

had been used in which draft versions of their essays had been circulated for commentary by their peers. Several problems were discussed and the learners were invited to discuss problems privately with the teacher before producing the final draft.

The essays had been assessed, without any commentary, only a grade. This was done deliberately so as to encourage the learners to find their own errors. My colleagues had agreed that this strategy might prevent learners from disregarding our comments as we felt had occurred in the past.

As part of the reflection exercise, they had to write down reasons for why they had not achieved 100%, as this was the goal established by all the exercises leading up to this moment.

Generally, the learners responded maturely. They were able to identify what errors they had made and what action they needed to take to change their writing. Growth in the understanding of the writing process had occurred. The very fact that the learners were now able to say what they had failed to do was an important development. Even though they had failed to carry out what they had said they would do, they still knew it had to be done. Learners were no longer blaming the teachers for unpredictable marking (with the exception Michael B).

The most common response was an acknowledgement of a failure to consider the checklists at any stage of the writing and drafting process. The errors, which had weakened the quality of their essays, could have been eliminated had they consulted the criteria they had established themselves. For example

Augusteno: *I did not use personal experience to write about, my paragraphs all bear the same*

subject. I tried to write my essay with the aid of the checklist I wrote and the list given to me by sir. I guess I did not use the list I wrote myself because it was just a note I had taken down in class. I can't explain why I didn't use it, but maybe it's just because I was lazy.

What Augusteno mentions is important, he had "tried" to use the checklist. This indicates that despite all the sessions preparing the ground for this moment of application, he was still not sufficiently confident to apply the checks himself. He appears to make a distinction between the combined list and the one he had written himself. It would appear that he blames his lack of success on this omission. The last admission he made reveals a sense of culpability. He seems to think he could have done a lot more to change his result. Similarly, Nthabiseng wrote: *I thought that I did what was needed but only to find out I did not. The people who edited my work told me it was fine and I thought I ought to get 98% that was a lie of course. They were just saying that to please me... I'm not meant to be a writer- I don't have the talent... I did not do what was required of me because:*

of laziness

I did not take this seriously

the effort required was too much

I thought I was going to be credited for what I produced not what the teacher wanted.

I could not change the essay to what was required because I was afraid it was going to change the true meaning.

I did not give myself time to think about this essay carefully. I wrote what was on my mind

I know I had no talent, so what was the point of my trying

I am determined to succeed, I know I can do it!

Nthabiseng's commentary is full of contradictions. While she is able to determine some of the factors for her average work she still displays a sense of helplessness. Her accusations vary from blaming herself, to not knowing exactly what to do, to believing that the editors of her work had not been honest with her, to implying that her assessment was less than just. However, after lengthy reflection, she concludes on a powerfully positive note: she is determined to keep trying.

What she also identified was the desire to have effort recognised. Even if this was misdirected, she needed to know that the teacher recognised her labour.

This recognition requires a sensitive response from the teacher as the learners' efforts must be acknowledged lest they become disheartened, however, they must also be directed towards the desired, negotiated end result.

The following two responses add to the honest admissions of the others.

Lauren: *It is not so easy to follow a checklist and just go on a ticking spree and tick every column. I thought I followed everything, but to my surprise I didn't. I'm just going to have to work on. I think in future I'll give my essay to the following people: [lists of names of senior students] they are responsible and will read with a critical eye. (They get good marks too).*

Writing an essay must be the most difficult job on earth for me. (Apart from boiling water). Even though I have a checklist I know what to do, I still don't achieve the mark I know I am capable of. Time is a big issue because I am usually so stressed out and under pressure that I end up writing my essay the night before it must be handed in. KEY: TIME MANAGEMENT.

Aletia: *I looked at Lauren's essay. She got 84% which was actually a good mark, but for Lauren*

that is not good enough. She never really followed the checklist, so it brought her mark down. I don't think I also followed the checklist but I suppose I'll have to wait and see.

Lauren's comment about the checklist is revealing in that it introduces the question how user friendly the checklist actually was. The problems around this checklist were discussed in a grade meeting with Julia and Nikki as reflected in the teacher's journal below. Every learner who handed in a completed checklist with the final draft had checked all of the boxes. Lauren's "ticking spree" was in evidence frequently in all of the lists. Aletia's remark about Lauren's checklist shows that the list was simply checked and not applied.

