

**‘TALK DEEP TO WRITE DEEPER’: AN
EXPLORATION OF THE VALUE OF TALK
IN DEVELOPING COGNITIVE ACADEMIC
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (CALP).**

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to discover the value of 'deep' talk in developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), with primary focus on a group of 'under-prepared' first year university students for whom English is an additional language (EAL), who were registered for an 'extended degree' in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg, Kingsway campus.

The method of research was qualitative and took the form of a teaching intervention in which groups of students voluntarily participated in the performance of different learning activities (such as reading, talking and writing) either as individuals or as members of a group. All of the students were given identical background texts to read. The texts provided contextual information on a topic pertaining to a gender debate. Some students read the texts prior to participating in a discussion on the topic, after which they wrote an argumentative essay. Other students talked about the topic first, and then read the texts before writing their essay. A 'control' group of students did not talk at all, but just read the texts and then wrote an essay on the topic.

The researcher analysed transcriptions of tape-recordings of the group discussions, using limited discourse analysis to highlight various 'speech acts' to assess how the students used language to actively engage with each other and build their arguments. The research findings were also assisted by an analysis of the essays and reflections written by each student.

The research found that the process of talk itself in which the students used language to respond to each other's ideas, helped to cognitively challenge the students in the development of their arguments. The research also found that the cognitive development gained through the talk was helpful in assisting students to formulate their written arguments in their essay. The research found that some contextual support in the form of background readings was also helpful. The order in which this took place was also found to be important. The research found it to be particularly useful for students to be given background reading *before* their talk, rather than after their talk, as this gave students a more informed perspective with which to approach their group discussion. By examining the essays in relation to the transcripts of the talk, the researcher explored the extent to which a more informed perspective on the topic, coupled with the way in which students used language, helped students to develop a more balanced approach in developing their written arguments.

Declaration

This research report is my own original work, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text. It is submitted for the degree of Master of English Language Education in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Delia Layton.....

.....day of....., 2008

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, AIMS AND RATIONALE

I have been an educator engaged for several years in the teaching of 'academic literacy' to first year university students at the University of Johannesburg, Kingsway campus (previously RAU). While the term 'literacy' has been contested, with narrow definitions confining themselves only to reading and writing skills, more recent definitions have tended to extend the view of literacy to include its socio-cultural context and purpose. Moreover, there is often a conflict between what has been achieved in the narrow sense of the definition of what constitutes 'literacy' at high school level, which tends to focus only on basic reading and writing skills, and what has come to be expected in terms of 'academic literacy' when a student first enters a tertiary environment. Individual students are expected to adapt and change their identity in terms of how they use language so that it is 'appropriate' to the academy. This involves a change in identity and ways of being, thinking and communicating as university students to achieve 'academic literacy' or what Gee (1996) would term academic 'Discourse'. This concept of 'Discourse' relates to the different ways of being and using language that people adopt in adapting to different socio-cultural situations.

The extent to which students are gradually adapting to this change in identity in learning this kind of 'academic literacy' can be revealed in their writing. Thus, in terms of what constitutes this concept of 'academic literacy' there are certain criteria that can be set down which take into consideration the ability to express in academic writing more than mere content, but also an ability to express ideas and abstract concepts in a manner appropriate to the 'Discourses' and discourse specific contexts expected at tertiary level. 'Academic literacy' also requires students to develop efficient, critical and analytical reading skills. All these skills and abilities require 'higher order thinking' and therefore 'Academic literacy' is something that students strive to gradually develop through continual practice over time.

The particular students that I have been tutoring are predominantly students for whom English is an additional language, and who have been identified as being 'under-prepared' for the academic demands of the university environment. Many of these students struggle with the dual challenge of having to master the second language to the level required in a university environment as well as having to learn how to function in this new (academic) discourse community. In order to address this situation, the Centre for Academic

Development at the University of Johannesburg has for several years been developing courses which aim to help develop the necessary skills and strategies, as well as build the confidence of these students to enable them to cope with the mainstream university course structures they will encounter.

