

**Master's level study in a British context:
Developing writers**

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Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis study followed six MA in English Language Teaching/Applied Linguistics students as they started out on their one-year programmes at the University of Reading, UK. They came from various academic, professional and national backgrounds. One was a native speaker of English; the other five were not. The study takes an ethnographic approach in exploring how these mature students learned to meet writing requirements in this context (which were within the essayist tradition of academic literacy), both as individual case studies and as a group.

The focus was on three Term1 writing assignments which all students had in common. However, the research sought to contextualise first term experiences in the framework of the whole year of study. I therefore interviewed these students about their writing five times in the year, including after submission of their year-end dissertations, and contacted them again a year later for post-course insights. The study explored how they responded to pre-submission advice from tutors and their reactions to and use of summative feedback provided. It also examined assignment briefings and documentation, students' meetings with personal tutors and my interviews with module tutors, as well as feedback on outlines and on the three assignments, and the assignments themselves. Although the students were, of course, six unique individual cases, themes emerged from this study of their development as academic writers in this context. These include the influence of background (such as academic, professional, discipline, linguistic), personal characteristics (eg expectations and approach to learning), and the role of literacy brokers.

Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clare L. Furneaux".

Clare Furneaux

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List of abbreviations

A1	Assignment 1
A2	Assignment 2
A3	Assignment 3
CoP	Community of practice
DA	Discourse analysis
DC	Discourse community
HE	Higher Education
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ESL	English as a second language
ESP	English for specific purposes
ELT	English language teaching
FL	Foreign language
HE	Higher Education
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LCD	Language curriculum design
LPP	Legitimate peripheral participation
MAAL	MA in Applied Linguistics
MAELT	MA in English Language Teaching
NES	Native English speaker
NLS	New Literacy Studies
NNES	Non-native English speaker
PCA	Pre-course assignment
PCQ	Pre-course questionnaire
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SLA	Second language acquisition
SLLP	Second language learning principles
TESOL	Teaching English to speakers of other languages
YOQ	Year-on questionnaire

Abbreviations used for data (in text and in quotation codes):

A/a	assignment
C	criterion
cl	class
i/I	interview
m	meeting
s	student
t	tutor
T	theme

Statement

My thesis explores how six new students develop as writers within the context of one-year Masters programmes. 'Developing', however, has two meanings: being developed by external agents and doing it for yourself, both of which are explored in the thesis. There are parallels here with the focus of this statement: my development as a researcher. The EdD programme builds up to self-development but there is a great deal of external input along the way and, as with the MA programmes I explored, the balance shifts as the programme progresses from input to personal development. There are also practical issues to consider, especially when, as in my case, the EdD has taken ten years to complete, and I shall begin with these.

Staying focused as a part-time student has been a challenge. For example, major upheavals at my place of work resulted in a year's suspension at one point. In addition, this thesis is based on my second topic, after a year of preparation on a first which could not go ahead as the course I planned to study did not run. The first project planned to investigate participants' reactions and products on an online course in writing for publication for a group of French researchers worldwide. Dropping this was enormously disappointing, as the topic built on two major professional interests (academic writing and online learning) and the study could have made a unique contribution to current research interest in non-native speaker academics writing for publication in English (eg Lillis and Curry 2010).

Because of the time and challenges involved in completing my EdD, I have learnt a great deal about the role of motivation and support in student continuation. Starting again with a new topic, for example, was a major test of my motivation, and I decided to research a context which I knew would exist, choosing to explore the academic writing experiences of our campus-based MA students. In addition, motivation can, and must, come from within, but I found that external factors were ultimately the strongest, including commitment to students who gave their time and to colleagues who increased their workload to reduce mine. In addition, other support in the form of a family who do not complain about absence and stress, and, most importantly,

an encouraging supervisor seems to me to be essential for an unfunded student to continue with a personal research project over time.

An unexpected motivating factor in doing the EdD has been its role in my professional development. In 2009 I was promoted to Senior Lecturer and made a National Teaching Fellow. Feedback from both the University Promotions Panel and the HEA revealed that commitment to the EdD and its resultant research were factors in my favour in both cases and I think this is appropriate. I have no doubt that, painful though it has been, my study for the EdD has developed me enormously as a researcher and teacher. It has also enabled me to contribute to the academic community, both locally and more widely. I have, for example, made several presentations based on EdD research. The findings of my Institution-Focused Study (Furneaux 2007) were presented to colleagues at University Teaching and Learning Days. Aspects of the thesis study have also been presented at the same forum and at an international conference and I now plan to write it up for publication.

What I find most interesting about my experience of the EdD is that, although I had a research background, I was forced to go back to basic principles as a researcher. My academic discipline is Applied Linguistics and, despite professional origins as an English language teacher and a current University post with heavy teaching commitments, I have conducted research in this area for years (e.g. Furneaux et al 1991) as well as supervised to Masters and doctoral levels. This means I am comfortable with an applied linguistics approach to research, which in my situation means a rationale that is practical and context-related. It does not require the epistemological reflection expected in Education, and I have struggled with this on the EdD, culminating in a reviewer of my Thesis Proposal advising me not to use terms I do not fully understand after I gave up trying to bluff my way through a definition of post-positivism to the Upgrade Committee. I was delighted to accept this advice, but I acknowledge that it is important to situate any research within a theoretical framework, and I now recognise that this is an area my discipline rather takes for granted. For example, in a discipline-specific introduction to research, the leading applied linguist, Dörnyei, argues that the main characteristics of a good researcher are curiosity, common sense, 'having good ideas' and 'being disciplined and responsible' (2007:17). Discussing his

approach to research methodology, he states: 'I cannot relate well to research texts that are too heavy on discussing the philosophical underpinnings of research methodology...I get easily disorientated in the midst of discussing research at such an abstract level' (Dörnyei 2007:18).

Returning to my development as a researcher, having had my second proposal accepted, my progress through the EdD continued to be painful. Teaching has always been something I enjoy. Research is a more solitary experience and it lacks the motivation of knowing others rely on you to deliver a core activity, so it is easier to procrastinate. As my first supervisor predicted, I really enjoyed the data collection (as it involved interaction with students), but then struggled with the rest of the process. Ironically given my topic, I have found the write-up to be a major challenge and this has been salutary. I have been battling with academic writing myself while writing about my participants' struggles with the same phenomenon; there can be few researchers in this position, which has added to my development as a researcher of this topic. I take comfort from Rogers' observation that 'all significant learning is to some degree painful and involves turbulence, within the individual' (1969:339). The pain I have experienced has focused on the development of my own ability to complete this study and to make sense of it, both for myself and for others in the write-up.

Deciding on my method of analysis was a particular challenge, especially as there is a dominant methodology, grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), that I wanted to experience and yet found antithetical to my aims of exploring the big picture. Another highly influential way of approaching research studies that I became uncomfortable with was Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger 1991), which I could not identify in this context. Developing as a researcher included building the confidence to challenge these dominant concepts and to follow a different path. This made me reflect on the challenge we pose our MA and doctoral students in asking them to be critical, when we ourselves need courage to be critical of those who are above us in the academy.

As a supervisor I know that the student-supervisor relationship is crucial in research, as discussed with regard to Masters dissertations in Woolhouse 2002

and to doctorates in Sambrook, Stewart and Roberts 2008. However, being a supervisee has made me appreciate this much more. Exploring this topic, I was particularly interested in the experiences of Sambrook (ibid), who writes from the perspective of being Stewart's supervisee and Roberts' supervisor. Her experiences were different from mine; unlike me, she began a PhD straight after undergraduate studies, and Roberts was her first doctoral student. Points raised, however, struck a chord, especially 'The key point here seems to be the balance between the professional (technical) and social (emotional) aspects of the relationship' (ibid:73). I have participated in three supervisor-supervisee relationships while working on the thesis; the first change resulted from the revision of topic, and the second because my then-supervisor left the Institute. The supervisor-supervisee relationship, whilst supportive, was completely different in terms of the professional-social balance in all three cases.

The first relationship was limited, though helpful, and relatively formal with a male supervisor in a different discipline (online learning). The second was closer with a female supervisor of a similar background to my own, who was an expert on second language writing; we had met as professional equals before she became my supervisor. My third and final supervisor, Amos Paran, was a former colleague, with whom I had published research (e.g. Furneaux, Paran and Fairfax 2007) and a close personal friend. Sambrook, Stewart and Roberts (2008) warn against a supervisory relationship that is too friendly 'thus preventing constructive critique' (ibid:80). This was not my experience with Amos. If anything, the nature of our relationship meant that the feedback was more robust and direct than I had received from either earlier supervisor. The difference was that I felt more able to rebut or challenge the advice – especially as I knew writing was more my area than his. Amos thinks that our history meant that 'at times I was able to support you more than I could or would have supported a student who was not a friend (e.g. the constant phoning between us)' (personal communication, November 2011). Although there has been more informal contact because of our friendship, knowing his professionalism, I do not think I received qualitatively different attention from his other doctoral students. I was happy to become his supervisee because I thought our friendship could withstand the pressures this would bring and I

knew I would get excellent and copious advice. This has been the case and I have found his input invaluable.

I only overrode his advice on one issue, which was with regard to my reluctance to use grounded theory's coding, discussed above. The academic pressure this provoked led me again to realise the scale of what we are doing when we ask students to be critical and to challenge the power hierarchy of the academy, as discussed in the thesis with regard to Critical EAP and academic literacies. Amos' concern was useful, however, as it pushed me to fully explore and justify my decision, following up leads with regard to other research.

In another connection with my thesis study, considering my relationship with my supervisors has led me to reflect on their crucial role as literacy brokers (Lillis and Curry 2006). Initially, I thought that these programme-related contacts were my only such brokers, in contrast to my thesis participants (who had a range of literacy brokers), but I then realised there had been others beyond the programme. Discussing their writing with my thesis-study participants heightened my awareness of the challenges and processes writers go through with new academic genres, which I then experienced in my own write-up. During this, I briefly discussed my work on different occasions with three friends who are applied linguists (John Field, Barry O'Sullivan and Alan Tonkyn) and they gave advice on ways to approach the thesis-writing task and/or of thinking about my data at points in time where I had met an impasse. Discussion at another key stage with a friend about her PhD (O'Regan:2009) in a different discipline, but following a similar approach, gave me confidence to pursue my method of data analysis. In addition, my husband (Dermot Shields) contributed to conceptual frameworks by working with me on figurative representations of my thinking. Finally, meetings with another Reading-based EdD student encouraged me to continue, and his thesis (McNeill:2010) was a useful example of the EdD thesis genre and a spur to complete mine.

In conclusion, whilst my experience of studying my participants' writing development and of my own writing of the thesis leads me to agree wholeheartedly with Bazerman that 'writing is a constant struggle' (1998:vii),

I would now adapt that quotation to claim that ‘researching is a constant struggle’ too. Many people have been instrumental in my struggle and development as a researcher during the EdD, at a range of levels, and I realise now the importance of support from others throughout, as well as the need for sheer dogged determination. I have been fortunate to have both.

1996 words

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Chapter 1: Introduction

‘Academic writing does not happen in isolation, but within multicultural, social, and political networks of relationships for purposes that suit particular locally situated practices in colleges and university settings.’ (Casanave 2002:257)

1.1 Rationale

I recently received the following e-mail from a British student on our MA in English Language Teaching by Distance Study programme, entitled ‘Book recommendations’:

Hi Clare, I would like to buy a book that will help me improve my academic writing skills in preparation for the optional modules. Do you know of anything that would suit the kind of writing that we are expected to produce on this course? There are lots of titles out there, but many are aimed at ESL students.
John

This e-mail reminded me of the reasons why I undertook this study of the development of academic writing by Masters students. As Lillis (2001:20) says, academic literacy plays a major role in British academic life and writing is seen:

as the way in which students consolidate their understanding of subject areas, as well as the means by which tutors can come to learn about the extent and nature of individual students’ understanding.

As John shows, even British postgraduate students feel they need help with this crucial skill; the challenge is even greater for our non-native English speaker students who are studying in a completely new educational context and often for the first time in English. Many students, even at postgraduate level, believe that generic advice on writing will help them develop their writing skills for the course of study they are undertaking. Yet when they look for published advice they do not find it. Can any book actually provide the help Masters students like John need? There are two main reasons why I believe it cannot.

Firstly, we do not know what writing at this level actually requires because there is very little research in this area; as Casanave (2002:84) points out ‘published case studies of academic enculturation at the masters level are sparse’. Research into

academic writing in Higher Education contexts has tended to focus on undergraduates or at postgraduate level on doctoral students. Undergraduates are important because over the past two decades English-medium universities across the world have seen an explosion in the number of 'non-traditional' students as participation rates for home populations have increased (as outlined with reference to Britain in Ivanič and Lea 2006). The postgraduate focus on doctoral writing (eg Berkenkotter, Huckin and Ackerman 1988, Prior 1998) and not taught Masters students' writing is harder to explain. It may be because most of this research has been in America where taught Masters tend to be within doctoral programmes, or because doctorates are the most challenging student writing task and therefore the most interesting to research.

Secondly, any advice needs to be geared towards the writing required on the student's specific programme. It is impossible for a generic publication to provide this because it cannot prepare the student for his/her actual writing context – only guidance embedded within that context can do that. The situated contextual nature of writing is largely underestimated by non-writing specialists (as Wingate 2006 points out). There is often a focus in generic study-skills contexts on cultural variation in academic writing traditions in different macro/global environments, such as national, academic discipline or level of study. However, the writing skills and insights that students need in order to succeed are mostly at the local level, by which I mean specific modules on specific programmes in specific university departments. It is in these situated contexts that students write. Almost everything that matters about writing is at this level, from what tasks consist of to how they are marked. As every External Examiner knows, there is enormous variation even within disciplines.

The huge increase in numbers of non-traditional home students in universities has coincided with greater numbers of international students as education has become more global (Green et al 2007). As a result, new populations of students have struggled with the still dominant tradition of 'essayist literacy' (Lillis 2001:37), although my experience has shown that all students, like John, find this a challenge. In my roles as Admissions Officer and teacher on one-year taught MA programmes I have seen that many students do not perform as expected from their application forms. People we think will sail through do badly or even fail, while others whose backgrounds suggest they will not do particularly well surprise us with distinction-level work.

I therefore decided to explore the student experience within the context of taught MAs in my University Department to try to identify aspects of students and programmes, and the interaction between the two, that influence the development of student academic writing. My immediate aim was to use the insights gained from this research to help other students develop their writing by feeding directly into our Department's academic writing support for all MA students. In addition, I wanted to contribute to broadening the research focus to taught postgraduates.

Academic writing specialists (eg Wingate 2006) argue for the embedding of such support within academic departments as opposed to the ubiquitous 'bolt on' university-wide study support centres, because of the integration this allows of subject-knowledge and academic literacy skill development over whole programmes. With an academic interest in literacy, I am responsible for the writing support on our MA programmes. This involves discussion of a pre-course assignment and classes/distance study materials focusing on relatively technical 'study skills' issues, drawing on examples from Applied Linguistics (such as referencing and how to exploit reading appropriately). While I am aware that tackling these issues within the Department is better than within the central University Study Support unit (see Study Advice n.d.), I realise that what we offer is limited and that we do not have the information we need about the challenges our students face or how they tackle them to give more appropriate advice.

I decided to work with campus-based, not distance, students as this allowed me to study the experience of students in the same basic environment and also gave greater access to the student experience. Our campus and distance programmes have the same curriculum and assessments, so I also felt identifying features of student writing development in the campus-based context would provide insights for distance students. In order to find out how students cope with the transition into study in the context of our MAs I decided to focus on first term writing only. However, such work is part of an ongoing process of development, so its implications for subsequent writing were also considered as were students' perceptions of Term 1 writing looking back after completing their dissertations.

1.2 Research Context

This study took place in the academic year 2008-09 on two campus-based taught programmes (MA Applied Linguistics and MA English Language Teaching) in the

Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Reading. These programmes attract students from a range of countries, all of whom have worked for at least a year in language teaching or other applied linguistic fields. Six volunteers from five countries took part in the study: three men and three women, one native English speaker (NES) and five non-native English speakers (NNEs).

These were not representative of our student body as no group of six people can be, but they were typical in many ways. Contact continued across the whole year and a year after they had left. The study focused on the first three pieces of academic writing they all did: the formative pre-course assignment and assessed assignments for two core modules. Such assignments are typical of the essayist literacy tradition (Kachru 2006b) these programmes follow.

My Department saw the need for this study and colleagues were extremely supportive. They absorbed my Term 1 MA programme and personal tutor responsibilities so that I could focus on this research and so that the participants did not encounter me as a tutor until they had done the Term 1 writing tasks the study would focus on. It was hoped this would reduce any inhibitions the participants might have about discussing their work with a member of the academic team assessing it, seeing me rather as an interested 'knowledgeable insider' (Harris 1992:379). In addition, colleagues were very helpful in terms of collecting and giving me access to their classes, to recordings of their tutor meetings with participants, and to feedback on students' outlines.

1.3 Introduction to the study

The purpose of the study, therefore, was to explore how students develop as writers on our programmes. This is within the tradition of Applied Linguistics as interpreted by Brumfit (1995:27), who defined the discipline as 'the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue'. Language is at the heart of everything here: all the information collected is linguistic and all student development involved language.

The research methods literature drew me towards an ethnographic approach, because this explores 'situations through the eyes of the participants' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:167), leading to thick descriptions (Geertz 1973). As a fellow academic-writing researcher, Cheng (2006:303), points out, the rich details that such studies provide about 'particular learners in concrete acts of learning in specific

contexts' prevent us from seeing student learning in oversimplified and stereotypical terms, and allow us to 'recognize the fascinating complexities of writing' (Casanave 2005:29).

In 1992 Casanave and Hubbard commented that surveys such as theirs of teachers at Stanford University, while providing some useful information on the student experience, cannot provide all the information needed about student writing problems, ignoring as they have to essential contextual details. They called for in-depth case studies of students and their teachers, with, for example, interviews, class observation and analysis of course documents. This research is within this developing field of research.

The study here follows the premise that Lillis presents in her ethnographic study of non-traditional undergraduates: 'in order to understand what is involved in students' writing, it is important to have a sense of who the student-writers are and the representational resources they are potentially drawing on' (2001:6). Like Lillis' (2001:1), this study seeks to put the six participants 'centre-stage'. They gave information about their literacy-histories, on-going experiences of literacy practices on the MA and the resources that fed into their meaning making. Information was collected mainly through interviews but also through questionnaires, e-mails and examination of their written texts. In addition, academic staff also gave information in the form of briefings, feedback on work and discussion about academic writing expectations.

1.4 Introduction to the Thesis

1.4.1 Terminology

A range of terms is used to refer to the role of English and different types of speaker. This thesis refers to English as a mother tongue as English as L1 and English as a foreign or second language as English as L2, except where it is necessary to differentiate between these contexts, when EFL and ESL will be used respectively.

Native English speakers are referred to as NESs and non-native English speakers as NNESSs. I am, of course, aware that the terms 'native-' and 'non-native speaker' are highly contentious in applied linguistics and educational fields, as discussed, for example, by Davies (2003), and Firth and Wagner (1997). The latter authors critique the then-predominant view of discourse and communication in Second Language

Acquisition research, which they see as failing to take into account ‘interactional and sociolinguistic dimensions of language’ (1997:285). This oversimplification leads to an unhelpful ‘mindset that elevates an idealized ‘native’ speaker above a stereotypical ‘non-native’, while viewing the latter as a defective communicator, limited by an underdeveloped communicative competence’ (ibid). Meanwhile, Leung, Harris and Rampton (1997:543) ‘question the pedagogical relevance of the notion of *native speaker* and propose that instead TESOL professionals should be concerned with questions about language expertise, language inheritance, and language affiliation’. It is essential, therefore, to recognise the problems in using such stereotypical terms in any discussion of language in use, including academic writing, where they may oversimplify key debates surrounding what is involved. For the purposes of this thesis, ‘native English speaker’ (NES) and ‘non-native English speaker’ (NNES) are used as shorthand phrases. The former is used to refer to people for whom English is their mother tongue and who have been educated in the context under study, providing them with cultural insights into the literacy practices within that system. The latter term is used to refer to those from a different educational background and for whom English is not their mother tongue, though they may be as proficient in its use as many so-called ‘native-speakers’ – or even more proficient.

1.4.2 The Thesis

This chapter introduced the whole project. Chapter 2 sets the scene in terms of issues raised in relevant research reports and theoretical works about writing in general and academic writing in particular which have influenced this study. It concludes with the study’s two research questions. Chapter 3 describes the research context in more detail and presents the methodology employed. Chapter 4 examines the six participants as individual cases, and Chapter 5 looks at the group as a whole. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by returning to the research questions, and summarising the factors that affect writers’ development. It also reflects on the study in terms of its limitations and its methodology and in making pedagogic suggestions.

Chapter 2: Writing in academic settings: research and theory

'Every time a student sits down to write for us he (sic) has to invent the university...He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community.' (Bartholomae 1985:273)

2.1 Introduction

This observation, whilst identifying writing as a major challenge for students, also reflects the commonly held view that students entering University are joining a community, although what exactly that community is and how it compares with other communities are open to discussion. It is agreed, however, that part of joining an academic community involves developing appropriate literacy skills. The focus of this thesis, like the quote above, is on writing and this literature review, whilst discussing issues surrounding what literacy means in general terms, will focus mainly on that skill, in English. The thesis studies postgraduate students writing within a specific discipline in an 'inner-circle country' (Kachru 1992). This means a country, like Britain, where most people speak English as their L1. This review will, therefore, largely focus on this context, drawing on others where relevant.

This chapter seeks to outline core issues in a wide range of relevant fields/sub-fields within that framework. It begins by considering writing from three over-arching perspectives of the term: writing as process, product and social activity, which underpin all that follows. Discussion then turns to the literature on writing in Higher Education (HE) contexts. This literature has been influenced by two movements, which have drawn on various academic backgrounds to discuss different student groups. In America, these two movements are seen as ESL (English as a Second Language) and L1 composition. In Britain and Australia, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), grounded in Applied Linguistics, has focused on international non-native English speaker students while the academic literacies movement, drawing more on Education and Sociology, has focused on home students, usually from non-standard backgrounds where English may or may not be the L1. These two movements feature heavily in this review. Discussion of University-wide generic study support centres has not been included as they typically play no role in the postgraduate student experience (as discussed in Hallett 2010), as was the case in the context of this study.

The chapter then turns to two highly influential themes in the literature that come from the wider contexts of Applied Linguistics and Education: community and identity. It concludes by summarising the conflicting influences on L2 and L1 writing from the EAP and the academic literacies movements respectively, and by positioning this study, including its research questions, within this complex context.

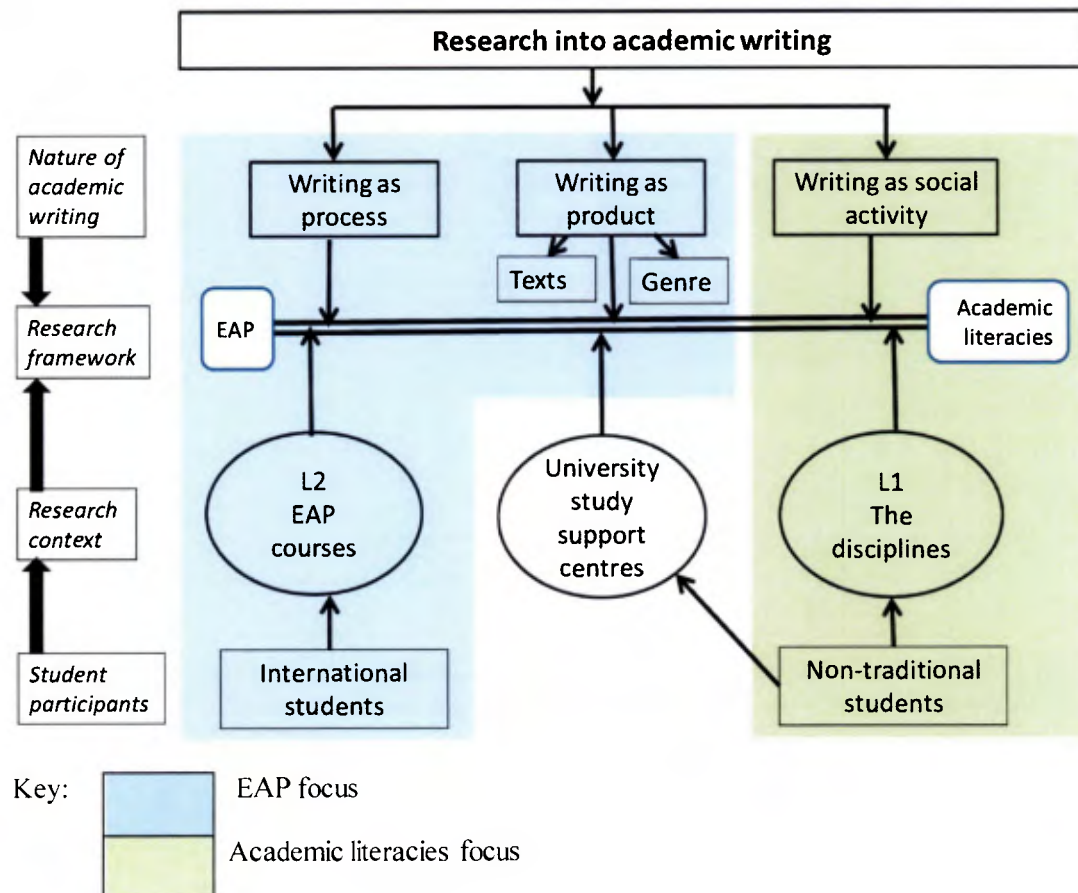
Research into writing, which began in the 1970s (see Nystrand 2006), has drawn on different academic traditions in exploring the three perspectives of process, product and social activity referred to above, the main ones being Psychology (such as the work of Flower & Hayes 1981), Applied Linguistics (including the work of scholars such as Swales 1990, Flowerdew 2000, K. Hyland 2002) and Education (for example, Lea and Street 1998). One factor in research that is rarely commented on is the importance of access to data; many academic writing researchers have, therefore, studied their own teaching contexts, with their own students acting as participants. This has led to a focus on academic writing in support contexts, both L1 and L2. Relatively little research, until recently, has taken place within disciplines, or into academic writing by non-students. Major shifts in focus are now taking place, however, with researchers exploring writing practices within subject areas (eg Seloni 2012) and by non-native English speaking (NNES) academics seeking publication (eg Lillis and Curry 2010).

The literature on writing typically seeks to divide the research field into clearly defined areas; for example, Hyland 2009 presents research as text-oriented, writer-oriented or reader-oriented. Although I do the same here in dividing up my discussion of research for clarity of presentation, I have increasingly come to see the three perspectives above as overlapping: writing is a social activity whose process results in a written product which is both influenced by and can itself influence the social context and/or the writer's process. In addition, I would argue (with Wingate and Tribble, forthcoming) that the EAP and academic literacies movements should also be more linked. In sum, all these perspectives and movements contribute to a current, composite view of writing. However, this review must present issues in an accessible fashion: hence the sub-divisions below, which also reflect typical views of the field.

The range of academic writing research covered here is summarised in Figure 2.1, with shading showing the different areas of EAP's and academic literacies' focuses as traditionally viewed. A better diagram (and hopefully one that will reflect actual

practice in the future) would indicate how far both EAP and academic literacies engage with all three perspectives on writing. Figure 2.1's categorisation of research into an EAP focus on process and product, and that of academic literacies on social activity, is a division this thesis ultimately seeks to challenge as an unhelpful, and increasingly out-dated, oversimplification. The categorisation is, however, useful here as a summary of the current view in most contexts.

Figure 2.1: Patterns of research into academic writing since the 1980's



2.2 Writing as process, product and social activity

These are the three main perspectives on writing research in the last 30 years, which have transformed how we think about writing. Research into writing until then had focussed on products at the levels of linguistic features (discussed in Linell 2005). From the 1980s onwards, attention shifted to process and then back to product, but a very different kind of product: interest went beyond linguistic issues, which had usually been at the sentence or paragraph levels, to concern with whole texts as pieces

of discourse, and especially with genres. Interest in genre coincided with, and contributed to, the view of writing as social activity.

2.2.1 Writing as process

Reacting to earlier views of learning as behaviourist (eg Skinner 1957), psychologists in the 1970s and 1980s began investigating cognitive processes in learning. In writing research, this presaged a move from basic linguistic products to processes. Flower and Hayes (1981) developed the highly influential cognitive process model of writing. This model indicates that writers use a combination of cognitive processes which they draw on as needed while writing: generating ideas, translating them into text and reviewing what they write. Writers refer to the rhetorical task throughout in terms of its requirements, audience and the text produced so far, as well as to their long-term memory of previous experiences and writing tasks.

An important refinement of Flower and Hayes' model was that of Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), who divided writing into knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming models. The former is a simpler model with writers reporting on what they know, for example summarising a viewpoint from reading. In knowledge-transforming writers develop what they know, synthesising information and adding their own perspective to create something new. This happens, for example, in academic writing when writers draw on different sources, organising, critiquing and adding to them to develop an original argument.

In the 1980s, English as an L2 researchers and teachers began to explore the same issues, shifting focus from product-based views of writing to a process-oriented view. This meant that instead of focusing on the analysis of texts (with concerns such as how L2 texts differ from L1 ones – eg Kaplan 1966) researchers turned to writers and the ways in which they composed. Research methods, especially think aloud protocols, were adopted from L1 research (eg Perl 1979) by L2 scholars such as Arndt (1987) in Britain and Raimes (1987) in America. Findings were that L2 writing is not a totally different animal from L1 writing - as argued in Jones and Tetroe 1987: writers transfer composing strategies across languages. However, there are major strategic, rhetorical and linguistic differences, as reported in Silva's 1993 review of studies comparing L1 and L2 writing.

2.2.2 Writing as product

In the later 1980s and 1990s, there was a backlash against expressivist exponents of process writing from some scholars in the L2 writing community, especially Horowitz (1986), rekindling interest in products but with a broader scope than before: genre. Horowitz (1986) argued that no matter how good a writer's process might be, if the resultant text did not meet the genre requirements of the target writing community, it would be unsuccessful.

Three different, but complementary, perspectives on genre have emerged. The first perspective is English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Britain and America, associated with John Swales (1990), who proposed genre as a class of communicative events with a shared set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by members of the professional or academic community in which the genre occurs, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. Genre analysis (elaborated by Bhatia 1993) was originally based on three main concepts: genre, discourse community (see Section 2.4) and task, underpinned by communicative purpose. In this vein, ESP researchers have sought to identify the features of successful texts (eg Paltridge 1997, Thompson 2001), explored structural patterns/moves within texts (eg Samraj 2008) and exploited the advances in data-processing provided by technology to analyse corpora (eg Biber 2006, Thompson 2009). English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is an important sub-area of ESP focusing on the rapidly expanding need in recent years to prepare international NNEs for study in English-medium universities, with, for example, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) showcasing research perspectives in this field. EAP has evolved to also encompass a critical view of EAP (as expounded by Benesch 1999, 2009; see Section 2.6 below), and a broader view of genre analysis, including a new and important move from a focus only on texts to a focus on discourse community members (eg Starfield 2001).

Johns and Swales (2002:17) make an important point about genre: that, whilst it is now 'something of a truism to say that all genres are embedded in their socio-cultural contexts', there are 'several layers shaping context' that affect the requirements for a specific instance of genre. They identify four layers for doctoral writers:

1. the scholarly expectations of the university as a whole;

2. the established expectations of a department or a discipline and what that collectivity considers to be appropriate topics and appropriate claims for novelty and innovation;
3. the subfield chosen, in the methodologies and approaches used, and in the rhetorical options to be explored;
4. the situated localities of adviser-advisee relationships and the need to take doctoral advice/support-givers and examiners into account.

The second perspective on genre is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) developed by Halliday (1978) in Australia ('the Sydney School'). In this tradition Martin (1984:25) describes genre as 'a staged, goal-orientated, and purposeful social activity that people engage in as members of their culture'. Researchers explore how text delivers meaning through grammatical and lexical choices (eg Halliday and Martin 1993, Woodward-Kron 2002).

The third perspective comes from the 'New Rhetoric' movement in America. This movement developed from the 1980s, in opposition to the previous 'Current-traditional' practice in composition studies and its focus on 'little more than...editing and rules of usage' (Freedman and Medway 1994a:4). It is also contrasted to the Sydney School approach (with its 'prescriptivism and the implicit static vision of genres' (ibid: 9), which are both necessary if the focus of study is texts) in emphasizing 'the dynamic quality of genres' (ibid). The New Rhetoric was influenced by Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory, which highlights the role of language as social action and therefore the need to consider context and participants, and Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) focus on 'dialogism' and the 'addressivity' of discourse, in terms of audience awareness, as well as his argument that, while genres require regularity and typification, they are also more dynamic and flexible than linguistic patterns such as grammar. The New Rhetoric presents 'a vision of systems of complex located literate activity constructed through typified actions' (Bazerman 1994:79). Those who can identify and use typified texts can advance their own interests, working within 'a complex societal machine in which genres form important social levers' (ibid). In addition, genres are shown to be evolving (Bazerman 1988, 2004) in response to contextual socio-cultural phenomena.

2.2.3 Writing as social activity

There are two major perspectives on writing as social activity, also with different geographical bases. The first is the socioliterate approach suggested by Johns (1997) in America. This combines an SFL approach to exploring text and language elements with a more social view of literacy as embedded in context. The approach sees texts as primarily socially constructed and the concepts of genre and discourse community are central to this view, linking it to ESP. An important contribution of Johns' approach is an empowered view of literacy teachers in universities, whom Johns calls to act as 'mediators' between students and staff.

The second more influential perspective on writing as social activity developed in the UK. In the 1980s, a series of movements in different fields, especially Education and Sociology, and drawing on the work of post-structuralist and post-modernist thinkers such as Bakhtin (1984), Bourdieu (1979/1984), Fairclough (1992), and Foucault (1973, 1977), turned against both behaviourism and the cognitivism that had replaced it. These had focused on the individual and his/her mind as an information-processing mechanism, within a scientific, objective research framework. The new ways of thinking sought to turn the focus to the social and the cultural and this led to the highly influential New Literacy Studies (NLS) movement.

NLS grew out of the ethnographic work of anthropologists, psychologists and linguists as discussed in Barton 1994, Gee 1996, and Street 1995. They called for a shift from literacy defined in terms of the development of skills to one which viewed literacy as a set of social practices within a social setting, which influences and forms those practices. Explaining that literacy varies according to context, NLS exponents (eg Heath 1983; Street 1984, and Barton and Hamilton 1998) speak of different literacies associated with different domains of life (such as home, work, school), arguing that 'literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others' (Barton 2002: 4). Interestingly, the NLS' focus parallels a growing concern with socio-cultural aspects in other Applied Linguistic spheres. In the last decade many Second Language Acquisition researchers, for example, have moved from seeing language learning as a largely individual, cognitive process to exploring it as a sociohistorically situated phenomenon (discussed in Block 2003).

In the NLS framework, literacy is no longer seen as an individual cognitive concern, but as a tool used by groups, with social rules and regulation of texts. It is, therefore, historically and culturally situated. This impacts on the individual writer, of course, and everyone has a personal history of literacy: 'The literacy practices an individual engages with change across their lifetime, as a result of changing demands, available resources, as well as the possibilities and their interests' (Barton 2002: 6). In sum, the NLS argued for 'the recognition of multiple literacies, varying according to time and space, but also contested in relations of power' (Street 2003:1). The academic literacies movement within British HE, to which we shall return in Section 2.3.3, developed from NLS in order to explore its implications for understanding student learning (Lea and Street 1998).

2.3 Writing in HE contexts

2.3.1 EAP background: L2 writing research themes in HE

L2 writing research proliferated from the 1980s. In line with the product-focus of much research discussed above, writers' texts have until recently been the largest area of study, which as Polio points out (2003) is unsurprising as the impetus behind much L2 writing research is to help students generate better products, and study of texts helps identify issues. Topics researched include linguistic accuracy (Robb et al 1986), syntactic complexity (Coombs 1986), the lexicon (Laufer and Nation 1995) and discourse features (eg register: Shaw and Liu 1998). Studies such as these explore the impact of instruction in terms of linguistic performance and the linguistic characteristics of successful/unsuccessful texts. While this information is important, most researchers and practitioners today would also expect to focus on writers and what they bring to the task. In addition, genre-studies, while informative in that they provide information about genuine academic texts (and not writing in general), have tended to focus on manageable short pieces of discourse, such as introductions (eg Swales 1990) or abstracts (Hyland and Tse 2004). These are not hugely useful when preparing students for major pieces of coursework. Work with corpora of student writing, such as in the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus, will hopefully lead to more pedagogically useful studies (research possibilities are discussed in Schlitz 2010).

Early studies of writers' cognitive processes focused on what writers do, in general (Zamel 1983) and in specific sub-processes (eg revising: Porte 1997). Some research

compared L1 and L2 writing, identifying similarities (eg across languages: Arndt 1987) and differences (eg differences between unskilled L1 and L2 writers: Raimes 1987). A strong, on-going research theme examines feedback on writing (as reviewed in F.Hyland and K.Hyland 2006): its providers (peer and/or teacher, eg Conrad and Goldstein 1999); its focus (Bitchener, Young and Cameron 2005); its impact (F. Hyland 1998) and student preferences (Ferris 1995). Most of this research is in contexts where formative feedback is given requiring further drafts. Findings suggest that students appreciate feedback, prefer to receive it from the teachers than from peers, and sometimes interpret it differently from their teachers (discussed in K.Hyland and F.Hyland 2006). Feedback on language is, unsurprisingly, easier to work with than feedback on content.

Influenced by a social practice view of writing, another research area focuses on participants in the teaching and learning process. The backgrounds, attitudes and/or behaviour of different groups of people have been explored, for example: English language teachers (Shi and Cumming 1995), students/writers (Reid and Kroll 1995), raters (Weigle 1994) and content teachers (Janopoulos 1992). Findings reveal participants' different views of writing problems, with students and teachers, NES and NNES teachers and EAP/content teachers expressing different perspectives.

The social context of L2 writing has also been examined. Studies in this area do not seek to identify and isolate specific aspects of texts, processes or participants. Rather, they explore more overall contextual issues. One area is students' goals outside the language classroom, and Polio 2003 includes the work of genre analysts here, with studies describing target texts (eg Swales 1990 on research articles). Hyland (2004:xi) argues that there are two main ways of studying social interactions in writing: 'We can examine the actions of individuals as they create particular texts, or we can examine the distributions of different genre features to see how they cluster in complementary distribution'. This reflects a major division between research in academic literacies (which includes focus on the former) and EAP (which tends to a focus on the latter).

Another research area of significance for L2 academic writing, explored by scholars such as Kaplan (1966) and Connor (eg 2003, 2004), is that of contrastive rhetoric (Kachru 2006a), which explores how L1 language and culture influence L2 writing. Atkinson (2004) notes the crucial role of culture in the EAP context, differentiating between the concept of 'small' culture (eg of an academic discipline) as opposed to

'big' culture (eg national, racial). Of course, this extends beyond products (the texts examined in contrastive rhetoric) to processes (ways of writing/experience of instruction) and there is a literature base here as exemplified by Atkinson and Ramanathan (1995).

2.3.2 Research into NNES postgraduate writing

The 'small' culture context for the majority of the research described above is Anglophone HE where researchers work with international students facing university-level academic writing tasks (eg Riazi 1997, and Johns and Swales 2002). Much of the research into L2 postgraduate University writing has been done in North America; as noted in Section 1.1, this usually means doctoral study as in Belcher and Hirvela 2005, and all studies in Casanave and Li 2008. Two notable exceptions (discussed below) are Prior (1998) and Casanave (2002), both of which include studies of NNES Masters-level writers in L2 education programmes.

Braine (2002) usefully summarises American research into issues of academic literacy for NNES postgraduate students, outlining research methodologies and findings. Himself a NNES scholar, he describes the trauma of beginning his graduate studies at an American university, pointing out that discipline and linguistic knowledge combined with reading and writing skills only provide the foundation for the acquisition of academic literacy. Building on this foundation, 'graduate students must adapt quickly to both the academic and social culture of their host environments, and the personalities and demands of their teachers, academic advisors, and classmates' (2002:60). Acquiring advanced academic literacy, therefore, 'only comes... along with complex and often confusing baggage' (ibid).

His survey of the literature to date shows that surveys and case studies provide useful information on NNES students and their needs. Such studies reveal:

- postgraduate students struggling to interpret assignments and to identify tutors' expectations;
- different cultural assumptions of student-supervisor roles;
- the core need for adequate language skills;
- markers of such writing being less concerned with surface errors than global ones;
- the key role of doing writing in learning to write;

- the importance of drafting and redrafting, which students do not always recognise as such, seeing it mainly as surface-level editing.

Braine (2002) also reports the need for good social skills to help doctoral students identify and develop the necessary contacts within their chosen discourse community. He deplores the absence of one key aspect in this research: the authentic student voice, writing of ‘the need to give voice to current and former NNS students themselves so they can express first-hand how they acquired academic literacy’ (2002:60/61). He calls for NNS colleagues to record their initiation into the world of English-speaking academia, and for research into NNS graduate writers to be in the form of case studies, because of the richness and range of data they provide.

A later study that does listen to the student voice is Tardy 2005. This explores the problems NNS postgraduate students have with developing the rhetorical knowledge required for advanced academic literacy, especially the move from Bereiter and Scardamalia’s (1987) knowledge-telling to knowledge-transforming text. Through access to their writing and interviews, she explored the writing development of a Chinese and Thai student in the US, finding that they went beyond ‘the community’s values and practices’ to also learn ‘to understand writing as an *explicitly* rhetorical process, referring to writing as “a tool”, a way to “convince readers” and “a story”.’ (2005:336).

Although Prior 1998 does not focus on L2 writers, his ethnographic exploration of writing in HE includes a study of two international students on an MA in L2 education programme attending the same research seminar. Working within the New Rhetoric framework described above (Section 2.2.2), Prior’s thick description of their experiences notes that, although they were similar from a programme trajectory and institutional viewpoint, they actually ‘were engaged in quite different modes of participation’ (ibid:104). He identifies three such modes, which he claims ‘capture...some important patterns of participation in school-based disciplinary enculturation’ (ibid:101):

1. passing: reducing education to completing the course, ie meeting programme requirements and getting the certification;
2. procedural display: taking part in the cultural event that is, in this case, the seminar; identifying, then doing and being seen to do the activity this involves;

3. deep participation: 'rich access to, and engagement in, practices' (ibid:103) and the relevant community of practice (a concept discussed below in Section 2.4) that could eventually lead to full membership of that community.

These modes are on a continuum, with all students involved in 1. and some form of 2., but only some achieving 3. Prior identifies the two students' levels of participation, noting also that their use of source texts was an important gauge of this. He sees one student as engaged in passing and procedural display participation; she worked in relative isolation with limited access to a community of practice and found disciplinary texts opaque. The other student, however, was engaged in features of deep participation: she had a rich and developing access to supportive communities of practice and understood the texts she worked with.

A major L2 writing researcher in HE contexts who has been heavily influenced by Prior's work is Casanave. Her 2002 exploration of 'Writing Games' collates and summarises her thinking on NNES academic writing over ten years of teaching and research in this area in university settings in America and Japan. It explores the writing experiences of undergraduates, postgraduates and bilingual academics seeking publication. This book includes the only study I have found of Masters level study that is comparable to that in this thesis. For that reason, Casanave's perspective and insights will be considered in some detail.

The game metaphor is borrowed from Freedman (1994) and the feminist anthropologist Ortner (1996). Casanave (2002) adopts it because:

- Games, like writing practices, are grounded in 'rules, conventions and strategies' (ibid:2), and players can decide to follow or flout them, or not to play at all.
- Novice game-players, like novice writers, do not usually do well, needing to practice, rehearse and imitate and to internalise the rules.
- Game-players, like writers, have varying motivations and degrees of commitment to the game.
- There is a multiplicity of games available – as in writing where there is 'a wide range of formal and informal discursive and social conventions' (ibid:3).

Drawn to theorists/researchers whose work can be applied to real cases of actual practice, Casanave explains that:

Scrutinizing routines and patterns helps me understand the regularities I might observe, but I am equally interested in the irregularities— the local and individual details of lived experience that do not readily fit the broader patterns (ibid:15).

Like many practising teachers, she seeks support for her ‘belief in the importance of situated literacy practices’ (ibid:19) in real-world academic settings, to help protect her ‘from feeling put off or intimidated by the totalizing tendencies of grander social theories’ (ibid:19), such as those referred to at the beginning of Section 2.3 above (eg Bourdieu 1979/1984).

Within situated literacy practices, Casanave believes that ‘changes and transitions of many kinds figure as basic to people’s experiences with academic writing over time’ (2002:9). Whilst acknowledging that such changes affect people’s sense of identity, she finds that identity (to which we shall turn in Section 2.4 below) is ‘a complex, slippery, vague, and even misleading term’ (ibid:9). She concludes, however, that ‘identities are never singular, but blendings of selves from different personal, work, and academic communities’ (2002:264). ‘Disciplinary enculturation’ (2002:26) is another important concept which Casanave feels captures some of the complexity and richness of learning to participate in academic settings, influencing, as Tardy (2005) noticed, writers’ ontological and epistemological beliefs and values. This helps explain why new undergraduate and postgraduate students can feel like outsiders or strangers and then come, with time, to be at home in their University department and/or subject area. This process is not a linear one; rather, it is, as she states, ‘an experience that is ongoing, layered and necessarily always incomplete’ (ibid: 27).

As noted in Section 1.1, Casanave (2002) regrets the sparse literature on learning to write on taught Masters programmes. The few studies there are indicate that students contribute to the construction of their situated practice environments, showing that ‘expertise develops not as one-way transmission from a community of specialists to novices but interactively’ (2002:87), as different students exploit resources differently. Although she clearly sees herself as an EAP teacher, Casanave’s own research into Masters-level writing moves the discussion on to consideration of writing for both NNES and NES students. Her study constitutes a case study focusing on five women attending different stages of three-semester MA programmes in TESOL or Teaching Foreign Language (FL) at an American university: one Armenian Visiting Scholar and

four MA students (two Japanese and two Americans). They were all two-semester or more into their programmes, and their language teaching experience ranged from none to several years. The study included class observations (though none with all five students in), interviews with the five participants over one semester, and examples of their marked writing. Professors were met informally but not interviewed.

Casanave (2002) found that writing played a central role in the students' programmes and was carried out in a wide range of genres: participants listed 10 to 12 types of writing, eg lesson plans, annotated bibliographies, research papers. None of the students had been prepared for this diversity of genres by previous academic or writing courses. Task descriptions varied, giving 'different messages based on the personal proclivities of each professor' (2002:111), and participants reported that the first semester's challenge had been 'to figure out what to do in first writing assignments before they had gotten their first feedback and before they knew the idiosyncracies of each of the professors they would be writing for' (2002:109). Feedback also varied by professor, and Casanave concluded she was unable to identify 'an overall set of rules or practices' (2002:119). The only generalisable requirement was that 'students explain and justify their assertions' (2002:119).

Casanave's Masters in TESOL students 'entered their graduate programs seeing themselves not just as graduate students, but also as teachers and prospective teachers' (2002:12). The FL teaching world was identified as being the community these students were seeking to enter; Casanave saw them as 'Students who step into a profession by transitioning into it through a masters degree program' (2002:128). They were 'hovering' between two very different communities: the academic community, with its 'school literacy games' (2002:131), and the professional community of second language educators. The former was reflected in the academic writing tasks the students were required to do for assessment; the latter by some of the practices those tasks required (eg test evaluation/ development) and the teaching they did while studying.

There were therefore changes in the women themselves during their study, with some moving from being novices in terms of their role as teachers to more confident in their professionalism. Kirsten, the only MA student with substantial teaching experience, reported a loss of awe with regard to experts in the field she had met at conferences and a sense that now 'she "had something to say".' (2002:123). However, tension

remained between being an FL professional and an MA student and this involved the students in 'learning to survive in a complexly layered network of political and social relationships' (2002:128). The exploration of such issues has clear links with the academic literacies movement, to which we shall now turn.

2.3.3 The academic literacies movement

This movement has shifted the focus of most research into academic writing in HE from educational and cognitive models of writing to a more cultural and social perspective. A major UK influence is Lea and Street's (1998) seminal article reporting research into undergraduate student writing perceptions and practices in two British universities. Adopting an ethnographic-style case study approach and drawing on their own knowledge as insiders within the institutions being explored, they interviewed students and academic and support staff and examined course documents, samples of student writing and feedback. Findings indicated the variety of writing and feedback practices undergraduate students experienced across a range of disciplines, influenced by contextual assumptions about what constituted valid knowledge. Institutional factors also influenced the nature of writer's and marker's power and authority.

Lea and Street (1998) identify three models of student writing in HE, summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Models of student writing in HE (adapted from Lea and Street 1998)

Model	Perspective	Focus	Roots in	View of academic writing (ibid:172)
study skill	student deficit	atomised skills: surface language, spelling, grammar etc.	programmed learning and behavioural/ experimental psychology	'technical and instrumental skill'
academic socialisation	acculturation of students into academic discourse	new culture: student orientation to learning and tasks	social psychology; anthropology; constructivism	'a transparent medium of representation'
academic literacies	students' negotiation of conflicting literacy practices	literacies as social practices, at levels of epistemology and identities	New Literacy Studies; critical discourse analysis; systemic functional linguistics; cultural anthropology	'constitutive and contested'

Lea and Street (1998) clearly favour the potentially transformative academic literacies model, arguing that it subsumes and goes beyond the other two, which they see as essentially normative. They argue that the study skills approach attempts to fix problems in student learning at the surface level; this is an issue expanded on by Wingate (2006) who sees this 'bolt on model' usually taught in University-wide study skills centres, not within subject areas, as a technical trivialisation of student learning. The second model, academic socialisation, attempts to induct the student into a homogenous academic culture 'whose norms and practices have simply to be learnt to provide access to the whole institution' (Lea and Street 1998:159). Because of its simplistic view of writing, they argue, this approach neglects essential 'deep language, literacy and discourse issues' (ibid). They conclude that neither approach pays enough attention to context and that both assume a transmission view of knowledge; in contrast, the academic literacies approach draws on both these models but addresses their shortcomings. It 'treats reading and writing as social practices that vary with context, culture and genre' (Lea and Street 2006:368). It also explores the implicit relationships of 'power, authority, meaning making, and identity' (ibid:370) within situated literacy practices.

Working within the academic literacies framework, Lillis (1997, 2001, 2003) explores the experiences of non-traditional British undergraduates over time, seeking to widen discussion to what writing for the academy means to them. The term 'non-traditional' refers to 'students from social groups who have historically been largely excluded from higher education' (Lillis 2001:1), which Costley (2008:77) defines as 'ethnically diverse, multilingual and/or working class students'. Traditional students, in contrast, are those who have experienced 'a steady, gradual apprenticeship in the language of education over a period of 14 years full-time education between the ages of 4 and 18' (Ivanič 1998:5). Lillis' (2001) participants were ten women of different ages (20-48), ethnicity and L1 backgrounds (eg English, Urdu) who had all experienced UK compulsory education, but entered university after 18. Lillis worked with these student-writers for between two and six years as writing tutor and researcher as they struggled with the literacy demands of undergraduate study. Her ethnographic study focuses on 'talk around texts' (ibid:6) drawing on regular discussion of drafts of assignments for undergraduate courses in areas such as Law and Women's Studies, as well as referring to institutional documentation about writing.

Lillis (2001:20) refers to Womack (1993)'s description of 'the essay' as 'the default genre' in formal educational settings; she sees it not as a text type, but as 'institutionalised shorthand for a particular way of constructing knowledge which has come to be privileged within the academy' (ibid). This is 'essayist literacy', a term introduced by Scollon and Scollon (1981) to describe the dominant western, rationalist tradition of literacy. Gee (1996) defined the concept further, as for example, explicit, linear, with one central theme and in standard language. Lillis sees its practice as 'ideologically inscribed' (Lillis 2001:39) and privileging certain social groups. The confusion this tradition created in her non-traditional students led Lillis to describe it as 'an institutional practice of mystery' (2001:53), restricting access to HE to those who have been schooled in this tradition.

Echoing Casanave's (2002) students' reported experience of their first semesters, Lillis noted that conventions are often 'invisible' (2001:75) to staff and students, resulting in her students seeing their success or failure as 'the consequence of individual tutors' quirks' (2001:74). Students' understanding of task requirements (which is also discussed in Lillis and Turner 2001) cannot be improved because relationships with tutors are monologic, not, as students desire, dialogic. The essayist tradition mediates and regulates what students can write, with tensions between what her students wanted to say and what they felt they could say. They felt particular aspects of their identity (especially ethnicity and social class) were excluded. In addition, their academic writing did not involve negotiated meaning and had no clear addressee. These students were, therefore, examples of Bartholomae's generic student in our opening epigraph, having to 'invent the university' (Lillis 2001:105) and to create the voices to which they were responding. In response to this often overwhelming challenge, Lillis calls for 'dialogues of participation' (2001:132) between students and tutors, outsiders and insiders, novices and experts. This 'talk-as-apprenticeship' (2001:158) needs to draw on an understanding that writing within HE is a social practice, involving 'questions about the relationships between language, social identity and institutional practices' (2001:147).

2.4 Writing and Community

In this chapter's epigraph, Bartholomae (1985) also refers to 'community'. This is a beguiling term with a spectrum of definitions. The thick formulation at one extreme implies 'a system of social conventions that may be isolated and then codified', while

the thin one sees it as 'a chorus of polyphonous voices...a relatively indeterminate and uncodifiable sedimentation of beliefs and desires' (Kent 1991:425). It is not surprising, therefore, that different fields of study have produced different conceptions of community. A focus on language, and in EAP contexts, has led to discussion of 'discourse community', while cognitive anthropologists Lave and Wenger (1991) have developed the highly influential notion of 'community of practice'.

The term 'discourse community' (DC), first introduced by the sociolinguist Nystrand (1982), came to prominence in writing circles through the work of John Swales. Swales (1990) sees a DC as a group characterised by shared values, and practices and the term typically focuses on the use and analysis of written communication. Swales (1998) later revisits the definition to encompass 'place discourse communities': those which share spoken as well as written communication through being co-located.

Swales 1998 lists six criteria for defining a DC:

1. common goals,
2. participatory mechanisms,
3. information exchange,
4. community-specific genres,
5. a highly specialized terminology,
6. a high general level of expertise.

Membership of a DC requires learning the conventions that underpin these criteria. Students entering an academic discipline must learn the genres and conventions that are commonly employed by members of their disciplinary discourse community (as argued by Bartholomae 1985). One issue is how stable such a community is. Stability implies normative genres which novices (in academic settings: students) must learn and conform to and which gatekeepers (academic staff) enforce. Johns (1997) argues for a more dynamic view of such genres, seeing them as changing even within a discipline. In addition, this normative perspective has been challenged (eg by Canagarajah 2002, Starfield 2001) for disempowering students, especially those from non-standard backgrounds, including NNEs.

Although the scope of this review cannot include major theories of learning, one that must be considered because of its relevance to any study of learning in context is 'situated learning' (Lave and Wenger 1991). This is grounded in learning through practice and participation, adopting a social theory of learning: 'practice is always

social practice' (Wenger 1998:47). The term 'legitimate peripheral participation' (LPP) is used to characterise 'the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice'(Lave and Wenger 1991:29). Peripherality involves participation in actual practice at some lesser level than full membership. Newcomers are treated by the community as potential (hence, 'legitimate') full members. Lave and Wenger 1991 introduced the influential concept of a community of practice (CoP). The term is not clearly defined in this work, however, and is surprisingly hard to extract from Wenger's book *Communities of Practice* (1998). Prior (2003) accuses CoP of being a theoretically slippery term inconsistently defined in Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998); the former, he claims, has roots in activity theory while the latter relies on anthropological and sociological references. Wenger 2006 provides a clear definition of a CoP, however: a group of people 'who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly'. A CoP has three essential characteristics:

- 'a domain of interest';
- a community of members who interact, building relationships that allow them to learn from each other;
- members are practitioners, with 'a shared repertoire of resources' (Wenger 2006).

Lave and Wenger's examples of communities of practice involve informal apprenticeships: midwives, tailors, Alcoholics Anonymous groups (Lave and Wenger 1991) and they warn against trying to apply their analysis to institutional settings (ibid, pp 39-41). However, this has not prevented educationalists from doing this (eg O'Donnell and Tobbell 2007).

Lea (2005:183) suggests that educationalists can overcome this problem by viewing CoP and LPP as useful metaphors and heuristics: 'ways of helping us understand a social model of learning as participation in practice'. This seems a more sensible way forward than trying to make the CoP framework 'fit' instruction in formal settings for which it was not intended. Prior (2003), in contrast, asks if CoPs are really an alternative to discourse communities and challenges both concepts. He argues that discourse communities are not, as often presented, 'warm, fuzzy "discursive utopias" marked by consensus and homogeneity' (ibid:5) because situated research into areas such as the enculturation of university students has revealed 'complicated notions of

discourse communities, finding complex spaces, shot through with multiple discourses, practices, and identities' (ibid:6). Turning to CoPs, Prior challenges both the inconsistent use of the term, as discussed above, and its backgrounding of major issues in identity-formation such as social classifications, race or gender and he asks what counts as a CoP. Instead of the typifications such concepts as DC and CoP promote, Prior argues for the need 'to see the laminated, fundamentally heterogeneous character of our discourses, our selves, and our social lives' (2003:20). This all builds on his earlier seminal work referred to in Section 2.3.2, where Prior (1998) explores the social aspects of disciplinary enculturation, arguing that it is not so much a matter of moving from novice to expert via an apprenticeship with an expert but rather a process of continual negotiation, based on personal and contextual factors within a social setting.

2.5 Writing and Identity

Identity, as noted above, has become a major theme in research into writing (Casanave 2002, Lillis 2001). This is especially true in the academic literacies movement, the clearest example being Ivanič's 'Writing and identity' (1998). She defines 'identity' as:

the everyday word for people's sense of who they are, but using it to stand for the often multiple, sometimes contradictory, identities which can coexist. (Ivanič 2006:1)

Wenger 1998 places great importance on identity. He characterises it as:

- negotiated experience (participation and reification by self and others),
- community membership ('we define who we are by the familiar and unfamiliar'),
- learning trajectory ('where we have been and where we are going'),
- nexus of multimembership (how 'we reconcile our various forms of memberships into one identity'),
- 'a relation between the local and the global' (Wenger 1998:149).

Casanave adopts and develops this definition for academic settings. She sees the identities of students, teachers and researchers as constantly changing as they 'learn to engage in different sets of practices and envision themselves on different possible trajectories'(2002:22/23).

Ivanič's (1998) influential book explores the issue of writing and identity in great depth in the context of eight non-traditional British undergraduate students, researching the challenges they faced in a variety of mostly second-year social science courses. Her premise is that:

Writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interest which they embody. (1998:32)

Linking to the central issue of community discussed above, Ivanič asks:

What are the ways in which writers show themselves to be members of a community yet at the same time preserve other aspects of their identity? (1998: 4).

Lillis (2001) explores this issue of social identity further with her group of non-traditional writers discussing the problems they faced in choosing 'wordings' (a term 'used to refer to single words as well as phrases and sentences' 2001:106). What her participant said and how she said it were 'bound up with who she wants to be' (2001:94). Students' sense of social grouping became apparent with wordings like 'prerequisite' sounding white to a Black participant. Her study revealed indirect regulation of students' writing, with her student-writers indicating 'ways in which particular kinds of identity, notably relating to 'race'/ethnicity and social class, are excluded' (ibid:105).

The issue of the social self pervades all of Ivanič's four aspects of "writer identity"(1998:23):

1. autobiographical self: what social/discoursal background people bring with them to any piece of writing;
2. discoursal self (the focus of Ivanič's study): 'the impression – often multiple, sometimes contradictory – which they consciously or unconsciously convey of themselves in a particular written text'(1998:25);
3. self as author: the writer's voice in the text; how far they present themselves as having an authorial voice (with beliefs, opinions, authority), and how far they attribute ideas to others;
4. possibilities for self-hood: this relates to the institutional context, and how writers relate to this, so that the self is shaped by social, cultural and institutional contexts, taking the individual writer into a range of possible positionings.

Identity as presented by these writers is a complex phenomenon and one which can perhaps (as Ivanič 1998 suggests) better be seen in terms of plurality. The notion of 'identities' captures the characteristics that have been identified of change and lamination, with individuals having multiple identities affected by time and context.

2.6 Conflicting perspectives in L2 and L1 writing movements

As discussed above, research into academic writing is a young field which has divided in the context of university-level writing into the two perspectives shaded in blue and green in Figure 2.1 above: the NNES (L2) student focus of the EAP movement and the home student/usually-NES (L1) focus of the academic literacies movement. Despite a common pedagogic endeavour - namely, to help students develop literacy skills - there has been an almost total mutual disregard of each other's perspectives by researchers and practitioners in these two fields. There has, however, been considerable debate on the purpose of writing instruction in L2 contexts. This has been expressed as pragmatist and critical stances towards academic writing, highlighted by Casanave (2004:196) as one of her L2 writing controversies. She points out that, while all teachers aim to help students with their writing, the controversy lies in how to achieve that. On the one hand there is EAP's accommodationist pragmatism which seeks to help NNES students succeed within existing academic contexts. On the other hand, this is criticised for ignoring socio-political issues by those who see it as a normative pretence at impossible neutrality. This Critical EAP (Benesch 1993, Canagarajah 1993, Pennycook 1997) argues that all teaching is ideological, with Western academic literacy norms being imposed on L2 writers in an oppressive way. It claims that the indigenous languages that NNESs bring to their study are equal to dominant discourses, and that the role of EAP is to challenge the University to adapt to NNESs' discourses, not vice versa.

Santos (2001) expounds a powerful critique of Critical EAP and academic writing. Whilst acknowledging the fact that there is a political dimension to education and human relations, she challenges the view that everything is political and ideological and argues that it is possible to take a neutral position in teaching. HE by definition is elitist, as only a minority of any population goes to University, and, in particular, international students often come from the most privileged groups. She argues that it is not dishonest/unethical to help students adopt dominant academic discourses because this is essential for academic success and what students themselves request. Speaking

from personal experience (which echoes my own), she claims that, while professors do not accept indigenous languages as equal to academic discourse, they are tolerant of student 'accents' in speech and writing. Turning to pedagogy, she makes the point that Critical EAP has not led to actual teaching practices: 'critical theory is easier said than critical pedagogy done' (2001:185), with very little reported classroom implementation. This is a criticism Wingate and Tribble (forthcoming) also level at academic literacies. The EAP-Critical EAP debate is, in fact, exactly equivalent to the study skills/academic socialisation-academic literacies divide outlined in Section 2.3.3; many of the arguments Santos (2001) makes could be put by academic socialisation practitioners to academic literacies exponents. The difference is that the Critical EAP movement is relatively minor within EAP, whereas academic literacies is now the dominant intellectual force within academic writing discourse for NESs in British universities.

There are, of course, examples of L1 and L2 writing specialists showing awareness of each other's positions. For example, Hyland (2009), coming from EAP, sees the academic literacies perspective as a critical orientation to discourse; Lillis and Scott (2007) contrast the normative stance of EAP, as they see it, with the transformative one of academic literacies. A rare (unique, even) example of L1 and L2 writing teacher collaboration comes from America in Costino and Hyon (2011), which we will consider in some detail. In America L1 composition studies and applied linguistics are acknowledged as 'both parent fields of L2 composition' (Costino and Hyon 2011:25). However, as in the UK, teaching writing to NESs and NNEs are seen as different disciplines 'in binary opposition to each other' (ibid:25) - a point also argued in Santos 1992, Silva and Leki 2004, and Min 2010. Costino and Hyon (2011) describe a project with L1 and L2 university composition teachers together producing guidelines for all students, reflecting the blurring of the L1-L2 distinction within the widening diversity of US university composition classrooms. A major hurdle to overcome was the 'scare' words from both disciplines that triggered negative reactions in the other, which again echoes the EAP-Critical EAP and study skills/academic socialisation-academic literacies debates discussed above.

Common L2-composition words that scare L1-composition teachers are *skills* and *practice*, which Costino and Hyon's (2011) L1-composition teachers see as reflecting an unhelpful, autonomous view of literacy (as identified in Street 1984). This views writing as a technical, individual skill which ignores the ideological view of literacy

more favoured by L1 teachers. This acknowledges the role of social forces that privilege certain - typically, western, middle class - identities and values. *Ideology*, *power* and *critical* are seen as L1-composition focussed words rejected by L2-composition teachers for implying instruction that 'encourages students to resist rather than adopt mainstream discourses of power' (Costino and Hyon 2011:26). Many L1 teachers argue that attention to such issues in writing helps students understand 'when, where, and why different discourses are ideologically and rhetorically appropriate' (ibid:27). Interestingly, the bridge term identified as bringing the two disciplines together is *genre*, which is seen by both as 'a framework for helping students understand relationships among rhetorical situations, messages, and writers' linguistic choices' (ibid:29).

While there may be some instances of acknowledgement of different perspectives as outlined above, these have not yet influenced research or pedagogy in L1 or L2 writing fields. The more common ignorance of each other's perspective is despite the rapid increase in the numbers of both international and 'non-traditional' students in HE in recent years – or maybe because of it, as increasingly busy practitioners concentrate on their own field. This major waste of insight and resources has been unremarked upon until very recently, when two British applied linguists raised the issue (Wingate and Tribble: forthcoming). Their focus is primarily pedagogic, arguing that EAP has been too focused on the needs of NNESs to make an impact on the mainstream teaching of academic writing. Academic literacies, meanwhile, has mainly focused on non-traditional students, and has insufficiently acknowledged 'the theoretical and pedagogic potential of EAP for developing a mainstream instructional model' (ibid:1). They argue that all students entering HE need academic writing support, which the best of both these approaches can help provide. This situation is not unique to the UK; EAP practitioners Johns and Swales (2002:14) point out that US undergraduates - especially those from 'disadvantaged backgrounds'- and postgraduates would also benefit from EAP-type help.

