which only appears in the townspeople's more varied and extensive uses for reading in Heath's research (1983:258), is also absent from the student-participants' accounts of their reading experiences, in much the same way as it was absent in the homes of Roadville and Trackton. It is possible that the absence of this 'critical' category is related to the high cultural value placed on reading as having a powerful religious or moral function (see my discussion earlier in this Section). This being so, a critical attitude towards texts would be viewed as inappropriate. Grabe *et al.* point out some of the implications of this:

... some social groups see texts as sacred and unchanging ... others view texts as sources of truth to be studied; yet others value texts as alternative interpretations of realities and facts that can be disputed ... L2 readers moving from one orientation to another are likely to encounter some difficulties in reading texts for purposes that do not complement cultural assumptions; these students may need ... assistance in making these shifts (2002:60).

A final frame about reading, relating not so much to its *uses* as to its *nature*, is that the reading process is closely linked with oracy, with the two practices often being overlaid in the participants' prior experiences of learning. This is demonstrated in the ways the students were taught to read, in which the teachers would read a text and then the learners would repeat it aloud, chanting together, thereby memorising it (see Section 4.1.1). The close link between reading and oracy is also shown in Khaya's recollection of reading in Grade 1: "*We were not doing reading that much. They [the teachers] were reading the books themselves and then telling us the story*".

More evidence of this phenomenon comes from the repeated examples that the participants gave of trying to read a text, failing to make any sense of it, and then relying on a teacher or more experienced peer to explain the content of the text to them orally. Khaya remembers dealing with reading homework in this way: "*I would try and read, and then would ask my sister to explain it to me*". Setbooks at school were often read aloud in class, after which the teacher would set about presenting an oral explanation of the text. These explanations of an English text would be offered in the students' home language. Print was seldom independent of speech. Rather there was a pattern of 'reading-then-telling', with most textual meanings being transmitted orally. This may well have been a function of learning in a second language, but also seems to have been part of the home culture as well. Khaya's sister, the first member of the family to be able to read, would often read aloud to the family in the evenings, but "*... sometimes she even include some things that were not even in the books just to make the reading fun*". There is a sense in which reading alone was not interesting enough in itself and

she employs the traditions of story-telling to entertain the family in a way that was more comfortable and familiar to them. Section 4.3 will show that this is a pattern that the students carried with them into their tertiary reading assignments.

4.1.3 The student-participants' attitudes to reading and readers

The student-participants gave mixed, ambiguous responses to questions concerning the ways in which they valued reading or readers, an ambiguity encapsulated in Madoda's remark: *"I don't want to be known for reading ...[even though] I sometimes identify myself with people who read a lot"*. A person who reads a lot is, on the one hand, learned and wise and even, to use Sindi's term, *"brave"*. She says, *"They exercise their brains and think a lot"*. Reading gives one *"status and recognition"* claims Khaya. Mandoro agrees: *"I like someone who reads a lot because he/she [is] usually successful in his/her studies at school or university and gets a good job after finishing his studies"*. So a reader is admired as someone who is potentially successful, and who, in terms of the family economy, will be able to help 'put bread on the table'.

On the other hand, when I asked the participants what attitude they would have to a peer who was "always inside with a book" (see Appendix B) there was a strongly negative response. *"That boy has a gender problem"*, says Fundile, *"... it's like, you don't conform with that society. You are not considered a boy ... you are in between. You're 'a moffie'. It's best to be out with the guys"*. Khaya, who knew someone of this description, says that his peer group all thought he was effeminate, although *"... truthfully, he was not"*. Thembisa, responding to a similar question about a girl in her class, says such a person *"... would give that feeling that [she] is better than everybody else. That child would not be accepted ..."* Tali says in his community a person who reads a lot is understood as someone who *"would probably go mad"*, or *"such a person is crazy"*.⁵

When I asked the students to think of words in their home languages that were more or less equivalent to 'nerd' or 'bookworm', (see Appendix A) many of them were unable respond with similar terms, an interesting enough result in itself. But the rough translations some students did offer were: *"ungqondongqondo"*, which connotes "someone too bright for their own good" or a person with a hint of arrogance; *"umfundimani"*, a term used by less educated people to refer to more educated people who are assuming a superior status; and *"ikumsha"*, which simply means someone who can speak English well, a notion that seems to be conflated with being well-educated and empowered.⁶ The connotations of these terms highlight the ambiguities with which a reader, assumed to be an English speaking, educated,

⁵ Bulelwa says that the slang for a 'crazy reader' is 'uyasayilona', accompanied by a gesture, a circling finger pointing to the head.

⁶ I am again indebted to Bulelwa for all these translations and interpretations.

influential person, is also regarded with some suspicion. When they become students, therefore, the participants would be required to reconcile these ambiguities as they become enculturated into the university. They would have to bear the weight of their families' expectations and pride alongside the resentment and distrust with which they might be regarded in the same communities. Reading could imply acculturation and a loss of identity, as Gee suggests (1990, in Section 2.4.1).

The student-participants have surprisingly negative attitudes to people who can't read although a few students said that they felt sorry for them and would try and help them (some of the students' own parents and grandparents were unable to read). More often the students describe such people as "*lazy*". There was a contempt for those that don't read.⁷ Phakama says, "*... the people [say] if you want something to be a secret you must write it down because no black people can [find] out about that*". A person who does not read is "*not on the move*" and "*knows nothing*", "*can only gossip and lacks information*", "*doesn't want to bother themselves with issues*", "*has no language skills ... such a person is unacceptable*". It seems that again there are ambiguities here, because whilst there is pity, 'illiterate' people are also not regarded as having literacies or competencies of their own that might be worthy of respect. In this the students demonstrate the values of the larger society which see a clear separation between 'literacy' and 'illiteracy', illiteracy being associated with deficit and disempowerment. In Xhosa society illiteracy is associated with the 'red'⁸ people from traditional, rural communities who are 'backward' and 'primitive'. These attitudes have clear connections with Street's description of the 'autonomous' model of literacy (described in Section 2.4.2) which conflates the ability to read and write with cognitive superiority and advancement.

4.1.4 Reading and identity

In this section I will draw attention to data that relates to the student-participants' enjoyable literacy experiences and the significance of this. In Section 2.4.2 I discussed the importance of the formation of identity in literacy development when I described Newfield *et al.*'s (2002) Multiliteracies Project at the University of the Witwatersrand. When I asked the students what they would read for fun (see Appendix B) their responses were low-key, as though this was not a possibility that they had often considered. Some mentioned magazines and newspapers but Khaya responded more fully: as a member of the Pan African Congress (PAC), he would read PAC pamphlets and articles about such heroes of the anti-apartheid struggle as Robert Sobukwe. It seems he was motivated to read when there were issues of his political identity

⁷ This observation was challenged by Thembisa who later wrote: "I don't think that this is what black people think about illiterate people, we respect our parents and understand that circumstances caused them to be unable to read".

⁸ Rural people in Xhosa society are called 'red' because they are associated with the soil.

involved. He also mentioned that he liked reading about Reggae and Kwaito.⁹ Another student said: *"I like Xhosa poems very much"*, especially praise poetry. Others mentioned reading about sport, particularly soccer. When I asked them what television programs they had watched or enjoyed while they were growing up, Tali recalled one programme that he had enjoyed *"... because we know the background of the presenters, because they live with us"*. This evidence, along with their enjoyment of being told stories, such as 'iintsomi', and of reading books like *Umakhwethakhwetha*, shows that the students instinctively sought literacy materials with which they could develop affective and cultural links. These materials could have supported their emergent literacies through the development of their identity, participation and self-esteem as learners, but clearly such materials were scarce in their homes and schools. Support in the form of school or municipal libraries was largely unavailable. Very few students report having had school libraries, (often confusing a library with the school book storeroom). The township children could have joined the local libraries but their parents and teachers seldom encouraged them to do so. They never reported being given explicit guidance in how to use or enjoy a library. Furthermore, the experience of having to read and learn in a poorly understood, often poorly taught, additional language must have created a sense of the lack of relevance or reality in the reading materials that were available. There was even some resistance to reading in English, an idea only expressed only by Khaya, but possibly shared by the others. He says:

I saw no reason why we were taught in English. I mean we are Xhosa, but they are making ... they are forcing us to read in English. Like when the teacher is coming in to the classroom we'll have to stand up and say "Good morning teacher", all those things, but we are Xhosa. So, I didn't like that – I wanted my home language.

Khaya's remark recalls the schoolchild in Newfield and Stein's project who said, "If you paint another language on my skin, my soul cannot breathe" (2002, in Section 2.4.2.). In South Africa, English as LOLT cannot be a neutral, autonomous vehicle for literacy for the reasons I discussed in Sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 (Gee, 1990 and Street, 1993). Discourses of all kinds represent ideologies, values, social and political histories. It is likely that, for the students in this study, reading can signify ideological complicity in the 'Discourse' of English or possibly a subtle sense of being colonised. Johns (1997:64,65) notes that there is a "cost of affiliation" for novice academics wishing to join a given knowledge community. It involves "considerable sacrifices ... that create personal and social distance between them and their families and communities". Educated people in black, working-class communities can be regarded with a degree of resentment, as I showed above. Thus for all students, but particularly for students from poor, working-class backgrounds, reading is an unimaginably more complex practice, not simply a cognitive and linguistic skill.

⁹ These are both styles of music associated with township culture.

The ethnographic endeavour is to build up a rich and complex picture of a culture at work. The account above gives a detailed picture of the students' culturally-shaped experiences of reading. In the next section, the students move into a rather different cultural space, a university department. I will now describe the History department's frames about the nature and purpose of reading.

Section 4.2 The History department's frames for reading

Although there were many shared values about what it means to 'read for a degree' amongst the History department's teaching staff, there were also some individual differences in approach and methodology. I will suggest, on the basis of my observations, that the values about reading in History 101 represent the broader views of the department. History 102's mode of examination and its policy about 'readings' make it somewhat atypical, not only in terms of the department, but in terms of the Humanities faculty as well. However, I will argue that broadly, in both History 101 and History 102, the department's ideology with regard to the nature of literacy and learning is essentially expressivist in character, although History 102 seems to be informed by a stronger version of the model¹⁰.

The History department's teachers and its courses were introduced in the previous chapter. I will now explore their values about reading and the ways in which these values were evidenced in the data, dealing first with History 101 and then with History 102.

4.2.1 History 101

In their very first encounter with the department, in the first lecture of the year, Professor M talked to all the students about "*the development of a good, enquiring, critical mind through engagement with a range of books*" and he encouraged them to use the library to locate reading resources relevant to the course. In these few introductory words History was expressing its fundamental frames about learning and literacy. Spelt out, the message to the students was that they were expected to become self-directed, reflective readers, driven by personal interest, independently locating a wide range of relevant reading materials for the course. These, then, appear to be the broad assumptions underpinning the department's view of how a student is to become historically literate, and, as I will show, these values were often reiterated and elaborated, both implicitly and explicitly. Because they emphasise independent, self-directed learning in a 'print-rich' environment, (see Section 2.3), they demonstrate the influence of expressivism. Clearly, for the students in this study for whom reading was primarily a cognitive exercise, these expressivist-style frames were radically new.

Professor M describes a good History 1 student as one who shows "*interest and enthusiasm ... who asks questions of what a lecturer is saying ... and asks questions of a reading*" (The

¹⁰ Professor M confirmed this interpretation during the later interview I had with him after reading my findings.

use of the preposition 'of' in this quotation is worth noting: he does not use 'about', therefore implying that the content of the book or lecture is already understood and a further, more advanced stage of critical evaluation is needed). Dr W describes a good student as "... *bright, alert and curious ... excited by the acquisition of new knowledge*". In a similar vein, Professor M suggests that a good student will have "... *interesting new ideas and angles on an issue*". He seems to devalue content knowledge, or 'facts', when he says: "... *you can always find content in books, journals, the Internet ...*". Dr W describes content as the mere "*ingredients*", which, having been assembled and mixed, need to be "*baked*", undergoing transformation from "*batter ... to cake*", in the process of being subjected to "*mental heat*". What this 'baking' metaphor seems to show is that, whilst the department does value historical knowledge, it is much more important for the students to develop and express views about the knowledge, the 'baking', rather than the 'ingredients'. I will refer to Dr W's image again later (see Section 4.3).

The History 101 tutorial book says: "*Students should feel free to voice their own opinions on issues, to raise questions and problems and to challenge particular ideas that they have come across in lectures or reading ...*". Professor M. says a good first-year year essay should show evidence of "*grappling ... with a reading or a question*", as well as of extensive reading and research. They must present "... *a sound analysis, and ... arguments around questions*". (Again Professor M's choice of preposition, 'around', implies a more sophisticated level of argumentation). So important is this value of independent, individual engagement in historical texts and issues, that the History department assigns 10% of the final year mark, in History 1, 2 and 3, for what they term "*participation*". They describe this quality as the extent to which a student shows a personal involvement, or "*immersion*", in the course, an ability to discuss, argue and transform information convincingly, even passionately, in tutorials and essays. Glen, one of the third year tutors, says that he was selected for a tutorship in the History department not because he had particularly high marks, but because he was "*passionate*" about History. Again, the importance placed on personally-motivated learning in the affective domain demonstrates expressivist values.

Interestingly, Northedge (2003, in Section 2.5.1) also values participation in learning, seeing it as integral to the process of gaining membership in a new knowledge community. Participation is a central idea in socio-cultural understandings of learning. Northedge says lecturers must construct intermediate levels of discourse allowing for the unskilled participation of novice academics (2003:22). Here student participation is deliberately scaffolded. The student gradually progresses through a teacher-led learning sequence, through ZPDs, and is not expected to participate generatively and actively at once. This is a more refined understanding of the idea of participation than that of the History department.

In a handout giving advice about essay-writing, which Amanda had prepared for her tutees, two of the 17 pieces of advice she offers involve reading. She advises them as follows: *"READ!!!! As much as possible. The more you read the better you will understand your topic and the better you will be able to explain it to me"*. The second point is: *"Select the most VIP source materials: you can't use everything you find, so be selective and DON'T RAMBLE!"* What these exhortations demonstrate is the very high value placed on reading but, at the same time, the assumption that the students do not require specific guidelines about what or how to read: the handout seems to suggest that the students are already able to identify and select 'VIP' source materials and to assess them critically. More explicit guidance was offered about how to write in an academic way – the other 15 points in this handout related to essay writing. Amanda's document indicates that there was comparatively less help offered for reading in the new knowledge community.

Critical reading skills are central to the departmental values – *"an ability to see what lies beneath what is written"*, as such skills are described by Professor M. Students must *"... get away from being in awe of the written word in books"* and must be able to look for the ideology underlying a text. He also highlights the importance of a related skill: a student must be able to look at a book and identify what kind of book it is, whether it is popular History, historiography, a monograph, or other kinds of historical writing.

In the second term, in the course designed by Dr W, a similar assumption is made. Many different types of historical source material are given as tutorial readings every week: there are diaries, letters, extracts from novels, press clippings, political speeches, autobiographies and propaganda, demonstrating the huge variety, and contested nature, of historical sources. Some mediation is offered to the students. Appendix K (taken from the course's tutorial book) shows the kinds of guidance that the students are offered as they read for a particular tutorial. In this example the students must extract 'history' from a political pamphlet and an autobiography, both written in a period for which it was unlikely that they had any extratextual frames. The lecturer clearly acknowledges this when she says that, *"Both Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah are famous African leaders and heads of state. Much more about them and their careers can easily be found on the internet and the library"*. The questions from this example from the tutorial book indicates that the lecturer, Dr W, is indeed aware of the need to scaffold the discussion about these readings. However, I contend that much more prior framing of the readings needs to be offered to the History 1 students before they can contextualise, comprehend or argue convincingly on the basis of these readings. This view holds true particularly in the case of underprepared students, such as those in the study.

It was difficult to assess how much of these readings from Nyerere and Nkrumah any of the students in the tutorial had been able to understand. The four student-participants I observed

were silent throughout the tutorial. The other students had an animated discussion about a range of topics with only the most distant connection to the readings themselves. These included the way elderly people are more valued in African than Western culture, Plato's ideas about democracy, the difference between socialism and capitalism, whether Mark Shuttleworth should have spent R2 000 000 on going into space, cross-disciplinary degrees, Kadar Asmal and several other topics. In my field notes I comment on the tutorial, "*WAY OFF READINGS!!!*" Leaving the tutorial room, I asked Tali what he had learnt. He said: "*I didn't understand ... maybe [it was about] the Africans protecting their culture and tradition*", clearly reaching for frames from his own experience with which to make sense of this wide-ranging discussion, but he was unable to locate appropriate frames, only an inappropriate one (see Taber, 2001, Section 2.5).