The students that participated in this research project were all registered for a year-long course called 'Argument in the Humanities' (AIH) in which they were helped to develop their ability to cope with the demands of academic discourse. The AIH course included the following skills and strategies: reading strategies and the annotation of texts; summarizing and paraphrasing; paragraphing and the use of linking words for coherence and cohesion; how to write a thesis statement or a main claim with supporting evidence based on reasoning; the importance of acknowledging a counter-argument; the citing and acknowledgement of sources; how to write introductions and conclusions; online discussions in the computer labs; and the preparation (research) and oral presentation of academic debates in the classroom. Thus, by the time this research project took place, in the final semester of the academic year, these students had already learnt many of the fundamentals for constructing an academic argument.

Nevile (1996) explores the issue that whereas assumptions are often made that many students entering the university for the first time have 'weak' language skills and are thus in need of remedial English language classes to 'repair' these weaknesses, it is rather the case that they are actually unfamiliar with the discourse required of them in an academic environment. He argues that students need to understand the context and purposes of their writing in terms of the different needs of academic Discourse in general and within their particular academic disciplines. Since this requires them to 'adopt a new literacy identity', that of academic literacy, students experience a kind of 'literacy culture shock' when they first come to university. This is because they find their own literacy challenged by that of the new Discourse community.

Nevile also uses Gee's (1996) notion of 'identity' which says that the type of language that a person uses reflects and represents an individual's self-perception, which affects not only behaviour and ways of thinking but even their value systems. It is Nevile's contention that students gradually develop this new kind of identity and academic literacy as they are 'enculturated' into the academy and into their specific fields of study. He further argues that it

is only when the students' own perceptions of their identities as 'learners of culture' and not just 'learners of content' that this shift occurs.

Nevile finds a common problem amongst many of his students in that they do not always understand that at a university, unlike high school, they are assessed in terms of their academic literacy and ability to construct or develop an argument, or adopt a 'position' which is supported by evidence rather than just presenting their straightforward knowledge of the 'content' of the texts they are studying. The challenge therefore, as Nevile sees it is to help students make the 'transition from studying to doing', from being a 'History student' to 'being an historian'. (1996:39)

I can identify with much of what Nevile writes about his own students, specifically those that came to him for help in improving their academic work. He distinguishes between those who had difficulties in the 'process of production' or the actual processes of reading and writing, and those who had difficulties with the final written product. The former students, he argues, tend to adopt inappropriate literacy strategies when they are trying to produce or understand their academic texts in that they may 'underestimate' the 'demands' of writing in an academic context. This applies also to the tendency of this type of student to not realize the importance of drafting and re-drafting their work.

When my first year English as an additional language (EAL) students who are in an extended-degree program, are taught to write in an academic context, they are expected to write several drafts, in which they are given detailed written feedback, before the final draft is submitted for assessment. Like Nevile, I have also come across certain students who see themselves as 'good writers', and who become quite disheartened if they cannot 'get it right' the first time. They do not understand that as has been stated by many researchers as cited by Nevile (Mahalski, 1992; Norton, 1990; Oliver & Kerr, 1993) that evidence shows that 'the greater frequency of revision is associated with higher essay scores'.

My students, like those Nevile writes about, also have to learn to write for an 'academic audience', and thus have to learn to contextualize their argument in terms of its relevance, as well as learn how to reference the work of other writers in the field, and take into consideration counter-arguments while keeping sight of their own position which must be supported by evidence. They also have to be open to the fact that further reading may affect

their initial argument which will require revision of their writing. Their literacy strategies in terms of reading also have to become more appropriate for the academic context in that they also have to learn to predict certain features of a text by their ability to skim and scan, and take note of visual clues such as headings and key terms (in bold or italics).