2.7 This study

In order to bridge and begin to remove the unhelpful L1-L2 writing research and pedagogy divide referred to above, what is needed now are more studies like Casanave's 2002 (see Section 2.3.2) that include both NNES and NES writers. It is also important to study traditional as well as non-traditional NES students, so that

lessons can be learnt for all students. Echoing Bartholomae's (1985) epigraph above, Ivanič (1998:7) cites Moss (1987:46): 'HE has unvoiced traditions, expectations and values that all new students must learn – a culture of academic institutions'. For older students this can be even more challenging. Summarising relevant research in this area about undergraduates, Ivanič notes that 'entering higher education as a mature student is associated with change, difficulty, crises of confidence, conflicts of identity, feelings of strangeness, the need to discover the rules of an unfamiliar world' (1998:7).

The situation is similar for students enrolling on postgraduate programmes, especially high-stakes one-year taught Masters. My experience is that NNEs find this even more of a challenge than NES students, though it could be claimed that all such students start from the same point of lack of membership of the academic community and lack of an appropriate academic identity. Postgraduate students from other cultures are arguably similar to the non-traditional undergraduates Ivanič (1998) and Lillis (2001) studied in that the UK university environment is also alien to them and they too can feel like outsiders expected to know the norms. In addition, postgraduate international students come with a view of what university study is from their own home contexts. UK graduates have a definite advantage here, especially if their undergraduate studies were in related disciplines, but even they often report struggling with what is required at this higher level of study, and especially after a number of years of work.

The present study seeks to help fill gaps in the literature identified above, drawing on the traditions of both EAP and academic literacies and in the spirit of the call for mutual recognition/ development by Wingate and Tribble (forthcoming). In doing this, it broadens the research focus beyond international or home students to a mixed nationality group including both. In addition, it focuses on a group of students studying the same modules and doing exactly the same writing tasks, which is something that none of the above studies has done. This is important if we are to make any comparisons across individuals. Another previously unexplored focus is how postgraduate students face academic writing challenges at the beginning of their studies. This time of transition is crucial for student success, especially on the relatively short one-year Masters programmes we have in Britain. The more we can understand how students develop into academic writers at this time, the better we can advise both their teachers and their successors.

The research questions this study seeks to answer, therefore, are:

1. How do taught postgraduate students develop an understanding of the writing demands of the academy in the early stages of their study?
2. What differences are there in the experiences of students developing academic writing skills within this context?

This chapter has explored the range of literature that informed this research project.

The next chapter will now explain how the study was conducted.

Chapter 3: Methodology

'Only carefully-planned studies providing data from multiple sources will give us the information we need for a clearer understanding of how NNS students acquire academic literacy.' (Braine 2002:67)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research project. It begins by considering the underlying framework, before turning to the academic context of two MA programmes in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Reading. This context is described in some detail as much of the data collected refers to events and structures within the programmes, so it is important to explain how they operate. The six MA students who participated in the study are then introduced, followed by an outline of the data collection (tools, ethical issues) and of the analysis.

A focus of my EdD studies has been online learning, and questions about the use of technology were included in all the research tools here. However, the findings were of limited interest compared to other issues and so it was decided to drop this focus from the Thesis.

3.2 Research framework

All methods of research can be defined in terms of three core parameters (Duff 2008): ontology (how reality is interpreted: constructed by or independent of observers?), epistemology (how knowledge is seen: what is 'truth'? Are researchers objective or subjective?), and methodology (how research is conducted: for example, experimental/quantitative and/or dialogic/qualitative?). This study takes a constructivist view of reality and knowledge; the constructivist epistemological perspective is defined by Robson (2002:8,9) as follows:

Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of our world...Meaning is not discovered, but constructed.

This means that there are no absolute realities or insights here; these are constructed by the people who explore them. In this context, for example, the participants interpret their views in interviews, questionnaires and e-mails, which are then re-interpreted and presented by me as researcher. Any analysis of written texts is also influenced by my focus/interpretation.

Turning to methodological principles, this is a qualitative study exploring phenomena in their natural settings in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) see this as being interpretive research, involving the acknowledgment of different perspectives and multiple realities. The study is clearly within an ethnographic framework. However, ethnography is a debated term (see Hammersley 1994, 2006 and Lillis 2008), used in different ways in different disciplines, although its roots lie in anthropology. Discussion of ethnography (outlined for example in Hammersley 2006) includes the issue of generalizing beyond the specific context, how/if contexts should be defined and located within society as a whole, and whether what people say and do should be explored holistically or analysed at the micro level. As a result, ‘on each occasion of its use it is necessary to give some indication of how the term is being used’ (Hammersley 2006:3). Table 3.1 interprets this study in relation to Lillis’ (2008) summary of Hammersley’s (1994, 2006) core features of ethnography.

Table 3.1: Ethnographic characteristics of this study

Core features of ethnography (Lillis 2008:358)	This study
Collection and analysis of empirical data from “real world” contexts (ie not experimental study)	Study of on-going MA programmes in a University context
Sustained engagement in a particular site	Main data collected from October to February; final interviews in September; year-on questionnaires a year later
Researcher attempts to make sense of events from the participants’ perspectives	Focus on participants’ views and discussion of their experiences
Data from a range of sources (key tools are often observation and/or relatively informal conversations)	Wide range of sources (see Section 3.5)
Single setting/group of relatively small scale	One University department, six students
Data analysis involves interpretation of meanings/functions of human actions; mainly verbal descriptions and explanations; quantification/statistical analysis play a subordinate role at most	Analysis involves interpretation of data, resulting in summaries of literacy-histories and of case studies. Very limited quantification of some linguistic forms (see Section 5.8)

The study has all the core features of ethnography in Table 3.1 except one: it has a shorter period of engagement than major ethnographic studies in writing (eg Ivanč 1998: 2 years; Lillis 2001: 2-6 years). Lillis (2008:362) points out that ‘longitudinal studies of academic writing are uncommon’ and it is felt that in this context of limited

research shorter studies such as this one still have a contribution to make. In addition, the study focussed on the first four months of writing on a one-year programme with information-gathering spread over 24 months, so data was collected over a long period of time in the experience of the students on the programme. Because of its relatively limited time frame, it could be argued, as Lea and Street 1998 did, that the study follows an ‘ethnographic style’ approach (Green and Bloom 1997), rather than being fully ethnographic. Looking back on the study at the end, it also follows an ‘ethnography as methodology’ approach, defined by Lillis as ‘talk methodologies aimed explicitly at developing longer conversations...between writer and researcher’ (2008:362), including literacy-history interviews.

Whatever its ethnographic credentials, the present research is clearly a case study. Table 3.2 shows this in terms of Stake’s (2005) five requirements for a case study.

Table 3.2: Case study characteristics of this study

Case study requirements (Stake 2005:443-444)	This study
Issue choice – identifying key issues, optimising understanding by pursuing scholarly research questions	The research questions are grounded in key issues that can and need to be explored within this clearly defined educational context.
Triangulation of descriptions and interpretations throughout the period of study	A range of data is collected from different sources and explored throughout the study, leading to the identification of themes/issues which are constantly revisited for clarification and validity.
Concentration on experiential knowledge	The focus is on the experiences and perspectives of the participants.
Close attention to the influence of historical, political, social, cultural and other contexts	The study explores a range of situated contexts: historical, small cultural, social.
Careful attention to the activities in the case	The study focuses on the activities the participants undertake as part of their Term 1 studies in considerable detail.

Case studies have been classified in different ways. Firstly, they can be intrinsic or extrinsic (Yin 2003). Intrinsic case studies are examined purely for their own sake, to give a better understanding of the specific case being studied. Extrinsic, or instrumental, case studies are explored to help give insights into wider issues; the specific cases, though important, are of secondary interest. Secondly, cases can be singular or multiple/collective. This study can be seen as one case – the educational context – or as a multiple case study in terms of the six participants focussed on. As

the project unfolded, I moved from seeing it as the former to the latter, as different issues unfolded for each student and generalisations across the group became less obvious. Stake (2005:446) sees multiple case studies as being fundamentally 'instrumental in nature' and that is certainly the situation here - the wider issue being writing in the British HE postgraduate context. The six different individuals each became a case in their own right and this is how they are presented in Chapter 4. They can, of course, also then be explored as a group undertaking the same programme of study as is done in Chapter 5.

3.3 Context

The study was conducted in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Reading with students on two campus-based MA programmes in the academic year 2008-09. The MA in Applied Linguistics (MAAL) is for people with an interest in applied language studies, such as foreign language teaching (including EFL) or translation. The MA in English Language Teaching (ELT) is for experienced EFL teachers. Initially different in scope, these two MA programmes have become very similar in the last decade. Both require one year full-time study on campus and their curriculums are similar, apart for two different core modules. (See Appendix 1 for Programme Specifications.)

All students have a personal tutor on the academic staff, who gives feedback on a pre-course assignment (PCA). Students are sent this task (Appendix 2) before they come to Reading, and it is submitted at the end of Week 4. Students who attend the Reading summer preessional English language course write this assignment as their final project on that course. Personal tutors read, annotate and comment on the PCA and then have a meeting with the student to go over academic literacy issues arising from it. Tutors also typically see students once a term to discuss progress and decisions about modules and dissertation topic.

For international students with a relatively low level of English (IELTS 6.5, instead of the preferred 7), a compulsory discipline-specific inessional English course is provided with weekly classes and programme-related tasks in Term 1, and tutorial meetings in Term 2. (See Appendix 3 for course outline.) In Term 1 2008-09, there were also three study skills classes for all students. These covered basic academic literacy issues, such as citation practices and examples of plagiarism (see Appendix 5 for an outline of topics covered).

In Term 1 (October-December) all students study the same three core modules, as Table 3.3 shows.

Table 3.3: MA students' common, core Term 1 modules

Module	Credits	Assessment	Submission
Discourse Analysis (DA)	10	Assignment	End Term 1
Foundation Phonetics and Phonology	10	Test (dictation) Assignment	Beginning Term 2
Second Language Learning Principles (SLLP)	20	Assignment	Beginning Term 2

In Terms 2 (January–March) and 3 (April–June), students study three option modules and Research Design, and work towards a dissertation, which is submitted at the end of September. Students obtain the MA by achieving an average of 50% on 180 credits with a pass for the dissertation (worth 60 credits). The pass mark is 50%. Merit-level is 60-69% and distinction-level starts at 70%. (See Appendix 4 for marking scheme descriptors.)

As Table 3.3 indicates, writing is the means of assessment in the first term of the programme. This is the case throughout these MAs, as is commonly found on such Masters programmes in the UK. As Lillis (2001) notes, the prevailing genre in UK universities is the academic essay, with these students experiencing a much narrower genre range than Casanave's (2002) American Masters students (see 2.3.3). For two core modules, assessment is by examination, not assignment. Assignments, nevertheless, constitute the major form of assessment in all other modules, leading up to the 60-credit, 15,000-word dissertation submitted at the end of the year. Assignments are either 2,000-2,500 words in length (10-credit modules) or 3,000-4,000 words (20-credit modules).

Students are given assignment rubrics (see Appendix 6) at the beginning of a module and are encouraged to submit an outline for feedback to the module tutor before writing the assignment. After submission, assignments are returned within one month with feedback provided in the form of a standardised feedback sheet, divided into sections for comment according to marking criteria (see Appendix 7), and with context-specific annotations on the script itself. External examiners have commented favourably on the amount and quality of feedback (including for the year of this study, in the 2008-09 External Examiners Report). Students are told they can see tutors for clarification of feedback but staff find this rarely happens if the assignment passes. The

feedback sheet (see Appendix 8 for examples) also indicates the internal grade agreed by first and second markers.

3.4 Participants

3.4.1 Students

As well as relevant academic backgrounds, students on the MAELT must have a minimum of 2 years' full-time language teaching experience and MAAL students must have at least a year's experience in their professional field. There is always a mix of home/EU and international students, though British student numbers have declined over the years as more distance study programmes have become available (including our own). Recruitment for the academic year 2008-09 coincided with the beginnings of the international financial crisis, and student numbers were down considerably, with only 11 people registering (see Appendix 9 for information on this intake of students).

All students were invited to participate in the study after a short briefing on the project in a whole-group session in Fresher's Week before term started. They indicated their willingness to take part in a questionnaire about their academic literacy background completed in that session (See Section I in Appendix 10). Six said they would be prepared to participate. The other five were unsure and wanted more information before deciding.

Case studies do not require participants to be 'representative' (Yin 2003), but I agree with Eisenhardt (2002:12) that 'selection of an appropriate population controls extraneous variation and helps define the limits for generalizing the findings'. If my findings were to have relevance for future programmes and validity for my Department, the participants needed to be a cross-section of the kind of students we typically get, in terms of gender, age and background. Factors in selecting participants were:

- volunteers showing a willingness to take part;
- different nationalities, to provide variation in educational background and expectations;
- different educational experiences (mainly first degree subjects), to provide differing levels of familiarity with the discipline;
- students who were broadly representative of the student population who register for the programme.

Some of the eleven students were eliminated as they were 'atypical':

- a 62-year old, because the majority of students are in their twenties or thirties; she also planned to transfer to the distance study version of the programme part way through the MA;
- one British student who had already completed three of the core modules in distance mode;
- one international student who had been living in Britain for two years, and had been out of language teaching for some time. We had never had a student in this position before, as most students come from work contexts.

This left a total of eight 'possibles'. They came to a further briefing session, and six were then invited to participate. This was felt to be a manageable number for the study; in addition, the remaining two students were of the same nationality as invited students.

One of the invited students, from Libya, declined, explaining that she was anxious about her studies and the time commitment participation might require. The other five accepted and a further student (a second Japanese one, who had studied a different degree subject from her compatriot) was invited to take part and accepted. The final potential participant had studied on exactly the same course as the Polish student who agreed to participate; it was felt their profiles were too similar to justify expanding the study to a seventh participant. I invited her to pilot the interviews, which she did.

The participants' profiles are in Table 3.4, with pseudonyms beginning, for ease of reference, with the same letter as their nationality.

Table 3.4: Participants' profiles

	Programme	Age	Gender	Nationality
s1 Barbara	MAAL	29	F	British
s2 Razvan	MAAL	32	M	Romanian
s3 Pola	MAAL	21	F	Polish
s4 Timur	MAELT	26	M	Turkish
s5 Jun	MAELT	33	M	Japanese
s6 Jinko	MAELT	26	F	Japanese

This represented a balance across the two programmes and genders (50:50). I had noted that other case studies had not controlled for programme of study (eg Ivanič 1998) and some others had participants of one gender only (eg Casanave 2002, Lillis 2001). I wanted to include a balance across the two programmes involved and in

gender so that I could ignore both these variables, which would have been less easy to do if, for example, there had been only one MAAL participant or one man. The age range was typical of recent MA groups, as were the nationalities, with one notable exception: Razvan was our first Romanian student. All participants except Pola passed the MA at the first attempt. Pola failed her dissertation in September 2009; her re-submission a year later passed.

3.4.2 MA staff

The MA teaching team consisted of seven full-time and three part-time staff members, who had taught on MA programmes at Reading for between 18 months and 23 years. They contributed a range of specialist subject areas to the programme. All except one had taught English abroad at some stage in their career and the exception had considerable experience of teaching English in British schools.

Of the teaching team, six contributed to this study. Five were personal tutors for the six student participants, so they provided input in the form of advice given on the Pre-Course Assignment. Two of these five personal tutors, Ann and Steve (pseudonyms), were also module tutors for the two Term 1 modules focussed on in the study, so they provided a considerable amount of further data. In addition, the Departmental study skills and in-session English tutor, Nicky (pseudonym), contributed to the study, with details of input in these sessions and a recording of one meeting with Timur.

3.5 Data collection

The study focussed on the academic writing experiences of the six participating students in their first four months on the programme. During this time they produced four pieces of written work: the Pre-Course Assignment (PCA) and the three assignments in Table 3.3 above. It was decided to focus on three of these. The PCA showed participants' writing skills as the course began; the other two represented different, but typical, 'genres' in the field, and were submitted at different times. Discourse Analysis (DA) was submitted at the end of Term 1 and required them to work with linguistic data they had chosen/collected themselves. The Second Language Learning Principles (SLLP) assignment, submitted at the beginning of the Term 2, required discussion of an aspect of the field which had to be explored theoretically through the literature and then discussed in relation to their teaching context. It was felt that the fourth piece of writing (for the Foundation Phonetics and Phonology

module) was of less importance as it constituted only half the work for a 10-credit module. In addition, it was submitted at the same time as the SLLP assignment and it was felt that discussion of that more substantial piece of writing would give enough insights into writing at that stage of the programme.

The assignments focussed on are outlined in Table 3.5, which indicates input received from tutors. It also shows the spread of submission deadlines across the first four months of the programme and the increase in length of assignment over this time.

Table 3.5: Term 1 assignments focussed on in this study

Assignment/ module	Task (See Appendices 2 and 5 for rubrics)	Pre-submission input from module tutor	Submission deadline	Feedback
A1 Pre-Course Assignment (PCA) Unassessed	1,000-1,500 words. Assignment comparing first and second language learning	None	Term 1 Week 4	Feedback sheet; annotated script; face-to-face meeting with personal tutor
A2 Discourse Analysis (DA) 10 credits	2,000-2,500 words. Assignment presenting analysis of a student-selected piece of discourse/discussion of a genre	Two face-to-face meetings on topic/text focus	Term 1 Week 10	Feedback sheet; annotated script; 2 students also had meetings with module tutor.
A3 Second Language Learning Principles (SLLP) 20 credits	3,000-4,000 words. Assignment on how student-selected SLLP theories/ principles could influence a familiar ELT situation	e-mailed feedback on outline	Term 2 Week 1	Feedback sheet; annotated script

Information about module-specific assignment input was collected. This is referred to here as programme-generated data, as it was not specially elicited for the study. Other programme documentation was collected and study-specific research tools were also developed. See Table 3.8 for a summary of the different types of data collected in chronological order.

3.5.1 Programme-generated data

3.5.1.1 Non-assignment-specific input

Background information on the participants was gleaned from their application forms and marksheets. The MA Student Handbook and handouts from whole-group study skills classes were collected. In addition, two of the group (Jun and Timur) had English below the recommended level and so were instructed to attend in-session English

classes in Term 1; data included the input to these sessions and the tutor-annotated work the two students did for them.

3.5.1.2 Assignment-specific input

Three pieces of work were focussed on: one formative assignment with feedback in Week 6 and then two assessed pieces of work, the second of which was submitted before feedback was received on the first. For these assessed assignments, I attended class briefings and collected all information, the assignments themselves and feedback.

For the Pre-Course Assignment (PCA), feedback was both in the form of written feedback and recordings of face-to-face tutorials with personal tutors when the assignments were returned. Assignment rubrics and any other advice on Reading's Virtual Learning Environment, Blackboard, were collected and classroom assignment briefings recorded for the two assessed assignments. In addition, module tutor feedback on outlines (face-to-face or by e-mail) and on assignments was collected including recordings of face-to-face meetings with module tutors. Student-initiated post-feedback meetings between two students and the Discourse Analysis tutor were also recorded. Feedback on the dissertation, the final and most important piece of work, was also collected to allow comparison with feedback issues raised on early work.

3.5.2 Research tools designed for this project

Recent research into literacy discussed in Chapter 2 has included a range of research tools but all have interviews in common (as recommended by Casanave and Hubbard 1992 and Braine 2002). Although their contribution in some research has been criticised for being overused (by Hammersely 2006) or undertheorized and insufficiently presented in published write-ups (by Mann 2011), they have a major role to play within ethnographic studies (as discussed in Section 3.2 above) for the insights they give into insiders' perspectives.

Interviews with students and staff were the main source of information here. The research tools also included two questionnaires (pre-course and one-year on) and e-mail prompt questions to students. Extensive piloting was done using pre-session English language course students, former and contemporary MA students and colleagues not involved in the study as appropriate to the research tool. Interview and

questionnaire formats were all amended in the light of feedback from these pilots and piloted again if necessary.

3.5.2.1 Questionnaires

The pre-course questionnaire (PCQ, see Appendix 10) was given in a Fresher's week meeting to all MA students. This provided information on their expectations of the MA and previous experience of and attitudes towards reading and writing. The year-on questionnaire (YOQ, see Appendix 16) was e-mailed to students in October 2010, a year after they had all completed the MA except Pola who had just re-submitted her dissertation. This questionnaire collected factual information about reasons for doing their MA, employment and writing experiences since leaving Reading and if/how the MA had helped with work and subsequent writing. It also asked who/what had helped or hindered them in their writing development while on the MA, how their writing skills had changed during the programme and if participants thought they had changed as a result of doing the MA.

3.5.2.2 Interviews with students

Participants were interviewed five times as Table 3.6 shows.

Table 3.6: Student interview schedule

Interview (I)	When	Focus
11	Term 1 Week 4 (Oct 2008)	Academic reading and writing experience, and early reactions to the demands of the programme and the Pre-Course Assignment (A1)
12	Term 1 Week 8 (Nov 2008)	Experiences of academic literacy on the programme so far and feedback received on the PCA
13	Term 2 Week 2 (Jan 2009)	On-going experiences and feedback received on first assessed essay (for Discourse Analysis:A2)
14	Term 2 Week 8 (March 2009)	On-going experiences and feedback received on second assessed essay (Second Language Learning Principles assignment A3)
15	Academic year end (Sept 2009)	Looking back on development of writing skills at the end of the academic year, after the dissertation submission deadline, and specific questions following up issues raised in earlier interviews

Interviews were semi-scripted (Gillham 2000), and lasted between 18 and 85 minutes (see Appendix 12 for timings). This range was because the detail students went into varied. Both extremes were interviews with Barbara, who initially struggled with discussing her work (I2) but had most to say in I5. I2 was the shortest interview for all participants. This focused on the unassessed PCA submitted in Week 4 and before any other work was written; students had less to say at this stage of the programme and on the relatively limited feedback they had received on the PCA. The longest interviews were the final ones.

The questions asked (see Appendix 13) were broadly similar on occasions 1-4. In the final interview participants were asked questions about their experiences of writing development over the whole programme and participant-specific questions, based on a review of all the data concerning each of them - hence its length. In each interview the assignment being focused on and its written feedback were consulted. However, as students came with final versions of marked work, there was less focus on the student texts than in some other studies which have focussed on drafts (eg Lillis 2001), and talk about text, therefore, tended to focus on the tutor's feedback. Interviews about specific assignments (ie I2-I4) were conducted several days after feedback and grades had been received, to allow participants time to absorb this information. In the final interviews, all three pieces of work focussed on in this study and tutor feedback were available for reference.

3.5.2.3 e-mail reflections from students

Students were sent e-mails with questions at key stages between interviews, especially just after submission of an assignment (see Table 3.7 and Appendix 14). The purpose was to capture students' reflections on their writing having completed a major task but before any feedback. An e-mail over the Christmas break asked how students were proceeding with their writing outside term time. However, students were so busy at these times either studying for other modules or writing assignments that responses tended to be brief and uninformative. This data set did not, therefore, add greatly to the study. An exception was the response to e-mail 5 which elicited feedback on the first summary (discussed in 3.7.1) and responses to participant-specific questions. A year later participants were also e-mailed the year-on questionnaire and then clarification questions, followed by the case study summary for checking.

Table 3.7: Student e-mail schedule

e-mail	When	Focus
1	Term 1 Week 5 (Nov 2008)	PCA reflections post-submission
2	Vacation Week 1 (Dec 2008)	DA assignment reflections post-submission
3	Vacation Week 3 (Jan 2009)	Reflections on how the SLLP assignment was progressing
4	Term 2 Week 1 (Jan 2009)	SLLP reflections post-submission
5	Summer Vacation Week 7 (Aug 2009)	Accuracy of literacy-history/Month 1 summary with participant-specific questions to explore what they felt had changed
6	Academic year end (Sept 2010)	Year-on questionnaire and follow-up questions
7	Year on (Oct 2010)	Accuracy of case study summary and follow-up

3.5.3 Interviews with staff

After the two assessed assignments included in the study had been marked and returned to students, the two module tutors, Ann and Steve, were interviewed about their assignment. Questions (Appendix 15) addressed the assignment in general and then the work of each of the six participants, which the tutor referenced in the interview along with their feedback.

3.5.4 Summary of data collected





Table 3.8 presents a summary of all the data collected.

Table 3.8: Data collected

	When	Data genre	Focus
1	Beg Oct 08 Freshers Week	Pre-course questionnaire	Expectations of MA, experience of English, experience of reading and writing, attitudes to reading and writing in English
2	October	Documents: Student Handbook; assignment rubrics for all three assignments and notes for markers for A1 Participants' application forms	Information given to students on assignments on the programme – generic and specific Background information
3	October and November	Lectures - extracts	Oral briefings given in MA module classes for DA (A2) and SLLP (A3)
4	October - November	Handouts for 3 whole-group 'Study Skills' classes	Advice on academic writing to all students
5	Whole Term 1	Handouts for weekly Insessional English academic writing support classes and work done by Timur and Jun	Advice given on academic writing for these two students
6	End Oct 08	Interview 1	Previous experience – of academic writing
7	Beg Nov	e-mail	Thoughts post-submission of PCA, A1
8	Mid-Nov	1:1 tutorial with personal tutor	A1 and student's academic writing
9	Mid-Nov	A1, annotated by personal tutor	Assignment and in-text comments/ annotations
10	Mid-Nov	Written feedback sheet on A1 from personal tutor	Feedback by criteria and overall comment
11	End Nov 08	Tutorial between Timur and the academic writing tutor	A1 and his academic writing skills
12	End Nov	Interview 2	A1 – reactions to and summary of feedback looking ahead to A2
13	Mid-Nov (Week 6)	10-minute 1:1 Meeting 1 between each student and DA module tutor	To discuss choice of A2 topic and text for analysis
14	End Nov/ beg. Dec	Outline of A3, annotated in Word comment mode by module tutor (NB 1:1 meeting for Jun)	Feedback on each student's proposed outline for A3, with suggested readings
15	Beg Dec (Week 9)	10-minute 1:1 Meeting 2 between each student and DA module tutor	To present and discuss A2 outline
16	1 st week Dec (Monday Week 10)	10-minute oral poster presentation per student in DA class	To present A2 research project
17	1 st week Dec	e-mail	Reactions on having submitted Assignment 2
18	Early Jan 2009	e-mail	Report on progress on A3
19	Mid-January	e-mail	Reactions on having submitted A3
20	Beg January	A2 for DA annotated by module tutor	Assignment and annotations by module tutor
22	Beg January	Written Feedback sheet on A2 from module tutor	Comments by criteria, overall comment
23	Mid-January	Research Interview 3	A2 – reactions to and summary of feedback; looking ahead to A3; academic writing at this point
24	End January & early Feb	Post-feedback meetings with module tutor initiated by two students	Clarification of issues in feedback

25	Early February	Interview with DA module tutor	Comments on requirements for A2, and on work produced by the six students.
26	Mid-February	A3 for SLLP, annotated by module tutor	Assignment, ticks, underlinings and numbers related to specific comments on feedback sheet
27	Mid-February	Written feedback sheet on A3 from module tutor	Comments by criteria, overall comment, specific comments related to numbers in text.
28	End February	Research Interview 4	A3 - reactions to and summary of feedback, academic writing at this point
29	Mid-March	Interview with SLLP module tutor	Comments on requirements for A3, and on work produced by the six students.
30	Mid-August	e-mailed literacy-history/Month 1 summary, and questions	Sent to each student, for confirmation/correction. Questions asked about factual details and issues raised in at the beginning of the year.
31	September 2009	Research Interview 5 - f2f with all, except Pola (e-mail and phone interview in Poland). Timur also answered 15 general questions a second time by e-mail in December, post-dissertation submission	Post-dissertation submission (for all except Timur, who had an extension until Dec) - looking back at the year and reflecting on development of academic writing skills
32	October 2009	Dissertation feedback sheet	Feedback on final piece of work for the programme
33	September 2010	Year-on questionnaire	Information re motivation for MA study and present roles; reflections on MA experience
34	October 2010	Case study thematic write-up; follow-up e-mails to clarify participant amendments, as necessary Final amendments sent to relevant participants	Confirmation/correction of case study thematic write-up by each participant
35	November 2010	Summary of all data obtained from the academic staff member about his/her expectations of academic writing for A2 or A3	Sent to the two module tutors, for confirmation/correction.

Key

	Writing skills/experience in general
	Focus on A1: Pre-Course Assignment (PCA)
	Focus on A2: Discourse Analysis (DA) assignment
	Focus on A3: Second Language Learning Principles (SLLP) assignment

f2f= face to face

A summary of the range of data sources used in this study is presented in Table 3.9 drawing on Yin (2003)'s six basic sources of evidence in case studies. As his categorisation was produced before ubiquitous electronic communication, I have added this.

Table 3.9: Range of sources of evidence used in this study

Source (adapted from Yin 2003)	In this study
Documentation	Student Handbook, assignment rubrics, assignment outlines, assignments, feedback, questionnaires
e-mail	e-mail reflections/responses to questions and questionnaires
Archival records	application forms, Examiners Meeting marksheets
Interviews	Semi-structured interviews with students and staff
Direct observations	Assignment briefings, participants' DA class poster presentations, recordings of meetings between students and tutors
Participant-observation	Emic insights drawn on throughout
Physical artifacts	Limited to DA posters

3.6 Ethics Consent

Permission was given by the Institute of Education Ethics Panel for the University of Reading Ethics Committee approval to be appropriate for this study. This was granted in August 2008, and encompassed piloters as well as main-study participants. See Appendix 17 for documents supplied to participants, which explained the study, asked for permission to access documents, and guaranteed anonymity and the right to withdraw at any stage.

I was very aware of the ethical issues in researching my own teaching context.

Concerns were:

- that students might feel obliged to participate in the study, as I was a member of the teaching team that would be assessing their work;
- that they might not give honest answers to questions about the programme and, in particular, about staff and their feedback to a fellow member of staff.

To try to alleviate these:

- I ensured I was not the personal tutor for any students on these two MA programmes.
- I also did not take a role in their Fresher's week briefing, which I would usually have done.

- I focussed my study on work done in the first term of their programme, when I did not teach them at all. This meant that study support classes I normally run for the MA students were taken this year by a colleague, Nicky. This could not be continued into the Spring Term, however, as I was then tutor for one core and one option module, and so I could not avoid running a module on which the participants would be assessed. In addition, I was dissertation supervisor and first marker for one participant. I was also first marker for another whose supervisor left, and second marker for two others. It was, therefore, not possible to maintain the sole role of researcher beyond Term 1.

All of these concerns were unavoidable given my insider role. It was explained to the students that participation was separate from the MA. Their acceptance of the latter assurance seems probable from the fact that several students felt able to ask for further information before deciding on whether to volunteer for the project and one invitee declined to take part.

An on-going ethical issue that is intrinsic to any longitudinal study into behaviour and attitudes was whether taking part would either

- a) disadvantage participants in any way, for example, by taking study time
- or
- b) advantage them at all; as writers on learning (such as Dewey 1933, Kolb 1984, Moon 1999) suggest, reflection on learning can improve performance.

The fact that none of the students withdrew from the study and all seemed eager to discuss their work with me continuing a year after they left Reading implies the latter case is more likely.

3.7 Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed fully, using transcription conventions based on Blackwell 2000 (see Appendix 18). These were felt to be adequate for the purposes of this study, which did not require any phonemic transcription or detailed indication of pausing, though some was useful to indicate hesitation. Exact wording was transcribed, including any language errors. This was an issue with Jinko, Jun and Timur but it never interfered with their comprehensibility and their words were transcribed in full.

3.7.1 Literacy-history and Month 1 summaries

In the first term, I wrote a summary of each participant from what I had gleaned about their pre-Reading academic literacy experience and their first four weeks on the programme, from the pre-course questionnaire and our first research interview (I1 in Term 1 Week 4). This was based on information obtained before they had submitted any writing for the programme. Like Lillis (2001:4), I do not see this information as 'background information' 'but rather as central to any attempt to understand their specific experiences of engaging in academic writing in HE'. She refers to this information as 'student-writers' literacy/life-history account', a title which I have partially adopted here as my focus was on literacy, more than life history. Whilst some information was noted about participants' study and work backgrounds, the aim was to try to capture their pre-MA literacy experiences, both general and academic, and their reactions to the academic literacy demands at the beginning of the programme.

The first draft of this summary was e-mailed to each participant for a member-check for accuracy. I also included questions on specific issues I was unsure of on the draft. These answers and any corrections were used to produce the final draft of this summary of each case as they started on the programme and during the first four weeks (see Appendix 19 for an example). This final summary also included discussion of issues that had been returned to in specific questions at the dissertation-stage, referred to in Section 3.5.2.2 above.

3.7.2 Case study summaries

I began my examination of the other data, which constituted the main body of data for the study, by seeking to follow a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) as described in, for example, Robson 2002. I used qualitative data analysis software Atlas-ti to code documents. However, I found that the detailed attention to text (in terms of specific words/phrases) and the constant to-ing and fro-ing across the range of different documents required by changes in/refinements of codes impeded my developing understanding of the overall picture. It was difficult to develop a sense of the unfolding of each participant's experience through the year. Major issues here were both the volume of data and the different data sets. I was becoming pre-occupied by the detail of the coding of each document and not the stories the different documents were revealing. In addition, the emic nature of the study was being lost; this kind of

systematic coding forced me to examine each data extract in an objective, external way, not allowing me to draw on my more global insider knowledge.

I turned to the literature for guidance. Janesick (1994) and Thomas and James (2006) provide powerful critiques of grounded theory that resonate with my experience. Thomas and James (2006), writing from an educational research perspective, argue that 'the formulaic guidance of grounded theory' (ibid:788) served a useful purpose in the 1960s in making qualitative research legitimate in the face of the then-prevailing scientific bias of social science. However, they point out that this rationale is no longer necessary and that grounded theory, as I discovered, can lead to a preoccupation with the method and not the message:

In its hankering after order – with its fracturing, its axial coding, its categories and sub-categories – it seeks to impose a certain kind of patterning shape, and even rationality. Via such procedures it thereby relegates the original voice – the narrative – of both the respondent and the discussant in the research exercise. (ibid:790)

Having criticised grounded theory very convincingly, Thomas and James (2006) do not, however, offer any alternative approaches to working with qualitative data. I therefore revisited the research base outlined in Chapter 2 for possible ways forward. Published reports of studies of academic literacy/ literacies do not usually describe/explain their methods of analysis, as Eisenhardt (2002:17) also points out. (A notable exception is Prior 1998, referred to below.) The following extract from Lea and Street (1998:160), however, struck a chord:

As researchers we were able to benefit from our own situated knowledge of the institutions within which we were researching. Adopting an ethnographic style approach to the research, within settings of which we already had prior knowledge, enabled us to move away from the focus on transcribed interview material to a more eclectic approach, merging the importance of understanding both texts and practices in the light of staff and student interpretations of university writing.

I contacted Mary Lea directly to ask how data had been analysed in this study, and received the following reply:

We didn't use a grounded theory approach in the research. We drew on principles from literacies research and the New Literacy Studies, which uses ethnographic methods of enquiry...

...I have continued to use ethnographic methods, drawing out themes across a range of data. This means interrogating the different data in detail and pulling out themes as they emerge, then comparing these with those emerging in other data and finally concentrating on those which seem to cut across all the data. It is time consuming and much more interpretative than coding or using qualitative data software such as NVivo.

The thing about taking an ethnographic perspective is that one doesn't make a distinction between the data and the context. Everything encountered in the process of the research counts as data...So being insiders helped us understand the context and make sense of the different data sources that we collected. Texts and practices are so closely intertwined that one cannot separate them. So for example, looking at students' writing is always about understanding their practices and the broader institutional context. (Lea, personal communication, 16 December 2010).

I decided to also take a more ethnographic perspective, returning to the practice of summary-writing I had used for the Literacy-history and Month 1 experiences write-up reported in 3.7.1 above. The data collected for each participant from the point at which they submitted their unassessed pre-course assignment in Week 4 onwards were extracted and collated. This was similar to Prior's (1998:308) integration of multiple data sources, which allowed for 'integrative analysis': 'bringing multiple texts together at one place and one time and reading across texts' (ibid). With detailed, and repeated, reading and examination of spoken data and written documents I then wrote a series of summaries, following on from the summaries outlined in 3.7.1. The process was iterative, requiring careful reading and re-reading of relevant parts of transcriptions and other documents and listening again to recordings.

In this way I felt I kept true to the data, the participants and the research focus. This approach allowed the story of each participant to unfold as a narrative. For each participant, a summary was produced of their experiences of the three Term 1 assignments and their reflections looking back after the dissertation submission at the end of the year. Each summary was organised by the three assignments in

chronological order of submission with a final section looking back at the year after the dissertation had been submitted. (See Appendix 20 for an example.) Each drew on all data from interviews after students had submitted written work (Interviews 2-5 with participants and interviews about them with module tutors), tutorials (with personal tutors and module tutors), e-mails from participants, oral presentations from the Discourse Analysis poster presentation session where students discussed their completed assignment projects, assignment outlines, assignments themselves, and feedback. They included direct quotations from the interviews and feedback.

On the return of their year-on questionnaire, the participants were each e-mailed the case study summary for them minus the sections reporting what tutors had said about their work. They were asked to confirm, comment on and/or amend their report. Four participants confirmed that the reports as written were accurate. Barbara and Pola corrected some details; extracts of the final summary report with changes made in response to their comments and an explanation of any lack of change, with reasoning, were approved by them.

3.7.3 Summary of programme writing demands

In addition, a note-based summary of 'the writing demands of the academy' in this context was produced. This drew on the Student Handbook, assignment rubrics (including marking criteria), other briefing documents about assignments, transcriptions of in-class assignment briefings by module tutors which I had attended, and research interviews with the two module tutors about what they were looking for in A2 (Ann) and A3 (Steve). This summary (see Appendix 22) focused on 'unpacking' the five criteria used on this programme for assessing assignments, and other issues raised by module tutors in class and interviews: the task, the writing, outlines, feedback on assignment, aspects related to students and their roles, aspects related to staff and their roles.

The sections of the summary that arose from published documents and their individual input for their module were given to the tutors for A2 and A3 for member checking. One of them, Steve, was also the MA Programme Director and thus the staff member who had written the Student Handbook and the rubric and markers' notes for the Pre-Course Assignment (A1). They had both been personal tutors to one (Steve) or two (Ann) of the participants. They approved their section of my summary document, agreeing it was a true reflection of their views.

3.7.4 Data for the study

These three summaries then became my data, having undergone what Stake (1995, 2005) and Duff (2008: 171) refer to as ‘member checks’, where the ‘perspective of the researcher is checked by field participants’ review of the researcher’s report for accuracy and completeness’. Table 3.10 is a summary of these data sets.

Table 3.10: Data summaries drawn on in the study

Data summary	Drawing on:	Input from:
1. Literacy-history and Month 1 summaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-course questionnaire • Research Interview 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student participants (spoken and written)
2. Case study summaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Interviews 2-5 with participants • Personal tutorials between students and tutors • Meetings between module tutors and students (scheduled and unscheduled) • Insessional input for Jun and Timur • Feedback on written outlines (oral and electronic) • Assignments • Class poster presentations for A2 • Feedback on assignments – spoken and written 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student participants (spoken and written) • Academic staff as personal tutors and as module tutors (spoken and written)
3. Summary of programme writing demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class briefings • Student Handbook • Assignment rubrics and other documents • Feedback sheets • Interviews with module tutors about their assignment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic staff as module tutors (spoken and written) • Programme documentation

The student assignments formed part of the data. The scope of this study did not allow for detailed analysis of these texts (such as an SFL analysis would require). However, they and the feedback given were examined for examples of reader awareness and authorial voice, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

3.7.5 Use of summaries

The data summaries in Table 3.10 were examined for topics relating to writing issues and the following (Table 3.11) were identified. They are the kind of issues that might

have been coded in a grounded theory approach; they evolved from the data. However, they were not used to code the data in any way, but were instead held at a more macro, conceptual level and used to inform the case study summaries and then the thesis write-up of each case and of the whole group.

Table 3.11: Writing-related topics arising from examination of data summaries

1. Time
2. Balancing programme requirements (eg other assessments)
3. Being critical – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of authors • of ideas • of own work
4. Asking questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of tutors • in their writing
5. Identifying task requirements/ choosing topic/ 'answering the question'
6. Evidence
7. Previous academic experience/subject knowledge
8. Previous experience of writing (L1/English)
9. Own teaching/learning experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drawing on in writing • future benefits of MA study
10. Giving own opinions/voice in writing
11. Being organised in doing writing
12. Being organised in studying/life
13. Reading - appropriate
14. Reading – drawing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for ideas • in text
15. Reading - evaluating
16. Writing process
17. Strategies for overcoming problems
18. Language
19. Organising ideas in writing
20. Assignment sections
21. Word limit
22. The reader
23. Other people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on campus: classmates, friends, tutors • elsewhere: home, in UK, fellow students, previous teachers, family
24. Feedback on outlines
25. Feedback on assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from tutors • perceptions about • use of
26. Reactions to mark/marker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reactions to mark scheme • reactions to marks • reactions to feedback

27. Identity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationality • being a NES/NNES • being a teacher • being a student
28. Personality
29. Motivation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interest in the topic • effect/s of doing the MA • future plans
30. Own strengths
31. Own weaknesses
32. Reflecting on taking part in this study

Examination of these topics led to identification of ways of grouping them into the following broad themes (Table 3.12), which also fed into the write-up.

Table 3.12: Themes emerging from topics

Theme (T)	Topics
T1. Writing task constraints	1. Time 2. Balancing programme requirements 5. Identifying task requirements; 21. Word limit 22. The reader
T2. Meeting the criteria	3. Being critical 6. Evidence 10. Giving own opinions/voice in writing 14. Reading – drawing on 15. Reading – evaluating 18. Language 19. Organising ideas in writing 20. Assignment sections
T3. Student writer strategies	4. Asking questions 11. Being organised in doing writing 12. Being organised in studying/life 16. Writing process 17. Strategies for overcoming problems
T4. Resources drawn on in writing	7. Previous academic experience 8. Previous experience of writing 9. Drawing on own teaching/learning experience 13. Reading – appropriate 23. Other people 24. Feedback on outlines 25. Feedback on assignments.
T5. Personal perspectives	26. Reactions to marks/feedback 27. Identity 28. Personality 29. Motivation 30. Own strengths 31. Own weaknesses 32. Reflecting on taking part in this study

In addition, the topics linked to ‘T2 Meeting the criteria’ were mapped onto the five marking criteria identified in the programme writing demands summary (Appendix 22) as follows:

Table 3.13: Topics mapped on to marking criteria

Criterion (C)	Topics
C1 reading/understanding	6. Evidence 14. Reading – drawing on
C2 explanation/discussion	3. Being critical 6. Evidence 10. Giving own opinions/voice in writing 14. Reading – drawing on
C3 evaluation	3. Being critical 9. Drawing on own teaching/learning experience 4. Reading – drawing on 15. Reading – evaluating
C4 coherence	19. Organising ideas in writing 20. Assignment sections
C5 presentation	14. Reading – drawing on 18. Language

There are overlaps in Table 3.13 as topics can be represented in different ways, meeting different criteria. For example, ‘Topic 14 Reading – drawing on’ can be used to explain analysis done (in A2), or to discuss theories (in A1 and A3), meeting Criterion 2. It can also help meet Criterion 3 in evaluating findings (A2), or theories/pedagogic practices (A1 and A3). Finally, drawing on reading in terms of citing sources and referencing appropriately was required in all written work here and helps meet Criterion 5.

The data were constantly revisited in writing the case study summary for each participant. Once the themes had been identified, each of the case study summaries was re-organised by theme so that the information on each for each participant could be more easily located. This meant there were, in the end, two versions of the case study summaries, the first (see Appendix 20 for an example) organised in chronological order by assignments A1-A3 with a final section based on the post-dissertation interview (I5), and the second taking the same textual material but reorganising it by theme for each case (see Appendix 21). I originally hoped that these themes might constitute the framework for the whole group discussion in Chapter 5, but they were themes that arose from the data, and helped to describe it, not the issues that emerged from the whole study in answer to the research questions. These issues

arose from the combination of focuses raised in the review of the literature, my 'insider' interpretation of the data sets listed above and the writing of the Individual Case Synopses (ICS) (following Huberman and Miles 2002), to which we will now turn.

Chapter 4: Case study participants

‘In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.’ (Yin 2003:1)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the six case study participants. Chapter 5 will look at issues across the group, but the focus here is on the individuals as they developed as writers on the MA. No-one would disagree with Illeris that ‘learning is part of development’ (2007:3). Learning is, however, ‘an extensive and very complex field’ (Illeris 2007:2), particularly with regard to adult learners, who have been less extensively studied than children, and I have not found a uniform theory that explains the insights that I have gained in this study. In both chapters, therefore, I shall bring in different theories of learning from the literature as necessary to help explain points being made.

Participants are discussed here by order of their overall performance on the programme as measured by their final average (see Table 4.2). This means we begin with the three whose applications indicated they were the most advantaged (Barbara, Jinko and Razvan), before moving on to the two who seemed among the weakest in the whole intake on arrival in October (Jun and Timur), and finally finishing with the student who arrived in the former group and ended as the weakest student (Pola). Each brought their own background, personality and motivations, which helped shape their development as academic writers on the programme. I have tried to capture their defining characteristics in a simple descriptor for each in Table 4.1 below, but, of course, there is much more to them than this. As their profiles unfold, comparisons are made with other participants where relevant.

Where academic staff or student participants are quoted in the text, a letter and number code is used to indicate source of quotation. The source’s role is indicated by ‘s’ for student and ‘t’ for tutor, followed by a number to indicate which individual. See Table 3.4 for student participant identification numbers; Ann is t1 and Steve is t2. Then the discourse-type is indicated (i=interview; m= meeting with tutor/student, indicated by letter and number), and a number indicating sequence. The final number refers to the

transcription page. So 's13:6' refers to Student 1 (Barbara), Interview 3 and page 6 of the transcript. Other sources of information (e-mails, questionnaires, assignments and feedback sheets) are referred to in the text by genre labels.

Table 4.1: Participants' defining characterisation


Name	Characterisation
Barbara	The Disappointed High-flyer
Jinko	The Quick Learner
Razvan	The Independent Intellectual
Jun	The Persistent Novice
Timur	The Unorthodox Strategist
Pola	The Inflexible Technician

Performance on their whole programme, in terms of participants' module marks, was as follows:

Table 4.2: Participants' performance on MA assessments by %

Name	A1-PCA ¹	A2-DA	Grammar ²	Phonetics ³	A3-SLLP	LCD/Socio ⁴	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Dissertation	Average ⁵
Barbara	72	67	80	63	80	75	72	72	85	75	75
Jinko	75	55	77	74	60	72	80	68	75	75	72
Razvan	68	68	75	65	72	64	67	72	72	60	67
Jun	68	55	54	52	60	46	47	64	75	75	64
Timur	33	58	64	53	62	46	58	63	65	64	61
Pola	40	61	54	64	51	52	55	58	63	45	53

Key

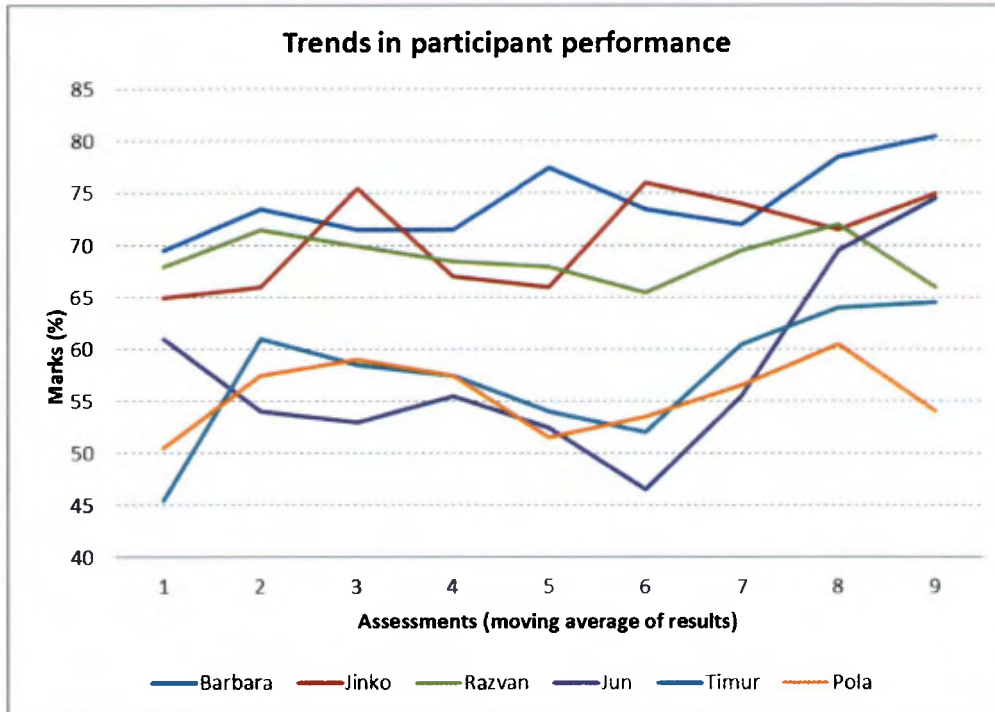
 Assignments focussed on in the study

1. Formative assignment, no grade given; estimated marks here based on tutors' feedback
2. Exam
3. Exam and assignment
4. Different core modules:
 - MAELT (Jinko, Jun, Timur) LCD - exam;
 - MAAL (Barbara, Razvan and Pola) Sociolinguistics – assignment
5. Overall MA average (after module weighting); included Pola's 1st submission average

Using this data, Figure 4.1 shows the trajectories of each participant in terms of how they performed in different assessments over the year, by using a moving average. This analysis reveals two distinct groupings based on all Term 1 work and some of Term 2's (up to point 7 in Figure 4.1): Barbara, Jinko and Razvan in a higher group and Jun, Timur and Pola in a lower one. Three groupings emerge at the end of the

programme, however: first, Barbara, Jinko and Jun; second, Razvan and Timur; and third, Pola. Examining each participant in turn helps explain these different trajectories.

Figure 4.1: Trends in participant performance (moving average, therefore excludes overall average)



4.2 Barbara - The Disappointed High-flyer

Barbara was 29 and British with a good modern languages degree, followed by a Certificate, then Diploma, in English Language Teaching. She had five years' language teaching experience. In the year before the MA she had taught EAP at an Omani university and then to undergraduates on a summer preessional course at a British university. On this course she had been offered classes of postgraduate students, but had felt unqualified to teach them without a Masters. She decided to do an MA to up-grade her qualifications and because 'I wanted to learn more about ELT and EAP and the issues that inform teaching in these areas' (YOQ). She thought an MA would lead to a better job and later achieved this ambition with a full-time EAP post at another university preparing students for both undergraduate and postgraduate study.

Barbara has been categorised here as a disappointed high-flyer. The top student in the group, her marks ranged from 63% to an exceptionally high 85%, with a distinction-

level average overall. Despite this academic success, she graduated as the most disappointed of all the students, finding the MA a lonely experience and not the intellectual challenge she had expected. She finished the year tired and disillusioned with academia and was not planning any further study, which she had thought a possibility before the MA. A year on she felt the same.

Before we can begin to explain Barbara's disappointment, it is important to try to understand her success. Characteristics that helped gain her distinction included:

- Her strong background, academically, both in terms of content and skills, and her teaching experience, all of which she was able to draw on in her writing for the MA.
- Her motivation to be a better teacher, focusing on EAP teaching.

This 'list' is much shorter than for the other participants here; basically, Barbara succeeded so well because she was very good. She started with skilled writing strategies; for example, she approached assignments by breaking titles down into different questions. She progressed from this to noting down questions for reading MA texts and then making notes on her reading by question. These useful strategies are commented on in a recent article on Critical EAP: 'I am reminded of how important good questions are in seeing beyond the text at hand or in expanding its reach and relevance' (Morgan 2009:86).

At the beginning of the MA, Barbara wanted to understand a topic before beginning writing, but she later realised that understanding came through writing, not before it, coming to appreciate the heuristic role of writing in learning (as discussed, eg, in Collins, Brown and Newman 1989). In early assignments, Barbara made plans she stuck to rigidly, but as she became more confident she changed them and also radically revised drafts: 'how...I first saw it is not how I end up seeing it' she reported in our last interview (s1i5:3). The biggest change she reported in her writing, however, was, amazingly for this time and her generation, word processing, which Barbara did for the first time for A1, having handwritten all previous academic work.

She struggled with some aspects of writing on the programme: for example, genre requirements she was uncomfortable with throughout included the use of section headings which her undergraduate writing experience had taught her were more appropriate for a report than an essay. A2's Discourse Analysis task required a research report write-up with Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion

sections. Like all the students she had never written an assignment in this format before. However, unlike all others except Razvan, she picked up this important structural information in her assignment outline tutorial with module tutor Ann. This was one example of her ability to identify and work with key feedback.

Barbara began with high expectations of what an MA would be like. She expected greater challenges than on her Diploma course and was surprised to find that she already had all the skills needed to pass and that writing at MA level was not very different from that she had been required to do for the Diploma. Although she had asked for and been given Accreditation of Prior Learning for two MA modules for her Diploma because it is considered Masters-level in the UK National Qualifications Framework, she had not realised this meant she had already been working at Masters-level. In particular, she was taken aback to find that her discussion of experience-based practical aspects was academic enough. This led to her challenging the level of writing required; for instance, she questioned her work for A3 (Second Language Learning Principles), feeling that discussion drawing on her teaching experience was too practical and basic: 'It's not like a new theory of SLA or something' (s14:1). These 'obvious' comments had been enough for the Diploma and she was expecting that more would be necessary for the MA, although when I challenged her on this in our final interview she acknowledged that Diploma assignments had drawn on less reading, in less depth.

An early disappointment was with the purpose of writing on the MA. Barbara questioned the function of A2 (the Discourse Analysis assignment where she analysed an L2 student text in terms of cohesion), re-writing the introduction three times, introducing it first 'as a piece of research that would be compared to other published research' (s13:8). However, she had only analysed one text, so

I rewrote it as an essay, as a piece of work for myself saying...this piece of research may help me improve my teaching in the future. But then I thought well that's what we did in the Diploma, it's not really like that so in the end I just sort of...didn't say anything (s13:8).

She raised this issue in a post-feedback meeting with the module tutor, Ann, who agreed with her that the purpose here was simply to do the assigned task of analysis.

Barbara struggled with identifying intellectual requirements in writing tasks at first and was disappointed by what she learned this involved. She was initially uncertain what being 'critical' meant at this level, thinking it required original thought. Feedback on A3 showed her that it was enough to pull together ideas from other people's criticisms. This synthesis of reading is actually a considerable challenge in writing (as Bazerman 2004 and Li 2008 discuss) and Barbara was the only student to do this in A3 according to Steve. However, she did not see this as an achievement, instead focusing on disappointment at the lack of need for originality as she defined it (ie something new). In addition, familiarity bred contempt. On arrival, she felt:

you sort of see academics, people who write text books as being somehow different, I know they're only ordinary people but you sort of think that you can't criticise or that...your opinions don't compare to them. (s1i1:9).

She learnt to critique her reading appropriately and feedback indicated to Barbara that she also wrote with authority, meeting all criteria well from A1. This was actually a disappointment to her, as, again, she had expected more. Like Casanave's experienced ELT Masters student (2002), Barbara lost some of the awe she had felt for experts in the field during the MA. While for Casanave's Kirsten this was empowering, for Barbara it was disillusioning. This disappointment was also reflected in her surprise at the marks awarded to early work, which were higher than on her BA; Barbara's reaction was that it should be harder to get such marks.

In class she was a quiet student, prepared to speak when called upon to do so but not outspoken. A hesitant speaker, of all the participants she struggled most in our interviews to answer questions about her experiences or opinions, giving the shortest answers in the first interview (I1), for example. This was unexpected as she was the only NES; several other participants struggled with spoken English but managed to communicate more. Her final interview (I5) was the longest of all in the study, however, reflecting her increased ability to discuss writing after studying it for one module and for her dissertation.

Her fundamental diffidence masked her strengths. Ann, who was her personal tutor and Discourse Analysis module tutor, for example, did not identify Barbara as a high-flyer; she thought she was a high merit but not distinction-level student: 'very good at being mechanical', but someone who would need help to 'go outside the box...to be more innovative' (t1a2is1:1). The key to her disappointment with the programme may,

in fact, lie in this quotation; despite Barbara's success in writing in terms of marks awarded, Ann's assessment of her may have been accurate. Perhaps Barbara needed more help than was given to develop herself more fully on the MA, not just through performance, but to the point at which she felt genuinely satisfied with her progress. Several times in our interviews she mentioned the solitary nature of MA study:

I probably just imagined it in a bit too idealistic way... I thought there would be more chance to work with other people and I felt like the majority of work I did it on my own. Or to work even, to engage with the tutors (s1i5:9).

Barbara had initiated contact with staff on early work, asking for a feedback follow-up meeting with module tutor Ann about A2, and e-mailing questions with her assignment outline to module tutor Steve for A3, which no one else had done. At the end of the year she reported that she could have made more opportunities to contact staff but '...maybe it's my personality, but also I didn't feel like it was a normal thing to do' (s1i5:9).

In words that would horrify my colleagues, who espouse a constructivist view of teaching and learning, she continued 'I just felt like we were taught. I don't know if that's because it's an MA and we're supposed to be learning rather than discovering things' (s1i5:9). She felt students were not really encouraged to express their own opinions, but corrected herself: '...actually, that's not true, I mean. through the writing I suppose we were encouraged to say what our opinion is or come up with a solution but I just felt it was a very individual thing' (s1i5:9).

This recognition (albeit somewhat grudging) of the functions of writing in developing ideas deserted Barbara when she came to the dissertation. She did not enjoy writing this and reported disappointment at her supervisor's more pragmatic and limited approach to her study. Once again she felt she could have done more (in this case, by collecting her own data, not relying on an existing corpus, and by reading more widely). This was another example of Barbara needing help to 'go outside the box', to return to Ann's comment, which the supervisor did not provide. Barbara did not get this impetus from fellow students either. However, her desire for more contact with them was partly met from Term 2 onwards when six students, including all participants in this study except Timur and Pola, arranged to meet regularly as an informal study group outside class. Although Barbara found this a useful opportunity to practise

introducing her ideas, 'which is...not my strength naturally' (s1i5:21), it resulted in presentations on student-selected topics, not discussion.

Time pressure to meet deadlines was identified by Barbara as her greatest problem with writing. As a result of writing up to the deadline she never had time to proofread her work properly herself or to ask anyone else to, thereby missing an opportunity for contact with others. The greatest lesson she reported learning about academic writing on the programme is relatively superficial: the amount of time necessary to revise a long text.

It can be argued from the above evidence that Barbara's disappointment with the MA was possibly because she was a social learner who liked to learn interactively with others (as discussed in Illeris 2007) through scaffolding from more experienced tutors (Bruner 1975) and collaborative learning with peers (Vygotsky 1978). This had happened on her Diploma course, and she clearly felt that none of these needs were met on the MA. Another reason for her unhappiness on the programme might be that Barbara's identity as a student was not very secure; for example, she was unsure of how far she could make contact with staff, as we have seen, and she found it hard to receive negative feedback on aspects of writing (such as cohesion) she had herself taught.

The other students did not see Barbara's lack of confidence as a student. As the only NES student on the programme who had also taught EAP, she was asked by three other students to proofread their work. Jun was the most demanding here and she was overwhelmed at times by his pushiness in requesting proofreading help for the dissertation. Being seen as the skilled NES in the group was an isolating position to be in and she appreciated the whole-group 'study skills' classes as they removed some of this pressure from her, allowing her to be a student with needs too and not, as normally perceived by the others, an expert writer.

In contrast to her weak identity as a student, Barbara's sense of herself as a teacher was very strong. This was an asset in her writing as it gave her professional experiences to reflect on in assignments; it also meant that she was interested in her classmates' issues with writing from a professional point of view, realising these insights would help in her future work. Despite her irritation with Jun's insistence that she help him, she saw this as useful to her as an EAP teacher, as was the experience of being a student herself. She made such connections with her teaching throughout the

MA in writing and in our interviews. A year on she produced a long list of ways the MA had helped with her EAP work, ranging from a better understanding of the process and product of writing to being able to advise students on how to manage time.

The fact that the positive lessons learnt on the MA were these professional ones rather than academic insights was probably a major factor in Barbara's sense of disappointment. It is possible that this stronger identity as a teacher prevented Barbara from properly engaging as a student. Interestingly, the studies of writers discussed in Chapter 2 (eg Ivanič 1998, Lillis 2001) talk of identity as being multiple and with possible conflicts between external and university roles, but none reports a conflict like Barbara's between the identities of professional the course aims to enrich (here, teacher) and student.

4.3 Jinko - The Quick Learner

Jinko was 26, with a highly relevant first degree in English Studies from a top Japanese university. She had strong professional experience having taught for four years in a secondary school. Her English language score was above our requirements, but she chose to attend the University's five-week preessional English course to familiarise herself with life in Reading and 'brush up' her written English. This showed an impressive commitment: few students take preessional courses if not required. It undoubtedly gave her a head-start on the MA, helping her to overcome her linguistic limitations: her spoken English, though inaccurate, was fluent and her written texts contained language errors but were fully comprehensible.

Like Barbara, she wanted a Masters degree to enable her to apply for University teaching jobs, which she successfully did while on the programme. She returned to Japan to teach English in one of the top private universities. Unlike Barbara, however, the programme developed her interest in further study and she plans to do a doctorate. Her performance on the MAELT was an outstanding overall distinction. Factors in her success were:

- a good background in academic writing in English from her BA study;
- experience of reading ELT academic texts in English as an undergraduate;
- excellent organisational skills;
- very hard work;
- the ability to identify essential points in feedback – she only needed to be told something once;

- strong motivation to succeed;
- confidence she could succeed.

The final five of these factors are characteristic of an autonomous approach to learning (see Benson 2001), which may explain why Jinko never mentioned lack of contact or loneliness on the programme as Barbara did.

Jinko had to learn what good writing on the programme required, however. Her English, although assessed as satisfactory before entry, was often inaccurate. She never mentioned this as an issue, however, which was sensible as feedback told her that any problems with her work were not linguistic. A1 was written during the preessional course with input from EAP teachers and it met all criteria, leading her personal tutor to predict a distinction for her. Jinko was astute enough, however, to realise that work produced on her own might not deliver this and the next two assignments confirmed her concern: they were her weakest (A2:58% and A3:60%), and she was shocked at these grades.

This work was penalised for unusual reasons. Both module tutors noted that in these assignments Jinko showed she could do the harder tasks (integrate sources into discussion, critique reading and her own analysis), but that she was losing marks on what they saw as easier parts: explaining her methodology or making links to her teaching. Lulled by Jinko's clear expertise into assuming that what was obvious to them was also clear to her, neither tutor had noticed these omissions on her assignment outlines. Jinko was too polite to say it outright, but she blamed Steve for not drawing her attention to A3's requirement 'to evaluate reading and relate it to practice in the field of L2 learning/teaching' (A3 assignment rubric) in his feedback on her outline. She had omitted any connection to her teaching context in A3 feeling that this was too subjective and descriptive, resulting in what she saw as her low mark (60%) for that assignment. In addition, whilst she appreciated that originality was a strength, she did not immediately realise what this meant for the MA; for example, she did not value the excellent original analysis of her data in her Discourse Analysis assignment (A2), seeing it as merely practical. Once she received feedback on her strengths and weaknesses and understood what was required, nothing held her back, and all subsequent work (bar one) was awarded distinctions.

She was very strategic, so when struggling with her first topic choice for A2 she was also reading about her second, final choice. She later described this topic approvingly

as 'the safer option' (s6i5:l2), recognising her own limitations at that stage of the programme. This is an example of Jinko's highly efficient time management, which continued to the point where she was able to submit her dissertation two weeks early to allow her to return home to begin her new job. One victim of time pressure was proofreading; she was advised to have her work checked, but did not have time. She accepted this as unavoidable but also said she was eager to find out how she performed on her own. This attitude meant improvements in her written language reflected her own development, rather than the work of proofreaders (an issue raised as problematic in Turner 2011).

Jinko's autonomous approach to learning was indicated in other ways. For example, she worked hard on her own, spending five hours each day on reading throughout the year, systematically dividing her time: four hours reading for modules and one for assignments in term-time. Her efficiency and forward-planning ensured that she was adept at using library and online resources and that she was the first to borrow library sources everyone would need for assignments. In interviews she reported that her reading speed was increasing and that she had become more skilled at selecting and focusing her reading. For instance, once aware of the need to integrate discussion of her experience in her writing (after A3's feedback), she turned to published texts to see how expert writers did this. Autonomous learning involves identifying and using a range of sources of support, which Jinko did intelligently. For example, she used feedback on outlines to change assignment plans and physically highlighted key parts of feedback on assignments, focusing on areas for improvement in future work. Her friendship with Barbara was also beneficial to her writing; they exchanged and discussed marked essays. Seeing how Barbara wrote about her teaching context was another source of expert text, showing how a successful writer did this. She also appreciated the contact with other students in the informal study group mentioned above, as it gave her other perspectives on applied linguistics.

Jinko approached her writing strategically too, reading her work aloud to find errors. She understood that writing improved with writing, and appreciated the need to spend time on it. At the end of the year she felt that her writing had also improved through familiarity with different genres and a deeper understanding of her own writing process, which she felt had not changed but developed since her arrival, especially in terms of greater flexibility. She had, for example, always made outlines but was now prepared to change them if necessary. In addition, she redrafted assignments several

times and reported that she was now very good at 'developing my own argument and then...finding the support which is very relevant to what I am going to say' (s6i5:2).

After the MA, Jinko felt she had not changed as a person during the year, but was now much more confident professionally. Like Kirsten, Casanave's experienced MA student (2002), Jinko saw this in her attendance at an ELT conference on her return to Japan, where she was now able to contribute fully, especially in terms of questioning expert speakers. Her ability to quickly identify gaps in her knowledge about both the content and the academic writing culture of the programme meant she was able to fill these gaps with appropriate insights and practices. As a result her trajectory through the programme was a highly successful and satisfying one.