I have linked Reid and MacLachlan's categorisation (1994, in Section 3.8.1) of the different kinds of frames involved in reading comprehension with my observations of student-participants' reading during the course of their first year of study in the History department. I have listed, although not exhaustively, some of the frames that I believe would be necessary for them to read productively in this context. This list includes a complex range of extratextual, intertextual, circumtextual and intratextual frames. Students, for example, would need to be able to use an academic library and online research tools and resources – these are mainly extratextual skills. They would need to be able to identify, contextualise and make use of a wide variety of textual genres, such as autobiography, pamphlets, academic journals, popular history and so on. This is a kind of intertextual framing. They would need to use circumtextual frames effectively, such as being able to locate and make sense of dates of publication, indexes, contents pages, references or footnotes. They would need to be able to skim and scan a text (using intratextual framing) whilst at the same time making a broad judgement as to its relevance (using extratextual frames). They would need intratextual frames to make sense of the difficult academic language itself, the like of which many students would be encountering for the first time. They would need an extensive set of frames about world affairs, both past and present, that is, extratextual frames. It is no wonder that the tutorial about Nyerere and Nkrumah confused Tali: his response showed that he had none of these frames.

In the following section I describe some of the ways in which these frames for reading were communicated to the students.

4.2.2 History 101: some observations of the values being enacted

In the second term I observed Dr W explicitly teach critical reading skills. She displayed a short extract from Lawrence Vambe's *An Ill-fated People* on an overhead projector. It deals with the arrival of the white pioneers in Mashonaland towards the end of the 19th century from

the point of view of the Shona inhabitants. The students were asked to suggest what was 'fact' and what was 'opinion' in the passage; the facts were underlined and the opinions circled. She went on to explain the importance of being able to distinguish between the two in any historical text before one can offer an analysis or interpretation. In textual criticism, she explained, the date of a text's production is important, thus, in Vambe's text, produced in 1972, the independence struggle in Zimbabwe was in progress. It is only on the basis of such an analysis, "... *bringing in everything you know*", that one can develop one's own interpretations of events. This exercise took about 15 minutes of a formal lecture.

However, this incident described above was one of the few examples I observed of values about reading in the History department being *explicitly* taught. For the most part it seems to be assumed that the students will be able, by exposure, to absorb the departmental culture as it concerns reading.

Professor M discussed skimming as an important reading skill at university but claimed that one cannot teach it. In her interview, Dr W said that she thought that it was important to discuss the difference between history books and journals with students that are new to the study of academic History. However, I did not observe this happening in tutorials or lectures. One student, not in the study, complained that, even using indexes and contents pages correctly, she would "... *end up in the middle of a chapter and you've got no background knowledge to know what's relevant or not*". Several students in Amanda's tutorial, not just those in the study, said they had difficulty locating the recommended resources in the university library, but even having found a book, they could not make their way around it in order to find the information they were looking for. So, at least for the students participating in this study, and possibly for the others too, some of the *skills* for academic reading are unavailable. Furthermore the kinds of world knowledge, or extratextual frames, that would enable them to make sense of academic texts and participate in the new knowledge community are also often absent.

In the tutorials I frequently observed tutor and tutees either ignoring readings or dealing with them too broadly and superficially, merely using them as a springboard for wide-ranging and unfocussed discussions. For example, the following text was the opening paragraph of a three-page reading for the first tutorial of the year and deals with the foundational issues of Historiography – the focus of the first four weeks of the course:

At one extreme there are those like G.R.Elton who maintain that humility in the face of evidence and training in the technicalities of research have steadily enlarged the stock of certain historical knowledge;... At the other extreme, Theodore Zeldin holds that all he (or any historian) can offer his readers is his personal vision of the past, and the materials out of

which they in turn can fashion a personal vision which corresponds to their own aspirations and sympathies: 'everyone has the right to find his own perspective' (Tosh, 1991).

On an intratextual level, the syntactic complexity, the nominalisations, the metaphors (for example, "the *stock* of ... knowledge", the idea of "*holding*" a view, or "a *vision* of the past"), could cause some processing difficulties, especially for EAL students. Not many students would have extratextual frames available to identify or contextualise the three historians mentioned, nor, in terms of their circumtextual frames, be able to discern that the reference, 'Tosh, 1991', signified that one historian was overviewing the ideological positions of two other historians. They would also probably not be able to make sense of these historians' views about the nature of history as 'structuralist' and 'post-structuralist' on the basis of the kind of history they had experienced at school. As novice academics, they would have few frames for "*the technicalities of research*" or for research validity. Finally, a frame for "*everyone has the right to find his own perspective*", would, most likely, be absent in students educated largely in a reproductive paradigm (see Section 2.6.1). But apart from the tutor's comment about the "*verbose*" nature of History texts, this important tutorial reading, setting up the idea of history as 'constructed' probably for the first time in most of the students' experience, was not discussed at all.

Dr W claims to have "... *no good answer*" to the question, "*Can reading be explicitly taught?*" She says: "*I don't know how to do it*", even though she was aware of the need and had, herself, attempted to do so, both in the lecture described at the beginning of this section and in her carefully designed programme of readings and questions on the departmental website in Term 2. She said:

... basically we throw [the students] in. We give them readings, we respond to what they are doing, we ask them to write essays which are going to show how well they are understanding things and how they are using the information ... you dialogue ... it works by trial and error: you correct them until they get the right idea ...

It seems that learning to read in History is understood to occur naturally, mostly by exposure to departmental values. Expressivist frames about reading and learning do not value structured learning programs but believe that learning occurs 'painlessly', through immersion, or, by 'acquisition' rather than by conscious, deliberate learning (Gee, 1990).

Ten out of the 14 students registered for History 101 passed it in the June exams, mostly with percentages of below 60%. As I explained in the previous chapter, only nine students continued with History. All nine of the student-participants left doing History 102 failed it, except one, Mkululi, who got 51%. I will argue that a significant reason for their failure was that the History 102 curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are informed by a stronger version of Expressivism than History 101. I will show that because no scaffolding at all is offered the

students in History 102, epistemological access is made much more difficult for poor, working-class students. Evidence for this view emerges in the data that follows.

4.2.3 History 102

Professor C's reasons for assigning no readings for tutorials or essays are as follows: he says "*I object 100% to the concept of readings*" because it is "*a type of censorship*" or "*fascist control*", a dangerous trend in the university, which came in, he thinks, during the late 1980's. He refers, denigratingly, to "*10 pages from a photocopied chapter*" as "*babyfood stuff*" but "*dangerous as well*". The History department, he says, wants to "*prolong the Age of Gutenberg*".¹¹ He gives students "*permission to read ... we congratulate them for reading*", but he emphatically does not believe in assigning any readings for his course. So whilst reading is highly valued, there is an emphasis on self-directed reading, in line with Whole Language principles (see Section 2.3.). Thus students must read as their individual interests dictate. Reading is not monitored or controlled, and there are few, shared, communal reading experiences in History 102, as there are in History 101. Clearly the value at work in this curriculum decision is individualism, a hallmark of expressive views of learning.

Professor C says that one of the course's objectives is to "*rub [the student's] noses in aspects of human crisis ... showing that humans are very precariously poised at the moment*". In this sense the course seems to have a strong 'moral' motivation in the sense of raising students' awareness, and some alarm, about human beings' potential for self-destruction and anarchy. Ten out of the 50 History 102 lectures are on the threats of globalisation and five deal with environmental destruction (see Appendix I). Many students flock to Professor C's lectures and he has an almost guru-like status on the university campus. He conceptualises himself as a teacher who stimulates reflection and debate – this is also an expressivist idea because teachers in this paradigm see themselves as guides and facilitators, rather than experts who control the learning process (see Section 2.3).

Many of his other views demonstrate Professor C's inherent expressivism. For example, he claims that the course is designed to "*amuse and entertain*". Smith, (1978, in Section 2.3) claims that the ideal conditions for learning are "playfulness and autonomy". History 102 is designed to give students space to ask questions, to be curious, to have freedom and to explore although he is distressed that fewer and fewer students seem show these qualities, and that most students are "... *profoundly bored*". Students, he says, "*loll in front of TVs*", and "*can't or won't read because they are lazy*". His course aims to challenge their intellectual and moral lethargy.

¹¹ This term refers to the culture of the book which emerged in Europe with the advent of the printing press.

He also believes the university as a whole does not value or encourage this kind of freedom and intellectual autonomy. He believes most students *"simply parrot what lecturers say"*. Most lecturers want this of students, but he sees himself as at odds with the prevailing intellectual culture of the institution. In his interview he told me:

Note this: for most lecturers the most important thing is to get students to absorb something from a reading, but for me, the most important thing is to get them to ask questions ... [But] they can't ask questions – they can only provide answers.

He cites Einstein at Princeton who would enter a lecture hall and ask: *"Any questions?"* If there were none he would say, *"See you next week"*. He admires students who can challenge and provoke their lecturers, hopefully politely, but he even welcomes an aggressive challenge. But he says that most South African students have *"fascist personalities"*. He says, *"I can make them say anything I like"* because they are *"uncritical, frightened of authority and submit far too easily"*.

However, although Professor C is very articulate about his views on learning and reading, he seems to be largely unaware of the theory underlying them. He said he didn't know where his views had originated but assumed they were based on the way he himself had been taught. As Johns (1997:1) points out, *"Most of us do not discuss our theories on an abstract level; in fact, we may not acknowledge that we have them. But we do."*

To sum up, wide, general reading is essential for Professor C's course, but it is implicitly assumed to be the responsibility of individual students. It is also assumed that students will have multiple frames of reference from their prior or current reading experiences and that his course takes its place within an already established infrastructure of world knowledge. This assumption is a logical extension of another of Professor C's views: that universities are *elite* institutions and it is not part of a lecturer's brief to prepare students for university study. Nomalanga says,

If you are not already widely read, you won't get involved with this course ... people who benefit from this course are readers of newspapers – in fact any book from the Library ... you have to read widely ... you have to have a knowledge of world affairs and be able to fill in the gaps ...

In this observation Nomalanga grasps the significance of extratextual frames in reading comprehension and that History 102 makes particular demands on the students with regard to the need for wide-ranging, extratextual frames.

4.2.4 History 102: Some observations of the values being enacted

Because expressivist-style teachers are largely non-directive, consciously avoiding authoritarian roles, Professor C offers little explicit guidance to tutors for the management of their tutorials or the topics for discussions. When I asked Glen about how he decided on topics for tutorials he said, *"It's up to me"*, and that his method was to ask the students themselves what had interested or troubled them from the lectures. This learner-centredness is characteristic of expressivism. Nomalanga says: *"He [Professor C] doesn't like telling us what to do ... he doesn't plan tuts ... it's a spontaneous thing"*. Many tutorials on this course started with the tutor asking, *"OK: what do you guys want to talk about?"* I observed one tutor show real irritation when there was a long silence in response to this question. Glen eventually sensed that the 'free-for-all' approach was unhelpful because his students were unresponsive. So he attempted a more structured approach and asked his tutees to read a book related to the course and to present it to the other students in the tutorials. Clearly the Expressive model doesn't work equally well with all tutors or all students. My fieldnotes record that the student-participants contributed virtually nothing to the discussions and for the most part appeared passive and disengaged.

In one tutorial the topic concerned environmental issues, in which such terms as "biodiversity", "Green Peace", and "tree-huggers", "CFCs" and "DDTs" were being used. Few of these extratextual frames were available to the students in the study as I deduced from informal interviews afterwards. In fact Fundile said that he confused CFCs with KFC, (Kentucky Fried Chicken), a clear case of being unable to *'fill in the gaps'* (see Nomalanga's comment earlier in this section). On another occasion, I observed Mpumezi misunderstand the notion of "think tank", assuming it had something to do with World War 2. The tutor explained this term as meaning, *"Academics hired by big corporations to tell lies for them"*, which may have been even more confusing. Because vital extratextual frames are missing Fundile and Mpumezi had reached for humiliatingly inappropriate frames.

On another occasion Glen, who was discussing the trial examination with his tutees, told them: *"You guys can say almost anything so long as you back it up"*. He illustrated this by a response to the question 'Football' that Mpumezi had written in a trial examination. Glen had given him almost full marks for writing the following answer:

I don't think that football has an effect in world crisis. I think it was developed just for entertaining people. Also to keep people busy so that crime and violence would decrease.

Football was part of Mpumezi's personal history, he had an existing frame for it, and he was thus able to confidently challenge Professor C's view that sport has links with warfare and represents an opportunity for men to display legitimate aggression or emotion. Because

Mpumzezi had the appropriate extratextual frame, he was able to be critically engaged with the topic and develop an independent standpoint.

4.2.5 Nomalanga's tutorials

I explained in the previous chapter that Nomalanga was given the responsibility of taking a tutorial consisting mostly of the students in this study. I will describe her somewhat different approach to tutoring because, although she herself had thrived in Professor C's course in her first-year, (she had got 86% for the History 102 examination), she was attempting a more focussed, teacher-led approach to tutoring when I observed her, probably because she was aware of the need to be deliberately remedial. However, because her methods involved some deliberate scaffolding, I will describe some aspects of her tutorials. Her tutees found her helpful, and her approach represents the kinds of interventions that could, potentially, be more generally useful to other students too, because all of them are on a 'continuum' of relative preparedness (see my discussion of this in Section 3.5.3).

In one tutorial she decided to deal with a particular issue raised by the course, that is, our own responsibilities in a global culture characterised by rampant consumerism. She elicited a list of the students' dreams and aspirations and wrote their ideas up on the board, one by one, as they suggested them. The students quickly came up with a list of some 16 items ranging from "... to drive expensive cars" and "have a double-storey house" to "being a lawyer" or "meeting R. Kelly". She went on to suggest that we ourselves are not exempt from responsibility in a consumerist culture. In our quest for a better life, including in our educational aspirations, we show attitudes not very different to the exploitative mindset that underlies globalisation. She suggested that the list on the board indicated that the students themselves were victims and perpetrators of a consumerist culture. Did they not uncritically admire the characters in 'Isidingo',¹² for example, who always "... eat at Steers and drink Black Label?" By adopting this approach the notion of consumerism in modern culture was made relevant to the students' experiences, even though they are from poor backgrounds. They had assumed that these were not the concerns of the poor. The following exchange from this tutorial demonstrates the students' engagement – an engagement which I believe Nomalanga had deliberately set up.

Mandoro: *These multi-national companies are a very bad influence...*

Nomalanga: *But you are exploiting ...*

Mandoro: *No – I don't!...*

Another student: *Yes, I agree!*

Mandoro: *People don't live like this in rural areas...*

Nomalanga: *But we are not working towards a simple lifestyle. Older generations maybe, but not the younger generation. We want cars, not poverty ...*

¹² Isidingo is a television soap opera about South African life on the mines.

Mandoro's explicit disagreement of Nomalanga's view was the only time I observed one of the participants in the study challenge a tutor's position. It would seem that the student-participants' usual silence and passivity in tutorials may have had more to do with their other tutors' failure to recognise their cultural resources and frames, and the need to take these into account when teaching, rather than to do with their *"fascist personalities"*.

On other occasions Nomalanga photostated manageable and relevant reading materials which she had often located on the Internet for the students (see examples of two of her handouts in Appendix J). In the tutorials the students read aloud from Nomalanga's handouts and she would stop them frequently to explain words or concepts, in the 'read-and-tell' pattern that the students were familiar with (see the latter part of Section 4.1.2). However, she worried about this method: *"They read and don't understand ... they understand when I have explained, but not when they read"*. She also said: *"Talking makes you feel as if you understand, you can catch the stream ..."*. However I observed Nomalanga also encouraging close, detailed reading of the texts. I often saw her stop the reading and say: *"What is he saying here?" "What does this mean?" "Say it in your own words", or "This is a long sentence but we can break it down"*.

There are a number of concepts in History 102 that are extremely difficult for students from poor, working-class, African backgrounds. Apart from consumerism, for example, they have to conceptualise the idea of "the sibling society", "narcissism", "hedonism", environmental issues, and others (see Appendix I). After explaining an idea Nomalanga would ask: *"Is this true of African society?"* She told them, *"This course is mostly talking to the white kids in the class"*. After Professor C had read this account, he challenged Nomalanga's assertion. He said the course deliberately deracialises History, exploring *"the species in crisis"*, deliberately avoiding either black or white perspectives. I read Nomalanga's observation as referring to the ways in which the course makes more sense to students with middle-class, mainstream frames, and that 'white' is merely a metaphor for this. Her efforts to help the students understand a new culture by contrasting it with their own was informed by this insight.

Thembisa described Nomalanga's tutorials thus:

*Nomalanga helped us more ... they [the other tutors] hurry, they don't repeat things. They tell us that **we** are the ones who are supposed to talk, not **them**. So we get nothing from them. They ask us, did you understand what happened in the lectures? All the whites say, yes, they understood, then start talking about something else ...*

Probably because of her strong connections with both of the cultures represented in this research, (Western, academic culture and South African black culture – see Section 3.7.2),

Nomalanga seems to have grasped why the students found the course difficult. She told me: *"The whole course relies on [having had] a certain kind of [Western] education and life experiences"*, and she tried, in ten tutorials, to *"fill in the gaps"* by giving structured, explicit guidance and by assuming a more authoritative role as teacher. But Professor C, like many lecturers before him (for example, lecturers described in Delpit, 1988 and Johns, 1997 who hold similar views) ascribed the failure of some of these students to lack of intelligence:

There are some students that are ill-equipped mentally. There are people that just don't understand, who are not clever, or [who are] grossly unclever ... in fact, incredibly stupid ... they shouldn't be anywhere near a university ... there is some defect in the way they are being permitted into the university.