Werner: *In our discussion in the grade meeting today, we debated that the checklist might have been too long. If there was too much information that had to be carefully controlled at one point, then we thought that it would not be done carefully. We had sensed this before implementation and had tried to make them more accessible.*

In our sessions in which draft work was commented on by the class, we had divided the groups into checklist speciality areas. One group only checked for imagery, another only for structure. We had hoped that procedure would eliminate the "skippers" who might be intimidated into ignoring the whole list.

The following comment was disturbing because Omphile states that he did not know how to write his essay. He appears to mix subject matter with style. He calls the subject matter that he chose "boring" showing that he did not feel it was a good choice. He does show that by comparison he realised the need for further careful editing.

Omphile: *I never knew how to write this essay. I also find descriptive essays difficult to write because I think I am not that creative to write a descriptive essay.*

My essay is more like those apartheid, boring stories. I think I should think more about my essay topic and look deep into the topic not the overall.

Reading other people's essays, mine was very weak. The persons to whom I am going to give my essay to edit are [two very successful senior boys named]

By contrast, Bontle enjoyed part of her experience.

Bontle: *I enjoyed writing this essay because I like writing something different. But my vocabulary is pathetic and my paragraphs were not focused. My essay did not flow and my figures of speech did not create mental images. For my next essay I must follow instructions because last time I just went on writing without consulting given instructions. The other thing was that I was not descriptive enough and did not focus on a moment.*

Straight to the point, Bontle identifies every area of weakness in her work and introduces a path for change. What was pleasing to see was that she had not lost her positive attitude towards her writing, she knew what to do to change her results. The following learners added to the general flow of confessions.

Aphiwe: *Why I did not do some of the parts of the checklist was mainly because I could not actually pick out the parts, which were not in the essay. But one thing I realised was that it lacked metaphors, which were abundant in the top essay. Another part needed in an essay, which I would need to use, are strong adverbs, which would describe adequately the situation in the essay. Most*

figures of speech are the essence of a successful descriptive essay because they create images, which ultimately describe the essay more than normal words.

Key features in a descriptive essay were absent from Aphiwe's writing, he was able to notice this after his assessment. His initial comment was disturbing because he showed an inability to identify his own errors. He had not asked anyone to edit his work for him. This was admitted in the class discussion.

Virginia: I'm not sure what made me not do the things that were required but one of the things I did not ask many people to edit my work and my essay was too simple and I think I must start being a little sophisticated and interesting and have perfect structure and style.

Virginia writes about the mysterious force, which all educators have attempted to capture. The force that prevents learners from applying what they know they should be applying.

Jonathan: My feelings on my essay were first mixed up and secondly confusing and thirdly upsetting. It was like this because I thought personally that I tried my best and that the message of the story was very strong. Oh I know that I made some mistakes: spelling, grammar and pace, but the fact that I got 66% for my best made me feel uncomfortable; disappointed with myself. I suppose I should use this piece as a learning experience and try better next time. My results from this essay, compared to the classes, showed me just how talented some people really are and that I have a long way to go with descriptive writing. What also helped me a lot was listening to someone of my calibre with excellent work, which really opened my eyes.

Jonathan's response serves as a reminder that whenever a learner produces work, it is a personal issue. Assessment is perceived to be a judgement of the individual and not of the work. The work is an extension of the individual. However, the session did not leave him with a sense of failure, an example of success was presented, this gave him a goal to which he stated he was striving.

What becomes apparent from these comments is that a valuable lesson was gained by listening to successful work produced by peers. The fact that model essays were being produced in this very class, in this very school, inspired the whole class. Some of the learners, like Jonathan who had thought that their work was very good, realised the vast gap in their own work when compared with someone's work that had fulfilled all of the criteria.

Michael B: *My essay was, I believe a rather good essay. I however focused on a large period of time rather than a moment, which was not the expectation of departmental criteria. I believe that all people will have different ways of marking so I cannot comment on my marker's marking because he obviously had his own point of view. I think that I should concentrate more on my word, expression and ideas, time, pace as well as my sentence structure and ask more people to read it.*

While acknowledging some of the responsibility for his lack of success, Michael now disowns the checklist and all the processes that preceded it. Fortunately he does not consider his situation to be without remedy.