4.4 Razvan – The Independent Intellectual

Razvan, at 32, was the student who looked the best prepared for MA study at the beginning of the year. He was clearly an exceptional student, having graduated top of his BA Philology year group in 1999. He then taught on EAP courses at his Romanian alma mater for four years, before moving to work in the Ministry of European Integration. There he was chosen to represent Romania at an EU educational initiative in Graz, Austria, after which he returned to his university post. In 2006/07 he had spent six months as a visiting student at a British university. According to him, this was when he had experienced culture shock and had adapted to life here. This meant that he arrived in Reading well-adjusted to life in Britain and able to focus on his studies. His English was far above what was required, with the intake's highest IELTS writing score (Band 8). He decided to do an MA to develop his teaching and research career and he started a doctorate with a full scholarship at another British university after the MA.

He did very well on our programme, graduating with a high merit average (67%), which would have been a distinction had his dissertation earned more than 60%. This was his lowest mark by far; he was hugely disappointed with this, seeing it as a personal failure and confessing a year later that he still had not opened the envelope containing his annotated dissertation and feedback.

Looking at the data from our interviews and his answers to questionnaires, his fundamental success was due to:

- his strong background in terms of content and linguistic knowledge;

- his previous experience of 'professional writing' at Graz, summarising research reports, and collecting, analysing and writing-up data;
- his intellectual skills and maturity, honed in a range of research-oriented contexts, as outlined above.

However, he finished on a disappointing note and the roots of this may lie in his independence, resulting in a polite resistance to support/advice and reluctance to seek help.

From the start, Razvan was able to discuss his reading and assignments critically in intellectual terms few other students on the programme had ever matched, both with regard to new topics and his own work. For example, he was rightly critical of the A1 rubric, seeing it as too wide and lacking evaluation criteria. However, when criteria were provided for the first assignments he paid scant attention, thinking all assignments could be treated in the same way: 'I just had a script in my mind that I applied for each and every' (s214:4). This meant he missed differentiating features, which included the new aspect of writing drawing on his own learning/teaching experiences. He chose assignment topics that interested him professionally (eg the A3 topic of learner demotivation which he had experienced in his teaching), but he then neglected to refer overtly to the Romanian context in his writing. Both his first two assessed assignments, though very good pieces of work (A2: 68%; A3: 72%), lost marks for lack of discussion of pedagogic issues, which were touched on briefly and too theoretically. He was still struggling with this need to integrate his teaching experience into his writing at the end of the programme.

A great strength was his ability to write with authority about his reading from the beginning, though he was criticised for over-quoting in A2 and for not developing his own voice in A3. Despite this, the module tutors for A2 and A3 described his writing as 'sophisticated', in terms of both his synthesis of sources and his analysis of data. 'Sophisticated' text can be a challenging read, however, and Razvan's early writing was also described as 'opaque' (A2 feedback). Ann, the module tutor for A2, saw this as trying to write at too high a level, saying he needed to be more explicit. This exemplified what was seen in this context as an overly intellectual tone. Razvan tried to write more simply in later work, but found it challenging to change from what he saw as his Romanian style. He acknowledged he did not re-read work from the perspective of a reader. This lack of focus on the reader also meant he omitted

essential details, such as the Methodology of his data collection for A2, which cost him a distinction.

He did not like the switching from one subject to another that is required in the programme, preferring to work on one area at a time. However, he was helped in this by excellent organisational skills from his previous work and study. An area of development was in the better organisation of his reading, which he said he had done in a chaotic way before the MA, jumping from one interesting idea to another. He identified planning as key to success on the programme, especially for NNEs for whom 'there is a lot of burden on writing in English and I think everything in your head is focused on writing correct English' (s2i4:10/11). Even with his excellent English he reported that at the beginning he had found it hard to put abstract ideas into English. This shows that even the most highly functioning students can have difficulties at the level at which they are operating and can see room for improvement. Over the year, Razvan became more comfortable both with expressing abstract ideas, and with writing from a more practical perspective. In his year-on questionnaire he reflected that being an NNE was not an issue for him and that he could express his thoughts confidently in English.

As his confidence in his English writing grew, his reliance on initial planning, like Barbara's, decreased, and he was able to change/adopt his plan as he wrote. He relied less on quotations too, which he admitted he had used initially 'because I wasn't confident enough and I always thought "Well they said it better anyway".' (s2i5:5), showing the same respect for published authors as Barbara. Like Jinko, he used his reading to develop his writing skills; in his case, it taught him how to evaluate sources effectively.

In Romania, Razvan had thrived in what he described as its mass-style, autonomous learning system: resource-poor, with limited access to staff, and no feedback on written work. He was used to working independently, not turning to others for help problem-solving. He did not, therefore, ask for any proofreading help from others, and, like Jinko, he saw the informal student group they formed in February as an opportunity to learn about other students' dissertation topics, rather than one to benefit his own research project. In addition, while he made good use of feedback on outlines offered by staff, he did not revisit assignment feedback after the initial return of work, confident he had improved in his writing.

He admitted he was not a good evaluator of his own work, however, after misjudging relative performance on Term 1 work (when he erroneously thought he had done better on other work than on SLLP), and he completely failed to see where the dissertation might be poor. The dissertation feedback was damning for a student of Razvan's intellectual calibre. He was criticised for weakness in areas that had been identified as strengths in all Term 1 work: poor organisation, and an unclear discussion section. One major criticism did have echoes in Term 1 feedback, however: a lack of critique in the literature review, which was a point that had been made on A1 and A3. He had not commented on this to me regarding A1, but had identified Steve's comment on A3 'You report criticisms of Gardner's theory, but don't really evaluate it, or the other theories, from your own standpoint' (A3 feedback sheet:1) as true. He had discussed his literature in an intellectual way in A3, drawing on acknowledged theories and seeing his own insights as interference (and maybe, given the point about confidence above, as inferior):

I just put there what I thought were sensitive criticisms but without me personally getting involved in that and saying "Well, I think this is accurate or true, not very valid or valid"...I started very theoretically, without interfering with any of my own observations (s24:3).

Given the dissertation feedback, critiquing reading himself was obviously an aspect of his writing that did not develop well during the MA. Feedback such as Steve's above made him aware of the problem but did not help him remedy it.

Although clearly devastated by his relatively poor dissertation result, Razvan stated that the problem lay in his own inability to evaluate his work, showing independence and accepting intellectual responsibility as he had done from the beginning. However, the other side of this independence was a lack of contact. He identified as Romanian his reluctance to communicate with teachers, acknowledging this as a weakness in the Reading context (I4). In the same interview (I4) he acknowledged that he should have initiated more contact with Steve for A3, which he knew other students (eg Jun) had done. However, even without such contact he had gained a distinction for this assignment, so the lesson quoted above, though recognised, was not learnt. It is clear, however, that limited contact with his supervisor (which was all by e-mail, when face-to-face meetings were also offered) was a factor in his disappointing dissertation performance.

4.5 Jun – The Persistent Novice

At 33, Jun was the oldest of the participants. He had a degree in English Literature from a top Japanese University and had taught in a junior high school for seven years. Before starting the MA, he attended Reading's eight-week preessional language course. His exit-test performance indicated his English level was the minimum for programme entry, so he was required to attend Nicky's discipline-specific insessional English course in Term 1.

Unusually for this group, he had no plans for a change in career or a doctorate, saying he simply wanted to study and live in Britain for a year. He was, however, motivated by an interest in English language teaching. Although he had attended no professional meetings in Japan before the MA, he had read books on ELT theory and practice in order to improve his teaching. He had a particular interest in learning about theories underlying ELT in order to justify and improve his professional practice. On graduation he returned to his previous teaching job.

From his weak beginning, Jun did well on the MA with a 'merit' average of 64%. This was despite failing two modules: one assessed by exam and the other with an assignment topic he misinterpreted. These marks aside, his performance improved throughout the MA, with pass marks for the two Term 1 language modules and A2 (55%) and a bare merit (60%) for A3's SLLP, followed by solid merit/distinction grades for later assignments and a good distinction grade (75%) for his dissertation. His success in overcoming his lack of background knowledge in applied linguistics and of experience of relevant study in English could be attributed to:

- his overall self-confidence, grounded in his previous successful study (albeit in a different discipline);
- his commitment to applied linguistics in general, with a passion for the area of second language acquisition discovered on the programme;
- his identity as a teacher, and the concern that his teaching, though successful, was not grounded in any theory;
- his motivation to share his knowledge with Japanese colleagues on his return;
- his confidence in his writing in Japanese and his determination to improve his written language skills in English;
- his ability to seek the help that he identified he needed from others.

Jun struggled enormously at all levels on the MA; his lack of academic background meant everything was new to him, and he found this frustrating and demotivating at times. He was less interested in technical subjects (such as Phonology), which he did not see as having direct pedagogic use and he resented the time he had to spend on them. However, he was captivated by the more theoretical SLLP, saying that, although the assignment for this module (A3) was the most difficult thing he had ever done, he had greatly enjoyed it. He went on to do his excellent dissertation in this area.

Jun approached the programme strategically, persistently seeking help from sources he viewed as expert in their field, so asking module tutors for guidance on writing for their subject and expecting NES students to give advice on language. He also realised the need for hard work and was clear about its aims. For example, he spent even more time reading each day than Jinko in Term 1: six hours preparing for and doing follow up reading for each lecture, forcing himself to systematically record and learn the enormous number of new terms and concepts he was meeting, using Japanese sources when necessary. He told me he had mastered all the terms he needed in this way by Week 8 and was then able to focus on content more.

With so much to learn, managing his time was a great challenge in Term 1, and Jun spent too much time reading and planning his writing before doing it. He then struggled to keep within time and word limits for A2. His persistence meant he was also stubborn, as exemplified by initial refusal to change topic for A2, ignoring advice from Ann, the module tutor. He then changed topic twice and settled on his eventual topic only three weeks before the deadline, thereby enormously disadvantaging himself. In particular, he did not manage to find or read enough relevant sources. Feedback said that he needed to broaden his reading: he realised he had to refer to more primary sources, and learn to use journals for the first time. In writing A3 he also learnt how to synthesise his reading, drawing on various sources to develop his own ideas.

Jun recognised that writing was an essential part of the learning process, deepening the more superficial knowledge gained through reading. He was a confident writer in Japanese, publishing a regular public blog on his life in the UK for Japanese teachers, for example. He was a novice academic writer in English, however, and initially struggled to move beyond the preessional expository essay. The unfamiliar genre of A2's Discourse Analysis research report was a challenge for him (as for most others);

he did not know what a Methodology section or Literature Review were or how to relate his reading to his analysis. Despite his lack of background, he ensured he got the help he needed for his first three essays to be described as well written. There were language problems in his writing throughout the year, however, and he realised he needed more help with proofreading. His focus in writing moved from such micro issues to macro ones, with initial planning at the paragraph level developing into a focus on overall content. Like Barbara, his writing process developed over the year. He began by writing his first three assignments in a linear way, but with increasing insight, seeing how his thinking developed as he wrote, he changed to leaving his introduction and conclusion to the end.

Jun relied heavily on people he knew for guidance with academic writing. He took feedback on assignments very seriously, systematically highlighting positive and negative comments in different colours, and re-reading them while working on later assignments. In Term 1, he also used opportunities offered by MA staff to get much more advice and time than was actually allocated. He prolonged both meetings with Ann about A2 by persistent questioning and bringing parts of his text to their second meeting, as well as the required outline. For A3, Jun asked for a face-to-face meeting with SLLP tutor Steve to discuss his outline, instead of the offered e-mailed comments. This meeting lasted 45 minutes. Steve became Jun's dissertation supervisor and he wryly commented on the significantly greater amount of contact this involved than for any other student, with Jun frequently asking for help and sending extra extracts of his work for comment.

He also made very heavy demands on fellow students, asking undergraduate neighbours in hall for help with language and British classmates to proofread his work. For one assignment he asked Barbara and another British classmate to comment on the same assignment draft, not appreciating (or worrying about) the inefficient use of their time this involved. Barbara admitted to me that she found his demands overwhelming at the writing-up stage of their dissertations, as he refused to accept 'no' as an answer.

The advice Jun received at the beginning was of limited use to him as he could not absorb it all. Early work was criticised for lacking critical evaluation and, despite his strong pedagogic interests, insufficient 'direct discussion of application of theory to your teaching situation' (A3 feedback sheet) – a criticism also made of Razvan's and Jinko's SLLP assignments. He misunderstood pre-submission advice from Steve on

using evidence to support his ideas; thinking this could only come from the literature, Jun did not identify his language learning/teaching experience as an evidence base. Like Razvan, he struggled to draw on this resource appropriately throughout the MA.

Jun finished the year extremely satisfied, however, seeing himself as 'a bit different person from last year's' (s5i5:11) through what he had learned and the professional and academic confidence he now had. On his return to Japan he felt confident enough to present his dissertation findings at an applied linguistics conference at his old university. This was a real indication to me that his motivation and persistence had paid off and that Jun had made the leap from capable and persistent novice to proficient scholar in ELT.

4.6 Timur – The Unorthodox Strategist

Timur was 26 with a first degree in English Language Teaching; this was taught exclusively in Turkish and involved little reading or writing. After graduation and military service he taught in a secondary school for three years. He then came to England 18 months before the MA, and lived in London, working while attending a seven-month IELTS preparation course at a private language school. He achieved only the minimum qualifying score on this, which necessitated in-session English support during the first term. Another challenge he faced was financial; throughout the MA he worked seven hours a week in a shop to support himself and to repatriate money for his mother's healthcare. Like Barbara and Jinko, he had a clear career plan: having an MA qualified him for a post teaching on a preparatory course in a prestigious English-medium Turkish University.

Timur started from a very low level, exacerbated by the fact that he ignored any structural support that was made available. On arrival, he admitted he was 'terrible' at writing, in any language (pre-course questionnaire). He appeared to be the weakest student; unlike other weak students (eg Jun), however, he had not attended the Reading summer pre-session course. Through lack of appreciation of their relevance and poor organisation (not reading documents and e-mails) he then missed most of the discipline-specific in-session writing classes in Term 1, including the opportunity to submit assigned writing tasks that related to A3 for Nicky's expert feedback. These were major miscalculations, as they meant he had no formal academic literacy input, beyond his IELTS-preparation course, which he quickly realised was woeful preparation for the academic writing tasks he now faced.

His writing skills improved dramatically from this very shaky start, however. His personal tutor estimated his formative Pre-Course Assignment (A1) would have been awarded a failing mark in the low 30s. Four weeks later, he submitted work that achieved a respectable pass with 58% for Discourse Analysis (A2), meeting all criteria. He proudly described this work to me as 'my first professional assignment' (s4i3:1). He was then delighted that A3 submitted five weeks after A2 was awarded a low merit (62%). He passed all other assessments, except an examination, with marks on assignments ranging from 53% to 65% achieving an average of 61%, with 64% for his dissertation.

How did Timur achieve such success, given his low entry level? As mentioned above, he did not take advantage of the orthodox support offered to students with writing problems. He did, however, have several advantages in facing the major challenges the MA threw at him:

- his personality, which was outgoing, flexible and tenacious;
- his commitment to ELT, which provided him with a strong interest in the content of the programme and his next advantage:
- his professional background: Timur was able, from the beginning, to draw on insights into his teaching context;
- his unwavering confidence in his own ability.

Timur was reasonably confident on submission of the Pre-Course Assignment that he had met the requirements, and so was very shocked to realise how far short of them it fell. He realised that this work was 'rubbish' (s4i5:2) and that he needed help, which he immediately sought. Obtaining assistance was done on his own terms, with Timur deciding what help he needed and when, although he was sensitive to cultural differences (quickly realising, for example, that, unlike in Turkey, students here did not want to exchange grades and feedback) and fulsome in his appreciation of all help given.

Timur's undergraduate programme (like Razvan's) had offered no contact with academic staff. Unlike Razvan, however, he paid great attention to feedback from MA staff, especially on Term 1 work, when his need was greatest. Less pushy than Jun in terms of demanding time, he accepted advice to submit outlines, e-mailing Steve a second one for A3 after feedback on the first showed his scope was too wide. Timur realised this was enough demand on Steve's time and sent his third outline for

comment to a Turkish doctoral student (his former teacher) at another British university. Another difference from Jun was that Timur did not access what for many students is a major source of support in their studies: classmates. He did not socialise with other MA students and was not a member of the informal study group the four participants above were part of. He put this down to lack of time because of his need to work for money, but it was also a choice: he preferred to mix with British undergraduates in hall, wanting to be part of that culture.

Timur's main strategy in dealing with his writing problems was to ask for help from supportive older women, an example being the doctoral student referred to above. In this context, it is interesting to note that Timur came from a very supportive family in Turkey; he was very close to his mother as the youngest of seven, with four older sisters. In effect, he was actively seeking literacy brokers (Lillis and Curry 2006; see Section 5.1 below) of a certain personal profile. I fitted this and Timur asked my advice on his writing in I3, but immediately accepted I could not discuss this in my role as researcher and that there were other people he could go to for advice. Some of these were 'assigned' to him by the programme (eg his personal tutor, Ann) but in addition he made friends with a mature British Politics undergraduate, Sylvia, whom he met by chance in the first fortnight. He immediately turned to her after the return of his disastrous first assignment and met her two or three times weekly throughout the year; she showed him library books on academic writing which he studied in depth and gave him advice on writing in our HE system, including how to draw on reading appropriately. She also proofread almost all his assignments. Other older women that he turned to included the in-session tutor, Nicky, who he said helped him enormously in an individual meeting to explain Ann's feedback on A1. Another was our liaison librarian whom Timur sought out, having missed the timetabled library induction sessions. She showed him how to find books and use the catalogue, his first exposure to a university library. Asking for extra help from all these people shows that Timur could be just as pushy as Jun on occasion, although he was more appreciative and charming. He also targeted different brokers: people not directly associated with the programme.

He noted advice efficiently and quickly changed his practices. On arrival, for example, he stated academic reading was not a problem for him, however, he soon realised its challenge and its centrality in academic writing, identifying the need to synthesize sources and to draw on them as evidence. He struggled initially with what he saw as

conflicting, idiosyncratic feedback from different tutors on the appropriate amount of quoting, echoing Bridget in Lillis 2001, but achieved an acceptable balance. Another issue he immediately identified for successful writing was meeting genre conventions: 'it doesn't matter whether you're clever or not if you don't know the format... it's not about the topic, is not about the task, it's about the format' (s4i5:9).

Timur benefited from what Bandura (1995)'s social learning theory (to which I shall return in Chapter 5) calls 'observational learning'; in his case this was having a 'verbal instructional model' from Ann, Nicky and Sylvia. His approach to overcoming his writing problems was unusual: he did not take advantage of the formal opportunities for improving his writing that were provided on the programme in in-session and study skills classes, nor did he seek guidance from more expert classmates. His unorthodox strategies of learning writing requirements from generic study skills books and a NES informant from another humanities discipline instead of departmental guidelines and fellow-students worked for him. He was also clearly open to Bandura's 'modeling process' - paying strategic attention, for example, to what he was told about A2 and A3 by the module tutors.

4.7 Pola – The Inflexible Technician

Pola, though at 21 the youngest, was one of the strongest students starting the MA. Her undergraduate study was recent and highly relevant: she had graduated with a good degree in English Philology/ELT a year before from a Polish English-medium teacher-training college and had then studied part-time for a diploma in translation. Her teaching experience, though limited, was varied: she had taught English privately while studying and had worked for her year post-graduation in a private language school and a state school. Her IELTS score was well above the minimum requirement. She was, therefore, very well equipped both academically and linguistically for the MA. She was doing an MA because it was the 'normal' next stage in her family, and saw herself as a high-flying student, capable of critical thinking. On returning home she took a job as translator/interpreter for an educational software company.

Her confident classroom performance also augured well. Steve, her personal tutor, commented on her strengths in Week 6, concluding 'We are expecting good things from you, Pola...you need to fulfil your potential' (t2a1ms3:2). He later reported that in this first tutorial she presented herself as someone looking forward to doing the MA because she had covered much of the ground before and now wanted to 'focus on the

bits in between...that she hadn't done so well' (t2a3is3:3). However, her performance on the MA was ultimately disastrous: her marks ranged from 45% to 64%, with a final 'pass' average of 53%, but she failed the dissertation, and therefore the MA, at the first attempt and had to re-submit a year later. She was the only student in the intake in this position; this was a great shock to her and to the Department.

Looking at her experiences in the early part of the programme covered by this study, however, it is possible to identify the source of some of her problems. A lack of flexibility in this new environment was at the root of many of the reasons for Pola's disappointing performance. These include:

- discomfort at the transition to postgraduate study. Pola clearly stated throughout the year that she preferred the more practical ('creative' in her words) way she had been taught and had studied at undergraduate level;
- initial overconfidence because of her strong background, which saw her getting her best mark in the familiar, more technical Phonology module, but then underestimating the seemingly-familiar Second Language Learning Principles assignment(A3), which required much greater depth than she produced;
- inability to realise the demands of independent study. Unlike all the other participants, Pola just did not do enough (reading, reflection, or absorption). In several interviews she reported doing less work than as an undergraduate and not finding the MA very demanding;
- a technical focus on writing as a matter of language (text), not discourse. She therefore focussed, for example, on vocabulary (searching the British National Corpus all year for synonyms and use as she had been trained to do in Poland) and not, to use her own term again, on 'elaborating' points for an appropriate reader. Jun also focused on vocabulary at the start of the programme but, unlike Pola, he moved on to more intellectual issues once he had mastered the terminology. For Jun, vocabulary was a means to an end; for Pola it was an end in itself.
- lack of adaptation to the assessment regime. Pola preferred spoken assessment over written. This had featured on her undergraduate study, but was not a component of the MA.
- This discomfort with MA forms of assessment was compounded by her failure to understand the marking criteria, in particular (unlike all other case study

participants) not understanding the need to appropriately use literature and her own experience in developing arguments.

She was naive in never fully appreciating the scale of the task she had undertaken, which resulted in her seeing writing assignments in largely technical terms. Her focus was mainly professional, on the use of language for teaching or translation purposes and not for the development of her own thinking; she did not engage intellectually enough with the ideas or theories presented in the programme. Although this basic problem was identified in feedback on A1 (explained in terms of 'not answering the question'), she was able to perform well on the first assessed assignment (A2:61%) probably because of its practical focus. She thought the dissertation was also largely practical, with no idea after submission that it might fail. This failure resulted from lack of engagement with the rigours of the discipline at this level, in terms of requirements for theoretical underpinnings and for reporting research. Overall, she just did not have the flexibility to upgrade her undergraduate skills and approach to study.

Pola also lacked perception; she did not understand task requirements fully. Like Razvan, she saw the assignment topics as all fundamentally similar. Razvan, however, treated them all with the same intellectual perspective, while Pola saw them as similar in containing 'descriptive part and my own opinions based on my experience' (January e-mail). Razvan quickly realised that MA writing tasks could be fundamentally different, whereas Pola never really did. This inability to change meant she did not differentiate between different types of assignment, and in particular underestimated the need to draw on theory in A3. She also did not differentiate in terms of effort, showing inflexibility again in spending the same amount of time on an assignment worth five credits (Phonology) as she did on one worth 20 (A3).

She focused excessively on technical, text-based issues, especially organisation and language use: keeping within the word limit, varying her vocabulary, and dividing up her text into sections. This practical-bias resulted in great improvement in these areas from A1 to A3, but not in the more fundamental area of critical discussion. Returning to Prior's (1998) modes of participation (discussed in Section 2.3.2), Pola engaged in procedural display and not deep participation.

Another major miscalculation was in identifying her readers in practical terms, saying at the end of the programme that she saw them as 'random people...not into linguistics, who are doing different disciplines and they can still read my paper and learn

something from it' (s3i5:7). Her academic support network consisted of such 'random' people: mainly flatmates from her hall, who included various NNES and British students on different programmes. They, and her family and friends in Poland, were the only people who read and gave feedback on drafts of her assignments. Like Timur, she did not read any of her classmates' work, or discuss academic issues beyond grades with them outside class (not being part of the informal study group, for example), thereby denying herself more reliable sources of informal feedback and of information about standards.

She was very resistant to the submission of assignment outlines to tutors for comment, refusing to do one for A2; she had been advised against outlines on her BA programme and could see no use in producing one before she had done the necessary reading. She submitted an outline for A3, however, and adopted the technical advice given, in terms of section divisions, but misinterpreted a key content point (that she needed to focus on a familiar teaching/learning situation) – further evidence of her technical bent. She was also not able to use feedback well from tutors on her writing itself, commenting 'I know that I've learned something (*from feedback*), but I can't say why and what' (s3i3:12).

Her reading was naive too; she did not identify key current readings for assignments or access journal articles beyond those provided by lecturers, and her bibliographies included inappropriate undergraduate reading/handouts and teacher-training textbooks. Her writing about the literature did not show a depth of understanding. These issues continued throughout the programme; her final dissertation was criticised for including irrelevant sources and insufficient foregrounding of a major study she was, in effect, replicating.

Pola never fully realised that study at Masters level requires more than the acquisition of new knowledge (Bereiter and Scardamalia's 1987 'knowledge telling'), which she had done well at undergraduate level. It also requires the creation of new knowledge (their 'knowledge transforming') and this she never managed to do well, seeing creativity in more practical terms of producing language teaching materials. In addition, her inflexible approach meant she did not identify or seek help for the problems created by her largely technical approach to academic writing at this level, as noted above. As a result her writing did not develop significantly during the MA.

In addition, Pola fits Bereiter and Scardamalia's 1983 description of a 'low road' writer in terms of goal setting. 'High road' writers pursue goals beyond their reach, with their mental capacity always challenged by the changing nature of a task. For them, the process of writing becomes a task of representing meaning, rather than simply transcribing language. 'Low-road' writers, in contrast, focus on the task in hand; writing is seen as merely having 'a clerical role in the development of thought and knowledge' (ibid:31), and the task is one of 'thinking of what to write next' (1983:27). In other words, writing is merely seen as transcription of formed ideas, and not as part of the learning process. The problems which such writers face include the inability to generate sufficient content, and the tendency to ramble due to lack of direction and effective planning, which they resist doing. This description partially matches Pola's approach to writing (she rambled), just as the description of high road writers fits the other participants here.

4.8 Conclusion

Salient issues that these six individual case studies reveal about successful students in their first term of postgraduate study in this context are that they:

- aimed high and did not settle for low grades;
- were very confident in their ability to succeed (having been top students in the past, unlike the non-traditional undergraduates Ivanič 1998 and Lillis 2001 studied), but without being complacent;
- were flexible in terms of changing/developing their ways of studying, including their approaches to reading and writing;
- could identify what knowledge/skills they lacked in this context;
- could identify and exploit resources appropriately (though in different ways) to help in remedying these problems;
- engaged in 'deep participation', as defined by Prior 1998 (see Section 2.3.2);
- were able to work independently if necessary to achieve this;
- realised (as Braine's 2002 survey revealed – see Section 2.3.2) that writing itself helps improve writing, and is part of the learning process;
- were very hard-working.

Problems they all encountered, to varying degrees, included:

- drawing on reading appropriately;
- drawing on their professional experience in writing;

- working with new genres beyond expository essays (eg A2's Discourse Analysis assignment).

Two views of learning are useful here: 'significant learning' (as discussed by Rogers 1961) and 'transformative learning' (as discussed in Mezirow 2000). Rogers (1961:45) explains the former as follows:

By significant learning I mean learning which is more than an accumulation of facts. It is learning which makes a difference – in the individual's behaviour, in the course of action he (sic) chooses in the future, in his attitudes and in his personality.

Timur and Jun clearly experienced this, and to a lesser extent Jinko. For Barbara and Razvan learning was significant, but arguably it was more negative (about what not to do, and what MA level study was not) than the ultimately positive experience of the other three. Such learning involves pain: 'all significant learning is to some degree painful and involves turbulence, within the individual and within the system' (Rogers 1969:339). Most students, but especially Jun and Timur, reported their struggles on the MA to me; as discussed above, Pola never saw the MA as a challenge beyond that of her undergraduate studies, and she did not see learning as making a difference beyond technical, linguistic skills.

Jun and Timur also certainly experienced transformative learning, defined by Mezirow (2000:7-8) as:

the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning, perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets), to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they can generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.

Jun came with a desire for this kind of learning, in terms of his hunger to develop theoretical rationales for his teaching; Timur experienced transformative learning when he realised how far short of expected levels he was and worked to meet the criteria. Pola, however, never appreciated the programme requirements sufficiently to experience any kind of transformation as outlined above.

Significant and transformative learning are useful ways of interpreting the other participants' experiences. It is possible that neither Barbara nor Razvan experienced either kind of learning in a way that had any real impact on them, and hence their disappointment with the programme. Jinko was in the middle, with a smaller gap between her starting level (in terms of subject and linguistic knowledge) and what was required than Jun and Timur, but more to learn in order to pass and do well than Barbara and Razvan. So she graduated more satisfied than Barbara and Razvan in her learning and performance on the programme.

Consideration of these six participants has given insights into their individual experiences and some of the reasons behind their academic writing performance on the programme. It has also allowed some cross-participant comparisons. The next chapter will now consider the group as a whole.

Chapter 5: Whole group

‘Thus, current sociohistoric theories have begun to converge on a theory of learning as the formation of a person’s consciousness through participation in social practices, a theory that stresses affect, motivation, perspective, embodied ways of being in the world, and identity as well as conceptual development.’
(Prior 1998:22)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider these six students as a group to explore patterns and differences in their behaviour and attitudes, as revealed by the whole range of data collected (see Table 3.8). The aim here is to bring to the fore issues that help answer the research questions and that could impact on our pedagogy. As discussed at the end of Chapter 3, the issues that emerged from the study in response to the research questions are not the themes that were identified at the data analysis stage (as presented in Table 3.12) These themes arose from my early exploration of the data and were useful as a heuristic in producing the second version of each case study summary. However, on returning to the themes after I had written the six Individual Case Study synopses presented in Chapter 4, it became clear that the answers to the research questions lay beyond the themes. They continued to be informative, but were superseded by more salient issues to which we will now turn.

The chapter begins by outlining patterns across the group at the outset, in terms of what the participants themselves brought to their study and factors arising from the programme. It then turns to discussion of approaches to learning within the group, making links with issues raised in Chapter 2 and with learning theories. As noted in Section 4.1, it was impossible to find one theory (beyond the broad-brush one outlined by Prior above) that provided explanations of what happened with these learners, and so I have drawn on a number of different theories as appropriate. Motivation and social aspects of writing within this context, in terms of audience and voice, are also considered. Another important concept that is discussed here is that of ‘literacy brokers’ (referred to in Section 4.6 regarding Timur), which Lillis and Curry (2006:4) define as people who ‘mediate text production’, giving ‘editors, reviewers, academic peers, and English-speaking friends and colleagues’ as examples in academic

publishing. They point out that there is little research into ‘the nature and impact of brokering academic writing in any context’, and the findings here support the view that this is a major omission.

5.2 Patterns across the group on arrival

Consideration of the individual participants reveals some commonalities and contrasts. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show salient factors that help to explain the overall performance of these students. They focus on the beginning and end points of the programme, highlighting the conundrum at the heart of this study: why do some students with every advantage at the start do badly (for example Pola and, to a lesser extent, Razvan) and others, with huge disadvantages to overcome, do well against all the odds (as illustrated here by Jun and Timur)? How do students with a head-start maintain it (such as Barbara and Jinko)?

Table 5.1: Factors on arrival, by participant: background and experience

Factor	Component	Participant						Maps to Thesis Theme
		Barbara	Jinko	Razvan	Jun	Timur	Pola	
Background and experience	Language teaching experience	**	**	**	**	**	*	T4 Resources drawn on in writing
	Relevant academic background	**	**	**		*	**	
	Academic writing experience in mother tongue	**		*	*		*	
	Academic writing experience in English	**	**	**			**	
	Advanced language skills	**	*	**			**	
	Language learning experience	*	**	**	**	**	**	

Key: ** = considerable experience/expertise; * = some experience/expertise

Obviously, all the participants met the basic academic, professional, and language proficiency requirements for acceptance onto their MA. However, as Chapter 4 and Table 5.1 show, this masks the fact that participants started with very different backgrounds and personal resources they could develop in their writing.

Areas where all participants had relevant experience were language teaching and learning. However, as none of the students arrived knowing that academic discussion in the light of this professional/learning experience was a requirement in most

assignments, a shift in their personal epistemologies, ie their view of what counts as knowledge (Hyland 2009), was necessary. Having identified this disciplinary requirement they then had to learn how to do it.

In terms of relevant academic background and writing experience, Barbara, Razvan and Pola had the greatest beginning advantages having recently studied and produced academic writing in applied linguistics. This is reflected in Barbara and Razvan's top ranking performances in the first two assignments. However, neither got a distinction on the first assessed work (A2); they needed to build on their previous writing experiences by identifying writing requirements in this new context. Their advantages on entry helped them achieve the group's first distinctions, which were on A3.

Jinko was next in terms of advantages, with her appropriate academic background and EAP writing skills. However, her skills were rusty, and she took the first term to establish what was required for academic writing, producing distinction level work from Term 2 on. Jun and Timur, as we have seen and as is quite clear in Table 5.1, had enormous disadvantages; Jun had no background in the discipline and Timur had no academic writing experience. They both needed the whole year to develop their potential, and, as Timur ruefully argued in September, would have done much better had they been starting a year later with the insights and skills gained during the programme. Pola had the same beginning advantages as Barbara and Razvan; her extremely disappointing performance was caused by her inability to develop beyond the approach to her undergraduate studies, as we have seen.

Table 5.2: Initial promise compared with performance

Factor	Component		Participant						Maps to Thesis Theme (T)
			Barbara	Jinko	Razvan	Jun	Timur	Pola	
Initial promise (staff assessed) and subsequent performance	High promise	High performance	x	x					T5 Personal perspectives
		Disappointing performance			x			x	
	Low promise	High performance				x	x		
		Expected low performance							

Key: x = factor present

Table 5.2 shows the mixed pattern of linkage for this group between initial promise and final performance: two students met their potential (Barbara and Jinko); two

students whom staff considered would struggle did well (Jun and Timur), while Razvan and Pola did not meet their own and their teachers' expectations of how they would perform. This variation makes predicting student success a challenge that University staff (including Admission Panels) cannot be expected to meet. In addition, this variation is masked by the fact that these students all passed in the end. Findings from studies such as this one have the potential, it is hoped, to alert teachers in HE to the individual factors that contribute to such varying degrees of success, so that we can help all students to develop.

5.3 Expectations of programme writing requirements

The pre-course questionnaire (PCQ) reveals what the participants envisaged about the programme's demands on arrival (see Appendix 11). Unsurprisingly, this shows that the students who did best in Term 1 had started with the most realistic expectations and those who were initially unaware of its challenges took longer to develop their writing to satisfy departmental criteria. The students with the most realistic expectations were Barbara and Razvan; Jinko and Pola overestimated the amount of writing, and Jun and Timur underestimated it. One question asked students to predict text types they would be asked to write; all except Jun and Timur were able to do this. While they all appreciated that there would be a lot of reading, their understanding of what this meant also varied. Again, Timur stood out in terms of least accurate, predicting reading '10 essays a week'. Jun was the only participant who made no reference to articles, noting only books, indicating his initial lack of awareness of the need to read journals (which he rectified after A2's feedback).

The PCQ also asked students to anticipate what problems they would have with MA writing and this revealed further differences between better and weaker students at this early stage. The better students spoke of macro-issues (Jinko mentioned synthesising sources, for example). The weaker ones lacked this insight of what academic writing actually involved and focussed instead on how much they disliked writing (Pola and Timur) and worried about language problems (this also included Jun). Asked about reading, they all mentioned time except Jinko, who focused on reading skills from the preessional English language course (eg 'reading between the lines'). Jun was also a preessional 'graduate' but his concerns were more basic, probably because of his weaker English and acute awareness in Term 1 of his lack of content background; he focused on the number of books and his concern about which to select. Pola noted her

concern about the time it might take her to 'read the books from the list', revealing an expectation of instructions about what to read and an unawareness of the need to find sources independently.

As new students, they were asked what they would do to overcome writing problems. Everyone except Jun mentioned drawing on some support that was on offer, although in practice none of them greatly used the support they identified at this stage. Barbara, Razvan and Timur said they would consult their personal tutor, which in fact none actually did after discussion of A1. Jinko and Jun referred to drawing on what they had learnt on the presessional course; this was clearly an important part of their pre-MA background, and one we have already seen Jinko drew on in terms of skill/strategy identification. Jun's need for support was greater than Jinko's, and he described what he had learnt from this course: 'select books and plan well; clear the main idea and support the idea by detailed evidence' (PCQ). These were indeed general strategies he had to learn to use within his new discipline, and much of his work for the first term's modules focused on developing them.

Half the group (Jinko, Razvan, and Timur) thought they would draw on the whole-group study skills classes. In practice, neither Jinko nor Razvan ever referred to the study skills classes as useful, illustrating perhaps the lack of relevance to such students of this kind of generic 'deficit' approach to developing student writing (as pointed out in Lea and Street 1998, see also Section 2.3), even when done at departmental level. Timur, with the greatest need for basic information, found these classes useful, however. Pola was the least precise about sources of support she would use, focusing again on her difficulties in writing and referring to 'my supervisors or other person able to help me organise my work'. This uncertainty can perhaps be seen as further indication of her lack of readiness for the MA, despite her apparent strengths. Interestingly, only Razvan mentioned talking to 'colleagues' as a possible source of support. This is early indication of this group's lack of appreciation or expectation of peer-support.

The pre-course survey reveals the enormous variation in the group's preparedness for study at this level on arrival. This variation encompassed understanding of what study at this level involves, in terms of their expectations of academic literacy requirements and the challenges they would face, and anticipated sources of support. The students who faced the greatest challenges showed least awareness of what was to come at the

start of the programme, and no one was able to accurately identify the sources of support they ended up using.

5.4 Programme-related factors

In Table 5.3 below some other answers to the questions raised in 5.2 above begin to emerge, in relation to the group's experiences on their MA. All participants struggled at the start with certain aspects of the new discipline/context-specific genre requirements for writing. This corroborates the situated view of academic literacies discussed in Chapter 2; academic essay genre requirements vary with context, and these students had to learn what was required within the disciplinary context of applied linguistics at this level and the situated context of these Reading programmes.

Table 5.3: Programme factors by participant

Factor	Component	Participant						Maps to Thesis Theme (T)
		Barbara	Jinko	Razvan	Jun	Timur	Pola	
Academic writing genre challenges	Unfamiliarity with sections expected within assignments	x	x	x	x	x	x	T1 Writing task constraints
	Unsure how to use own teaching / learning experience in writing		x	x	x		x	
	Concern over what being original meant	x	x	x				
	Difficulty being critical	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	Over-use of quotations			x		x		
Role of academic writing	Developing understanding	x	x	x	x	x		T2 Meeting the criteria
	Showing understanding						x	
Writing process	Changed considerably over the year	x		x	x	x		T3 Student writer strategies
	Developed, but no fundamental change		x					
	No change						x	
Role of academic reading	Model for own academic writing	x	x	x	x			T4 Resources drawn on in writing
	Source of ideas that could be challenged	x	x	x	x	x		
	Source of new language		x		x	x	x	

Key: x = factor present

Early issues for all participants related to writing task constraints, namely:

- Subdivision of assignments into specific sections and when/how to be critical were challenges for everyone.
- As already mentioned, drawing on their own teaching/learning experience in writing was unfamiliar for most people regardless of level, except for Timur,

for whom it seemed to come naturally, and Barbara, who had done it on her Diploma. Even she, however, arrived thinking this 'telling your own stories' (s1i5:18) was not appropriate at Masters level. This was in contrast to Tardy (2005)'s academic writers, who, however, were at a later stage in their study, as discussed in Section 2.3.2.

- Only stronger students (Barbara, Jinko and Razvan) worried at all about originality. It is interesting to note this was a concern raised by Paltridge's (2002) Melbourne ESL postgraduate dissertation/thesis writers, indicating that perhaps this is another issue that arises later in most students' study.
- Both strong (Razvan) and weak (Timur) starters could find themselves lacking a voice and relying too much on quotations.

The volume of writing and extended length of assignments demanded by the programme resulted in all five students who did well developing their writing process over the year and coming to an appreciation of the important knowledge-transforming (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987) role of writing, and the fact that writing improves with writing (as noted in Braine 2002). Pola, in contrast, did not develop her writing, clinging instead to the writing processes and strategies she had brought with her and to a simpler knowledge-telling approach to writing. Her writing did not improve with practice, which shows that doing writing is a necessary but not sufficient condition for writer development; awareness of the need to adapt and the ability to do so are also required.

These participants' use of the central resource of reading was also predictive of academic writing success. Reading provided 'textual interaction' (Tardy 2005:336) and this study found, as Tardy's does, that this was a significant factor in building 'subject-matter expertise and served as powerful influences on the writers' linguistic development, particularly in learning forms through borrowing strategies' (ibid: 336/337). All participants with language concerns at the start (everyone except Barbara and Razvan) rightly saw reading as a useful source of new language. Only Pola continued to focus on this throughout the programme. The others all moved on to view reading more as source of new ideas they could develop and/or challenge. Everyone except Pola realised the importance of academic reading in terms of helping them develop their writing skills (as discussed in Carson and Leki 1993), although it took Timur some weeks to make this connection. These students read as apprentice writers (outlined in Bazerman 1980), noting how expert writers tackled the tasks of presenting

their survey of the literature and supporting their own opinions. Pola's only attempt to draw on her reading in this way was unsuccessful; she explained her use of inappropriate meta-discourse on A2 as having come from her reading. For example, she wrote in A2 (page 1) 'Because my paper is mainly based on my analysis I do not refer to many sources. However, I will mention other books I have read to obtain general bibliography'. This reveals an inappropriate use of expert texts as guides for her own discourse; this textual use of sources was something she never reported attempting again beyond lexical borrowings.

These students were, like Lillis's (2001), concerned with wordings (see Section 2.5); they realised they needed to use language appropriately in academic ways. However, unlike Lillis's participants, their concerns focused on linguistic accuracy and appropriacy, not social identity. This, of course, relates to their different sense of identity from Lillis's students, which will be returned to in Section 6.3 below.

Having written their first assessed assignment (A2), students waited anxiously for their marks. None of the students knew what the standards would be as they started out and they obviously had varied expectations based on their previous experiences of writing and assessment on their home-country undergraduate programmes. As we have seen in Chapter 4, feedback on early assessed assignments was a surprise to all of them. These students knew that the marking criteria and mark scheme were different from what they had experienced before, either at undergraduate level, and/or in their home countries. The UK grading system and the MA criteria were explained in briefings and the Student Handbook; all the non-British students, however, commented on the strangeness (Razvan's word) of the mark scheme, with its varied bandings (see Section 3.3): 'Why is it so much, 30% at the top and then only 10 – 10 - 10 further down?' (Razvan s2i3:4). They were also used to higher grades, and saw the British mark scheme as 'severe' (Jun's description); in all the other countries represented here any grade below 70% is considered weak, whereas it is distinction-level in British universities.

As Jinko pointed out, experiencing the system was 'totally different' (s6i3:3) from being briefed on it. The shock of getting marks much lower than they were used to was, of course, greatest at the beginning. Everyone was taken aback by their first mark; Barbara was pleasantly surprised with what her British undergraduate experience told her was a high mark (67%), but the other participants were shocked.

Their comments on their A2 grades were also indicative of their different attitudes to study; for example, Razvan (with 68%) was 'very disappointed with myself' (s2i3:4) and Jun was somewhat indignant with 55% after positive feedback on his DA poster presentation, but accepted the grade, vowing to work harder: 'I am really ambitious to get higher score... I know I can't do it well now, so I will do it more' (s5i3:11).

This was a rare occasion where some of the students found reinforcement and information from each other. Jinko (57%) reported she was 'trying to be calm down' (s6i3:3) after discussing the feedback with classmates. This discussion led them to the conclusion that 'especially the 50 and 60 mark was almost the same' (Jinko s6i3:9). Pola and Timur, who were already outsiders to the whole group by January, both told me in I3 they felt others did not want to talk about their grades, so they did not get this confirmation from peers of their relative position. Instead, Pola went to see module tutor Ann, who was struck by her interpretation of her grade of 61% as poor, when such a merit level grade is seen as good within the British system.

Expectations of marks for A3 were mitigated by the experience of A2 marks and the A3 marker's reputation. All participants except Razvan mentioned to me that Steve (who is seen by his colleagues as having high standards) was a harsh marker. This was apparently based on reports from former students, although the source was unknown. The effect of this reputation was that students who did well were particularly pleased (eg Barbara and Timur) and Pola, with 51%, did not appreciate the weakness of her performance: 'Steve is quite strict in his marking so I'm happy I passed because I heard several people didn't pass so still I am above the average' (s3i6:3). Talking to other students would have revealed the inaccuracy here: she was in fact in the bottom four for this module. This led to an early acceptance of the lowering of her grades and, arguably, to insufficient will to improve them. In sharp contrast, Jun continuously strove to improve, commenting in September (before receipt of his final, distinction-level marks) that he was 'not satisfied with any mark on this course' (s5i5:18).

Students' different reactions to disappointing feedback/marks link to what Illeris (2007) describes as the incentive dimension of learning which is constituted by 'the motivation, emotion, attitudes and volition invested by the individual in the learning situation' (ibid:95). Echoing Rogers 1969 and Mezirow 2000 (discussed in Section 4.8), Illeris (2007) notes the transformative effect of 'disturbances and conflicts'; pointing out that learning is not a smooth process, he argues that learning possibilities

'often take their starting point in one form or other of disturbance of the current personal or social balance' (ibid:91). The most extreme example of resulting radical transformation is Timur's reaction to A1 (discussed in 4.6), but we have also seen how Jun and Jinko's disappointing initial grades spurred them to harder work, while Pola's acceptance of hers resulted in lack of effort.

Although participants were puzzled by the mark scheme, and this continued to the end of the programme, the picture that emerges is of students accepting whatever grade they were given. Beyond raising it with me when explicitly asked, no-one ever sought to challenge the degree classification bands or to use the marking criteria to question grades as students with a Critical EAP or academic literacies viewpoint (see Section 2.6) might have done. For these confident professionals this was not because of any perception of students' institutional inferior status, but because they accepted the status-quo as part of their experience of being Masters students in Britain.

Students who improved then worked with feedback, not the mark scheme – as evinced in Jinko's and Jun's highlighting of feedback, and Timur's further 'unpacking' of Ann's feedback on A1 with Nicky. No student mentioned using the mark scheme descriptors in the Student Handbook (see Appendix 4) or referring to marking criteria in developing their writing. I believe that this focus on assignment-specific feedback and not criteria meant that students did not develop a sufficient overview of what was being looked for in academic writing on this programme that they could transfer to a new genre, such as the dissertation. As a result, students were less able to generalise from one piece of writing to another and, therefore, were unable to predict how they had performed in a new genre. This may explain Razvan and Pola's shock on discovering their dissertation grades, and why Barbara again underestimated her performance on this final piece of work.

5.5 Level of application

All these students predicted that the programme would involve a considerable amount of work. The focus in Term 1 tended to be on reading, with Barbara, Razvan, Timur and Pola reporting they had not allowed enough time for writing A2. This experience led to a better balance for later assignments. This study shows that the amount of reading work done by these participants varied, however. At one extreme were Jinko and Jun who reported hours of daily reading preparation for classes; they recognised the need to prepare for topics and then to consolidate with follow-up reading. They

were able to use bibliographies to identify sources that would help with these tasks. Timur's approach was very different, and less organised, than these two's, with more of a strategic focus on developing writing skills than content knowledge. He had to balance study with paid employment and socialising with British friends but study for the programme involving a great deal of time on academic literacy activities was undoubtedly his focus during the year. At the other extreme, as we have seen, was Pola who admitted she did not find the MA workload as challenging as her undergraduate degree. This was not, I believe, because she was 'lazy' or unmotivated, but because she did not appreciate the level of work and understanding required. This partly resulted from her lack of perception, but it was also because of her distance from the group. She did not know how hard others were working, or in what ways.

Physical distance from the programme was also an issue. On an intensive one-year programme like this, we advise students to limit their time away. Pola was the only student who did not follow this advice. She returned home three times: for the Christmas holiday, in early May to arrange dissertation data collection and permanently from early June to complete data collection and then write-up. In all, I estimate she was in Reading for only 29 weeks of the academic year. This was by far the least amount of time of any student; 49 weeks was the next lowest figure. Three other participants went home in the year: Razvan (Christmas holiday), Timur (twice to see his sick mother and later to write up his dissertation in his post-September extension period) and Jinko (a Term 2 one-week job interview trip), but their more limited absence had no obvious impact on their performance. Being absent in May and from June onwards meant Pola missed dissertation writing support in terms of a write-up briefing session, the possibility of consulting library examples of the genre, and face-to-face sessions with her supervisor. Timur also returned home to collect data and to write-up, but this impacted his work differently from Pola's experience, reflecting the amount of preparation done before they left. Timur had a more fully worked out research design, which he was able to implement with few changes. He then kept in e-mail contact with his supervisor for submission of drafts. In contrast, Pola's proposal was incomplete and she had to make ad hoc changes during data collection, which her supervisor could not advise on. He reported she did not keep in regular contact and that he did not know what she was doing. She, in turn, felt he 'hindered me a lot' (YOQ), being slow to respond. Whatever the facts, her absence from Reading certainly contributed to the failure of her first dissertation submission. Belatedly aware of the

need for face-to-face supervision, Pola returned to Reading to see her supervisor to discuss her re-submission, which she then was able to re-write well enough to pass.

All these participants showed enormous commitment to completing the programme. Everyone, except Razvan, who always appeared confident, and Pola, who seemed to have no specific worries, reported struggling at stages in the year. The student with the most external challenges to overcome, however, was undoubtedly Timur, who had major financial problems and was the only student who needed paid employment. He was also deeply concerned about his mother's health all year, and was paying for her health care. He returned home for financial reasons in September, and was himself then hospitalised with swine flu while working on his dissertation. Given he was also the student with the weakest academic writing background, his ability to complete the programme (and at merit level) under such difficult circumstances was testament to his abilities, motivation and commitment, and the power of 'transformative learning' (Mezirow 2000, as discussed in 4.8 above).

5.6 Approaches to learning

As we are seeing, these students approached their learning in different ways, influenced by various factors. It is evident, however, that as a group their overall approach to learning on the programme was more from a constructivist than a social constructivist point of view. Constructivism (discussed in Fox 2001) posits that people learn by individually making cognitive links between what they know and encounter; social constructivism (Vygotsky 1978) argues that this is done with others. We shall consider literacy brokers in more detail in Section 5.10, but the year-on questionnaire questionnaires (see Table 5.4 below) and interviews revealed that only Timur here relied heavily on others for his core learning about academic writing. The only other students who acknowledged receiving considerable help (Jun and Jinko) were the other two with serious language problems, and it seems they saw their need for help at this more micro-level. Although all participants learned from their interaction with tutors, most of them reported this as minimal ('a bit'); this interaction was clearly limited by staff availability. Very little learning, however, took place with other students on the MA. Barbara was the only student referred to as having helped more than one person. Most students clearly studied and learned alone, especially in Term 1, and the gaps between stronger and weaker students were, therefore, perhaps too wide to allow them to construct knowledge together. In addition, the interviews show that the strong

students were mostly people used to working independently (eg Razvan and Jinko) and that the weaker students (eg Jun and Timur) were struggling so much to keep up they had no time for anything ‘extra’, and certainly, given their choice of more expert literacy brokers (see Section 5.10 below), saw no reason for working with each other.

Table 5.4: Year-on (YOQ) participants’ view of other people’s support for their writing (identified in brackets)

	Helped me a lot	Helped me a bit	Neither helped nor hindered me
Barbara		module tutors	personal tutor, study-skills tutor, other students on programme, other people not in Reading
Jinko	module tutors, other students on programme (Barbara)	personal tutor, study-skills tutor, other students not on programme (in hall)	
Razvan		personal tutor, module tutors, study-skills tutor, other students on programme (Barbara – A2), other students not on programme (girlfriend)	
Jun	module tutors, other students on programme (Barbara, another NESS)	personal tutor, insessional tutor	Other students not on programme (hall)
Timur	personal tutor, insessional tutor, other students not on programme (Sylvia)	module tutors	other students on the programme; other people not students at Reading
Pola		module tutors	personal tutor, study-skills tutor, other students on programme, other students not on programme (in hall), other people not at Reading (family)

In Term 2, when students were mainly engaged in option modules, there was more interaction with, for example, students working in pairs to present their interpretation of core readings in class. It was at this point that Barbara, Jinko, Razvan and Jun established their informal study group. However, it is clear from how they spoke of this that they all saw it as a forum for making individual presentations (about their dissertation projects) replicating their classroom experience with students instead of

staff 'lecturing', rather than for collaborative learning: 'I don't think we really discussed things that much' (Barbara s1i5:10).

Many of the characteristics that students described in the year-on questionnaire as having helped them succeed were grounded in being able to work hard on their own. Whether this was cause or effect is hard to say: maybe they valued these traits because those were the ones their programme required. Differently configured programmes (with more assessed group work, for example) might have required or engendered more collaborative characteristics. So, for example, Barbara attributed her success to the fact that 'I am able to work alone and am determined to succeed. I am able to complete projects which I start' (YOQ). Timur and Jun spoke of being very ambitious, and never giving up. Jun's tenacity, evinced in his insistence on help on occasion when people clearly did not want to give it (eg Barbara), was clearly a contributing factor in his success. He worked on his own, however, up the point where he needed help with a concrete task, such as editing his language, and then reached out for support. This was getting people to work for him, not with him.

It is interesting to note that the only student who reported dissatisfaction with the programme was Barbara, who was also the best prepared for it. The lack of opportunity to develop her learning in a more social context on the MA may well explain Barbara's sense of loneliness and disappointment. She was the only participant who reported prior experience of a social constructivist approach to learning. While she acknowledged that she learnt from her classmates about their issues with academic writing, and the usefulness of this for her future EAP work, she did not see that she could learn anything academic from them. Her Diploma course had involved students with similar profiles (experienced NES teachers of English) coming together for interactive workshops. She had hoped for/expected the same on the MA, but realised this was a different community. For example, on one occasion she had prepared a presentation for the informal study group but

the way I'd prepared it was really from a perspective of the whole sort of Diploma...or that way of thinking...And then I realised that the people I was presenting for weren't from that perspective and they didn't have the assumptions that I had. (s1i5:22)

So Barbara changed her presentation for the group, not attempting to challenge them to think differently. Arguably, this deprived both them and her of an opportunity to

engage at a higher intellectual level with each other and it was indicative of her acceptance of the status-quo of their academically-unchallenging interactions with each other.

A useful concept when discussing approaches to learning is that of 'theories of action'(Argyris and Schön 1974), which posits that people have mental maps that guide them in how to act in situations, and influence how they review these actions.

There is a split between:

- 'theory-in-use': what people actually do
- and
- 'espoused theory': what people say influences them.

The distinction is helpful because it encourages reflection on how far behaviour 'fits' espoused theory, and whether beliefs affect behaviour. Argyris (1980) argues that effective behaviour results from developing congruence between theory-in-use and espoused theory. Students here who had a high degree of congruence were Barbara, Jinko, Jun and Timur. As far as my study can show, they practised what they preached in terms of levels and ways of studying. For Razvan and Pola there was less congruence. For example, they expressed great appreciation for feedback on their writing, but admitted to me that they had made little use of it. Although Pola claimed that she liked learning new things and that she was a critical thinker, she continued with her technical undergraduate learning approaches.

Argyris and Schön (1978:2) argue that learning involves identifying and correcting errors. This can be done in two ways:

1. Single-loop learning: problem-solving takes place within the existing framework/way of working: 'goals, values, frameworks, and to a certain extent, strategies are taken for granted. The emphasis is on "techniques and making techniques more efficient". Any reflection is directed towards making the strategy more effective' (Smith 2001). It involves following routines and some sort of preset plans and is both less risky for the individual and gives greater control than the double-loop way of learning.
2. Double-loop learning: an alternative way to problem-solve is to question/critically examine everything that is taken for granted. This is more creative and reflective and can lead to radical changes in how things are done.

Pola's approach clearly falls into single-loop learning. For her, 'learning new things' only extended to learning new language. Discussion about her writing revealed a preoccupation with organising her assignments with correct headings, not the content of each section. Her single-loop approach also meant she stopped producing outlines when no longer required by tutors. She did not see MA writing as being different from her undergraduate work, with 'being creative' in both contexts, for example, meaning designing language teaching materials (which she did for her undergraduate teaching practice and for her MA dissertation data collection). In September Pola could not describe any new strategies she had developed over the year to help improve her writing. She saw the MA as being less of the same as undergraduate study in terms of the amount and type of work required; her single-loop, technical framework did not lead to the changes that were needed in her way of working and ultimately led to her dissertation failure. Timur, in contrast, was prepared to accept Rogers' (1961) pain and turbulence (discussed in Section 4.8), overturning everything he knew about academic study. Both he and Jun were also prepared to seek out help/advice in developing completely new strategies which ranged, for example, from learning how to deconstruct essay titles to learning how to select and use sources in their writing. It could be argued that they had no choice as their knowledge and skill base were so limited; however, they had the choice to, for instance, refuse to adapt and/or to give up and blame others, and did neither. Their double-loop learning approach undoubtedly enabled them to identify the tasks they had to perform, and to develop their own writing in order to complete them.

While Jun could be stubborn - as exemplified in his refusal to accept Ann's initial advice on his choice of A2 topic - he was also prepared to critically examine his taken-for-granted approaches to learning and learn from mistakes, which ensured, for example, he learnt from his experience with A2, subsequently choosing assignment topics more carefully and sticking to them. Both Timur and Jun were prepared to explore and employ strategies until they decided they no longer needed them, showing independence in decision-making and in taking responsibility for their own learning. Timur, for example, stopped seeking detailed advice on assignment writing after A3 apart from proof-reading, confident he now knew what to do (which was reflected in his merit marks) and Jun continued systematically noting down new lexical items until the end of Term 1 when he decided he had learned enough.

5.7 Motivation

Motivation is a major factor in academic success, and a source of much research and debate. Pintrich and Schunk 2002 summarise issues in an education framework, and Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011 give an up-dated applied linguistics perspective. The latter argue that research has produced a complex ‘motivational palette’ (ibid:4), with cognitive and emotional dimensions, and that such research is increasingly influenced by a growing recognition of the importance of social context as well as the more traditional individualistic perspective. They conclude that there is no simple, linear model of motivation and that researchers in this area must choose which aspects to study (such as the links between motivation and identity).

Table 5.5 below focuses on one aspect of motivation, borrowing Gardner’s (1985) notion of instrumental (ie practical) orientation from applied linguistics. This is now seen as somewhat out-dated within the discipline (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011), but it reflects the current UK educational discourse of education and employability (eg Baker 2011).

Table 5.5: Participants’ motivation

Factor	Component	Participant						Maps to Thesis Theme (T)
		Barbara	Jinko	Razvan	Jun	Timur	Pola	
Instrumental motivation	Future study		x	x				T5 Personal perspectives
	Up-grade in level of teaching (school to University)		x			x		
	Interest in EAP teaching post	x				x		
	No specific ambition				x		x	

Key x - factor present

Tables 5.5 and 4.2 (giving participants’ performance) show that there is no link between these students’ primary reasons for choosing to do the MA and their performance. Students who performed well had different practical motivations on registering, ranging from future study (Razvan and Jinko) to career development (Barbara, Jinko and Timur) to Jun’s lack of specific ambition, but interest in developing his professional knowledge. Like Jun, Pola had no future plans; she never indicated, however, that she would return to translation, not teaching, after the MA, and always drew on her pedagogic not translation background in her writing. During the year,

none of these participants mentioned practical motivations in interviews unless asked, and it seemed their focus was very much on the here-and-now of doing each piece of work successfully.

The participants in this study can be described in terms of other forms of motivation. Bandura's (1994, 2001) discussion of self-efficacy has been mentioned above with regard to Timur (Section 4.6), and can now be used for the group. Perceived self-efficacy is 'people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce effects' (Bandura 1994:71) and influences a person's sense of themselves, their motivation and behaviour. Bandura identifies four sources of this belief which are helpful in interpreting the behaviour of these participants:

a. Mastery experiences (performing a task successfully) Their success in writing (in terms of grades and feedback on work) led to increased confidence in everyone in the group, except Pola. She expected to do well and was shocked by her A2 mark, which was low in the Polish marking system. However, she then lowered her expectations when her marks dropped further, saying she was satisfied with just passing. She did not seek to improve her mastery of academic writing and settled for lower grades than she was used to. For the others, success bred success. Timur's passing grade on A2 was especially important for him, after his bad start with A1. Students who had written A1 on the preessional language course (Jun and Jinko) interpreted the praise they received in different ways: Jun was delighted, Jinko realised that this was no indication of what she could do by herself, and she paid more attention to feedback on A2. Feedback on Barbara and Razvan's first assignments showed them that they already had mastered the essentials of academic writing.

b. Social modelling (seeing others succeed) There was only a limited amount of social modelling in this group. As discussed above, some students were aware of each other's marks, and saw that others were passing, but there was limited discussion of their performance or exchange of work.

c. Social persuasion by others that one can succeed This came mainly from tutors, not each other. The student everyone said would do well, Barbara, was in fact intimidated and isolated by this expectation, seeing it as meaning no one would appreciate any worries she had. Tutors' feedback on their work, however, had a major impact on students' self-efficacy. The feedback on draft outlines for A2 and A3 was

important here for those who valued it, as it indicated where they were on the right track and gave advice to help them succeed where they were not.

d. Psychological responses to stress These students managed their stress extremely well in the academically challenging first term, when workload pressure was greatest and they were all new to the system; only Jun had to ask for an assignment deadline extension (because of ill health). Students told me about the pressures they were under in interviews, but mostly in factual workload terms, not complaint. Stress varied, of course, and revealed itself in different ways: Jun and Razvan, for example, were ill during the Christmas vacation; Jun also had problems sleeping. Jinko admitted in September that she had experienced homesickness and a crisis of confidence about job prospects in February but she had carried on functioning normally. Barbara was under much less pressure than the others, but found her role as expert NES stressful on occasion. Pola did not indicate any psychological issues during the year, but mentioned a year on that she had had major family problems. Timur had the most stress, with his academic, financial and family worries. However, he built up a strong support network of programme-external friends and only once complained to me of excessive workload.

One focus of motivation is how it is affected by the value of the task undertaken. This is obviously a major factor in high-stakes Masters programmes. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011: 18/19) summarise the comprehensive model of task values (with reference to Wigfield and Eccles 2000 and Eccles 2005) as:

1. attainment value: 'the personal importance of mastering a skill and doing well on a task';
2. intrinsic value: 'interest...enjoyment coming from performing an activity';
3. extrinsic utility value: 'awareness of how well a task relates to current and future goals and what role learning plays in improving the quality of one's life or making one a better person';
4. cost: 'the negative value component...expended effort and time... and various emotional costs such as anxiety and fear of failure'.

The group studied here was broadly coherent in terms of the first and last values above. They all attached importance to doing well on programme tasks, but defined this differently, according to their self-perception - for Razvan, 60% on his dissertation was disastrous, whereas Timur was delighted with 64% for his. Although we have seen

above there were costs in terms of stress, no-one raised any task value cost of doing their MA in terms of complaint about expended time or anxiety. This is not surprising as they all arrived expecting a high level of challenge.

Intrinsic value is one aspect that varied across the group. The only two students who expressed pleasure in their learning of specific aspects of the programme were Razvan and Jun. Razvan, for example, described Discourse Analysis as 'a wonderful subject' (s2a2m2:4); Jun really enjoyed studying SLLP and his related dissertation. They also had experience of enjoying writing, publishing online as a hobby outside academia. In stark contrast, Timur and Pola both disliked any kind of writing on arrival. Pola's view of writing did not change over the year, but Timur's was transformed by his success. In his YOQ he wrote with pride of his ability now to read and write academically.

Extrinsic utility value was clearly a factor for all, though of differing significance, given their individual ambitions. All participants, except Pola, made links between what they were learning on the programme and their future work in terms of the qualification itself (Razvan and Jinko) and/or of the knowledge, skills and/or insights gained on the programme. Jun had the least extrinsic motivation in terms of career plans, but he did have a keen desire to improve his knowledge to better inform his teaching and advice for colleagues. His answer in the year-on questionnaire (YOQ) to the question 'How has what you learned on the MA helped you in your current work/study?' revealed this desire was realised: 'I can consciously reflect SLA theories when I design the tasks and consider the teaching plans'. Razvan, in response to the same question, reported that 'I use the skills practised and improved in Reading every day in my research... It would not have been possible to continue with a PhD without the MA experience'.

Timur and Barbara's answers referred to skills learnt on the programme that helped in their EAP teaching, in terms of being able to advise their students on academic literacy having done it themselves. Throughout the programme, Barbara expressed less intrinsic interest in the content of the programme than Jun and Razvan. She saw the MA as an opportunity to develop her teaching skills by broadening her knowledge but also, and this became a more prominent focus as the course progressed, by giving her experience of postgraduate study, including choosing to do a dissertation because it would prepare her for teaching postgraduates. Her desire to work in EAP also fuelled her interest in the academic challenges faced by NNES classmates.

Pola was doing an MA as it was expected in her family. She had the weakest motivation, therefore, in that it was extrinsic and unrelated to the specific programme (presumably any MA would have sufficed). A year on she was unable to see any benefits beyond the technical: 'My current work is related to marketing, translations and sales – areas which I wasn't taught on the MA. But I definitely improved my English which helped me a lot'. However, achieving this qualification was important enough for her while working to re-write her failed dissertation in order to get the MA when she could have settled for a Postgraduate Diploma. This seems to reflect Ryan and Deci (2000)'s Self-Determination Theory with Pola showing their 'introjected regulation' form of extrinsic motivation caused by 'the feeling of pressure in order to avoid guilt or anxiety or to attain ego-enhancements or pride' (ibid:62), satisfying her family expectations of level of qualification.