Other students that Nevile mentions have more 'product-related difficulties' which according to Nevile have more to do with 'the construction of meaning within the demands of particular disciplines' (1996:43) rather than the surface features of good grammatical construction of sentences. Similarly, in my teaching context, although incorrect grammatical features are noted, the development of ideas and conceptual reasoning is a greater focus. Since I am not teaching specific 'content' in terms of a specific academic discipline, I need to help my students master certain strategies in terms of how meaning is structured.

For instance, in order to guide the reader of their text (usually an essay), students must learn how to write a well-constructed argumentative essay. To this end, the importance of a good introductory paragraph which contextualizes and gives an overview of the main ideas or argument that the writer will follow is highlighted and students spend time drafting and re-drafting this. Other strategies are taught such as the importance of giving a definition of any key terms which may be used in the essay; how to structure their paragraphs in the body of the essay in terms of having a main claim and sub-claims with their supporting evidence or illustrative examples; how to use linking words (for instance to signal comparison or contrast) to create coherence and cohesion; the importance of acknowledging a counter-argument by which they strengthen their own position; and the concluding paragraph in which they summarise their main argument and perhaps argue for some further action or research in the field to be undertaken.

I agree with Nevile that students find referencing or citation of other people's work very difficult to do, and they fail to comprehend just how important this aspect of academic literacy is. Our students are given much instruction on the functions of referencing and how to do it (with the proviso that there may also be faculty-specific conventions), but this is something that seems to take time to become internalized by some students. This is just another learning curve in terms of the new academic literacy that students must learn so that it eventually becomes part of their identity and they becoming acclimatized to the academic culture itself.

In terms of my teaching context, I therefore feel that it is important to explore which kinds of teaching and learning strategies can best assist students to make the transition to a more 'academic' form of writing and in this way become fully fledged members of this particular 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998), that constitutes the Academy.

In teaching academic language development courses, I have found that students become very motivated whenever there is an opportunity to discuss a topic which interests them, and are able to express themselves reasonably well when they *speak* English. However, their lack of development in terms of academic Discourse and their lack of familiarity with the language tends to fail them when it comes to their written work.

As a result of this enthusiasm that students display when they talk through certain topics, I therefore wanted also to take advantage of the fact that students generally have a positive attitude towards 'talk' in the classroom. To this end, I wished to investigate this phenomenon more closely to discover if by creating a conducive environment through using certain teaching interventions which promote more intensive group work, it was possible to enable students to 'go deeper' in their conversations.

Perera (1986) has pointed out in her study of school children aged from 9 to 13 discourse-level differences between the language of fiction and that of non-fiction and some of the linguistic difficulties learners have in reading academic texts (school textbooks) compared with that of reading narratives. Although her study relates to young school children, the linguistic difficulties that are experienced by even a first-year university student for whom English is not a first language can be likened to those of a younger first-language English speaker. The ease with which young first language English speakers read narratives or fiction can be related to the ease that is experienced when first year second language English speakers engage in conversational talk or what Cummins (1996) has termed 'basic interpersonal communication skills' (BICS). In contrast, the linguistic difficulties experienced when reading academic textbooks can be related to those challenges experienced by second language speakers when they have to write or talk in an academically appropriate manner displaying what Cummins terms 'cognitive academic language proficiency' (CALP).

The purpose of this research was to try to challenge students to move away from the surface level of engagement by giving them academic texts to read which helped them to contextualize a particular topic. The investigation involved putting students into small discussion groups and asking them to discuss a particular question relating to the selected topic before writing an academic essay. This intervention aimed to encourage these students to go beyond a superficial conversational mode of talking ('BICS') and move towards a deeper more 'academic' or 'exploratory' type of talk ('CALP') and which I term 'deep' talk, in which higher levels of abstraction and criticality can occur. The rationale was that through group discussions, students could hear the views of others, justify their own opinions and interact in a mature but critically engaging way with each other in debate about a topic and in doing so find ways to express more cognitively challenging concepts using and adapting the language resources that they have available to them.