The final three remarks all showed that the work had been left until the last moment and had not been prepared, as the learners knew they should have.

Ishaam: *I thought this checklist would help me but it did not. Every time I have something to write I forget to look at the list and produce something, which I do not want. The thing that makes me forget is because I sometimes do it in a hurry. I need to put this in front of my file so that I can see it every time I have something to write.*

Meagan: *I don't usually follow the checklist because sometimes I write my essay under pressure whereby I end up forgetting to use the points.*

Precious: *Why do I not do the things in the checklist?*

I mostly forget to do them or feel it is unnecessary to write or practise some of them, because they will not have an effect in the essay. I do not do those things because sometimes I intend to forget them when I write the essay. So it would be better to write the essay with the checklist in front of me.

Werner: *I cannot begin to describe my disappointment. They told me what they had to do. I combined all of their points into one checklist, which I then discussed with them in detail. I asked them to ensure that each aspect was clear to them. I invited questions both in an open class forum and by consultation with individuals.*

Michael B. made a huge fuss about having to write in any particular genre at all. No amount of explaining could help him see that this was one genre out of many. He wanted to write his way whenever he wanted to. I suspect this problem is the result of being "woolly" about the labels "creative" and "descriptive" writing. Perhaps this whole difference should be developed. He thinks

creative means do as you like and it must be good.

The whole point of this laborious writing project was to help them hand in work that is flawless. I feel as inspired as the teacher does in D. H. Lawrence's "Last Lesson of the Afternoon"!

This is the classic teacher's dilemma. Why are they resisting the path to success when they themselves have told me exactly what they need to do?

Julia and Nikki agree that the results in actual writing produced were bitterly disappointing. Nikki wrote, "when the first essays came in, they had not done what they said they should do. Instead they wrote unbelievable alien stories or dreams or adventure stories that spanned a week. Perhaps the problem was that they knew what they ought to be doing - but struggled with transferring this adequately to their own."

Julia's comment was that "many of them found the editing and re-editing process tedious and wanted to write stories. Many of the first essays were still in the story format but certainly with a more descriptive, creative effort and effect."

Identifying what went wrong will be the real key to changing learning. This is not the first time a teacher has thought a lesson has been successful, only to be disabused of that belief by the students' work. To change this learning pattern will be the real challenge, if we can't do it now, will we ever have the ability really to teach learners anything?

Sometimes I think that we are just keeping them busy until they have passed puberty and leave school. Are we just expensive baby sitters?

This journal entry shows that the teachers too, engaged emotionally with the process. The perception is that the learners were deliberately resisting using the guidance given to them. Not wallowing in dismay, the teachers planned yet another intervention. The most significant event that occurred in the process so far, was when the learners admitted their responsibility. This simple admission would be used to develop the next step.

4.2.6 Responses to class discussion about writing progress.

The final body of data was collected from both the learners' logs and my teacher's log in which we recorded our responses to two 40-minute class discussions (Friday and Monday) on issues relating to creative writing and the assessment of their recent writing. This discussion would serve to prepare the learners for the next round of writing. The entire process of writing was about to begin again, without the preliminary visual sessions as the learners were demonstrating a stronger acceptance of written examples. This was shown by their scant references to the screening of the commercial.

The mood of this discussion was quite emotional as the learners had time to reflect on their assessments and their roles within that assessment. The whole issue of writing was opened up for scrutiny. At the end of the Friday discussion, all the participants wrote down their responses in their learning logs to share in the Monday lesson.

Virginia: Most people in the school say creative writing will help you in the future if your career will need it such as journalist scriptwriter and all of those. Some of them agreed but said it must

be banned from schools because it gives students stress. I think writing must be taken out of schools because it takes time to know how to write and effort.

The emotional energy required to produce writing was restated. Virginia's strong feelings demonstrate her lack of empowerment. She still feels that it is a task she would rather not confront.