Later Professor C qualified this view: he emphasised that this remark did not apply to all ill-prepared students but merely to some of them. He said that he did indeed distinguish between the *"clearly hopeless cases ... and those with capacity and potential"*. Nevertheless, this thesis deliberately de-emphasises cognitive factors in academic access. It has sought instead to understand students' failures in History 102 in terms of a mismatch in literacy and life experiences. Whilst intelligence must indeed be a factor in reading and learning, the scope of this research does not allow me to address it: possibly this is a weakness, and I will discuss it further in Section 5.5.

4.3 Reading for an assignment in History 102

I will now focus on the ways in which the students read for a particular assignment in History 102, seeking thereby to illustrate the students using the resources provided by their own reading backgrounds and experiences in their efforts to meet the requirements of a new kind of literacy. In effect I will be exploring the interaction between the two cultures I have described above.

The assignment was described in the History 102 handbook thus:

... Read a book on a theme that interests you and write an essay about that aspect of human crisis within the context of the overall human crisis. The essay should be formulated as a question. You will be assessed on how you define a topic for yourself, on what you have read, your interest and enthusiasm, on the work you have put into the assignment, and on the ability with which you write ...

I interviewed eight of the students while they were in the process of doing this assignment: in a sense I was observing them *"assemble the ingredients"*, to use Dr W's metaphor in Section 4.2.1. I collected some of the notes that they had made from their chosen books and all the essays they had written about them. I observed the ways in which their readings had been integrated into their essays and noted the evaluative remarks and the marks that the tutors had

given them. The essay was the final product, the “*cake*”, in which they were required to relate their readings to the idea of the human species in crisis.

One of the reasons I chose to give special attention to this assignment was because it required that the participants read *whole* books. Thus all four kinds of textual framing, extratextual, intertextual, circumtextual and intratextual, were available to the students in their efforts to make sense of the book. So the questions I asked the participants (see Appendix F) probed whatever broad background knowledge they were able to bring to the text (extratextual framing); what connections they were able to make with other texts (intertextual framing); what they used of the physical presentation of the book, such as the back cover, pictures or maps (circumtextual framing); and finally what they made of the text itself (intratextual framing). I enquired about the strategies they used to make sense of the text, for example, whether or not they had used a dictionary and how long they had spent reading their texts. I also asked them global questions to discover the extent to which they were able to assess their books’ general themes and the writers’ intentions, important for making the links with ‘world crisis’. The essay questions they formulated partly assessed their overall grasp of their books but also the extent to which the genre of university-style essay questions had indeed ‘rubbed off’ on them or not. The final question of the interview asked them to make a judgment about what had made a particular impression on them from the text, an expressivist-style question, in keeping with the departmental values about personal engagement, interest and enthusiasm.

As I explore the ways in which the participants dealt with this reading and writing assignment, I will limit myself primarily to the *reading* aspect of it. Secondly, in harmony with the socio-cultural, ethnographic framework of this research, I will focus on reporting the socio-cultural values, behaviours, attitudes and assumptions about reading that the students brought to the task. This will mean that I will concentrate particularly on extratextual and intertextual framing and only on circumtextual and intratextual framing as they specifically relate to cultural behaviours and values.

4.3.1 The student-participants’ book choices.

Of the 8 students I interviewed only three of them, Khaya and Rabo and Mpumezi, seem to have been motivated to locate a book on the basis of personal interest. In the case of Khaya and Rabo their interest related to prior experiences or frames developed at school. Thus Khaya had heard about the Holocaust in school History classes and wanted to know more about it. He said: “*I was pulled by the topic. I was interested to know the Holocaust in detail*”. He located a book by Inga Clendinnen, called *Reading the Holocaust*, not on the ‘Some Books’ list. Rabo had heard something of the detrimental effects of global capitalism on Third World countries from a teacher at his school, but he said, “... *we didn’t discuss the impact*”. Thus he was motivated to acquire *The Globalisation of Poverty*, by Michel

Chossudovsky, which was on the list and on 48-hour loan in the library. Mpumezi chose *The MacDonaldisation of Society* by George Ritzer because, he said, “*I like this topic. It’s interesting*”, although he found it difficult to express why he was drawn to this topic. Three of the remaining five in the group followed Khaya’s lead: Fundile, Thembisa and Sindi also decided to write about the Holocaust, even though they had never heard of it before they came to university. Thembisa and Sindi eventually paired off and used another, much easier and shorter book than Clendinnen’s book. It is illustrated with many photographs and overviews the main events of the Holocaust. It is, in fact, a ‘history-history’ style book, *The Holocaust*, by Peter Neville, one of a series of “Cambridge Perspectives in History” books. Phakama, like Rabo, decided on *The Globalisation of Poverty*, and Mandoro chose *Why Nations Go to War* by John Stroessinger.

What the students’ book choices above show is the importance of an already rich source of background, extratextual knowledge for establishing the sort of personal interest in historical or contemporary issues which the History department finds so valuable. Furthermore, it seems in the absence of a driving, individual interest, some of the students tended to collaborate with and support one another in their choices of books, conferring with peers rather than pursuing an individual, private line of interest. Clearly their prior experience of reading and learning meant that they brought a collaborative rather than an individualistic frame to the task in hand. As I showed in Section 4.1, reading in the participants’ homes and schools had been a shared activity in which meanings were imparted and negotiated orally.

4.3.2 Extratextual Framing

Reading researchers such as Johnson (1981) and Carrell (1987) believe in the pre-eminence of *content* schemata over *linguistic* or *formal* schemata in comprehension (see Section 2.2). Extratextual frames are similar to content schemata, and so we can assume the central importance of this kind of framing as the students came to make sense of their books. However, there was little evidence from the interviews in this phase of the study that the students were able to bring much in the way of useful extratextual framing, or content schemata, to the comprehension of their topics and texts. For example, Fundile said: “*I knew nothing about the Holocaust. I didn’t do History back at High School*”. When I asked Thembisa what she had known about the Holocaust, she laughed and said: “*I knew nothing ... Khaya told me about it*”. Sindi had also never heard of it and said: “*Thembi told me that this book is interesting*”.

Similarly, Mpumezi, who wrote about *The McDonaldization of Society*, had only ever been to a McDonalds once in his life, “*... last year, in PE¹³, with the school*”. His book deals with the changing face of contemporary social life and is probably more relevant to American than

¹³ ‘PE’ is Port Elizabeth, a city some 120 kilometres from Mpumezi’s home town.

South African society. Mpumezi had very few extratextual frames for life in American society. In his interview, when I asked him what his book was about he said: *"In the past people ate in their houses: now they eat in restaurants"*. This is clearly not true of his own, South African society. Writing the following sentence in his essay must have carried an air of unreality for Mpumezi:

"It is believed that this fast food restaurant is a crucial contributor to the disintegration of the family because families tended to stop having lunch together and also having breakfast together".

The use of the passive in the opening phrase of this extract seems to distance Mpumezi from the content of the information that follows as though he is writing about something he cannot easily visualise.¹⁴

Mpumezi could have been far more 'critical' if he had argued that whilst the fast food industry may be having an impact on family and social life in the wealthier sectors of world society, in Africa family or societal crises are more often poverty- rather than wealth-related. Mpumezi, who had answered so confidently on 'Football' in his trial examination (see Section 4.2.4) could, perhaps, have been more usefully directed to Gary Armstrong's *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score* which was on the 'Some Books' list. He had the sort of frames that would have allowed him to compare the behaviours of football fans in South African and European culture.

Nevertheless Mpumezi claims to have been interested in the topic of 'McDonaldization', although he could not express why. Speculatively, his interest could have been motivated by a poor person's attraction to consumerist culture, as Nomalanga had tried to demonstrate in Section 4.2.5 – the strange but fascinating phenomenon of a society in which ordinary people eat in restaurants more than they eat at home, where family disintegration relates to excess rather than deprivation. Apart from his interest in such a strange and wasteful culture, another extratextual frame that Mpumezi could have brought to his book was a sense of personal injustice on behalf of the poor in the face of globalisation as represented by companies like McDonalds. The last part of the essay title that Mpumezi formulated seems to demonstrate this. It runs as follows:

How is globalisation reshaping the world? How do global corporations like Mcdonalds affect people's lives? Why has this fast food restaurant been such a world wide success? Is it possible to create a world run by ordinary people without multinationals and governments, a world based on sharing, freedom and respect for all life?

¹⁴ Later Mpumezi confirmed that he had experienced his book in this way.

Mpumezi's essay title above shows qualities of which the History department could warmly approve. Although this cannot be said to be a classic formulation for a university essay it is very clearly "grappling ... with a reading or a question" (see Prof M's remark in Section 4.2.1), and it also shows evidence of the student having developed a personal interest, even a passion, for the concerns raised by the book. So here we note both a match and a mismatch of frames between student and the department for which he is writing.

The other essay titles the participants formulated show a variety of extratextual frames. Khaya's essay title also shows a passionate involvement in his topic, but not an academic frame, which would demand that he show some emotional distance from his topic:

The Holocaust was one of the most terrible, horrible and barbaric mass killings of the 20th century in Europe.

Interestingly, as I have demonstrated in Section 4.2.1, the History department is frequently explicit about the former value, that of personal interest and liveliness, but not about the latter, that is, the value of emotional objectivity in academic discourse. In fact, they are not explicit about the "rules and conventions" (Ballard *et al.*, 1988:8) that govern *how* students could express that value. It seems that students such as Khaya and Mpumezi could be beginning to 'find their voices' in an expressivist sense, but not their 'academic voices'.

Sindi's essay title seems to have been framed by the discourse of school History essays. It demonstrates the ideological roots of her learning experiences in ex-DET schools (see Taylor *et al.*'s descriptions of these schools in Section 2.6.1). In keeping with the principles of 'fundamental pedagogics', her title invites a simple, uncritical reproduction of information:

The suffering of the Jews under the leadership of Hitler.

Mandoro, playing safe, simply reproduced the title of his book for his essay, *Why Nations go to War*, a title that showed little evidence of "baking" (see Section 4.2.1).

The following two titles, Fundile's and Rabo's, show evidence that an academic frame for the formulation of essay questions was, indeed, beginning to 'rub off' on them:

Discuss who was responsible for the Holocaust and why it took place;

and, *A critic discussion on how the impacts of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank reforms led to/caused the globalisation of poverty.*

These latter two titles are “mushfake”, (Gee, 1990,’s in Section 2.4.1): they imitate academic discourse, but are not yet ‘the real thing’. In both cases the topics are far too broad in range – a narrowing of the focus could have helped both students control their essays.

When I asked Phakama what her book, *The Globalisation of Poverty*, was about she said, “*It was the explanation of globalisation and the World Bank and IMF and the effect that they make on globalisation*”. But when I probed, she could not explain what the IMF and the World Bank actually did and what their role in the globalisation of poverty was, although a basic understanding of the role of both organisations was vital for making any sense of Chossudovsky’s book.

After reading sections of *Reading the Holocaust*, Fundile knew something of how the Jews had been treated in the camps. He mentions that they were shot, worked to exhaustion, were starved, beaten and tortured, “... *till they lose all their strength*”, but he never once mentioned the gas chambers, an extraordinary omission in terms of extratextual framing.

Nevertheless, there is evidence from the interviews that the students longed for books, articles or lectures that would give them broad, contextual information, in other words, useful extratextual frames. Khaya said with regard to taking notes in lectures: “*The notes are there but the facts are not there ... you are taking notes but there are no facts ... I feel it’s going to be very dangerous for the exams. I am having a fear for the exams*”. In my view, this is a legitimate anxiety: it is impossible to ‘bake a cake’ if it is difficult to come by the ‘ingredients’ in the first place. Furthermore, there are few explicit instructions, a ‘method’, on what to do with the ingredients once they have been assembled.

4.3.3 Intertextual Framing

The student-participants were seldom able to make use of relevant intertextual frames either. For example, in the four interviews with the students who read about the Holocaust, only Fundile refers to other genocides in history. He says: “*The Holocaust is one of the most cruel things in that ever happened in history. It involved the killing of people who were not resisting ... who had no arms ... not like the one in Rwanda*”. Like the children of recent Bangladeshi immigrants to Britain, (Group ‘A’ in Mines’s study, 2000, reported in Section 2.7.2) the students in this research had few of the intertextual frames that were assumed by their new culture.

An important aspect of intertextual framing is the ability to identify the genre of texts correctly, a practice that grows out of a wide experience of many different kinds of reading. There is frequent evidence from the data of the participants misreading the genre of texts. For example, I observed Sonwabo, earlier in the academic year, quoting from an editorial,

opinion-based text as though it was factual. Another example concerns Clendinnen's book, *Reading the Holocaust*, which explores the experience of the Holocaust from the victims' and the perpetrators' point of view and evaluates the testimonies of survivors such as Primo Levi, Charlotte Delbo and Filip Muller, a member of the 'Sonderkommando'.¹⁵ It is written in a highly literary style and attempts to make existential sense of the horrific events. Clendinnen's purpose was to challenge the "bafflement" and the "Gorgon effect", which are common responses to learning about the Holocaust. However the students struggled to find the appropriate generic frame for this kind of writing. In fact, as we saw in Section 4.3.1, Thembisa and Sindi eventually abandoned the book in favour of Neville's more straightforward, factual account. Khaya expresses some frustration when he says that he had hoped *Reading the Holocaust* would give him more information about the events in some sort of chronological order: "... maybe the book will be about the start of the Holocaust ... and go on to the end ... but it's giving you witnesses". He seems to have been looking for the 'evidence' and 'chronology' (see Nuttal *et al.*'s diagram in Section 2.6.2), before he felt ready to construct an argument. However, Fundile comes closer to sensing the book's genre. When asked what Clendinnen's purpose in writing the book was, he replied that her motivation had been:

Let me ... write something about the Holocaust. Let me do some kind of justice for these people ... Not an evaluation to be read by someone ... but for someone who doesn't know the Holocaust, like me ... What were they like? What was it all about? Why did it happen? What happened to those people after the Holocaust? How did they live then? Do they still have problems now it's over? ... do they always deal with it? It will always be ... They cannot forget ...

The intertextual frame at work in Fundile's discourse here is initially Biblical. Later, in the repeated questioning, there are "structural parallelisms", a particular feature of praise poetry (Gough, 2000:50), or of poetry in general. In the repeated speech rhythms, it seems almost incantatory or prayer-like. Using the frames he has available, Fundile does indeed show a sensitive, true appreciation of the existential nature of Clendinnen's book although such frames are of little use to him in classic academic discourse. But in another sense Fundile did also misread the genre: *Reading the Holocaust* is, indeed an evaluation, and it was not written for people like Fundile who had never heard of the events before. It is interesting that in contrast to his fine oral response to the book's purpose, recorded above, Fundile's written essay seems quite stilted as it struggles to 'mushfake' yet another kind of text, the academic essay, an intertextual frame to which he had had only limited exposure. His essay's conclusion reads:

In conclusion, it is evident that the Holocaust was a cruel act against mankind, especially the killing of Jews by other Jews who probably had no choice as non-compliance could have

¹⁵ The Sonderkommando were Jewish prisoners in the camps who agreed to work for the SS in the gas chambers.

meant death for them. Although I have tried to illustrate the reasons as to the occurrence of this horrific event, some events within it remain a mystery. How one could find decency in killing innocent people remains questionable in terms of moral values. Maybe the repetitive indoctrination of nationalism was the key, but does not explain the actions of Battalion 101 in Poland. Without a doubt the Holocaust is one of the most evil acts in human history, even for Germans.

The final sentence is, I believe, an awkward effort to relate the Holocaust to “... *the context of the overall human crisis*”, an aspect of the assignment only Fundile attempted.

The general paucity of intertextual framing that occurred as the student-participants were reading for this assignment must surely be a consequence of their lack of exposure to different varieties of books and reading experiences during their childhood and adolescence, as I illustrated in Section 4.1. In addition, the intertextual frames that are available to them, (for example, poetry, the Bible or a tradition of oral folk tales), are not, on the face of it, particularly helpful for developing academic reading.

4.3.4 Circumtextual framing

There is evidence that some of the students made good use of circumtextual framing in their reading, one of the advantages, I believe, of Professor C’s ‘whole books’ approach to student learning. Whole books mean that there are more clues to make use of in comprehension. Most participants seem to have made use of the Contents pages of their books in order to get an overview of what the chapters were about and to make selections as to where to start reading their books. Some had read the back covers of their books before starting. In Khaya’s case, however, he had not read the back cover of *Reading the Holocaust* although it provides useful generic clues, contextual and authorial information which could have helped him to discover early on that his book was not a factual account of the genocide.

