

The copyright of the above-mentioned described thesis rests with the author or the University to which it was submitted. No portion of the text derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author or University (as may be appropriate). *Short quotations may be included in the text of a thesis or dissertation for purposes of illustration, comment or criticism, provided full acknowledgement is made of the source, author and University.*

Werner A Pactzold
8807789/j

Masters in English Education
Research Report

1999

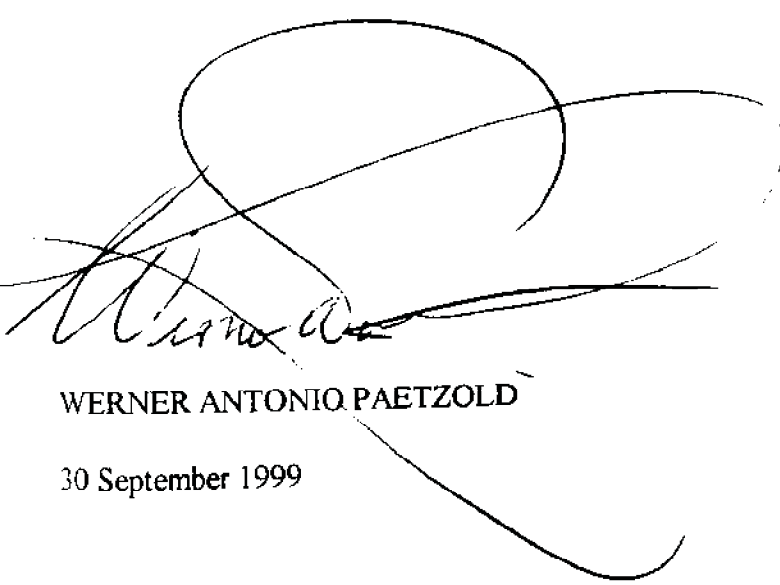
Moving Images to Writing: the teaching of visual literacy to enhance creative writing skills.

A research report submitted to the combined departments of English, Applied English Language Studies and African Literature in the faculty of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree Master of Arts.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree
Master of Arts in English education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1999.

It has not been submitted before for any other degree or to any other university.



WERNER ANTONIO PAETZOLD

30 September 1999

ABSTRACT

This research report is about a method of teaching creative writing in the context of a South African English medium High School where most of the learners do not have English as a first language but are expected to perform at first language level for their final, school-leaving examination. In the research, a visual stimulus (television commercial) was used in an attempt at making a connection between the analysis of one mode of media to the production of another mode of media.

The rationale for this was based on the perceived over-exposure of learners to the visual media and their lack of performance and confidence in the production of creative writing.

Because this research is about the teaching of creative writing, it is centred in a school and both Action Research and Teacher as Researcher methodologies have been used.

The theoretical framework of this study was eclectic because of the various different disciplines that were drawn upon. These included writing methodology, genre theory, English teaching, Teacher as Researcher methodology and Action Research methodology.

Ultimately, this experiment became one part of a lengthier process of teaching writing. The experiment began to imitate both the process of writing itself as well as the cyclical nature of Action Research.

The findings of this report showed that while no clear transmodal connection was made, a tangible shift occurred in the understanding of the writing process in the minds of the learners. One of the aspects of the research question was whether the proposed approach would enable the learners to have a more positive attitude towards their work. This aspect was achieved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to extend my sincerest thanks to the following people:

My supervisor Denise Newfield and my guest supervisor Claudia Mitchell. I am deeply indebted to both of you.

My friends Ana Ferreira, Micheal (sic) Goodman and Ann Smith for their patience and encouragement.

The headmaster of St Barnabas College, Michael Corke, for allowing this research.

My colleagues, Julia Sulman and Nikki Irish, who agreed to participate in this research and especially the St Barnabas College Grade 10 class of 1999.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Helga Paetzold and to my sister, Anneliese Paetzold.

Thank you for providing me with real life examples of good teachers.