Aletia: In class today we had a hearty discussion about creative writing. We were mainly focusing on what goes into a good essay. The class argued that when writing an essay a lot of effort and time goes into it so when it's being marked, a teacher should take that into account. Well then Mr P compared the essay to a house being built and if it doesn't meet your standards you won't pay for it so we, most of us that is, agreed that effort shouldn't be considered.

The point that Aletia has conceded is that effort, properly channelled, will be recognised. Her comment begins to capture the dynamic nature of the discussion that had taken place. The point that she concedes was only won after half an hour of "hearty" discussion.

Bontle: I have somehow lost hope because it seems like when you start with 60's you will always get 60's for your English work. I think what we must do is that you must show us the example and teach us how to do it. Some people tell me my essay does not have strong verbs but they will never show me how to make sure that my essay contains strong verbs.

Writing is an effort; it is not a natural thing. Creative writing is way of making yourself known to the world. It is also a way of expressing yourself and it is a personal concept.

I also know that I have the same problems as my classmates. I find descriptive writing very useful and interesting but it's pointless not knowing how to do it. Truly speaking what we have been discussing in class the last few days have not helped me with my essay. Many people have different ideas about creative writing. Some say it is using your mind creatively, some say it is a waste of time.

The straightforward comments in Bontle's entry reflect a sincere attempt at coming to terms with her own writing difficulties. At first she expresses her concern that her marks may be "pigeon-holed", then she moves on to exploring areas of difficulty in her writing. She directly asks for help, however, her request is a specific one, one she has been able to formulate as a result of the sessions on writing. Bontle has indicated that she desire to know how to write better but she wants help. Her request for support from the teacher is a reminder that the educational process involves revisiting learning areas again and again.

This stage of the entire project was a crucial one owing to the fact that at this moment, the learners were in crisis mode more than in any other phase. Now they had to acknowledge what they were going to do. They had failed themselves by their own admission, what would be the next step in their own development?

The bulk of the teacher's comments have been included to convey the full extent of this moment.

Werner: FRIDAY

I began the lesson by sharing with the class how very difficult I was finding writing up this

research. I told them how much effort it cost me and how often I had to revise entire chapters. The amount of effort that this cost me was what bothered me. Plenty of murmurs of sympathy were heard around the classroom. The issue of "effort" in their own writing came up quite strongly. I sensed that this was what they wanted recognised. Then I put to the class what was really burning inside me. I told them that if I was able to predict their marks regularly, that if their marks never showed any upward movement, surely there was then no point in their trying to learn anything? I suggested we spend the year on the lawns outside. Some of the learners agreed with this idea!

I then used an analogy of a house being built. If the house was not built according to exact specifications, but built nonetheless, should that effort be rewarded in terms of payment? Ishaam quickly quipped from one of the groups that I could not compare that to their own writing! This was met with a number of supportive remarks. They were saying that the analogy was unfair!

At that moment, an extraordinary question was posed. I was asked, sincerely, why they had not been shown what the teachers wanted. I asked the nearest learner to open her file. First I removed the imagery notes and asked whether we had discussed those. All agreed. Then I removed the sample descriptive essay and asked if I had shown them examples of good writing. They all agreed. Then I removed the checklist and asked whether we had co-operatively created this list so that they could determine what they needed to do. They all agreed. This was quite a dramatic moment. All the knowledge and practice which some had claimed did not exist had been proved! There was no way out! I laughed heartily. This broke the tension. Fortunately this did not develop into a confrontational lesson, rather they accepted responsibility.

The focus was then shifted to a course of action that could be taken to prevent this from happening

again as their next essay was about to be given to them.

While it may seem unusual for a learner to deny having had any of the knowledge, the reaction of the teacher helped to reinforce all that had been presented. A number of pedagogical issues emerge as a result of that learner's comment: how much reinforcement does an adolescent need? How well was the learner maintaining his own notes (it was a boy)? What emotional lack of confidence prompted the learner to make such a remark? Was it possible that the learner was so insecure in his writing that he could only save face by denying that he had been taught anything? Were the lessons so boring or so uninclusive that the learner did not feel part of the process?

Rather than feel defeated, the teacher demonstrated to that learner what he had chosen to forget. A choice not dissimilar from his peers' choice to disregard their checklists.