With regard to motivation and improvements in academic writing, Tardy (2005:337) refers to the importance of 'high investment' in 'high-stakes tasks' in leading to long-term improvement. Jinko, Jun and Timur clearly made the highest investment in their writing and experienced the greatest improvements within the group. Pola made relatively little investment, beyond her concern for linguistic accuracy. Barbara and Razvan were somewhere in between these two extremes in their hard working, but less enthused, attitudes to study and writing in Term 1, which did not greatly change later.

What this group of students seems to confirm is that a general, extrinsic motivation is not enough; motivation needs to be more specific to the programme of study. It can be relatively technical (as arguably Timur and Barbara's teaching-skills based motivation was), but that technical aspect needs to be deeper than just developing at a basic level, which here was at the level of language improvement. In order to succeed on a challenging academic programme, students need to see how it can benefit them. That should be a given on programmes with a clear professional link such as the MAs here; however, it is still possible for a student to not make that connection and so to not develop. Again I turn to Pola to illustrate this point: she did not make any non-technical connections between what she was learning/experiencing on the MA and her future needs. It is entirely possible that this lack of a strong instrumental motivation beyond getting any MA interacted with her lack of intrinsic motivation to prevent her from making the changes that success on the programme demanded.

5.8 Writing in a social context: audience and voice

It is interesting to note that current thinking about motivation mirrors the cognitive-social shift in discourse about writing:

Instead of viewing cognition or motivation as located solely within the individual mind, these phenomena are coming to be viewed as dynamically constructed in discursive interactions between people situated in particular social contexts. (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011:8)

It is to the social aspects of writing that we shall now turn.

Audience and writer's voice are two important aspects of the social dimension of writing, linking the writer to the discourse community s/he is writing within. Developing an awareness of the reader is an important prerequisite for meeting audience and marker expectations in academic contexts; in addition, skilled writers think of their audience as they write (Berkenkotter 1981, Flower and Hayes 1981). Also, developing his/her own voice in writing (Ivanič 1998, discussed in Section 2.5 above) is an important part of identity for an academic writer. This study's data set helps throw light on the participants' experiences of audience and voice in the only part of this thesis that draws on quantitative analysis.

A noticeable omission in student interviews is reference to 'the reader'. One reason for this may be the limited lack of reference to audience by staff, as revealed in Table 5.6, which shows how infrequently staff referred to a reader (in general or themselves as 'I') in feedback. Ann was the tutor who engaged most with the concept, and even she did not refer to 'the reader' or 'I' in written feedback on A2 to everyone. Guidance on assignments also did not help here. Although the A1 rubric (see Appendix 2) explains that the personal tutor will read and provide feedback, 'the reader' is only explicitly mentioned once in the three assignment rubrics focused on in this study (in A3's: Appendix 6). In class assignment briefings, Ann (A2) did not mention the reader at all and Steve (A3) only mentioned him/her once.

Table 5.6: Mention of 'the reader', 'I' and 'you' in tutor feedback on outlines and assignments

	Assignment and tutor	Barbara	Jinko	Razvan	Jun	Timur	Pola	Total
1. Mention of 'the reader' in written feedback (+discussion)	A1 written feedback					1		1
	(A1 personal tutorials) Tutor:	(11) Ann		(2) Lyn		(10) Ann	(3) Steve	(26)
	(A2 meetings)	(3)					(3)	(6)
	A2 written feedback (Ann)	1		5	1			7
	A3 outline (Steve)				NA			
	A3 written feedback (Steve)							
Total		1 (14)		5 (7)	1	1 (11)	(6)	8 (38)
2. Use of 'I' in written feedback	A1 feedback					1		1
	A2 feedback	1	3	1		3	1	9
	A3 outline	4	2	1	NA	2	2	11
	A3 feedback		6	3	2	1	9	21
Total		5	11	5	2	7	12	42
3. Use of 'you' in written feedback	A1 feedback	11	1		4	18	7	41
	A2 feedback	2	19	23	27	27	17	115
	A3 outline	2	8	3	NA	16 ²	14	43
	A3 feedback	3	8	11	9	12	13	56
Total		18		37	40	73	51	256

Key: Numbers in brackets, and/or shaded brown, are from spoken feedback

Turning to the students, Razvan was the only student to discuss the reader in all meetings with me, making 60% of the references to 'the reader' in student interviews, as Table 5.7 shows. This table excludes reference to proofreaders.

Table 5.7: Student reference to a/the reader/readers in interviews

	Barbara	Jinko	Razvan	Jun	Timur	Pola	Total mentions	Number of participants
Interview 1			2				2	1
Interview 2			1				1	1
Interview 3	1	1	10	5	1		18	5
Interview 4			1	2		2	5	3
Interview 5			2#			1*	3	2
Year on Questionnaire	1						1	1
Total mentions	2	1	16	7	1	3	30	
Number of different occasions (N=36)	2	1	5	2	1	2	13	

Key: Red data: the participant did not use the term 'the reader':

reference to his girlfriend as his typical reader;

* 'random people'

Everyone except Pola mentioned the reader in Interview 3, even if this was, as for Jinko, Barbara and Timur, their only instance in any interview. This was after they had received feedback on A2, so Ann's concern for the reader had been noticed by the five who read feedback carefully, with Razvan and Jun making a number of references.

From an assessment point of view, departmental tutors are the most important readers of student work. However, it is striking that when participants here mentioned their reader the imagined audience was varied, and only one person, Jun, explicitly mentioned an academic reader (ie the module tutor). Pola referred to her readership in our final interview as being 'random people'- flatmates and friends (see Section 4.7). Timur thought his writing had to be clear enough for his students or unspecified other people in the future to read his work. Even Razvan, who showed most awareness of the concept, spoke of his girlfriend being his typical reader - an educated person from another discipline. However, he also mentioned that taking part in this study added me to the list of readers, showing a unique awareness of different audiences. Given the lack of reference to any reader in most contexts, it is perhaps not surprising that this group of students did not seem to be thinking much about their audience at all, and when they did they did not see the need for clarity in their writing as arising from the requirement to display knowledge to 'superior', gate-keeping academic readers. They did, however, appreciate that they needed to be explicit, which was certainly beneficial in terms of meeting reader expectations.

The lack of focus on their module tutors and examiners as readers may also come from the way feedback was given. Tutors did not refer to themselves greatly, preferring instead to direct their comments to the students. Following Samraj 2008 (who measured use of the personal pronoun 'I' to indicate authorial voice), Table 5.6 also shows how infrequently 'I' and how frequently 'you' were used in feedback to students in written feedback on assignments and outlines. Five different personal tutors marked work for A1 and there was only one instance of 'I' in written feedback (in Ann's feedback to Timur). This could be because all, except Steve who had set the topic, lacked confidence in proclaiming in the complex field of SLA. They were, however, more prepared to advise/comment on what the student had done, with five students being addressed directly as 'you'.

The pattern is the same, though less extreme for written feedback on A2 and A3, with Table 5.6 revealing an overall you:I ratio of 6:1. This ratio, using totals across both assignments, masks the very different feedback behaviours in this regard of Ann and Steve. Ann's you:I ratio was 13:1, whereas Steve's was 2.5:1. This reflects Ann's much more prescriptive approach to feedback, with twice as many 'you's as Steve and less than a third as many 'I's. She justified this as appropriate for the first assessed assignment on the programme, where students needed clear guidance/advice. Students (eg Razvan and Jun) supported this justification. Turning to Steve's greater use of 'I', it is striking that he used it in inverse proportion to the mark awarded, so Barbara with the top mark here had no 'I's in her feedback, whereas Pola, who just passed, had the most. Examining his feedback to Pola, five of his nine uses of 'I' collocated with 'think' or 'feel' showing Steve was clearly (and he agreed when I raised this later) using 'I' to mitigate his harsh grade for her, 'sugaring the pill' as Hyland and Hyland (2001) found EAP tutors doing.

Whatever the motivation for uses of 'the reader', 'I' and 'you' in feedback, this behaviour by staff had the effect of emphasising to students their role in writing, which is in tune with developing writer-responsible text (Hyland 2003:47/48), where it is the writer's responsibility to produce clear and accessible text. The need for reader-based text (Flower 1979), taking the needs/expectations of the reader into account, was not highlighted, however. For five of the students here this did not matter greatly, as their academic writing improved over the year anyway in terms of meeting their audience's criteria for their writing. For Pola, lack of awareness of these issues was arguably disastrous, culminating in a dissertation which failed largely because, as the

dissertation feedback sheet stated, ‘overall, the information the reader is given about methods, materials and procedures is inadequate to enable to design and rigour of the project to be assessed’. She was then advised to re-write ‘bearing the reader much more carefully in mind’. This was the first reference she had received to ‘the reader’ in any written feedback.

Students’ self-reference in their texts is also important; as Johns and Swales 2002:14 point out, students struggle to find ‘an appropriate authorial persona –as personified by the use/non-use of “I”’. Harwood and Hadley (2004) broaden this to include possessive adjectives in their corpus study of academic writing in four different disciplines and their method of analysis is adopted here and shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8: Participants’ use of 1st person personal pronouns and possessive adjectives by assignment (A1-A3): cases per 1000 words, and overall number of instances*

Assignment	Barbara	Jinko	Razvan	Jun	Timur	Pola
A1	2		7.9		5	33
A2			3	1.25		26
A3	1.26		6.5	1.55	18	19.4
Total instances N=254	7	0	40	9	23	175

* I, ME, MY, OUR, WE, US (after Harwood and Hadley 2004)

Table 5.8 indicates that successful writers in this group did not self-refer much, or at all, and that the person who self-referred most was the weakest writer. Pola self-referred in all three assignments and more than twice as often as all the others combined. This might suggest that self-referral is not a successful tactic; this would be surprising given the feedback on A1 and A3 that participants’ needed more reference to their own teaching/learning experiences, which one might imagine would require greater use of the first person. However, it is again necessary to examine the actual uses of these forms in students’ texts before making generalisations. Such examination shows that, although Pola knew how to use personal pronouns to reference her own experience, she did not always use them appropriately. Pola’s use of the first person in A1 was to discuss her own teaching/learning and as such was appropriate. In A2 and A3, however, she employed the first person mainly for the meta-discourse that Ann’s feedback criticised her for overusing (discussed in Section 4.7), which was considered inappropriate. Timur and Razvan, in contrast, were comfortable using first person pronouns from the beginning. Jinko and Jun avoided the use of first person pronouns

in this early work, following the generic advice given on the preessional course that academic writing does not use these pronouns. However, they did self-refer; Jinko mentioned 'the writer' (A3:1) and 'classroom practitioners' (A3:14) and Jun wrote 'Teachers will be aware of...' (A2:1). Although there is some use of 'I' in their dissertation rationales, they continued to refer to themselves in the third person in the write-up (such as 'The researcher found...'). Barbara also made very little use of first person pronouns, preferring a more formal register (eg 'This essay will attempt...' A3 page 1). This omission of her own voice in her writing may reflect Barbara's early lack of confidence in her own opinions; it continued all year, however, (including in her dissertation) and was not commented on by markers. This exploration reveals that developing their own voice was achieved by successful writers in this group, but was done in different ways. The use or non-use of personal pronouns did not seem to be a factor in their success.

5.9 Response to feedback

On these programmes assignment feedback from tutors was the main locus of interaction between staff and students on their writing. While there was some spoken (A2)/written (A3) dialogue around outlines and face-to-face discussion of formative A1, written feedback on assessed work typified the university monologism that is part of the essayist literacy tradition and that Lillis (2001) is so critical of.

All participants said they appreciated the feedback they received. However, they also reported varying reactions to and use of feedback, as we have seen in Chapter 4. Barbara and Jinko found the feedback on specific aspects of later texts more useful than the generic comments received on A1. Personal tutors marked A1; although applied linguists, they were not content-specialists for this SLA topic set by Steve and so, apart from Steve, their feedback focussed on more general issues such as referencing. The specific feedback Barbara identified as more useful can only come from a discipline specialist, which Ann (Barbara's tutor) was then able to provide when she marked work for her own module, DA. University-wide study skills counsellors are further removed from content areas than the non-specialist applied linguistic tutors here; this study indicates the limitations of what non-specialists can offer in terms of situated academic writing advice essential for better students. Weaker writers here relied on feedback much more for guidance on the general academic writing conventions (eg citations) that non-specialist advisors (either within the

Department or University-wide counsellors) could offer. For Timur, for example, Ann's feedback on A1 was the wake-up call he needed, alerting him to what he had to learn about academic writing conventions in general.

Razvan and Pola made limited use of feedback after an initial reading. Razvan attributed this to the fact that 'I don't take criticism very well', but added he hoped he incorporated suggestions 'in my writing repertoire subconsciously' (YOQ). His ability to summarise what he had learnt from feedback on Term 1 assignments in our interviews and his marks on Term 2 assignments indicate this was true. Pola, however, misinterpreted some of the feedback she received, for example seeing on-text questions in A3 as genuine requests for information, rather than challenges to her argument. Her prioritisation of feedback on mechanics (especially language) instead of the more major issue of content reflected her primarily linguistic and technical focus and masked the fact that she did not always understand the other points being made. In addition, she was the only student worried about the impact of issues raised on the actual mark, again showing evidence of Prior's (1998) passing mode of participation (see Section 2.3.2) and a primarily instrumental motivation that contrasted with other students' more intrinsic one. This meant she also did not read the feedback sheets carefully enough, so, for example, she had not noticed until pointed out in our interview (14) that the section numbers on A3's feedback sheet referred to the marking criteria listed above.

Jinko and Jun showed a real respect for the feedback they received. They both spent a considerable amount of time going over feedback sheets, highlighting specific points. Noticing (ie consciously registering) is acknowledged by applied linguists as a necessary condition for learning (in Schmidt 1990's Noticing Hypothesis), and Jun echoes this, speaking of 'the effect of feedback on noticing what I couldn't find, what I couldn't do...so it's really important' (s5i4:l2). Both these participants also looked back at previous feedback when working on Term 2 assignments. Jinko focussed on major concerns and issues to be considered in the next assignment, while Jun highlighted positive and negative feedback, the latter being 'the point I have to overcome at the next essay' (s5i4:4). This practice revealed one basic misunderstanding; Jun highlighted anything described as 'satisfactory' on A2 as positive, whereas Ann meant this to indicate 'not good', illustrating a lack of transparency in terms used for evaluation noted by both Casanave (2002) and Lillis (2001). Timur relied less heavily on feedback for guidance in his academic writing;

although he studied the feedback carefully when he received it, he felt this was enough and he did not re-visit it when working on later assignments.

This variation in the use of feedback and the fact that all these students said they had never received such feedback before revealed the need to help students interpret and use this new genre, and to build in consultation with staff after return of feedback to ensure important focuses are noticed. Only two students here took up tutor offers to explain feedback; Barbara and Pola asked to see Ann about A2. Barbara challenged feedback comments she did not agree with or were unclear. Pola used this session to check where marks had been removed, and then did not consult Steve about A3's feedback. This would have been more beneficial as there was much more she did not understand and needed to learn in his feedback on this barely passing piece of work.

One point all the struggling students (Pola, Jun, Timur) made was that they appreciated positive as well as negative feedback, but that feedback had often been negative.

Recognition of strengths gave Timur something positive to bolster his bruised self-respect on early work, which was important for his sense of self-esteem. He also argued: 'I don't want to be criticised all the time...at least there should be some point that I did good' (s4i5:11). Pola felt most feedback after A2 had been negative 'what I was lacking' (s3i5:6); this resulted in her scant attention to the feedback provided. Pola suggested tutors include advice for future assignments in feedback: 'because the tutors know best what's the perfect assignment. We are trying to, we are learning and I only have a year to improve.' (s3i4:6). Although this was a realistic assessment of the situation at one level, it revealed Pola's inability to feed-forward from feedback to future assignments (unlike Jinko and Jun), which is typically associated with more novice writers (eg Carless 2006's Hong Kong undergraduates). In addition the assumption of the existence of 'the perfect assignment' and of tutors' knowledge about what it was revealed a naiveté about writing and the role of feedback.

5.10 Literacy brokers

The literacy brokers (Lillis and Curry 2006) participants chose and the use made of them are very revealing of the students' understanding of the programme's requirements, and their commitment to meeting them. No one has yet, to my knowledge, explicitly considered postgraduate students' use of literacy brokers, so this aspect of the study is a useful beginning to this area of research.

Figure 5.1 shows the range of literacy brokers these participants as a group called upon arranged from left to right in order of those brokers' increasing understanding/knowledge of MA programme requirements in this context, from none to a high level.

Figure 5.1: Range of literacy brokers used by this group of participants

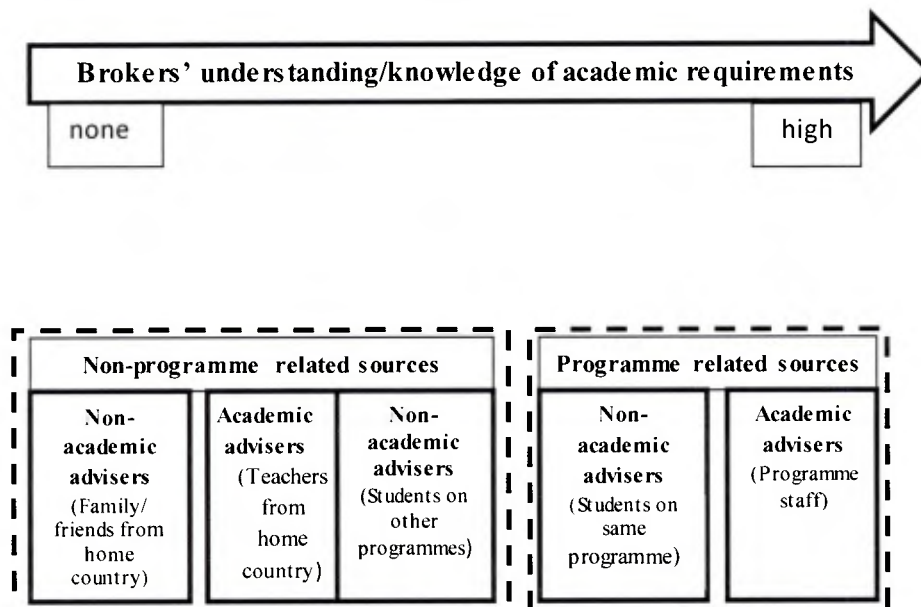
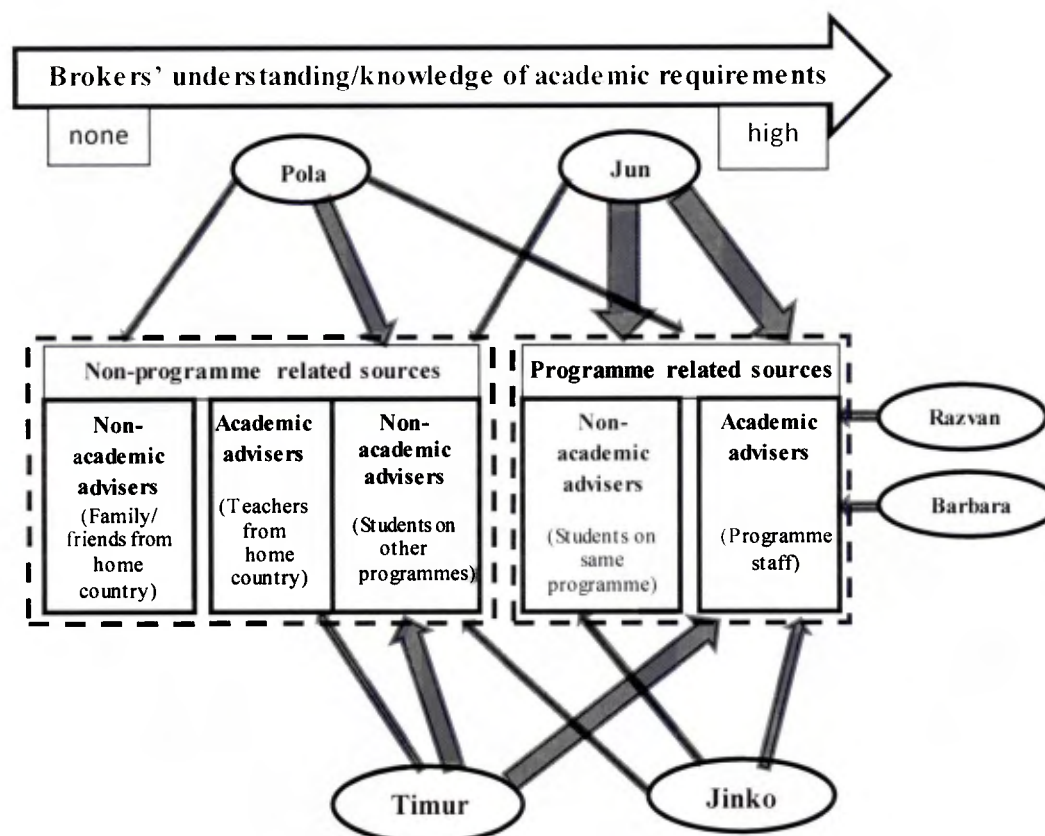


Figure 5.2 below extends this figure to include details about the brokers each participant used, indicating the intensity of interaction between them and these different sources of academic writing support. This figure shows the range and variety of literacy brokers different participants called upon (in contrast to Tardy's 2005 findings; her two participants referred only to academic mentors), revealing how many different types of broker each participant engaged with, and how informed these people were of the necessary academic requirements. The two high-achieving but essentially disappointed students (Barbara and Razvan) had the narrowest range, only relying on academic staff and that to a limited extent. This may explain their disappointment, but from different perspectives. As already discussed (Section 4.2), Barbara craved greater contact with staff and her writing would also have benefitted from more intellectual interaction with classmates. Razvan, on the other hand, did not want more contact with staff, but certainly needed it to develop his potential. More discussion of academic writing with classmates and reading of each other's work would have helped him write a better dissertation, as would greater contact with his supervisor. Jinko made moderate use of hallmates, classmates and tutors. However, because of her quick uptake, this was enough to give her all the support she needed.

Figure 5.2 Range of literacy broker and intensity of use by each participant



Key: Width of shaded arrows originating from each participant indicates intensity of contact

The weakest students on arrival, Jun and Timur, were, sensibly, those with the widest networks of literacy brokers, as Figure 5.2 shows. They also made the most demands on them. In particular, Jun's dogged exploitation of tutors, classmates and NES informants in hall contributed to his outstanding grades. Timur was a more sensitive, and appreciative, 'exploiter' of others, but still made considerable demands on his brokers. However, unlike Jun, who continued in this vein to the end, Timur was confident, and flexible, enough to decide when he no longer needed this support for assignments, which was after A3. When confronted by the new genre of the dissertation, he again consulted more experienced friends for guidance. As discussed in Section 4.6, Timur's literacy brokers comprised an unusual group. He did not use other MA students at all, instead relying heavily on his British undergraduate friend. In addition, he was the only student to turn to academic contacts (former university teachers) from home for advice. As Figure 5.2 indicates, Pola had a similarly wide range of brokers, though she made much less use of them. In addition, she did not choose wisely. Like all the other participants, she relied on tutors, although with less understanding of points being made, and to a much lesser degree than Timur and Jun.

Her major misjudgement was in her other chosen sources of support as they were all non-programme related: family and friends in Poland and other students in hall, most of whom were also NNEs new to the British education system. These 'random' people, as Pola herself called them, were in no position to give her the well-informed, critical feedback she needed to improve her writing for the MA.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter opened with the conundrum of why some students do badly despite advantages whilst others do well against all odds. This group of students divided into different groups in terms of performance and satisfaction with the programme. As we saw in Figure 4.1, grouping by performance changed after the dissertation, with Jun joining Barbara and Jinko in the top group, Razvan joining Timur in a lower-level group, and Pola on her own at the bottom. These shifts influenced participants' sense of satisfaction with the programme. The three students who graduated feeling most satisfied were Jinko, Jun and Timur. They had all overcome major challenges, in terms of language, content and MA-level academic writing in English skills in this context, to earn their high grades and had drawn well on a range of literacy brokers to do this. They did very well and this combination of effort and reward resulted in enormous satisfaction. Razvan and Pola did relatively badly; Pola was disappointed by her marks throughout and both of them were devastated by their unexpected, disappointing dissertation marks. They therefore finished feeling dissatisfied. Barbara's disappointment had a completely different cause: her perception that, although she had worked hard and gained high grades, she had not developed sufficiently. None of these three students used literacy brokers well.

Considering the participants as a group with common experiences of study on this programme, rather than six individuals, has enabled a focus on patterns of similarity and difference in their academic writing development. The main reasons for the participants' variation in performance and satisfaction have been discussed in terms of contextual and student factors. The conclusion will now step back from the participants to focus on the 'big picture' of the study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

‘Sociocultural and socio-political theories emphasize that learning is not simply a question of transmitting knowledge, but rather of working with students so that they can reflect, theorize and create knowledge.’ Nieto (2009:7)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the research questions, building on the discussion in Chapters 4 and 5. It then considers the limitations of this study, methodological issues and makes some suggestions for further research into academic writing. A discussion of what the study means for pedagogic practices follows and the chapter concludes by returning to the two approaches that influenced thinking about the study throughout: EAP and academic literacies.

6.2 Research Question 1

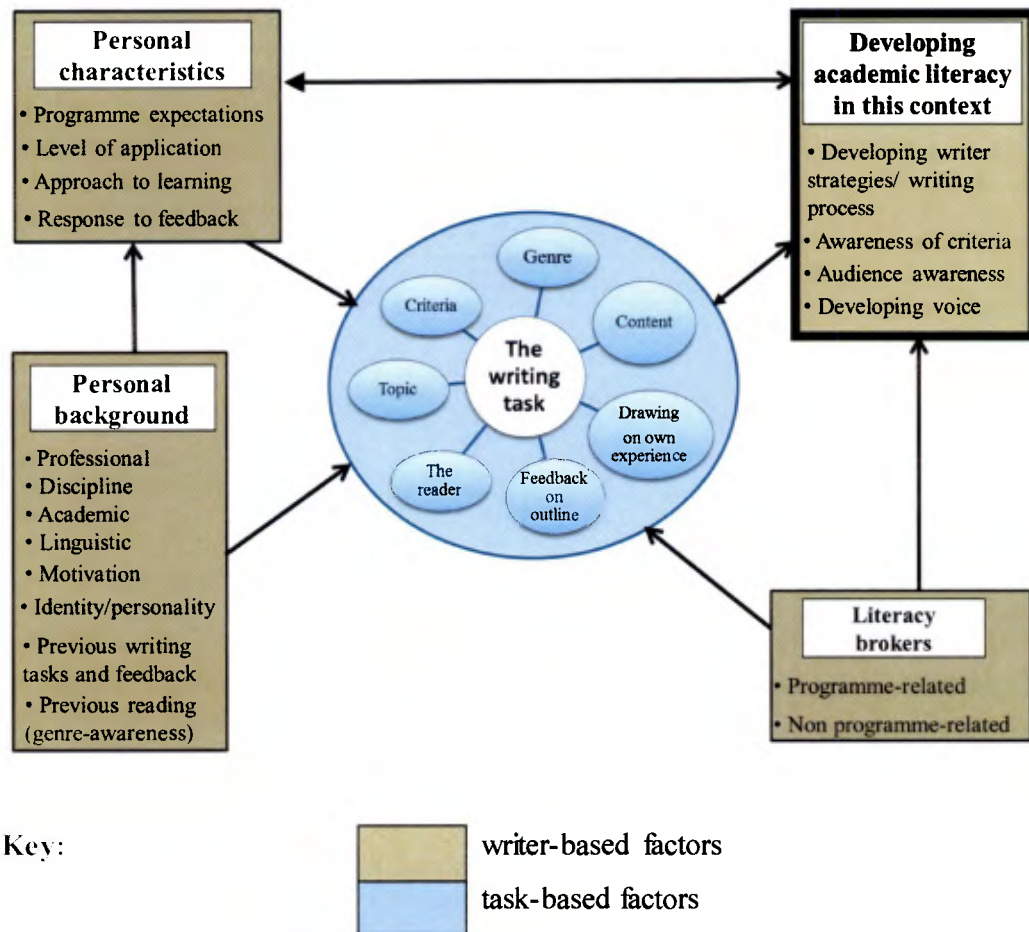
How do taught postgraduate students develop an understanding of the writing demands of the academy in the early stages of their study?

The short answer to this is: by doing writing for their particular academy, with all that this entails in terms of developing context-appropriate academic literacy skills, and by receiving and acting upon advice from appropriate sources. Earlier chapters have revealed the resources these six students drew on as they learned what the writing requirements of their programmes were. Figure 6.1 summarises these resources, and the relationship between them, with arrows showing the flow of influence and impact. In most cases the flow is in one direction, but in two important cases it is bidirectional.

The writing task being worked on at any one time lies at the centre of Figure 6.1, with its task-specific factors: topic, marking criteria, content from class input and reading, genre, the need to draw on writers’ own language teaching and/or learning experience if appropriate, module tutor feedback on an outline, and the reader (module reader and other examiners). The other factors are external to the task, and specific to the writer. Those on the bottom left of the diagram, labeled ‘Personal background’, are factors which the student brings with them to the programme, and which do not change greatly while on the programme: their previous experience of work, study (including the range of genres they have been exposed to) and writing, and their language level as they start out. I have put motivation here; although it is a potentially changing factor

(as discussed in Section 5.7), in the case of the students in this study their instrumental motivations and sense of self-efficacy on starting the programme were the main motivating influences I observed. For this group of students, identity also seems to be relatively stable, as is personality. Other factors change as the student progresses through the programme. ‘Personal characteristics’, which are of course influenced by personal background, include their expectations of the programme, level of application and approach to learning, all of which can alter as students learn more about programme requirements. Use and range of literacy brokers can also change over time, and, along with personal background and characteristics, influence how the student accomplishes the writing task.

Figure 6.1: Factors influencing developing writers on these programmes



All these factors and experience of the current writing task impact on the student's developing academic literacy within this context. As the bidirectional arrows here indicate, their developing academic literacy, in turn, affects how they perform the writing task and their personal characteristics. As we have seen, successful students develop their writing strategies and writing process. Their awareness of their audience and the criteria for academic writing in this context also need to grow. With such development and increasing confidence, they will hopefully develop their own voice within the discipline.

The degree to which these writers had to draw on the personal and programme-specific resources outlined in Figure 6.1 varied according to the combination of background and specific writing task. Literacy brokers were clearly a major resource in these students' writing; another resource was the reading they did. It could be argued published authors are literacy brokers too in that their influence can mediate text production (as we saw when students here turned to expert writers to see how they drew on their professional experience, for example). If this argument is accepted, the major non-broker influence was the cumulation of knowledge about appropriate content and writing (process, product and social activity) that students built up as the programme progressed.

Central to this discussion of writing is the context these students found themselves in. What this study as a whole shows is that we do not have a community of practice here, in contrast to Prior's claim (1998:xii) that 'graduate students are...engaging in active relations with dynamic, open interpenetrated communities of practice'. While this may apply to postgraduate students at the doctoral level, it does not seem to relate to the context here. In Section 2.4, I outlined the three crucial characteristics of a CoP:

- a domain of interest/expertise;
- an interactive community learning together;
- a common practice, with a shared repertoire and resources (Wenger 2006).

Staff and students on these MA programmes have a common domain of interest in language teaching and learning. However, they do not learn how to do it better by interacting on these MAs, where language teaching and learning are studied but not practised (unlike some American MATESOLs with a teaching practicum, for example). Departmental academic staff all supervise doctoral students and we see this relationship as being closer to the newcomer-expert model that Wenger (1998)

describes and which is the focus of most other studies of postgraduate students learning to write (see Section 2.3.2). Doctoral students are more likely to aspire to similar academic careers to their supervisors', and therefore need to be 'acculturated' into the profession in terms of research and university-level teaching. In contrast, Masters students on the programmes here do not typically see themselves as training to follow in the footsteps of their tutors, but want to upgrade their qualifications to give them better employment prospects as language teachers. This motivation also applies to other vocationally-grounded Masters programmes such as those in Business and Law. The CoP our MA students identified with was fellow language teachers, not within the Department of Applied Linguistics. Even Razvan, who aspired to studying for a doctorate after the MA, did not see this year as part of that process beyond qualifying him to apply in terms of skills and academic credentials.

The MA group could have formed themselves into a student CoP, with Barbara and Razvan as its more proficient experts, but they did not do this. Arguably, if the Department wishes such a CoP to exist they need to formally encourage its establishment, by (for example) timetabling student meeting times and perhaps asking previous students to mentor such groups. Without such structure, students on the group periphery (like Timur and Pola) would not be involved. Previous students, if available, could provide the more-expert advisor role, ensuring discussion was more interactive and less focused on presentation of individual interests than in the study group some of these students established.

The concept of a place discourse community (Swales 1990, 1998) seems to be more useful here than that of a CoP. DCs are 'groups that have goals or purposes, and use communication to achieve these goals' (Borg 2003:398), and 'place' adds the focus of being in one location. The members of the MA community (staff and students) shared one common goal: success for students on the programme. They communicated with each other to pursue this goal, in speech and in writing, and were all based in Reading for the duration of the programme, except Pola who suffered as a result.

The context of the Reading MAs matches a traditional view of a discourse community (as outlined by Borg 2003). Students must meet genre requirements to succeed and academic staff act as gatekeepers in enforcing these standards in their advice, feedback and assessment. At no point are students encouraged to incorporate aspects of their other discourses in their writing or to negotiate or challenge the norms of this

community, although students are not expressly forbidden from challenging expectations, and on the one occasion in this study when a student did this (Barbara's meeting with Ann about her A2 feedback) the tutor was happy to explain the situation. What we have on our MA programmes here is, therefore, as Canagarajah (2002:32) states,

a one-sided approach to community that considers how one should acculturate to the community one wishes to join, without considering the discursive implications of the other memberships one brings with oneself.

Only very rarely in our interviews was the aspect of acculturation enforcement raised with me; this group of students saw meeting discourse community norms as part of the task they had enrolled for. In line with theories of motivation which reveal that 'the more difficult the goal the greater the achievement' (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011:20), those who struggled most also reported most satisfaction with this process.

6.3 Research Question 2

What differences are there in the experiences of students developing academic writing skills within this context? How are these differences affected by students' background and previous experience?

Examining the six case studies here, it is clear that these students had some experiences in common, beyond the chronology and content of the programme: the challenge of meeting deadlines, the struggles with drawing upon resources (either from their own background and/or their reading) in their writing, and appreciation of feedback on their written work. In addition, unlike Lillis' non-traditional undergraduate students (2001), these students did not see any of the programme challenges as a threat to their identity, in terms of their sense of who they were (Ivanič 2006). This was because their identities were both secure and recognised as highly valuable by the programmes they were on; they had been successful students in their home countries (which success had led them to apply for the MA in the first place) and were confident professionals. They therefore used their energies to try to identify what was expected in writing in this context and to meet those expectations, not to question them, as a Critical EAP or academic literacies (Section 2.6) view would advocate. They saw the challenges of academic writing as cultural at the level of language and discourse, not social, norms.

Beyond these aspects, it is hard to identify commonalities across all six participants; what the study has mostly revealed is the range of experiences these participants had in developing their academic writing skills on the programme. Even students with similar levels of challenge in their writing identified and tackled these challenges very differently. It is clear that background by itself, while important in terms of baseline levels of language and academic/professional experience which these students all met, is not the key factor here. It is the combination of background, personality and reactions to experiences in this specific context that seems to be crucial to a student's overall experience of the programme. What we have, unsurprisingly, are six individuals, but with evidence of some patterns and tendencies in terms of expectations and flexibility affecting satisfaction with and success on the programme. The patterns that emerge from this study seem to be:

- Disappointed students (especially Barbara, but also Razvan to some extent) had strong backgrounds but unrealistic expectations, and were relatively inflexible in their learning approach. They did not make many changes in their ways of writing.
- Students making outstanding progress (Timur and Jun) had poor academic and linguistic backgrounds, but strong professional ones. Their expectations on arrival were unrealistic or unclear but they were flexible enough to allow their writing to change and develop in transformative ways.
- The student who made considerable progress (Jinko) had a reasonably strong background in terms of previous learning experiences, realistic expectations and the ability to learn and adapt her writing quickly.
- The failing student (Pola) had a poor background in terms of the technical view of learning promoted, with its focus on language and the 'nuts and bolts' of language teaching. This led to expectations of being fed learning, of 'busy-work' and of change being linguistic. Her resultant inflexibility meant her writing did not develop beyond superficial change.

It seems that successful, satisfied students have strong motivation to engage with the content of their programme, are flexible, work hard and see themselves making progress. As a result, their writing greatly develops during the programme. Successful students who have less need to develop as writers because of initial advantages may not experience the highs of achievement of those who transform their writing during

their study without appropriate encouragement and/or challenge, and as a result may actually not develop to their full potential.

6.4 Limitations of the study

The study is not without its limitations, of course. Although I interviewed the participants five times over the year, I did not collect their writing and feedback on other assignments than the three Term 1 ones focussed on here. There were good reasons for this: the focus was on work at the beginning of the programme, and this also controlled for the variable of module choice, focusing on core module assessed coursework everyone had done, before the individual variation of Term 2 options.

I also wanted to collect data before I taught on the MAs; although I know other longitudinal studies (eg Lillis 2001) have explored student writing where the researcher is also the tutor, in these studies the tutor is often an academic writing tutor, and not teaching or assessing academic modules. The fact remains that, although I was not teaching any modules in Term 1, these participants knew I was a member of academic staff. However, they were mature students, who managed, for the most part, to keep my roles as researcher and teacher separate. Only once did this overtly intrude, when Jun asked me in our final interview if admitting to me the extent of Barbara's help would affect his results. This reservation validates the decision not to research work in Term 2, when students saw me as a tutor more than a researcher. However, the limitation remains that I do not know what information students withheld from me because of my role on their programmes - and in this I am within a strong tradition of writing researchers exploring their own teaching contexts (eg Ivanić 1998, Lea and Street 1998, Lillis 2001, Casanave 2002). Also, being an insider had the advantage of insights into the context that helped shape the study.

As with any ethnographic study, the data that were collected were much more than could be fully used in this thesis. The focus was on the students and, as a result, the perspectives and written products of the tutors were not much focused on. In addition, I did not analyse the student scripts in any detail, which an SFL approach would have promoted. However, as these students had only received feedback on one assignment (unassessed A1) when they wrote A2 and A3, I could not really explore writing development in texts in relation to feedback received; this was another limitation.

The most significant major limitation is the perennial one faced by ethnographic researchers: the Hawthorne Effect. Does the process of studying human behaviour in itself affect that behaviour? There were only two clear examples of student behaviour affected by the study: Barbara and Pola's requests to see Ann to discuss A2 feedback, which Ann attributed to my 'prompting'. As noted in Section 3.3, students on these programmes rarely contact tutors about feedback on passing assignments, so it seems probable that having discussed A2 feedback in I3 made these students more prepared to do it.

It was also clear on occasion that examining their feedback with me helped the participants see things they had missed. In our experience, Masters students read and appreciate feedback in a way undergraduates do not. However, these students had cause to focus on it even more than usual, and it is entirely possible they therefore got more out of the feedback than is normally the case, thus affecting their awareness of writing requirements. I asked the participants if they had been influenced by taking part in the study, and they all said they had, except Pola. Answers ranged from Barbara's appreciation of the fact that someone was interested in her work to Razvan's realisation that I was another reader of his writing. However, given all the participants here experienced the same research process, comparisons between them and consideration of them as a group are as valid as in any such study.

6.5 Reflections on the methodology

This study was, in part, a response to the call from prominent ELT scholars, such as Braine (2002) and Casanave and Hubbard (1992), to explore academic writing through case studies. As such it followed a now well-established tradition of ethnographic research, most notably the influential work of Casanave herself (2002), Ivanić (1998) and Lillis (2001). The focus throughout this study was on the participants in this teaching and learning context, drawing on thinking in both EAP and academic literacies. Both approaches added to the scope of the project, with EAP, for example, prompting exploration of discourse (in interviews, assignments and feedback) and academic literacies providing the exploration of literacy histories and 'talk around text' (Lillis 2001) through interviews. This balance worked well, allowing attention to texts and participants within a clearly defined situated context.

Because of that context, and the limitation of the main focus to Term 1, the study was able to control for a number of variables which other studies (including those

mentioned above) have not. The students here were all at the beginning of their programmes, attending the same modules and writing the same assignments. This allowed for greater, and possibly more valid, comparisons across cases, whilst acknowledging each as individual. The fact that their writing, apart from A1, was for assessment and that all assignments were to be read by departmental tutors (unlike much EAP research into student writing, eg Hyland 1998) adds further validity.

Braine (2002) has called for the NNES voice to be heard. His intention, of course, was for that to be the authorial voice, which is not the case here. The researcher has, as is acknowledged in all ethnographic study, the major role of interpreting the information collected. However, it is hoped that the present study goes some way to allowing the voices of these five NNES writers to be heard in addition to that of the NES writer.

My greatest methodological challenge was the analysis of the data. I have no regrets about not using a grounded theory approach, for the reason outlined in Section 3.7.2, but I am aware that without reliance upon a recognised, systematic approach I am vulnerable to claims that my interpretation has been too subjective. However, I would argue that is also the case with grounded theory, as any analysis in that vein is only as good as its codes, which are chosen by the researcher and therefore also subjective. My approach has involved constant referral to the data, even consulting original data at the final draft stage, and I would therefore argue it is as true a reflection of the student story as I am capable of, and truer than a grounded theory approach would have allowed me to give.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

This study potentially feeds into a range of other research projects. One project could use the findings here to tackle the academic writing needs of our students. A subsequent group of students could then be studied in the same way as here to see how their academic writing developed with better informed, deeper guidance. Other studies could explore the data/information already collected with different focuses. One could be the tutor perspective, another could be a greater focus on the student texts with, for example, linguistic and discourse analyses exploring change in writing products over time on the programme. A content analysis could be made of tutor feedback (as was done, for example, in Woodward-Kron 2004 and Wingate 2010). In a longer study, intertextual tracing (as recommended in Prior 2004) could be done of writing,

feedback and interviews. This would help 'to locate influences on and changes in the writers' texts and textual knowledge over time' (Tardy 2005:329).

The methodology could be changed to draw on the cognitive research tool of think aloud protocols (eg Flower and Hayes 1981), with writers verbalising thoughts as they write. Collecting data on all of a student's work on Masters assignments in this way would be very difficult, because of the time and logistics involved, but students could be asked to think aloud as they read feedback, giving insights into their immediate reactions and understanding. Alternatively, the researcher could be different: a fellow student, or someone not involved in the programme under scrutiny might reveal different perspectives.

Going beyond this context, the level or academic discipline of students studying the same modules on one programme could be changed, or the context could be broadened to the new EAP context of an English-medium university in an outer circle (Kachru 1992) context (such Nottingham's Ningbo University in China). Developing student writers' range and use of literacy brokers in other academic contexts should also be studied, as these are a major, and unresearched, influence.

6.7 Pedagogic suggestions

Undertaking this study while being involved in running these programmes on campus and at a distance has raised my awareness of the huge demands that are made of our students, and how much we expect them to know already on arrival or to find out for themselves. This is on long-standing MA programmes with international reputations, praised by External Examiners and Periodic Reviewers as being very supportive. The challenges faced by these students are not, therefore, because the programmes are lacking in comparison with others in the sector. It is because, as Lillis (2001) and Paltridge (2002) point out, 'what to experienced academics might seem like common knowledge, to a great number of their students... is not' (ibid:22). Studies such as this one reveal issues surrounding the 'common knowledge' within programmes that new Masters students have a very short time to find out. As a result, the pedagogic suggestions that can be made may be of use to a wider academic community than the Department in this multiple case study. Figure 4.1 reveals three groups of students at the end of the programme in terms of performance. However, a different tri-partite grouping emerges from Section 6.3 in terms of participant satisfaction and development as writers here:

1. disappointed students (Barbara and Razvan), who arrived with the necessary academic skills in place and did not develop greatly beyond the level of content knowledge and broadening of existing academic literacy skills;
2. highly satisfied students (Jun, Timur and Jinko), who arrived without the necessary knowledge-base and/or skills but who could identify what their challenges were and then rise to them. They developed and succeeded, and graduated feeling transformed, and delighted with their achievement;
3. the failing student (Pola), who did not identify what was required and did not develop.

Pedagogic suggestions will look at ways of improving the programme for these three groups.

6.7.1 Developing a community

The first group of students, in particular, suffered from the lack of a stronger community, perhaps akin to a community of practice (CoP), as discussed in Section 2.4, but all students could have benefitted from this. If such is to develop here, and to include more than students, it needs input from professionals in the field – as is done in MBA and Law programmes, for example, where some modules are taught by experts from the professions that students aspire to enter/return to. To my knowledge this is not done on any equivalent applied linguistics programme in Britain. Whilst many programme directors have relevant applied linguistics' backgrounds, having taught English or worked as translators, for example, before taking up University posts, this experience is not current and is no longer their professional focus. Without changing programme curriculums, I would therefore advocate input from expert professionals (such as language school teachers and materials developers). Team teaching by a University lecturer and an external professional would ensure cross-fertilisation of ideas, linking theory and practice, and 'quality control', in terms of defining and meeting academic standards.

The student body needs to have responsibility for establishing a community too. One issue here is recruitment; the plethora of ELT Masters programmes has meant relatively few students on each. Where there are several Barbaras and Razvans on a programme, they will find each other and work together. Where there are very few, as happened here, they can feel isolated. However, a community is rarely a grouping of kindred spirits, and the concept of CoP may, in fact, be part of the solution to the small

student intake dilemma. This solution was alluded to in 6.2 above, in terms of students with stronger backgrounds or former students taking the lead, and being the 'more expert' others. This would need sensitive handling, however, as students do not arrive expecting to help/be helped in this way.

6.7.2 Promoting collaborative learning

One clue to dealing with the above problem seems to lie in the small study group some of these participants set up independently of the programme. This potentially represents Illeris' collaborative learning 'where a group of people try and learn something together' (2007:121). This could be incorporated into these MAs more formally, with modelling of, then practice in, more collaborative group behaviour in class. For short one-year programmes, such as UK Masters, this would require more Term 1 seminar-based sessions than is currently the case on the Reading MAs studied here.

Encouraging more collaboration would help the second group of students more easily achieve their goals. In collaboration students could take it in turns to lead in-class discussions in pairs/small groups, beginning with stronger students who are also familiar with collaborative learning, but over the first term including everyone. This would promote Bandura's (1994) social modelling and, with successful presentations, mastery experiences. The third 'group' would also benefit. More interaction with other students would have helped Pola see what the required level was. Group presentations and discussion of key sources would build up students' experience of critical reading and of discussion grounded in their own experience, which were both areas these students struggled with in their Term 1 writing. Such discussion would allow for some students' preference for spoken over written communication. It would also ensure everyone was part of the group that discussed readings, not just those who chose to meet, so preventing the development of group outsiders as happened here with Pola and Timur. Presentation bibliographies could be encouraged to extend beyond the class reading lists and core textbooks, thereby making weaker students aware of the need to read more widely.

The practice of group collaboration could then be extended to writing, with students being encouraged, at the very least, to read each others' work. This could be before submission, to give feedback and to show weaker students what others were producing. More formal programme expectation of students reading and giving

feedback on each others' work (following set guidelines) might have prevented two problems that arose here. Firstly, with a specified classmate as her pre-submission reader Pola might have realised that the 'random people' who read her work were not the best literacy brokers. Secondly, if peer-review had been built into the programme, it would have been more controlled than Jun's demands on Barbara, and both of them would have realised what was a reasonable expectation of help from a classmate. Students would also have seen that it was not just a one-way flow, that they had a responsibility to help each other.

6.7.3 Broadening genre awareness

Going beyond reading of other students' work, collaborative writing of coursework could be built into the programme, at the same time as broadening the range of assessment types beyond the essay. So, for example, students could work together to produce a summary of literature in a particular topic area. This broadening would need careful handling as all students in this study took some time to appreciate what one core genre involved (namely, the academic coursework essay at this level) and all students then struggled with other genres (research reports, exam answers and the dissertation). Increased support for academic writing would have to involve students studying examples of suitable texts in a limited range of genres, not the 10-12 text types experienced by Casanave's (2002) Masters students (Section 2.3.2). The authors of these example texts should be previous students on their programme, so situated in the same context. Whole-group writing sessions could include discussion of a range of assignments illustrating the different mark bands, with students marking assignments by specific criteria, before comparison with actual feedback and grades given. This would have the effect of focusing students' attention on the marking criteria from the beginning – something even strong students, such as Razvan, did not do enough in Term 1.

Section 2.2 above included reference to Johns and Swales' 2002 four layers of expectations that affect genre requirements for American doctoral students. This study suggests these are relevant in this British taught Masters context too, as Table 6.1 indicates.

Table 6.1: Pedagogic implications arising from Johns and Swales' (2002) layers of expectations

Layers of expectations	Issues noted in this study	Examples of pedagogic implications
1. University-wide expectations of scholarship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' bemusement at the University grading scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More class time going over the mark scheme, especially on the return of first pieces of assessed work
2. Departmental/ discipline expectations of appropriate topics and appropriate claims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of assignment topic choice • Learning that professional and language learning experiences counted as evidence to draw upon in writing • Learning how to do this appropriately • Learning how to draw on reading appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured, discourse analysis of assignment topics in content classes before writing begins, to highlight conventions and important content areas • Discussion of when/how to draw on their teaching/learning experience • Discussion of examples of different uses of reading (successful and unsuccessful), including choice/length of quotations • Analysis of feedback on successful and unsuccessful assignments, to help all students identify the 'rules of the game' (Casanave 2002) • Explaining feedback, so that students do not see it as idiosyncratic to each tutor
3. Subfield expectations re methodologies, approaches and rhetorical options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' need to learn that MA assignments for different modules could represent different genres, with different expectations of how to meet core criteria 	<p>Same as above, but</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • highlighting differences between assignments in different sub-disciplines (ie modules), and what is new about each specific assignment. • This means tutors must be aware of the format of assignments already written for other modules.
4. Personal expectations: the need to consider support-givers and examiners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' need to take note of advice from module tutors, in general and with regard to their specific outline • The need to exploit the more generic advice from the departmental study skills/in-session tutor • The need to bear their readers (tutors and examiners) in mind more when writing • Differing use of appropriate/inappropriate literacy brokers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental discussion (among staff and with students) about differences in expectations across modules and tutors • Clearer explanations of relevance of support sessions from the beginning • Discussion of readers in assignment documents, briefings and feedback • Discussion with students of readers' expectations • Analysis of assignment marking criteria • Discussion with students of helpful/unhelpful literacy brokers

6.7.4 Departmental support

It is clear that these suggestions require more academic support than the current limited Departmental study skills sessions on this programme. As discussed above (in Sections 2.3.3 and 5.9), such support needs to be discipline-specific. This study shows (in feedback on A1) that even academic colleagues in the same department give less useful feedback on a topic outside their specific area of expertise than the subject-specialist. Students here clearly realised this and, despite their stated expectations on arrival, none chose personal tutors as literacy brokers, preferring instead to consult module tutors. This was encouraged by the programme, with feedback on outlines given by module tutors, but students could have also chosen to consult personal tutors on their writing and they did not. This study indicates that this was a wise choice, and reinforces the advice of Wingate (2006:457) that academic writing support should be 'built in' to the subject teaching.

This need for subject-specialist advice may explain the students' lack of engagement with Nicky's whole-group, technical study skills classes. She was, however, well-placed to give support as in-session tutor to students with low levels of English and weak writing skills. She was exactly the kind of literacy broker a CoP would encourage, being a graduate of the programme. Feedback on these classes was positive, but not all students who needed such help attended them, and so initial briefings must ensure targeted students appreciate what is on offer in time.

6.7.5 Academic writing acculturation

There is, however, still room for whole-group discussion of academic literacy and current practice is heavily influenced by this study. The sessions are no longer labelled 'Study Skills', with the normative connotations noted by Lea and Street (1998); instead we use the more contextual, and hopefully transformative, label 'Becoming an MA student on these programmes'. These sessions use material from this study (see Appendix 23 for examples), and future materials will include presentation of advice from successful students in interviews and discussion by students of successful/less successful personal characteristics (eg in/flexibility) and approaches to study (eg seeing it as transformative) through exploration of a range of quotes from the data. We will also look at the range of different strategies these students adopted and identify those which helped and hindered.

As discussed in 6.7.4, embedding writing support within modules is clearly important, but it is also problematic, for reasons Wingate (2006) identifies: academic staff may argue they lack time to train students in academic writing for their module, and/or that it is not their responsibility to do so. This suggests the use of online academic writing support, with module-specific tasks and guidance students can refer to. However, experience in conducting this study resulted in the dropping of my earlier online learning focus because online learning clearly had very little impact here, although online resources and tools were available. This suggests that any such resources must also be introduced in class or within distance module materials by the module tutor, and their rationale/use clearly shown.

This study has shown the need to help students work with two important genres, but which are unrecognised as such, in University settings: task rubrics and written feedback on their work. I now incorporate attention to both of these in my teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Beginning with tasks, students clearly benefit from discourse analysis of rubrics, identifying key aspects, (as in Hamp-Lyons and Heasley 1987 for essay questions: topic, focus, comment, viewpoint). In addition, rubrics include marking criteria, and these need unpacking/explaining. With regard to feedback, Jinko and Jun's habit of highlighting positive and/or negative aspects on feedback sheets is good practice. It makes the student focus on the feedback, noticing key points, which is so essential for uptake, and it gives them a quick summary to refer to when writing subsequently. In addition, if they bring these highlighted texts to tutorials, the tutor can see, albeit it at a crude, binary level, how correctly the feedback is being interpreted. A session doing this that I piloted with recent students at the dissertation write-up stage is included in Appendix 23. Feedback reported a better understanding of the marking criteria and a clearer idea of what to include in dissertation sub-sections, with comments such as:

- 'I learned that we should compare my findings with those of others'
- 'I learned what I missed in my literature review' (a draft of which had just been submitted)
- 'even dissertation with top marks have bad points and even bad dissertation are not that bad.'

6.7.6 Staff input to student writer development

This study has given some insights into how staff can best use their limited time in helping students improve their writing. Clearly this guidance is crucial, as module tutors were the only literacy brokers all these students had in common. The importance of explaining rubrics and criteria thoroughly has been mentioned. The practice of giving feedback is clearly crucial, as this is the main resource for student writers to learn what their assessors think of their work. The feedback these staff gave was detailed and mostly understood by the students, although face-to-face meetings to explain feedback would be beneficial, especially, but not exclusively, for weak students. What was more problematic was one focus of the feedback: the audience. If we want students to produce reader-based texts, feedback must draw their attention to reader expectations. At the most basic level, this means the focus should not all be on what 'you' did or 'you' need to do. Instead there must be more reference to 'the reader' and/ or to 'I' in feedback, and not just to mitigate bad news. In addition, feedback must include comments on positive points as well as problems, so that struggling students are encouraged to continue.

6.7.7 Identifying struggling students

A further use of this study is in identifying new students who will struggle on the programme. This is not, I now realise, in terms of their background (which is used to select them, after all), but in terms of their expectations on arrival and the commitment they show to their studies. This allows earlier identification than before of potentially failing or disappointed students. In the past, problems only become apparent half way through the second term, when all Term 1 assessment had been returned. By then it was usually too late for such students; they were negative and demotivated in their attitude, either blaming the programme or themselves for their failure/disappointment. By using the insights from this study, it is easier to identify and try to help students such as Pola in Term 1, by raising their awareness of programme requirements and the effort required. High-fliers can be encouraged to see how they are being developed/challenged and what they can do to push themselves, and others, further.

6.8 Conclusion

The Literature Review (Chapter 2) highlighted the divide between two dominant approaches to writing in HE: EAP and academic literacies. Wingate and Tribble (forthcoming) call upon the two movements to learn from each other and to adopt a

pedagogy that benefits all students, not just those seen as deficit (in terms of international students with limited English or non-traditional home students). This study lends support to their argument. It is clear that developing writing in an academic setting requires more than generic language skills; it demands context-specific understanding of how knowledge is formed and presented. All six case studies here (but especially Pola's) show the truth of this claim. In addition, situated academic literacy is a challenge for NESs as well as for NNEs.

While the EAP movement has much to offer in terms of existing writing pedagogies, such as process and genre, it can be criticised for being too text-oriented. However, this foundation has validity for these students, who spent a great deal of their time grappling with text, both receptively and productively. Instruction that helped them meet these challenges could only be beneficial.

The academic literacies movement, though lacking in pedagogy, provides a social practice view of writing, which this study supports. The writing these students did was within a contextual framework that encompassed them (though, mainly, as individuals and not as a group) and their tutors. The study shows that writing cannot be taught outside the context in which it is produced, beyond a certain, technical level - an argument for writing instruction within the disciplines. A soft version of the movement's ideological perspective seems advisable. As suggested in Costino and Hyon (2011) and Casanave (2010), this does not require students to take a stance against the existing status quo in terms of discursive norms and power relations within universities, which none of the students in this study wanted to do. However, it does mean that students can be helped by being made aware that those norms and relations exist and what they mean for them as developing writers.

This EdD thesis has explored the experiences of six students as they produced their first pieces of academic writing on professionally-oriented, post-experience MA programmes, and as they reflected on their writing experiences over the whole year, and one year on. They are, of course, unique individuals, but some patterns have emerged in how they can be described, both individually, with a characteristic profile, and in terms of groupings by their expectations, approaches and use of resources. The insights thus gained can be used to help future students develop as academic writers, be they on campus like our six here or, like John, the student who e-mailed for advice quoted in Chapter 1, at a distance. In addition, the findings of this study can be drawn

on in other contexts to inform colleagues as they help new students acculturate to their academic community. Timur's experience sums up what developing writers can achieve, going from 'I was in the middle of nowhere when I came in this MA programme because I didn't know how to write academic writing (s4i3:8) to 'I know that if I have enough time I can do anything' (s4i5:7) a year later.

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Appendix 1: MAELT and MAAL programme specifications

MA in English Language Teaching (MAELT)

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading Faculty of Arts & Humanities
Programme length:	12 months (full-time)
Programme Director:	X
Board of Studies:	MA in English Language Teaching

Summary of programme aims

The MA in English Language Teaching (MAELT) programme is designed especially for those currently working or intending to work in the field of English as a second / foreign language, and has courses in language description, and in pedagogy-and administration-related fields with this audience in mind. Students are given an up-to-date knowledge of principles and issues in areas of importance to language learning and assessment, and investigate their practical implications. They receive a thorough grounding that will help them to develop their career as a teacher, trainer, researcher or manager.

Transferable skills

In addition to those skills which all students are expected to have developed by the end of their degree programme, it is envisaged that MAELT students will have developed or enhanced the following more specific transferable skills:

- analysing and categorising – and hence evaluating – language at different levels;
- designing curricula and syllabi on the basis of data provided;
- synthesising, analysing and evaluating information and theoretical claims in specialist literature;
- giving well-organised, clear oral presentations to a specialist or semi-specialist audience;
- producing well-structured and clearly-written academic and professional papers;
- collaborating with others in research, problem-solving and/or the development of plans and recommendations;
- using time efficiently while carrying out reading, research and related writing activities.
- (for dissertation-track students) designing and conducting a research project, including a clear statement of research aims, identifying and searching relevant bibliographical sources, conducting an empirical or library-based investigation, and analysing and interpreting results in relation to established theory and professional concerns;
- (for portfolio-track students) observing critically and analysing classroom events, designing lesson plans and materials for language learners, delivering and evaluating micro-teaching practice sessions.

Programme content

The following profile states which modules must be taken (the compulsory part), together with lists of modules from which students must make a selection (the option modules).

The MAELT programme allows students some freedom to suit their own needs, but with a shared foundation of compulsory core modules. The latter combine with option modules which may be selected from a range of available subjects within the School. A special feature of the programme is that it has three tracks, one with a dissertation (referred to as the 'dissertation track'), another with modules in place of the dissertation (the 'taught track'), and a third by way of a language teaching portfolio (the 'portfolio track'). In addition, there is a distance study version of the taught track and dissertation tracks permitting study entirely away from Reading, or a combination of distance and campus-based study. [A separate programme specification is available for the distance study programme.]

The **compulsory modules** are divided into three areas: English language description, language teaching/learning, and (for dissertation track) research, or (for portfolio track) teaching observation and practice. The English language description modules run in the Autumn term, and language learning and teaching modules in the Autumn and Spring terms. The research area comprises a non-assessed module in research design and basic statistical methods (taught in the Spring Term) and the dissertation, of 15,000 words, on a topic in the field of English Language Teaching, broadly defined. Research for, and the writing of, the dissertation take place mainly in the Summer term and the Summer vacation. The teaching portfolio comprises a number of assessments related to the observation of classroom practice, design and development of language teaching material, and reflective accounts of experiences delivering materials in classroom contexts.

The **option modules** cover a wide range of pure and applied areas (with an emphasis on the latter) and, together with the dissertation, provide flexibility and the opportunity for specialisation in the greater part of the programme.

The following profile states which modules must be taken (the compulsory modules), together with lists of modules from which students must make a selection (the option modules). In consultation with their programme adviser, students must choose 3 option modules (each of 20 credits) if following the dissertation or portfolio tracks, and 6 option modules (each of 20 credits) if following the taught track, to make a total of 180 credits when combined with the other programme modules and the dissertation or teaching portfolio (where relevant). The number of credits for each module is shown after its title.

Masters Level (three terms)		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
<i>Compulsory modules</i>			
Autumn term			
LSMPH1	<i>Foundation Phonetics & Phonology*</i>	10	M
LSMDG	<i>Descriptive English Grammar</i>	10	M
* Portfolio-track students who have studied Phonetics & Phonology at University-level before may choose to study LSMDT instead of LSMPH1, with permission from the Programme Director.			
For Taught-track and Dissertation track:			
LSMDT	<i>Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers</i>	10	M
LSMSL	<i>Second Language Learning Principles</i>	20	M
For Portfolio-track			
LSMELT	<i>Core Issues in Language Teaching</i>	10	M
LSMSLT	<i>Second Language Teaching and Learning</i>	20	M
Spring term			
For Taught-track and Dissertation-track			
LSMLC	<i>Language Curriculum Design</i>	10	M
For Portfolio track			
LSMTLS	<i>Teaching the Language Skills</i>	10	M
Spring and Summer term and Summer vacation			
For Dissertation-track only			
LSMDIF	<i>Research Design and Dissertation (MAELT)</i>	60	M
For Portfolio-track only			
LSMDIP	<i>Language Teaching Portfolio</i>	60	M
<i>Option modules</i>			
Students select <u>three</u> (dissertation-track and portfolio-track) or <u>six</u> (taught-track) options from the following.			
For Taught-track and Dissertation-track:			
Spring term			
LSMTP	<i>Language Testing Principles</i>	20	M
LSMWL	<i>Written Language (Reading & Writing)</i>	20	M
LSMCA	<i>Corpora in Applied Linguistics</i>	20	M
LSMES	<i>English for Specific Purposes</i>	20	M
LSMEPH	<i>Experimental Phonology for Language Teachers</i>	20	M

Summer Term			
LSMIB	<i>Issues in Bilingualism</i>	20	M
LSMIC	<i>Intercultural Communication</i>	20	M
LSMSP	<i>Spoken Language (Listening & Speaking)</i>	20	M
LSMIT	<i>Information Technology for Language Teaching</i>	20	M
For Portfolio-track			
Autumn Term			
LSMCL	<i>Child Language Development</i>	20	M
Spring term			
LSMEW	<i>English in the World</i>	20	M
LSMTP	<i>Language Testing Principles</i>	20	M
LSMCA	<i>Corpora in Applied Linguistics</i>	20	M
LSMES	<i>English for Specific Purposes</i>	20	M
Summer Term			
LSMIB	<i>Issues in Bilingualism</i>	20	M
LSMIC	<i>Intercultural Communication</i>	20	M
LSMIT	<i>Information Technology for Language Teaching</i>	20	M

The assessment of those modules running entirely in the Autumn term will be by assignments and an examination to be completed either before or over the Christmas vacation; assessment of those modules running entirely, or completed, in the Spring term, will be by assignments to be completed over the Easter vacation. Modules running entirely, or completed, in the Summer term will be assessed by assignments to be submitted by the beginning of the fourth week of the summer vacation. The dissertation / teaching portfolio will be submitted by 21st September, unless a student has had to resubmit failed module assessments. (See 2.5.4 below.)

Part-time/Modular arrangements

The programme is offered on a part-time basis, normally over a period of up to 24 months, and on a modular basis normally over a period of 3 to 4 years, but with a maximum of 6 years. These arrangements are normally as follows:

Part-time (24 months):

Year 1: 3 compulsory taught modules and 1-2 option modules (dissertation and portfolio track) or 2-3 option modules (taught track);

Year 2: 2-3 compulsory taught modules (including Research Design, if taken) and 1-2 option modules + dissertation (dissertation track) or portfolio (portfolio-track), or 3-4 option modules (taught track).

Modular (3-4 years)

Years 1-3: Dissertation and portfolio track: 1-2 compulsory modules p.a., including Research Design in year 3 for dissertation track, and 1 option module p.a.;

Taught track: 1-2 compulsory modules p.a., and 1-2 option modules p.a.;

Year 4: Dissertation and portfolio track: dissertation/teaching portfolio;

Taught track: 1-2 option modules.

Note: Dissertation-track students may switch from full-time to part-time status at the end of the Spring term to complete the dissertation. They will then have one year to complete the dissertation, and any option modules not taken by that point.

MA in Applied Linguistics (MAAL)

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading Faculty of Arts & Humanities
Programme length:	12 months (full-time)
Programme Director:	X
Board of Studies:	MA in Applied Linguistics

Summary of programme aims

The MAAL is designed as a programme of continuing development for language professionals, especially those working in the field of language teaching. Core modules are offered in language description, language pedagogy and language learning, and students are given an up-to-date knowledge of principles and issues of importance within the broad field of study of language in use. Through a choice of options, students also have access to a further range of pedagogy and non-pedagogy-related areas of interest. They receive a thorough grounding that will help them to develop their career in a wide range of language related professions.