CONTENTS

Prologue: a commercial break

Chapter One: Introduction, Contexts, Aims, Rationale and Research Question

1 Introduction

1.1.1 Context: the researcher

1.1.2 Context: schools used

1.1.3 Context: creative writing

1.2 Research Question

1.3 Rationale

**Chapter Two Part One: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework
for the Research Question.**

2.1.1 Introduction

2.1.2 Media Studies, Multiple Intelligences Theory and English Education

2.1.3 Writing Pedagogy

2.1.3.1 The Genre Approach

2.1.4 Multiliteracies

2.1.5 Conclusion

Chapter Two Part Two: Theoretical Framework for the Research Methodology

2.2 Introduction

2.2.1 The teacher as researcher

2.2.2 Action Research

2.2.3 Why Action Research?

2.2.4 The research process

Chapter Three: The Action Research Cycle

3.1 Introduction

- 3.2. Initiation
- 3.3. Preliminary Investigation
- 3.4. Premises
- 3.5. Intervention
- 3.6. Evaluation
- 3.7. Communication
- 3.8. Follow up

Chapter Four: Results and Interpretations

- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Analysis of Data
 - 4.2.1. Response to introduction to descriptive writing
 - 4.2.2. Learners' response to the Levi's commercial
 - 4.2.3. Learners' responses to examples of descriptive essays and related exercise
 - 4.2.4. Learners' checklists
 - 4.2.5. Learners' reflections on first piece of writing
 - 4.2.6. Responses to class discussion about writing progress
- 4.3. Epilogue
- 4.4. Conclusion

Chapter Five: Conclusions

- 5.1. Conclusions drawn from data analysis
- 5.2. Why was the project not entirely successful in its aims?
- 5.3. Other potential influencing factors
- 5.4. Limitations
- 5.5. Recommendations for further research

5.6 Conclusion

5.7 The Future

Bibliography

Prologue: a commercial break

A BLACK LIGHT FLICKERS ON THE SCREEN:

OPENING SHOT

Scene One

BLACK AND WHITE, GRAINY PICTURE, EYE LEVEL SHOT, EERIE ELECTRONIC MUSIC SOFT AND INDISTINCT:

Nothing is clear,

ZOOM TO CLOSE UP BLUR: a black and white wooden shed. CUT TO REVERSE

TRACKING: slowly reveals an old 40's style van reversing from a dark shed.

Scene Two

CUT TO INTERIOR OF VAN, EXTREME CLOSE UP OF ONLY DRIVER'S ROUGH AND WORK DIRTY HANDS, CAMERA POINT OF VIEW IS THE DRIVER'S.

The vehicle drives through an old town of the same period, evoking memories of the film version of The Grapes of Wrath.

CUT TO LONG SHOT OF PASSING TRAIN (STILL DRIVER'S P.O.V.)

The van passes a railway line, several houses, and a few people.

CUT TO THIRD PERSON P.O.V., HIGH ANGLE LONG SHOT:

The van stops outside a wood built drugstore and a young man climbs out of the truck.

Scene three

CAMERA TRACKS BOY'S PROGRESS INTO STORE.

CLOSE UP: his boyish reflection in the window of the drugstore before he enters.

Scene four

CUT: INTERIOR OF DRUGSTORE, STILL THIRD PERSON P.O.V.

MEDIUM LONG SHOT OF DRUGGIST AND CUSTOMERS.

In the store, he approaches the old, wooden counter where there is a mother and daughter. He places his order with the elderly druggist.

CUT TO EYE LEVEL CLOSE UP OF DRUGGIST: at first appears shocked.

CUT TO MOTHER AND DAUGHTER HIGH ANGLE TWO SHOT: The mother pulls her daughter away, she was smiling at the boy,

CUT TO LOW ANGLE CLOSE UP OF BOY, GIRL'S P.O.V.

CUT TO DRUGGIST, MEDIUM CLOSE UP. INDISTINCT, REEDY MUSIC AND VOICES IN BACKGROUND:

The druggist places the small tin in front of the boy.

CUT TO TWO SHOT CLOSE UP OF BOY AND DRUGGIST, HIGH ANGLE: who lifts it up to his eyes

CUT TO ZOOM IN CLOSE UP OF *LATEX CONDOM* TIN. BOY'S HAND APPEARS IN FRONT OF LENS TO OPEN TIN, WHICH IS STILL HELD IN CAMERA CLOSE UP. CONTENTS CLEARLY SHOWN IN CU.

CUT TO MEDIUM CLOSE UP: druggist gives him an approving wink.

CUT TO HIGH ANGLE THIRD PERSON SHOT, PANS TO RIGHT TO SHOW EXIT OF

BOY as he leaves the store.