Mandoro had noted when his chosen book, *Why Nations Go to War*, had been published – 2002 – and he appreciated the significance of such a recent date of publication. Some of the students said they had studied the maps in their books although some had not. Khaya said: “*When I see maps I am interested*”, and he had used the maps extensively and was thus able to explain the location of the extermination camps in Poland. Mandoro also said he had found the maps in his book useful. However Thembisa and Sindi said they had not used their maps. Rabo had paid attention to the graphs and tables in his book but Phakama had not. Interestingly, Fundile misread a photograph of a Jewish mother walking with her three children and baggage, entitled *The path to Auschwitz-Birkenau*. He described it as, “... *a family going home from the concentration camp*”. Khaya brought a romantic, heroic frame to the photograph: “*I think those are the Jews ... The woman is prepared to die for her children*”. Fundile was unsure of the meaning of the swastika symbol which appears on the

front cover of Clendinnen's book, although the others identified it as "*the German soldiers' badge*".

The use of circumtextual framing is essentially a 'top-down' processing skill. It allows a reader to make broad judgements about a book's context and genre. Skilled, experienced academic readers make extensive use of circumtextual frames, seldom reading an academic text from start to finish but rather making informed decisions, based partly on the variety of circumtextual clues provided, about which parts of a text are relevant to their purposes and which are not. It seems that most of the students had begun to grasp this very important academic reading skill, which, I suggest, is the beginning of learning to 'skim' and 'scan' effectively (see Professor M's comment about the importance of learning to skim academic texts in Section 4.2.2). Rabo, for example, had employed circumtextual framing in order to read only the chapters in his book that dealt with the effects of IMF loans in India and Rwanda. Mandoro said he read the introduction to his book and then jumped to the "... *the last part* [because] *maybe the end has all the reasons* [why nations go to war] *together... I read it because it was a summary of the author's basic ideas*". Fundile reports using a similar strategy although it was not helpful in *Reading the Holocaust*, which is not a classic academic text and therefore did not tend to sum up main points at the end of chapters or sections. But when I asked Phakama how she had gone about reading her book, she said, "*I start with Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, etc ...*" and Sindi said she read from Chapter 1 to Chapter 6 of her 90-page book about the Holocaust. Even so, most of the students made judicious, realistic selections of parts of their books on the basis of having developed a prior, overall sense of it mainly through the use of circumtextual clues.

Although none of the student-participants could be said to have been experienced readers before they came to university, it was interesting that they seemed to have acquired this academic reading skill relatively easily. A version of circumtextual framing is explicitly taught in ELAP and it is possible that the ease with which they learnt to apply it could be because of their prior reading experiences: they are generally 'top-down' processors of texts, used to picking up on the general meanings of texts and "... *catching the stream*", as Nomalanga had noticed (see Section 4.2.5). This relates to Parry's research (reported in Section 2.7.2) in which she shows that Nigerian students tend to be top-down processors as well. The Chinese students in her study were more inclined to use bottom-up processing methods. Her research discusses the reasons for these preferences: as I explained in Section 2.7.2, there are several significant similarities between the social and linguistic contexts of Nigeria and South Africa that would incline learners from both countries to adopt top-down approaches to reading. But like the Nigerian students, the South African participants in this study are not proficient 'bottom-up' readers, as I demonstrate in the next section.

4.3.5 Intratextual framing

Intratextual framing is similar to bottom-up processing because it involves paying close attention to the text, both to the language itself and the ways in which the print is presented on the page. Whilst extratextual and intertextual framing are more obviously socio-cultural in character because of their relationship to a reader's background knowledge and socially-shaped reading experiences, I will also give some attention to intratextual framing. This kind of framing provides evidence for how the student-participants approach reading tasks. This, too, is a socio-cultural issue because it concerns the ways in which readers are enculturated into valuing attentiveness to close textual processing. I showed towards the end of Section 4.1.2 that the students had been trained, mostly at school, to pay attention to the broad issues raised by a text. They had often listened to oral explanations of textual meanings. They seldom wrestled with meanings at word- or sentence-level and they were not inclined to seek meaning in the textual details. There is evidence of this in the way they read their books for this assignment.

When I asked the students what strategies they had resorted to when they didn't understand something in their books, they often said they had consulted a friend. Sindi said that she had asked Thembisa about meanings and that she had provided oral explanations but "... *she didn't read it with me*". Similarly, Phakama had consulted a friend in his second year: "*I went to X ... he explained in English and Xhosa*". He had also not actually read any of the text itself with her. In fact, I discovered in an informal interview with X almost a year later, and well after Phakama had left the university, that she had copied, almost verbatim, an old essay of X's on globalisation and submitted it to the History department.(I have X's permission to repeat this story. 'Phakama' is not the student's real name and she has since left Rhodes University). The essay appeared impressive but had had little to do with her book, *The Globalisation of Poverty*. Insightfully, one of the tutor's comments at the end of her essay was: "*You were supposed to stick to one book and I can't really tell what that book is*". Phakama had been given 58% for this assignment.

I understand Phakama's plagiarism as a dishonest but desperate means of dealing with an assignment that was too complex and demanding for her to cope with. I believe she sought help from a fellow student as much on the grounds of the design of the assignment as on her own incompetence in the face of it. Her school-based literacy practices encouraged the copying and memorising of texts, word for word, and she had no other resources which she could draw on. Whilst peers could, and indeed did, help with the broad ideas about globalisation, the top-down aspects of the reading, and could explain it to her in such a way that she could 'catch the stream', especially in her home language, what I believe drove her to cheat was her lack of intratextual frames: she had simply found the text itself indecipherable. This is not surprising given her school experiences of reading English: as I showed in Section

2.6.1, she had probably had very little experience of reading in English at all in her ex-DET school and a history for reproducing information word for word¹⁶. Furthermore, it was likely that she had well below the minimum basic vocabulary for reading university level texts (see Section 2.2.1). Her notes on the book, which I had collected, were simply large, random chunks of text copied word for word, a feature of note-taking from readings that Nuttal *et al.* (1995) had also noticed in their students (see Section 2.6.2).

Further evidence of the students' lack of sufficient intratextual framing is provided by the students' reports of the time they spent reading their texts. Anderson says that, "Although readers who read too fast often miss out important information, research does suggest that reading at too slow a rate not only reduces enjoyment of reading but also jeopardises efficient comprehension" (1999:2). Reading too slowly means that 'the bigger picture' disappears. There was evidence that several students read far too slowly, thereby compromising comprehension. Mandoro could not say exactly how long a chapter had taken him to read but he claimed: *'It takes me a long time. I read twice, three times ...'* Khaya said: *"When I find something interesting ... it takes a day. I need to read a chapter 3 times ... so I can read it closely"*. Thembisa reports taking four hours to read a chapter. These students were, at least, making serious attempts to wrestle with their readings at a textual level. However, in contrast, several others reported very fast reading times – for example, Mpumezi said that he had taken half an hour to read the first chapter of his book. From the interview, I discerned that he had made only the most general sense of the content of the chapter and he was unaware of how much of it he was missing.

The students gave varied reports of how much they had used a dictionary. Thembisa made little use of a dictionary while she was reading her book. She said that, *"It's a waste of time ... This book is very big. If you take it word for word, you never read it ..."* Khaya also says he did not use a dictionary whilst he was reading. If he didn't understand a word, he says: *"I go to the context and try and guess"*, a perfect example of Goodman's notion of reading as a "psycholinguistic guessing game" (see Section 2.3) and typical of 'top-down' processing. Sindi also says she did not use a dictionary. Mandoro, a mature and very conscientious student, was the only one who reported using the dictionary *"... many times"* whilst he was reading. It seems the students' strategy was to deduce meanings through guessing on the basis of context – a strategy that can often lead to the frustration of misreading a text (Grabe and Stoller, 2002). But what this strategy shows is that the students are drawing on extratextual, intertextual and circumtextual cues, rather than intratextual ones. Possibly this is a wise and practical strategy in the light of the demanding length and nature of the task (see Thembisa's comment about the use of Dictionaries above), but unfortunately it reinforces the participants'

¹⁶ Bulelwa's comment about the plagiarism incident was: "We are used to doing it at school. We copied word for word ... there is nothing else you can do".

inherent preference for avoiding close word- and sentence-based processing. Instead, the participants often chose to guess and overview a writer's line of argument. However, all four kinds of framing, working together, are needed to make full sense of texts (see Section 3.8.1: Using Framing Theory). Attentiveness to grammar and vocabulary is at least as important as the various levels of background and cultural knowledge any given reader may bring to textual comprehension, especially if that reader is using English as an additional language.

The interviews that I conducted with the students about their reading assignment (see Appendix F) showed that what the students had mostly remembered of their books afterwards were narrative sections, or stories. They had difficulty in recalling and discussing the theoretical aspects of their books. For example, the students who had read about the Holocaust were able to recall horrifying stories of suffering and cruelty which had made an impression on them, such as Filip Muller's memories from his time in the Sondercommando, stories about the way fellow prisoners had stolen bread from each other, or the activities of Battalion 101 in Poland. Mpumezi, on the other hand, had no specific memories of his book but he confidently made a broad judgement: "*McDonalds is interested only in profits ... not the people.*" Phakama commented in a similar vein: "*The IMF and World Bank cause 3rd world poverty*". It seems the impressions the students were left with were either too partial and specific, as in their memories of specific narrative sections only, or they were too simplistic and sweeping, as in the comments made by Phakama and Mpumezi.

I believe that broad, impressionistic judgements and memories such as these could be the consequence of too little intratextual processing. The participants were simply not experienced in the kinds of close, intensive reading that would allow them to make comprehensive sense of a writer's complex arguments. In terms of the implicit 'rules' of academic membership this is an inadequate basis for developing personal, independent opinions – it is too fragile a base on which to develop a critical stance. It is dangerous to encourage critical reading in students who have not yet fully grasped a writer's whole argument because, as McCormick says of the Expressive model of literacy, "... it appears to give students a voice, but also leaves them unaware of the determinants of that voice and powerless to interrogate it" (1994: 47 in Section 2.3.2).

The eight students that I interviewed about this assignment did reasonably well in it: Rabo got over 70%. Sindi, and, effectively, Phakama failed it, but the rest of the participants attained marks in the lower 60s and 50s. In fact, most of them passed History 102 on the basis of their assignments, but failed overall because they did so poorly in the final examination. It seems that Khaya's comment, "*I am having a fear for the exams*" (see Section 4.3.1) was a wise prediction.

Much more could be said about this assignment but in the interests of maintaining a focus on the particular issues and approach of this research, I have reported only on data which illuminates the experiences, attitudes and assumptions about reading that have either conflicted or corresponded with those of the History department's. Further discussion of the critical implications of such conflicts and correspondences follows in the final chapter. Having told the 'ethnographic story', I will now turn to the ways in which the various participants, 'insiders' and 'outsiders', responded to it.

4.4 Establishing validity: the participants respond

In Section 3.5.2, I explained that I distributed drafts, mostly of Chapter 4 above, to the research participants and other 'outsiders'. Some respondents wrote their comments on the draft-copies and returned them to me. I had informal interviews with others, during which I took notes. I have already included some of their more detailed responses to aspects of the data, mostly as footnotes, during the course of this chapter. I will now report on their broad, general responses with a view to establishing "... the trustworthiness of inferences drawn from the data" (see Eisenhart and Howe, 1992: 664). Given the critical orientation of this study, it is also important that I assess whether or not it can claim to have had emancipatory consequences.

Five out of the eight student-participants to whom I had distributed drafts of Chapter 4 returned them to me and their comments almost invariably confirmed my interpretations of their stories. Only in one case (see Footnote 7, in Section 4.1.4), in my report about the student-participants' attitudes to illiteracy, were the findings challenged. For the most part, the students responded kindly and uncritically: Vuyo wrote:

This is very good, constructive and helpful for understanding reading. Things that were not important to me now I see them as significant. Just a few mistakes in spellings of some Xhosa words¹⁷ but its fine, it makes sense. It is fascinating.

Tali said that reading the data "... gave me an understanding of me", and his comment that the data was "... very fair, nothing misinterpreted, nothing I disagreed with", was typical of the students' responses as a whole. He also appears to have reflected on the fact that reading practices are shaped differently in different cultures: "*Other people have more access to books ... it's something they grow up doing. We didn't grow up doing these things ... we are not in the habit of reading novels*".

Mpumezi demonstrates that his reading of the research findings had encouraged him to develop a meta-awareness of the ways in which he was being taught:

¹⁷ I have since corrected the spellings.

Yes, you were correct about the students failing History 102 because of the way the exam was set up. The problem solving types of questions were very new to us [because] we were used to writing essays. [My] year mark was high. I passed my essay above 60% and I got 55% for the test.

Here Mpumezi is criticising the fact that their assessments during the semester were by means of two tough reading and writing assignments and one test, yet the style of the examination didn't seem to have any obvious links with the skills that he had so painstakingly acquired through the assignments. This remark is certainly evidence of Mpumezi developing a degree of reflexivity through his reading of Chapter 4. His other broad comment confirms what he had experienced in History: *"Overall it was good research, you covered everything that needed to be covered and you looked at it objectively"*. Nevertheless, it must be said that it is possible that he brought the same, relatively uncritical frames to my account of his reading experiences as he had done to his History reading: he accepted my views as authoritative.

On the basis of all these representative responses I believe that I can at least make claims about the accuracy of my descriptions of the student-participants' reading experiences at home, school and in first-year History. But there is clearly too little evidence to suggest that reading the findings may also have provided the students with emancipatory insights as well.

Strong evidence for the authenticity of the findings also came from the two 'outsiders' who read and reflected on the findings for me. Bulelwa Nosilela and Ntombomzi Mbelebele are both older, more senior women, who have been successful students at Rhodes University: Bulelwa is now a lecturer in the African Languages department. Both come from poor, working-class backgrounds, similar to those of the students in this study, although in both families the parents' very high regard for the importance of education resulted in an unusual degree of involvement in the daughters' academic development. Ntombomzi wrote:

... what I can say is what distinguishes one child from another is not ability but access. If one does not have access to books, newspapers, computers, etc. he or she will be different not because he or she is stupid but because she does not have access to these things ... I wish that some lecturers could understand that the legacy of Bantu education is still with us. I know that the university is doing something to rectify the mistakes of the past but there are some lecturers who don't understand this. Bantu education did not allow us to think. But some of us challenged it ... I wanted to prove that I could rise above it ... to prove that I was better. Those of us who challenged it are resented in our own communities ... there is a price to pay if you study hard. You end up being alienated because of your determination.

I have seen and experienced most of your observations. Everything is true.

Bulelwa's response was deeply satisfying for an ethnographer: *"This is my story. This is exactly my story"*. However, she also raised the more critical issue of the study's potential to effect change:

My main worry is what is going to happen? What can we do about it? On a small scale, you can take it to the History department and they can see what they are doing right and what they are doing wrong ... but what about the other departments? ... It must go further.

I will now report on the History department's reactions, and whether they did indeed *"... see what they are doing right and what they are doing wrong"*.

In my interview with Professor M, the Head of History, he described my findings as *"fair"* and *"unsurprising"*. He said he had realised that the style and approach of the department was not suited to 'disadvantaged' students. He said: *"If I was to gear my approach to that group I'd lose most of the students"*. He said that in the past few years *"... our best students have got better and better ... My rewards come from them"*. The middle-of-the-road students, he said, are not reading and are not interested. When I suggested that these may be intellectually elitist views, he replied that, on the contrary, he was not catering for the brightest students only, but for those who show an interested attitude and a willingness to develop and learn.

However, I was reassured that he said that I had accurately described the History department's expectations with regard to reading. When I asked him whether these expectations were realistic, he replied that there had, indeed, been a decline in a culture of reading amongst students. On the other hand, he said, there is much more reading available nowadays, for example on the Internet, and the nature of this material is scattered and of variable quality. He said: *"I'm rethinking what I'm doing ... I don't want to lower expectations ... instead I'm planning a structured reading programme ... of carefully guided readings ... and I will be lecturing less"*. He added that *"... students need guidance ... how to be selective. We can't expect students to judge and discriminate quickly ... their time is also scarce"*. Although the programme he is planning is for 3rd year students, and may have had nothing at all to do with my research findings, even the presence of a researcher investigating the ways in which reading is taught in one's department, could of itself, begin a process of reflection on current practice. My research did indeed aim to generate change but not necessarily radically and dramatically, rather in *"... low-key, incremental ways"* (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999:46). This is, perhaps, an example of low-key change generated by a number of factors and my research findings may have had a part to play in it.

Professor C felt that my research findings were an *"implicit criticism"* of the way that he taught but he said: *"I don't mind being criticised"*. In fact, he graciously accepted the critique

implied within my findings, and I was gratified and encouraged by how seriously he took my chapter, even describing it as "... *a very interesting paper*", and "*sobering*", and spending almost an hour discussing it with me. He wrote on my draft:

*Remember the huge range of talents, abilities, cultural backgrounds that confront the lecturer faced with 200 – 500 students in a class. How do we cope with that with **one** tutoring system? Streaming? ... NB, too: The staff constraints. It is virtually not possible to keep 'control' over 10 or more tutors, even if one wanted to. We've generated a system—and survive, **just**, quite how we scarcely know.*

There are four members of staff serving 500 students in the History department and Professor C said that they are "*flooded out and overworked*". It is important, as I evaluate the ways in which my research may have raised consciousness about the needs of ill-prepared students, that I acknowledge the reality of this context.