Transferable skills

In addition to those skills which all students are expected to have developed by the end of their degree programme, it is envisaged that MAAL students will have developed or enhanced the following more specific transferable skills:

- analysing and categorising – and hence evaluating – language at different levels;
- designing curricula and syllabi on the basis of data provided;
- synthesising, analysing and evaluating information and theoretical claims in specialist literature;
- giving well-organised, clear oral presentations to a specialist or semi-specialist audience;
- producing well-structured and clearly-written academic and professional papers;
- collaborating with others in research, problem-solving and/or the development of plans and recommendations;
- designing and conducting a research project, including a clear statement of research aims, identifying and searching relevant bibliographical sources, conducting an empirical or library-based investigation, and analysing and interpreting results in relation to established theory and professional concerns;
- using time efficiently while carrying out reading, research and related writing activities.

Programme content

The MAAL programme allows students some freedom to suit their own needs, but with a shared foundation of compulsory core modules. The latter combine with option modules which may be selected from a range of available subjects within the School.

The **compulsory modules** are divided into four areas: language description (with specific reference to English), sociolinguistics, language teaching and learning and research. The language description, language teaching and learning, and sociolinguistics modules run in the Autumn term. The research area comprises a non-assessed module in research design and basic statistical methods (taught in the Spring Term) and the dissertation, of 15,000 words, on a topic in the field Applied Linguistics, broadly defined. Research for, and the writing of, the dissertation take place mainly in the Summer term and the Summer vacation.

The **option modules** cover a wide range of linguistic and applied areas offered within the School and, together with the dissertation, provide flexibility and the opportunity for specialisation.

The following list specifies the obligatory (total 120 credits) and option modules (total 60 credits). In consultation with their programme adviser, students must choose 3 option modules (each of 20 credits).

Masters Level (three terms)		<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
<i>Compulsory modules</i>			
Autumn term			
LSMPH1	<i>Foundation Phonetics & Phonology</i>	10	M
LSMGL	<i>English Grammar and Lexis</i>	10	M
LSMDT	<i>Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers</i>	10	M
LSMSL	<i>Second Language Learning Principles</i>	20	M
LSMSO	<i>Sociolinguistics</i>	10	M
Spring and Summer term and Summer vacation			
LSMDIA	<i>Research Design & Dissertation (MAAL)</i>	60	M

Option modules

Students select three 20-credit options from the following (or two 20-credit modules and a pair of 10 credit Linguistics modules). An asterisk (*) indicates that the module will only be available to students with relevant teaching experience.

Autumn Term			
LSMCL	<i>Child Language Development</i>	20	M

Spring term				
*	LSMLCL	<i>Language Curriculum Design</i>	20	M
	LSMTP	<i>Language Testing Principles</i>	20	M
*	LSMWL	<i>Written Language (Reading & Writing)</i>	20	M
	LSMCA	<i>Corpora in Applied Linguistics</i>	20	M
	LSMES	<i>English for Specific Purposes</i>	20	M
	LSMEW	<i>English in the World</i>	20	M
	LSMPL	<i>Psycholinguistics</i>	20	M
	LSMEPH	<i>Experimental Phonology for Language Teachers</i>	20	M
Summer Term				
	LSMIB	<i>Issues in Bilingualism</i>	20	M
*	LSMSP	<i>Spoken Language (Listening & Speaking)</i>	20	M
*	LSMIT	<i>Information Technology for Language Teaching</i>	20	M
	LSMIC	<i>Intercultural Communication</i>	20	M

The assessment of those modules running entirely in the Autumn term will be by assignments and an examination to be completed either before or over the Christmas vacation; assessment of those modules running entirely, or completed, in the Spring term, will be by assignments to be completed over the Easter vacation. Modules running entirely, or completed, in the Summer term will be assessed by assignments to be submitted by the beginning of the fourth week of the summer vacation. The dissertation will be submitted by 21st September, unless a student has had to resubmit failed module assessments. (See 2.5.4 below.)

Part-time/Modular arrangements

The programme is offered on a part-time basis, normally over a period of up to 24 months, and on a modular basis normally over a period of 3 to 4 years, but with a maximum of 6 years.

The structure of these arrangements is as follows:

Part-time (24 months):

Year 1: 3 compulsory taught modules and 1-2 option modules;

Year 2: 3 compulsory taught modules (including Research Design) and 1-2 option modules + dissertation.

Modular (3-4 years)

Years 1-3: 2 core modules p.a., including Research Design in year 3, and 1 option module p.a.;

Year 4: dissertation.

Note: students may switch from full-time to part-time status at the end of the Spring term to complete the dissertation. They will then have one year to complete the dissertation, and any option modules not taken by that point.

Appendix 2: Pre-Course Assignment (A1)

School of Languages and European Studies, University of Reading:
Dept. of Applied Linguistics

MA in ELT (*Dissertation and Taught Tracks*) / MAAL: Second Language
Learning Principles (SLLP)

Non-assessed assignment

To encourage you to do the pre-course reading for the above modules, and to give you some practice in academic writing, and some early feedback on your performance, we would like you to write a short essay (1000-1500 words) on the following topic:

Is learning a second language* (L2) like learning a first language† (L1)? Discuss the similarities and differences as seen by different theorists, and try to draw conclusions. You can draw on your own experience of L2 learning as well.

(*eg English as a Foreign Language, or, if you are an English speaker, another foreign language such as French. † ie your mother tongue)

To tackle this topic you should read the materials suggested in the pre-course reading list for these modules, focusing especially on the chapters mentioned below:

- Ellis, R. 1997. *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: OUP (especially chapters 3-7)
- Johnson, K. 2001. *An Introduction to Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. London: Longman. (especially chapters 2-7)
- Lightbown, P. and N. Spada. 2006. *How Languages are Learned*. Oxford: OUP (especially chapters 1-3)

Please note:

- a) This assignment will not contribute to your course grade, but you are required to do it.
- b) You should hand it in to the Course administrator by noon on Thursday, 30th October in the Autumn term.
- c) Your personal tutor will look at your essay, and give you feedback on it, especially in relation to the way in which you have presented your discussion.
- d) You can start on it immediately, but you are not required to do so. If you do not wish to purchase all the books listed above, you can borrow them from the University library when you come to Reading. However, the number of copies available in the library will be limited. You can, of course, use other sources as well.
- e) You must acknowledge properly all references to what you have read, whether they are summarised in your own words, or direct quotations. You will get further advice on this at Reading.

Appendix 3: Insessional English course outline

Oct 8th

Writing Skills: answering an assignment question

- Characteristics of a good essay (with reference to feedback forms from previous student essays)
- Unpacking the title (with reference to Steve's suggestions given on his handout: *Second Language Learning Principles Assignment*)
- 1st draft Plan of Work

Oct 15th Theory

Reading skills: selecting from a booklist

- Evaluation of potential relevance to the essay
 1. general overview of the issues or
 2. case studies / research papers / particular theoretical perspective
 3. downloading articles from Databases
 4. using Endnote

Writing skills: paragraph structure

- Use of topic sentences and concluding sentences
- Pick up on language errors for corrective feedback

Oct 22st

Reading skills: reading more closely, critical thinking

- Identifying opposing points of view
- Note-taking skills
- Clarifying your own question for your assignment

Finish Detailed Plan

Oct 29th

Reading => Writing

- Paraphrasing
- Summarising

Nov 5th

Reading => Writing

- Synthesis of several articles into one paragraph
- Reporting verbs
- Use of ATHENS

First Draft Lit Review

Nov 12st Practice

Reading Skills

- Case studies / examples

Writing skills

- Defining your teaching / learning context

Nov 19th

Language input and practice
(with reference to common errors arising)

First Outline Draft

Nov 26th

Language input and practice
(with reference to common errors arising)

Revise Outline Draft

Dec 3rd

Writing skills: editing

- Peer review and self-editing
- Check back with Steve's advice / Study skills booklet
- The bibliography

Dec 10th? t.b.c.

Feedback on the course

Next steps: Writing Advisory Service

Write up essay!

Appendix 4: Mark scheme descriptors in Student Handbook

	Coverage / understanding of topic, and breadth of reading	Argumentation and application of information	Coherence and expression
Distance	The essay fully addresses the topic set. There is indication of wide reading, involving both material provided by the lecturer and a range of key primary and secondary sources in the literature. There are no errors of understanding, and the writer shows the ability to find links between different sources in the literature throughout the essay.	Points are clearly presented, terms are defined and claims are thoroughly supported through careful argumentation and references to the literature. The writer shows considerable ability to evaluate theory and research from the literature, and to relate these to professional practice where relevant. The essay is sophisticated and authoritative in its argumentation, and is reminiscent of what might appear in an academic journal.	The writer is sensitive to the needs of the reader in presenting and sequencing the content of the essay in a clear and accessible way. Organisation into sections and paragraphs is appropriate and helpful, and the writing is articulate and expressive. All the conventions of academic writing, including referencing and bibliographical presentation, are followed.
Merit	The essay may omit one or two key points which a reader would expect to be covered, but coverage of the topic is still substantial. There is indication of fairly wide reading involving both lecturer-provided and outside material, including some primary sources. There are no major errors of understanding, though there may be one or two minor ones. Throughout the essay, the writer shows the ability to find links between different sources in the literature.	Points are clearly presented, most terms are defined and most claims are supported through careful argumentation, though some unsupported statements may be made. The writer shows the ability to evaluate theory and research from the literature, and to relate these to professional practice where relevant. The essay shows signs of journal –level sophistication, but this is not sustained throughout.	There may be some functionless repetition and awkward side- or back-tracking, but over most of the paper the development of the ideas will be such that the reader can follow the thread and relate parts to each other and to the whole. Overall organisation into sections is appropriate. There may be some infelicities or ambiguities in the expression which may involve poor use of grammar and vocabulary, but these do not frequently obscure the meaning. Academic referencing will be mainly appropriate, though occasional inconsistencies and errors will be allowed.
Pass	The essay contains several key points, but may also reveal one or two important gaps and contain irrelevant material. Reading for the essay is limited to lecturer-provided material and a few major secondary sources and possibly one or two primary sources. There may be at least one major error of understanding, and several minor ones, but overall, the writer understands the relevant background material for the essay. The ability to make links between sources will usually be limited at C level, but there will be some evidence of it.	Most points are clearly presented, though some ambiguities may also be present. There is a mixture of supported / well-argued points, and unsupported / weakly argued ones. There may not be much evidence of critical evaluative ability, but there will be some evidence of the ability to apply theory to practice, where relevant. There should be some evidence that the writer has studied and understood the module, and is not merely resorting to ‘folk wisdom’, or regurgitation of lecture notes or other sources.	There may be some functionless repetition and awkward side- or back-tracking, but over most of the paper the development of the ideas will be such that the reader can follow the thread and relate parts to each other and to the whole. Overall organisation into sections is appropriate. There may be some infelicities or ambiguities in the expression which may involve poor use of grammar and vocabulary, but these do not frequently obscure the meaning. Academic referencing will be mainly appropriate, though occasional inconsistencies and errors will be allowed.

(Continued on next page)

	Coverage / understanding of topic, and breadth of reading	Argumentation and application of information	Coherence and expression
Below threshold standard	Several key points of information relevant to the essay are missing, making for only partial and / or simplistic coverage of the topic. There will often be a considerable amount of irrelevant, or poorly integrated, material. Reading is usually confined to lecturer-provided material and a few secondary sources. There are fairly frequent misunderstandings, giving the impression of poor grasp of key concepts. The writer tends to summarise sources without making necessary links between them.	Weak argumentation and poor support of points tend to predominate. There will probably be no evidence of critical evaluative ability. Discussion of practice will usually pay little or no attention to the theoretical points raised in the essay, and will often give the impression of not being based on study of the module in question.	The text structure will often be difficult to follow because of poor linking of parts to each other and to the argument as a whole. There will be organisation into sections, but these will often not be appropriate or helpful. Expression on the whole is unclear and difficult to follow, and this may be due to inaccurate use of grammar and/or vocabulary. Referencing will show some understanding of academic conventions, but will also betray considerable carelessness and / or inconsistency.
Unsatisfactory	Material of major importance is omitted, and the essay fails to address key aspects of the topic. As a result, coverage of the topic is extremely limited. There will often be a considerable amount of irrelevant, or poorly integrated, material. Reading is usually confined to lecturer-provided material and a few secondary sources. There are very frequent misunderstandings, giving the impression of very poor grasp of key concepts. The writer tends to summarise sources without making necessary links between them.	Claims appear to be uninformed by module content and reading, and references to sources are rare. There is no evidence of critical evaluative ability, and much of the argument consists of poorly integrated regurgitation of module material or secondary sources. Discussion of practice will be absent, or give the impression of not being based on study of the module in question.	The essay is made up of unrelated parts with no underlying argument. The reader has major difficulty in following the thread of the essay. The expression is such that the writer appears to be ill-suited to language teaching. This will often be due to inaccurate use of grammar and/or vocabulary. Referencing shows no understanding of academic conventions.

Note: These descriptions are intended as guidelines only. Lecturers will give appropriate weighting to certain features in response to the needs of particular assignments. A grade will be awarded on the basis of the description of that grade overall, and not on the evidence of one or two individual features. (ie An essay might meet some of the criteria for a Pass grade, but still be awarded a Narrow Fail on the basis of its overall quality.)

XX (2000), revised 2004

Appendix 5: Study Skills course outline

MAAL/MAELT

Study Skills Outline

Session 1:

- 1. What you bring to the programme**
- 2. Concerns about study at this level**
- 3. Managing your time**

Session 2:

- 1. Reading workshop**
- 2. Efficient note-taking**
- 3. Writing a bibliography**

Session 3:

- 1. Unpacking essay titles**
- 2. Writing an assignment**

Autumn 2008

Appendix 6: Module assignment rubrics: Discourse Analysis (A2) and Second Language Learning Principles (A3)

Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers

ASSESSMENT:

Consists of a take-home paper, to be submitted at the end of the module.

The word limit is 2,000-2,500 words.

Assignment Topics

Choose **one** of the following topics:

1. Analyse a piece of writing, an essay or other assignment written by your/other students or a published or unpublished text, which seems problematic in terms of cohesion. With reference to the work of Halliday and Hasan (1976) and others such as Hoey (1991), define and describe the categories of cohesive devices/ties and develop a framework of analysis. Which cohesive devices does the student/author appear to be able to use and which do they appear to have difficulty with/or do not use?
2. Analyse an extract of classroom talk or natural conversation between two speakers. Record the students/speakers, listen to the recording, and then transcribe a ten minute section. Carry out a conversation analysis. Focus on the organisation and distribution of turns; adjacency pairs or repair strategies used by the students/the teacher (or by the interlocutors if a naturalistic conversations) and any other conversational feature(s) that appeal to you/arise in the data. Compare your findings with those in the literature and discuss how such an analysis might inform teaching practice.
3. Survey at least three ELT texts that teach a specific speech act sequence, e.g. offering advice/expressing congratulations etc. As Boxer and Pickering (1995:44) (paper given in class), highlight any possible 'mismatch between data from spontaneous speech, and data that is contrived through the native speaker intuitions of the textbook author'. Highlight the differences between the intuitive samples offered to students in the texts and naturalistic data.
4. You wish to teach students to write in a particular genre. Select a genre, e.g. advertising; report writing. Discuss the communicative purpose, the linguistic and discourse features of this genre and briefly consider how you can creatively teach this genre using the communicative approach in the classroom.

5. Ask a friend to narrate a personal story to you (no longer than ten minutes). Transcribe the story and carry out a 'narrative analysis' detailing the 'abstract'; 'orientation'; 'complicating action'; 'result or resolution'; the 'evaluation' and the 'coda'. Discuss how such an analysis may inform the teaching of narration to students.

Assessment criteria

The following criteria will be used for marking your assignment:

1. *Demonstration of a range of relevant reading and understanding of issues.* i.e. you should make reference to those parts of the module which are relevant to your topic, plus to all other extended reading. Initially provide a brief but relevant literature review, providing the necessary background to your study and any work that has helped you to formulate your framework for analysis. You should read and reference at least five other sources beyond the module documents.

2. *Explanation of data.* Introduce the text(s) you are analysing: describe the method of data collection and the form of the data and any information in relation to the subjects involved. If gathering spoken language data, e.g. if you are analysing a conversation, describe how you gathered the data, what the data is (e.g. a transcription of a ten minute recording of a dinner conversation between a male aged forty-four and female aged forty-five). Also provide copies of any material, i.e. transcripts/written texts used for analysis, in an appendix.

3. *Clarity of analysis and critical evaluation of analytical approach taken.* It may be helpful to present some of your analysis in tabular form.

4. *Structure of Assignment.* Coherence of assignment, especially overall organisation and division into sections (where necessary) and paragraphs.

5. *Presentation, especially correctness of referencing and bibliography, quality of writing and transcription.* If you are analysing recorded spoken data, please include with your assignment a copy of the extracts you have transcribed and used.

Submission:

Essays are to be submitted on the day of the final class of the Autumn Term.

All submissions must be made to the MA secretary in order for them to be date-stamped. DO NOT SUBMIT THEM TO THE LECTURER.

MAELT/ MAAL: Second Language Learning Principles Assignment

Due:12th January, 2008 (Marked work will be returned 4 weeks after all the assignment essays have been handed to me by the Administrator)

No. of words: 3,000-4,000

General Requirements:

In this assignment you are expected to show that:

- a) you have done an appropriate amount of reading on a topic or range of topics.
This reading will normally comprise both secondary sources (eg textbooks and survey articles) and primary sources (eg key articles reporting research).
- b) you have thought about what you have read, and can link up information from different sources and standpoints and relate this information to your topic.
- c) you can evaluate what you have read and relate it to practical issues (ie, L2 teaching / learning approaches, methods and materials).
- d) you can organise an essay into appropriate sections and paragraphs, and can construct a coherent discussion which is easy for the reader to follow.
- e) you can use appropriate layout, quotation, referencing and bibliographical conventions, and can express yourself clearly and accurately.

The general topic is as follows:

Discuss how theories or principles of second language learning, backed by research, could influence the way in which you teach - or might teach - an L2 (eg English) in a situation with which you are familiar.

You are free to select any aspect of your work (past, present or future) to which you feel that language learning principles can be applied. (eg Course design; the teaching or practising of grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation; the teaching or practising of one or more of the skills. See the attached notes for further suggestions in this regard.)

You are also free to select a particular area of theory (or more than one area) which you feel is, or might be, especially important to you. (eg Theories relating to the general learning process; interlanguage theories; theories about the role of input, interaction and instruction in language learning; theories about the nature of learners' motivation or capabilities.)

In writing your paper, you will need to give a clear account of:

- the nature of the teaching situation you wish to focus on and of the learners involved (this should be relatively brief);
- the nature of, and support for, the theory / theories which you have selected;
- how this theory / these theories is / are related to the particular teaching approaches, methods or procedures which you have used, or envisage using.

SLLP Assignment: Notes for guidance

1. Necessary features

- a) A good survey of relevant literature, coherently organised and synthesised.
- b) Evidence of ability to evaluate theories, research and conclusions / recommendations in the literature on the basis of your reading and experience.
- c) Evidence of your ability to apply what you have read to particular teaching / learning situations.
- d) Adherence to normal academic conventions regarding presentation, referencing and bibliography. (Refer to the notes on pp 14-18 of the MA Handbook).
- e) Good overall organisation, clearly signposted (by means of headings and sub-headings where appropriate.)
- f) Clear, readable English: neither excessively informal nor clumsily stilted.
- g) Numbered pages and paragraphs.
- h) Within word limit. (See Handbook p 29.)
- i) Word-processed, with 1.5 line spacing.
- j) Handed in on time. Extensions are not given, except in cases of genuine emergency. (See your Handbook, pp 23-24). Computer-related excuses (eg 'I lost the file'; 'I can't get the computer to print my file') are not accepted. When using a word-processor:
 - Save your work regularly and frequently;
 - Make back-ups on separate disks after each work period;
 - Check the operation of the printer well in advance of production of the final version;
 - Establish an alternative computer+printer set-up which you can use in an emergency if your usual workstation is unavailable;
 - Leave yourself plenty of time (eg a full day) to print out your work, just in case you strike snags. It may be a good idea to print off draft versions as you go along, so that you have something to hand in if the computer or printer lets you down just before the deadline.

k) This essay is not to be submitted anonymously. (ie Please give your name.)

Note:

- 1. See the sample essay excerpts which I have posted in a separate folder in the Assignments section of the Blackboard site.**
- 2. Please e-mail me an outline of your assignment essay before you start writing to check that you are on the right track with regard to your plans.**

Appendix 7: Marking criteria for Assignments 1-3

Assignment 1: Pre-course assignment

1. Demonstration of relevant reading and understanding of issues.
2. Explanation of acquisition/learning theory & similarities/differences (as set in essay question).
3. Clarity of critical evaluation.
4. Coherence of assignment, especially overall organisation and division into sections and paragraphs.
5. Presentation, especially correctness of referencing and bibliography, and quality of writing.

Assignment 2: Discourse Analysis

1. Demonstration of relevant reading and understanding of issues.
2. Explanation of data and justification of analytical approach(es) used.
3. Clarity of evaluation of analytical approach(es) taken.
4. Coherence of assignment, especially overall organisation and division into sections and paragraphs.
5. Presentation, especially correctness of referencing and bibliography, and quality of writing (and transcription if necessary).

Assignment 3: Second Language Learning Principles

1. Demonstration of relevant reading and understanding of issues.
2. Ability to summarise and inter-relate sources and use in support of discussion.
3. Ability to evaluate reading and relate it to practice in the field of L2 learning/teaching.
4. Coherence of assignment, especially overall organisation and division into sections and paragraphs.
5. Presentation, especially correctness of referencing and bibliography, and quality of writing.

As presented on feedback sheets for A1-A3, and assignment rubric documents for A2 and A3.

Appendix 8: Examples of assignment feedback sheets

**The University of Reading
Department of Applied Linguistics
MA Feedback Sheet**

Module code		Module title	
Student	1	Programme	MAAL
Assignment task	Non-assessed	Date submitted	By 30/10/08
Marked by	Steve (Personal tutor)		
THIS MARK IS PROVISIONAL AND IS SUBJECT TO ADJUSTMENT IN EITHER DIRECTION BY THE EXAMINERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES			

	Ex	VG	G	F	P	Specific comments
Demonstration of relevant reading and understanding of issues.				√		A pity you didn't show more reading of pre-course list sources. (Only Ellis 1987). Not all the citations were particularly relevant to the topic.
Explanation of acquisition/learning theory & similarities/differences (as set in essay question).					√	See my general comment below.
Clarity of critical evaluation.			√			You are critically aware, but need to back up your statements with references to the sources more consistently.
Coherence of assignment, especially overall organisation and division into sections and paragraphs.					√	Paragraphs tend to be too long and heterogeneous in content. (eg para 2 on pp 1-2)
Presentation, especially correctness of referencing and bibliography, and quality of writing (and transcription if necessary).				√		Several bibliographical entries aren't correct/complete. Poor punctuation in places.
<p>Overall comments Please see comments below as well. (No.s refer to no.s in the margin of your text.) There is obvious potential and interest here, but you really haven't addressed the topic. You say <u>nothing</u> about learning a first language, so you don't tackle the issue of the similarities and differences of the two processes (L1 and L2). You write quite well at the sentence level, but need to be more careful in the way you structure your argument into, and within, paragraphs. Be careful with your punctuation of sentences.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An arresting introduction, but perhaps it doesn't focus strongly enough on the particular topic of this essay. 2. The argument is not very clear here. Does lack of information in the mind necessarily make language learning easier? Also this looks rather a casual, un-academic statement! 3. This is an example of a sudden topic-switch in mid-paragraph. 						

The University of Reading
Department of Applied Linguistics
MA Feedback Sheet

Module code	LSMDT	Module title	Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers	
Student	Number 3	Programme	MAELT	
Assignment task	5. Narrative analysis		Date submitted	December 2008
Marked by	Ann	Mark	55%	
THIS MARK IS PROVISIONAL AND IS SUBJECT TO ADJUSTMENT IN EITHER DIRECTION BY THE EXAMINERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES				

	D 70+	M 60-69	G 50-59	40-49	<40	Specific comments
Demonstration of relevant reading and understanding of issues.			x			<p>You relied heavily on a few secondary sources, and in particular on the work of Cortazzi, rather than finding the original account by Labov and Waletzky (1968) and subsequent updates to this e.g. by Eggins and Slade. At MA level you are expected to read primary source material and to read a little more extensively, even for an essay of this length.</p> <p>Your literature review was very sparse, (it was even shorter than your introduction) and since you did not provide a comprehensive account of narrative analysis it is not clear that you fully understood it or its limitations.</p>
Explanation of data and justification of analytical approach(es) selected.			x			<p>Your account of your subject and method of data collection was satisfactory; although you did not specify the prompt that you gave to your informant prior to their story telling, e.g. 'Can you tell me a story that is memorable to you'.</p> <p>Your analytical approach was justified; although you did not provide a very comprehensive framework on which the reader could draw, i.e. you did not describe the elements of the narrative framework, as described by Labov & Waletzky in sufficient detail.</p>
Clarity of analysis and critical evaluation of analytical approach(es) taken.			x			<p>Your analysis was not particularly comprehensive and you did not specify initially how you would structure your analysis, e.g. 'First I will discuss the general structure of the narrative, describing the structure and content of the abstract.....then I will discuss the orientation.....'</p> <p>Your analysis of the narrative clauses (as</p>

					<p>shown in your appendix) was not fully exploited. Some of your discussion was interesting, but overall, your account was not particularly insightful or sophisticated. It was not always clear why you had chosen to discuss certain features or create certain dichotomies, e.g. you concentrate on passive and 'affirmative' constructions (as you call them) but why you have drawn on this dichotomy and not 'passive'/'active' forms for example.</p> <p>There was also little, if any, critical evaluation of the framework. There have been reports in the academic literature about the limitations of the narrative framework but you did not refer to these.</p>
Coherence of assignment, especially overall organisation and division into sections and paragraphs.			x		<p>Overall organisation was satisfactory, although section headings were not always appropriate (e.g. 'Labov's analysis' should have been entitled 'Literature Review', you should have had a methodology section), and some material was incorrectly placed, e.g. explanation of the 'complicating action' on p.4, which should have been placed in the literature review section. Note too that there was no title for your assignment and no page numbers.</p>
Presentation, especially correctness of referencing and bibliography and quality of writing (and transcription if necessary).			x		<p>You incorrectly use references in your text to support your propositions – you need to seek help to understand how we use intra-textual referencing in essays.</p> <p>The text was well-written for the most part, although there were some grammatical errors. Note too my comments in your bibliography at the end.</p> <p>The transcription was good.</p>
<p>Overall comments</p> <p>This work primarily suffered from lack of reading. You relied on just a few secondary sources, and these did not provide sufficient details for you to construct and appreciate the complexity of the analytic framework that you were working with. This meant in turn that your analysis was a little pedestrian.</p> <p>You have a good writing style but need to ensure that you carefully proofread work, as you made a number of grammatical mistakes. You are also advised to seek help in understanding intra-textual referencing.</p> <p>Your recording and transcription were good however and showed that you had spent time on transcription and careful analysis.</p> <p>Please see other comments on your paper</p>					

The University of Reading

School of Languages and European Studies: Department of Applied Linguistics

MA Feedback Sheet

Module code	LSMSL	Module title	Second Language Learning Principles	
Student	Number 7	Programme	MAAL/MAELT	
Assignment task	A discussion of an area – or of areas – of SLA theory in relation to practice in a particular context. (See assignment sheet)		Date submitted	19/01/09
Marked by	Steve	Grade	62%	
THIS MARK IS PROVISIONAL AND IS SUBJECT TO ADJUSTMENT IN EITHER DIRECTION BY THE EXAMINERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES				

Criteria for this task

- Demonstration of a range of relevant reading and understanding of issues
- Ability to summarise and inter-relate sources and use in support of the discussion
- Ability to evaluate reading and relate it to practice in the field of L2 learning/teaching
- Coherence of assignment, especially overall organisation and division into sections and paragraphs
- Presentation, especially correctness of referencing and bibliography, and quality of writing

Comments (No.s refer to criteria above) (Please also note the numbers in the margins of your script, which refer to the Specific Points given below this box.)

1. A good range of relevant reading. You show good understanding of what you have read.
2. You summarise well on the whole, and are willing to draw on different sources to support your discussion in several places.
3. You relate the motivation concepts you discuss appropriately and interestingly to the (Country) situation. However, you could perhaps have made some more specific recommendations for pedagogy: your suggestions tend to be rather general. In addition, your discussion of integrative motivation was too brief, and did not include reference to work which would have been more relevant to the (Country) situation.
4. Clearly organised into sections.
5. A few typo.s and English errors, but mostly clearly and comprehensibly written. Some problems in the Bibliography. (see your script).

Overall: A thoughtful approach to relating motivation concepts to the (Country) situation. Would have benefited from some more concrete suggestions about promoting motivation and coping with demotivation.

Specific points: (Refer to the numbers in the margins of your text)

1. A reasonable set of definitions. Perhaps you could have added a sentence or two to pull together the key common factors in them.
2. 'internal desire' isn't the same as intrinsic motivation, which refers to the pleasure derived from the activity itself. One could generate 'internal desire' for an external/extrinsic goal.

3. Perhaps you need to distinguish between choosing to learn the language and choosing the means of learning the language, which is what you have been talking about here. (i.e. Learners help to choose the materials.)
4. Incomplete sentence
5. Good point.
6. Important point. The demotivating effect of the backwash from exams can certainly distort learners' approach to language learning.
7. This quotation doesn't actually support the point you want to go on to make. You need to indicate that while Spolsky (1989) said this, others would disagree.
8. Nice example.
9. These sentences are not clear.
10. I agree that this is a good strategy, but we have to acknowledge that aptitude will play a part in language learning!
11. A very interesting anecdote!
12. If you are going to discuss integrative motivation, you need to go on to discuss more recent work on this concept, especially work relevant to an EFL situation, such as you find in (Country). (e.g. Dörnyei's Hungarian studies.)
13. Reasonable ideas, but you need to show how you would combat the 'anti-integrative' nationalistic feelings of learners and their families.

Appendix 9: MA students on Reading's MAAL and MA ELT (experienced teachers) programmes 2008-09

	Sex	Age	Nationality	L1	English	Education	Comments
Barbara	F	29	British	English		2001 -BA French/Spanish, Cardiff CELTA, Dip TESOL (2007)	APL for Dip
<i>Student</i>	M	42	Nepalese	Nepali	IELTS 6.5 May 06	1991- MA English Lit, Nepal PGD in English Education (1998)	In UK from Sept 06. In-sess Engl
Razvan	M	32	Romanian	Romanian	IELTS 7.5	1999- Engl Lang & Lit Romanian Lang & Lit	
<i>Student</i>	F	22	Polish	Polish	IELTS 7.5	2007 – TT college - ELT, Poland	
Pola	F	21	Polish	Polish	IELTS 7.5	2007 – TT College English Philology and ELT, Poland	
<i>Student</i>	F	22	Libyan	Arabic	Pre-sess	2005 – English Language BA, Libya; partial completion of Libyan MA	In-sess Engl
<i>Student</i>	F	62	British	British		1968 – BA History, London 1969 PGCE 2004 CTESOL	Transferring to distance after 2 terms
Timur	M	26	Turkish	Turkish	IELTS 6.5 (6 in wrtg & reading)	2004 – BA ELT, Turkey	In-sess Engl
Jun	M	33	Japanese	Japanese	Pre-sess, IELTS 6.5 equivalent	2001 – BA English Lit, Japan	In-sess Engl
Jinko	F	26	Japanese	Japanese	Pre-sess, despite IELTS 7.5 in Nov 07	2005 – BA English Studies, Japan	

Key:

Italics: MAAL; Normal font: MA ELT

Bold: participants in the study

B. Your experience of English (if English is your mother tongue, please go to Section C)

1. Where have you learned English before coming to Reading? (eg country and institution/context)
2. Where have you used English before coming to Reading? (eg country and institution/context)

C. Your experience of reading and writing

1. What language/s do you read in? Please underline the one you read in most.
2. What language/s do you write in? Please underline the one you write in most.
3. What kinds of text have you read in English before coming to Reading?
4. What kinds of text have you written in English before coming to Reading?

D. Your attitude to reading and writing in English: Please answer all questions

1. What do you find easy about reading?
2. What do you find difficult about reading in English?
3. What do you find easy about writing in English?
4. What do you find difficult about writing in English?

E. Using online tools and resources in any language

Which of the following online tools/resources have you used in the past, and how frequently?
(Please put a cross in one box in each row)

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I don't know this
1. word-processing					
2. spellchecker					
3. internet searching for information					
4. websites and links					
5. electronic journals/magazines					
6. e-mail					
7. online discussion boards					
8. chat rooms					
9. instant messaging (eg Skype, msn messenger)					
10. a Virtual Learning Environment – eg Blackboard, WebCT					
11. other – please specify:					

F. Using online tools and resources in academic writing in any language

Which of the following online tools/resources have you used in academic writing in the past, and how frequently? (Please put a cross in one box in each row)

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I don't know this
1. word-processing					
2. spellchecker					
3. internet searching for information					
4. websites and links					
5. electronic journals/magazines					
6. e-mail					
7. online discussion boards					
8. chat rooms					
9. instant messaging (eg Skype, msn messenger)					
10. a Virtual Learning Environment – eg Blackboard, WebCT					
11. other – please specify:					

G. Please add below any other comments on your reading/writing experiences and/or concerns about them at this stage over the page.

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire!

Clare Furneaux

Autumn Term 2008

I. Taking part in the study? Please circle one:

1. I want to take part in the study into academic writing.
2. I am not sure if I want to take part in the study into academic writing; I would like more information about it before deciding.
3. I do not want to take part in the study into academic writing.

Appendix 11: Pre-course questionnaire responses: course expectations of reading and writing

1. How much writing do you expect to do on the MA programme? (eg comment on amount and frequency)

Student	Response
Barbara	At least one assignment for each module. One or two exams. Note-taking from reading and lectures. Dissertation.
Jinko	Classnotes (every time we have lectures); Several projects for each term and dissertation
Razvan	An average of 3,000-4,000 words/module + dissertation
Jun	4-5 essays (3,000-4,000 words) and 15,000 word dissertation
Timur	I expect to write 5 papers (which include 1,000 words) a month
Pola	One or two essays or written assignments per module, plus a dissertation

2. What kinds of text do you expect to write on the MA programme? (eg essays, notes)

Student	Response
Barbara	Essays; notes; dissertation
Jinko	dissertation; projects (assignments); class notes
Razvan	Class notes, bibliographic lists, essays (argumentative etc), research papers
Jun	Second Language Acquisition; Phonetics, Systax (sic)
Timur	They are all about language acquisition, the difficulties in learning language, testing.
Pola	Class notes, drafts of projects, essays

3. How much reading do expect to do on the MA programme? (eg comment on amount and frequency)

Student	Response
Barbara	A lot! 3+ books for each module and journals for each module
Jinko	everyday pre-reading for courses
Razvan	A lot – it's difficult to quantify now, but in terms of time at least 5/6 h/day
Jun	5-10 books for one module
Timur	I am sure it is going to be too much, maybe 10 essay in a week.
Pola	Basically a lot of reading. Several books per module plus additional one eg chosen by myself

4. What kinds of text/sources do you expect to read on the MA programme? (eg textbooks)

Student	Response
Barbara	Textbooks. Journals.
Jinko	Textbooks; journal (e-journals); articles
Razvan	Textbooks, books on specific subjects, articles
Jun	SLA, phonetic, grammar, teaching methodology
Timur	Textbooks which broaden my horizon in English language teaching
Pola	Articles, notes from lectures, books, journals

5. What problems (if any) do you think you will have with reading and writing on the MA Programme?

5.1 reading

Student	Response
Barbara	Not enough time to do the reading. Problems staying motivated to complete some reading. Don't know how to access journals. Mot much time with staf to discuss what we have read and doubts we might have.
Jinko	Read between the lines; deep and full understanding of the texts; skimming and scanning information I have been looking for
Razvan	I hope to have enough time to read everything I plan.
Jun	Many books and a lot of information. We need to select some books.
Timur	We need to read a lot of article, essay and journal and that takes so much time, especially for foreign students. That's way (sic) foreign students should make more effort.
Pola	I am a slow reader so it might take more time for me to read the books from the list.

5.2 writing

Student	Response
Barbara	Not sure what organisation is expected in the dissertation
Jinko	Synthesizing different sources (sic) to make them support the own thesis statement; paraphrasing
Razvan	Meeting the British academic standards I think will be a challenge, I will do my best to meet the requirements
Jun	Language problems. Technical terms.
Timur	It's not only pain in the neck in MA but also in whole life: lack of information in particlar subject and lack of English skills will be problem.
Pola	I don't really like writing, I prefer talking about an issue or certain academic subject. For example, I prefer oral exams to written. The problem I might have is to get round to writing an essay if I have to.

6. What will you do to overcome any problems with academic writing? (eg Whom will you go to see? What will you do?)

Student	Response
Barbara	Talk to personal tutor or study skills adviser.
Jinko	Review what I have learned during preessional; make the best use of insessional academic writing
Razvan	Attend the study skills module, talk to my personal tutor, talk to colleagues
Jun	I learned a lot in preessional: select books and plan well; clear the main idea and support the idea by detailed evidence.
Timur	I am planning to attend the tailor-made courses and to speak my tutor about what we can do to overcome my problems.
Pola	I want to work on my willingness to writer. I am aware that it's a problem I can overcome easily. I'm quite sure it won't affect my performance. I hope to do the best I can. However, I find it really difficult to gather ideas. I might see my supervisor or other person able to help me organise my work.

Appendix 12: Student interview timings

	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	Total
Rachel	36	18	29	41	85	209
Jinko	32	25	30	54	56	197
Razvan	44	32	36	37	54	203
Jun	48	30	53	47	74	252
Timur	41	29	40	43	50	203
Pola*	29	29	47	56	38	199
Total	230	163	235	278	357	1263

*I5 by phone, supplemented by e-mail

Times are in minutes.

Appendix 13: Student interview questions

I1: Interview with Pre-Course Questionnaire (Term 1 Week 4)

1. Tell me about your experience of academic writing (before coming to Reading).
2. Tell me about your experience of academic reading (before coming to Reading).
3. Tell me about any other kinds of writing you do.
4. Tell me about any other kinds of reading you do.
5. Tell me how you are finding writing the PCA.
6. Tell me how you are finding the reading for the programme so far (SLLP, DA, other).
7. Tell me what thinking/work you have done for the assignments so far (if any).
8. Tell me about the Study Skills and/or IESP classes you have had so far.
9. Tell me about any worries you have re academic writing now.
10. Tell me about any worries you have re academic reading now.
11. Who or what can help you with academic reading/writing?
12. Any other comments on academic reading and writing?

I2: Interview with the PCA assignment and written feedback (Term 1 Week 8)

1. How much feedback did you get on your PCA from your personal tutor?
2. What do you think of this feedback? (accurate? enough? On the right things?)
3. On the script, can you show me some examples of useful feedback (and explain why)?
4. On the script, can you show me some examples of not useful feedback (and explain why)?
5. Is there anything you learned about writing at Masters level from doing this PCA that you will use in future MA assignments? What is it?
6. Is there anything you learned about writing at Masters level from the feedback you have received that you will use in future MA assignments? What is it?
7. What advice would you give future MA students about academic writing, based on doing the PCA?
8. Imagine you are talking to a new student about to start their PCA, what advice would you give them about how to do it and about academic writing based on your experiences?

Looking ahead to the Discourse Analysis assignment:

1. What have you done for the Discourse Analysis so far? Have you started to prepare for your DA Assignment yet? What have you done so far?
2. How is it going? What's going well?
3. What concerns (if any) do you have about writing it?

I3: Interview with the DA assignment and written feedback (Term 2 Week 2)

1. How much feedback did you get on your DA assignment?
2. What do you think of this feedback/ (accurate? enough? on the right things?)
3. On the script, can you show me some eggs of useful feedback (and explain why)?
4. On the script, can you show me some eggs of not useful feedback (and explain why)?
5. On the feedback sheet, can you show me some eggs of useful feedback (and explain why)?
6. On the feedback sheet, can you show me some eggs of not useful feedback (and explain why)?
7. What do you think of the mark you got for the assignment? (in general? In the light of the feedback?)
8. Is there anything you have learned from the feedback on this assignment that would have helped you improve your SLLP assignment?
9. What have you learned about writing at Masters level from doing this DA assignment that you will use in future MA assignments?
10. What have you learned about writing at Masters level from the feedback you have received that you will use in future MA assignments?
11. What advice would you give future MA students about academic writing, based on doing the DA assignment?
12. Do you think your other assignments are better/worse than the DA one? Why?
13. Will you look at the DA essay and feedback on it again? When?
14. Have you discussed the DA assignment with anyone else (eg classmates)?
15. Will you show your DA assignment and feedback to anyone else? Or ask to read anyone else's?

I4: Interview with the SLLP assignment and written feedback (Term 2 Week 8)

1. How much feedback did you get on your SLLP assignment?
2. What do you think of this feedback/ (accurate? enough? on the right things?)
3. On the script, can you show me some eggs of useful feedback (and explain why)?
4. On the script, can you show me some eggs of not useful feedback (and explain why)?
5. On the feedback sheet, can you show me some eggs of useful feedback (and explain why)?
6. On the feedback sheet, can you show me some eggs of not useful feedback (and explain why)?
7. What do you think of the mark you got for the assignment? (in general? In the light of the feedback?)
8. Is there anything you have learned from the feedback on this assignment that would have helped you improve your SLLP assignment?
9. What have you learned about writing at Masters level from doing this SLLP assignment that you will use in future MA assignments?
10. What have you learned about writing at Masters level from the feedback you have received that you will use in future MA assignments?
11. What advice would you give future MA students about academic writing, based on doing the SLLP assignment?
12. Do you think your other assignments are better/worse than the SLLP one? Why?
13. Will you look at the SLLP essay and feedback on it again? When?
14. Have you discussed the SLLP assignment with anyone else (eg classmates)?

15. Will you show your SLLP assignment and feedback to anyone else? Or ask to read anyone else's?

I5: Post-submission of dissertation interview, with A1-A3 (end of academic year-September)

1. How have your academic writing skills changed since you started on the MA?
2. What do you now know about academic writing you wish you'd known when you were writing your first assignments?
3. What/who caused you problems with academic writing? How?
4. What /who helped you develop your writing skills? How?
5. What advice would you give future MA students about academic writing?
6. Have you changed at all as a result of doing the MA? If so, how? What do you think of these changes?
7. Do you think you will go on to do any further academic writing in English in the future? If so, what?
8. Has your use of technology changed since you started on the MA?

I5 Participant-specific questions

Barbara

1. At the beginning you mentioned a concern about covering too much too briefly in your writing (a criticism of ug and DELTA tutors). Is that still an issue?
2. Another concern: synthesizing ideas from different sources, including your own ideas. Now?
3. You came to the MA from teaching on a preessional course at Bangor, and ac wtg skills in Oman. How easy was it to make that transition – and did having taught ac wtg skills help you with your ac writing at all?
4. You mentioned restricting your reading as a problem when you started. Still the case? You were not used to writing on computer (the PCA was the 1st time you did this). Now?
5. You said you wanted to understand things before you started writing. Now?
6. Did you find out how to access online journals (not able to do it in Week 4)? Used much?
7. You mentioned enjoying seeing someone else teach study skills – as a fellow teacher. Have you experienced that elsewhere on the programme at all? Any ideas you'll borrow for future teaching – methodology? Content?
8. You were worried at the beginning re standards and the jump from ug and Diploma. Was that an issue? What are you aiming for now? (merit/pass?)
9. Also you were not very confident giving your own ideas and opinions of academics' ideas. Now?
10. How have you drawn on in your writing as experiences: teaching or learning languages?
11. You weren't sure what constituted evidence in an assignment at the beginning. Ann said some things were speculation. Now?
12. You were also unsure about using section headings in an essay. Now?
13. You didn't enjoy the DA assignment as you felt rushed. Did you enjoy other pieces of writing?
14. You struggled with the word count on DA – an issue with other work?
15. Have you continued to spend too long reading (too much and for too long) for assignments?

16. For DA you weren't sure re the purpose: if it was a piece of original research, something to help with your teaching or just an essay for the MA. Did you have that uncertainty for other pieces of writing? How were they resolved?
17. Steve said you had made some insightful comments on your SLLP assignment, but you felt they were obvious. Can you see now how?
18. Before you got SLLP back, people said Steve was a harsh marker. Where did that information come from? Was it right?
19. Steve advised writing summaries of readings on cards and you thought that was useful. Did you do it?
20. Also you described writing assignments as answering questions. Did that continue?
21. Did you continue to work in the library mostly?

Razvan

1. At the beginning you said you found it difficult to put abstract ideas into English – now?
2. Have you continued contributing to discussion boards re language?
3. You saw SLLP as being the toughest assignment in the first term – was that the case? And cfed to later term's work?
4. At the beginning you said you found it difficult to critically evaluate various points of view– now?
5. At the beginning you said you found it difficult to juggle so many balls in studying different subjects/writing diff assignments at the same time– now?
6. DA was new to you – writing from a practical perspective. – now?
7. Ann asked you make your writing 'a little clearer' – simpler/less opaque (defining terms, less complex sentences) in future (after DA) – did you do this?
8. Looking back, were you surprised at all by your early grades? (DA – 68%; SLLP 72%)
9. When we met after you'd got SLLP back, you said you were puzzled by the marking criteria (you were surprised when SLLP got a distinction). Do you understand it now?
10. SLLP – Steve said you should have put some more personal/pedagogic/Romanian context comments in. Have you done that in subsequent essays/ your diss?
11. Outlines – oral tutorial (DA) – online comments (SLLP) – comments?
12. You said in January you were uncomfortable with asking tutors for advice – because of the autonomous learning/mass education in Romania. Now?
13. Did you read other ss' essays/feedback? They yours? Why?

Jinko

1. Did you pay for a proof-reader for your later essays/ the dissertation? Who? How used?
2. You told Jane you spent hours on your PCA – did this continue for other assignments? More than required? (10 credits – 100 hours student effort, eg)
3. Looking back, what did the Pre-sess give you?
4. Did your rate of work speed up over the year? (This was a concern at the beginning)
5. After the PCA you said you struggled a bit drawing on your own teaching/learning experiences in writing, has that changed? (PCA int 2 – you said you had been told not to use 'I' in ac wtg – by whom?) SLLP – lost marks for failing to apply to practice. Said you weren't comfortable with doing this/didn't know what Steve meant by 'related experience'. Now?

6. You said at one point (Int 2) you read your assignment aloud (to help cut down words) – do you still do that?
7. Early on you were noting down new vocab you came across. Did you continue to do that? General or subject-specific? With example sentences? Eng & Jap meanings?
8. Choosing topics – when? Change? Still think it important? Own subject (eg SLLP) – better? You said writers should look for a topic in which they are interested.
9. What did you learn from feedback on your essays?(Ann said lit review and definitions not always v clear, also poor grammar)
10. DA – why did you think it got this mark (58%) and not a merit?
11. What do you now think about the marking criteria? (didn't understand at beg – totally different from Japan)
12. Did you re-draft assignments (Ann thought not)?
13. Did you re-read previous assignments/feedback at all during the year?
14. What do you think of writing outlines?
15. The role of tutors?
16. Other ss? Read their work?
17. How do you use your reading in writing?
18. Difference in wtg in Engl & Japanese? You said the process was broadly the same (In 4) – reading, outline...
19. Effect of our meetings/discussions re wtg? (Mentioned in Int 4)

Jun

1. In the first term everything was new for you – esp given your ug background in literature. How did that affect you, looking back? How long did that feeling of newness continue? What did you do to deal with it? (Printing PP slides before lectures, eg?)
2. Do you still find using your own experience in writing easy (you said this at in Oct, but the feedback on the SLLP assignment said this was missing)?
3. But you found using data/statistics difficult and using lit as evidence to support your views 0 is this still the case?
4. You struggled with vocab at the beginning and noted down a number of new words – now? NB Initial confusion of terms theory/hypothesis, pointed out by both Bea and Nicky
5. Reading speed – v slow at the beginning (2 or 3 hours for 20 pages, eg) – faster now?
6. How useful was the insessional course? What did you learn about writing from it?
7. Early on you told us you were enjoying learning about the theory behind ELT practice, which you had not studied before (having majored in literature at ug level). Do you still feel like that? How do you now feel about your knowledge of theory?
8. You changed your topic for CA several times- why? Did that continue?
9. Joe Bloggs (British classmate) proof read your DA assignment – did he (or anyone else) do the same for other assignments? The diss?
10. You were very disappointed by your DA mark you told me. Where you disappointed by any later marks?
11. You marked your DA feedback sheet with yellow for negatives and pink highlighting for positives. Why did you do that?
12. Ann criticised you for not using primary sources, Did you do that in subsequent assignments?

13. Your comments on the marking scheme being severe. Do you still think that?
14. Have you looked at feedback on earlier assignments at all during the year? When? Why?
15. Did you ever look at the SLLP Blackboard site? (You said you would in our interview after you got the assignment back)

Timur

1. What writing did you do on your undergraduate degree? (confusion between info given in Ints 1 & 2, where he says he did none). Were you given bibliographies as part of modules in Turkey?
2. What did you get from the in-session classes? You only did 2 or three pieces of work out of the possible 7/8. Why? Did you see Nicky in the Spring Term?
3. Nicky referred you to some books in writing and a website, which you looked at. Did you refer to it again or to the suggested books on writing (or others found by your English Politics student friend) during the year?
4. Do you still think you are a bad writer (as you said at the beginning- in any language)
5. Your PCA was very weak, what did you learn from doing that and getting feedback on it? How has your writing improved since then?
6. You said you chose the wrong books to read for your PCA. Has selecting readings been easier since?
7. You met a previous student on the MA, from Turkey – in Term 1 and he e-mailed you one of his essays. Did this help you at all? Did you have any further contact with him?
8. You changed your DA topic. How many times? Did you do that for other assignments? Why?
9. Who proofread your assignments? Paid? (mentioned a lady in the Uni re DA in meeting with Ann of 1 Dec)
10. You improved enormously in your writing between the PCA and your DA assignment. How?
11. Did you ever look at the explanation of the mark scheme in the student handbook?
12. There was some problem with citation in your earlier work – no refs in the PCA, then too many quotations in DA. Can you comment on your use of sources now?
13. You thought your SLLP assignment mark would be less than DA, but it was higher. Has that happened with other assignments (your assessment is wrong)?
14. Who proofread your work over the year?
15. You were concerned about linking paragraphs after the PCA and in your SLLP assignment. Has this concern continued?
16. Steve told you you needed to give more concrete suggestions in your SLLP assignment. What do you understand by this? Did you do in later assignments?
17. You said at the time SLLP feedback was the best you'd got so far. Still true? Why?
18. In the SLLP assignment you linked theory and your teaching situation in Turkey well. Have you had to do that in other assignments? How well?
19. You were surprised at first that students here didn't show each other their marks and feedback and assignments (unlike Turkey). Did that situation change?
20. You experienced feedback on electronically submitted outlines (SLLP) and face-to-face meetings re outlines (DA) – feeling about these 2 v different forms of advice on outlines? Other modules?
21. Use of BB/ Steve's e-mails of assignment extracts? (Didn't look at when writing SLLP assignment – later?)

22. You talked to one of your lecturers in Turkey on MSN for the SLLP assignment. How did that help? Did you do it again?
23. Your friend in another UK university doing a PhD there – nationality? Help during the year?

Pola

1. Have you changed your opinion of written interaction and assessments? Do you still prefer oral communication and tests/exams? Why?
2. At the beginning of the year you said you were doing much less work than on your degree in Poland. Do you still think that?
3. You found the amount of terminology a bit overwhelming at the beginning – esp. for SLLP. Has that continued? How do you feel about the amount of terminology on the MA now?
4. How much downloading of articles online have you done (using the library's e-journal catalogue or searching via Google?)
5. On your PCA Steve said you hadn't backed up claims/assertions made. Do you feel you do this now? How?
6. When you started you had problems with paragraphing. Now? How did you tackle this problem?
7. In the autumn term, you said you didn't see much difference between writing at under-graduate and at masters levels. Do you still think that? Why?
8. Did you write outlines for later assignments (after SLLP)/ the dissertation? Why?
9. When we talked about your Autumn Term assignment you said 'everyone in our hall is involved in my assignments'. Which assignments were these –and did this continue past the Autumn Term? How many people were involved and how did they help you?
10. At first you thought 61% was a poor mark. Do you now feel you understand the marking system here? What do you think if it?
11. You liked Ann's feedback on the DA assignment, with both negative and positive comments. Was later feedback on other assignments similar/different to this? How helpful was it?
12. You thought you might get someone to proofread later assignment. Did you? Who? Did you pay them?
13. At the beginning you said you got different advice from Steve (re keeping things simple in your PCA) and Ann (who said your writing was too simple). Did this contraction continue? How did you resolve it in later writing?
14. Did you continue to take notes from all your reading?
15. Did you continue to use the BNC to explore vocabulary?
16. Your parents read your SLLP assignment – did they read other work you did? Why?
17. After SLLP, you noted a problem in your writing was being clear, so the reader understood your point. Did that problem continue?
18. You also said (Int 4) you'd have to try to focus on main ideas, not discuss every other area that is relevant to the topic, – did you do that?
19. To make you be more clear, you said you'd write 3,500 words for a 4,000 word essay and then expand/elaborate on points – did you do that?
20. You said you preferred reading books to articles – did that continue? Why?

Appendix 14: Student e-mail questions

e-mail 1 (Nov 2008)

Dear (Name)

Could you please answer the following questions (in a reply e-mail) with reference to the Pre-Course Assignment:

1. Have you handed the PCA in? If not, when will you hand it in?
2. When you look at/think of the PCA, what are you pleased about?
3. When you look at/think of the PCA, what (if anything) are you concerned about?
4. How do you think the PCA could have been improved?
5. Did anyone else read your PCA before you submitted it? If so, who and why?
6. Do you have any other comments on the PCA?

Many thanks

Clare

e-mail 2 (Dec 2008)

Dear (Name)

Thank you very much for all your input this term to my project. I hope you have a good break over the Christmas vacation. Before it starts, could you please answer the following questions (in a reply e-mail) with reference to the Discourse Analysis (DA) Assignment?

1. When you look at/think of your DA assignment, what are you pleased about?
2. When you look at/think of the DA assignment, what are you concerned about?
3. How do you think your DA assignment could have been improved?
4. Do you think this piece of work is better than your Pre-Course Assignment?
If so, in what way/s?
5. Did giving the Poster presentation on the assignment topic help in writing the assignment at all?
Please explain your answer.
6. Did giving the Poster presentation on the assignment topic hinder/cause problems in writing the assignment at all?
Please explain your answer.
7. Did anyone else read your DA assignment before you submitted it?
If so, who and why?
8. Having completed the DA assignment, what advice would you give to other students who have to do the same piece of work next year?
9. Do you have any other comments on the DA assignment?

I'll be contacting you again over the vacation with some questions about how the SLLP assignment is going. Until then...

Clare

e-mail 3 (early Jan 2009)

Dear (Name)

Could you please take a few minutes when you can to answer the following questions (in a reply e-mail) with reference to the SLLP Assignment?

1. How is the SLLP assignment going? Please explain your answer.
2. What are you working on at the moment on that assignment?
3. What concerns (if any) do you have about this assignment? Why?
4. What if anything are you finding easy about this assignment? Why?
5. In what way(s) if any are you finding this assignment different from the Discourse Analysis one?
6. In what way(s) if any are you finding this assignment different from the other assignments you are writing/have written (the Pre-Course Assignment, Sociolinguistics, Foundation Phonetics and Phonology)?
7. Do you have any other comments on the SLLP assignment at this stage?

Many thanks

Clare

e-mail 4 (mid-Jan 2009)

Dear (Name)

Have you now handed in your SLLP assignment? If so (or when you do), could you please answer the following questions in a reply e-mail to me? Please tell me on what date the assignment is/was submitted.

1. When you look at/think of your SLLP assignment, what are you pleased about?
2. When you look at/think of the SLLP assignment, what are you concerned about?
3. How do you think your SLLP assignment could have been improved?
4. Do you think this piece of work is better or worse than your DiscourseAnalysis assignment?
If so, in what way/s?
5. Did anyone else read your SLLP assignment before you submitted it?
If so, who and why?
6. Having completed the SLLP assignment, what advice would you give to other students who have to do the same piece of work next year?
7. Do you have any other comments on the SLLP assignment?

Many thanks

Clare

e-mail 5 (August 2009)

Dear (Name)

How are you? I hope your dissertation work is going well.

I have attached here the draft of a summary I have written about your academic writing

experiences before you started on the MA and in the first four weeks on the programme (using information from our Week 4 first interview).

Would you mind reading it through to make sure it is accurate? Please tell me of any points that are factually wrong, and correct them.

In addition, I have added some questions in blue. I'd be really grateful if you could answer these.

If possible, I suggest you save the document and then use Word Comment mode to indicate errors and to answer questions, and then e-mail the text with the comments in back to me. Let me know if you'd prefer to deal with this another way.

Best wishes

Clare

e-mail 6 (September 2010)

Dear (Name)

How are you? I hope you have had a good year (who can believe it has gone so quickly??), and I really look forward to hearing your news. How is your X (teaching/research/job) going?

I am still working on my academic writing project, and would like to ask for your help at the final stage. I would like to ask you to do two things:

1. answer some year-on questions - these are in the attachment to this message, and you will see range from some background information to what you think you learned - in general and re academic writing. To answer, please download the questions, answer them on the questionnaire and e-mail it back to me.

2. I would then like to send you a copy of the summary report I have made of all the information gained from our meetings while you were on the MA, from your tutorials with other staff members and feedback on the three Autumn Term assignments that I focused on. I would be really grateful if you could take the time to read and check this document. I realise you will not remember all the details, but if there is anything that you think is inaccurate, I'd like you to tell me this, and correct it, in Word Comment mode. You would then return the document with your comments to me. This is an important stage in my research, checking that what I am saying is correct with my 'participants'. I hope that you would find it interesting and that it would not take too much time.

I am very much looking forward to hearing from you!

Best wishes

Clare

e-mail 7 (October 2010)

Dear (Name)

Thanks very much for sending me back the year-on questionnaire, and for giving such full answers - much appreciated. This is really useful. It's also good to know that the MA was useful for you in your work now. I've attached here a section of the questionnaire with your answers to one question, with a further question from me, on issues I wanted to explore a bit more. Short answers are fine...

Thanks too for agreeing to read though my summary report. I have attached it here. As I said before, you'll see it is a summary of all the information gained from our meetings while you were on the MA, and from your tutorials with other staff members and feedback on the three Autumn Term assignments that I focused on. I would now be really grateful if you could now take the time to read and check this document. I realise you will not remember all the details, but if there is anything that you think is inaccurate, could you please tell me this, and correct it, by inserting a correction in the text in a different colour or by adding a comment in Word Comment mode? Please then return the document with your comments to me. As I said in my previous e-mail, this is an important stage in my research, checking that what I am saying is correct with my 'participants'.

There is no great hurry to get this back to me - I'd be really grateful if it could be within the next month or so, eg. I am only replying to your e-mail now as term starts tomorrow and I'm afraid time will run on if I don't do this now!

I've written my summary as a report from all my data, including quotes from you and other people in meetings. Don't worry about correcting any of the language in direct quotes - spoken language always looks odd when transcribed, as you know!

Just so you know too, Assignment 1 = Pre-Course Assignment; Assignment 2 = Discourse Analysis; Assignment 3 = SLLP.

You'll see I've changed names to anonymise it all. To help the reader remember nationality, I've given students names from their country beginning with the country name's first letter (though I may change these) - so A (name) is currently Razvan, B (name) is Jun, C(name) is Jinko, D (name) is Timur and E (name) is Pola. Your name here is Barbara, as I needed a name beginning with B. So if you don't like this name, please send me another beginning with this letter. X is Steve and Y is Ann.

Thanks again for your help. Best wishes

Clare

Appendix 15: Staff interview questions

a. General academic writing issues re writing for your assignment

1. What are the main issues that strike you in students' writing for this assignment?
2. Do you notice any issues to do with the students' L1 or cultural backgrounds?
3. What is the student's role in developing their writing skills?
4. What advice would you give new students re academic writing?
5. What is your main role in developing students' writing skills? (How important do you think your feedback is in this? What do you expect students to do with your feedback?)
6. What advice would you give a new tutor teaching your module about helping students with their writing?

b. Writing issues re specific student script/feedback sheet

1. What contact did you have with this student before they submitted their assignment? After?
2. On reading the assignment, is there anything re this student and their writing that you were pleased with?
3. Is there anything re this student and their writing that you thought was particularly important to provide feedback on?
4. How does this piece of writing compare with others for the same assignment?
5. If you had the chance to give this student advice, what advice would you give them for improving their next piece of writing?

11 Feb 09

Appendix 16: Year-on questionnaire to students

1. Why did you decide to do an MA?
2. Why did you come to Reading?
3. Where are you working now, and in what job/role?
4. How has what you learned on the MA helped you in your current work/study?
5. Do you think you changed at all as result of doing the MA? If yes, how?
6. What kind of person will succeed on an MA programme like the one you did? (eg background, personal characteristics)
7. How far did your background (eg academic, language, personal) help/hinder in your academic writing on the programme? Please add your answers in columns a. and/or b.

	a. How this helped:	b. How this hindered:
1. My academic background		
2. My language background		
3. My personal background		
4. My personality		
5. Other – please specify:		

8. Have you done any academic writing since you left Reading? If so – what (and in what language)?
9. What do you think academic writing at Masters level involves? What is:
 - 8.1 essential?
 - 8.2 desirable?
10. How did your academic writing skills change over the year of MA study?
11. What did you think of your dissertation grade and feedback? (eg was the grade what you had expected? How fair was the grade and the feedback?)

12. How far did the following help people help you develop your academic writing skills while you were on the MA programme (pls put x in the box you choose in each row)?

	Helped me a lot	Helped me a bit	Neither helped nor hindered me	Hindered me a bit	Hindered me a lot
1. My personal tutor					
2. Module tutors					
3. My dissertation supervisor					
4. Academic writing tutor (Nicola Taylor)					
5. Other students on the programme. Pls name them:					
6. Other students, not on the programme. Pls explain who:					
7. Other people, not students at Reading. Pls explain who:					

Do you have any other comments on either your experience on the MA or of academic writing? Please write them here:

Many thanks for completing this! Please now e-mail it to Clare at:
c.l.furneaux@reading.ac.uk

Clare Furneaux

September 2010

Appendix 17: Ethics Documentation

School of Languages and European Studies
Department of Applied Linguistics



Project Submission

Note All sections of this form should be completed.

Principal Investigator: Clare Furneaux

Department: Applied Linguistics

An exploration of how taught post-graduate students develop an understanding of the demands of the academy in the early stages of their study.

Proposed starting date: August 2008

Number of subjects that you require consent from (approximate):

- Piloting: 10
- Main study: 30

Brief description of Project: [300-400 words, to be provided on a separate sheet]

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge I have made known all information relevant to the Ethics and Research Committee and I undertake to inform the Committee of any such information which subsequently becomes available whether before or after the research has begun.

I confirm that a list of the names and addresses of the subjects in this project will be compiled and that this, together with a copy of the Consent Form, will be retained.

Signed:(Researcher)

Date: 31 July 2008

ETHICS COMMITTEE

Consent Form

Project title: An exploration of how taught post-graduate students develop an understanding of the demands of the academy in the early stages of their study.

I have read and had explained to me by Clare Furneaux the Information Sheet relating to this project.

I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time.

I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Researcher:
Clare Furneaux
Tel 0118 378 8986
E-mail: c.l.furneaux@reading.ac.uk

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School of Languages and European Studies
HumSS Building
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Reading RG6 6AA

*Phone 01183788141
Email appling@reading.ac.uk*

INFORMATION SHEET for MA students

1. Title of the project

An exploration of how taught post-graduate students develop an understanding of the demands of the academy in the early stages of their study.

2. Introduction

As part of my doctoral studies at the Institute of Education, London University, I am exploring the development of academic writing skills at post-graduate level. I would like to invite you to take part in this study during your first 5 months on the MA ELT/MAAL programme (October 2008-February 2009 inclusive).

3. What would taking part involve?

I would like to study your experience of producing academic texts for the MA during the first term and, in particular, the assignments for two modules: Discourse Analysis (DA) and Second Language Learning Principles (SLLP).

I am asking all students on the MA ELT taught and dissertation tracks to take part in the study and on the MAAL. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to:

- complete questionnaires on your experiences of academic reading and writing pre-Reading and as you submit the two assignments being focused on (DA and SLLP);
- give me access to communication between you and academic staff on anything related to your academic writing in Term 1 and for Term 1 modules (mainly copies of e-mails, audio-recordings of face-to-face meetings);
- take part in interviews with me and/or discussion groups with other students about academic reading and writing during the first four months of the MA;
- e-mail me diary entries about your experiences of academic reading and writing for the first term's modules;
- give me permission to examine your written work submitted for the first term's modules and your pre-course assignment.

I will be acting as a researcher only during the study, so my role will be to observe and record what is happening; at no stage will I be able to get involved in any issues concerning your studies.

You will be able to withdraw from the study at any time, by e-mailing me at: c.l.furneaux@reading.ac.uk

4. What will happen to the information/data collected?

The data collected for the study will be stored by me and remain completely confidential; access to the data will be restricted to myself, my supervisor and to the thesis examiners. The data will only be used for research or teaching purposes. The write-up of my study, for the doctorate and any publications, will change names/anonymise data, so your name will never be included.

5. What would you get out of the study?

Apart from helping us understand better the challenges faced by post-graduate students on MA programmes, so that we can help provide future students with appropriate study skills advice, you would experience first-hand a research project in our area. This would help you appreciate issues involved in research, which would be useful when you read research reports for MA modules and if/when you come to work on your own dissertation. In addition, we know that reflecting on academic skills (which the project will ask you to do at regular intervals) is a useful process – so you would benefit from that. Finally, when the study is over, I will be happy to see all students who have completed the study individually to give them advice on their academic writing skills at that time.