CUT TO EYE LEVEL MEDIUM SHOT OF: The lady at the door smiles coyly at him.

Scene Five (Longest in time duration)

CUT TO VEHICLE MOUNTED CAMERA SHOWING HOOD OF VAN, DRIVER NO LONGER VISIBLE, LIGHTING DARKENS TO BLACK NIGHT: The young man travels through the town and the night. MUSICAL PACE ACCELERATES TO MATCH LONG SHOT OF: A passing steam train.

FILM FLICKERS AS IN OLD REEL MOVIE PROJECTION.

Scene Six

CUT TO THIRD PERSON P.O.V. HIGH ANGLE LONG SHOT: he arrives at an old double story house; CUT TO MEDIUM LOW ANGLE LONG SHOT: a young lady in a wispy white summer dress who smiles as she sees his arrival from the balcony. She rushes indoors (off camera) and down the stairs to meet him.

CUT TO MEDIUM CLOSE UP OF FRONT DOOR: MEDIUM SHOT OF FATHER: father opens the door.

RAPID CUT TO C.U. BOY'S FACE

CUT BACK TO C.U. DRUGGIST'S FACE

CUT BACK TO C.U. BOY'S FACE

CUT BACK TO C.U. CONDOM TIN IN BOY'S HAND

CUT BACK TO C.U. BOY'S FACE: the father is the same druggist!

CUT TO TWO SHOT OF FATHER AND DAUGHTER WHO APPEARS BEHIND FATHER:
father points at boy and shakes head in disapproval. Girl kisses her father on the cheek.

CUT TO LONG SHOT OF BOY IN DOORWAY

CUT TO BOY AND GIRL IN DOORWAY, ARM IN ARM, CAMERA LONG FOCUS TO
FOLLOW AS: girl leaves with the boy

CUT TO CLOSE UP OF BOY'S WAIST, CAMERA ZOOMS IN TO SHOW BOY'S HAND
PUSHING CONDOM TIN INTO HIS JEAN'S WATCH POCKET.

CUT TO MEDIUM CLOSE UP: The closing shot features the father watching them leave.

Writing appears next to the druggist: "**Levi's watch pockets, invented 1873, abused ever since**".

Chapter One: Introduction, Aims, Research Question and Rationale.

1. Introduction

This research was conducted in collaboration with my grade ten colleagues in the English Department but primarily with my grade ten learners. They are twenty-one fifteen to sixteen-year old girls and boys, who agreed to participate in this study and contributed enthusiastically to the whole process. This allowed me to combine both teacher as researcher and action research methodology.

1.1.1 Context: the researcher.

I am currently the Head of the English Department at my school, which is in Bosmont, Johannesburg, South Africa. I have taught English First Language since I began teaching seven years ago. During this time, I have become concerned with the teaching of creative writing in the school context. My observations and reflections raised a number of questions, which I have explored through this research report.

The voice of my learners as participants in this inquiry is as important as my own as teacher/ researcher. Both my principal and my students have consented to their participation in this research.

The research procedure which I have adopted is Action Research because it recognises the role of the teacher as a researcher in the classroom and educational context and it created an opportunity for learners to become part of the research as active participants, not just research subjects. The full

rationale is contained in chapter three.

1.1.2 Context: schools used.

I have taught at two other high schools, the first is a monastic boys' school in Johannesburg, which has a private school reputation but falls under the provincial education department. The school's student population was dominantly white with only 10% Black students. The community from which these students are drawn is considered to be affluent, "old money". The Old Boys' Club affiliated to this school was considered to be an important contact for the students entering the business world.

The second school at which I taught is a relatively modern school on the East Rand. This co-educational school had a larger percentage of black students, 40 %. This school also falls under the provincial educational authority without the substantial financial support of an old boys' club or network. The suburban middle class values of the feeder community were highly valued by the teaching faculty. Both of these schools' students wrote the provincial final matriculation examination at the end of the twelfth grade. The English First Language Higher grade paper consisted of four sections: an internal oral examination (10% of the total mark); a creative writing paper, which required learners to produce several pieces of creative writing under examination conditions without access to any reference materials; a language paper and a literature paper. The language and literature papers carried the most weight.