When individuals engage in talk with others, each individual needs to externalize his/her own interior monologue, or thoughts. The connection between 'thinking' and 'talking' takes place when each individual thinker using the medium of language finds a means to communicate his/her thoughts outwardly. Furthermore when students read a text that is linguistically complex, such as is typical of an academic text in the university context, they are also required to mentally de-code the language they are reading in order to comprehend its meaning. In order to gain understanding and for learning to take place, the student reader must first grasp the meaning of a text. Once this has been achieved, in engaging in group discussion, or in writing an academic essay, the student would have to make use of language in order to communicate an understanding of the meanings, which may be abstract and conceptually complex.

The extent to which an (EAL) student can communicate this complexity of meaning outwardly to others either through 'deep talk' or in academic writing, depends on the level to which that student has achieved academic language proficiency. By practicing these skills through talking 'deep', and by collaboration and interaction through talk, it was hoped that students would start to develop and transfer these cognitive abilities into better academic writing.

This formed the central focus for my research project: 'talk deep' to 'write deeper': an exploration of the value of talk in developing cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP).

CHAPTER 2

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2.1. Aims

2.2. Research questions

2.1. Aims

The central aim of my research project was to explore the value of ‘talk’ in developing the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) of a group of first year university students in an extended degree program, for whom English is an additional language (EAL). My broad research question was whether through encouraging ‘deep talk’, their academic language proficiency improves and thus influences the quality of their written work. I wished to investigate whether through engaging in this kind of exploratory ‘deep talk’ there would be indications that students began to develop what has been termed ‘higher order thinking’ skills in which they started to make these more abstract and critical connections. In order to engage in deeper talk, students would naturally need to develop their academic language proficiency in order to express more abstract concepts, thus I wished to discover whether these (higher order thinking) skills, which would be indicators of a development in academic language proficiency, would be expressed not only in their group discussions, but also in their written work.

2.2 Research Questions

The main research question asked in this project was the following:

Will an intervention which focuses on ‘deep talk’ help first year students in an academic literacy programme at the University of Johannesburg to develop cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)?

Other questions that were addressed in focusing on the main research question were:

1. Will a classroom intervention in which the ‘talking’ process is emphasized enable ‘under-prepared’ first year students whose English language skills are still developing, to produce better written essays?

2. If 'deep talk' can be seen as talk that goes beyond 'basic interpersonal communication skills' (BICS), how can 'deep talk' be developed in an academic literacy programme?
3. Can 'deep talk' provide support for improved academic reading and writing?
4. Can 'deep talk' help to develop 'higher order thinking'?

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

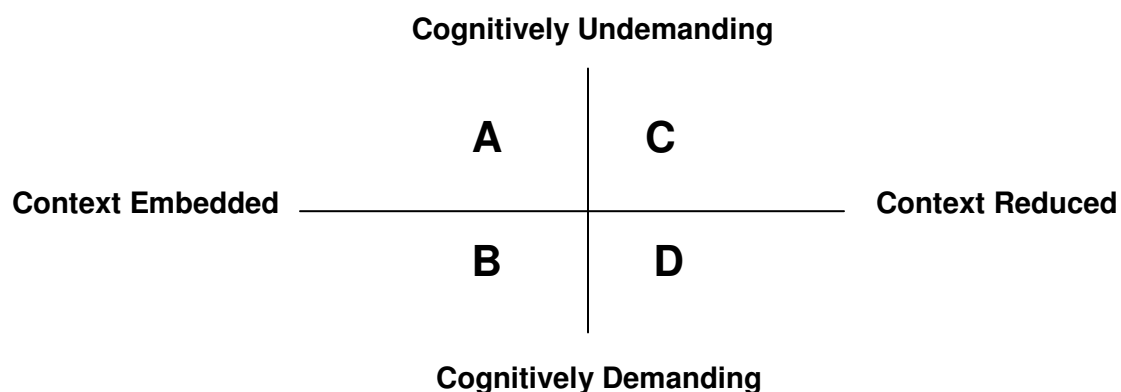
This chapter gives an overview of the various theoretical approaches to the teaching of Academic Literacy in the university environment outlining specific pedagogical theory and practice which is of direct relevance to this research project.