6. University approval

This project has been subject to ethical review by the University Ethics and Research Committee, and has been allowed to proceed.

7. Any questions?

If you have any queries or wish to clarify anything about the study, please feel free to contact me at c.l.furneaux@reading.ac.uk

ETHICS COMMITTEE

Consent Form

Project title: An exploration of how taught post-graduate students develop a sense of the demands of the academy in their first term.

I have read and had explained to me by Clare Furneaux the Information Sheet relating to this project.

I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time.

I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

INFORMATION SHEET for Piloters

1. Title of the project

An exploration of how taught post-graduate students develop an understanding of the demands of the academy in the early stages of their study.

2. Introduction

I have taught academic writing in the University of Reading and researched into writing for several years. As part of my doctoral studies at the Institute of Education, London University, I am now exploring the development of academic writing skills at post-graduate level. I would like you to help me with my study by allowing me to try out ('pilot') my research tools on you before I start my main study in October.

3. What taking part involves

I will ask you to try out my research tools, so that I can identify any problems and improve them. The research tools I would like to pilot are questionnaires (about previous reading/writing experience and your writing experience at Reading); an interview and a group discussion. I know your time is limited, so I will be grateful for whatever help you can give me. The minimum amount of time is probably about one hour.

4. What happens to the information/data collected?

The data collected for the study will be stored by me and remain completely confidential; access to the data will be restricted to myself, my supervisor and to the thesis examiners. The data will only be used for research or teaching purposes. The write-up of my study, for the doctorate and any publications, will change names/anonymise data, so your name will never be included.

5. What would you get out of this?

Apart from helping us understand better the challenges faced by post-graduate students on MA programmes, so that we can help provide future students with appropriate study skills advice, you would experience first-hand parts of a research project. This would help you appreciate issues involved in research, which might be useful when you read research reports for your modules and if/when you come to work on your own dissertation. In addition, we know that reflecting on academic skills (which taking part would involve) is a useful process – so you would benefit from that.

6. University approval

This project has been subject to ethical review by the University Ethics and Research Committee, and has been allowed to proceed.

7. Any questions?

If you have any queries or wish to clarify anything about the study, please feel free to contact me at c.l.furneaux@reading.ac.uk

ETHICS COMMITTEE

Consent Form

Project title: An exploration of how taught post-graduate students develop an understanding of the demands of the academy in the early stages of their study.

I have read and had explained to me by Clare Furneaux the Information Sheet relating to this project.

I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time.

I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

INFORMATION SHEET for MA ELT/MAAL programme tutors

1. Title of the project

An exploration of how taught post-graduate students develop an understanding of the demands of the academy in the early stages of their study.

2. Introduction

As part of my doctoral studies at the Institute of Education, London University, I am exploring the development of academic writing skills at post-graduate level. My focus will be on the MA ELT (taught and dissertation tracks) and MAAL students. However I would also like academic staff to take part in this study during the first 4 months on the MA ELT programme (October 2008-February 2009 inclusive).

3. What taking part involves

I am asking all tutors on the MA programme and the insessional writing tutor to take part in the study. My focus is on how the students produce the Discourse Analysis and SLLP assignments, but I am also interested in the discussion and feedback that takes place on the pre-course assignment (PCA) all personal tutors receive from their tutees. The following data will be collected in the Autumn and Spring Terms:

Data
1. Individual semi-structured interviews (face-to-face)
2. Focus group (all tutors)
3. e-mail communication and face-to-face tutorials between students and personal tutors re the pre-course assignment and with the SLLP and Discourse Analysis module tutors
4. Feedback from tutors on the PCA, work done for Nicola's Writing course and Autumn Term assessed work

You could withdraw from the study at any time.

4. What happens to the information/data collected

The data collected for the study will be stored by me and remain completely confidential; access to the data will be restricted to myself, my supervisor and to the thesis examiners. The data will only be used for research or teaching purposes. The write-up of my study, for the doctorate and any publications, will change names/anonymise data, so your name will never be included.

5. University approval

This project has been subject to ethical review by the University Ethics and Research Committee, and has been allowed to proceed.

6. Any questions

If you have any queries or wish to clarify anything about the study, please feel free to contact me at c.l.furneaux@reading.ac.uk

Description of the project

Research question/problem

1. How do taught post-graduate students develop an understanding of the writing demands of the academy in the early stages of their study?
2. What differences are there in the experiences of students developing academic writing skills within this context? How are these differences affected by students' background and previous experience - for example, their relationship to the English language: native-speaker (NS) or non-native speaker (NNS), their mother tongue and previous academic experience?
3. How does the use of online resources interact with their developing understanding of the writing demands of the academy?

Sub-questions:

- a. Re how taught post-graduate students experience learning to write for the academy in the early stages of their study:
 1. How do tutors and learners perceive each other's roles in developing writing skills?
 2. What is the nature of the interactions concerning academic writing in this context (tutor-student; student-student; face-to-face; online)?
 3. How does feedback from tutors contribute to learners' development as writers in academic English?
- b. Re the participants – their understanding of what academic writing involves, their expectations/reactions to the need to develop such skills:
 4. What issues and needs related to writing for academic study do such writers have?
 5. What online resources and tools do they use in their academic writing and how?
 6. How do they react to the writing needs of the programme, in the early stages, including during the production of their first pieces of academic writing?
- c. Re the outcomes:
 7. How far do they achieve success in their first major pieces of academic writing?

The proposed study will seek to explore these issues in the context of MA programmes (MA English Language Teaching and MA Applied Linguistics) in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Reading.

2. Working title

An exploration of how taught post-graduate students develop an understanding of the demands of the academy in the early stages of their study.

3. Design of the study

The study has three strands, of which the first two are the major ones:

3.1 The novice academic writers

Before the programme starts, enrolled students will be contacted and asked to participate in the study. It will be made clear that all data will be confidential and will be reported anonymously, and that they can withdraw from the study at any time. What is involved in taking part in the study will be clearly explained, namely:

- questionnaires on their experiences of academic reading and writing pre-Reading and as they submit the two assignments being focused on: Discourse Analysis and Second Language Learning Principles (SLLP);
- access to communication between students and academic staff on anything related to their academic writing in Term 1 and for Term 1 modules (mainly copies of e-mails, audio-recordings of face-to-face meetings);

- interviews with me and/or focus groups with other students about academic reading and writing during the first four months of the MA;
- e-mail diary entries about their experiences of academic reading and writing for the first term's modules;
- permission to examine their written work submitted for the first term's modules and your pre-course assignment.

3.2 The academy: programme tutors

Tutors on the MA programme and the insessional writing tutor will be asked to take part in the study. The following data will be collected from them:

Data
1. Individual semi-structured interviews (face-to-face)
2. Focus group (all tutors)
3. e-mail communication and face-to-face tutorials between students and personal tutors re the pre-course assignment and with the SLLP and Discourse Analysis module tutors
4. Feedback from tutors on assessed work

3.3 Programme documentation

Guidelines on academic writing conventions and expectations for post-graduate level writing in the form of University and departmental documentation will be examined for key content. Programme documentation on Blackboard for the Discourse Analysis and SLLP modules will also be examined.

4. Timetable

The study will focus on the MA ELT/MAAL programmes. In 08-09, these programmes begin on 28 September 2008 with Freshers Week; the 10-week teaching term starts on 6 October 2008. The data collection period of the study will, therefore, run from 28 September 2008 to after the students have received, and reacted to, the feedback on their Second Language Learning Principles assignment in February 2009. Piloting of the questionnaire and interview research tools will take place between July and October 2008, using 08-09 MA ELT/MAAL students still in Reading and appropriate post-graduate CALS Preessional students in August/September.

Appendix 18: Transcription conventions

1. A standard orthographic transcription (i.e. **conventional English spelling**) will be adequate
2. Do not add **punctuation**, except full stops and capital letters at beginning of clearly demarcated sentences and commas, if relevant, to show structure/meaning eg:

The man, who I spoke to, was carrying a bag.
The man who I spoke to was carrying a bag

3. All **pauses** perceptible to the hearer should be represented in some way. Use a single dot in brackets (.) for a short pause (say, less than half a second), two dots (..) for a longer pause (half a second to one second) and (...) for longer pauses
4. If you are not sure that you have deciphered a section of speech correctly, indicate your **uncertainty** by surrounding the dubious bit in round brackets:

ice cream (to)day

5. If you really have **no idea of what is being said**, use empty brackets (). This is often the case with overlapping speech (see below).
6. Always indicate who **the speaker** is. I'll specify abbreviations for each transcription. In my interviews with students, r=researcher and s1, s2 etc = the students It will be assumed that the speaker is the same until a new speaker-abbreviation is encountered on the left-hand side of the transcription.
7. Put an **identifier** at the beginning of each turn and also a closing mark:

<s3>And what was your feeling about that</s3>

This makes the data more manipulable - if I want to get all the things that s3 says and put them into one place, I can do that very easily.

8. Always make it clear if two or more speakers are **talking simultaneously**. This is best done by placing their speech on consecutive lines and using lines or brackets to show where the simultaneous speech begins and ends, e.g.:

r: interesting {work}
s1: {work}

9. Transcribe what was **actually said**; do not correct the English.
10. Indicate where a word is pronounced **with particular emphasis**. In such cases the convention is to use capital letters for the stressed syllable:

s: You DIDn't

Adapted from Blackwell (2000)

Appendix 19: Example of Data Summary 1: Literacy-history and Month 1 summary for Jun

1. Pre-MA experience of academic writing and reading

1.1 In Japan

Jun comes from Japan, where he graduated in English and American Literature from a top university in 2001. He did not think his English proficiency improved a great deal at University, but where it did was in writing, not speaking. At University he had academic writing classes in the first and second years, where he was taught by an American teacher to write essay 'logically'. He also had to write a diary 'almost every day' for this class, so he felt he practised a lot. Most subjects at University were assessed by written exams based on textbooks. Some, however, required him to write academic essays in English, varying in length from 1,000 to 2,000 words. For these he had some guidance, for example on writing a bibliography, from a Japanese lecturer. In his four-year programme he wrote around ten of these essays. He wrote his BA dissertation of about 8,000 words in Japanese but had to produce a summary in English.

His degree required a considerable amount of reading of source texts (mostly novels) and some literary critiques. His reading was mostly in English, although he was given some handouts in Japanese and he sometimes read novels in translation to make sure he fully understood the work. He was not required to read any journal articles at undergraduate level.

He then taught English in secondary school in Japan for seven years. During this time he read some books on English Language Teaching education and theory, as he wanted to improve his teaching and apply theory into practice in his classroom. Readings were identified from web pages of professors and teachers of ELT in Japan. He did not attend any ELT conferences or workshops in Japan.

1.2 On the Reading Preessional course

Before starting the MA, he studied for two weeks on a preessional language course at Edinburgh, which he attended mostly for sight-seeing and relaxation. His major preessional study was then at Reading, where he undertook eight weeks' intensive study on our preessional English course in August and September. He found the

written language component well organised and helpful, with the teacher giving a great deal of feedback, comments and compliments, on multiple drafts. He had written drafts of work before on his all undergraduate programme in Japan, but had never had such extensive feedback. He was surprised and impressed by the amount of detail, and felt his writing definitely improved during that time. He also found the Project class extremely helpful, teaching him how to write academically, with a bibliography and avoiding plagiarism.

Reading activities on the course, he said, developed reading techniques, including skimming, scanning, and how to be selective in reading. He had been taught these techniques before he entered university in Japan in his 'cram school' and also at University there, but the preessional classes reminded him of these techniques and re-activated them, after eight years away from academic study.

On this course he says he wrote eight academic essays, including writing the pre-course assignment for the MA as his final project. He found the PCA title challenging as he was not familiar with the topic at all, and e-mailed the module tutor for advice, plus had a face-to-face meeting with him with another Japanese student. He also received advice from the preessional block director, who had a masters degree in this area. He accessed the assignment's suggested reading (3 books), reading selectively parts relevant to his topics of interest for the assignment.

In writing this assignment, he planned a lot on paper first, reading, underlining key points and words and making notes, absorbing the theory. Then he drafted his work on paper before putting text into his laptop computer. He said this was his normal way of writing, in Japanese as well as English.

He received feedback from his preessional project teacher on early drafts that he had misunderstood some key theoretical points and his focus for this assignment was to make sure he showed appropriate understanding and to incorporate a different perspective. He submitted the PCA to his preessional tutor in mid-September, who passed it to the MA administrator.

At the end of the preessional course, as he started the MA, he stated that he found the following easy: reading in familiar topic areas in English and organising his writing

and writing about content based on his own experience. He found using statistics/data to support his ideas in writing difficult.

2. Non-academic use of internet in reading and writing while on the MA

On starting the MA, he was experienced in word processing and internet searching for information and documents. He used e-mail a lot and had sometimes used electronic discussion boards for academic study, but a lot for everyday life. He often used instant messaging for both work and personal life. He had never accessed e-Journals, or experienced a virtual learning environment (such as Blackboard). Writing included regular e-mails in Japanese (90%), and to American friends in English. He wrote a blog in Japanese almost every day; this reduced to two or three times a week in Term 1 on the MA, totalling one or two hours per week. He typically wrote about 500 words for each entry, writing about 'British culture, British foods, and studying here, teachers here', straight onto the blog, with little planning or editing. The blog is hosted by a company specialising in English education, so it is mostly read by teachers. Others commented on his blog and he replied.

In addition he wrote short diary entries in notebooks in Japanese, again two or three times a week – but just for 5 minutes. These entries were more personal and private than his blog, which he was aware was for 'public consumption'.

3. Non-academic reading

In Japan he read a great number of lifestyle books in both Japanese and English. He is interested in politics and international affairs, so read about them in Japanese newspapers, and occasionally in the Economist, which he started reading when he knew he was coming to the UK. Non-academic reading he did in the first term included reading about the Bible – not for religious reasons, but out of interest – and he bought the news publication 'The Week' twice a month. He found the Economist difficult to read and liked the Week for its short summaries of news articles.

4. Academic literacy issues after one month of Term 1

One month into the MA, Jun said he found the technical terms on the MA really difficult to understand, as they seemed abstract and were unfamiliar. To deal with this he bought a dictionary of applied linguistics and linguistics, highlighting words in the text and noting definitions in a notebook, organised by module area. He said that

typically he was looking up between five and ten words per article, and examples included 'inductive', 'deductive', 'pidgins'. He also had four other paper dictionaries (a bilingual dictionary, the Oxford dictionary, Longman, COBUILD) and an electronic dictionary in Japanese and English. He reported using the specialist dictionary and the electronic ones most frequently. He began by looking in the specialist dictionary and then using the electronic one for words in that he did not understand.

In addition, when suggested core reading was difficult for him (eg in Discourse Analysis) he looked for introductory books in the area, to help him define/learn basic technical terms. The titles on the bibliography given out by the module tutor looked difficult, so he searched for more introductory titles on the library shelves. He found useful introductory texts books this way.

The whole MA group had three Study Skills classes, which made him feel relieved as he saw 'many people have as such the kind of same problems about studying, how to manage time and yeah are worried about their reading and assignments' (11). In addition, these classes taught him how to access e-journal articles and how to write a bibliography for the programme (which, he noted, differed in minor ways from what he had been taught on the preessional course). Other topics covered (how to organize the writing, how to read, how to select books effectively) were similar to what he had done on the preessional.

In addition, Jun had been asked to attend the weekly inessional English language classes offered to Applied Linguistics' MA students with an IELTS level of 6.5. He attended all of these classes, except one, appreciating them because: 'Ah there are a smaller number of students there. I can feel relaxed and I can ask many questions about how to write and about collocation, phrase and verbs, language grammar, so it's very helpful for me.' (11). He also did all the work for these classes: 'every week weekend she gives me, gives us a short essay, time limited assignment, writing assignment about my teaching experience'. These tasks typically involved 5-10 minutes planning on paper, then 30 minutes to an hour writing on the computer.

Preessional teachers had told him 'I'm not good at using appropriate words collocations so I'm worried about I can't use I can't write correct language, grammar, those sorts of things. So I'm worried about grammar, language problems' (11). He was

working hard to improve his English, noting down useful phrases in notebooks, while listening to the television or radio most days. He also spent time talking to British students in his hall of residence, asking them language questions, and raising similar issues with a male British student on the MA course with whom he lunched most days. This person answered questions and pointed out errors Jun was making in speaking. In addition, in the first term he was also attending evening classes at a language school in the town, which required him to write a diary, but mainly focussed on speaking. He enjoyed this opportunity to communicate in English with other language learners.

Academic reading was proving problematic, as Jun struggled to understand completely new subjects. Particularly challenging was the module Phonetics and Phonology. He spoke to the module tutor about this and she suggested some other reading, but problems here went beyond understanding technical terms to being able to understand the theory of the sound system and to solving practice questions.

For another module, SLLP, he said: 'For example, psychological approach, it's really difficult to imagine you've got to understand some technical words, the content, so as I told you I pick some unfamiliar words in the dictionary and try to understand but it takes ages to read twenty pages or forty pages and understand well, it's really difficult.' He reported spending two or three hours to read twenty pages. He was reading whole texts, then returning to particular paragraphs that interested him, or were particularly problematic.

He found it hard to connect his teaching experience to the theories he was meeting in SLLP. He reported not keeping up with the reading, because he was typically spending three hours preparing for each lecture (reading materials given by the teacher or doing background readings) and then three hours afterwards reviewing the pre-lecture materials and readings. He underlined interesting sentences/phrases in text, especially those 'strongly related to the topic ... or... which is strongly related to my teaching experience' (11).

Sources of help he identified at the end of the first month on the programme were: friends (one classmate and one neighbour in hall), the module tutors, and, especially, the in-session teacher. He reported that he had found the two-month pre-session course really helpful, and felt it had been long enough. It had increased his confidence

in writing academic essays. However, in the fourth week on the MA course his main concerns were whether he could write well enough to pass and , the biggest problems: 'how to manage time and following the lecture and understand well' (11).

5. Issues raised above returned to in August 2009

He continued writing the Japanese blog referred to in 2. above, writing almost every day, until the last term, when he was too busy to do this and so wrote about 10 entries a month. He had written there about his experiences of study in the UK.

His private diary entries stopped, but he did note down helpful ideas for his dissertation in three notebooks.

He also stopped noting down new technical vocabulary items, but continued to refer to a core reference book for SLA for defining terms (Ellis's 'The study of SLA'). His use of the electronic dictionary decreased.

He only attended the private evening classes in English 4 or 5 times more in the first term.

Appendix 20: Example of Data Summary 2.1: Case study summary in chronological order for Timur

Assignment 1: PCA

1. Having submitted his PCA, Timur e-mailed to say he was pleased with it because he realised that he had improved his academic writing skill, and because he believed he had ‘managed to cover the topic with 1,100 words’. He stated ‘I refreshed my knowledge. I haven’t read anything about ELT since my graduation so by virtue of PCA I had a chance to read some referential books before starting my study’. He expressed no concerns about the assignment.

2. Assignment and feedback. The assignment had a cover page, with Timur’s name and a shortened title. The essay was eight paragraphs in length, in single-line spacing, with no headings/sub-headings and no bibliography.

There were a lot of annotations on the text, as well as a feedback sheet and written feedback at the end of the assignment. The latter indicated this was ‘a good try but you have quite a lot of work to do to get your writing up to an acceptable MA standard. This is achievable but you will need significant and sustained help and support’. The feedback sheet had ticks in the ‘fair’ and/or ‘poor’ columns in feedback grid by criteria. It also commented on the following:

C1: He had clearly read some sources, but there was limited referencing within the text and no bibliography.

He had grasped some concepts but ‘your discussion was not always coherent’.

C2: Having discussed some salient issues on parts of the topic, he had ‘not adequately compared and contrasted’ them.

C3: There was ‘little critical analysis of work in the research field’.

‘However, reflections on your own teaching experience demonstrate some critical awareness’.

C4: Coherence was major issue: ‘you need substantial work on this and you are advised to seek help’.

C5: There were a number of presentation problems, and he was told he needed to learn referencing conventions ‘intra-textually and how to create a reference list’.

A number of grammar points were indicated on the text and he was advised ‘You must ensure your work is proof-read before submission’.

End comments also pointed out:

- He needed to learn how to develop ‘a well-structured assignment, including a clear introduction, with a thesis statement (including some indication of the structure of the assignment to follow), a clear and cohesive (and coherent) paragraph structure, with each topic sentence highlighting the topic to be discussed within the paragraph and all issues within the paragraph relating to the same theme. Plus cohesion across the essay by creating links between paragraphs and developing an argument’.
- ‘You need to adopt a more explicit style, on occasion you assume that the reader has knowledge that he/she may not.’
- ‘Learn to make references to support points made.’
- He needed to follow conventions: by providing a full essay title and reference list.
- Also ‘this is significantly below the word limit and you therefore did not elaborate on issues’.

3. These points were explained further by the tutor in their meeting in Week 6. She told him: ‘I have been, with everybody, as critical as I can be to help you, because this is obviously non-assessed.’ (t5a1ms4:1). A great deal of information was given in this 50-minute tutorial, dominated by the tutor, with Timur clearly struggling to keep up and absorb information, as indicated by his questions/comments. He did not take notes or ask to record the meeting.

The tutor began by asking if Timur was attending the extra in-session writing support classes, and telling him:

‘You have a lot of work to do to get to an MA standard. It is achievable but it means you are going to have to get help...It’s about your academic writing, in terms of dealing with linguistics and ...this new academic literacy ...but it is also more fundamental than that. It’s about how you write an essay and how we construct a coherent essay with, you know, a very clear introduction, thesis statement, the following paragraphs that have topic sentences that link and are cohesive and how you develop an argument in your writing...’ (t1a1ms4:1).

At the end of this summary of issues, Timur asked ‘Coherence?’.

She went on to explain the use of the feedback sheet and the marking scheme and then turned to specific problems:

1. Reading. A major issue was his limited number of references in the assignment (and no dates with authors' names, plus no bibliography). The following extract from the tutorial illustrates the points being raised on this and his participation in the dialogue:

t1: From reading your assignment, it was clear to me you had read.

s4: But clear

t1 But what you didn't do is you didn't reference the sources which you had used, within your text. So whenever you put forward an idea or you are summarising information, you're drawing on information and ideas from other sources, you must always write it and then put the name of the author that you got it from and the date, intra-textual referencing. It does two things, in a way, or maybe more than two things. One is it lends authority to your writing because it suggests that you have read within the field, there's some demonstration of that and also what it's doing is it's supporting what you're saying. You're saying it's not just me saying this, somebody else {is saying this.}

s4: {Someone else saying that.}

t1: OK, so you must do that.

2. Addressing the question: he had described, but not compared issues, as was required, and had focussed on one aspect of the topic (out of two).
3. Critical evaluation: 'there was really little critical analysis in the work' (t1a1ms4:2) in relation to the reading done, and the tutor told him he needed to 'discuss more about the theories and how the theories support or can be refuted based on certain evidence as well' (t1a1ms4:3) but she liked the way he had reflected on his own teaching experience, saying this 'demonstrated critical awareness' (t1a1ms4:3).
4. He also needed help with assignment coherence: 'overall organisation, development of sections and paragraphs' (t1a1ms4:3).
5. He did not write to the word limit.
6. Key terms were not defined/explained.
7. He paraphrased the title, when it should be exact.

8. Direct quotes were not in inverted commas, and the tutor noticed the change in style.

Timur explained that he was not a good writer in Turkish, and they agreed he needed to practise academic writing in English. She gave him a considerable amount of advice:

- to 'stick to a framework to make your writing coherent to the reader' (t1a1ms4:3).
- When he suggested looking at other assignments, she told him there were books on academic writing style, and that he should consult the departmental insessional academic writing tutor (Nicky).
- He was given advice about the mechanics of how to cite within the text
- If he used a proof-reader (as he said he would), he needed to ask this person 'to comment on: Is my writing clear and coherent?' (t1a1ms4:4).
- To be selective in the topics he covered in an assignment, focusing on only three or four.
- To have a thesis statement (a term she explained) and one main idea per paragraph, with coherence between the two, and links between paragraphs.
- 'always have the reader in mind when you are writing' and 'don't assume that your reader knows, even though you're writing for academics here who know the materials, because they've taught you this material, and you need to be quite explicit in what you are saying. Or at least you need to be explicit because we need to know what your reading is or what your understanding of that concept is, your idea' (t1a1ms5:7).
- To use references to support points made.
- 'Most importantly, address the question set' (t1a1ms4:7), and she suggested he underline key words in the essay title.

By this point, Timur had realised that his IELTS course in London had not prepared him for academic writing at this level. He reported on the writing tutor's comment that, although he had improved his speaking, his writing had not improved and he was going to be judged by his writing, which this tutor confirmed.

Ann had annotated his script extensively, and told him not to be 'horrified' by this, but he said: 'Yeah, I am horrified about this' (t1a1ms4:6) and stated that if he gave in work like this he would be highly likely to fail, which she confirmed, saying that the work he had submitted would get a percentage mark in the 30s. On the positive side, she told him 'It's clear to me that you are understanding what you are reading and certainly from our discussions as well in class and, you know, the way you follow the lectures, you understand' (t1a1ms4:6).

At the end, the tutor asked him to summarise her advice which he did as follows:

'Well first of all I need to read the topic and I should highlight the key words. Then the basic points the cohesive, I'm jumping from one idea to another and I need to, I'm using the, some vocabulary items which is complicated but I'm not explaining what they are. And (..) one paragraph should address to one idea and explain it completely and you should make a link between the other paragraph. I mean the next paragraph and the previous paragraph. And introduction paragraph should be clear and should express what you are talking about in this assignment.' (s4a1mt1:13).

She concluded that 'the help you need is beyond what a lecturer can give you and what we should be giving you. So you know it is going to be a lot of your own work... you've got to take responsibility for it because we can't be reading drafts, you know, we can't be advising on that. That's not our role.' (t1a1ms4).

Timur concluded the meeting by saying he was totally depressed and he wished he had had this feedback earlier in the term, but she replied 'I think you also need to be within the academic community a little bit first before you start addressing this... You have to do your best anyway, it's, your MA studies are a formative process, you're not supposed to be brilliant from the start, it's all about learning as you go through and part of that learning' (t1a1ms4:16). 'It's a process, you're not here to be brilliant from the beginning, you're here to learn.' (t1a1ms4:17)

4. As advised by his personal tutor, Timur arranged to see Nicky, the insessional academic writing tutor to discuss this assignment. This meeting took place in the middle of Week 8. The personal tutor had given Nicky his PCA and feedback, and

discussed his needs with her. He had already borrowed some books on academic writing and again regretted not having received advice earlier in the term. At this point, Nicky gently reminded him that he had missed several of their weekly in-session writing classes and had only submitted three of the seven pieces of work for them. He excused this by saying everyone was disorganised in the first term and that he would be better organised in the second one (when, however, there were no in-session writing classes). They discussed other possible sources of help, including his British undergraduate friend, who had offered to proofread his work.

They looked at the assignment together and the two basic problems he identified were linking paragraphs and giving citations. He now felt confident about the second issue, having been shown how to do it in a whole-group study skills class. Nicky pointed out that he had not followed departmental writing conventions, such as double spacing and he immediately asked where he could find this information, and was directed to the Student Handbook. He identified his main linguistic problem as the use of articles and she showed him an EAP-focussed website at another university that had exercises on common language and study skills problems, and recommended some books on academic writing.

He asked Nicky if she liked writing herself, and she said 'No, of course not...it is hard but the qualification is worthwhile, but it is stimulating for the mind, which is not always comfortable'. (t5a1ms4:3/4). Timur said he had talked to a Turkish friend doing a doctorate who had told him MA writing was harder than writing for the PhD, 'because in your MA degree you are not aware of how to write, what's essay, but in your PhD you already experienced about that, everything in your MA degree' (s4a1mt5:11). He explained he felt under pressure, with two outlines to complete by that Friday, but confidently thought, having done all the reading for his DA assignment (A2) and taken notes, he would be able to write it in two days.

5. The research interview about Assignment 1 was at the end of Week 8, two weeks after the meeting with Timur's personal tutor, and two days after the meeting described above with the academic writing tutor, Nicky.

He reported on his shock at the first feedback (on A1): 'I thought that it was OK... I used to think it was about 75%....After meeting, it's like 35, at most 40...If I were a

teacher or lecturer, I wouldn't give more than 40. And it shows that I, you know, I moved on from this situation to a better one' (s4i1:7). He said he had completely understood his personal tutor's feedback on A1. He acknowledged 'before submitting the PCA...I didn't have any idea how to write an assignment and I did this ...like a normal writing'. (s4i2:5). He had, as a result, 'got many mistakes in this work' (s4i2:1). When asked to point out useful feedback he mentioned the following:

Genre requirements:

- He had not included the full title and then not covered the whole topic.
- The need for a thesis statement in the opening paragraph (he had learnt about thesis statements on his IELTS course).
- Focusing on one topic per paragraph.
- Linking paragraphs.
- The mistake of introducing a new idea in the conclusion.
- Giving references, which was a major feature he had not encountered before. He had added some references to the PCA text on the advice of his British undergraduate friend, but she had not mentioned the need for a bibliography.

Micro issues: These were language problems, especially missing articles.

He described MA-level writing as 'more professional than other writing' (s4i2:2). As preparation for the IELTS exam he had written on a wide range of general academic topics, such as the environment, education. Re the PCA task he said 'this writing is kind of new one to me. Because this is an academic writing and I learnt that I need to be much more specific when introducing the subjects and I should be clearer' (ibid). He summarised the IELTS training as 'IELTS writing is just assessing your vocabulary, assessing how to write and how to use the colloquial items, but in academic writing it's different from IELTS writing. In academic writing you need to use some idea, you need to support the, you need to find loads of examples, you need to read books before starting writing...In IELTS, just they are given topics and you are starting to write about these topics.' (s4i2:5). He commented 'When I look at my writing (A1), this is a kind of typical IELTS writing. I can, but right now I can realise that. But at Week 4 (*when it was handed in*), I couldn't understand it' (s5i2:7).

After his meeting with the writing tutor, Timur had accessed the study skills website she had recommended ('I found everything in that website' s4i2:4), and went straight to the library where he had borrowed two books she recommended on academic writing.

Advice he would give other students about academic writing now included:

- Being very careful about referencing.
- 'there should be a sequence and inner fluency in an academic writing, because there is no fluency in my academic writing and it is very hard to understand, so they should be aware of:
- Linking paragraphs
- Mentioning just one thing in a paragraph' (s4i2:4).
- They should borrow books and read about academic writing.
- Being careful to deal with the whole topic, not part of it.
- Reading the recommended books for the PCA, not just the ones they already had. This is what he had done: 'I didn't want to go to library... it was easier to use my own books' (s4i2:5).
- He strongly advised new students to contact their tutor/lecturer for advice on assignments.

Sources of support, which he saw as following three steps:

1. Personal tutor – see Sections 2. and 3. above.
2. Friend – British mature undergraduate student, final year – gave him 'tips and clues' about academic writing, and helped him select writing advice books in the library.
3. Academic writing tutor – see Section 4. Above.

In addition, he had been contacted on Facebook by a Turkish student who had done the MA the previous year and they had met. This student had e-mailed Timur his second, DA assignment, but without the mark or feedback. This was on a topic that Timur had changed from.

Assignment 2: Discourse Analysis

1. Timur's personal tutor, Ann, was also the Discourse Analysis tutor, so they met again to discuss his essay topic choice in Week 6. He said he was planning to write about three types of genre (Beatles' lyrics, a Turkish short story and a filmscore) and she told him to focus on one genre only, but:

'I still think that's too huge for you focus on for a 2,000 word essay, 2,000-2,500 word essay. It's rather large. Whereas if you were to look at, probably not as appealing as all these things you've just described, but for instance the abstract, the academic abstract or the essay structure as I've described to you in the lecture, that's much more contained and you, the analysis will be (..) will be much more contained for the essay that you've been, the number of words that you can write in' (t1a2m1s4:2).

She also directed him to choose a genre with a reasonable literature base as the subject was new to him. They discussed other possible genres, with her directing him to something shorter and already researched eg advertisements, academic abstracts, and newspaper articles. He asked her to define a key concept in genre analysis: 'structure', which he saw as linked to vocabulary.

Ann looked at his references, and noted most of them were about language teaching. She suggested some other references. He asked if he should wait to decide on the genre before deciding on the books to read, and she advised against this: 'read at the same time, I mean your reading is going to guide you' (t1a2m1s4:4). There was only one lecture on genre, so he needed to supplement that with reading introductory texts.

He was clear about the pedagogic applications of genre analysis: 'while teaching genre you should have a lesson plan and it's a kind of form... And I can complete this form according to my genre and I can imagine that I'm going to teach this genre in my classroom and I need to have a lesson plan for genre and I can do this work' (s4a2m1:4).

He asked if he was the only person having problems choosing a topic and she assured him this was not the case, that most people had chosen topics but not yet decided on the data they were going to collect, or were unfocused in their reading. Raising these

issues was the function of the meeting. Timur could now see that the choice of genre, which he had thought unproblematic, was actually difficult. The tutor, whilst telling him it was his choice, and suggesting alternatives, tried to steer him towards an academic genre that had been studied by Swales: the abstract. Reading his work would give Timur a stronger framework for analysis. Still unsure of his genre choice, Timur said: 'I will take my time for it today and I will think about it...I think it's better to at first to start to reading' (s4a2m1:6). He asked if she wanted to know his decision re topic and text, which she did.

2. Research Interview 2, summarised above with regard to Assignment 1, finished by looking ahead to Assignment 2. By this time, Timur had changed topic completely, focussing on a different assignment question. He was irritated by the fact he had wasted a week on a topic he had changed from, because he had been unable to find references, or suitable texts to analyse. He had now asked a former student in Turkey to send him two essays to analyse for cohesion. He felt this topic was progressing better and said he did not foresee any problems; he would be seeing the module tutor the following week to go over his outline, and then still had a week before the assignment was due in. He was working on the outline for his Assignment 3 and planned to e-mail it to the tutor that day.

3. When the module tutor saw him again to discuss his Assignment 2 outline in Week 9, he showed her the 1,500-word text he had written so far. She told him 'I'd rather see the plan, I can't read all your writing in 10 minutes' (s1a2m2s4:1). He drew her attention to the sections: 'This is about analysing written texts in terms of cohesion. I started with introduction and I mentioned what I am going to write in this paper. Then I gave literature review' (s1a2m2s4:1). She stopped him and asked him which model of cohesion he was using, stating there was a more recent version. She pointed out he needed a methodology section before the analysis. He asked what she meant by methodology, and if it was at the end of the Literature Review or part of the analysis. She explained that this was a separate section: 'you need to state your methodology, where you got your text from, what it is and then the analysis that you are using' (t1a2m2s4:2). She told him the analysis section was more normally called 'Results'.

He had presented his data in a table, which was not clearly demarcated into sections or explained and the tutor suggested ways of making the different data sets more salient,

and of explaining what the data represented with a gloss. She told him he then needed to discuss the information in the table: 'I mean, what does this show us?' (t1a2mw2s4:3). They discussed this and she corrected some of his analysis, telling him to review it. She also encouraged him to look at the data from a comparative viewpoint (comparing the results on one text with those on the second). He pointed out that his student was using cohesive devices incorrectly and she told him he would need to comment on that, which he had not done in the draft. He was clear about examples he would use, and that he would put the two student essays in an appendix. He was concerned about the word limit, and was told he could choose to limit his essay 'to talking about just a few cohesive devices' (t1a2m2s4:5). He was clear he did not want to talk about ellipsis because he wanted to focus on reference types: 'I like that one, I like to go through the passages with cohesive device. Is that fine?' (t1a2m2s4:5), and she said that it was, but that this needed stating in the introduction.

Ann checked that he was still seeing the academic writing tutor, which he was, and he also mentioned having found a proof-reader (someone who worked in the University), with whom he had met to go through some of his writing. He assured her he was doing his best and she told him she could see improvement. They finished with him checking that he could e-mail her if he had problems. He did not do this, however.

4. On Assignment 2 submission day at the beginning of week 10, all students gave a poster presentation about their assignment topics. Timur was an engaged and engaging speaker beginning:

'Alright, ladies and gentlemen. Today we are going to talk about cohesion as usual and I feel really excited because I feel like a teacher, like all through the days, the power is of me. And we are going to talk about cohesion but first of all I will try to have a look at the picture (*on the poster, see Figure below*) on that guy, looks very unhappy. Do you know because he's trying to read my pre-course assignment, but he doesn't understand it because I didn't use many cohesive ties, and this is the problem, he has a problem about understanding (.) my assignment' (DA class poster presentation).

Figure: Picture of Timur's imagined reader; his poster about A2 presented in final DA class, Term 1 Week 10



This amusing introduction revealed Timur's awareness of his own writing problems and the links he was making between his own practice/experience and what he was studying. His presentation went on to explain his choice of framework for analysis and his findings. He spoke confidently, daring to challenge the experts: 'I don't agree with Halliday & Hasan about the repetition because if you use repetition many times, it makes redundant and you should avoid using repetition'.

There was one question, from Razvan, checking that the data were from one student over two time periods. The student's use of cohesive devices had improved and Razvan joked 'But you are a good teacher, right?'. To which Timur modestly replied: 'He is a good student'.

5. In his e-mailed reactions to having submitted A2, Timur was confident that he had improved his writing skills since A1, acknowledging the help of the writing tutor, Nicky, and his personal tutor, Ann. 'Maybe this assignment was my first serious assignment in my life and I know how to give reference and how to cite from now on'. He had no concerns, but felt he could have improved it by reading more, and giving more information, if 'I had arranged my time more effectively'. He was '100% sure' that this assignment was better than A1, 'because in PCA I did not even know how to write bibliography, giving reference and citation', and because 'paragraph connection, connection of sentences, coherence of assignment is better'. The assignment had been checked by his English student friend, Sylvia, for inappropriate language.

His advice for other students was that they should choose their topic carefully, as he had wasted time changing topic, which had prevented him reading more widely and from revising his assignment.

6. A2 looked completely different from A1: it had 1.5 (not single-line) spacing, with division into sections and sub-sections, a range of citations and quotes, and a bibliography. All these features had been missing in A1. The sections were: 1. Introduction, 2. Literature Review, 3. Method, 4. Analysis (sub-divided by category of cohesive device), 5. Discussion and Conclusion. The bibliography had nine items: five books and four chapters in books. There were no title or contents pages.

The written feedback Timur received on A2 confirmed his belief in his improvement. The assignment was awarded 58%, with crosses in all the 50%-59% boxes on the assignment sheet grid, and a second cross in the 60%-69% box for C3. Comments by criteria were:

C1: identification of correct sources, some clear accounts of reading and demonstration of understanding; inadequate review and description of his analytical framework in his literature review, an overuse of quotations which 'without any further explanation or exemplification, meant that it was difficult to decipher if you fully understood some of the concepts'.

C2: a fairly clear account of the data, but no 'explicit justification for the framework adopted'.

C3: good analysis and tabular representation of results, demonstrating 'good analytical ability'; he sensibly focused on features relevant to his study.

No highlighting of cohesive devices studied in the assignment (eg by colour), or listing of them in an appendix; lack of examples; no critique of the framework used.

C4: Coherence was best in the analysis section. He 'had the correct divisions but needed to include more in your literature review'. 'Some information was in the wrong sections'(eg 'you start to discuss information in your conclusion that belongs earlier in your paper').

C5: He was told 'You need to become more confident in establishing your own voice in your work i.e. stop using so many quotations and the ideas... into your own words and only use supporting references. Only quote when you feel it is

absolutely necessary'. There were errors in the bibliography, which needed proof-reading.

She again advised him to seek academic support, particularly 'on learning to use appropriate intra-textual references'.

The text was annotated with ticks, and questions/comments - eg re overquoting: 'try not to let the writing/ words of other dominate your work' (A2 page 3); 'put this in your own words' (A2 page 6). In several places he was asked to be more precise or to provide examples. The bibliographical reference for his framework (Halliday and Hasan 1976) was annotated with 'There is a more recent reference'.

7. Research Interview 3

This took place in Week 2 of Term Two. Timur was surprised by the amount of feedback on this assignment, as pre-submission he had thought he had done really well and that it would not be necessary. He commented again that this was his 'first, professional assignment' (s4i3:1), and on the lack of reading, writing and feedback on his undergraduate degree, where the only sources were randomly downloaded from the Internet (via Google), and he had not known how to use the library or e-journals.

Issues he raised were:

1. Own voice – 'my work was dominated by other writers' (s4i3:1). He realised he had over quoted here and needed to find a balance between A1, with no quotes, and A2 with too many. He felt this was the main point of the tutor's feedback, and having re-read his assignment 'I just realise that she was right' (s4i3:2). However, he pointed out that 'I just thought that because I was told that you need to use quotation and it makes your work very useful but no-one told me that how much quotation you need to give in your work and this is a problem and I thought that if I give lots of quotation it's going to be better, but it's not and I just realised that it's not'. (s4i3:5). He felt that this writing had been useful in that 'I got the idea of using quotations in my assignment, giving references and using in the correct place' (s4i3:7).
2. Genre requirement re explanations of key concepts: he also agreed with a second point that he had not explained what his framework was: 'I need to explain more, more detailed explanation of my literature review. This was too

basic' (s4i3:2). He had thought everyone knew the work he was referring to, but he now realised this was a major error: 'I believe it's really big mistake. Because I know what Halliday and Hasan are talking about... but everyone maybe cannot know it so I need to explain it' (s4i3:3). Overall, he now realised: 'If you are presenting a new idea, a new topic or new vocabulary, you need to explain what it is' (s4i3:2). However, he thought this was because he would not always be writing for his module tutor 'Because in the future I'm going to write my assignment maybe for my students, or other people' (s4i3:3). He believed Ann had pointed out the need to be more explicit for this reason, so had not realised the need to display knowledge in assignment writing.

3. Poor punctuation in his bibliography (which he had not asked his friend to proof-read).
4. Lexical choices need to be more appropriate: he had referred to 'written corpora', when it should have been 'written texts': 'I should find more common words in applied linguistics, I mean, what is appropriate for this MA programme' (s4i3:3).
5. Genre requirement re data analysis and presentation: Timur was very encouraged to be told he had done this well: 'I just realise that it's really good to use this kind of stuff...to show the analytic ability.' (s4i3:4). He could see how this use of tables was not applicable to A3, but would be helpful in all his option modules.
6. Like Barbara, Timur was surprised by the mark, but he was expecting a higher mark than 58%, although he confessed he had not looked at the mark scheme in the Student Handbook. Like Barbara, he compared to his previous learning context and felt that In Turkey it would have been awarded 65%. However, he concluded: 'Overall was fine, I did my best and I deserve 58' (s4i3:11).
7. Word count: 'I used to think 2,500 is too much to write an assignment, but ... I had lots of ideas but I couldn't reflect my ideas because 2,500 is nothing in MA degree' (s4i3:6). He would have liked another thousand words here, and twice as much for a large topic such as A3. The word limit had particularly affected his Literature Review, he felt.
8. He had combined discussion and conclusion and was now aware that was confusing, and that he needed to work on his organisation in future assignments.

He did not understand feedback on one section of the text, where the tutor had underlined some words, but had ended with a tick: 'I was confused that they are good or not, or do I need to paraphrase or not?' (s4i3:3). He had checked the meaning of one word, but was not sure if he could contact the tutor to find out.

Advice for future students was:

- To learn about appropriate number of quotations, with 'paraphrasing and acknowledging' (s4i3:8), unless they really needed to use a quotation (but he was unsure when that was). He was aware, however, that they must not 'cheat' (plagiarise).
- To consider the word limit before starting to write, because he had written 3,000 words (instead of the target 2,500) and this had been a major problem. He advised them to do this with an outline.
- To have a really good outline ('and it should show every step in your assignment' s4i3:9), before starting to read, if working on a topic covered in the module, as here. Otherwise it was necessary to read first, he felt.
- To choose one topic and stick to it.

Looking ahead to A3, which he had recently submitted, he was sure it was worse than A2 because:

- He had also overquoted there.
- 'In Turkey... if you have a first children, ...meaning for you is much more important than others because it's the first. And this one was my first son or daughter, this DA is very important to me that's why I did my best effort on this one... and also I believe that I did very well' (s4i3:9), so he was sure that if this got 58% his other assignment would get less than 50. He had also really liked the A2 topic more than A3's.

He was sure the feedback on A2 would be useful on later assignments and that he would re-read it before starting on the next one. He said he had consulted the feedback on A1 when writing A2 many times, and had found it very helpful (except about giving quotations).

He had discussed the assignment marks and was prepared to exchange his assignment and feedback with other students, but he did not think this would happen. He had noticed that this was a sensitive area: 'it's rude to ask someone to check their assignment because they can get me wrong' (s4i3:11). So he was only prepared to do this with one student, Jun from Japan, with whom he was very friendly.

Always eager for feedback, Timur asked me what I thought of his writing, but accepted that I could not do that and that there were other people he could go to for advice. He finished the interview by stating 'I believe I'm going to finish this MA... I'm more confident when I compare to before this assignment...I was really, really upset when I got my pre-course assignment feedback... because it was terrible. It was completely rubbish' (s4i3:12).

He also commented on his life as a student: 'I'm doing too much...studying, working (*for money*), adaptation to a new culture, I mean going night out very often...' The latter was unfamiliar to him but necessary, he felt, 'because it's the only way in England to socialise with people' (s4i3:13). This had been three or four nights weekly in the first term, with friends from hall, but he was now reducing it to two.

8. Ann, the module tutor, when interviewed about this piece of work reported that he had done extremely well here, given his PCA. On his A1, she commented: 'Now here's a case of a student who hadn't really experienced academic writing before much, so it's asking an awful lot of them' (t1a2is4:1). He had improved greatly, moving from a clear fail to a borderline merit, a mark that was in the middle of the group. He had been receptive to input and he was motivated. There had been a meeting about his topic and outline but no further contact for A2.

Positive aspects of A2 she mentioned were: he had identified the correct sources; his writing was clearer; he analysed his data independently, developing a small framework for himself which was 'innovative and well presented... and the way in which he then managed to interpret that, his analysis was quite mature' (t1a2is4:2). She also liked his structure, with a good introduction and 'very clear development' (ibid). The areas for improvement were those outlined above: insufficient explanation of the literature before 'he launched into his analysis' (t1a2s4:2); the major limitation was the overuse of quotations: 'he hasn't yet established his own voice in his writing, he's not yet confident to do that' (t1a2s4:2); lack of justification for, or critical discussion of, the

framework used for analysis; misplacing information, with new points in the conclusion, and some typos/language errors.

However, her overall impression was positive and she concluded: 'what I liked about it even though there were lots of quotations and so on, it was him, he'd tried his best to produce this piece of work on his own and it was very clear that that had been done and...he wasn't just following a model (*of analysis*), he was understanding it, I felt' (t1a2s4:2).

Assignment 3: SLLP

1. Students could submit their assignment outline to the module tutor for SLLP. Timur e-mailed two drafts of his outline for comment to Steve in Term 1 Weeks 8 and 10. His outlines contained headings and short summaries of planned content. E-mailed comments on the first draft, which were all taken into account in the second, advised him as follows:

- He planned a historical overview of motivation from different theoretical perspectives (eg cognitive), and was advised to only do this if relevant, and instead to consider focusing on a major debate between two views.
- To include in the introduction, as well as definitions of his focus (motivation), 'key issues concerning motivation that have caught your attention as a teacher in Turkey. That will give more focus for the assignment'.
- He was asked which aspects of one major author's work he would highlight, and told of three stages of his work.
- He was asked what he meant by referring to internal and external factors, offered different interpretations, and urged to 'relate this strongly to the Turkish situation', linking to an earlier section.
- It was suggested that points to be made in a section on the Turkish context be spread through other sections, and he was advised to 'make sure that you highlight the relevance of the theory to your practice as a teacher in Turkey'.

The second draft that he e-mailed was revised in the light of the above and included two direct questions to the module tutor about the range of content: firstly, should he discuss one model or four? He was advised to mention all four, with a summary of

arising issues before describing the different language learning situations in Turkey, and relating them to the concepts discussed.

His second question asked about depth of theoretical discussion, and he was again advised to relate this to his teaching context. A final comment urged him to relate his discussion of motivation of L2 learners to 'the teaching/learning situations on which you are focusing', and asked him questions about the relevance of sources he was referencing to that context. Three out of the four comments here urged him to link theoretical points to his teaching context. The assignment he wrote adopted the suggestions on the second outline.

2. Timur did not respond to my Christmas vacation e-mail about writing A3, but did answer the post-submission e-mail. When asked what he was pleased about when thinking of this assignment, he replied in terms of his development as a teacher: 'I feel much more comfortable about motivating my students by now on...I also learnt different strategies about motivation I can use in the classroom'. Concerns were also related to the topic, not the assignment. He thought the assignment could have been improved by covering more approaches, but this was not possible because of the word limit, and by using a proof-reader (which he had done for A2). He felt that A3 was better in that he had read more sources and it was better organised. Advice for future students was:

1. That they should prepare their outline carefully. He had rushed the first one and covered too many topics. He then 'wasted a week to think about a new outline'.
2. 'They should arrange their time realistically'. He felt the vacation had flown and 'I could not reflect the ideas in my mind to the paper because of the tight time'.

3. Assignment and feedback. The assignment had five sections: 1. Introduction, 2. Definition of motivation, 3. Motivation theories related to L2 (subdivided) 4. Motivating students and 5. Conclusion. The bibliography had 11 items: ten books and one chapter in a book. There was no title page.

The assignment was awarded a low merit grade (62%). Comments on the feedback sheet were:

C1: good understanding shown of a good range of relevant reading.

C2: successful summarising of sources, and the drawing together of different sources to support discussion in several places.

C3: He related the concepts discussed 'appropriately and interestingly to the Turkish situation', but could have made more specific recommendations for pedagogy. One section was too short and did not include reference to work more relevant to the Turkish situation.

C4: The assignment was clearly organised into sections.

C5: There were 'a few typos and English errors', but the overall text was clear and comprehensible. There were still problems with the bibliography, which was not in alphabetical order.

There were 13 text-specific comments. These mostly related to content, with positive features pointed out, as well as suggestions for improvement: 'good point', 'nice examples'. Sentences that were unclear or incomplete were pointed out. There were several ticks on the assignment itself.

4. The interview with the module tutor, Steve, added the following: the tutor felt 'I got a real flavour of his teaching situation and I thought this was somebody really engaging with the theory in relation to his teaching situations, that was something that I liked very much about it and it was a clearly organised piece of work' (t2a2is4:1).

A weakness was the lack of 'very specific or concrete recommendations... he needs to be aware that he mustn't be too vague and woolly. ..he needs to know markers will often respond very well to examples and illustrations and concrete material' (t2a2is4:1). Steve saw this as perhaps 'particularly true in the Anglophone world; I think we are ...a rather empirical people' (ibid). Timur's suggestions had been rather general and this had cost him marks. Future work (especially a dissertation) would need to include specific pedagogic recommendations.

The mark indicated this work was slightly above average for the group. When asked about Timur's use of quotations in this assignment, Steve noted that he had quoted a lot, but that 'I responded well to the fact that he was drawing on different sources' (t2a2is4:2). This was unlike 'the one-string banjo': endlessly quotations from one source, so 'it is almost as if Dornyei is writing the assignment...I felt he was doing it in a reasonably sophisticated and thoughtful way, showing he had recognised links

between different people and the different perspectives and in his assignment, also the fact that it was interleaved with relating to his own situation, therefore breaking up the quotations' (t2a2is4:2).

5. Research interview 4

This took place in Term Two, Week 8. Timur was very pleased with A3's mark of 62%, and the feedback. His confidence on submission of A3 had dropped after A2's grade and feedback, and he did not expect such a high grade for Assignment 3, as he felt it was weaker than A2. He still strongly believed this, arguing that markers only see one assignment, but 'I prepared both of them, so I know what I did, I know what I wrote in my assignments, and that's why I'm saying that Discourse Analysis is better than SLLP' (s4i4:5). He attributed the difference in grade to the marker, not the texts. Like other students, he had also heard that the SLLP module tutor was a harsh marker, but now disagreed with this. He did not think his writing had improved in the month between the submission of A2 and A3 because he had not done anything to improve in that time (unlike the concerted effort between A1 and A2).

The 'sin' of quotations in A2 had not been commented on here, though he had done as much quoting, he felt: 'so I'm really confused... is there a limitation or is there any standard about using quotation? So this is I think problem for me... What am I going to do in my next writing?' (t4i4:2). He learnt from specific examples in this feedback, however, that he needed 'to be much more careful while giving quotations because sometimes my quotations are not related what I'm trying to explain' (s4i4:5).

Feedback: Timur had spent an hour going through the feedback on his assignment. This was enough, he thought, and he did not plan to look at it again. 'I feel really good when I get this feedback because here I can see my improvement about writing' (s4i4:7). He thought this feedback was the most helpful he had received so far, and appreciated that it commented on strengths and weaknesses. He had gone through it carefully, completing an incomplete sentence that had been pointed out. He appreciated the praise of good points, which were where he had made links to his Turkish context.

He could not understand two pieces of feedback: 'Perhaps you need to distinguish between choosing to learn the language and choosing the means of learning the

language' (A3 feedback sheet, comment 3). He did not understand the meaning of the word 'means' here. He did not intend to explore this, however: 'Because the SLLP assignment is over, and I don't want to think about it because I have many things to do' (t4i4:2). The second instance was the exclamation mark at the end of comment 11: 'A very interesting anecdote!' In Turkish this was used to jokingly indicate the compliment meant the opposite, so he did not know if this comment was sincere or sarcastic.

Genre/content: Timur explained that in this assignment he had 'specified the problems in Turkey about motivation then I found some useful theoretical standpoints and I make a comparison and I try to explain the reasons and to solutions of the problems' (s4i4:3). He appreciated specific feedback on one point: 'reasonable ideas, but you need to show how you would combat the 'anti-integrative' nationalistic feelings of learners and their families' (A3 feedback sheet Comment 13), saying 'I realised I just presented the problem, I didn't suggest any reasonable idea how we can sort it out, so I really like this one' (s4i4:3).

Process: Considering the outlines, he said that he completely changed his plans after both sets of feedback. He argued that his assignment did not follow the second outline because of a major shift in focus (from Kurdish to Turkish speakers), after advice from the tutor to drop some of his topics. The outlines were produced before he had done much reading and so were too wide-ranging: 'I thought I can cover everything in one assignment' (s4i4:7). He did not feel he could send the tutor a third outline, and did not produce one: 'I just follow my instinct' (ibid).

Community? He had not shown his assignment or feedback to anyone. One student had asked his mark and commented that it was 'unbelievable', after his writing problems in Term 1. In Turkey students discussed marks and exchanged assignments, but here 'I realised that people don't feel comfortable about showing their assignments and telling their marks, because of cultural differences' (s4i4:7). He would have liked to read other people's work. His English friend had proofread part of this assignment, but she did not have time to check more.

He felt the academic writing tutor's feedback on extracts of his writing in the in-session class (which focused on the production of short texts intended as part of A3) in Term 1 had helped him:

s4: I talked to Nicky I mean very often, like once in two weeks and she help me many times on my assignments.

r: How? How did she help you?

s4: Well I mentioned to you in the previous one she gave me a website address, you remember. And also she corrected some of my, some of my works because we used to write assignment, we used to write essay every week and she used to give feedback...

s4: ...if you are talking about the writing skills, she helped but if you ask me I mean did Nicky help you in, help you more in Discourse Analysis or SLLP, absolutely SLLP because we were, were I mean writing generally about the SLLP topics...It's a kind of preparation to SLLP.

r: Yes, so do you think that made a difference? Might that be one reason why your SLLP assignment is better than your Discourse Analysis assignment, possibly?

s4: Yeah, I didn't think of it but might be...

r: OK. And if so, what things did she help you with specifically? I mean OK you've mentioned language in places, anything else she helped you with?

s4: She helped me about when I give a quotation I need to make comment about this quotation or I need to make a connection because I used to give quotation and I used to say like this is this someone's other's ideas and I think that it should be really good idea because it's on the book and I didn't make any comment about it, and Nicky advised me to make some comment, why you are putting this quotation here, you need to make an explanation or you need to make connection why you are putting this quotation here (s4i4:8/9).

Like Barbara, he had not consulted the specific advice on writing this assignment given in a long document on Blackboard, and did not remember it at all in the interview.

His advice for other writers of this assignment was firstly with regard to the theory-practice link: they should make connections between 'theoretical standpoints' (s4i4:3) and their teaching contexts. Secondly, with regard to sources, they should:

- read lots of books before starting to write (he had consulted around 15, and three articles). He had spent three weeks on the assignment, doing all the reading in the first week.
- ‘Because motivation is a kind of subject which there are lots of developments in this field, they should find latest books that published’ (s4i4:4).
- Read ‘at least a couple of books before submitting their outlines’ (s4i4:7).

Timur felt he was learning useful things for his professional life: ‘before I mean starting my MA degree I was aware of the problems in my teaching context but I didn’t know why it is. Then when I started my MA degree I just realised that I can give some reasonable explanation to the problems...and now especially motivation I feel really comfortable if I come across with a problem in teaching context I can use it to sort it out’ (t4i4:4). Considering his writing skills, he now felt, compared to A1, ‘I know what to do, I know how to write, I know how to give quotation, I know what kind of books do I need to read’ (s4i4:4).

He saw the role of feedback in developing writing skills as really useful ‘because I’m not going to make the same mistakes in future assignments’ (s4i4:9). Connecting to the content of an option module he was studying at the time (English for Specific Purposes), he saw it as like an evaluation: ‘when you get evaluation you are using this evaluation to make another course in the future’ (s4i4:9). He recognised from the feedback that his writing strength lay in ‘making connection to my teaching context’ (s4i4:10), and that his weaknesses were incomplete sentences and ‘not related quotation’.

The student’s role, as he saw it, was to get as much practice as possible in writing based on reading. His advice for beginning MA students was to find out what academic writing was, by consulting books on the topic and attending appropriate writing courses, as he had done.

Technology use:

- Timur described his writing at the beginning as writing down quotations from reading on paper, and finding when he came to write up the assignment on the computer that he could not remember why he had noted them. So he changed

to inputting quotations directly to the computer, with 'personal notes' (t4a4:l1) explaining why he had chosen them.

- He also now wrote his assignments straight into the computer, starting from those quotations and only ever saving the latest draft.
- He had been introduced to Zotero, citation software for searching for bibliographical details and for managing sources, by his English friend. He termed this a 'lifesaver', as he no longer had to think about his bibliography. It did not, however, put items in alphabetical order and he had been criticised for that on Assignment 3.
- He had learned to use the e-journal facility in the University library, and read articles online.
- He had e-mailed his assignment to his friend to proofread and she had returned it with two/three pages corrected (mostly with regard to the use of grammatical articles). He had asked her to indicate errors by colour, but she had not and so he had printed out both versions, to compare and realised 'it was terrible' (s4i4:l3), so he had checked the rest of the paper himself, but been unable to see errors himself.
- He had discussed his A2 topic on msn with one of his former lecturers in Turkey, for three hours. The lecturer discussed the topic in Turkish, but sent some information in English. He pointed out this topic (genre analysis) was challenging and this led to Timur changing topic.
- After receiving feedback on two drafts for A3, Timur did not feel he could 'disturb' the tutor again, so he phoned a Turkish friend studying for a PhD at another English university for advice on what to drop from this topic, as he realised from the feedback his coverage was too wide .
- He continued to use Babylon (translation software) and a free online dictionary. He used both of these to help him find synonyms, when he felt he had overused a particular word. Typically this happened up to three times per page of text.

Post-dissertation submission deadline

Research Interview 5

Timur was granted a three-month extension for his dissertation for personal reasons, and had to return to Turkey for this period. He was interviewed in September 2009 before he left, and he sent further e-mail comments on submission of the dissertation in January 2010.

Looking back at the whole year in September, he bemoaned his academic background, especially the lack of preparation at undergraduate level. He remembered his starting point with A1: 'I didn't have any idea about what academic writing is because let's talk about if someone asks me a question about space, I have no idea about it, it was the same thing' (s4i5:1). By the following September his writing skills had changed 'dramatically'; he knew what academic writing was: 'I wish it was my first year and I could do great works next year because I changed everything... I mean reading and writing and I know how to write it... I know many things about academic writing I learned within this year' (s4i5:1).

At this stage he realised the importance of academic reading: 'you have to know how to read first to know how to write'. 'How to read means, why do you read the articles? To get some idea and how are you going to organise this idea while referring in your writing?' (ibid). This involved taking notes for use in writing. Other things he wished he had known the previous October were: 'the format...you will start from literature review and you will support your idea with the previous studies or research' (ibid).

He was grateful for help in his writing to the following, in this order: from Nicky, the insessional writing teacher (and he regretted missing classes at the beginning of the first term), his English friend, Sylvia, and the A2 feedback. He had met with his English friend two or three times weekly during the year and she had taught him how to write 'how to organise your ideas in an academic writing... the format ...in general it was saying that you're going to mention previous study, then its gonna be from general to specific, then you will put your ideas in' (s4i5:3). The librarian responsible for liaising with our students also helped him with finding books in the library.

He still believed the different reactions to his amount of quoting in A2 and A3 were because of differences in the markers and their preferences, not the assignment topics: 'it's not the nature of the assignment, it's the nature of the rater' (s4i5:3).

Advice for new students included:

- Not to miss any in-session classes.
- To consult reference books on academic writing.
- To read widely before starting writing: 'when I started to read before writing they all broadened my horizon about my topic, they gave me a point of view' (s4i5:4).
- Not to work for money while studying, although, 'I had to work and I did and, well, if I managed to a merit in first and second term I think anyone could do that' (s4i5:5).
- To find at least one English friend, to explain the English education system.

Asked about changes he had experienced as a person on the MA he noted that his English had improved and he felt 'better'— and this was not because of the programme, but because of his friends in hall, and his undergraduate friend from Politics, Sylvia. He was pleased his writing had gone from 'zero, now I feel like ten out of eleven' (s4i5:4). When asked if he felt he had been made to change in a way he did not want, he replied 'No, I am very happy with that and I have enough culture, language, writing and I feel better and I am very happy doing my MA degree here' (s4i5:5). The previous year he had said he was a bad writer (in any language), but now asked if he felt the same he replied: 'No, no, I feel great now, but I can't say that I'm the best but I feel better... I know that if I have enough time I can do anything' (s4i5:7). He was confident in his underlying abilities and put problems on the MA down to his background:

'my problem is not about being intelligent because I am clever enough to study but it doesn't matter whether you're clever or not if you don't know the format... Books told me what I'm going to do, so it's not about the topic, it's not about the task, it's about the format' (s4i5:9).

He felt exhausted ('knackered') by the year, having had to study hard and work hard for money and that he could have done much better without the financial worries and the need to work. He had also worried about his family: 'you're always thinking about

your family and, you know, Turkish families are really stick each other, so I cannot stop thinking about my family' (s4i5:5). He had returned home twice in the year because his mother was unwell. He had also sent money back to help pay for an operation for her.

He saw the Turkish and English education systems as very different, and estimated that it took him two months to get used to the English system.

Looking back in February 2010 after the submission of his dissertation in January 2010, Timur said he had been helped by 'especially my English friend Sylvia, I am very much obliged to her. From the first day to last day she helped me about my academic writing by checking almost all of my assignments for proofreading. Secondly, I do not remember the name of the lady but she was lecturing in our insessional course. She helped me so much. That was very useful because the subject were directly related to the our field. And finally library and book. I have read lots of book about academic writing when I realised that I need an urgent help about my writing (see my pre course assignment)'.

He felt his writing had improved enormously and said his proof-reader had also commented on this. He felt more confident about his writing and planned to undertake a PhD in Turkey in the future. Advice for future MA students was: 'if they feel weak about they are writing, do not be stubborn go and ask for your help. Don't be late, do it immediately, at latest till first month of the first term otherwise it will be too late.'

His dissertation was awarded 64%.

Appendix 21: Example of Data Summary 2.2: Case Study report in theme order for Pola

Key: *A1 A2 A3* feedback sheet comments/points made about these assignments

Introduction

Before coming to Reading, Pola had learned English in private language schools, private lessons, state school and when studying for her BA ('Licencjat') in English. She graduated in 2007 from a good teacher training college in Poland, where all her study had been in English. During her term-time at college she taught in evening classes in private schools. After graduation she taught in private language schools and a state school for a year, and studied part-time at weekends for a Diploma in translation. This was taught in English, and involved simultaneous and consecutive translation and written translation, but no writing of her own texts.

She read in English and Polish equally fluently, with most reading in English (which she said she read as if in her mother tongue). This was reading of academic textbooks, newspapers, general books (including novels), and internet websites and articles. On her BA she was not required to read a lot; no reading lists were given out, for example. The focus was on learning in lectures. There were four or five lectures a day; there was no set reading from sources, but occasionally handouts from the previous class had to be read, or a whole-class presentation on a set topic prepared. All essential information was given in the lecture. There was also a lot of homework – for example, textbook evaluation, case studies of SEN learners and lesson plans, to show how certain theories could be applied in practice. It was, she felt, more practical than what was required at Reading, and required creativity.

She was confident about her understanding of vocabulary and grammar and that she could easily check unfamiliar vocabulary. The only problem she identified was encountering an unfamiliar phrase which she could not find in the dictionary. She was used to taking a lot of notes while reading.

She said she wrote an equal amount in both languages. Her main difficulty in writing was sometimes confusing Polish rules with English ones. In English, for her degree, she had written articles, case studies, letters and translations of texts. The few essays

she wrote had been short: 1,000-2,000 words. She had also written a dissertation of 30-40 pages on intercultural communication.

Exams could be oral or written, chosen by the lecturer, and different subjects were examined by one or both of these forms of assessment. There were multiple choice and short answer questions, as well as short essays (around 1,000 words). Pola preferred oral exams:

'I feel much more relaxed when there's oral because sometimes there is something in it. You may not know everything that was covered in the lecture but you can swap a bit to different area that might interest your listener so he or she gets involved and the interaction is much better.' (s3i1:l)

Writing for her undergraduate studies did not require Pola to draw on her own experience as a learner or teacher until the dissertation stage.