All three schools share one interesting common feature: learners arrive from a number of language backgrounds varying from English first language to English third language. All are expected to

perform, at the final exit stage of their schooling, at an English first language level. This forms the basis for the rationale of my research.

The school at which I am currently employed is a private school that falls under the auspices of the Anglican Church. The school is entirely dependent upon donor funding. This school draws its learners from a variety of backgrounds: our day students are drawn from the surrounding suburbs, which are predominantly Coloured¹ communities, and townships and our boarders from remote rural areas. Therefore, the student body comprises approximately 50 % Coloured students and 50 % black students. The primary criteria for admission are demonstrated academic potential. While the school is Christian in its constitution, there are a number of students and staff who are Muslim and Atheist. Almost all of our learners have scholarships to attend the school. The school has as its aim the empowerment of disadvantaged communities, which in South Africa means Black and Coloured communities. The school aims not to perpetuate access to privilege for the privileged classes, but to bridge the gap between poverty and access to privilege, through quality education.

The school also aims to encourage critical, democratic and socially responsible values.

¹In South Africa a distinction was created by the Nationalist Government (1948-1994) between the separate racial groupings in the country. The term "Coloured" was used to refer to people of Malay, Hottentot, African-European mix, in short anyone who was not white, African or Asian (Indian). During the struggle against apartheid, all racial groupings that were not European used the term "Black" as a unifying term, to refer to all disenfranchised, oppressed citizens. This led to the use of the term "so-called Coloured". My students have chosen to be referred to as Coloured. Coloured and Indian students who are Muslim prefer to identify with a religious grouping rather than racial.

Under Apartheid legislation, The Group Areas Act determined that Whites, Coloured, African and Indian communities had to be separate; mixing was not allowed.

Historically, the school was one of the first schools to subvert apartheid legislation by actively enrolling students of different races. The school also sheltered political activists from the security police.

Because of the broad recruitment range for students, the composition of the student body comprises a large variety of languages; there are representatives of all eleven official languages. These students initially have varying English language abilities. Some students arrive in the seventh grade with only third language English ability. The education the school provides produces learners who successfully write the English First Language Higher Grade Examination in the final, twelfth grade.

To facilitate the development of our learners, the class sizes are kept to an average of 21 students per class with a balance of race and gender.

While all instruction is conducted in English, there are no "English only" rules with regards to student discussions in and outside of the classroom. In the boarding house, a unique argot has developed along the lines of "tsotsitaal", a fashionable, dynamic slang language, which consists of a mixture of several of the official languages. In effect, the learners acquire mastery of two languages at the school: English and the school's distinctive version of "tsotsitaal".

The School is a member of the Independent Examinations Board (IEB), an organisation established by private schools, which presents an alternative summative grade 12 examination to the provincial examinations. Some of the member schools are the best-funded and resourced (therefore exclusive and socially prestigious) private schools in South Africa.

1.1.3 Context: Creative Writing

The term creative writing has historically been used synonymously with terms such as "composition", "reflective writing" and "original writing".

My own experience of this form of writing began when I attended High School as a pupil. In the English classroom, we were simply instructed to write a "creative essay". The only clear determiners were that there were to be no spelling or paragraphing errors and the length should be about six hundred words. Essays were typically returned during a tirade against our poor editing skills. The assessment consisted of a mark and a one-word comment. The teacher would be pleased or not. I never knew why my essays were either good or bad advertisement. When my essays were good, I knew that I had found the formula for pleasing that teacher. The single exhortation regarding my writing that I recall was given in my final year. The advice was "Your writing is too cerebral, I want to see your guts on the page." I never fully understood this comment. We were considered well prepared if we were able to include a "plan"; I usually produced my "plans" after I had written my essays. No essays were published in the school magazine and we were never shown examples of "successful" writing.

The first school at which I taught had a structured approach to the teaching of creative writing. At the eighth grade, learners were encouraged to explore structural format and imagery. In the teaching of structure, students were encouraged to experiment with rhythm and pace by creating short sharp sentences; long, languorous lines or pointed one word paragraphs. The point was to use punctuation and paragraphing for maximum dramatic effect. The school magazine always carried

examples of the best writing from all the grades. There was also an editors' prize for the best works submitted. All the school's English teachers participated in these editorial meetings.

Those learners, who had not grasped the writing formula, were directed to the examples in the school magazines. Learners were constantly exposed to examples of the desired product. There were on average 26 students in each class.