Professor C said that the fact that "... *we are not engaging with the students*" was not simply a matter of socio-economic class and background, as my research implies, but it is a generational and technological conflict as well. He and Professor M were, in a sense, "*obsolete people*", representing a reading and learning culture that is dying. Universities are changing radically and students are now "*different animals*".

Professor C's reflections about the diversity of the student body, the nature of the differences, and his role as a teacher within a new sociological and political order, could not have been inspired exclusively by my research. But I was encouraged by his openness to being a little disturbed by my descriptions of the student-participants' experiences of reading on his course. I believe that he does understand the literacy backgrounds of ELAP students better on the strength of reading my accounts in Section 4.1, and this could be a first step towards providing underprepared students with more explicit help in future. He said he was particularly interested in the discussion of how they had handled his assignment in Section 4.3. He was also interested in the fact that his pedagogical approach could be identified as belonging within a particular paradigm or ideology, that of Expressivism. He had never heard of Whole Language teaching before either, although many aspects of his teaching philosophy show clear links with that movement. Therefore, I believe that I fulfilled one of the objectives of critical ethnography, that is, "... to highlight the *role* of ideology in social and organisational settings" (May, 1997: 202, in Section 3.5.1).

In one very important instance, Professor C challenged my findings. He said that the students' reading and tutorial experiences had to be understood in the context of the lectures which do, in fact, provide students with the kind of extratextual framing that they need. During my interview with Professor C, I quoted Boughey (2000:215) who recalls a lecturer at the

University of Zululand complaining about the students' dire lack of general knowledge and saying that if he had his way he would "... cancel first year, hire a fleet of buses and drive them all over the country just showing them things". Professor C fixed on this idea as a metaphor for his own History 102 course. He said it was like a rapid 'bus tour' through world history. However, my experience of History 102 lectures is that they do not aim to provide factual, 'history-history' style background knowledge at all. Instead they present the students with an ideological challenge to reconceptualise their view of the world and role of their species within it. The fact that History 102 does not, I believe, function as a 'bus tour' through major events in world history seems to be borne out by something that Professor C said of his most recent History 102 examination. Sixty percent of the students were unable to identify what 'The Final Solution' was. Yet this is not at all surprising: his lecture had dealt with the *ideas* underlying a number of genocides in recent history, and it had very little to do with the Holocaust as a factual event. It is clear that 'history-history' content such as this must be acquired elsewhere, through wide, extra reading. On principle, his lectures almost never provide simple background, but rather aim to inspire reflection and debate. Yet, ironically, they may not be providing *enough* of the sort of extratextual framing that could set up such reflection and debate. Khaya's view about the lack of "facts" in his lecture notes (see Section 4.3.2) seems to confirm this.

Dr W also responded with interest to my research findings. She said: "*We do little explicit teaching [of reading]. Your research has encouraged me to do more of it*". She said that reading Chapter 4 had reinforced "... *how important it is not to take for granted that the students know things ... To us they're simple, but they aren't*". She, unlike her colleagues, does not believe that the 'ill-preparedness' of students is isolated to the poor, working-class students, but that "... *it's widespread that students in their first year haven't got these frames ... no students are in control of that*". She says that she is an advocate of more explicit approaches to the teaching of academic literacy with her colleagues and there is some debate about these issues within the department. She added that "*there is too much emphasis on the shining stars in the department*" and not enough on the average students who are later "*often put in great positions*". Dr W's response is encouraging: reading the findings seems to have confirmed in her a sense that her efforts towards a more explicit pedagogy are effective, and could be extended further.

Unfortunately, although I had suggested that the tutors read the chapter as well, and had made a copy available for them in the department, they were writing their Honours papers at the time and were very busy. Nomalanga has said that she will read it when she returns next year – she has very recently been appointed a junior lecturer in the History department. The fact that some of those responsible for appointing her had read my account of her sympathetic and imaginative tutoring could possibly have helped in her appointment. The History tutors are

very important figures, carrying significant responsibilities for teaching the values of the department. I hope that, by leaving a copy of this thesis in the department, it will continue to inspire reflection and debate amongst all the History teachers.

Further opportunities to present aspects of this study to the wider community at Rhodes University may yet arise. Already, one of the organisers of the Post-Graduate Certificate of Higher Education (PGCHE), which trains lecturers at Rhodes, has asked me to do a presentation on student diversity on the basis of these research findings next year.

The chapter above has presented the ethnographic story and the participants' responses to it. In the final chapter I return to the original questions that motivated my research and make some tentative claims about the ways that this study has illuminated and answered them.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION: MEANINGS AND DIRECTIONS

5.1 Introduction

This ethnographic account can speak for itself: important meanings and implications have already emerged as the story has unfolded. However, given the critical orientation of this thesis, and its academic purpose, it is important that I revisit the main findings of this study and spell out their significance, especially as they relate to the central issue of epistemological access for ill-prepared students in the university. In the final chapter, therefore, I return to the four main goals of this study as they were described in Section 1.6 in order to consider the ways in which the findings have shed light on them. I will also explore the logic of the findings in terms of what they imply for reading pedagogy, my own and the History department's. I will also discuss some avenues for further research.

The four goals were as follows: to explore the reading histories and experiences of a group of poor, working-class, EAL students with a view to establishing the values, attitudes and assumptions about reading that accompany them into the university context; secondly, to identify the reading frames that are expected by an academic discipline like History; thirdly, to describe the conflicts and correspondences that arise between these two different kinds of framing and to account for the students' relative under-performance in the academy in terms of a frequent mismatch of frames; and, finally, to facilitate reflexive awareness in the participants with the intention of generating some kind of change in the way reading is understood and taught. I will now critically evaluate the study's main insights in relation to each of these goals in turn.

5.2 The students' reading frames

Although there were exceptions, a "boiling down" and "crystalization" (Fetterman, 1989: 34) of the data about the student-participants' prior reading practices suggests that during their childhood, there was little time or opportunity for extensive, enjoyable reading either at home or school. They had limited access to libraries, newspapers, magazines or printed children's literature: they generally lived in 'print-poor' environments. Early reading at school was associated with memorisation and recitation. They understood reading within the Cognitive model, primarily as a decoding skill. Reading was associated with sacred literature and, to some extent, with cultural tradition. Therefore, printed material should be treated with honour because it represents 'truth': it cannot be regarded playfully or light-heartedly. Texts were often written down (for example, from the board) word for word, and then memorised and carefully reproduced. It is not surprising, therefore, that most of the student-participants had a primarily instructional frame for reading: reading is for the acquisition of important truths or

for 'getting on in life' – for getting a job and overcoming poverty. There was also a strong tradition of reading as a communal activity, at home and at school. There was often a particular 'class reader', an almost celebrated figure, who was responsible for reading aloud while the rest of the class listened. In fact, reading often signified passive listening rather than active engagement with the graphic display on a page. The broad, general themes of a reading were often transmitted orally, not by wrestling with the details of syntax or vocabulary. Reading was primarily a 'top-down' process: comprehension was reached primarily by accessing extratextual knowledge. At home, children who could read were sometimes expected to read aloud to the rest of the family as a sort of service or proud display of their new-found literacy. But parents usually saw the teaching of reading as the exclusive responsibility of the teachers. They were not involved in the literacy development of their children because reading was mostly understood as a church- or school-related activity. Furthermore, reading often meant reading in an additional language and must be understood in the context of English as LOLT. This caused problems, firstly, because of the struggle for basic, textual comprehension. Secondly, it could signify a threat to one's personal and cultural identity: reading was subtly linked with loss of cultural affiliation, of being colonised or of becoming upwardly mobile in an English-dominated society. Reading and being well-educated were admired but they also carried the risk of causing resentment in one's peers or community. These brief descriptions represent the complex matrix of reading frames that accompanied the student-participants into tertiary education.

5.3 The History department's reading frames

In the History department, reading is understood primarily within the Expressive model, although History 102 displays a stronger, more systematic, (albeit unconscious), commitment to expressivist values than does History 101. In both courses academic reading is conceptualised as an essentially self-directed activity, motivated by strong, individual enthusiasm, in the 'print-rich' environment of a university campus. Reading is not simply a process of decoding, comprehension and the ability to reproduce a writer's arguments accurately. Rather, reading involves the far more sophisticated skill of being able to question and critique a writer's position, or to transform the information in order to build up an argument of one's own. A strong emphasis in the History department is on tutorial participation, the ability to generate ideas and opinions or to provide a strong oral defence of a particular position. The reading that would be necessary to be able to do this well is understood to have taken place *before* the tutorial. Helping the students understand what a text actually means is not the role of the tutor in tutorial time. Questions *of* a reading are acceptable, but questions *about* a reading may not be. Passion, curiosity, liveliness and individual brilliance are greatly valued in History 1. The assumption is that the students themselves would often be able to pursue and select useful reading materials for the course, and not rely simply on the list of assigned readings or books. They should be able to begin to

discern the ideology that underlies a reading and to be able to distinguish between different genres of historical writing, and between centrally important texts and more peripheral ones. Furthermore, the data showed that History 1 students are implicitly understood as being able to read on the basis of an already rich, well-established store of world knowledge before starting out on the course. There is also an implicit *moralism* that informs some aspects of History 1 curriculum. For example, Dr W looks at colonialism and the struggles for independence in African states from a range of perspectives, but especially from African perspectives, thereby challenging the narrow, traditional focus of many young South Africans. History 102 deliberately raises awareness about the logic of world history, leading the species towards inevitable disaster and the collapse of culture and society as we know it. Therefore, both these curricula have a deliberately 'moral' agenda. The History department is overt about this, and of the way it values engaged, passionate students. But it is less explicit about how their feelings and personal opinions can be expressed within the "rules and conventions" (Ballard *et al.*, 1988:8) of the new knowledge community.

Nomalanga's tutorials were an exception to this generalised portrait. Although during the period of my observations she was an inexperienced 3rd year student with no prior teaching experience, she was aware of the need to make use of what her students already knew, to respect and engage with their frames, and to gradually build up a response on that basis. She seemed to have an instinctive, basic grasp of the Vygotskian notion of 'zones of proximal development', (see Section 2.5), making knowledge accessible to students in a sequenced, incremental way. She was attentive to her tutees' need to be able to comprehend the content of a reading *before* developing a personal response to it. Her tutorials showed that a thoughtful structuring of the learning process is more likely to generate interest and enthusiasm in students, than random exposure to a confusing plethora of ideas and information. In short, her approach seemed to demonstrate a realistic awareness of the students' resources and the need to build on them in manageable ways.

In the following section, I will show that some of the problems with the Expressive model of reading, outlined in Sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.4, have a direct bearing on the ways in which the History department's frames generally conflicted with those of the students.

5.4 The frames interact: matches and mismatches

In a department that implicitly values individualism in academic endeavour and the development of strong, personal, independent views, the data shows that the student-participants brought a history of shared, co-operative reading and learning in public rather than in quiet, private domains. The physical contexts of the participants' crowded homes and classrooms meant that habits of Sustained Silent Reading (see Section 2.6.3) were never strongly developed. Reading was often about listening, either to the text itself being read

aloud, or to oral explanations of its meanings. The broad ideas would then be negotiated in group discussions. Thus it seems there is a conflict of frames in the sense that there is a *collective* rather than an *individual* understanding of what reading and learning signify. So it seems the “cultural bias” (see Section 2.3.4) and the “overemphasis on individualism” (see Section 2.3.2) of the Expressive model disfavour the student-participants in this regard. Tutorial groups, the traditional place for ‘collective learning’, were overwhelming places for them. They felt disengaged and confused by the variety of topics under review, by their inability to express their ideas quickly in an additional language, and by the competitive atmosphere generated by a few, confident, EIL students, anxious to be seen to be participating passionately in the debates.

The departmental expectations were that students from ‘print-poor’ environments could manage the ‘print-rich’ environment of a university, and choose, often in their first encounters with libraries, appropriate academic reading materials without explicit guidance. The participants’ lack of experience of a range of different kinds of reading conflicted with expectations that they would be able to recognise and process the wide variety of textual genres from which history can be constructed. Their lack of experience of newspaper reading, and of reading in general, meant that they were often unable to “fill in the gaps” (see Nomalanga’s comment in Section 4.2.5) by using appropriate extratextual or intertextual frames. They often found themselves reaching for embarrassingly inappropriate frames, such as linking ‘CFCs’ to ‘KFC’ or ‘think-tanks’ to a kind of war machine.

The fact that the department had such high expectations about the quantity and extent of reading in History 1, yet, in tutorials, gave so little close attention to reading itself, meant that the student-participants’ habit of merely decoding print, and then relying on subsequent oral explanations for comprehension, was reinforced rather than challenged. Professor C’s assignment, informed by a ‘whole books’ philosophy, also reinforced habits of ‘top-down’ textual processing, and often resulted in reading responses that were too generalised and superficial. According to the implicit rules and conventions of academic discourse, this is an impoverished position from which to develop independent, critical views.

One of the problems with the Expressive model of reading is its exclusive reference to ‘top-down’ processing, (see Section 2.3.1) using the ‘world behind the eyes’. As Eskey (1988) and others have pointed out, top-down models of reading do not accurately describe reading in a second language, and even most EIL students in History 1 would be required to read in a much more text-based, ‘bottom-up’ manner when they encounter tough academic texts. But the data showed that all the first-year students were often seen to be engaging, ‘top-down’, with ideas that were related to a reading but not as often, in a disciplined and systematic way, with the reading itself. This approach cannot be conducive to building a ‘reading culture’. On

the contrary, it encourages a culture of the 'personal voice'. Northedge (2003:24) says that "... everyday discourse tends to be urgent, personal, emotive and tribal ... [whereas] ... the academic voice is unhurried, speculative, analytical and uncommitted, objective, rational". There is a risk that the explicit encouragement of 'personal voice' in the History department may affirm students in their use of "everyday discourse" and not encourage "the academic voice" (p.24). This approach could inadvertently de-emphasise a serious engagement with print.

Natural, experiential, spontaneous learning, by immersion and exposure, is a feature of the Expressive model. But it did not 'amuse' the student-participants in this study. (I showed in Section 4.2.3 that to inspire and 'amuse' is one of the explicit outcomes of Professor C's course). Instead, History 102 caused anxiety and insecurity in some, as we see from Khaya's remark at the end of Section 4.3.2. Others were entirely overwhelmed by its demands as I demonstrated in the case of Phakama's plagiarism. Given the well-established literacy practice of textual memorisation and reproduction, it is, in fact, quite surprising that I did not observe more plagiarism. One of the reasons that there wasn't, I believe, was because the History department was very explicit, even threatening, about the unacceptability of plagiarism in their community. I discussed in Section 2.3.3 that learning 'naturally', by immersion, works less well for 'disadvantaged' students: for them, without the cultural resources of middle-class students, learning is more effective when it is deliberately sequenced and structured.

Several times in Chapter 4 the student-participants expressed a need for more content, or extratextual frames, on which they could viably base their personal responses and opinions. But sufficient content was assumed by the department. It was a 'given': there was a much stronger emphasis on interest and interpretation. But a passion for, and interpretation of, historical events must surely be contingent on a rich source of well-understood and well-digested content knowledge. The reality of the student-participants' prior experiences of reading indicates that this is an unrealistic expectation. To use Dr W's metaphor (see Section 4.2.1), a cake cannot be baked without ingredients and a clear method, however much 'mental heat' one applies to it. So there was a mismatch of frames here as well.

Finally, there is both a match and a mismatch with regard to the ways in which students valued reading as having a moral or religious purpose. In one sense there is a mismatch because it is difficult to be critical about books that have previously represented sources of literal truth, deserving of honour, respect and unquestioning reproduction. It is difficult, with this literacy history, "... *to get away from being in awe of the written word*" (see Professor M's comment in Section 4.2). It is also difficult to adopt a strong, critical stance when one

hopes that acquiring an education will mean, eventually, physical survival in the form of a job. A submissive, unquestioning attitude may seem far safer.

Yet, in another sense, the implicit moralism of Dr W and Professor C's courses harmonised with the students' understanding of reading as an activity that involves the building of moral wisdom. In Section 4.3 I showed some students in this study developing a strongly emotional response and a moralistic stance in response to the issues raised by their readings, for example, in relation to the Holocaust or globalisation. However, the intertextual frames, such as poetry or the Bible, that were available to them as they came to expressing their powerful feelings of shock or injustice, were inappropriate for the academic context. It seems that the History department would need to explain the ways in which lively, independent, personal views can be acceptably expressed within their knowledge community.

Generally, what the data shows is that when the History department were explicit about their frames, such as their rejection of plagiarism, or their approval of affective learning, the potential for matches increased. The student-participants responded, even if the frame was quite new to them. However, if the frames were implicit, and they had to guess the 'rules and conventions' of the discipline, they were unresponsive, and the potential for mismatches increased.

5.5 Changing the consciousness of the participants: students, lecturers and researcher

I showed in Section 4.4 that there was insufficient evidence to claim that reading the research had changed the student-participants' consciousness of themselves as academic readers. However, Parry detected significant changes in the ways her Nigerian and Chinese students processed texts as a consequence of the research process itself:

The Nigerians ... paid increasing attention to individual words and to low-level rhetorical and syntactic cues ... As for the Chinese students, several wrote enthusiastically about how the volumes of reading that they did in the [research] program helped them learn to abandon their dictionaries and understand an academic article by using its overall structure and their own experience (1996; 687).