As she started on the MA programme, Pola identified the following possible problems: her slow reading speed and the fact that she did not really like writing; she preferred talking about an issue. She was concerned that she might delay 'getting round to' writing up an essay, which she identified as her biggest problem. This had been an issue when she started writing her BA dissertation. She felt she had not been a good writer in the past, but that her writing skills had improved during her previous studies. She did not anticipate that 'getting round to writing' would affect her performance at all.

Pola was seen as a potentially able student, given her good level of English and relevant, recent academic background. Her first assignment (A1) was weak, however, as discussed below, and she explained this in terms of being rushed. Overall written feedback noted that *'there is obvious potential and interest here, but you really haven't addressed the topic', as she said nothing about learning a first language and therefore had not compared/contrasted processes of learning L1 and L2*. A2 was awarded a low merit (61%), and written feedback described it as '**competent**' with clear demonstration of understanding of the topic, and interesting data analysis. It was, she was told, '**a good first assignment**'. A3, however, was awarded a bare pass at 51%. Feedback was given by criterion and there were 16 numbered, typed comments linked to specific points in the text. These all pointed out weaknesses in content or

organisation. On our interview, the tutor commented that there were, 'quite a lot of negatives... this was a borderline pass, very much so' (t2a3is3:1). Other module marks ranged from 52% to 64, but she failed the dissertation at the first attempt, with 45%. She had a year to re-submit, which she did, gaining a mark of 56%. She passed the MA with an overall pass. Of all the case studies, and indeed all the students in her year group, Pola was the only one to fail the dissertation, or the MA, at the first attempt.

T1. Writing task constraints

Answering the question

A1 - She had not addressed the topic.

She felt A3 was better than A2, because of the greater freedom given for A3, and her struggles with the framework for A2:

'SLLP there was more freedom given, I could write whatever I wanted to and the outline was mine, what I wanted to focus on and here I was told that I have to provide literature review, methodology there was something about discussion and I have problems with oh analytic framework, I have never done that before so it was new for me.' (s3i3:14).

In January, before submitting A3, she e-mailed that the assignment was quite similar to A2, except 'the purely analytical part was shorter'. She was finding all the assignments 'rather similar. All of them contain descriptive part and my own opinions based on my experience'. Pola commented on her submitted A3 at the end of Research Interview 3 (at the beginning of Term Two, Week 3), stating she thought it was better than A2, as she had had more freedom. A3 was also more similar to her BA dissertation 'because it focused on everyday situations, everyday language... it was more practical' (s3i3:13).

When asked what she had learned about writing at Masters level from writing A3 she replied: 'This is the main point that I have to focus on like be succinct but elaborate at the same time in expressing ideas. And also comparing with other studies, this is what has been pointed out to me in several assignments' (s3i4:6).

Topic choice

Pola's first meeting (in Week 6) with the module tutor to discuss the choice of assignment topic focused on the following issues:

1. choice of topic. She was immediately advised to narrow her topic to cohesion as indicated on the assignment rubric, not cohesion and coherence, as she stated. Both were too much for the word length, the tutor said.
2. Data: Pola checked the text she was proposing to analyse was appropriate, and was told it possibly was but that she needed permission from the author. The tutor also pointed out that the text might not provide useful data, so she needed to think about alternatives. She said she planned to collect the data that day, but when asked about the prompt she would give the writer, had to admit she had not yet thought about that. The tutor advised her to collect this data as soon as possible and to also develop her framework for analysis based on one well known one, 'deciding on... what features you are going to be looking at or indeed what the data tells you' (t1a2m1s3:2). She wondered about asking two people to write to compare their texts, and was told she could but 'you'd have to think about the motivation for comparing them.' (t1a2m1s3:3).

In Interview 2, Pola said she had chosen her A2 topic and she stuck to her first choice. Looking back on her submission, in an e-mail in January, she was pleased at the topic chosen, as 'I had an opportunity to gain deeply into cohesion' and she had enjoyed the new experience of text analysis. If she could re-do the assignment, she would have used two pieces of data: texts written by a student at different stages of his learning. She would also have focused on several cohesive devices. Advice for future students in Oct 2009 included to stick to a topic.

Word limit

One issue Pola's first meeting (in Week 6) with the module tutor to discuss the choice of A2 assignment topic focused on was choice of topic. She was immediately advised to narrow her topic to cohesion as indicated on the assignment rubric, not cohesion and coherence, as she stated. Both were too much for the word length, the tutor, Ann, said.

Pola took her A2 draft assignment to her second meeting with Ann at the beginning of Week 9. She admitted this was 3,000 words so far and not yet finished, although the assignment maximum was 2,500. She knew the tutor could not read it, but she said she had printed it out because she had a problem: she had already exceeded the word limit, and had not finished the analysis. The tutor told her she was going to have to cut it down, to which she replied: 'but that's the problem, because I have never written such

an analysis and I don't know whether I am tackling in a correct way' (s3a2m2:1). Ann asked her to go through the draft, giving her an outline. Advice was then given re specific parts of the assignment, with direct recommendations to remove some sections already written. She later said she had not looked for any research studies on her topic to include in her Literature Review, because she had 'got stressed about this word limit' (s3a2m2:2). To solve the word limit problem she was told to focus on perhaps just two cohesive features that motivated her 'maybe because they appear the most, perhaps they have most trouble with' (t1a2m2s3:2). If she still needed to cut out words, then she would have to reduce the number of examples.

The meeting ended with Ann telling Pola she had to cut her assignment down, that she would be penalised if she went over and Pola recognising the need 'to be concise'. The tutor said this was part of the training, being 'able to express and talk about... the most interesting findings you're going to report and to not waffle around other things that aren't so important' (s3a2m2:4). Looking back on her submission, in an e-mail in January, Pola was concerned that her penultimate draft had exceeded the word limit by 1,000 words and that she had had to delete parts, which had been difficult: 'In the end I had an impression that I omitted the essential parts and my assignment was very chaotic'. She felt the original draft was better than A1, but was not sure about the final one. She commented that for some questions on this assignment the word limit should be bigger.

Feedback on A2 with regard to C1 told her that her literature review discussion was too broad ('given the limited word limit'). Re C2 the tutor said the decision to narrow her analysis to two cohesive ties was 'very sensible given the word limit and it meant you engaged in an interesting discussion'.

A2: page 1: She was told 'this meta-discourse (ie writing about the influence of others on your analysis and writing) is unnecessary and takes up valuable word space'.

In I3 re A2, Pola pointed out that at the end of one section, where she introduced three new terms in a final sentence, she was told to 'elaborate'(A2:page 4), but she argued she did not have space for this.

The word limit was 'a huge problem' for Pola, especially in terms of her analysis, and she felt it should have been greater. She had written 1,000 extra words and had to

reduce the text. The tutor's advice to focus on two devices only had helped her decide what to cut. She had analysed all devices, so struggled to decide which two to focus on, deciding in the end on the most common 'so I could write a lot about it' (s3i3:8).

When she met Steve in Week 6 for the personal tutorial to discuss A1, Pola raised the issue of A3. She showed Steve a rough summary of what she wanted to cover in A3: 'It's the way I thought you expected it to be, I wrote a very short introduction... and these are the headings and sub-headings. I had some problems with the word count' (s3a1mt2:8).

In Term Two I4, she said that she planned to make sure she wrote text that readers could follow by writing less than the word limit. Advice for other students about academic writing based on A3: 'Mainly write 500 words less than the limit and then stretch the word limit... because I talked to someone and they say this is what they do and that it's very helpful because then they elaborate and they expand the areas that need to be expanded but they don't notice that at first because they focus on, they put so many ideas in it but then they are not clear' (s3i4:8).

In September 2009, looking back she e-mailed that, with regard to her essays, 'there were instances where I couldn't elaborate more in a given topic and fit in the word count' (s3i5e:2). She felt she was now more able to focus on main ideas - unlike for A2 where her early drafts included 'everything in my mind' (s3i5:8). Although she had eventually got a merit for this assignment, cutting 1000 words had been very stressful: 'I wrote a lot and I had to remove something that I wasn't sure if it was good to remove'. Focusing on main ideas more helped her follow her suggestion of writing fewer words than the maximum: 'and then I was expanding a bit so some areas were more elaborated so they were clearer, but yes, I did follow that practice and I think I find it very useful, actually' (s3i5:8). As a result in later work she did not need to cut words out, and she had space to expand to clarify a point or provide more examples. In October 2009, post-dissertation submission, she still reported with regard to her essays, 'there were instances where I couldn't elaborate more in a given topic and fit in the word count' (s3i5e:2).

She noted clarity was an issue in her writing after A3, and felt she was much better at this now, being very easily able to spot and change sentences that were not clear, 'so that's improved a lot' (s3i5:8).

The reader

Pola discussed her work on A2 with her flatmates, and saw points where they did not understand as important 'I'm trying to apply this approach that my assignment has to be clear not only for professionals but also for people who might like to read it, and they treat it as an article. That if I'm relating to some vocabulary or some terms which are not clear at first glance then I try to elaborate or explain what I mean' (s3i3:10).

Three of her flatmates, from Albania, Finland and Italy, had asked to read her assignment, as she had been writing it in the kitchen, and they had expressed interest in her topic, because it was about language (unlike their own subjects of study in business and finance). Their questions had indicated to her points to elaborate.

When advised to get her work proof-read by Ann in their meeting after the return of A2, Pola mentioned that her flatmates studying other subjects, with no knowledge of her topic here: 'they really wanted to read it', had asked questions about the content, 'so I knew I had to elaborate and be more specific because... assignments should be written in such a way that a person who has no idea about it, they can read it' (s3a2m3:5). The tutor agreed with this, commenting that some students made the mistake: 'They think that I'm writing for a lecturer who knows everything about this, so I don't need to be explicit, but you do need to be explicit' (t1a2m3s3:5).

Balancing programme requirements

In her Week 6 meeting re A2, Pola wanted to finish another assignment (for the Sociolinguistics module) before starting on this one: 'I don't want to mix it like one day reading one thing and the other one from different modules because it will mix in my head' (s3a2m1:1).

In I4, Pola estimated she had spent the same amount of time on A3 as the other two assignments that she had had to complete over Christmas, though they were 'worth' much less in credit terms (Phonetics: 5 credits, as half a 10-credit module mark; Sociolinguistics: 10 credits).

In Oct 2009, she felt the Research Design module in the second term (which she remembered as having been in the first one) had been too early 'at a time when I was not thinking about my dissertation at all' (s3i5:2).

Time

In the second research interview on A1 at the end of Week 8, Pola commented on the amount of feedback on A1: 'I'm really happy to get all the feedback' (s3i2:1), although 'I feel so disappointed with my pre-course assignment... when I look at it now, I see so many spelling mistakes'. Pola attributed the numerous spelling mistakes on her A1 to lack of time to read the assignment through 'again and again' (I2).

She felt the reading, note-taking and 'knowing what to write about' was the 'most rewarding thing, the most demanding'(s3i2:3). This took the most time for her; in contrast she did not find writing took long. She was stressed by the message she was being given: she knew she was supposed to write her essay over the vacation, but to produce an outline she had to do the majority of the work now 'when I don't have time for it actually' (ibid).

She was 'a bit disappointed' (s3i3:8) by her mark of 61%, having devoted so much time to A2.

Re Pola's A3, Steve said that giving advice to students with low grades was difficult, because he did not know what had led to the misunderstandings of reading: 'misunderstandings may be English, may be rapid reading, may be just not deep enough reading, maybe a rather glib appreciation of schemata' (t2a3i3:3). He doubted that Pola's problem was with English, but thought it might be a writing problem: 'Possibly she didn't leave herself enough time to write, to weld it together better which led to the lack of conciseness and the slight repetitiousness in places...(or) to think what examples she would use' (ibid).

T2. Meeting the criteria

C1 reading/understanding

Insufficient reading from pre-course list sources (one only). Not all citations were relevant to the topic (grade descriptor: 'fair' on the feedback grid).

In Their Week 6 meeting, the tutor, Steve, commented on the lack of evidence of relevant reading, with only one source from the pre-course reading list included. Other references cited were not relevant to the topic.

In their first meeting about DA, Ann advised Pola to concentrate on specific sources focusing on her topic, not Discourse Analysis in general, and several texts were mentioned. A core book for her topic was already on loan, and she was advised to find out by whom and to start sharing materials. Her Literature Review, she was told, needed to report on any studies that had focused on her topic (cohesion in student writing), so she would need to consult journals.

Reflecting on A2, the tutor said in our interview about Pola said: 'But it's interesting about how, what gets marked, how I mark them and in this I think the key for me is the reading. That they have understood what they have read, that they can explain the framework and they can do the analysis' ((t1a2is3:4)

Feedback commented on the evidence of reading of appropriate texts, though she had not consulted a more recent version of her core text and had not consulted relevant studies in the same area as hers. Her discussion was too broad (given the word limit), not focusing in on her choice of cohesive devices for her study, which meant they were not discussed in enough depth. (grade descriptor: very good/good)

Problems mentioned in our interview included:

- Not using more up-to-date literature.
- 'Understanding that your literature review is there to offer a background but it's also there to support your analysis and your interpretation of the data, so there is no need to talk about absolutely everything, you can focus your literature review, so that it's there to feedback to back-reference in your analysis and in your conclusion' (t1a2is3:2).

Advice given when she met Ann after the return of A2 included 'making sure you are reading current literature as much as possible and up-to-date literature' (t1a2m3s3:4).

A3 showed an acceptable range of reading, but some misunderstanding or partial understanding (with specific examples); she showed 'understanding of concepts in the sources on the whole'. In-text comments pointed out inaccuracies, and assertions were challenged.

When the SLLP tutor, Steve, was interviewed about Pola, strengths of the assignment he mentioned included 'she had done an acceptable range of reading, she wasn't lazy, she had done the work...It passed mainly on the reading done and the fact that she was able to make some relation of theory to practice' (t2a3is3:1).

Negative points he raised included:

- 'instances of misunderstanding... on the whole she showed understanding of key subjects but here were some significant partial misunderstandings' (t2a3is3:1)
- imprecise comments on or summarising of points in the literature;
- omission of some key sources, mentioned in class: 'so she missed some opportunities to back up her argument with good literature' (t2a3is3:2).

C2 explanation/discussion

Feedback here for A1 said 'There is obvious potential here, but you haven't really addressed the topic', pointing out she had omitted discussion of learning a first language, therefore making comparison with learning a second impossible. (grade descriptor: poor)

In their personal tutorial in Week 6, C1 issues for improvement Steve commented on were:

1. *Content: The most important issue was that she had not really addressed the topic. Although she now had a choice of topic on the programme, she still needed to be relevant to her own topic and to be focused on it.*
2. *Assertions: Pola needed to back-up statements with references to sources more. She asked if she could support claims with her own experience, eg of teaching, not just theories and was told 'absolutely, yes' (t2a1ms3:3). When challenged on one area of content in her assignment at one point, she argued at some length from the experience of her adult learners. She was told she could make a very good argument in that way 'showing both sides of the question perhaps, but again you could back that up with discussion of issues like research on problem solving communication strategies... I think there would be literature you could cite there, anyway' (t2a1ms3:7).*

For A2, she was told that the data elicitation was unclear in the methodology section; there was no line numbering or highlighting of instances of features focused on, and that a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis might have been more sensible 'to illustrate the student's preference for conjunctions'. The decision to narrow her analysis to two cohesive ties was 'very sensible given the word limit and it meant you engaged in an interesting discussion'. (grade descriptor: very good/good)

In the interview about this assignment, Ann explained that reasons for Pola's good mark were: Good analysis – the 'very sensible' decision to focus on two features, handled well. The tutor forgot she had explicitly told Pola to do this in their second assignment meeting, thinking she had taken this from advice in the lecture on cohesion. 'She clearly understood the framework, she applied it well, and she sensibly narrowed it down' (t1a2is3:2). It was a coherent account – 'although a little pedestrian at times' (t1a2is3:2). She also needed more explanation of things in her data and 'there were some problems with the text that she didn't identify...She missed some things which is why she got a lower merit rather than an upper one' (t1 a2is3:3).

Feedback on A3 said that Pola mostly summarised correctly, 'though some of your comments are not very precise'. There was 'some evidence of willingness to combine sources' but there were places where a wider range of sources could have been used to explore areas more deeply (with a specific example).

The overall comment was 'This is all right as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. There was a lot more you could have said about the issues you discuss and one is left feeling that the content was rather thin'. In our interview about Pola's assignment, Steve said he felt if you tell students to write more on some aspects, you have to indicate what could be reduced – he did this for Pola, indicating where the text could have been more concise or removed. Commenting on her lack of enthusiasm for outlines, he said: 'In her case occasional problems in repetitiousness reveal that she could do with being more willing to...do an outline' (t2a3is3:4).

The fact that Pola had made references to her Polish learners was commented on positively, in terms of doing 'what the essay required' (t2a3i3:1) by the module

tutor in our interview. **Negative points he raised: not much evidence of 'willingness to combine sources' (t2a3is3:1).**

C3 evaluation

Re A1: 'You are critically aware, but need to back up your statements with references to the sources more consistently.' ('good' on the grid)

In Week 6, Steve told Pola A1 showed 'clarity of critical evaluation... I get the feeling that you're somebody who has a lively mind, you're thinking about things, you're willing to evaluate, that's good' (t2a1ms3:3). She agreed with this: 'yeah I'm very good at critical thinking, that's for sure' (s3a1mt2:3).

Re A2: the analysis could have been sub-divided by category; inappropriate usage in the student text was not always well explained; she did not provide a critical evaluation of the published framework, nor make logical suggestions for some of her findings (eg the order of mastery of some forms by L2 learners). (grade descriptor: very good/good) In our interview, the tutor mentioned again that there had been no critical evaluation of the framework.

When they met, after the return of A2, Ann advised Pola: 'be critical, you know, developing a critical awareness, you need to try to provide a critical examination of the framework you're using... you used it very well, but perhaps also note the limitations of the framework and that can be applied to many of your assignments that you do...when you are looking at different frameworks, different methodologies or even different ideologies'. Pola checked 'So I should really criticise them?' and was told: 'Within reason and also it depends on the essay question'. She was advised to look at the marking criteria carefully in the module outline and in the 'Course Booklet' (Criterion 3 stated 'clarity of analysis and critical evaluation of the analytical frameworks'), and to ask 'the examiner' if not sure about them.

Re A3: She made reference to errors of Polish speakers 'but rather sporadically' and did not probe issues fully. The errors she tended 'to pick on' to discuss 'may not be very typical'.

When the SLLP tutor, Steve, was interviewed about Pola's A3, he said 'it passed mainly on the reading done and the fact that she was able to make some relation of theory to practice' (t2a3is3:1). Negative points mentioned were:

- 'The references to the errors of Polish learners, which obviously was the whole point of the essay really, was done very sporadically and I felt she missed opportunities again to explore this...' (t2a3is3:2). 'It was as if "I've done the theory bit, now let's look at the Polish errors" and she didn't always choose her examples of errors well' (ibid).
- Poor examples, especially the dictionary –induced error: 'she gave one very abstruse kind of example, very much a one-off error...' (ibid). He later described this further: 'The example she gave was a piffling example which was just trivial and was it simply that she hadn't given herself enough time or was it that she hadn't got a solid enough basis in teaching experience to be able to churn out lots of examples? I don't know' (t2a3is3:4).
- A lot of issues arising from the theory would have been interesting to explore in regard to her Polish learners 'and she didn't explore those' (t2a3is3:2).

In Oct 2009, Pola was reminded that backing up claims had been a problem on A1 and she felt this was still a challenge: 'I do support them now because I know that I should do that, but I find it difficult to distinguish which ideas I should support and which ones I don't have to, like which ones I still claim are my own, which ones I have to claim are someone else's' (s3i5:3). Her own claims were backed up from her experience as a teacher.

C4 coherence

A1 was overlong with heterogeneous paragraphs (so 'poor' for coherence). An example of a sudden topic-switch in mid-paragraph, and another where the argument was not clear were indicated on the script. ('poor') Overall comment on feedback sheet: 'You write quite well at the sentence level, but need to be more careful in the way you structure your argument into, and within, paragraphs.'

In the Week 6 tutorial, Steve commented that her paragraphs were too long. She was advised to use headings and sub-headings, as it helped the marker and would help her

stay on track. She said she had not used them here as it was just a short essay, but readily acknowledged 'Yeah, I have problems with paragraphing...because I don't know where to separate things because ...they lead one thing to another' (s3a1m2:4). She was advised 'Don't be afraid to signal very clearly to the reader where you're going' (t2a1s3:4). and to indicate the assignment's structure in the opening paragraph', which she had not done here. She also needed to re-read her work for the development of a logical argument.

In her first meeting re A2, Pola asked about 'layout', and if she should begin by describing the features she was looking for. She was told this was right, that she would do it in her literature review. Then in her methodology she should give information about her data: the source (demographic details about the writer), the data itself and how it was collected. Pola was encouraged to think about the latter – should the writer have access to a dictionary, for example: 'you know you've got to think about how you're controlling it and that's up to you' (t1a2m1s3:3). This section would be followed by her results 'and there obviously you're going to be back-referencing to your literature review and the framework that you've described' (ibid). Next would come the discussion of the results, and a possible comparison with other studies' findings. Then, there was the conclusion.

In her 2nd meeting in Week 9, Pola took 3,000 words of text, instead of the required outline. She was given the following advice:

- Introduction: this was too long, with unnecessary detail about the topic. All this needed to do was to introduce the topic to the reader. 'So you can do it in a good way by grabbing their attention straight away and detailing the structure of the essay to follow. That's just your introductory paragraph.' (t1a2m2s3:1). Pola came back to this again at the end, checking: 'introduction is like what I am going to write about, what is my focus' (s3a2m2:3).
- Next would be the Literature Review: 'where you provide a background to cohesive devices' (t1a2m2s3:1). She was later told again that she should make reference to studies that had also examined cohesion in student writing, but said she had not found any, because she had 'got stressed about this word limit' (s3a2m2:2). She was told in that case to focus on her analysis.
- Methodology: Pola asked what the tutor meant by this and was told 'where you talk about the data that you gathered' (t1a2m2s3:1), which Pola called 'subject description and data collection' (s3a2m2:2). When told it should also include

the framework she had constructed, she asked: 'I don't understand this framework. What is it?' (ibid). The tutor asked how she had analysed her texts, and when Pola said she had done it by finding examples of sentences with specific features in, she asked if it was a qualitative, rather than a quantitative analysis. Pola thought so, and the tutor told her to state this.

- Pola asked what the difference was between analysis and discussion, and was told that 'in your analysis you report the findings... in your discussion... you are trying to explain your findings' (t1a2m2s3:3). She realised she had done this in her analysis and so needed to split this section, which she did in the assignment.

A2 and feedback. The assignment consisted of a cover sheet with programme and assignment titles. There was a table of contents, showing the text was divided into 6 major sections: 1. Introduction (with a sub-section 1.1 Literature Review and Methodology), 2. Cohesive devices (with several sub-sections discussing categories), 3. Analytic framework, 4. Analysis of chosen text, 5. Discussion, 6. Conclusion. There were page numbers. There was a bibliography section with 4 items: three books and her BA materials from Poland, plus a 'Further reading' section with two books and one article. This was followed by the Consent Form and then 'Appendix: Text for Analysis'.

This assignment did not follow all the advice given by the tutor, in particular: she had not justified her choice of devices discussed in the literature review and it included several cohesive devices not focused on in the analysis, and she did not make reference to other studies of L2 writers. Her methodology section was unclear: she did not give the necessary information on the genesis of her data (demographic information about the writer, instructions and conditions of production). These issues were commented on in the feedback. A point not noted, however, was that she did not use all the section headings discussed in the meetings; in particular the Introduction's second paragraph was entitled '1.1 Literature review and methodology', but served to introduce areas of reading. These two sections were covered elsewhere, and the tutor referred to those parts with these section titles in her feedback. There was no Results section, but sections entitled Discussion and Conclusion. However, the feedback sheet told her 'You had clearly planned the structure and presentation of your material'.

Advice given when they met after the return of A2: 'Make sure that you're categorising information appropriately, being coherent sometimes, sometimes you're not, you weren't clear...' (t1a2m3s3:4). Also, her account was coherent but 'sometimes a little pedestrian, lots of listing, instead of you know to enliven it a bit with discourse' (t1a2m3s3:5).

Re A2, feedback had told her that the account was coherent, but 'a little pedestrian at times... a listing of features...rather than a developing/developed account', though it was acknowledged this was to be expected, given the nature of the material. She had 'clearly planned the structure and presentation of your material'. (grade descriptor: very good/good)

In our interview, the tutor said a positive point of this assignment was 'The overall writing in terms of the structure' (t1a2is3:2). Problems mentioned included the need to break up her analysis by category, not put it all together.

In I3, Pola at the end of one section, where she introduced three new terms in a final sentence she was told to 'elaborate'(A2:page 4), but she argued she did not have space for this. She did not see this section as a Literature Review, so was puzzled to be told, having concluded a section with 'I will go into more details regarding conjunction in my analysis', 'It is not appropriate to make reference to your own study in your literature review' (A2:page 4). She argued 'It's not literature review... This is the section of cohesive devices' (s3i3:5). This issue came up again when they met after the return of the A2 (at Pola's request). She raised the point of specific feedback where she focused on two devices in her discussion,:

's3: I focused on conjunction and reference in my discussion only.

t1: Yes, that's in your discussion, but I don't think I'm talking about discussion here, am I? I'm talking about the whole...I'm talking about your analysis as well.' (t1a2m3s3:3). (This indicated a misunderstanding on Pola's part re what sections of her assignment were)

At one point in this meeting Ann referred to her literature review, and Pola protested 'but I don't have Literature Review', at which the tutor explained that the section where she talked about the different features was 'your literature review because

you're describing what the literature says about cohesive devices' (t1a2m3s3:3). She had the relevant sections pointed out to her and was told her current numbering was wrong, the second section should have been titled 'Literature review and Methodology', instead of this being 1.1, a short sub-section in the introduction. She finally realised: 'so in the literature review, I can't write on personal, only referencing' (s3a2m3t1:3). She was also told 'When you start to talk about your study, that's methodology' (t1a2m3s3:3).

Reasons for Pola's good mark, as explained by Ann in our interview, included: it was a coherent account – 'although a little pedestrian at times' (t1a2is3:2); 'the overall writing in terms of the structure' (t1a2is3:2).

Re A3, she was told that the essay could have been written more concisely, allowing space 'to explore important points' (with examples given).

In October 2009, post-dissertation submission, Pola said that she continued to struggle: 'There were instances that I had many ideas and found it problematic to group or classify them and even I was very into a topic and read a lot about a given matter my marks were poorer due to my organisational problems' (ibid). Her supervisor had pointed this out in her draft chapters for the dissertation: 'I think it is improving as I am highly aware of this and I pay much more attention to this' (s3i5e:1). Her problem with paragraphing remained 'but it has always been my problem, also in my mother tongue. Sometimes I just can't get where an idea finishes and where another one starts, especially when I want to, somehow have a flow of the text... but I'm still learning so I think it's much better because I know I have to pay much attention to it' (s3i5:3/4).

Advice for new students in Oct 2009 included: 'Go through this tedious work of going through each paragraph in each section and checking if it's the best place for this given paragraph' (s3i5e:2).

C5 presentation

A1: (Graded 'fair'). Incorrect/incomplete references in the bibliography; Poor punctuation in places. Some specific comments on the script related to her 'arresting' introduction, and 'a rather casual, unacademic statement', that did not make a clear argument at one point.

In their week 6 meeting, Steve pointed out:

Language item: Pola had made the common error of using 'on the contrary' when she meant 'on the other hand'.

A more serious language problem was her style in places, which sounded 'rather casual, unacademic' (t2a1ms3:7), 'informal' as she summarised it (ibid). The instance given was 'til puberty our minds are still fresh and are not packed with information about the world' She was advised not to become too formal, as some British students do, 'so the writing becomes very heavy, often inappropriate, awkward, clumsy' (ibid). What he wanted was 'a nice, clear, plain style' (ibid).

Looking back in October 2009, she felt her personal tutor had given her confusing advice after reading A1, when he advised her to use simpler language 'to make it easier for the lecturers to read our papers as they have a lot of them', as other lecturers later required 'more sophisticated language' (s3i5e:1). The same tutor taught SLLP and she felt the notes given out in class 'contained much difficult vocabulary, which was somehow contradictory. So it varied across teachers' (ibid). She felt the requirement was for 'the grammar rather simple but the vocabulary rather more academic and sophisticated' (ibid).

Presentation: Steve mentioned the issue of some bibliographical entries being incomplete or incorrect.

Punctuation was also problematic in places (with comma splicing). She acknowledged this: 'I know that I have to work on my punctuation because in Polish language we write very long, elaborate sentences, whereas in English they tend to be...' (s3a1mt2:6). She was asked to see it as her role to make the text easy for the reader, who would be reading fast, under pressure, with a lot of other assignments to read.

Re A2: intra-textual citations were 'correctly realised'. She had a bibliography and further reading at the end and was told the latter was inappropriate. She was again advised to proof-read carefully, or to find a proof-reader, 'as there were a number of grammatical errors and instances of poor word choices'. The meta-discourse in the text 'became a little tiresome at times' and she was advised to reduce it. (grade descriptor: very good/good)

An example of meta-discourse noted on the script was most of A2 Section 1.1, where Pola had written: 'this was very helpful for me to comprehend this area of analysis. Because my paper is mainly based on my own analysis I do not refer to many sources. However, I will mention other books I have read to obtain a general idea of bibliography. In order to analyse my chosen text I have first tried to understand cohesion itself thoroughly. Then I read the text several times trying to look for the 'links' and group them according to categories outlined in Halliday and Hasan's (1976) work.' (A2:page 1). She was told 'this meta-discourse (ie writing about the influence of others on your analysis and writing) is unnecessary and takes up valuable word space'.

In our interview about this assignment the tutor commented on the following:

- 'Overall she tended to have a very sort of pedestrian way of writing, so it's the same with the literature review, these are the features blah blah blah blah, without necessarily enlivening it or making it particularly critical. And the same with the presentation of results, it was like really quite pedestrian and needed to be bulked up quite a bit' (t1a2is3:3).
When asked what she meant by 'pedestrian' she explained: 'yes being a bit boring, but also just not being perhaps critical of what you are writing about, not being sufficiently critical as well... Too descriptive, yes, perhaps too descriptive' (t1a2is3:4).
- References – 'the further reading (*section*) she had taken from a flatmate's work who is in a different discipline and this is what he writes in his reference list so not taking note of what we suggest, is interesting. Not understanding there are different conventions in different disciplines' (t1a2is3:2).
- Proofreading (because of grammatical errors and poor word choice).
- 'Also she had a tendency... of talking about what she was doing all the time... a lot of meta-discourse that was just like taking up valuable word space and was not necessary' (t1a2is3:3). 'And it became really tiresome after a point' (t1a2is3:4).

Another area of misunderstanding re A2 feedback was her terminology. She wrongly used wrongly the expression 'general word' (A2: page 2), which she had seen in 'many books on cohesion' (s3i3:4). Another phrase she had borrowed from her reading ('discourse element' A2:page 3), and used when she was trying 'to be more formal' and

looking 'for a synonym', was underlined and a comment asked 'What is meant by this?'.

In their meeting post-A2, the tutor advised her on proofreading: she told her 'a big distinction between a very good and a distinction is, you know, an elegant analysis, a very elegant piece of work, really being able to critique the framework, understand the framework, in this instance, apply the framework, but also to be able to elegantly express that in writing as well, so in terms of clarity, in terms of the English as well... So careful proofreading and giving it to others to proofread for you' (t1a2m3s3:5).

Re A2: The writing was described as 'clear and readable', following presentation conventions. In-text comments ranged from detail (correcting technical word choice in Comment 1 and Comment 16) to referring to sections of text 'I don't think this paragraph really tells us very much' (Comment 4). The SLLP tutor when interviewed about Pola mentioned that 'the writing was clear and readable' (t2a3is3:1).

In Oct 2009, Pola still believed that the language (grammar) needed to be simple and clear, and that terminology, although 'a bit more academic, but it still has to be understood by random people' (s3i5:7). She described these as 'the people who are not into linguistics who are doing different disciplines and they can still read my paper and learn something from it' (ibid). She explained that 'What I like about reading in English when it comes to books or journals is that the language is much more simpler than it is in Polish.' (s3i5:7). She found it a pleasure to read in English, and demotivating to read academic papers in Polish. She thought this was the same in all disciplines, as she was now translating technical documents from Polish to English and was finding it the same: she went to English websites when she needed to understand something.

T3. Student writer strategies

Being organised

In Oct 2009, Pola's advice to new students included the need to organise their work: 'jot down main ideas and while reading for an assignment put our ideas or important information to our main ideas. It saves time and the majority is in order' (e-mail).

Writing process

Asked for advice for other students after completing A2, she e-mailed: 'The strategy that I apply into writing and which works is reading a lot of materials, taking notes and then organising them to form a coherent whole. I also don't prepare an outline in advance not to narrow myself at the beginning'.

For A2 she reported that she read and took handwritten notes, paraphrasing her reading; 'and I'm sure I am not plagiarising, because they are my own words' (s3i3:12). She then got rid of the books, and wrote from her notes into the computer, trying to organise the notes – giving them headings, and 'trying to organise it and develop, put it like better language... more sophisticated' (s3i3:13)

Advice she would give future MA students about academic writing based on A2 was:

- Devote a lot of time to writing it, reading and focusing on the literature.
- 'Focus on proper literature, not on the random one that OK so I had to write about cohesion, so I pick random books... the reading has to be planned' (s3i3:12).
- 'They have to be really clear what they are writing about...it can't be general, it has to be clarified, it has to be understood' (s3i3:13).
- 'give the assignment to someone who has no idea about the topic, ask them what's not clear' (ibid).
- 'Be succinct' (ibid).
- Being relevant: 'of course, it's not easy to find out which (*information*) is irrelevant...' (ibid).
- Stick to the topic (referring back to her experience with A1).
- Plan carefully.

In I4, for future assignments she said 'my goal is ...so pick the main ideas and then focus on them, not to try to focus on every other area that is relevant to it because you can't focus on everything' (s3i4:12). This essay was very broad and she thought she had not focused enough; she should have focused on three important sources of error and then analysed them more deeply. However she said: 'it's a different approach in many assignments here, that's what I learned, that it's more about analysing than

expressing, like, surface ideas about “so this might be this or the other way round” and giving random examples that might fit into certain theories more, like going deeply and analysing’ (s3i4:4).

After A3, she said the student’s role in developing their academic writing skills was to consider the notes and the marks, and to take previous mistakes into consideration when writing and try to avoid them ‘and write, I think, mainly write a lot... any writing just by trying to put ideas in order and in paper and being clear, practising using the language, using the ideas, re-organising’ (s3i4:16).

Asked by e-mail in October 2009 (post-dissertation submission) how she felt her academic writing skills had changed since starting on the MA, she answered as follows:

‘This is a difficult question as it is hard to say how they have changed. They have definitely improved as I had to write many assignments. One might say that it wasn’t that many but taking into notice that I wasn’t writing much before, 3 assignments a term was quite a lot. My skills have changed in terms of focus I think. It used to be more casual. Now my writing is more ‘academic’ i.e. more professional, clearer, elaborate, deeper into topic as the assignments were more specific. The amount of reading was also bigger as we had to obtain a deeper idea about the topic we were writing about. I also learnt to be more systematic about referencing and conscious about quoting. Before it wasn’t that obvious to me that the majority I claim must be supported by some reliable sources especially when it comes to some strong claims’ (s3i5e:1).

Strategies for overcoming problems

After feedback on language errors on A1, in her e-mail on submission of A2 she said ‘I proofread it hundreds of times’. She accepted the point on the A2 feedback sheet about needing to proof-read more carefully; she had done that here, but had not asked anyone else to help. She had re-read her text ‘many times over and over again’ and consulted grammar books, dictionaries and the British National Corpus to see how words could be used. In future she thought she might ask someone to read her work through for grammar problems, though she did not think there were many problems with that.

She felt the next assignment (A3) had been ‘definitely a different piece of writing’ (s3i3:10), with no analysis, but felt she was still learning: ‘I have to elaborate at certain points and cut down at others, but some I have difficulty with. I’m just sitting, looking at one or two hours and I just can’t come up with any brilliant idea how to do that...For example, how to put it in really good words or what to cut down, how to cut it, how to change it, how to paraphrase. So but I think I’m improving every time I write something else because I consult dictionaries all the time and other books’ (s3i3:10).

In early January, Pola e-mailed that A3 was going very well, and was almost finished: ‘I am just looking for more examples to support my opinions’. She was also proofreading and writing her bibliography and table of contents. In addition ‘I have the same concerns that I usually have when I submit a very important piece of writing’:

- Omission of something important (as re any important piece of writing);
- Focus on ‘less essential information’;
- Terminology used: ‘It might be slightly confusing and not clear enough’.

T4. Resources drawn on in writing

Previous academic experience

Her personal tutor told Pola, re A1, ‘We are expecting good things from you, Pola, so, you know, I was deliberately strict in my marking because I think you need to fulfil your potential. You’ve obviously got potential, your discussion in class and things like that shows us, and you’ve got a very good background’ (t2a1ms3:2).

In her e-mail after the submission of the PCA, Pola said she approved of the assignment because ‘it forced me to do some pre-session reading and think seriously about the course. I recalled a great deal of information which again inspired me for further research’.

In her meeting with her personal tutor, Steve, about A1 in Week 6 of Term 1, and Pola observed how, although there were a number of new things on the programme, her foundation in linguistics and ELT gave her a distinct advantage: ‘the things I’ve done in Poland help me to understand it better’ (s3a1mt2:1). For example, her detailed background knowledge of Phonetics meant she could follow when the Phonetics and

Phonology module tutor covered the basics very quickly, unlike Jun, who had never studied this before: 'this must be like black magic for him' (s3a1mt2:1), Pola noted.

Feedback: In the pre-PCA-submission e-mail she was looking forward to the feedback, knowing 'it will help me a lot when I start to writing my assignments'. She saw it as a formative task 'to help us in the future and discuss certain things before we write our assignments and the dissertation'. She had not asked anyone to read it, as she wanted to see how she did on her own.

As he returned her PCA and feedback, Steve explained: 'You'll find this probably rather negative so you'll have to forgive me that but again this is in the spirit of learning from your mistakes. There are a few general points I've made which, and that's the whole point of this assignment, it's to alert you to things that you need to do and to avoid in subsequent assignments' (t2a1ms3:2).

Previous experience of writing

When asked what she had learnt about writing at Masters level from the experience of A1, she answered: 'I don't see actually much difference between Masters level and BA level because my piece of writing, what I did before, my dissertation was very demanding so I had to separate my ideas, quote and reference properly. So the difference the essays are just longer and I have to use more resources, I think that's the main difference so I just have to read more' (s3i2:2). When probed, the reason for lack of differentiation between Masters and BA writing was 'because we don't have this distinction in Poland, because BA and MA is just the same approach' (ibid). However, what she had learned about academic writing at Reading was broadly the same as back home, including the assessment criteria. One difference was that the great emphasis on critical thinking here was a bit different, she thought, but she said 'I've always done that' (s3i2:3). In Oct 2010, looking back, she commented: 'The marking scheme was very difficult to understand for me. It was clear what are the assessment criteria but how they relate to the points obtained from a given assignment was unclear.' (e-mailed comment on chronological version of this document).

One thing she had not done was write assignment outlines: 'My tutor in Poland, he told me when I was writing my dissertation, my BA, he told me don't write in outlines, don't write introduction because then you will narrow yourself, just write what you

want to write about, gather ideas, a broad subject, then narrow it in the process of writing. And that's what I really like' (s3i2:3).

Advice she would give other students about academic writing was based on her main difficulties on A1 was:

- 'Organise ideas into paragraphs' (s3i2:4): Overlong paragraphs were a problem for her in Polish too: 'just the way I write... that I always found it problematic the paragraph because I don't know where the idea ends and the other one starts' (s3i2:4).
- 'Write short sentences'. This was based on Steve's direct advice to her, but she commented that in his writing (in module booklets) 'the sentences are very elaborate, very complicated, and now he told me that I have to write very short sentences'. Her problem with long sentences was 'because that's the way we write in Polish, and that's what I'm used to'. She had been told by undergraduate tutors that this was a problem in her English writing. 'But when I write shorter sentences it just looks so simple and not academic for me. Really, that's the problem that I want to make it more advanced and at the same time someone tells me don't make it so advanced'(s3i2:4). She identified 'two commas' per sentence as the maximum, instead of six in Polish.
- 'Definitely pay attention to referencing' (s3i2:5), which she found difficult because 'sometimes in books it's not clear where something was printed, edited...They give so many names of cities or names of publishers' (s3i2:5). Bibliographical accuracy had received less attention on her course in Poland, where she had used journal articles as well as books.

She had concerns about A2 because she had never had to analyse anything before: 'it's completely new and I'm kind of stressed about how that will go' (s3i2:7). She was concerned that she might not spot everything she needed to in the text: 'maybe there is still something there that is good, that is used properly and I haven't spotted that, or there is something that should be used differently, and I haven't spotted that' (s3i2:7). She added this was a shame as she felt 'I'm kind of here as an expert' on the topic (cohesion) and that she should be 'perfect in that already'(ibid).

Approach: Comparing A2 to her previous academic writing in Poland, she said MA writing called for different approaches: 'here it is more into analysing. And there is

more depth in literature.’ (s3i3:11). Although she had not had to do many essays in Poland, the way she had written her BA assignment had been ‘completely different’. She saw MA writing as ‘more specific: I had to elaborate my ideas, organise them, and in my BA thesis was rather the understanding of literature. There were not as many ideas of my own’ (s3i3:12).

In November in her A1 meeting with her personal tutor, Steve, (also the SLLP module tutor), looking ahead to A3 for SLLP, he acknowledged she could not go home to collect data from her students, so would need to rely on her memory of typical occurrences and features of her teaching context. Pola reported she was already asking her Polish colleagues to note down mistakes students made to send to her, and was told that they should really send her samples of data, so she could also see what the students were getting right.

Attitude: A week before submission of A3, she e-mailed to say she had worked on this topic (learners’ errors) on her undergraduate course and had found it interesting, so was pleased that this assignment gave her ‘another opportunity to broaden my knowledge in this area’. On submission day, she emailed that she thought her A3 was better than A2, as it was better organised and she was more familiar with the topic – Discourse Analysis had been new for her. In I3 she reported that A3 was also more similar to her BA dissertation than A2 had been ‘because it focused on everyday situations, everyday language... it was more practical’ (s3i3:13).

In October 2009, looking back, she said before she started on the programme she felt she knew about academic writing in theory, but had not practised much, so her skills needed ‘polishing’ (s3i5e:1).

In Oct 2009, Pola reported that, compared to when she started the programme, she still preferred oral to written communication and texts, though thought this attitude depended on the subject and her preferences at the time. She still thought she had worked harder on her Polish BA, as that had had more classes: lectures all day from 8am to 3pm, whereas in Reading there were only 6-8 hours in total a week. Asked about the other work of reading and writing, she could not say if it was more or less, ‘because it was just different’ (s3i5:1), with a lot of practical project work in Poland (‘which was more creative... just to become a teacher because it was ELT’, s3i5:4)

spread over the whole year, and MA work more focused at specific times. Her MA dissertation had been much more demanding than her BA one.

In October 2009, asked about the problems she had identified with terminology when interviewed about SLLP, she said this problem had reduced: she had had a gap year, as she described it, between college and the MA, when she had worked, and this meant she had forgotten the terminology and just had to 'brush it up a bit (*by reading*) but then it was OK' (s3i5:3).

Other people

In Term 1 Pola asked several friends to write texts for her for A2, from which she chose one, which she then analysed for the assignment. She was also collecting data from her hall mates for her sociolinguistics assignment, commenting 'It's so funny. Everyone in our hall is involved in my assignments' (s3i2:8). After discussing work on A2 with her flatmates, Pola saw points where they did not understand as important 'I'm trying to apply this approach that my assignment has to be clear not only for professionals but also for people who might like to read it, and they treat it as an article. That if I'm relating to some vocabulary or some terms which are not clear at first glance then I try to elaborate or explain what I mean' (s3i3:10). Three of her flatmates (who were from Albania, Finland and Italy, so NNES new to the British education system) had asked to read her assignment, as she had been writing it in the kitchen, and they had expressed interest in her topic, because it was about language, unlike their own subjects of study in business and finance. Their questions had indicated to her points to elaborate.

One problem re A2 was her decision to have further references, which she had been advised to do by a friend in another department: 'because he's British and he's been studying in England for all his life' (s3i3:6). With regard to the bibliography/further reading issue, the tutor explained that her British friend might be in a different discipline. Pola pointed out a problem with the Student Handbook, which did not clarify what to do with sources referred to in a study, but not mentioned in the student text. She decided to wait to see what feedback she got on this on other essays, where she had put all sources consulted in the bibliography even if not referenced in the text.

After her first meeting with the DA module tutor, Ann, Pola did not feel the need to discuss her assignment with anyone else, although there had been discussion of topic choices with three other students. Their meeting after the return of A2 finished on an up-beat note, with the tutor asking if it was clearer now and Pola replying that it was, much clearer. Ann repeated it was a good first assignment and Pola said she was looking forward to getting her marks on other assignments.

In her first meeting with Steve in his role as her personal tutor returning A1, Pola showed him a rough summary of what she wanted to cover in A3, for his module: 'It's the way I thought you expected it to be, I wrote a very short introduction... and these are the headings and sub-headings. I had some problems with the word count' (s3a1mt2:8). He told her that, though he could not read a draft of the assignment, he was 'prepared to mark a fairly detailed outline' (t2a1ms3:8).

A3: As she was writing the assignment at home in Poland there was no chance of discussing it with her flatmates. However, she had msn online chat on messenger with a Swiss friend in Reading, studying Real Estate. She sent him her assignment and he pointed out parts that were not clear to him. He suggested places where she could elaborate ('but still it was not enough' s3i4:13), asking what terms meant (eg 'a covert error', 'a slip'). She did not take his advice and did not define these in the text 'because there is... certain terminology he is not familiar with but other people are so I don't have to be clear about that' (s3i4:13). He also made the point that her explanations were not always clear.

On submission day, she emailed that she had also given A3 to her parents to read, as 'they like reading my compositions because they are interested in what I write'. She later told me that she had not discussed A3 with anyone else and did not think she would talk to the tutor about it, as 'it's mostly clear...I know what I have to focus on now.' (s3i4:9). She had talked to another student who had failed, but only briefly about their grades, in class. She wanted to read Razvan's assignment as he had got 72%. He had chosen a different topic (motivation), but it was one she was familiar with, so wanted to see 'how he tackled it, how he approached it' (s3i4:9). She did not, in fact, do this.

In Oct 2009, she felt her writing was helped by:

- Her flatmates, from different backgrounds – some British ‘who knew what is expected, some of them wrote a lot in the past and also knew what to focus on’ (s3i5e:2), and gave her advice, for example, about making the language more impersonal.
- She asked her flatmates sometimes to read her work and point out parts that were ‘very unclear to them’ (s3i5e:2).
- She searched the internet and books for writing guidelines, ‘especially with regard to certain writing genres. For example, if I had to write a literature review, I was looking for some examples, some key stages etc’ (s3i5e:2).
- She had signed up to generic writing classes offered by the University Study Support services, but went once only and found it too basic: intended ‘probably for people who never write before’.

In Oct 2009 she reported that her flatmates had not continued reading all her assignments, though some had expressed interest in the one for the option module ‘English in the World’ ‘just to get an idea of what’s happening in England’ (s3i5:5). Her dissertation had been read by her father and grandfather. The latter spoke good English, was interested in the topic and discussed the content with her, but gave no advice/suggestions for improvement. A very close friend in Poland, writing a Masters dissertation in mathematics, who was interested in language learning, also read it. She reported in Oct 2009 that no one had proofread her later work.

Reading

In I4, focusing on A3, Pola pointed out that most of her references were books, not articles and she responded with ‘I like reading books...I’m pretty bored when I read studies on their own because it’s like trying to focus on the whole procedure, the subject, the description, it’s boring to me. I like to have what’s the results...And in books I have the results, like “This is useful”, “This has been found that it’s quite relevant” and “This works”.’ (s3i4:7). She could not remember if she had any primary studies in her bibliography, and commented that a book referenced she liked was Harmer 2004 ‘The Practice of Language Teaching’: ‘there are definitely some (*primary studies*) in Harmer’s, some bits and pieces’ (ibid). (NB This is a basic, introductory textbook on this topic).

In Oct 2009, she felt her writing was helped by the amount of reading done ‘which gave me a lot of ideas about writing and the way certain authors write’ (s3i5e:2).

Advice for future students that related to sources was: ‘pay attention to references, strong opinions and make sure you are not plagiarising. Sometimes it is not easy to figure out if an idea is ours or someone else’s, especially when we read a lot of books’ (s3i5e:2).

Asked about her reading in Oct 2009, she reported 2/3 reading on paper and 1/3 on line: ‘I just love Google, I just love downloading articles, I search all the time something interesting, and I have lots of them on my computer’(s3i5:3). She used Google Scholar and the library e-journal catalogue. In January she had said that she preferred books to articles, but by the end of the programme she said ‘I convinced myself to read article... I like both of them’ (s3i5:9).

Feedback on outlines

She found the advice here to write outlines ‘problematic’. As noted above, she felt the reading, note-taking and ‘knowing what to write about’ was the ‘most rewarding thing’(s3i2:3). This took the most time for her – she did not find writing took long. Producing an outline before she had done the work (as required for A3 in Term 1) was not something she was used to, nor wanted to do, when she had the pressure of examinations and A2 (to be submitted at the end of that term) to think about. She clarified this further in her comments on this document in November 2010: ‘My problem with writing outlines was that in order to produce them I had to do the whole reading and organisation work – so I know how to organise ideas and how to produce the outline I can rely on in the process of writing, and this takes a lot of time. It was difficult for me to produce it in short period of time. This was a bit illogical for me.’ Questioned again about having outlines for A2, she said it gave her ‘general idea’ but that other ideas had come to her as she wrote and so she had skipped bits of her outline: ‘I have like better ideas now than I did before’ (s3i3:13).

In Research Interview 2 two weeks after meeting her personal tutor, Steve, (who was also module tutor for SLLP and A3) she reported: ‘he told me what I should focus on’ (s3i2:7), and said she had just sent him an up-dated outline. She still said she did not find outlines at all useful, but that the ideas from the tutor on that first, rough outline had been helpful, in that she had noticed sub-headings that could be collapsed,

vocabulary that needed changing, and that her focus needed narrowing. She said however that 'I don't think I am going to use my outline later on' (s3i2:8), though then said she would use the headings she had produced.

This assignment outline, e-mailed to her personal tutor now in his role as module tutor at the end of Week 8, consisted of a one-paragraph explanation of her focus, then an outline with section and sub-section headings, some followed by a short summary of what they would focus on. She received back six Word Comments covering the following issues:

1. A reminder that the assignment required a focus on a familiar teaching/learning situation: 'so you shouldn't be talking about learners in general when you illustrate the error types and sources that you wish to discuss' – her summary gave the impression she would do this.
2. Her use of the key term 'mistake' was unclear; she was told: 'you MUST be careful to use terms consistently and clearly and leave the reader in no doubt as to what you are talking about' (e-mailed Comment2). A further section suggested she meant 'mistake' in its broadest sense and was told: 'I think you need to use a different term' (e-mailed Comment3).
3. Two content issues, indicating possible errors of understanding/interpretation that might arise in the assignment.
4. One content issue was developed by the tutor, pointing out complexities and concluding: 'You will need to discuss how a teacher handles this balancing act' (Comment6).

Document-final comments pointed out the need for a pedagogic section, and the general comment: 'This is an appropriate topic for the assignment, but note my comments'. There was no further interaction between Pola and the module tutor.

She said she had mostly stuck to the outline she had produced for A3, but admitted 'I'm really not a good fan of outlines... I have never done it and it is really difficult for me to write outlines here because I usually write my assignment then I reorganise, think whether it is clear or not... I have to write them here, so I stick to them when I finally write them, I looked at them, but it's just I have to do it'. (s3i4:14). She then had all her ideas on one or two pieces of paper and 'I try to put them in order in my composition' (ibid).

When asked what advice she would give a new tutor for A3, she replied: Drop outlines! In her feedback on this document in November 2010, Pola commented here: ‘This sounds like shouting, I didn’t mean to shout. I thought of not being so strict with outlines. Maybe more time for writing them might be enough.’

Advice for future students in Oct 2009 showed that her view of outlines had not changed: ‘I didn’t write my outlines’, she made notes of her ideas while reading, then ‘put them into categories and this was my outline’ (s3i5:4). Before reading she did not have many ideas. Her supervisor had given her a chapter outline for the dissertation, but she had skipped sub-section headings in some chapters ‘because it was much neater when there weren’t any sub-heading’ (s3i5:4).

Feedback on assignments

In January 2009 she thought she would look at the feedback on A2 while writing other assignments ‘and try to look for things that she said are not important and try to get rid of them in my assignments’ (s3i3:14). In March 2009 she thought she might look at A3 and feedback when writing other assignments, ‘to look for the aspects he mentioned that I should have done’ (s3i4:9) to see if she had made the same mistakes.

In Oct 2009, she reported that she learnt a lot from feedback given on assignments. ‘I knew what to focus on on following papers’ (s3i5e:2).

On-line resources

Technology: Pola made use of the following in writing A2:

- Word for writing.
- At University in Poland she had been taught to use SARA simple search with the British National Corpus to check the meaning/contextual use of words/expressions and she continued to do that, for several words per page of text, checking words she had met in books and articles. She now trusted this more than grammar books, because with regard to her own use of language (syntax and lexis) ‘British peoples tell me that it’s not the way they use it actually’ (s3i3:16).
- COBUILD collocation resources.
- Online dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual) on CDs, open all the time she was working.

Her use of technology for A3:

- Pola had a tablet PC, bought before she left Poland. She wrote by hand on the touchscreen making her comments and notes, and draft assignment (this handwriting constituted 70% of her work, she estimated) then clicked to convert the text to typewritten, and put it into a Word document. She proofread this for mismatches between what she had written and how it had been converted to type.
- She worked on one draft version, overwriting it as she revised.
- She did not print out a final version to read, always working on screen.
- She continued to use SARA and COBUILD and her online dictionaries.
- She would be accessing journals online in the future, but for Assignment 3 had just used the article collection provided by the tutor.
- She had Googled for useful books, then looked for them in the Polish libraries she had access to over the Christmas vacation and in Reading.
- At the end of the vacation in Poland she had had an msn conversation with a Swiss friend in Reading, studying Real Estate. He had expressed interest in her assignment and she had sent it to him online, followed by feedback from him in their subsequent chat.
- When asked, she said she had accessed the module Blackboard site once or twice and seen the advice on writing A3 there: 'It gave me a brief picture of what is expected and what's the common practice...I tried to stick to it, but still I have my own way of writing so it's hard to imitate someone whom you're not, there has to be your own character in the writing as well' (s3i4:15). She found it useful as 'I saw I can write similarly, so it's fine that I don't have to change my style drastically' (s3i4:16).

In Oct 2009 she reported that her use of technology had not changed on the MA.

T5. Personal perspectives

Personality

In I4, discussing her writing after the return of A3, Pola identified her problem as having 'a mental shortcut'. She felt that she had the same problem writing in Polish, and that also in speaking people did not always get her point 'I'm not specific enough'.

She took from this feedback 'I have to be succinct in ideas but elaborate and clear in expressing them' (s3i4:4).

In Oct 2009, she reported 'In terms of writing, my skills have improved, my knowledge has broadened. In general, I was studying this year and I was definitely developing. And personal development is very important to me, so I'm very glad' (s3i5e:3). She did not intend to do any further academic writing: 'I don't really enjoy writing' (ibid). She said that she felt that she was better at more creative tasks than writing and described 'creative' in the context of her BA as: 'well for example we had a task that, an assignment for a project to do that we had to gather the whole file of pictures from various newspaper, various sources and then create five lessons with the use of these pictures' (s3i5:6). Asked if she had ever been asked to be creative on the MA she said: 'definitely in my dissertation' (where she produced lessons based on authentic materials), but she was not sure about elsewhere: 'Not that much, I think. I think the assignments were more about literature, like literature review' (s3i5:6).

Pola showed evidence of poor judgement. She reported in I2 that she was returning home for the whole Christmas vacation, and although she wanted to have a shorter stay there, she could not now change this, having booked flights two weeks into the term. Pola also returned to Poland in the summer and submitted her dissertation from there. She had not looked at any MA dissertations before leaving: 'I thought somehow similar to what I was doing before, but when I actually sat down to doing it, I realised it's something different, but then I was again back in Poland so I didn't have a chance' (s3i5:2).

Identity

As a teacher: She responded to the A2 tutor as a fellow teacher: 'I'm aware that she's got loads of work, loads of assignments to correct and she still has time to spot like different tiny things that's why I was really amazed, because sometimes, well, I am a teacher as well and sometimes I feel I'm not in the mood for correcting, and I know I have to. And it's really nice to see that there are people as well who do that'(s3i3:2).

In Week 6, she said she was finding that Grammar was more of a challenge than DA, as there were new concepts but she said: 'It's fine, I like learning new things, so I'm quite happy that I'm not studying things I already know.' She admitted, however, 'I

find Grammar quite difficult... but it's fine, you know, I'm a student, I have to study, right?' (s3a1mt2:2).

She said she loved the Discourse Analysis module, having not expected to like it from the suggested pre-course reading on this topic: 'I was like, what is that about? I didn't understand it, it was like speaking about things that are obvious, but here I learnt very new things, and this is why I found it really interesting. I find application in everyday life, that's maybe why I'm so happy about that, that it's not only theoretical but also practical' (s3a1mt2:1). In total contrast, she was struggling more with SLLP, as this was a subject she had thought would be practical, which she was finding very theoretical. She was enjoying Sociolinguistics 'I'm really interested in language in society' (s3a1mt2:2).

In her poster presentation on A2 submission day in a DA class, Pola discussed the pedagogic implications for her of her study for this module, commenting 'I found that I wasn't teaching cohesion as such' and, when asked by Timur if she would teach cohesive ties to her students in future replied 'I will pay more attention to it'.

Re feedback, she acknowledged that 'usually teachers focus on things that are not correct' and appreciated positive comments on A2: 'And here she says 'that OK', 'this is ok'... 'this is what I liked' and so it was nice to see that there are some things that I did correct' (s3i3:2).

Asked in I4 why she had previously thought (on submission) she had done better on A3 than A2, Pola repeated that this was because it was a more familiar area, and more practical than the analysing of a text required for A2. She wondered if the reason was 'Maybe because I was a little bit arrogant. OK I know this area, I can write about it and it seems like OK I should have spent more time on it actually' (s3i4:8).

When asked what advice she would give a new tutor for A3, she replied: 'Provide encouragement in feedback', using 'smiling and sad faces to indicate overall point of feedback: 'when I provide my students with my feedback, I do it like it doesn't matter if they are adults or not I just like smiling face which means "This is what I really liked in the assignment" so that I show them "OK you did something really good in here".' (s3i4:15). She then pointed out strengths in bullet points. The same was done for OK

and weak points: 'And I think it's clearer for them so I like this ways of getting feedback as well and some advice in future writing' (s3i4:15).

A3 was in the bottom quarter of the work submitted; only two students (out of 13) did worse (and they both failed). Steve commented that this was 'disappointing for her because she's quite a lively, thoughtful person, not resistant to teaching I think, but she's possibly a bit over-confident' (t2a3is3:2). This was probably because of her good background from her Licenciatj in Poland 'which has a lot of relevant modules in it' (t2a3is3:3). He felt that in their first tutorial she presented herself as someone looking forward to doing the MA because she had covered much of the ground before and wanted to 'focus on the bits in between as it were that she hadn't done so well' (t2a3is3:3). He was also disappointed: 'I felt this was someone who should have been able to devote quite a lot of attention to this and done a bit better' (ibid).

Asked in October 2009 if she had changed as result of doing the MA, Pola said that she had changed a lot during the year 'not only academically but as a person... It was a once in a lifetime experience, I suppose. I had an opportunity to meet a lot of wonderful people and to learn much from them. Unfortunately it has influenced my studies as I had a lot to think about apart from my studies and I had difficulties with separating these two things and focusing on my studies only' (s3i5e:2). The people who had so influenced her were other students at Reading, not on her course – flatmates and people in her hall. Their influence had been personal, not academic: 'I met a lot of wonderful people who helped my explore more about myself, my wants and needs and what I want from my life. Unfortunately it has influenced my studies as I had a lot to think about apart from my studies and I had difficulties with separating these two things and focusing on my studies only' (s3i5e:2).

Asked about changes required by the MA in Oct 2009, she replied: 'I had to write things that were new to me like in Discourse Analysis or the whole dissertation. I just had to learn to how to write it, look at it this way, so this is new so I had to learn it, that's all' (s3i5:9). When asked 'did you feel ever feel that you were being asked to become a different person or change how you were?' she replied 'No, not at all' (ibid). The only change was 'I have been using English almost as my second language' (s3i5:9), but that was required before she came to Reading, and was continuing in her new job. She had a permanent job with a Polish company producing software for

education, and was working as a translator of technical documents and an interpreter. 'I love this work right now. I really found myself in it 'cause I'm doing a lot of different things so I'm developing in different ways so I really enjoy it for now' (s3i5:10).

Reactions to feedback

In the meeting with her personal tutor to go over A1, Pola acknowledged that when she had printed out her PCA, she had noticed some spelling errors, and that she had not numbered the pages, but was up-beat: 'At least I noticed what I did wrong so I won't make the same mistakes probably next time' (s3a1mt2:2). When told not to be depressed by the A1 feedback, she replied 'I like learning from my mistakes' (s3a1mt2:7).

In Research Interview 2 (I2) at the end of Week 8, Pola commented on the amount of feedback: 'I'm really happy to get all the feedback' (s3i2:1), although 'I feel so disappointed with my pre-course assignment... when I look at it now, I see so many spelling mistakes'. She attributed these to lack of time to read the assignment through 'again and again', and her focus on content rather than 'layout and grammar' (ibid). The feedback and meeting with her tutor had been useful, as she received 'lots of information... what should I focus on, what I missed, what I didn't include, and what I should have included. So I know what to do later on' (ibid).

She saw all the feedback as useful, although she did not agree with all the points the tutor had picked out on A1. She felt she had focused on her experience and things she had noticed 'which for me were very important in this area of second language acquisition because I notice in my students how they ...produce language, so that's why I include it' (s3i2:1). These had not also been noticed by the tutor, she thought, 'so he didn't see any relevance' (ibid). She acknowledged that maybe she also had not supported her arguments, so this was 'why there was a bit of a misunderstanding' (ibid).

I3 took place in Term 2, Week 3. Pola was again impressed by the amount of feedback she had just received on A2, as she was used to getting only a mark and a few general comments at the end of assignments in Poland. She said she liked it, because it could help improve future work to know what she had done wrong.

She was, however, puzzled by some of the feedback: 'sometimes I got the impressions that it's a bit contradictory' (s3i3:1), giving as her example the comment on the feedback sheet under C1 'Demonstration of relevant reading and understanding of issues'. Pola did not identify that this section of the feedback sheet related primarily to her survey of the literature. She was told here: 'You demonstrated that you understood the function and nature of cohesive devices in your literature review, although, given the word limit it would have been sensible to narrow your discussion to the two devices you finally focused on'. Her reaction was: 'when I look at my discussion, I actually did that, so I don't know what's going on here' (s3i3:1). The problem related to the naming of parts in the assignment: the tutor was referring to the parts of the assignment that discussed the literature as the Literature Review, even though they were not named that. This is where a range of devices (not just two) was discussed. The assignment did, however, have a section titled 'Discussion', where she discussed her findings in relation to the two devices focused on in her study of her text. This is what Pola was referring to as 'discussion', and hence her confusion at the feedback.

Not realising the focus of feedback arose over another comment on this same criterion 'demonstration of reading': 'It might also have enriched your discussion to make reference to studies of the acquisition of cohesive devices by L2 learners'. She thought this meant she should have looked at other texts/learners to compare with the data she had collected, not that she should have read more widely. She was somewhat aggrieved by this comment, as she said she had made the point about not having comparative data sets in her class poster presentation.

Pola also had problems reading several words in the hand-written annotations on the script, which she understood as perhaps caused by the tutor having a lot to mark and being 'in a rush' (s3i3:2). She thought she had 'mainly got what's the point'(s3i3:1).

Overall, she thought the feedback on A2 was accurate: 'because there was some situations where I knew that I had to elaborate more or be more clear, but I couldn't think of anything more ... I knew how, what had to be improved, but I couldn't put it in the right words... like be more succinct or be more elaborate. So yes, she spotted that, basically' (s3i3:2).

When asked to identify feedback here that had been particularly useful, Pola picked out the feedback about the unnecessary meta-discourse in her introduction (discussed above). However, she then admitted that she did not understand why this should not be in her assignment. She had never written a literature review or methodology section before, and had had difficulty approaching them, so was not surprised there were problems. However 'I don't know why I can't add this information about how I approached this' (s3i3:3). She was not sure what to do about this: should she see the tutor for an explanation, work it out by herself, or ask other students if they had similar feedback on unnecessary inclusions? She had read several books on her topic 'and on writing assignments and I tried to borrow like famous writers' style...I tried to see how they write and I tried to apply this approach into my writing and in the end it turned out my approach was wrong... they mentioned how they approached the methodology, what books they consulted and I tried to add this one as well, my approach, and it turns out I should have skipped that' (s3i3:3/4).

From this she had concluded that, compared to undergraduate writing, MA writing was 'more like writing an article, not giving too much of my own feelings towards it, my own progress in it...it's more about information and the most important aspects of cohesion' (s3i3:3).

Pola asked Ann to justify the feedback on meta-language when they met (at Pola's request) after A2 had been returned. She was told there was no need to report on why she had made her decision with regard to methodology in this type of essay.