I was able to pursue a variety of methods with regard to teaching writing, including "process writing" (Summerfield, 1986) which encourages experimentation and the development of the student's personal voice.

In their twelfth grade, the boys had to submit a writing portfolio for their internal writing assessment. This portfolio was a compilation of their own writing as well as selections of published works. The students were required to write reflections on their own writing and on their chosen "favourites". While many students struggled with this portfolio, their attitude was always positive. They demonstrated considerable pride in their work. The English Department also demonstrated a collective pride over the results.

The students wrote a controlled creative writing paper for the summative provincial examination in which they were required to write one extended piece of about six hundred words and two shorter pieces of transactional writing. This examination was the only source for a writing grade in the provincial examination.

The results of the final provincial examination were regularly a source of high praise for the school's

English department due to the significant number of distinctions attained.

At my second school, there was no formal programme for the teaching of creative writing. It was considered a problem area in the subject. The only guideline provided to the teachers and the students was the marking grid used by the markers of the provincial examination. (Table 1) see overleaf.

The learner's work was sporadically published in the school magazine but these contributions were not carefully selected, nor was a prize offered. Learners were not directed towards these published works as models.

There was a primary emphasis on editing skills. The learners seldom experienced successful assessments of their work and lacked a great deal of confidence in their writing abilities. The opportunities for the learners to produce creative writing were limited as the teachers complained of the additional marking load, that this produced. The average class size was 40 students.

This school's students seldom attained distinctions for English in the final provincial examinations.

It was at this school that I first began to think of ways of accessing the enjoyment that learners

ENGLISH 14

COMPOSITION AND LETTER

GENERAL

90	70		EXCELLENT: Clear distinction; evidence of exceptional ability; imaginative thought; individual style.	1) Full marks should be awarded for the best essay etc. one can expect under exam. conditions. 2) When the subject has been ignored, mark down content to 0 if necessary. 3) Mark good work up; weak work down. 4) Insincerity - penalise heavil SECTION 8 Content: 15 marks Language: 15 marks				
87	68							
83	66	A						
80	64							
77	62							
73	60							
80	56	40						
77	55		VERY GOOD: but not distinguished; Sense of structure; some originality of thought and expression.					
73	53	B						
70	51	35						
	49							
67	48		GOOD: plain, clear statement; careful planning; intelligent reasoning and development; pleasing.					
63	46	C						
60	44	30						
	42							
57	41		AVERAGE: plain statement; adequate treatment; few serious errors.					
53	39	D						
50	37	25						
	35							
47	34		WEAK: Pedestrian. Mediocre subject matter and reasonable expression; reasonable S.M. and poor expression.					
43	32	E						
40	30	20						
	28							
37	27		VERY WEAK : faulty; not illiterate; poor subject matter; muddled; ungrammatical.	100	30	EXCELLENT	15	10
33	25	F		93	28		14	9
30	23			86	26		12	8
	21			80	24			
27	20		CLEAR FAIL: unintelligible; bordering on illiterate.	73	22	VERY GOOD	11	7
23	16	C		67	20		GOOD	10
20	12			60	18	9		
17	8			47	14	WEAK	7	4
13	7			40	12		6	
10					33	10	VERY WEAK	5
				27	8	4		
CONTENT			LANGUAGE USAGE					
1st EST.	Subject matter ideas, feeling atmosphere, originality		Planning: opening and closing par. sequence of paragraphs.	Sentence construction, variety, spelling punctuation.	Verbal command, idiomatic usage, vocab.	TOTAL	FINAL MARK	
70	30		15	10	15	70	70	

demonstrated towards visual literacy and film study and harnessing this attitude to improve their writing skills.

None of the learners at this school had access to successful models of creative writing. The lack of "creativity" was cited as the reason why students who gained distinctions in their other subjects would not fare as well in English. The attitude was that learners could not be taught to be creative. I began to challenge these notions by introducing a structured approach to creative writing and by making anthologies of students' writing available to these learners. It soon became apparent that their writing practices would not change easily but a process had begun which made them aware that it was possible to learn certain techniques that would enhance the stylistic quality of their writing.

At my current school, my predecessor as Head of Department had taught at my first school for the same period of two years that I had. She had begun to implement some of the structural and stylistic methods that we had practised at this school. Examples of students' writing from that school were used to teach creative writing here.