The research project draws on selected theoretical approaches to the teaching of Academic Literacy in the university environment. Whereas this literature and much of the previous research has tended to focus on the relationship between reading and writing, such as 'reading into writing' and 'writing into reading' (Zamel 1992), and while there has been some recognition of the relationship between talk and writing in the school context (Britton 1992), Academic Literacy Development at tertiary level has not focused greatly on talk. In my study, therefore, I wished to foreground the role of 'talk' in enabling academic writing by examining closely the role of structured talk in developing 'higher order thinking', and ultimately better writing.

There have been several theoretical concepts and debates which I have found useful in terms of this research project. Firstly, the work of Jim Cummins (1996) has helped me to distinguish clearly between the different levels of language proficiency exhibited by the first year students I have been teaching in terms of their surface (conversational) levels, or what Cummins terms 'basic interpersonal communication skills' (BICS) and a deeper (conceptual and academic) proficiency, which Cummins terms 'cognitive academic language proficiency' (CALP). By making the distinction between what he calls 'the two faces of language proficiency' (1996:51), the conversational and the academic, it becomes easier to differentiate between language that is used in context (as in conversational exchanges) and language that is decontextualised (as found in academic literacy development). Cummins asserts that many educators have basic misconceptions about the language proficiency of their students which confuse these two aspects. Firstly, educators may assume that a student's limited command of the language (at the conversational level) is an indicator of a limited range of logical reasoning in general, which is not necessarily the case; secondly, educators may presume that if a student has proficiency at the conversational (surface) level of a language, then that student has overall proficiency (including deeper, academic, conceptual aspects) in the language, which may also not be the case.

Cummins is trying to show that educators are often guilty of assuming that while some second language English speakers may be regarded as having attained a proficiency in English (because they have fluency at the conversational level), this does not necessarily mean that their language proficiency is sufficient to allow them to communicate at a deeper, and more decontextualised level as required in the academic environment. The mistake is often made whereby students who (although they have conversational proficiency) are still in the process of developing their full language proficiency, but are presumed to be 'deficient' or 'slow' learners because the distinction between contextualized and decontextualised language is not made by the educators.

Cummins develops a conceptual framework by means of which educators can track what cognitive and contextual demands a particular communicative activity makes. The framework consists of two intersecting continua, which range from the cognitively undemanding to the cognitively demanding on the vertical axis, and from the context embedded to the context reduced on the horizontal axis. The two intersecting axes create four quadrants A,B, C and D with quadrants A and B falling on the left side, (with A at the top and B below), and quadrants C and D on the right side (with C at the top and D below) (1996:57).



By dividing tasks into these quadrants, it is possible to see quite easily that the challenge for teachers of EAL speakers is to take their students from quadrant A, which comprises the more conversational (highly contextualized input with many visual clues and immediate feedback) which is not cognitively demanding through to quadrant D, where more academic, decontextualised input which is more reliant on linguistic clues and needs a more developed

type of literacy proficiency. What is made clear by this visual framework, is that the quadrant B is the one in which the groundwork for increasing an EAL student's proficiency can most effectively take place. Thus, the student should be supported by the teacher who can contextualize the tasks as well as giving constant feedback to the student, but at the same time challenge the student in more cognitively demanding tasks so that real learning can take place in an effective manner.