This encouraged me to speculate that change can occur as much during the process of being researched as by the outcomes of the research itself. I frequently told the students about the reasons for my research, and this may well have helped them to develop an awareness of themselves as readers in the process of change in a new kind of reading community.

However, there is more convincing evidence of a degree of changed consciousness in the History lecturers (see Section 4.4). Having described the many mismatches of literacy frames in Chapter 4, it is clear that the student-participants' epistemological failure can indeed be

ascribed to socio-cultural factors, although a variety of other factors must undoubtedly play their part. For example, I showed at the end of Section 4.2.5 that Professor C accounted for some students' failures in terms of an inherent lack of intelligence, and that he was by no means unusual in that assumption. Other students are described as "*profoundly bored*" or "*lazy*" (see Section 4.2.3). But this study has foregrounded socio-cultural practices and the ways in which they intersect, in mainly unhelpful ways, with the practices of the university. In the light of these findings, I believe that some re-evaluation of the causes of student failure can follow. This study clearly shows that poor, black, working-class students at Rhodes University are indeed ill-prepared for tertiary study in the Humanities in the sense that many of their socio-cultural frames do not 'fit' in the academy. But I also showed in Sections 1.2 and 2.6.1 that students such as these are the tiny, brave, surviving minority of a discouraging, dysfunctional state school system and because of this they are usually neither unintelligent, nor are they lazy. The fact that Professor C found the study's findings "sobering" (see Section 4.4) suggests that he may have accommodated this perspective. Furthermore, some re-evaluation of the idea of universities as *elite* institutions is needed for the South African context. The students in this study are likely to have been more of an elite, in terms of their schools, than many other students from much more privileged backgrounds. It seems that in South Africa, the elite is often ill-prepared for university learning, and lecturers need to work from this reality.

The data also shows that the more systematically expressivist the reading and learning expectations were in the History department, the less well the student-participants performed. The extremely expressivist examination style of History 102, in which the question – a mere phrase or isolated word – gives no clue or guidance as to how it should be answered, was perhaps the most destructive frame of all: *all* the student-participants, except one with 51%, failed this examination. The same nine students fared significantly better in History 101: a third of them failed this course. So it appears that one of the clearest findings to have emerged from this study is the strong correlation between an expressivist pedagogy and the subsequent failure of ill-prepared students. This is an uncomfortable insight for the History department. It means that they too have been 'ill-prepared': they have been impeded by their old, expressivist frames about the nature of universities and university learning (see Morphet *et al.*, 1989 in Section 2.5.1). Because they have failed to reframe their assumptions, they have inadvertently generated failure in some students, particularly those from poor, working-class backgrounds.

The expressivist ideology extends to the tutors. They, too, are given no explicit guidance about how to tutor, especially in History 102. It is assumed that they will have absorbed the style of History tutoring, experientially, through exposure. This did not always work well (see Section 4.2.2).

However, evidence that a structured, guided reading programme is being planned for next year, albeit for 3rd year historians, (see Section 4.4), suggests that low-key, emancipatory change may indeed have begun, although I cannot, of course, claim that my research has been directly responsible for this.

Understanding myself as a 'participant' in the research process (see Section 3.3) requires that I consider how it has affected me, too. It must be said that the experience of being a *critical* ethnographer has not been entirely comfortable. It has been disturbing, certainly for me, and probably, it seems, for the History department as well. In the next section I will offer some practical advice on the teaching of reading to ill-prepared students in History. This is perhaps presumptuous: I am not a historian. But *my* passion, as I described in Section 1.5, is to explore ways in which ill-prepared students can become active, generative members of academic communities. I have concluded that I cannot avoid the responsibilities of a critical researcher and the awkwardness that this undoubtedly involves.

In other ways my experience has been unexpectedly emancipatory. I have been able to enter the home- and school-based literacy experiences of my students more imaginatively and respectfully and I feel that I have been at the 'coal-face' with them as they courageously attempt to read and write for a mainstream discipline in the university. In the light of my findings it becomes imperative that I, too, revisit the ways in which I teach reading. I have realised, with some discomfort, that the 'read-and-tell' method that I describe towards the end of Section 4.1.2, has also been part of my own practice as an ELAP tutor, and that I must now find ways of teaching students to engage more rigorously with print, to become more efficient 'bottom-up processors'. I must heed my own advice. The reading for my own course must be more carefully graded and sequenced and must be accessible to the students at every point. I must acknowledge the students' 'zones of proximal development', build on them, and gradually withdraw the scaffolding during the course of the academic year. So in urgent and practical ways, the experience of this study will profoundly affect my own reading pedagogy.

Ascribing student failure to cognitive or linguistic, rather than socio-cultural factors, means that lecturers, including myself, can avoid their responsibilities to teach in imaginative and accessible ways. Understanding student failure as a mismatch of frames implicates lecturers much more radically because it requires that they reframe *their* assumptions and address issues of practice. In the following section, then, I will explore some of the practical ways in which the teaching of reading to ill-prepared students can be improved in History 1.

5.6 Suggestions for an improved reading pedagogy

Generally, the sorts of interventions that would give ill-prepared students better opportunities for access to a Humanities degree at Rhodes University would have to be based on a more thorough knowledge of and respect for their socio-cultural frames for reading and learning. Some frames may need to be dismantled and replaced to make way for more academic understandings of knowledge, but gently and respectfully. For example, to denigrate 'history-history', that is, the history of facts and stories, is unrealistic and possibly humiliating for students with already low expectations of their ability to cope at university. In fact, I suggest that 'history-history' is an important part of 'History': after all, there can be no 'argument' and 'construction' without 'evidence' and 'chronology' (Nuttal *et al.*, 1995: see the diagram in Section 2.6.2). All these four factors work together to make good 'History'. The 'evidence' and the 'chronology', (the facts and stories), are at the base of the Nuttal *et al.*'s pyramid-diagram: there can be no 'argument' or 'construction' without them. When Thembisa made use of a 90 page, 'history-history' book for her essay (see Section 4.3.1), it was a wise and practical choice: she built a relatively successful argument on the sort of extratextual frames that it had provided her with.

Furthermore, if they were to succeed in History, the students in this study would need their reading to be much more carefully scaffolded. For example, the readings would need to be graded in terms of accessibility, from easier to more difficult texts. Tutors or tutorial materials would prepare the students for the readings and new ideas, scenes, people and language would be thoroughly mediated beforehand. Tutors would explore the students' existing extratextual frames, and build on them, or replace them if they represented impediments to the effective comprehension of a text (see Taber, 2001, in Section 2.5). Even the use of a textbook such as Shillington's *History of Africa* could be employed as a valuable way to build up background knowledge for the courses, and as a point of comparison for other interpretations of the history of Africa, to encourage the beginnings of a critical literacy. Textbooks are a 'zone of proximal development' for most first-year students: teachers need to build *from* that zone, and not in conflict with it, by spurning textbooks entirely. Nuttal *et al.* (1995, in Section 2.6.2) *weaned* their students off textbooks.

It would also be important for the students to be explicitly told about the concept of *genre*. If textbooks are within their 'ZPD', then they need to become aware that textbooks themselves are a particular kind of writing, and that a huge variety of *other* written (and spoken) genres go to constructing history. They would have to be taught how to identify the features of different kinds of generic writing, how to distinguish one genre from another, and to understand the role and function of different genres. Furthermore, given the potentially confusing variety of textual genres, the students would need guidance about which are important, 'central' textual sources, and which are peripheral.

Finally, having made the effort to read and write within the new knowledge community, the students' examinations and assessments would need to test the skills that they had acquired in the process, and not new ones. The History 102 examination style (see Appendix H) suggests a mismatch between the skills acquired during the course and the new, atypical academic skills required for the examination.

Ill-prepared students, especially, need teachers who are discourse models for how to speak, read, write, value and behave in the new knowledge community. As they observe and imitate these models, they can begin to participate, at first passively and then, later, generatively, in the new discourse community (see Northedge, 2003, in Section 2.5.1). As novice academics, the students would need to be apprenticed into the "design grammar" (see Gee, 2000, in Section 2.4.1) of the new community. Novices need overt, expert leadership. They do not need tutors "who wait patiently for learning to combust spontaneously and then to follow its natural course" (Northedge, 2003:170). Some of Dr W's tutorial materials and aspects of Nomalanga's tutorials represent this kind of active, deliberate modelling. The other tutors often modelled how to *speak* and even how to *write* in the new community, but only Dr W and Nomalanga tried to model academic *reading*.

Both Nuttal *et al.* (1995) and Leibowitz *et al.* (1995) have described curriculum initiatives for the teaching of History 1. Nuttal *et al.*'s approach was essentially skills-based, but gave students opportunities to 'mushfake' (see Section 2.6.2) the discourse of the new community. Leibowitz *et al.* immersed students in the discourse of History, but, unlike at Rhodes University, there was more deliberate modelling of the adversarial voice that seems so important to academic History. Both of these initiatives needed elements offered by the other to be more fully socio-cultural in orientation – more *conscious teaching* on the one hand, and more *apprenticing* on the other. The suggestions I have put forward in the section above include both elements: I believe students need both deliberate skills-teaching *and* apprenticeship. However, apprenticing large groups of first-year students is difficult, and it is important to create opportunities for intermediate levels of participation in the new discourse, and to deliberately encourage the voices of those from less powerful, minority cultures. And although there is a place for skills teaching, ('*learning*' in Gee's terms) it needs to set alongside '*acquisition*' by means of more modelling and real-life practice within the community itself.

5.7 Further research

The interventions that I have suggested in the section above are tentative and possibly idealistic: they would need to be implemented in the context of the personal resources already available to the department and, as I reported in Section 4.4, it is a department with an already

extremely heavy work load. Such interventions would need to be further refined, researched and evaluated.

My own study has had a narrow focus because it has explored the needs of only one kind of student in History 1. Whether the findings are applicable, to any extent, to other first year students in History would need to be established by further research. It is Dr W's sense that they are more generalisable, but Professor M's that they are not (see their comments in Section 4.4).

Professor C's remarks in Section 4.4. suggest that he is aware that he is not engaging fully with the students, but that this is as much a 'generational' and 'technological' conflict as a socio-cultural and socio-economic one. Students, he said, are now altogether "*different animals*". This implies that my study may have a wider significance because many students are "*different animals*" for a variety of complex reasons, not simply the ones I have researched. The *nature* of the disengagement between lecturers and their students needs fuller investigation.

I am interested in pursuing research that explores similar ideas to those that have informed this research in other disciplinary and institutional contexts. Furthermore, reading is only one aspect of academic literacy. I have argued that it is a particularly important one, but this research is clearly limited by the fact that its focus is on reading only. Socio-cultural frames for how to speak or write in new knowledge communities also need further attention.

Finally, building on this thesis, I would like to research a particular reading intervention which has been designed on the basis of a fuller comprehension of students' socio-cultural frames and on the basis of the learning principles outlined by Taber (2001) and Northedge (2003, in Sections 2.5 and 2.5.1). I feel that the insights of this study would be more thoroughly secured and refined by such research.

5.8 Concluding remarks

At the end of this research endeavour, I am left with a sense of the importance of more reading research of *all* kinds in this country, both qualitative and quantitative. The traditional idea of 'reading for a degree' still holds good, and ways of making reading available to all the "*different [South African] animals*" in schools and universities needs to be found with some urgency.

This research has also encouraged me to reflect on the institution of which I am a part. Quinn, writing about the PGCHE, a course for lecturers at Rhodes University (see Section 4.4), observes that:

At Rhodes, sufficient effort has not been made to contribute to equity in terms of providing either formal or actual access to previously disadvantaged students ... an important issue for us to consider in our thinking about our curriculum is how we can ensure that we are preparing lecturers to help previously disadvantaged students gain epistemological access to the university by encouraging them to make shifts in their frameworks for understanding their practice as well as to acquire the relevant practical knowledge (2003: 11, 12).

The fact that the History department had only 14 'previously disadvantaged' students, in a much larger class of 200 – 300, does not reflect well on the way Rhodes University is adapting to the new South African order. Lecturers do not feel they have to address educational needs of such students because they are a small minority. They do not appear to have to "shift their frameworks" or "acquire the relevant practical knowledge" (ibid.). Black, working-class students will, in turn, avoid registering for courses at Rhodes University because their needs are not sympathetically addressed, and because they are assigned a 'minority-group' status in small, foundation year courses. They are treated as "charity cases" in a "pauper's wing" in the "stately home of elite education" (Northedge, 2003:17). Thereafter, it seems, students of this kind must 'sink or swim'. The fact that ELAP, as an 'add-on' course is presently being reconceptualised as a full Foundation Year, integrated into the mainstream courses of the Humanities faculty, is a significant step forward. But it will be important that the new course avoids the stigma of a new kind of "pauper's wing". The full support of the whole institution will be needed to establish a deeper awareness of the cultural and educational needs of underprepared students. Only then can a more urgent sense of our institutional responsibilities for redress follow. I therefore hope that this ethnographic exploration into some students' experiences of reading in one Humanities discipline can play a part in changing the consciousness of the wider institution as a whole.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Questionnaire (including copy of formal consent form)

RHODES UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS
MARCH, 2002

- I am doing some research into the pre-university reading experiences of some students who are doing a Humanities subject. I have chosen History and have permission from the History department to conduct this research amongst some of their students.
- I would be grateful if you could fill in the following questionnaire as honestly as you can. There are really no right or wrong answers here! What I am looking for are your *reflections and memories* of your life as a reader.
- If you are happy for me to use your comments in my research project, please indicate at the bottom of this page by signing your name. If you would like me to use a *pseudonym*, or false name, suggest an alternative name for yourself.
- Please return the questionnaire by the beginning of next term.
- **Thank you very much for taking time to help me with this project!**

NAME: _____

STUDENT NUMBER: _____

1. What is your mother tongue?

2. What was the name and address of your school?

3. What are your father and mother's (or guardian's) levels of education?

4. Are your parents (or guardians) employed? Where, or how, are they employed?

5. Would you like me to use a *pseudonym* when I report the data that you give me? If so, suggest an alternative name for yourself.

6. Please sign here if you are willing for me to write about your reading experiences in my research

SIGNATURE: _____

QUESTIONNAIRE:

The pre-university reading experiences of 1st year students at Rhodes University.

N.B. In order to save space, I have deleted the writing spaces after each of the following questions. There were 5 – 6 lines for the responses for each question in the original document.

NAME: _____

STUDENT NUMBER: _____

SECTION 1: CHILDHOOD READING EXPERIENCES

1. Describe as much as you can remember about how you first learnt to read. (E.g., What were the circumstances, how old were you, who were the people involved in teaching you and what reading materials did you have to help you?)
2. Did reading come easily to you, or did you struggle? If you struggled, try and remember why, and describe how it felt.
3. Did your school provide you with books to take home to practise your reading (eg, for homework), or did you practice reading only in class time?
4. Did the adults who took care of you at home listen to you read your schoolbooks aloud?
5. Did you read non-school books as a schoolchild? (eg, Comics? Library books? The Bible?)
6. Did you have a favourite book when you were a child? What was it? Say why you think you remember it.
7. What kinds of games did you play most often when you were a child?

SECTION 2: READING AT HOME

8. What sort of reading was available to you in your home while you (eg storybooks, magazines, newspapers, religious books, novels etc) were growing up?
9. Approximately how many books were in your home? Give a few of the titles if you can remember them.
10. Did the adults in your home ever read stories aloud to you? Or did some of them ever tell you stories? If you have these memories describe them in as much detail as you can.
11. What do you remember about the kinds of reading the adults at your home did? (Eg, did they read newspapers, magazines, religious books or any other kinds of books? Do you remember them receiving and reading various kinds of letters?)
12. Did your home have a TV? If so, did you used to watch it a lot? If you had favourite programmes, try and describe why you think you liked them.

SECTION 3: READING AT SCHOOL

13. What has been your experience of libraries before you came to University? Did your school or town have a library that you used?
14. Can you remember being encouraged to read extra books by your teachers at school?
15. Think about how you studied your setbooks at school in English classes. Did you mostly read them aloud in class or did you read them silently to yourself? If you did both, which method did you use more often, and which did you enjoy more?

16. What do you think you learnt from reading your school setbooks? (Eg, the novel you studied for Matric?)
17. What would you say your level of computer literacy was before you came to Rhodes? (Eg, Had you ever read anything on an Internet website before you came to Rhodes?)

SECTION 4: ATTITUDES TO READING

18. In English, a person who reads a lot is sometimes called 'a bookworm' or 'a nerd'. Neither of these words is very kind! Do you have similar words for people who read a lot, or study a lot, in your language? If so, try and give a translation of the words.
19. Describe your own attitude to someone who reads a lot, and then describe your attitude to someone who can't read at all.
20. How would describe the benefits of reading, either for yourself or for someone else?

APPENDIX B

The students' interview questions

Interview questions: The reading experiences and histories of foundation year students at RU.