Owing to the English language needs of the students at this school, the English department designed a programme as follows: the junior grades, seven to nine, focus on reading a wide variety of texts and practise oral skills. Grade ten marks the transition to the formal writing programme and shifts the emphasis to written expression in preparation for the final examination.

This school is where I finalised the subject of this research report.

1.2 Research Question

This Research Report is the examination of an attempt to determine whether the critical analysis of the content and structure of a television advertisement enabled learners to extend their confidence in their own writing ability by producing a list of explicit criteria which they used to determine the quality of their own work.

The premises that formed the background to this question are discussed in chapter three.

The learners reflected on their attitudes towards their own writing ability in their learning journals so that they were able to assess their own writing development. (Fulwiler, 1987). This served to record their initial attitudes. During the process of watching a television advertisement, the learners critically analysed the commercial, using their film study metalanguage. This process enabled them to derive a criteria list, which served as a guide for themselves when producing their own writing.

Although some of the learners did not experience successful assessments, after the first cycle had been completed, they were asked whether they at least had begun to understand why they had not been successful. They could no longer avoid responsibility by claiming that assessment of writing was capriciously subjective. As their writing had been assessed by the teacher using a criteria list which was a composite of all the individual lists. The composite list was discussed with the learners and distributed to them before they began writing.

What my study hoped to find was a change in attitude towards and an improved ability in producing

descriptive writing. This change was assessed directly through the responses of the learners who had participated in this exercise. These responses were collected from their journals where they reflected on their attitudes and their writing skills. The teacher's journal was used as a source for information about class discussions and perceived learner attitude development. The ability of the learners was assessed through their production of several descriptive writing pieces. The comments of the learners about their writing were given the most consideration in this study, as efficiency was not the ultimate goal of this research, rather "an appreciation of the attempt to learn" (Kincheloe, 1991: 8) see also chapter 2.2.2.

1.3 Rationale

The IEB final examination of English First Language Higher Grade consists of the following components: a writing portfolio which shows a range of the learner's writing ability (25%); an oral examination (25%)(both the oral examination and the writing portfolio are examined internally and then moderated by an external moderator); formal written literature and language examinations (25%+ 25%). This final examination is summative and determines university access in South Africa.

Traditionally, the learners of my current school perform very well in the oral examination. The writing portfolio, which allows the learners the opportunity to develop their work, often proves to be disappointing with regard to the quality of the learners' work. My colleagues and I² have sought to address this issue at an early learning level.

² The colleagues who taught grade 10 with me were Julia Sulman and Nikki Irish. They were both in agreed to participate in this writing project. Other colleagues, Ana Ferreira and Catherine Raftopoulos, who teach the senior grades with me, agreed that this was a suitable level for the inception of this project. They would then be in a position to develop these skills in grades 11 and 12 in the following years.

The grade ten syllabus was modified to include the introduction of formal creative writing techniques such as imagery and other stylistic features. This is the same grade in which visual literacy teaching, begun in the sixth grade, is formalised into film study. The film that has been studied at this grade in the past three years is "Dead Poets Society" (Weir, 89). This grade is also the point at which the genre of the formal literary essay is formalised.

Since the introduction of Film Study in the IEB English syllabus, learners have been exposed to the structure of film and have a relatively sophisticated vocabulary of film terminology. They enjoy this component of their syllabus and participate enthusiastically.

While the writing portfolio requires a range of writing styles, the most problematic genre for learners is that of descriptive writing. This is sometimes broadly referred to as creative writing. For the purposes of this study, I shall use the term descriptive writing, which shall apply to all references to writing apart from journal reflection.

Descriptive writing is considered by English teachers in the IEB to have the following qualities:

- *it focuses on a brief moment of time,
- *the emphasis is on evocative, descriptive imagery,
- *mood and atmosphere must be communicated,
- *the writing must be inspired by personal experience/observation
- *it may not exceed six hundred words (practical constraint), therefore
- *economy of style and scope are vital.

These guidelines are dynamic and are discussed and modified at national and regional IEB conferences on an informal, ongoing basis. They are the result of consensus among English teachers regarding desired outcomes.

One of the responses learners give when we discuss their writing, is that they firmly believe the process of assessment to be a purely subjective one and therefore they are either successful in the eyes of the assessor or not. The learners appear to have a sense of surrender. They most certainly do not believe that they are capable of understanding what it is that the assessor will be requiring of them.