Cummins mentions some practical ways in which teachers can help students to move towards a more developed academic proficiency more effectively. Briefly, his thesis is that teachers need to find ways to activate the prior knowledge of their students, to give them cognitively challenging input while giving them contextual support, to encourage them to actively use the target language in the classroom, as well as giving them sufficient feedback to help develop skills that will help them with their learning. According to Cummins, this process will lead to CALP.

Cummins also developed a conceptual framework by means of which educators can track what cognitive and contextual demands a particular communicative activity makes. In my research project it was thus important to ensure the tasks that were set for the teaching intervention (which is outlined in detail in the methodology section) were framed in terms of certain verbs (high level ones being e.g. reflect, theorise, apply, generate; and lower level ones being e.g. memorise, list, recognize etc.), so that the expected outcome (being some academic writing) is aligned with the teaching/learning activities which are performed. This is in keeping with the notion of 'constructive alignment' (a term coined by John Biggs, 2003) in which students construct meaning from what they do to learn, and where the teacher aligns the planned learning activities with the learning outcomes.

In order to achieve the outcome posed by my research project, of encouraging my students to 'go deeper' in terms of their learning, I realized that I had to make sure that students were given a range of contextual readings that would stimulate them to a higher level of cognitive engagement in their discussions and later essay writing. In other words, I wanted to ascertain whether this 'deeper' type of 'talk' would lead to a deeper, more complex and critical level of engagement or cognitive academic language proficiency both at the level of 'talk' and when these students transferred the concepts discussed into writing.

The second theoretical concept that I found helpful is another one from the pedagogical writings of John Biggs (2003) whose method called SOLO (Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome) provides a framework for formulating teaching objectives in an academic environment. In this taxonomy, Biggs describes a hierarchy of levels of understanding which can be gradually developed, whereby the student not only increases knowledge, but also deepens understanding, with each higher level building on the understanding achieved at the level below it. This moves from a *prestructural* level (which is similar to Cummins' concept of 'BICS' and indicative of a very shallow level of understanding) to a *unistructural* level (where more is understood, but much left out), to *multistructural* (goes further but does not address underlying issues), to *relational* (the first level of academically relevant understanding, where concepts are not just described, but are explained in terms of their relationship to the topic as a whole), and finally, to *extended abstract* (which goes beyond what has been given to include a high level of abstraction and conceptualization of the topic to include a broader view). These two concepts of the 'relational' and the 'extended abstract' relate to the kinds of levels of understanding that 'deep talk' aims to achieve.

In addition, Biggs argues that by emphasizing the *qualitative* aims in the objectives over *quantitative* aims, students will be encouraged more to engage in higher order thinking or deeper approaches to learning.

It is also Biggs' view that learning is a way of interacting with the world, of taking one's prior knowledge and integrating it with new knowledge, creating new meanings and concepts. Since education is about 'conceptual change' rather than the transmission of information from teacher to student, a fundamental requirement for this to take place is the need for collaboration and dialogue between peers and the teacher, in order to deepen understanding and levels of thinking. According to Biggs, teaching works when you get students to engage in learning-related activities which are aimed at fulfilling a certain objective, such as theorizing, problem-solving, coming up with new ideas of their own, and reflecting on their own experiences in order to direct their own learning. In this way, knowledge is constructed by the student's learning activities or approaches to learning. The deeper approach encourages the student's active engagement with the work which creates meaning and thus learning takes place since the focus is on the student. The idea is to try to encourage students to actively engage with tasks and thus 'go deep' in their learning. While there will obviously be some students who are more naturally inclined to follow a deep approach to

learning, and others who tend to take the path of least resistance and follow a surface approach (do the minimum to pass), the question I was asking in my research project, is whether through encouraging students to actively engage in a learning-related activity (such as collaborative dialogue in group discussions as well as the reading of background texts) can trigger cognitive performances and help students to start to construct their conceptual knowledge and understanding in order to begin to express themselves in an academically appropriate way in their writing.