The response of the class to the analogy and to the lesson as a whole seems to have been positive in that they did not leave the lesson feeling defeated and insecure as reflected in the teacher's journal entry about the next lesson.

Werner: MONDAY

I was heartened when I began to hear from the various readings of the journals that many of the learners had accepted responsibility for their own failure to consider their own or the joint checklist. The issue I now have to face is how did this come about? What can I change to make it work? They seem to be determined to try again, to do as they have said they would. The class appear to be eager to begin the next essay, almost as if to prove to me that they could change.

I felt that at least we are beginning to discover the real obstacles to teenage learning. Their own unwillingness to change the way they had always done things.

Augusteno and Michael's comments both show their introspection as a consequence of the discussion.

Augusteno: *I did not write the essay the way the teacher wanted. The teacher did tell me how and what he wants in the essay. He did talk about it in class and he gave me a checklist of guidelines and made me draw up my own.*

I did not use the guidelines given to me because some of the guidelines I could not understand. This was when I read through the list. Because I did not understand some of the guidelines I forgot about the entire list.

Another cause for my not using the list was because of time I left writing the essay for the last moment, the day before and because of this I couldn't still try and understand the list of guidelines nor put it into one.

The guidelines I did have in my essay were there by accident; I did not do it purposely. The major problem I have in essay writing is that when I have an idea I'm all excited and roll the idea around in my head for a while criticising it and finding loopholes and tying up loose ends this is fine but when I write it down and get towards the end.... I blame it on me for not carefully planning my essay.

Michael E: *I have only realised today that my written essay isn't believable. A lot has been learned from this experience, because now I need to start listening harder, I've got to start writing*

a believable essay.

I could have improved my essays by actually studying my checklist. I think the problem was where I didn't write any examples on my points. This cost me a lot because I knew what I had to do but did not know how to use it in context.

These comments refer back to Lauren's early comment about time management. What has become clear from the learners' journals is that generally, they have neglected to allocate sufficient time to allow themselves to properly draft their writing. They had left the work until the last moment, even though the classes were never given less than seven days' notice for a writing exercise. Learners had also been given class time for working on their writing. Neither of these allowances appears to have been utilised sufficiently. While the learners may have appeared to be engaged in their writing, this was obviously not the case.

What the learners were now able to state was why they had been assessed as they were. They were in a position to complete, in detail, the sentence: "I received this mark because..." The veil of the marker's mind had been lifted. Now the learners had the knowledge, even though the use of that knowledge was not yet fully activated, a change in their metacognition about their writing had occurred.

What the teacher will need to do is revisit several of the aspects of writing with the class to clarify and reinforce the new areas of knowledge. Learners like Augusteno, Bontle and Michael E have been honest enough to admit to a lack of understanding, while they did not do anything themselves in order to clarify information about which they were still uncertain, the teacher now had obtained

specific requests and could plan accordingly. The learners had been provided with a vehicle for expressing their difficulties. They had been empowered through the use of their journals. Where previous interventions had been determined by the teachers, now the learners themselves had determined the nature of the next intervention in the cycle of Action Research.

4.3 Epilogue

The second pieces of writing, which the learners produced as a result of these processes, disturbed the accepted bell curve of grades. While only a few learners gained distinctions, a much larger majority of learner marks move upward by an average of 15%. When the writing was returned to the learners, there was a tangible air of celebration in the classroom.

Julia wrote, *"much was gained by this process. We must continue this method. I felt that the discussions with students had become constructive and not confrontational. The students have begun to show an increasing willingness to take responsibility for their work."*

4.4 Conclusion

The cycle of Action Research is an ongoing process, this particular process will continue until the learners leave school at the end of their grade twelve-year. Just as writing itself is a process, so is the *knowing* about that process ongoing. As the learners gain life experience, as they explore the visual world around them, as they are exposed to other genres of writing through their own reading and through the literature components of the syllabus, so will their own attitudes to their writing develop. Furthermore, as these learners develop physically and emotionally and intellectually towards adulthood, so will their writing reflect change and growth. Because writers are human,

because these writers are adolescents, inevitably there will be disappointments and regressions, how these are dealt with will affect the overall process.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions drawn from data analysis

The analysis shows that some aspects of the original research question were answered. The more interesting conclusions that may be drawn from this work are that the issues which affect the development of learners and their writing are complex and that rather than one single approach, such as one creative lesson using visual media, an entire learning cycle should be instituted whereby new approaches are integrated with traditional methods and in which new and old areas are continually revisited to restore, refresh and rethink the ways in which the learners are thinking about their writing, the ways in which the learners are knowing about their own writing.