Inspired by the work of Cope and Kalantzis (chapter one: 93), we have endeavoured to demystify both the assessment procedure as well as the creative process to empower learners. We held our goal to be the making explicit of what learners could do to increase their success rate, thereby also, increasing their own sense of self worth as successful learners.

Success was considered the ability to produce well-edited writing that reflected all of the qualities listed under the definition of descriptive writing. We considered affect to be central to our intention.

One attempt at demystifying the writing process was to show learners examples of successful work, guide them to analyse this work, hoping that exposure would lift the veil of disempowerment. While this method helped some learners, it was not as successful as was hoped; there were still learners who felt resentful of the authors' success. They believed that someone who wrote in such a way had to be intellectually superior to them. They did not feel themselves able to write like that at all.

Another attempt was derived from my teaching of literature where I have often used multimodal media, including using visual images, to help the learners access the material, either by showing them illustrations of the texts or film interpretations of texts. These methods reduced learners' resistance to the material as determined by their responses and interaction with the material.

In my assessment of students' understanding of literature, I often included a visual component that required learners to represent their understanding of a literary text in a visual form. The visual interpretation would be communicated to the class in a formal oral presentation. The products of these exercises were much more successful than a formal written essay.

Because the knowledge was processed and demonstrated in a medium that was not written,

- *learners felt less threatened by the process

- *experienced greater empowerment as they were not intimidated by the effort of producing a formal written response and therefore showed their understanding and interpretation far better than they had done in conventional essays;

- *yet they demonstrated their understanding of formal structure in the organisation and delivery of their oral and visual responses.

The best result of this process, in my belief, was that there was always a greater enjoyment of the entire process. Attitudes to written texts had been changed.

I had to consider a number of points from my experience:

- *Learners were negative about producing their own writing.

*Learners were good at visual interpretations in that they were able to deconstruct the composition of visual material such as film, cartoons and posters.

*Learners enjoyed visual interpretations.

*Learners enjoyed any film-related work.

*Learners have a good understanding of film technique in that they were able to participate critically in film analysis discussions.

The question with which I was faced was whether I could find a way that would harness their enjoyment of the visual media and their ability to communicate knowledge effectively through the production of this media and to use this way to fashion a multimodal approach that would enable these learners to understand how to produce better creative writing and to enjoy that writing.

What I wanted to do was lead them in the direction of making their understanding of visual structures an explicit understanding, a metalanguage, that could then be translated into their skills as writers. Buckingham mentions the value of media education in this context where he states that media education builds upon an existing knowledge of language in all its forms, which is both complex and sophisticated. By enabling students to make that knowledge explicit, he believes that it gives them the ability to manipulate and control their language production (1990).

While Buckingham wished to link existing knowledge of language to media studies, I wished to link existing knowledge of and attitudes towards media studies to writing.

The responses of the learners to the process caused a shift in the focus of this research. The learners showed a greater affinity to written examples than to visual. The causes for this are

considered in the last chapter. The process of participating in an Action Research cycle began to have a far more significant impact on the learners' attitudes to their own writing than the analysis of a television commercial had. This shift in response dictated a shift in the focus of the research from the original visual- based initiative to a process-oriented investigation.

Chapter Two Part One: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

for the research question.

2.1.1 Introduction

The domain of this research requires an eclectic theoretical framework as multimodality draws on a range of theoretical disciplines. This variety is necessitated because this research deals with multimodality as pedagogic practice, with specific reference to the application of the visual medium in teaching writing, as part of the teaching of English.

2.1.2 Media Studies, Multiple Intelligence Theory and English Education

The IEB high school curriculum does not make provision for the specific study of the Media as advocated by *inter alia* Buckingham, Masterman, Newfield and UNESCO. However, a considerable percentage of the English syllabus is devoted to studying the media. This focus includes newspaper work, advertising and film. In my research, I related Buckingham's media work to our English work.

Buckingham argues that

Unlike many subject areas, media education is one to which children bring an enormous amount of prior knowledge, they are already in a certain sense, "experts", and it is for this reason that the study begins with a mode of media with which learners are far more comfortable and therefore less resistant as the role of pleasure is hereby acknowledged (216: 90).