Pola saw feedback on A2 assignment as 'clashing' with that on A1. For that she had been told to use language that was clear, 'not neutral but not formal... somewhere in between' to make it easy for busy markers to read. But here the marker had commented on her poor word choice: 'one person says one thing to me and the other says something different' (s3i3:11). Looking ahead she would 'try to balance it somehow maybe not use many formal words but also not like colloquial language' (s3i3:11). She saw the criticism of A2 as meaning she should use 'more sophisticated words and grammar structures, more passive' (s3i3:11). This is not what the feedback actually implied, I think.

In A2, feedback had commented on the lack of reference to a more recent publication - she was concerned this had cost her marks; it had not, she was told when they met, but the tutor wanted her to be aware of its existence.

Interview 4 took place in Term 2, Week 8. Pola began by saying she did not know what the A3 feedback meant overall: 'I don't actually know if these are the only areas that should be improved and otherwise my mark would be much higher. Or if these all are these just comments that, "OK, you could have added this one, you could have elaborated this section, this is not of much importance"'.(s3i4:l).

Asked to identify useful feedback on A3, she referred to:

- Specific Comment 7, which pointed out that a reference she used to identify two distinctions had made a further, third, distinction; she saw this an example of her not going into enough depth: 'I should have considered every aspect and all possible theories and statements made by writers, and I think I omitted this one'. (s3i4:l).
- She was mortified by an error she made in the text 'oh my god, I feel so ashamed' (s3i4:l). She used the word 'ashamed' three times here to explain how she felt. She had written:

'2.3 Order of acquisition

Kryszewska (2007) states that this term stands for the order in which we teach our students.'

The tutor wrote: 'No it doesn't! It stands for a hypothesised typical order in which learners acquire the forms, irrespective of the teaching order' (Comment11).

Pola said 'I made this mistake that this is not what I meant actually' (s3i4:l).

She was particularly embarrassed that she had erroneously referenced her Polish lecturer's BA materials in making this point. 'I should have elaborated and pay much attention, much more attention to the vocabulary I am choosing because it's not teaching, it's acquiring, it's completely the other way round' (s3i4:l). When asked how she thought this had happened she replied 'This was the last one I was writing, maybe I was just tired and I was just run out of ideas... it was like Christmas, I was writing so many assignments, like three of them...' (s3i4:l). She had not noticed it when she read it through: 'No, I didn't

notice that, that's why when I saw it I was like 'Oh I'll dig a hole and lay there' (laughs)' (s3i4:2).

The next of Steve's points that she commented on was about her choice of example of a dictionary-induced language error. She had chosen the Polish word 'pierwszy', looked up by a student in a Polish-English Dictionary. She had written: 'Having not read the notes of guidance and how to read the symbols, he finds a word 'pierwszy' and the first word seen is *num* meaning *numeral*. The student wrote down *num* thinking that it is the English equivalent of a Polish word 'pierwszy' (A3:8). The tutor felt this was an unusual example and not one he thought worth mentioning. She recognised Steve was telling her to use a more common example, but she wanted to make the point about inaccurate use of dictionaries leading to errors, as she had noticed it in her students' work, but was limited by the examples she had on paper: 'but I didn't have it, I was analysing the ones I had' (s3i4:2). She returned to this issue again, discussing the Criterion 3 comment re her sporadic references to Polish errors later: 'If there is an error and there is like a reasonable source for it, I think it's worth mentioning because it is something new, it's not typical, I wasn't focusing on typical errors of error analysis. I was trying to analyse the errors I had, that I have gathered' (s3i4:5).

She objected to the question in Criterion 3: 'Do Polish learners tend to transfer all features of Polish? If not, why not?', saying she thought this was a Master's Thesis question: 'How can I state in this assignment if all Polish learners transfer all the features of Polish? It's impossible for me to guess and analyse it' (s3i4:5).

Specific feedback she did not consider useful was, she felt, where:

- she was herself confused by an issue she was describing, and already knew there was a problem, so did not need telling;
- problems that were caused by misunderstanding of what she had meant: 'I probably put it in wrong words.' Also 'So I probably didn't elaborate it properly and I wasn't clear enough' (s3i4:3).

With regard to the feedback sheet overall, she interpreted it as the tutor telling her that her main problem was 'some of my comments are not very precise' (s3i4:3). She quoted the feedback: 'some places I "missed opportunities to explore areas more

deeply". I totally agree this is my main problem in all the assignments I've done so far and I'm really hoping to improve this area in my following assignments' (ibid). She re-stated the problem as follows: 'I'm not clear...I have something in my mind and I write like certain sentence about it like I'm trying to make this clear but I actually miss the target that the reader, for the reader it's not that clear, and I need to do something more' (s3i4:3).

Late in I4 in March it emerged that Pola had not realised that the general feedback sheet gave comments by marking criterion, although they were given on the feedback sheet and this was pointed out: 'Oh my god, I didn't read that!' (s3i4:15). She said she would have to read the feedback again to see if this made a difference to her understanding of the feedback.

On A3 she thought that the problem was that , although she had a long bibliography, the tutor 'had like his own idea of error correction and some model, someone's work that he thought might have been worth mentioning' (s3i4:7).

Looking back on feedback on assignments in Oct 2009, Pola had liked the feedback on A2 as it gave both positive and negative points. She felt most subsequent feedback had been negative 'what I was lacking'(s3i5:6).

Reaction to marks

She was 'a bit disappointed' (s3i3:8) by her mark of 61%, having devoted so much time to A2. However, she was pleased to have passed her first assignment. She wanted to compare herself with other students 'because I think I'm one of the youngest in the group' (s3i3:9). She knew the grades of several others, all below 70% and wondered if anyone had got over that mark. She commented: 'I don't know if they want to talk about it, I don't want to ask them...' (s3i3:9).

She compared the Reading and Polish mark schemes, puzzled that 70% was the Reading distinction level: 'it's a lot of percentage between like 70 and 100, and it's still the same mark' (s3i3:9). In Poland, where the pass mark was 60%, '100% is something really, really good, and 80 is this 60%' (s3i3:9). So when she saw her A2 mark of 61% she thought 'Oh my god, in Poland I would just have passed' (s3i3:9), even though she had already looked at the mark scheme in the Student Handbook and

knew the Reading pass mark was 50%. She had also looked at the marking criteria (on the assignment rubric sheet) while writing this assignment, in the middle of writing and again at the end.

In a final question to Ann when they met after the return of A2, Pola asked 'Which aspects of my assignment were, like, need improvement the most, because I 61%, it's like OK, it's the first assignment but then also 40% to be completed, to the final 100%' (s3a2m3t1:4). The tutor commented this was a very good question 'But what you have to remember is 70 is a distinction... which is an excellent piece of work, so you are not far off that...it's not 40% because many, very few people get above 80% at this level, so ...what you want to do is improve from a merit to a distinction' (t1a2m3s3:4). Pola said in Poland 60% was a pass, so 'it sounds to me like really low' (s3a2m3t1:4), and was told 'You've got to rescale in your mind... It's a very good mark here... and it's Masters level' (t1a2m3s3:4).

In our interview on Pola's performance on A2, the tutor reported on their post-assignment meeting; the issue that had most struck her here was Pola's reaction to the mark: 'she thought she'd done very badly, with 61% and that's, you know, about coming from different backgrounds' (t1a2is3:1). Ann realised that 'understanding the scales is something that needs to be pointed out' (ibid), and that this was an issue for the teacher of the first module, but 'there's a lot to be handled. The problem is the time. I mean, when do you have the time to do that?' (ibid). She pondered on the need for time to be set aside with the whole group to 'explain these kind of things and how we give feedback and what they're supposed to do with it and so on' (ibid). At the end of their meeting, Ann felt Pola seemed to understand 'what I was saying and how I'd arrive at the mark'.

Referring to points made about the literature review, Ann acknowledged, upon reflection, that 'that's something that they probably wouldn't know until now, until I comment on this'. She commented that some of the points being mentioned were not ones for which she would deduct marks 'because I think, they won't know this, but I'll point it out to you'. She was interested to note when students came to talk to her about these issues, their concern was 'Did you take marks off? And I say no, I didn't take marks off, but they're not to know that' (t1a2is3:2). 'It doesn't impact on the grade, because there's things I think they shouldn't know at this stage, but I'll point it out to

them so they know for next time' (t1a2is3:3). She saw her role as giving them guidance and advice for future pieces of work, not just for her assignment. She was more explicit in early assignments than in later ones, where she'd point out a problem, eg references, but say 'you should have your references done by now' (t1a2is3:3).

A3. Although disappointed by her mark of 51%, Pola had heard that the tutor (Steve) was quite strict in his marking, 'so I'm happy I passed because I heard several people didn't pass so still I am above the average' (s3i4:5). She said 'I just want to get it over and done, but then actually in the comments I don't know what I could have done to improve it, to have a higher mark' (s3i4:5). She worried again about whether issues raised in comments had lowered her mark. Advice for future assignments might help: 'because the tutors know best what's the perfect assignment. We are trying to, we are learning and I only have a year to improve and I might not know what areas need to be improved like in general' (s3i4:6).

She felt she was still learning about the marking scheme, 'about what's the most emphasis put on' (ibid). She thought she might have a clearer idea once she had received back the next batch of assignments after the Easter vacation.

In Oct 2009, she laughed when reminded of her reaction to her first mark of 61% and asked if she now understood the marking scheme. She described it as 'weird' (s3i5:6): she could not understand that a range of 30% of the marks could be a distinction: 'It seems a lot, and like merit is only 10% from 60 to 70 and I don't think I understand it, but no one ever actually explained that to me, but on what basis is it given' (s3i5:5). She now knew 'just to get a pass I need to write this and that and to get a distinction I might work it to contain certain other features but I don't know why is it like this way' (s3i5:6). She compared it with the Polish system, where 60 is a pass, 70 is very average, 80-90% is satisfactory, and a very good mark is almost 100%. Her Polish marks had been around 90% usually 'so when I was getting 50 or 60 I was very dissatisfied' (s3i5:6). She understood that 50 was a Reading Masters pass, but felt her marks had been low: 'I understand that 50 is a pass and this is OK, but for me pass was never OK, but I always wanted to have higher marks because I was working... on my project' (s3i5:6).

Appendix 22: Summary document 3: Programme writing demands

1. Introduction

As part of this study, it was important to identify what the writing demands were that the participants were facing. In an influential earlier study, Lea and Street (1998) explored academic writing at two English universities, interviewing both staff and undergraduate students in a range of disciplines. They describe tutor expectations as grounded in

‘their own fairly well-defined views regarding what constitutes the elements of a good piece of student writing in the areas in which they teach. These tend to refer to form in a more generic sense, including attention to syntax, punctuation and layout and to such apparently evident components of rational essay writing as ‘structure’, ‘argument’ and ‘clarity’.’ (1998:162)

They identified the words ‘argument’ and ‘structure’ as particularly problematic, both in terms of their foregrounding by a range of academic staff, who could not, however, then describe what they consisted of, and of students’ understanding of their meaning. They found that many problems arose from ‘the conflicting and contrasting requirements for writing on different courses’ (as students took courses in different disciplines) and ‘the fact that these requirements were frequently left implicit’ (ibid:161/162).

The context of this study is one programme in one academic discipline, but it was important to check how far the messages being given about criteria were the same from different module tutors, especially when the assignments required such different approaches as A2 (analysing a piece of discourse) and A3 (discussing one theory-laden aspect of Second Language Acquisition in relation to pedagogic experience). In addition, it was necessary to establish how explicitly the criteria were explained to the students, before being able to explore what the participants understood by them.

Following Street and Lea (1998), who used the same types of data (except 6. below) the expectations of what Master’s level writing involves on this programme can be gleaned from a variety of sources:

1. Student Handbook
2. Assignment rubrics, including marking criteria
3. Other documents about assignments
4. Class briefings by module tutors
5. Research interviews with staff

6. Individual student meetings with staff
7. Feedback on outlines and assignments

Individual student-staff meetings and feedback on outlines and assignments are discussed elsewhere in this Thesis; the focus here is on explicit information/guidance provided in items 1-5 above, except in one or two instances where staff feedback to a student exemplifies a bigger point not made elsewhere (eg Section 3.2.3 below). This summary begins by examining the specific marking criteria and then turns to other issues raised in these sources about the task, the writing, outlines, feedback on assignments, students and, finally, module tutors.

2. Marking criteria

2.1 Criteria as presented on assignment rubrics

Marking criteria are given on all assignment rubrics, and feedback sheets are organised by criterion, with other, specific comments annotated on, or linked to, the text. The criteria for each of the three assignments focused on here are in Appendix 7. All have five criteria, with Criterion (C) 1, C4 and C5 identical for all three assignments, C2 grounded in use of data/reading and C3 in evaluation of these.

These five criteria are broadly similar to those used in other programmes and levels in this discipline; for example, Wingate (2010) reports almost identical assessment criteria (though with C2 and C3 switched) for the first-year undergraduate applied linguistics programme formative essay she studied at Kings College, London. Research into student take-up of feedback that she reports on comments on the problems students have with the language of feedback on writing, and the mis-matches that exist between tutor and student understandings of what academic writing requires. Interestingly, compared to Lea and Street (1998), although the word 'structure' is found in feedback by Wingate and this study, 'argument' is not.

The table below shows the criteria and identifies the focus of each. See Annex 1 to this appendix for an expanded version of this table, including further information from the assignment rubrics for A2 and A3; as an aim of A1 was to ascertain students' writing skills as they started on the programme, relatively little guidance was given in this rubric beyond the title and advice about reading and the need to acknowledge sources. Examining the information about the five criteria in the light of what the literature on academic writing tells us that students struggle with leads to identification of some concepts/terms as potentially problematic for the participants here.

Table 1 Marking criteria, as specified in assignment rubrics on Assignments 1-3

Criterion (C)	Reference in this thesis	Focus	Potentially problematic concepts/terms
C1. Demonstration of relevant reading and understanding of issues.	reading/ understanding	Appropriate knowledge telling, grounded in reading of relevant literature.	appropriate/relevant reading; appropriate range; demonstration of understanding; issue; different types of sources: primary/secondary, textbooks, handbooks, survey articles, key articles; research paper; critical awareness; critical ability; targeted reading
C2. Explanation of what has been done if data-based (A2); explanation/summary and discussion of theories/reading if not data-based (A1 and A3).	explanation/ discussion	Knowledge transforming, in the light of the task.	Synthesis of reading; linking information from different sources; identifying standpoints; explanation of a study; summary of theories; discussion of theories; account of teaching situation; summarising sources appropriately, avoiding plagiarism
C3. Evaluation: of analytical approach to data analysis (A2) or of theories/reading if not data-based (A1 and A3). Relating evaluation to L2 pedagogic practice (A3).	evaluation	Appropriate evaluation.	Evaluation of reading; relating reading to practical teaching and learning issues; evidence of same; applying lessons learned from your professional experience; analytical approach to data analysis; clarity of analysis; critical evaluation of analytical approach; support for theories; relating theory to practice; judging the worth of theory and research
C4. Coherence of assignment, especially overall organisation and division into sections and paragraphs.	coherence	Academic writing genre requirements: macro. Development of a coherent piece of discourse.	Structure of the assignment; overall organisation; a coherent discussion; clear signposting; avoiding irrelevance; good introductions; signalling to/guiding the reader; internal organisation of paragraphs and sections
C5. Presentation, especially correctness of referencing and bibliography, and quality of writing.	presentation	Academic writing genre requirements: micro.	Appropriate layout, citation and referencing; clear, readable English; the quality of your writing; using appendices

2.2 Further information about criteria from module tutors

Further information from briefings in classes, other documents and interviews with tutors that expanded these criteria is shown in Annex 2 to this appendix, where issues raised have been linked to criteria and given a summary 'issue' label.

3. Other issues raised by module tutors in class and in research interviews

This section outlines points made by tutors 1 and 2 (Ann and Steve) in class and in interviews with me about the assignment task, the process of writing itself, outlines, feedback on assignments, the students (what they bring and what their responsibilities are) and, finally, the module tutor (contact and responsibilities).

3.1 The task

3.1.1 The importance of the assignment

When asked what advice she would give new students Ann replied: 'general advice about how crucial it is, in terms of this is their grading particularly at MA level, they're not doing exams, they're not doing multiple choice so this is what it's based upon so they need to, if they need help they need to seek help and they need to work on it and it's (.) it's more important actually than the material almost that they're handling, they've got to be able to have control of the, their ability to write in order to present their ideas and to get the grade and they spend as much time on that as they do, as I said to one of my students actually you've spent as much time on that as you do on actually reading for the course and focusing on your assignment' (t1a2i:3).

3.1.2 Range of topics

For A2

- five possible areas; 'the questions that I've posed give you an opportunity to focus on something a) that we will have covered in lectures to some extent and b) it gives you a range of possibilities so hopefully you'll find something among these that you'll enjoy'(t1a2c11:5)
- choice between focus on spoken or written language.

For A3

- 'I like to allow you maximum freedom to allow you to interpret the topic in your own way' (t2a3c12:4).

3.1.3 Main issues

Asked about the main issues in MA students' writing for her module's assignment after they had been marked and returned, Ann (t1) said she felt these were to do with structure (of the assignment: 'introduction, main body, conclusion, sections and so on' (t1a2i:1), language (for international students, especially grammar) and substance/content, 'especially...understanding of reading' (t1a2i:1).

3.2 The writing

3.2.1 Starting out

A2: First class: 'It's quite soon but I've given you assignment topics which we'll read in a moment. But start to focus your reading a little bit so that you can understand right from the beginning, if you start reading some introductory texts in relation to some of these areas, is this for me, is this really what I'd like to do or not? So you start looking at, at the beginning at some introductory texts in relation to some of the key areas I'm about to talk about and start getting a feel for those areas and what you might want to focus your assignments on.' (t1a2c1:4)

3.2.2 The process

A2:

- 'It'll be fun'(t1a2c1:5).
- choice from a range of topics – each with questions posed/guidance re focus
- 'as always, start reading as soon as possible, is what I would say to you. Start reading today, the introductory texts on discourse analysis if at all possible.' (t1a2c1:7)
- 'have your outline plan which I will see because I make you bring an outline plan to me
- but you also then draft, as any good language teacher will teach you, that you have various drafts and you work up those drafts until the final product,
- it isn't a one shot, it's a long process
- and that process needs to start now' (t1a2c1:8), ie Term 1, Week 1.
- Term 1, Week 6 class: 5-10 minute individual appointments arranged the previous week 'when you'll come and speak to me...bringing with you some kind of outline plan for your assignment and any questions that you have up to that point, which can range anything from references to how I write my bibliography, maybe you shouldn't be worrying about that at that point necessarily but you might be, or how I reference in my text to, you know, key issues about your methodology. I suggest that when you bring your questions you just bring two or three very pertinent question and any others

then we can discuss in email or after class. But target your questions because I don't have sufficient time for you... At that point the most important questions are really to do with your collection of data, your methodology in particular and your reading that's informing all of that, of course' (t1a2c11:8/9).

The aim of the first meeting was 'going over the first two criteria essentially' (t1a2c15:2); 'I'm just checking that you are managing to get hold of texts for your literature review to give you background to your study and that you are appropriately looking at texts as well. When you're looking at the texts, you need to look at them in terms of giving obviously a background to the topic area but also how these, the information in these texts is informing your methodology as well, whatever methodology you're using. So that's the first thing. Second thing is I want to know what type of data you intend to look at, and examine for your assignment, a) making sure you can get it, and you're being realistic about what you're attempting to get and b) the type of texts that you're looking at too.' (t1a2c15:2).

- Term 1, Week 9 class: individual 10-minute meetings 'a final outline that I will look at and comment on and also one or two final issues that you want ironed out before you hand in. Do not bring your complete assignment to me, I cannot read your whole assignment or even sections of it but bring the outline' (t1a2c11:9). Further discussion of issues by e-mail, if necessary.
- Final class (Term 1, Week 10): poster presentations 'Posters are essentially a brief summary of a paper, they're put in a poster format so they will have perhaps an abstract, this one doesn't necessarily, I should find others, I should pin them up. They'll have an abstract explaining you know what the paper is about and then maybe an introduction, some details as to the results and the findings and conclusion, just some points. And this is what you will be creating from your assignment for the final lesson. And what we do is we post them up around the wall and you each stand next to your poster in turn and you just talk through your assignment with everyone else. Just what you did, what you found out.' (t1a2c11:9). The previous year, students had panicked when it was mentioned but after: 'this they said was wonderful because it meant that when they created this poster, they did it at the same time as they were creating the outline for me, they started really to think about the purpose of their writing and the purpose of the assignment and the implications for teaching as well, which was great, and how you might express that, not just in writing but orally as well to other people in summary form.' (ibid).

A3:

- ‘Don’t be daunted, people often start thinking oh this is a terrible task but most of them usually enjoy doing the assignment, they learn a lot from it and (.) it stimulates thought and that’s the whole point of it.’ (t2a3c12:6).
- Saving work regularly and frequently.
- Back-ups on separate discs.
- Allowing time for printer problems.
- Advice for new students: ‘Do a lot of drafts So (..) get writing, get your hand moving, don’t try to avoid writer’s block by thinking of the perfect opening paragraph but plunge into the second paragraph perhaps, just get writing, get drafting, free up your hand as it were, I think that’s important.’ (t2a3i:8)
- Advice for new students: ‘Read your work aloud. I think very often if you read your work aloud you become aware of where it’s (.) not hanging together, where you’ve written a sentence that doesn’t make sense I think even a lot of our British students would see that, they would find it difficult to read their own work.’ (t2a3i:8)

3.2.3 Writing with authority

In their meeting about A1, Barbara was praised for writing with authority, which her tutor glossed as ‘by that I mean you that you are drawing on conclusions, findings from other researchers and you’re drawing on evidence. It has to be evidence-based. So evidence in the form of your own findings in terms of some analysis that you’ve carried out for example or evidence drawn from the writings of others. So, giving opinions has, it’s not really giving opinions’ (t1a1ms1:7). She was told: ‘Always be careful with opinions, back it up or go on to then prove it, that’s what your assignment is going to be about, it’s a hypothesis that you want to then go on and prove’ (t1a1ms1:8).

3.2.4 Model assignments

- Ann’s advice for new students, given in our interview would be: ‘do look at models I suppose, models of other writing so that they become familiar with it, that’s something I don’t do with my course because the essays have stayed the same and I don’t want them to see the exact essays so a model essay but maybe not that piece’ (t1a2i:3).
- Steve’s in-class discussion of A3 included ‘A few guidelines that may help you, I’ve said, to avoid irrelevance. I’ve said there are two main ways of handling this assignment and I’ve got A and B. A is basically starting with some theory and then moving on to looking at practice, what you do or what you might do in the classroom.’

(t2a3c1:4). 'But you can do it another way and that is "this is what happens in my school, my classroom"...starting with a teaching procedure and then as it were going underneath it and looking at what theory might have to say about it, OK. So that's my A and B' (t2a3c2:5).

- t2 re A3: 'I haven't posted a whole assignment (*on Blackboard*) because I don't think that's helpful. People think "Oh this is a template, this is an ideal assignment, right, I will take this and I will do something exactly like this." You are all very creative, imaginative individuals, you will have a lot of different ways of approaching this assignment and I want you to do that.' (t2a3c2:4)
- In our interview, Steve explained his view of sample assignments: 'a sample assignment which I think a lot of them would like, which I think is dangerous...Because (..) they may, if you provide them with a whole assignment...they may react to that in different ways, many of which may be slightly dangerous. (.) They may want to write about that subject but then feel "well I can't now say those things because this assignment has said it and he'll think I'm just copying it", so it rather queers their pitch in that sense...On the other hand, and this might be more of a danger, for more of them, they might think "Oh right (.) I will try to copy this assignment, not in the sense that I will plagiarise it but (..) maybe I will write on this topic because this is obviously a good topic and I wasn't going to write on it, but I will now"...so I'll get loads of assignments on the sample assignment topic, or "This is a kind of template for me, I must follow the way this person's done this assignment". Now I encourage them to think that there are different ways of approaching this assignment.' (t2a3i:8) 'So I wouldn't want to restrict them to a particular template.' (t2a3i:9)

3.3 Outlines

3.3.1

A2: A rough outline was required for students' first individual meeting with Ann in Term 1, Week 6

- A4 sheet of paper, with the topic. 'So in other words if you've not selected your topic yet, if you've not yet ventured into the library or onto the computer, please do so' (t1a2c15:1).
- 'a short bibliography of texts or research articles that you have read or you are intending to read' (ibid)
- 'detail for me the data that you have already collected, and you may already have, or data you intend to collect. And by that I mean if it is conversational data, I'd like to

know who your subjects are going to be, the length of the recording, (...) so your subjects, who they are, their age, their demographic details in relation to the subjects, you know where they're from and so on.' (ibid). Written texts: 'the type of written texts that you're going to hold of. If it's the question on (.) on genre, for instance, what genre are you going to look at and what texts are you specifically going to get? Or if you're looking at cohesion and coherence and you're going to be looking at some ELT texts, what texts are you going to get? And if you can bring samples of those for me to see as well, that would be great. If you're not up to that point that's fine as long as I know you have an idea as to where you're going to find these materials, alright? (t1a2c15:1).

3.3.2

A2: A detailed outline was required for the second individual meeting with Ann in Term 1, Week 9 (A2 was then submitted at the end of Week 10)

'It's a final outline that I will look at and comment on... I want to see a nice outline and any final questions that you have' (t1a1c11:9).

3.3.3

A3: Steve required students to e-mail him a detailed outline

- 'e-mail me an outline of your assignment essay before you start writing to check that you're on the right track with regard to your plans' (t2a3c12:4).
- 'What I would like are quite detailed headings and sub-headings. You can often do it in a page, you might need a little more than a page of an outline. And obviously the more information you give me, the more help I can give you. (t2a3c12:4).
- 'by the end of week 8, earlier if you can' (t2a3c12:6)
- 'normally I find that if you give me a fairly detailed outline I can give you sufficient feedback so you know what you're doing' (t2a3c15:1).
- 'you might want to indicate under each (*sub-heading*) very briefly what kind of issues you are going to deal with and you could also put in the kind of readings or sources you might use in relation to those sub-headings. So the more information you give me the more feedback I can give you' (t2a3c15:2).
- 'My main aim is ensure that you don't go on completely the wrong track or spend too much time in the assignment doing something that's not very relevant' (t2a3c15:2).
- Giving students examples of good outlines – not done this year, but Jinko's had been kept as a good example to show future year groups: 'that would be good practice. Because I do tell them what is a good outline, orally, I say, I mean I ham it up a bit, I say "I get some outlines which are sort of beginning middle end, introduction, what is

motivation, central section different theories of motivation, conclusion how we apply motivation in our teaching”. I say “that’s not a good outline really”, so I really hammer it home that limited outlines are not very good. And I then do give some oral examples of the kinds of subheadings you might find in such an assignment.’ (t2a3i:13)

- His feedback on outlines: ‘What I do is I use the Word comment function. So I comment (.) on their outline, indicating where I think sections may be overlapping, indicating where they may have omitted something, I make occasional suggestions for reading that they may need to think about on top of the suggestions that appear in the module materials anyway and I have a general comment at the end (..) about it.’ (t2a3i:13)

3.4 Feedback on assignments

3.4.1 Role

- ‘The feedback is crucial, I think’ (t1a2i:4)
- Using feedback overall: ‘being realistic, there are some things they would find perhaps difficult to generalise from...I’m afraid that remains a summative feedback...I would expect them simply to become aware of that, explaining why they got the mark they had and why, to what extent they’ve met the criteria. There would be a few things which they could use formatively but I think we’ve got to not be too worried about that there’ll be some things which are only summative. We are telling them how much of this content they’ve really understood and how well they’ve applied it.’ (t2a3i:11).

3.4.2 On language

- ‘they should get some feedback on their English and their organisational skills so criteria four and five are helpful there, I can tell them whether they’ve organised the work properly, whether it was well structured and I can tell them whether their English was acceptable (.) If there are flaws in it, I always tell them, so they know, even if they are good writers like Razvan...’(t2a3i:10).
- ‘I underline, this is perhaps an influence of my life as an ELT teacher, I don’t like to let things go but I’m aware that I don’t underline everything but I underline probably more than fifty percent of their English errors. I have a slight concern about that because I’m aware that I’m not marking it for English as I would if I was somebody in *CALS (our EAP unit)*, so I’m not doing a complete job on that and I’m aware that those underlinings, they’re alerting them to a problem but they’re not telling them what the nature of the problem is and they may misconstrue that, as Jinko did in some cases. (.) But I do give them some feedback on their English both in general terms and

by underlining things. In a few cases, where I think it's something where the underlining might be seriously misunderstood or opaque, unclear to them, I might actually write in a word' (t2a3i:10).

3.4.3 Role of specific points on the text

- 'The specific feedback, specific points, as I think I've said to you before, it's quite a lot of work and some of them I'm giving them a lot of specific feedback, probably well above average, I think, because my feedback has been praised at external examiners meeting...But I find that actually that doing that helps me to remain on track for giving the general feedback. I think I would find it very difficult just to read it through, trying to make mental notes THEN do the general feedback. (.) Doing it this way, also doing it neatly this way so I've got these specific points in a nice word processed form, looking through those it gives me a better feel for the way the the thing has been done. It also means, and you've probably noticed this, that in my general comments, I can back up my general points by referring to specific points which I tend to do particularly with the weaker ones. So if I say, for example, with Pola I was able to say some examples of misunderstandings, specific see examples, specific points seven, ten, eleven and fifteen so she can't turn round to me and say "What did you mean by that? What did I misunderstand? I think I understood everything perfectly." She's got an immediate reference to where she didn't, so I think that is good practice and I suspect that that possibly encourages some of them who, the more motivated ones, to look at the specific points because it's hitting them in the eye straight away. I don't always do that, but I do it with quite a lot of them.' (t2a3i:13).

3.5. Students

3.5.1 What students come with

- 'Welcome everyone! Whatever your experience, I'm sure you'll bring these things to the course and please throughout as we're talking, even about theoretical things, bring in, you know, examples of your own teaching and don't feel shy because that's what really will enrich the course and enliven it and make it applicable to you as well' (t1a2c11:3).
- 'there are differences in ...their training' (t1a2i:1) – eg Turkish students having only written multiple choice tests before, no essays.
- 'danger here of stereotyping...but I would say particularly perhaps students from (..) a Middle Eastern (..) no I would perhaps include North African background and also East Asians, are less willing to evaluate and be critical I think, they do find this hard. I

suspect (.) that they come, well I think one has evidence that they come from a tradition where (.) display of knowledge rather than evaluation of knowledge is the key factor, and I think they feel uneasy with evaluating. Particularly a problem for my module, of course, is that it comes early on and they haven't perhaps developed confidence, developed a voice, they haven't seen that their ideas are (..) worthy and can be respected, so perhaps it's difficult for them, this is a challenging module coming quite early on, relatively speaking in their MA career, so that is particularly a problem, particularly for people from those backgrounds. I think (..) I think Latin Americans, Europeans, if we're talking about international students here, outside the British realm, are more willing to have a go and be critical. I think the most evaluative person here is, yes it's interesting here you've got a British student, a good British student Barbara who I've said "you evaluate the literature thoughtfully and sensitively". Razvan, who is probably the best non-native, I said "you report criticisms of Gardner's theory but don't really evaluate it or the other theories from your own standpoint, which is a pity as I'm sure you could have done this". So that's very interesting. He's at the top, top of the tree as far as international students in this group are concerned and he was willing to show others' evaluations, but he wasn't then prepared to leap in and say "this seems sensible" or "this seems wise", whereas Barbara was, she was willing to use her experience and her professional judgement to evaluate' (t2a3i:5). 'I could just as an addendum to what I've just said say that (..) I'm sometimes surprised at the fact that people from the education traditions where I would think they developed good critical thinking, and I'm thinking here perhaps of the French and the Italians and the Spanish...that they can often be disappointing in terms of their ability to use the literature and deal with it and evaluate it in any way.' (t2a3i:6).

- 'I think probably they perhaps haven't had to do this amount, this RANGE of reading, they've had to do more limited reading from a set text for a particular module. So I think having to synthesise material from such a range of sources, use primary research sources, it's probably also a bit unfamiliar to them' (t2a3i:6).
- 'You tend to find students are unwilling to evaluate, even when they've clearly read widely... They don't then try to pull it together and say what their view of this is, and I think that's very typical particularly perhaps of less confident international students where they feel what right have they got to come to a conclusion, maybe they feel they don't have the experience or knowledge to come to a conclusion.' (t2a3i:2)

3.5.2 Students' responsibilities

- To find sources: 'I expect them to find a lot of the sources themselves' (t1a2i:1) (short reading lists with only core texts were given in class). This was something Ann felt that she needed to stress more strongly in future, 'In terms of(.) that "I am giving you core texts and I expect you to go beyond that but also to come back", I do say to them "come and check with me if you're uncertain" but I think I might make it (.) compulsory that they come back and, and give me a list actually of references so that I can take a look at them' (t1a2i:6).
- Their role in developing their writing skill is 'huge' (t1a2i:2).
- Importance of good writing: 'Everything you can do to make my life easier makes me love you more and more!' (t2a3c12:2).
- Reading for language: 'they need to read widely and sensitively... I think that's very important... because particularly the reading for this sort of work, there will be a lot of repetitive formulaic language coming up, particularly in research studies...you know 'it was found that' or 'so and so suggested'...so a lot of handy phrases that could be used for common functions in their writing. So that's the first thing I would say to them, "Get reading. The more reading you could do, obviously it benefits your reading speed anyway but also you will be imbibing useful language both technical and sub-technical for your work".' (t2a3i:7/8).
- To seek out help 'to go and get help' if needed: 'I'll look at plans but I'm not going to go beyond that necessarily, not at MA level' (t1a2i:2) – eg from the insessional English tutor and the University study advisors. 'I do guide them in terms of preparing them for this first assignment, in terms of planning and then talking to them about their plan and writing and offering advice then but they are to go away them and to seek help with their writing beyond that and to (.) I expect if they have fundamental problems they will spend quite some time with the tutor helping them with their writing and so on' (t1a2i:3).
- To contact the module tutor if they have questions, before submission: 'I see them individually, and then it's up to them if they want to see me in between times. And they often, yeah, they do catch me after class I suppose sometimes but (.) very few (.) came back between times' (t1a2i:4).
- Planning: 'They've got a responsibility to judge how quickly they write and to allow time for writing, and I do say this to them. "Think back from the deadline to how long you'll need to start writing this, so you've got to decide when you're going to stop reading and start writing".' (t2a3i:7).
- Checking: 'for the basics – the English, the punctuation, the spelling. They've got a duty to check their work. At the weakest end or sometimes quite good students but

who turn in rather inferior work, they obviously haven't bothered to check it. OK, obviously the spell checker will help to some extent but they need to do a bit more than that because you know (.) homonyms and things like that can cause problems. But I often get the feeling that they don't, something that really irritates me is they haven't checked the authors, spelling of the author's name' (t2a3i:6).

- Using all feedback: 'They've got to be sensitive to any feedback they get (..) and that obviously is something that goes on along the way...the people that do this assignment, many of them will have had help from Nicky (*insessional tutor*) so they'll be getting feedback relevant to my assignment before they do it, obviously they've got to take HER feedback on board if they've had that or any other feedback on their English language. And I notice that some students, it's interesting, Jinko has done this she's actually, she's noted because I tend to underline quite a lot of their English and I notice that she has tried to correct it. Now unfortunately in some places she's misunderstood my underlining, I mean I can't do more than that, she's actually miscorrected it but she trying, she is doing what I say she should do which is be sensitive to the feedback' (t2a3i:7).
- Using assignment feedback: When asked what she expected students to do with the feedback, Ann laughed and asked: 'Do you want the reality or what do I expect? What I expect is what I would do with my feedback, I think, as a student, is perhaps (.) I should say as well I think as well perhaps some advice should be given to them in that "Read it once when you initially get it back" because I think initially they'll focus on the grade and that will be it, and maybe "Put it away for a couple of days and then pick it back up again" I think that's probably the best advice I would give them, which I don't and perhaps you should, to reflect on it. But what I think they should do is look at the points (.) that specifically relate to the text and try to understand how I arrived at whatever grade I did and the decision that I arrived at but also to identify those areas of their writing or (.) or anything else in relation to the substance that can then be applied to other courses as well and to develop their writing, that's what I would hope. So things like citations and, you know, referencing and general structure and um as well as, you know, displaying knowledge and how you go about it. I mean they would take it on board and try to understand it' (t1a2i:4/5).
- Steve expected students to relate feedback to the criteria (given again on the feedback sheet); to relate numbers on the script to the numbered specific points they relate to on the feedback sheet. 'I now realise, which was a rather obvious point, I should be checking to see whether they are doing that' (t2a3i:11).
- Regarding his feedback on content, Steve said: 'I fear that for a lot of them, they may not make a lot of use of it' (t2a3i:10). 'I would them like to come back to me if there's anything they're not sure about. And I do say you're welcome to do that' (t2a3i:10) –

though none in this year's group of students had done that: 'I think they've moved on probably' (ibid). 'I'm aware that some will make very detailed use of it, as I'm sure Jinko did and I suspect Jun did because they're Japanese and they're that sort of person and probably Razvan did but I'm aware that some of the others (.) probably didn't' (t2a3i:11).

- Also, contact after receiving assignment feedback: only two had done that this year for A2, and Ann thought this was because of their meetings with me: 'otherwise, normally... they wouldn't' (t1a2i:5). When asked if more should do this, and if she would be prepared to see them, she replied she would: 'it would be nice...especially for a first piece, I think that's important'. She thought the reason they did not come was because 'they have moved on...I think they may see the comments, see it in relation to...just that course and they don't necessarily see it as important for their further writing, I think that's a key thing and they've moved on and they've become very busy' (t1a2i:5).

3.5.3 Collaboration

- Sharing sources: in order to help accessing popular sources from the library, t1 (Ann) recommended in class that students share books.
- She also said told her class that previous year groups 'not only shared the books but they also had sort of study groups together to discuss the material they were reading. Not to discuss how they were going to go about answering the question necessarily but just the reading in relation to this question, and I recommend you start to do that' (t1a2c11:7).
- Advice that Steve would give a new student included: 'Get a critical friend to read it if you can, if you can team up with somebody else, hopefully somebody with good English if they're non-native speaker. Can they identify topics, do the paragraphs make sense? You could give them an essay without any, without the headings, with the headings removed but you'd indicate where there was a heading and see if the critical friend can supply a heading. Does, can they see what the topic is?' (t2a3i:8).

3.6 Module tutors

3.6.1 Contact with module tutor

A2:

- In DA Class (c) 1 Ann told students 'I have an open door policy so whatever the issue...do come along. Particularly before the hand in date of your assignment' (t1a2c11:3) – contacting beforehand to make an appointment.

- If students were choosing a topic discussed later in the module, she advised them in Class 1 ‘then please come along and see me before, before we get to Lecture 8, so I can guide you a bit, guide you in your reading and then give you some prep.’ (t1a2c11:5).
- There were two short individual meetings, with appointments in class time to discuss A2 focus and outline.

A3:

- Students were told to e-mail Steve an outline, by end Week 8, in SLLP Week 2’s class.
- Also in Class 2, students were told: ‘If you are still worried about the outline and my response to your outline, you can come and see me about it or email me about it’ (t2a3c12:4).
- In SLLP Class 5 they were told: ‘If when I comment on the outline there’s something you’re not happy about, you can sign up to come and see me’ (t2a3c15:1)
- The tutor had meetings with three students (Jun, Timur and another student) ‘The others it was just email exchanges, sometimes they came back to me with another outline and I did respond to that and I do say to them, you know, that they’re welcome to come and talk to me about it’ (t2a3i:13). However: ‘Few come back with a revised outline.’ (ibid).

3.6.2 Tutor’s responsibilities

- In our interview about DA, Ann said that her most important role for her module was support with the process: ‘particularly as it’s a first course, guiding them a little bit through that process of helping them identify an appropriate topic and seeing their plans and listening to their ideas about what they’re going to do with it is important as well.’ (t1a2i:4)
- ‘in terms of reading into writing, I suppose, identifying key books and so on and key texts, key readings’ (t1a2i:4).
- ‘I support in terms of planning and will offer advice’ (t1a2i:4). The class time taken to discuss individual plans worked for some but ‘I saw some essays that were clearly not anything to do with the plan that I had seen’ (t1a2i:6);
- ‘but I won’t read drafts, not for coursework.’ (t1a2i:4).
- In our interview on Pola’s performance on A2, Ann reported that in their post-assignment meeting the issue that had most struck her was Pola’s reaction to the mark: ‘she thought she’d done very badly, with 61% and that’s, you know, about coming from different backgrounds’ (t1a2is3:1). She realised that ‘understanding the scales is something that needs to be pointed out’ (ibid), and that this was an issue for the teacher of the first module, but ‘there’s a lot to be handled. The problem is the time. I

mean, when do you have the time to do that?’ (ibid). She pondered on the need for time to be set aside with the whole group to ‘explain these kind of things and how we give feedback and what they’re supposed to do with it and so on’ (ibid). At the end of their meeting, the tutor felt Pola seemed to understand ‘what I was saying and how I’d arrived at the mark’ (ibid).

- Re Pola, Ann told me that a problem was ‘Understanding that your literature review is there to offer a background but it’s also there to support your analysis and your interpretation of the data, so there is no need to talk about absolutely everything, you can focus your literature review, so that it’s there to feedback to back-reference in your analysis and in your conclusion’ (t1a2is3:2).
- She then acknowledged, on reflection, referring to the points above about the literature review, ‘that’s something that they probably wouldn’t know until now, until I comment on this’ (t1a2is3:2). She commented that some of the points being mentioned were not ones for which she would deduct marks ‘because I think, they won’t know this, but I’ll point it out to you’. She was interested to note when student came to talk to her about these issues, their concern was “‘Did you take marks off?’” And I say “no, I didn’t take marks off”, but they’re not to know that’ (t1a2is3:2). ‘It doesn’t impact on the grade, because there’s things I think they shouldn’t know at this stage, but I’ll point it out to them so they know for next time’ (t1a2is3:3). She saw her role at this stage as giving them guidance and advice for future pieces of work, not just for her assignment. She was more explicit in early assignments than in later ones, where she’d point out a problem, eg references, but say ‘you should have your references done by now’ (t1a2is3:3).
- Steve said that his role included ‘Providing helpful examples, NOT in my case in the form of a sample assignment’ (t2a3i:8). ‘I provide them with a more thematised (..) set of excerpts (*on Blackboard*) from a range of different assignments with different styles but exemplifying meeting the criteria. I don’t confine it simply to meeting the criteria indicated here but it’s broadly linked to these criteria. So they can see the way different writers have done this. Now one thing I haven’t checked on is what use they make of that’ (t2a3i:9). ‘I think the Blackboard site with the sample assignment excerpts is a good idea, maybe it should be slimmed down a bit to make it more usable. Maybe also one should (..) set aside time to talk them through it, well that might mean an extra session. Or possibly I might ask Nicky (*academic writing insessional tutor*), perhaps’ (t2a3i:11).
- He also told me in our interview that the tutor needed to ‘provide a helpful rubric, I think that’s important, so they get the topic (..) they then get some discussion about the way you could approach it in terms of general organisation, (..) the two templates I’ve spoken about already (..) the sort of, you know, practice then theory or theory then

practice kind of approach, I mentioned that. I then give them a series of questions (..) related to each of the topics in the module to show the kind of things, the kind of questions they might be asking themselves, if they were going to write an assignment which was going to draw on theory from those different sections....So I'm encouraging them to think of the kinds of questions that they would need to be thinking about if they were going to draw on this theory in relation to their teaching situations... I also reiterate in that (*rubric*) the criteria, and...I elaborate a bit on that reminding them of what are the features of a good assignment' (t2a3i:9/10).

- Asked about encouraging discussion, he replied: 'I have in the past (..) put up discussion points (*on Blackboard*) but they don't tend, not to attract much discussion and the students have said to me "Look we're here on campus, we want to talk to living human beings, we don't want to engage via Blackboard"... I am going to increase the number of hours next year so they will have seminars so I'll meet that need and therefore there will be less need to do things on Blackboard. I think we overestimate what Blackboard is good for and I think Blackboard is good for giving (.) perhaps additional readings, links to websites, the sort of thing I do with the assignment but I think it's not terribly good for campus-based students for discussion, quite frankly' (t2a3i:12).
- 'It's part of my professional duty to give them feedback' (t2a3i:11).
- 'I need to find out I mean I'm wasting my time giving them detailed feedback if they're not making use of it' (t2a3i:11).
- Re Pola's A3, Steve said that giving advice to students with low grades was difficult, he said, because he did not know what had led to the misunderstandings of reading: 'misunderstandings may be English, may be rapid reading, may be just not deep enough reading, maybe a rather glib appreciation of schemata' (t2a3is3:3).

Annex 1 Summary of marking criteria, as presented on feedback sheets for A1-3 (see Appendix 8), and assignment rubric documents for A2 and A3 (see Appendix 6).

Criterion (C)	Focus	A2 assignment sheet	A3 assignment sheet
<p>C1. Demonstration of relevant reading and understanding of issues.</p> <p>Reference in this thesis: <i>reading/understanding</i></p>	<p>Appropriate knowledge telling, grounded in reading of relevant literature.</p>	<p>1. 'reference to those parts of the module which are relevant to your topic 2. plus all extended reading' (module materials + at least five other sources) 3. 'Initially provide a brief but relevant literature review, providing the necessary background to your study and any work that has helped you to formulate your framework of analysis.'</p>	<p>1. 'appropriate range of reading' 2. ' both secondary (eg textbooks and survey articles) and primary (eg key articles reporting research) sources'</p>
<p>C2. Explanation of what has been done if data-based (A2); explanation/summary and discussion of theories/reading if not data-based (A1 and A3).</p> <p>Reference in this thesis: <i>explanation/discussion</i></p>	<p>Knowledge transforming, in the light of the task.</p>	<p>1. 'Introduce the texts you are analysing: describe the method of data collection and the form of the data and any information in relation to the subjects involved.' 2. 'Provide copies of any materials, ie transcripts/written texts used for analysis, in an appendix.'</p>	<p>1. Showing 'you have thought about what you have read, 2. and can link up information from different sources and standpoints 3. and relate this information to your topic'. 4. synthesis of reading 5. 'a clear account of the nature of the teaching situation you wish to focus on and of the learners involved'</p>
<p>C3. Evaluation: of analytical approach to data analysis (A2) or of theories/reading if not data-based (A1 and A3). Relating evaluation to L2 pedagogic practice (A3).</p> <p>Reference in this thesis: <i>evaluation</i></p>	<p>Appropriate evaluation.</p>	<p>'It may be helpful to present some of your analysis in tabular form'</p>	<p>1. Showing 'you can evaluate what you have read 2. and relate it to practical issues (ie L2 teaching/learning, methods and materials)' 3. evaluation of 'theories, research and conclusions/recommendations in the literature.' 4. 'evidence of ability to apply reading to particular teaching/learning situations' 5. 'clear account of the nature of and support for the theory or theories which you've selected... 6. also how this theory or</p>

			these theories is or are related to the particular teaching approaches, methods or procedures which you have used or envisage using'
C4. Coherence of assignment, especially overall organisation and division into sections and paragraphs. Reference in this thesis: <i>coherence</i>	Academic writing genre requirements : macro. Development of a coherent piece of discourse.	'Structure of assignment'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Showing 'you can organise an essay into appropriate sections and paragraphs 2. and can construct a coherent discussion 3. which is easy for the reader to follow' 4. Clear signposting.
C5. Presentation, especially correctness of referencing and bibliography, and quality of writing. Reference in this thesis: <i>presentation</i>	Academic writing genre requirements : micro.	If 'analysing spoken data, include with your assignment a copy of extracts you have transcribed and used'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Showing 'you can use appropriate layout, quotation, referencing and bibliographical conventions' 2. Showing you 'can express yourself clearly and accurately.' 'Clear, readable English: neither excessively informal nor clumsily stilted'. 3. Numbered pages and paragraphs. 4. 1.5 line-spacing 5. Handed in on time. 6. Not submitted anonymously.

Annex 2 Expansion of marking criteria, by criterion-based issue, with module-specific writing advice from class briefings, non-rubric documentation and research interviews with module tutors

Information students had access to with regard to the two assessed assignments, A2 and A3, was given verbally in class (indicated by ‘cl’ in quotation codes), and this was the source of information here unless otherwise stated. In addition, information drawn on includes more detail from a document posted by A2’s tutor on Blackboard (‘SLLP assignment: Meeting the criteria – Some examples’, indicated here as ‘Doc’), which gave excerpts from assignments submitted by previous students.

Information students were not privy to, from my interviews with module tutors post-marking, is indicated by ‘i’ in the quote codes below, and presented in italic font.

Criterion 1 Reading/understanding

Issue	Mentioned regarding A2	Mentioned regarding A3
Core texts	Two named textbooks	Secondary sources, eg textbooks and survey articles.
Other sources	Two readers/handbooks: ‘they’ll ask you questions so that you’ll start to think about what you’re reading. So they will help you to develop some of your critical awareness, your critical ability with some of the reading material as well.’ (t1a2cll:5)	Primary sources: key articles reporting research. <i>‘The weakest students would just cite a short list of general secondary sources’ (t2a3i:1)</i>
Range	At least five texts beyond those recommended/discussed in class. A text is a research paper, or a secondary source. <i>Re Pola, ‘Understanding that your literature review is there to offer a background but it’s also there to support your analysis and your interpretation of the data, so there is no need to talk about absolutely everything, you can focus your literature review, so that it’s there to feedback to back-reference in your analysis and in your conclusion’ (t1a2is3:2).</i>	<i>‘acceptable SLLP assignments have been presented with very different lists of references. At Master’s level we expect a mixture of more general reading from ‘survey sources’ (egs given) and more specific issues, often involving reports of research studies’ (D4:10) Example then given of bibliography with ‘an average length list for this assignment’ – 14 items (D4) ‘something around 12 to 18 sources’ (t2a3i:1)</i>
Selection	‘obviously you target your reading to suit, you know, your question and your analysis’ (t1a2cll:7)	
Showing understanding	‘So you’re assessed on being able... obviously to understand the issues that are raised in those texts’ (t1a2cll:7) Reflecting on A2, the tutor said in	<i>‘some instances of misunderstanding... occasionally they get something completely wrong’ (t2a3i:1) (eg Pola); ‘example of partial misunderstanding... it was partly</i>

	our interview re Pola: <i>'But it's interesting about how, what gets marked, how I mark them and in this I think the key for me is the reading. That they have understood what they have read, that they can explain the framework and they can do the analysis'</i> (t1a2is3:4)	<i>right and partly wrong' (ibid) (eg Pola again)</i>
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Criterion 2 Explanation/discussion

Issue	A2	A3
Presenting information appropriately	'you are assessed on your ability to explain your data. So what is this data that you're analysing?' (t1a2c11:7). Eg speech recording: the person (social identity, age, gender, socio-economic class, level of English); how data was gathered (recording, setting, equipment).	'your ability to summarise sources appropriately (not too long or short, avoiding plagiarism)' (Doc: Page3)
Developing themes		'your ability to relate them (<i>sources</i>) to each other (ie working from themes and showing what different writers have to say about each theme). This is much better than a simply giving a set of separate, poorly integrated summaries. If you integrate your summaries in this way, you make the sources serve your purpose, rather than summarising them because they are in some general way relevant to your topic' (Doc:3) <i>not linking ideas – 'source-dependent' (t2a3i:2)</i> <i>'one has a gradation there, from the true scholarly synthesis to a partial synthesis where a series of summaries is given within a section, so there's some kind of welding together, to what I would call non-synthesis where you've got quite separate sections with separate authors...are dominating the section. They don't see that they should be thematically linked, that's the problem.'</i> (t2a3i:2) Good eg: Barbara, weak: Pola.

		<p>'I expect you to have thought about what you've read, and to be able to link up information from different sources and standpoints and relate this information to your topic...I don't want a necklace approach to your reading, OK?... Series of separate little pearls, no. I want you to show that you can work more thematically; you can talk about particular themes and particular issues and combine work from different sources. Because that's what you'll see in the literature that you read. Good professional writers are able to draw together material from different sources and it's also important for you to be able to often to pull that information together at the end to show, of a particular section of your work.' (t2a3c12:1)</p>
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Criterion 3: Evaluation

Issue	A2	A3
Relevance of this criterion		<p><i>'probably the most vital one for this assignment' (t2a3i:2)</i> Closely linked to criterion 2 (Doc:5) <i>Two aspects here: 'ability to evaluate reading and relate it to the practice in the field of L2 learning and teaching' (t2a3i:2) – see below.</i></p>
Clarity	<p><i>'the clarity of your analysis' (t1a2c11:8)</i></p>	
Criticality	<p><i>'So you're assessed on being able... to critically discuss them (the issues raised in texts).'</i> (t1a2c11:7) and on <i>'the critical evaluation of the analytical approach that you're taking'</i> (t1a2c11:8) The tutor saw that as a skill which would develop with reading models of good critical analysis. She was not sure a year was enough to develop this skill, as, even though all courses required criticality, <i>'It's being critical about different things, and how you handle these different things because, say, critical discourse analysis is something very different to being able to interpret data in conversational analysis...it's all very different and they demand different skills and some people are good at one thing and not at another'</i> (t1a2is1:3).</p>	<p><i>'your ability: to judge the worth of the theory and research which you have encountered' (Doc:5)</i> <i>t2 spoke of students' reluctance 'to pull it (the reading) together and say what their view of this is, and...to come to a conclusion.'</i> (t2a3i:2)</p>

Application		<p>'your ability to...apply lessons learned from your professional experience' (Doc:5)</p> <p><i>Weak work shows 'the lack of what I would call concrete or situation-specific applications of theory to practice.'</i> (t2a3i:2). It is limited to 'very general remarks... and you don't feel that they're actually imagining themselves back in the classroom or imagining themselves ahead in the classroom, what they might do having done this reading' (t2a3i:3) Eg Jinko's assignment.</p> <p><i>Re Pola's A3 Negative points mentioned were: 'The references to the errors of Polish learners, which obviously was the whole point of the essay really...'</i> (t2a3is3:2).</p>
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Criterion 4: Coherence

Issue	A2	A3
Overall	<p>'the overall structure of your assignment, its overall organisation... you know the overall coherence of the overall piece of work.' (t1a2c11:8)</p>	<p>'a coherent discussion which is easy for the reader to follow.' (t2a3c12:2)</p> <p><i>'Here (.) again you have a cline. You have the best students, it's well organised at the macro level so you've got a very good well identified, well labelled set of sections and sub-sections with clear headings, which is good and (..) they're logically organised and they're not repetitive so they're dealing with separate content'</i> (t2a3i:3) <i>'In the middle...you tend to find people who present you with what looks like a broadly well structured essay but within the sections, the paragraphs are not well organised. Perhaps not well sequenced, there may be repetition (...) possibly even contradictions... the weakest ones yes, where there's very little in the way of headings, perhaps very few and then paragraphs within that are not well organised... essays lack, are repetitive and are not tightly organised'</i> (t2a3i:4)</p>
'The structure' (t1)	<p><i>'writing an academic essay, so academic writing (.) in terms of (.) the structure, in terms of how you write an essay, right from introduction, main body, conclusion, sections and</i></p>	<p>'A few guidelines may help you to avoid irrelevance...there are probably two main ways of handling this assignment':</p> <p>a. starting with some theory and then</p>

	<p><i>so on, so the main structure.</i> (t1a2i:1)</p>	<p>moving on to looking at practical implications for teaching</p> <p>b. examining some teaching, and evaluating it in the light of some theoretical approaches. (A3 rubric)</p> <p>Good introductions 'give an indication of the rationale for the choice of topic....signal to the reader the nature of the content of the assignment' (Doc:1)</p>
<p>Division into sections - macro organisation</p>	<p>'You're assessed on...its overall organisation, whether it needs to be put into sections, whether it's relevant for you to have headings and divisions' (t1a2c11:8)</p>	<p>'it guides the reader.' (t2a3c12:2)</p> <p>'Coherent organisation operates at different levels, for example in the overall plan of the essay (its major sections and sub-sections)' (Doc:9)</p> <p><i>The tutor, asked if this essay could be written without section divisions, replied: 'That's where it interacts with me because I suppose I'm the sort of person that tends to like sections and sub-sections' (t2a3i:3)</i></p> <p><i>'You could, but I think it would be, not only for me but for most people, less easy to mark. I think most people like the signposts, so I would always strongly recommend students to do that. I think it's also a good way of monitoring what they're doing themselves. I think it's much easier to lose track of the structure of your essay if you haven't got headings, and I think that's why a lot of the Erasmus people go wrong. They just start writing.'</i> (t2a3i:4)</p>
<p>Organisation within sections and paragraphs – micro organisation</p>		<p>'the way sections and sub-sections are organised internally, and in the organisation of paragraphs' (Doc:9)</p> <p>'we don't want a whole mixture of different topics within one paragraph, I sometimes get that. So...clear topics within them.' (t2a3c12:2)</p>
<p>Rhetorical style</p>	<p><i>Cross-cultural differences; 'for instance, Chinese, Japanese students would often have an inductive type of style and approach' (t1a2i:1).</i></p> <p><i>Typical problems of 'Greeks and paragraph structure' (t1a2i:2)</i></p>	<p><i>'I tend to find this is more of a problem with European students' (t2a3i:3)</i></p> <p><i>'I think there is a different convention there, in Europe, and the seamless garment is more accepted there. Or if it's not a seamless garment, they think of it in terms of beginning, middle and end. So you have an introduction, a long central section with long, long paragraphs very often and a conclusion.'</i> (t2a3i:4)</p>

Criterion 5: Presentation

Issue	A2	A3
Citing sources	<p>'especially referencing, bibliographic details' (t1a2c11:8)</p>	<p>Example given of 'proper layout' of a complete bibliography (Doc:10) <i>'Sometimes there were some bibliographic...problems (.) again I don't think it was a major problem in this group or in the wider module this time round but sometimes (.) they don't have a good eye for detail and so punctuation in the bibliography isn't right or certain details are missed out'</i> (t2a3i:5)</p>
Quality	<p>'the quality of your writing'(t1a2c11:8) The tutor told Pola 'a big distinction between a very good and a distinction is, you know, an elegant analysis...but also to be able to elegantly express that in writing as well, so in terms of clarity, in terms of the English as well' (t1a2m3s3:5).</p>	
Specific requirements	<p>'if you're carrying out spoken language...I'll look at your transcription as well and mark that'(t1a2c11:8)</p>	<p>information on teaching situation/learners/materials: 'use appendices to help you save words in that area' (t2a3c12:2) , and 'refer to that in the text' (ibid)</p>
Linguistic accuracy	<p>'I'll keep stressing it throughout, please make sure you proofread your final assignment, so many students fall at the last hurdle. I have a really good piece of work and then there are just numerous grammatical errors, typos, or just structural errors that could easily have been remedied if they'd just sat back and just redrafted one more time, two more times.' (t1a2c11:8)</p> <p>The language issues, which the tutor noted applied to most of the students, had not pulled the mark down:</p> <p><i>'I would still give someone a merit if their writing was ungrammatical in parts or was difficult... I would NOT give a distinction. But if it was a particularly sophisticated analysis and I thought they'd been very clever in what they'd done I think I</i></p>	<p><i>'I suppose the thing which is most glaring and most difficult is sometimes poor English...I think it was true of this group as a whole, I was aware I was often commenting on flaws in the English but I was usually saying 'doesn't impede comprehension' and I would say what I was reading here, particularly in your cohort of six, (.) all the non-native speakers, even Razvan, I think, evinced some element of non-nativeness and flaws, Razvan very little, the others a bit more, but I felt it was perfectly acceptable, I thought this was exactly the sort of non-nativeness one could live with and indeed one could live with a slightly worse level, I think, than they've produced.'</i> (t2a3i:5) <i>'moving outside your little cohort, sometimes the writing is so poor that... first of all your comprehension is slowed up, so...because your working memory span is being</i></p>

	<i>would still give them a merit'</i> (t1a2is6:2)	<i>challenged, it's difficult to keep in mind what they've just said and relate it to the next thing that they say. So the work becomes very, very difficult to mark.'</i> (t2a3i:5)
Word limit	'Do not go above the word limit' (t1a2cl1:5)	

Appendix 23: Example materials/activities from MA sessions

MAAL/MAELT Dissertation: Summer term briefing session

Session plan

1. Go over dissertation marking criteria: students highlight key words; compare in pairs; whole class discussion
2. Distribute feedback on Dissertation A (Pola)
Individually:
 - Students read feedback sheet
 - They highlight positive points in yellow; negative points in pink
 - They give it a markThey compare in pairs.
Whole class discussion
Collation of range of marks – real mark revealed
3. Repeat for feedback on Dissertation B (Jun)
4. Whole group discussion of advice for students to note while writing their own dissertations.
5. Feedback on session

2011-12 Term 1 'Becoming an MA student on these programmes' sessions.

Term 1: Session 1

Final two Powerpoint slides:

Jun: background

- NNES: IELTS 6.5
- 1st degree in English Literature (so no discipline background)
- 7 years' ELT experience
- Studied on preessional course before MA

Jun: approach in Term 1

- Term 1: 6 hours preparing for and doing follow- up reading for each lecture
- Systematically recorded, and learnt new terms and concepts he was meeting, using L1 sources when necessary.
- By Week 8 he had mastered all the terms he needed and was then able to focus on content more.

MAAL/MAELT: Becoming an MA student on our programmes

Session 2

1. Timewasters! (Session 1 handout)
2. Factors influencing developing writers on English Language MA programmes
diagram – complete section 3: The present task in relation to factors affecting any assignment.
3. Please note down different types of MA writing you expect to do.
4. **Analysing the rubric**

Hamp-Lyons and Heasley (1987) suggest a technique for analysing academic essay titles which we have found useful. They suggest writers try to identify up to four elements of a title. Let's look at them in relation to the following essay title from the applied linguistics field:

“Review the role of the teacher in planning and monitoring students’ work on communicative tasks.”

1. **Topic** - what the essay is about, in general terms. So, above, the general topic is ‘the role of the teacher in planning and monitoring students’ work’.
2. **Focus** - this is the delineation of the topic, where the specific aspect of the general topic is prescribed. In the above title, this would be ‘on communicative tasks’.
3. **Comment** - this refers to the ‘instruction word or phrase’ (ibid: 140), which tells you what you should do with the topic. There may be more than one set of instructions in an essay (especially where you have to discuss theoretical issues and then put them in a pedagogic context). The comment above is ‘review’.
4. **Viewpoint** - this is not always present in an essay title. It refers to the necessity to write from a specific point of view dictated to you by the title. If you do not agree with this viewpoint, you will have to write your essay in such a way that acknowledges the viewpoint, explains why it is prevalent and then challenges it. Above, there is an uncontroversial viewpoint: that the teacher has a role in planning and monitoring students’ work.

According to Hamp-Lyons and Heasley:

In planning the essay, *Comment* decides the text-type (discussion, definition etc.); *Topic* determines the overall range of the subject matter but *Focus* determines the particular content; *Viewpoint* dictates which arguments, pro or con, to use; the interaction between *Comment* and *Focus* will lead to decisions about the organisation of the essay. (ibid: 142)

Task

Analyse the following essay titles using the Hamp-Lyons and Heasley framework outlined above:

1. Defining your use of the term 'pedagogic task', explain what in your view is the role of task-based learning in the foreign language curriculum.
2. In what ways do you consider that background knowledge is most important in foreign language learning, and what implications are there for the teaching profession? Discuss with reference to the research literature.
3. 'Reading in a foreign language: a reading problem or a language problem?' (Alderson 1984). What are your views on this question?
4. Talking can impede your language development. Critically evaluate the case for delaying the introduction of oral production in foreign language courses.
5. Illustrate the ways different English verb phrases may refer to future time. Discuss the validity of the rules that attempt to account for the use of the different forms
6. Assess contrasting approaches to needs analysis and relate these to the wider context of syllabus and course design.

5. Marking criteria

Underline key words in the following set of example marking criteria:

1. Demonstration of a range of relevant reading and understanding of issues raised in the Module
2. Ability to evaluate reading and relate it to your experiences as a foreign language learner and/or a foreign language teacher
3. Depth and breadth of discussion of the chosen topic
4. Coherence of assignment, especially overall organisation and division into sections and paragraphs
5. Presentation, especially correctness of referencing and bibliography, and quality of writing

6. Read your summary of your downloaded article written as preparation for this session and decide how well you meet criteria 2. above.
7. In groups of 3, quickly read each other's summaries. Comment on how well they meet criterion 2.
8. For our next session in Week 5:
9. Complete Tasks 1 and 2 on the handout: 'Referring to the Literature'. Bring your completed tasks to the session, and the Student Handbook.
10. Check and revise if necessary, the reference you produced for the article you downloaded and wrote your summary of.
11. Read the MA Assignment Submission Checklist. Do you have any questions about this? Bring it and the questions to the session.

References

Hamp-Lyons, L. & Heasley, B. (1987). *Study Writing*. Cambridge: CUP.

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Task 1: Key (different interpretations are possible in places)

Title No.	Topic	Focus	Comment	Viewpoint
1.	Task-based learning (TBL)	its role in the FL curriculum	explain (and define)	TBL has a role in the FL curriculum
2.	background knowledge	a) its importance in FL learning b) its implications for ELT	discuss with reference to the research literature	a) it is most important in FL learning b) it has teaching implications
3.	reading in a FL	is it a reading or a language problem?	no comment word, as it is a direct question (but note the request for your views)	reading in a FL is problematic
4.	delaying the introduction of oral production in FL courses	the case in favour of this	critically evaluate	Talking can impede language development
5.	English verb phrases referring to future time	a) the ways they do it b) the validity of rules that try to account for the use of different forms	a) illustrate b) discuss	a) English verb phrases may refer to future time b) different rules may have different degrees of validity
6.	Needs analysis (NA)	a) contrasting approaches to NA b) their relationship to syllabus & course design	a) assess b) relate	NA can be related to syllabus and course design