The most interesting results of this research were produced as a result of the process in which the learners were actually involved in a process of reflection on their own writing: commenting and constantly reflecting on their own behaviour and attitude.

A connection between the expectation of the teacher, the understanding of the learners and the actual production of the learners did not occur. An analysis of the discrepancy between what the learners said they knew they had to produce and what they actually did produce, all contributed to a jump in the learning process of the learners. The learners demonstrated maturity in their thinking with regard to their own obligations towards their work. The primary reason for learners' failure to perform appears to be not the ability of the learners but their actual willingness to implement knowledge about ways of writing.

To revisit the original 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 will enable learners to extend their confidence in their own writing ability by producing a list of explicit criteria.*

The answer to this investigation has to be complex because of the nature of Action Research and the precise way in which the Action Research was conducted. To respond simplistically: Yes, the learners did produce checklists, some of them very comprehensive. Yes, some of the learners' confidence in their writing ability did improve, however this was not as result of an analysis of the visual material or the production of checklists alone. The process that was initiated by using this approach is what may be said to have led to change in the learners' metacognition about their writing. Because they had begun to understand how they write, why they make the mistakes that they do make, they had begun to feel differently about their abilities as writers. Through the use of their learning logs, the learners had gained a voice for themselves as writers and as learners. The single most important influence on the attitude of the learners was their participation in the research itself. They were not simply the objects of a study; they were part of the whole process.

Finally, the most interesting information that has emerged from this research cycle, is the identification of the *learning attitude* that had prevented most of the participants from implementing the knowledge that they had demonstrated in their checklists. This identification occurred because of the nature of the research that had been undertaken. Because the learners had been empowered to speak and write about their writing, they had uncovered their greatest problem themselves (themselves?).

5.2 Why was the project not entirely successful in its aims?

The least successful element of the research was establishing a *clear* transmodal link between an analysis of a visual sequence and the production of a written piece. A number of factors could be considered to have contributed to this failure.

The first factor is that possibly the assumed visual knowledge of the learners with regard to filmic terminology was not as developed as expected. This lack of development became clear in the teacher's journal comment:

Werner: ... we have just completed our close study of Dead Poets Society. I wish that we had begun the whole writing process after this film study. I am very pleased with the analyses the learners produced of the film; this was only after in depth discussion of film terminology and film methods. The reference work that they used (Van Nierop: 1997) also helped them to establish a successful genre for this kind of writing. Had we left writing until after this module, I believe we would have witnessed radically different results.

I will definitely put off using visual analysis, especially with regard to descriptive writing until after the grade 10 film study component. Unless of course, we develop the visual literacy component in grade 9.

Attributing the learners' undeveloped film study understanding to the partial failure of the research is not pure speculation. According to the journal, the learners' ability to discuss filmic issues was

successful, after the preparatory phase of vocabulary acquisition. In a similar way, the learners were able to discuss their own writing in a more sophisticated manner after the writing sessions. Thus it is possible to imagine that had the film study component been presented before the writing sessions, the learners would have demonstrated a greater transfer of skills because they had the words to talk about them first.

Although the learners had produced checklists, they were not all empowered by them. The sheer mass of information with which they were confronted proved to be a stumbling block. The learners were intimidated by the amount of effort required in implementing the checklists and therefore avoided confronting them altogether.

Further, not all the participants understood all of the criteria of the combined checklist. The combined checklist was not entirely their own work and possibly that proved alienating.

The skill of systematically consulting the criteria of the checklists appears to have been absent. The learners who did try to use the checklists found themselves defeated by not being able to persevere through the implementation process.