Home reading experiences:

1. What was your first experience or memory of books? Before school?
2. Did you read *non-school* books when you were growing up?
 - What kind of books were they?
 - Where did you get them from?
 - Can you remember any favourite books that you had? Describe them.
2. Can you remember how many books were in your home?
 - Do you remember reading any of them while you were growing up?
3. Can you remember ever being *read* or *told* stories when you were a child?
 - Describe either of these experiences in as much detail as you can remember.
 - Describe the circumstances in which you were read or told these stories.
4. Can you remember how much reading your caregivers (eg parents, grandparents or sisters, brothers etc) did when they were at home?
 - What kinds of reading do you remember your parents (guardians etc) doing?
 - Did they ever talk about what they were reading about?
5. Did you have crayons/pens/pencils/paper to write with or draw with at home?
6. What magazines or newspapers did you see in your home and who read them? Did you?

School reading experiences:

6. Tell me as much as you can remember about HOW you learned to read?
 - Did you learn to read from books or from the board?
 - Did you learn by chanting the sounds?
 - Did you learn in Xhosa or English (or both)?
 - Did the teacher ever listen to you read individually (alone)?
 - If you had books in the class, did you have to share them with other pupils?
 - Were the books interesting, colourful etc?
 - Did they have pictures that helped you to understand what you were reading about.
7. Did you find learning to read easy or was it a struggle?
 - If it was difficult try and remember why you had difficulties.
 - Do you still find reading a struggle?

- If it was easy, try and remember what it felt like to learn to read for the first time? Did it feel good or exciting?
8. Did your school give you books to take home to practice your reading?
 - Did you practice your reading mainly at school?
 9. *How much* and *what sort of* reading in Xhosa did you do at school?
 - Were there interesting reading materials?
 - Did you do much *extensive* reading in Xhosa/Venda at school?
 10. Did the adults who took care of you at home listen to you read your schoolbooks aloud?
 - Were they *proud* of you, or *critical* of your reading? (Revise...Did you enjoy reading to them...What did they say about you reading?)
 11. Can you remember any particularly interesting or exciting reading experiences that you had at school?
 12. What was your experience of libraries before you came to Rhodes?
 - Did your school have a library that you used?
 13. Can you remember a teacher who encouraged you to read extra books?
 - Did they give you extra books or magazines?
 - Did they show you how to join or use a library?
 - Did your teacher ever ask you to write about what you had read, eg, do book reviews?
 - Do you very remember a teacher asking you about your extra reading, or checking that you had done it?
 14. Describe your experience of reading your setbooks in English?
 - What method did the teacher use to help you to read them?
 - Did you read them aloud in class or did you read silently?
 - What do you remember about your Matric setbooks (in English?)
 - What do you think you learned from them?
 15. Same questions for Xhosa setbooks.

Attitudes to reading:

1. When you were growing up in your community, if there was a girl/boy who didn't like playing outside with all the other children (eg soccer or skipping) and s/he just wanted to read, what would you think of that girl/boy? What would the other children or parents say about that child?
2. What do you think the *benefits* of reading are (for yourself)?
3. Do you think *reading* is more or less the same as *learning*? Or is it different from learning?
4. If you didn't have to read for serious purposes, (eg, for learning English!) what do you think you would choose to read?
5. Is reading ever a *painful* experience for you?
6. When you 'page' a magazine, for example, what are you doing exactly?

APPENDIX C

Copy of letter to Professor M

15th September, 2003

English Language and Linguistics, RU.

Dear [Professor M]

I promised [Drs C and W] that I would show them what I had written about my observations of the 1st years' reading in their History 1 courses – I can't remember if I made you the same promise. It was a long time ago! I am enclosing 2 copies of the data chapter of my thesis – Chapter 4. I would be very grateful if you and your colleagues could comment. I know how busy you all are, so I am well aware of the imposition. But you may find it interesting. My research is 'participative'. So the validity and reliability of the whole enterprise will depend largely on the responses of the 'participants'. I would love Nomalanga and Glen to be able to read it as well. I have already mentioned this to Nomalanga. The 1st year students I researched will also be asked to respond – those that are still around.

I really want to ask you all whether you think I have been fair to you! I am prepared to revise and rewrite – even exclude – sections if you think I have misrepresented you! How you all respond will have an impact on how I write Chapter 5 – the 'conclusion' and 'implications' section. Also, how shall I refer to you all? Would you like to hide names a bit, as is normally done in research reports? Of course I would be happy to do that as well.

I will leave the two copies with the secretary and perhaps I could ask her to circulate them a bit? If you want to email me your responses that would be fine ... or you could write all over the copies and I could come and pick them up in due course.

Thank you all for your help and time. I am really grateful and I have found my experiences in the History department very enriching and the process of writing up this data absolutely fascinating. I am feeling that I need to revise my own practice somewhat on the basis of some of it.

Yours sincerely

Penny Niven.

APPENDIX D

The lecturers' interview questions

1. What are you hoping the students will gain from your History 101/102 course generally?
2. How would you describe an 'ideal' History 101/102 student?
3. How would you describe a good, 1st class History 101/102 essay?
4. What part should (or does?) reading play in History 101/102?
5. What would you hope the History students would gain from their weekly tutorials?
 - *Why don't you prescribe particular topics or readings for the tuts as is done in the department generally? [For History 102].*
 - *Are the tuts related to the lecture topics?*
 - *What are the advantages or disadvantages of putting your readings on the Web? [For History 101].*
6. Do you think that academic reading can be taught explicitly? [For both courses].
7. [For History 102]: Quote from History 102 handbook: "We are trying prolong the Age of Gutenberg and would like to see you reading books and using the Library". What is the thinking behind this comment?
 - *Why did you put it this way?*
 - *Seems to indicate a suspicion reading from the Internet? Is this true?*
8. [For History 102]: In terms of the Humanities faculty in general, and the History department in particular, your method of examining the students seems quite unusual? Could you explain your motivation for this particular method of examining?
9. Why do you think the ELAP students often fail your course?
10. I have explored the ELAP students' reading backgrounds and histories quite extensively and I'd like to ask you some questions about your own.
 - *Did you have many books or reading materials in your home when you were growing up?*
 - *Were you read to as a child?*
 - *Did you read for pleasure? Were you 'a bookworm'?*
 - *Were you encouraged to read widely at school?*
 - *How did you learn to read? Was learning to read easy, or difficult? When did you learn to read? Did your parents listen to you read aloud?*
 - *Did you have easy access to a library when you were growing up?*
 - *Do you read for pleasure now, or is most of your reading work-related?*

APPENDIX E

The tutors' interview questions

1. How do you decide on what topics to cover in your tuts with the students [or with ELAP students]?
 - *Are you guided by the History dept or do you make your own decisions?*
2. Do you think *reading* is an important part of this course? In what ways?
3. Are you given any specific guidance regarding how to help the students with reading or writing in History 1?
4. Do you think reading plays an important role in whether the students pass or fail this course?
5. Do you try and locate extra reading materials for the students? Where, how?
6. How did the (ELAP) students handle the reading/writing assignment for History 102? [For History 102].
7. How do you see your role as a History tutor?
 - *Is your role different for ELAP students?*
 - *What are the students needs (generally)?*
 - *Are the needs different for ELAP students?*
 - *Are their needs linguistic?*
 - *Socio-cultural?*
 - *To do with background knowledge?*
 - *Do you see your role as teaching reading in any way? How?*
8. Do the (ELAP) students ever tell you what they need help with?
 - *Do they ever tell you if they don't understand a concept or something that is being read in tuts?*
9. How do you decide on that 10% of the final mark for 'participation' in tuts?

APPENDIX F

Interview questions about the History 102 reading assignment

Schema-type questions.

1. What did you know about [the Holocaust, or other relevant topic] before you came to University?
2. What do you know about it now that you have read this book?

Reading strategies

3. What did you read first in the book? (Before you started reading Chapter 1, did you look at anything else in/on the book? Eg...Did you read the 'blurb' on the back? Did you read the Contents page? Did you look at the map? The quotations at the beginning of the book?)
4. Did you use the sub-headings before starting the chapters?
5. Did you 'dip in' to the book and read the interesting-looking bits first? Which bits did you look at first?
6. How long is it taking you to read a chapter? How long are you reading sessions before you get bored/tired?
7. Have you been using a dictionary to look up difficult words?

Global questions

8. What do you think the writer's purpose was in writing this book?
9. What is the essay question, based on this book, that you have planned?
10. What sticks out in your memory from reading this book?

APPENDIX G

Examples from the History 102 'Some Books' list

Some books

African Rights, Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance
 Titus Alexander, Unravelling Global Apartheid
 Martin Amis, Einstein's Monsters
 Gary Armstrong, Football Hooligans. Knowing the Score
 George Ayittey, Africa in Chaos
 Asoka Bandarage, Women, Population and Global Crisis
 Benjamin Barber, Jihad vs McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World
 Jo Ellen Barnett, Time's Pendulum. The Quest to Capture Time (Physics Library)
 Omer Bartov (ed), The Holocaust
 Jean Baudrillard, The Consumer Society
 Jean Baudrillard, The Transparency of Evil
 John Baylis & Steve Smith (eds), The Globalization of World Politics
 Sharon Beder, Global Spin. The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism
 Yves Beigbeder, Judging War Criminals
 Walden Bello, Dark Victory. The United States, Structural Adjustment and Global Poverty
 James Beniger, The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society
 Birdlife Africa 2000, Threatened Birds of the World
 Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind
 Robert Bly, The Sibling Society
 Murray Bookchin, Re-enchanting Humanity: A Defense of the Human Spirit Against Anti-Humanism, Misanthropy, Mysicism and Primitivism
 Samuel Bowles & Richard Edwards, Understanding Capitalism
 York Bradshaw & Michael Wallace, Global Inequalities
 David Brin, The Transparent Society: Will Technology Force Us to Choose Between Privacy and Freedom?
 Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth
 J. Bronowski, The Ascent of Man
 George Brooks, Getting Along Together: World History Perspectives for the 21st Century (see Professor Cobbing)
 David Brown, Cybertrends: Chaos, Power and Accountability in the Information Age
 Lester Brown, State of the World 1990 (and one for each subsequent year—available Education Library)
 Lester Brown & Hal Kane, Full House. Reassessing the Earth's Population Carrying Capacity
 Phillip Brown & Hugh Lauder, Capitalism and Social Progress: The Future of Society in a Global Economy
 Christopher Browning, Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland
 Zbigniew Brzezinski, Out of Control. Global Turmoil on the Eve of the 21st Century
 Susan Buck-Moss, Dreamworld and Catastrophe. The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West
 Deborah Cadbury, The Feminization of Nature
 Rondo Cameron, A Concise Economic History of the World
 Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics
 Fritjof Capra, The Web of Life
 Rachel Carson, Silent Spring
 Manuel Castells, The Information Age (3 vols.)
 Marvin Cetron & Owen Davies, Probable Tomorrows: How Science and Technology will Transform Our Lives in the Next 20 Years
 Noam Chomsky, Deterring Democracy
 Noam Chomsky, Class Warfare
 Michel Chossudovsky, The Globalisation of Poverty
 Peter Cochrane, Tips for Time Travellers. Visionary Insights into New Technology, Life and the Future
 Matthew Collin, Altered State. The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House

Robert Conquest, The Great Terror: A Reassessment
 Stephen Cornell & Douglas Hartmann, Ethnicity and Race
 Vincent Courtillot, Evolutionary Catastrophes: The Science of Mass Extinction
 Alfred Crosby, Ecological Imperialism. The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900
 Herman Daly & John Cobb, For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future
 Paul Davies, The Fifth Miracle. The Search for the Origin and Meaning of Life
 Terrence Deacon, The Symbolic Species. The Co-Evolution of Language and the Human Brain
 Michael Dertouzos, What Will Be. How the New World of Information Will Change Our Lives
 Mark Dery, Escape Velocity. Cyberculture at the End of the Century
 Igor Diakonoff, The Paths of History
 Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs and Steel. A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years
 Murray Dobbin, The Myth of the Good Corporate Citizen: Democracy under the Rule of Big Business
 Richard Douthwaite, The Growth Illusion. How Economic Growth has Enriched the Few, Impoverished the Many and Endangered the Planet
 Alan Durning, How Much is Enough? The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth
 Graham Dutfield, Intellectual Property Rights, Trade and Biodiversity
 Michael Edwards, Future Positive. International Cooperation in the 21st Century
 Paul Ehrlich, The Population Explosion
 Elizabeth Eisenstein, The Printing Revolution
 Norbert Elias, Time: An Essay
 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Civil Wars. From L.A. to Bosnia
 Harold Evans, The American Century
 L.T. Evans, Feeding the Ten Billion. Plants and Population Growth
 Susan Faludi, Stiffed. The Betrayal of the American Man
 Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, Millenium. A History of Our Last Thousand Years
 Marc Ferro, The Great War 1914-1918
 Viktor Frankl, Man's Search For Meaning
 Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique
 Erich Fromm, The Sane Society
 Richard Froyen, Macroeconomics
 Francis Fukuyama, The Great Disruption
 Johan Galtung, 'On the Social Costs of Modernisation: Social Disintegration, Atomie/Anomie and Social Development', last chapter in Cynthia Hewitt de Alcantara (ed), Social Futures: Global Visions
 Adam Garfinkle, Telltale Hearts. The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement Murray
 Gell-Mann, The Quark and the Jaguar (Physics Library)
 Susan George, A Fate Worse than Debt
 Susan George, The Debt Boomerang: How the Third World Debt Harms Us All
 Susan George, 'How the Poor Develop the Rich', ch.20 in Majid Rahnema et al (eds), The Post-Development Reader
 Susan George, 'A Short History of Neoliberalism', chapter 2 in Walden Bello et al (eds), Global Finance
 Kenneth Gergen, The Saturated Self. Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life
 Eugenia Ginsberg, Into the Whirlwind (Town Library)
 Eugenia Ginsberg, Within the Whirlwind (Town Library)
 Todd Gitlin, The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage
 James Gleick, Faster. The Acceleration of Just About Everything
 Jonathan Glover, Humanity. A Moral History of the 20th Century
 Daniel Goldhagen, Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust
 Edward Goldsmith & Jerry Mander (eds), The Case Against the Global Economy, and For a Turn Towards Localization
 Germaine Greer, Sex and Destiny. The Politics of Human Fertility
 William Greider, Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy
 William Greider, One World, Ready or Not. The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism
 John Gribbin, Hothouse Earth. The Greenhouse Effect and Gaia
 Mirko Grmek, History of AIDS
 Michael Grubb et al, The Kyoto Protocol
 Nadine Gurr & Benjamin Cole, The New Face of Terrorism: Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction
 Janet Hadley, Abortion. Between Freedom and Necessity

Edward Hall, Beyond Culture
 Charles Hampden-Turner and Alfons Trompenaars, The Seven Cultures of Capitalism
 Stephen Handelman, Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafiya
 Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, Empire
 Claire Hargreaves, Snowfields. The War on Cocaine in the Andes
 Bennett Harrison & Barry Bluestone, The Great U-Turn: Corporate Restructuring and the Polarizing of America
 Andrew Harvey & Mark Matousek, Dialogues with a Modern Mystic
 Stephen Haseler, The Super-Rich. The Unjust New World of Global Capitalism
 Vaclav Havel, Summer Meditations
 Stephen Hawking, A Brief History of Time (Physics Library)
 David Held (ed), A Globalizing World?
 Edward Herman & Robert McChesney, The Global Media. The New Missionaries of Global Capitalism
 Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, The Bell Curve. Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life
 Noreena Hertz, The Silent Takeover: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy
 John Hidore, Global Environmental Change
 Henry Hobhouse, Seeds of Change. Six Plants that Transformed Mankind
 Eric Hobsbawm, Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991
 Eric Hobsbawm, The New Century
 David Holloway, Stalin and the Bomb
 Robert Holton, Globalization and the Nation State
 Edward Hooper, The River
 John Horgan, The End of Science. Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age
 Sanford Horwitt, Let Them Call Me Rebel. Saul Alinsky: His Life and Legacy
 John Hoyt, Animals in Peril
 Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order
 Roger Hutchinson, High Sixties: The Summers of Riot and Love
 Samuel Hynes, The Soldiers' Tale. Bearing Witness to Modern War
 Karl Jackson, Cambodia, 1975-1978: Rendezvous with Death
 Paul Johnson, Modern Times. A History of the World from the 1920s to the 1990s
 Ryszard Kapuscinski, Imperium
 Paul Kennedy, Preparing for the Twenty-First Century
 Manfred Kets de Vries et al, The New Global Leaders (e.g. Richard Branson)
 Ben Kiernan, The Pol Pot Regime
 William Kilpatrick, Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong: And What We Can Do About It
 Naomi Klein, No Logo
 William Knoke, Bold New World. The Essential Road Map to the Twenty-First Century
 David Korten, When Corporations Rule the World
 Robert Kuttner, Everything for Sale. The Virtues and Limits of Markets
 Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism
 Ervin Laszlo, The Creative Cosmos. A Unified Science of Matter, Life and Mind
 Richard Leakey, The Origin of Humankind
 Timothy Leary, Neuropolitique
 Timothy Leary, Chaos and Cyberculture
 Robert Levine, A Geography of Time
 Roger Lewin, Complexity. Life on the Edge of Chaos
 Massimo Livi-Bacci, A Concise History of World Population
 James Lovelock, The Ages of Gaia. A Biography of Our Living Earth
 James Lovelock, Healing Gaia. Practical Medicine for the Planet
 Bobbi Low, Why Sex Matters. A Darwinian Look at Human Behaviour
 Evan Luard, The Globalization of Politics
 Lora Lumpe (ed), Running Guns. The Global Black Market in Small Arms
 Celia Luri, Consumer Culture
 Nadezhda Mandelstam, Hope Against Hope
 Nadezhda Mandelstam, Hope Abandoned
 Debra Martin & David Frayer (eds), Troubled Times: Violence and Warfare in the Past
 Hans-Peter Martin & Harald Schumann, The Global Trap. Globalization and the Assault on Democracy and Prosperity
 Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War
 Arthur Marwick, The Sixties

Arno Mayer, Why Did The Heavens Not Darken? The 'Final Solution' in History
 Ernst Mayr, This is Biology. The Science of the Living World
 Robert McChesney, Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times
 Alfred McCoy, The Politics of Heroin. CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade
 Bill McKibben, The End of Nature
 Bill McKibben, The Age of Missing Information
 Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man
 Hamish McRae, The World in 2020. A Vision of the Future
 Zhores Medvedev, The Legacy of Chernobyl
 Gerard Milburn, Schrodinger's Machines: The Quantum Technology Reshaping Everyday Life
 Sidney Mintz, Sweetness and Power. The Place of Sugar in Modern History
 Stephen Mithen, The Prehistory of the Mind: A Search for the Origins of Art, Religion and Science
 Desmond Morris, The Naked Ape
 Desmond Morris, The Human Zoo
 Lewis Mumford, Technics and Civilisation
 Lewis Mumford, The Pentagon of Power: The Myth of the Machine
 Norman Myers (ed), The Gaia Atlas of Planet Management
 Roderick Nash, The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics
 Joel Nelson, Post-Industrial Capitalism: Exploring Economic Inequality in America
 Daniel Nettle & Suzanne Romaine, Vanishing Voices. The Extinction of the World's Languages
 Haing Ngor, Surviving the Killing Fields
 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross
 Igor Novikov, The River of Time
 Klaus Nurnberger, Prosperity, Poverty and Pollution: Managing the Approaching Crisis
 Robert O'Connell, Of Arms and Men. A History of War, Weapons and Aggression
 Kenichi Ohmae, The Borderless World. Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy
 Bob Ortega, In Sam We Trust: The Untold Story of Sam Walton and Wal-Mart
 Richard Overy, Russia's War
 Ian Pearson (ed), The Atlas of the Future
 Neil Postman, The Disappearance of Childhood (Education Library)
 Neil Postman, Technopoly. The Surrender of Culture to Technology
 Neil Postman & Steve Powers, How To Watch TV News
 Mark Prendergast, For God, Country and Coca-Cola
 Ilya Prigogine, The End of Certainty. Time, Chaos and the New Laws of Nature
 Gerard Prunier, The Rwandan Crisis 1959-1994
 Bill Readings, The University in Ruins
 Michael Redclift, Wasted. Counting the Costs of Global Consumption
 Martin Rees, Before the Beginning: Our Universe and Others
 Robert Reich, The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st-Century Capitalism
 Richard Rhodes, The Making of the Atomic Bomb (Physics Library)
 Richard Rhodes, Dark Sun. The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb (Physics Library)
 Eugene Rice, The Foundations of Early Modern Europe
 Jeremy Rifkin, Time Wars. The Primary Conflict in Human History
 Jeremy Rifkin, The End of Work. The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era
 Gilbert Rist, The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith
 George Ritzer, The McDonaldization of Society
 Sharon Roan, Ozone Crisis
 David Roberts, Minds at War. The Poetry and Experience of the First World War
 Richard Rosecrance, The Rise of the Virtual State: Wealth and Power in the Coming Century
 Ron Rosenbaum, Explaining Hitler
 Theodore Roszak, The Voice of the Earth
 Carl Sagan, The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark
 Kirkpatrick Sale, The Conquest of Paradise. Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy
 Ken Saro-Wiwa, A Month and A Day. A Detention Diary
 Peter Saunders, Capitalism: A Social Audit
 Jonathan Schell, The Fate of the Earth
 Jonathan Schell, 'Nuclear Holocaust', chapter 25 in Charles Kegley and Eugene Wittkopf (eds), The Nuclear Reader
 Jeffrey Scheuer, The Sound Bite Society: Television and the American Mind
 Dan Schiller, Digital Capitalism. Networking the Global Market System

Jan Aart Scholte, Globalization: A Critical Introduction
 Stephen Schwartz, Atomic Audit. The Costs and Consequences of U.S. Nuclear Weapons since 1940
 Viktoria Schweitzer, Tsvetaeva
 John Searle, The Mystery of Consciousness
 John Seitz, Global Issues: An Introduction
 Richard Sennett, The Corrosion of Character. The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism
 Michael Shallis, On Time (Physics Department Library)
 Michael Shermer, Why People Believe Wierd Things: Pseudoscience, Superstition, And Other Confusions of Our Time
 Vandana Shiva, Biopiracy. The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge
 Kavaljit Singh, The Globalisation of Finance
 Leslie Sklair, Sociology of the Global System
 Lee Smolin, The Life of the Cosmos
 South African Institute of International Affairs, The Illegal Drug Trade in Southern Africa
 Charles Southwick, Global Ecology in Human Perspective
 Peter Stalker, Workers Without Frontiers: The Impact of Globalization on International Migration
 Amory Starr, Naming the Enemy: Anti-Corporate Movements Confront Globalization
 John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton, Toxic Sludge is Good For You: Lies, Damned Lies and the Public Relations Industry
 L.S. Stavrianos, Lifelines from Our Past. A New World History
 Jay Stevens, Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream
 John Stoessinger, Why Nations Go To War
 Susan Strange, The Retreat of the State
 Charles Sykes, A Nation of Victims. The Decay of the American Character
 Studs Terkel, My American Century
 William Irwin Thompson (ed), Gaia: A Way of Knowing. Political Implications of the New Biology
 Martin van Crefeld, Technology and War
 Martin van Crefeld, The Transformation of War
 John Vidal, McLibel. Burger Culture on Trial
 Theodor Von Laue, The World Revolution of Westernization: The 20th Century in Global Perspective
 Frans de Waal, Chimpanzee Politics: Power and Sex among Apes
 Immanuel Wallerstein, The End of the World As We Know It
 John Walton & David Seddon, Free Markets and Food Riots. The Politics of Global Adjustment
 John Wargo, Our Children's Toxic Legacy: How Science and Law Fail to Protect Us from Pesticides
 Sheldon Watts, Epidemics and History. Disease, Power and Imperialism
 John Weiss, Ideology of Death. Why the Holocaust Happened in Germany
 Richard Welford, Hijacking Environmentalism. Corporate Responses to Sustainable Development
 Anthony Wilden, Man and Woman, War and Peace: The Strategist's Comparison
 Richard Wilkinson, Unhealthy Societies: The Afflictions of Inequality
 Edward Wilson, On Human Nature
 Edward Wilson, Consilience (Physics Library)
 Trevor Wilson, The Myriad Faces of War. Britain and the Great War, 1914-18
 William Wolman & Anne Callamosca, The Judas Economy. The Triumph of Capital and the Betrayal of Work
 Donald Wood, Post-Intellectualism and the Decline of Democracy: The Failure of Reason and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century
 Robert Wright, The Moral Animal. Why We Are The Way We Are
 Peter Wyden, Day One. Before Hiroshima and After
 Richard Wyman, Global Climatic Change and Life on Earth

APPENDIX H

HISTORY 102 MOCK EXAMINATION 2002

THE WORLD CRISIS AND ITS HISTORICAL ORIGINS

(N.B. I have deleted the lines after each question from the original document).

Instructions: This exercise is a trial run for the November examination. Identify and comment upon the following 25 issues/people/things/quotations and indicate why they are significant for humans. Write concisely on the script itself confining your comments to the allocated space. Use as much time as you can afford, though remember that in the November examination you will be required to comment on 50 terms in three hours: so pace yourselves accordingly. You are welcome to criticise the lecturer's point of view where you think it necessary.

1. The planet earth seen from space
2. Gaia as an autopoietic system
3. Human consciousness
4. Straight lines and progress
5. Agriculture and the 1001 things
6. The alphabet and iron
7. Clocks, firearms, books
8. The first men to travel round the world – with the leader's name (not Magellan)
9. Sugar, coffee, chocolate
10. Citypox
11. Capitalist growth and innovation
12. The factory
13. The breech-loading rifle
14. Electricity
15. Democracies
16. Football
17. The world war of 1914 – 45
18. The gulag system in the Soviet Union
19. Lisa Meitner and uranium
20. Edward Teller and fusion

21. Auschwitz
22. Guernica, Dresden and Hiroshima
23. The Keynesian consensus of the 1950s and 1960s
24. The fridge
25. Women's liberation

APPENDIX I

List of History 102 lectures (2002)

THIRD TERM'S LECTURE THEMES

Here is the rough order of themes to be covered during the third term.

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The web of life
- 3 Humans and consciousness
- 4 Agriculture and the 1001 things
- 5 The alphabet, religions, ploughs, horses and beans
- 6 Clocks, firearms and printing: the nation state
- 7 Ditto: imperialism
- 8 Factories, cities and railways
- 9 Capitalism
- 10 Controls
- 11 Electricity and oil
- 12 Democracy and nationalism
- 13 Armies, weapons and wars
- 14 The outbreak of world war
- 15 The first world war
- 16 Fascism and depression
- 17 The second world war
- 18 The Yezhovschina in the USSR
- 19 Individuals: Osip Mandelstam and Eugenia Ginsberg
- 20 Racism and euthanasia in Germany: pre-thinking the Holocaust
- 21 Auschwitz
- 22 Conceptualizing the atomic bomb
- 23 Hiroshima
- 24 The golden age of the Keynesian consensus
- 25 The cultural revolution of the 1950s and after
- 26 The hydrogen bomb
- 27 The contemporary neo-liberal era

FOURTH TERM'S LECTURE THEMES

And here are the themes to be covered during the fourth term. Some variations in sequence or running on from lecture to the next may occur.

- 28 Globalization: an overview
- 29 When corporations rule the world
- 30 Global spin
- 31 The erosion of democracy
- 32 Bad mood rising: McDonalds vs Steel and Morris
- 33 The super rich and their financial system
- 34 Global inequalities
- 35 Global debt and structural adjustment
- 36 Global apartheid
- 37 Global crime
- 38 Television and the end of the Age of Gutenberg
- 39 Sibling society
- 40 Ethical collapse and consumerism
- 41 The population explosion
- 42 Problems of food output and distribution
- 43 Human onslaught on the environment and animal life
- 44 Global warming
- 45 Chemicals in the environment
- 46 AIDS: causes and outlook
- 47 Brands of tyranny and genocide
- 48 Africa unravels: the coming anarchy?
- 49 Thoughts on 11 September 2001
- 50 Possible futures: can we survive?

APPENDIX J

Two examples of Nomalanga's tutorial handouts, with fieldnotes.

9/10/01

ELAP HISTORY HANDOUT 5

So far we have pointed the finger at the capitalist system, technologies and historical processes in our attempts to find the root of our problems. However, we need to start looking at ourselves as modern individuals to better understand why we seem to be spiralling towards collapse.

MODERN CULTURE – our primary goal is to ACQUIRE and ACQUIRE FOREVER!

We need to ask what the psychology of the modern day person is. What is the culture that pervades our lifestyles and tells what life is about and what to value.

Cobbing says that today's we have a culture of narcissism. Narcissus, according to Greek mythology, fell in love with his own reflection therefore himself. He saw nobody and nothing else – he was a self-admirer, blinded to anything but his own delusions of significance and worth.]

www.dictionarv.com gives the following definition of narcissism: A psychological condition characterized by self-preoccupation, lack of empathy (and unconscious deficits in self-esteem)

In a sense, modern individuals are preoccupied with their own success, own problems, and own issues. When we do things we are hardly thinking in terms of community. We do not think that the problems of our neighbours are our own. We do not think we are the problem but want to blame somebody else so we can go on with our lives.

We live in a culture where consumption of goods and commodities is our primary goal. We cannot conceive of Christmas without buying and getting, we cannot conceive of birthdays without presents. We buy things for Mother's Day, Father's Day etc. But even in our daily lives we want to be buying and getting. We walk past shops and look through windows and think "I must get that..." whether we can or cannot. We can't imagine not getting new clothes, new shoes, the latest fashion or eating out at Wimpy's or Steers...

We are hedonistic in that we want to indulge in everything. We want to try everything, eat everything, wear everything, smoke everything, drink everything etc...

www.dictionarv.com defines hedonism or hedonistic as: a) Pursuit of or devotion to pleasure, especially to the pleasures of the senses. b) holding that only what is pleasant or has pleasant consequences is intrinsically good. c) behaviour is motivated by the desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain.

The mass media (TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, music industry...) is seen as one of the major sources where modern people learn their culture and where it is reflected visit the following website to read more on the role of media in consumerist culture:

<http://www.pathtofreedom.com/issues/culture&media/index.shtml>

deals with mass media: Noma explains how to look up

Noma says: "True?"

Students couldn't pronounce Noma's definition

Noma: "Steers which they told"

Noma: "go to dictionary & look."

explains: "ya are insecure."

Noma: "canal. emotional pain."

16/Oct

"Let's break it down..."
 "If sibling means brother & sister
 then we have a society
 of brother/sister society.
 No fathers & mothers."

ELAP HANDOUT 6
 THE SIBLING SOCIETY

Nana stops after sentences!
 What does he say? "There are no older people to help to move adults into adulthood."
 What does this mean?
 "There are no older people to help to move adults into adulthood."
 What does this mean?
 "There are no older people to help to move adults into adulthood."

In his book The Sibling Society Robert Bly suggests that there are no psychically whole, responsible, adult role models to help guide adolescents into maturity. He argues that our society has passed from a paternalistic to an adolescent state in which we behave like jealous siblings, each demanding personal gratification and hating mutual responsibility and natural authority.

They knew this word.
 Nana checked.

What we increasingly lack is imagination, without which we are unable to sympathise and empathise with, and to learn from, one another and past generations. We have been actively destroying the imagination since the 1950s, Bly feels, by overexposing children to, first, television, and now, computers and the information superhighway; we have substituted these one-way, image-vending media for the play and storytelling--with parents, with peers, or alone--that are crucial for developing imagination.

Nana: Why since 1950s? Age of television, electronic appliances, etc

Nana
 Adults want to be young forever
 Want to compete with the young people.
 Adults = immature.

replaced

Definitions:

Paternalistic - treating or governing people in a fatherly manner especially by providing for their needs without giving them rights or responsibilities.

Nana: do you understand this? Say in your own words.

What do you think Cobbing means by 'the end of The Age of Gutenberg'?

Should people go to library reading books. Thumbs: nation states.

Processes involved in books slower. Books = story teller.

Books: must make a picture in your mind. Erod. of thinking skills.

"Mostly talking to white kids in class."

Western, urban middle-class perspective on this course.
 SA = many different levels.

APPENDIX K

An example of questions from Dr W's History 101 tutorial book

Week 5 Readings and Questions

The readings this week focus on the concerns and problems faced by African leaders at the time of gaining independence. Both capture the sense of heady optimism that characterised the times. One selection is from Julius Nyerere, who, in a political party pamphlet (no date given but clearly between 1960-63), outlines what he envisions for Tanganyika (later renamed Tanzania) along socialist lines, as well as his vision for broad African unity. The other reading comes from the autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah (1965) describing the development of his 'Positive Action' campaign in 1949 which led to his arrest. When his party, the CPP (Convention Peoples Party) won elections in 1951, he was released directly from prison to become 'leader of government business' in parliament. The second part of the reading is his reflection on the problems he faced on taking over government from colonial officials.

Both Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah are famous African leaders and heads of state. Much more about them and their careers can easily be found on the internet or in the library.

For Nyerere reading:

1. What values does Nyerere attribute to African society?
2. How ought these ideals be manifested in an African socialist state?
3. What does he find wrong with western society?
4. What does Nyerere see as the benefits of a United States of Africa?
5. What were the practical realities which made Nyerere's ideals unworkable?
6. What do these readings tell us about Nyerere as a person?

For Nkrumah reading:

1. What prompted Nkrumah to devise the Positive Action campaign?
2. What forms did the Positive Action campaign take?
3. How did the opposition respond to the Positive Action campaign?
4. Why did the British eventually agree to Nkrumah's demands and allow him to head government?
5. How does Nkrumah's attitude towards the British change once he is in office?
6. What do these readings tell us about Nkrumah as a person?

Both the BBC website on Independence and the larger African History websites have quite a lot of additional information which can more fully place these two leaders in their contexts, as well as offer more from their writing and speaking.