While it may appear that undue emphasis was placed on the use of checklists, it must be pointed out that they are part of a whole process and simply help to consolidate information learned. Every time a pilot flies, a checklist is used; however, the overall skill is not entirely measurable. There must be room for virtuosity and experimentation, within the bounds of clear communication.

5.3 Other potential influencing factors

I believe that the work ethic of the learners proved to be an influencing factor. Clearly the majority of participants, by their own admission, had never produced writing over a period of time. They were accustomed to rushing through a piece at the last minute. Had this attitude been different from the beginning of the cycle, the very first set of writing would have been of a much better quality. Most of the learners stated that they had not implemented their checklists because they had not left themselves enough time. It is reasonable therefore to speculate that had they left themselves sufficient time, they would have produced better work.

5.4 Limitations

This study was limited in a number of areas. Firstly, the fact that visual equipment was not easily available restricted the number of viewings that the learners had of the commercial. Had they been able to watch the commercial at specific intervals, they might have been able to make better *transference of skills*, especially if they had been able to revisit the commercial after their film study component.

Secondly, not all of the learners responded in as detailed a manner as they could have. This was quite a serious limitation as *some of the data influencing this study* was therefore unavailable. Owing to the fact that the type of research model chosen was Action Research, the cycle could have covered a greater period of time, an *entire academic year*, not just work from February to May. A greater development would have been *reflected* had the time period been extended.

However, as is the nature of this research model, the cycle itself will always continue even after this study is concluded.

5.5 Recommendations for further research

I still believe that the link between the visual and the written should be exploited to the advantage of our learners. I recommend that this area of transmodality be explored and carefully researched, especially as our daily world becomes increasingly visually oriented. The ability of my learners to analyse their film study component left no doubt in my mind that visual literacy is indeed a powerful tool for the future.

I further recommend introducing filmic vocabulary to learners at a much earlier stage of their educational programme. The attitude of learners predisposes them to gaining this knowledge. The skills they gain through this should not be ignored. It is still my belief that skills are transferable, possibly the best vehicle for encouraging that transference still needs to be discovered.

Finally, the fact that the learners were able to become empowered through the use of their learning logs indicates the potential that lies in this tool. I am aware of the existing body of literature that has discussed the value of journals, however, I sense that the full value of this tool has yet to be tapped by my colleagues and my learners.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has considered the educational potential inherent in the visual media with regard to its contribution to the development of the skill of writing. In some respects this research was unsuccessful; however, what has been demonstrated is that learners were able to make some connections between understanding what they had seen and how they write. Part of the success of this connection must be attributed to the teaching methodology, which employed a large variety of approaches. The process of production as advocated by Buckingham enabled learners to come to terms with the complexity of the medium of writing.

If it was the intention of this study to empower learners with regard to their abilities as writers then the study has not failed. Learners were given a vehicle through which they could explore their identities and issues as writers. The work of the researchers, the Summerfields, Maybin and Elbow proved invaluable in this respect. The learners gained an understanding of the work entailed in writing. De Fina's goal of giving young writers "ownership" of the work was achieved. (1992).

What this study has shown is how providing learners with models of a genre, descriptive writing, as advocated by Cope and Kalantzis, contributes in a small way to the learners' understanding of the desired end product. The most valuable aspect of this research though was including the learners as co-participants in the research. This encouraged them to think critically about their own writing; it equipped them with a metacognition and it challenged conceptions about traditional teacher research. In the tradition of Paulo Freire, the learners were empowered by being given an authoritative voice.

While the students may not yet be highly accomplished writers in every genre, they have begun a process, which enables them to identify clearly their own areas of writing weaknesses. They have come to be able to recognise exactly what they have to do for their writing to change. Most importantly, they have realised that, like this research itself, writing is a long, cyclical process.

5.7 The Future

The future in education lies in recognising the intelligence of our learners and allowing them to participate in the construction of their own learning process. Ownership introduces pride, accountability and determination. I believe that if we, as educators allow our learners' voices to be heard, we will hear from them how to facilitate the knowledge and skills we have traditionally thrust upon them.

Just like the cyclical path that this research took, so is the path of all learning. The greatest lessons that were learned here were the ones that showed the value of constantly reflecting about learning. Sharing these thoughts, being allowed to speak or write about learning issues, created the best possible learning environment.

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