A third concept which I have found applicable to my research is that of Vygotsky's (1978) 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD), an observable occurrence in which cognitive development takes place as a result of social interaction and social learning. He described this phenomenon as:

*the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or **in collaboration with more capable peers*** (Vygotsky, 1978).

The idea here is that with peer collaboration or adult guidance, a student can perform a cognitive task more effectively than if s/he was working alone. ZPD bridges the gap between what is already known and what can come to be known. Vygotsky also emphasized the role of talk in mediating socially situated environments. Whereas young children do this initially just to communicate their needs, as people become more familiar with language they are able to use this language tool to articulate higher forms of learning and thinking. The theory that through practice in using language through the medium of talk, and 'in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978), learning takes place, is fundamental to my research question. In my research project, I wanted to discover whether talk in the particular 'socially situated environment' set up for the discussion groups would lead to a level of engagement and collaboration between the students, in which those 'more capable peers' could help those with less language proficiency to express themselves at a more cognitively challenging level.

Another educational theorist, Vivien Zamel (1993), has written of the importance of focusing our instruction on 'the deep structure of challenging intellectual activity' rather than stressing the surface features of academic writing, as she contends that these superficial aspects will

be learned more effortlessly in 'the context of meaningful and purposeful work'. Her solution to this is to involve students in 'authentic work' by 'immersing them in reading, writing, and language, by engaging them in rich course material, by providing them with multiple and extensive opportunities to inquire into, raise questions about, critically examine this material, by inviting them to see connections between their own perspectives and course content, by helping them develop new frameworks of understanding, by allowing them to actively construct knowledge by locating meaning in their observations and interpretations' (1993:35).

With this in mind, my research project posed the question of whether students were able to negotiate deeper meanings by interaction and collaboration with their peers and whether they did, in practice, begin to articulate their thoughts in a more complex or highly developed manner through this process.

In a recently published article, Moragh Paxton (2007) has explored the notion of 'interim literacies' which was developed in a research project conducted at the University of Cape Town in 2004 in which linguistic and intertextual analysis of first year student writing was used to investigate 'the intersection of academic discourse and student voice' (2007:45). As Paxton points out, very few students at the first year level have achieved a level of 'mastery or fluent control... over a secondary discourse' (Gee, 1996:43) which is how Gee defines 'literacy', and so she constructed the term 'interim literacies' to describe the writing practices of these first year students. For Paxton, 'Interim literacies' are a reflection of 'a transition process from school and home to academic literacy' (2007:46). She sees language and meaning-making as a dynamic resource and questions the dominant role of traditional Western concepts of literacy in terms of the academy. Paxton highlights the fact that many of the students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) find their own familiar discourses at odds with that of the dominant discourses of the academy, and in making the transition from one discourse to the other is a struggle which involves a conflict of identities in which past influences, such as spoken discourses from a deeply embedded oral cultural tradition can impact on their present acquisition of academic discourse. I have found this notion of 'interim literacies' to be of great relevance not only to my research work on the *writing* produced by first year students for whom English is an additional language, but have extended its terms of reference to also describe how first year students frame their *'talk'* in the context of an 'academic' group discussion.

For James Gee (1996), language is not only used to communicate information, but is also used to reflect feelings, ideas, social activities and interaction, social identities and affiliations within cultures and institutions. He distinguishes between discourse (with a small 'd') as 'language-in-use' wherein various activities are enacted through language, and Discourse (with a capital 'D') which is a wider concept wherein non-language elements also have an impact. Gee's central argument is that language should be appreciated in its social context in terms of these various Discourses which are in Gee's words 'ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles (or 'types of people') by specific *groups of people*' (Gee,1996:viii)

Gee introduced the notion of multiple Discourses which relate to different kinds of social identities in which people can have allegiance to various Discourse models at the same time, and argues that these may be in conflict with each other in terms of what he calls one's primary Discourse (one's 'home' identity, and way of being within the immediate family and social grouping that one is born into) and a dominant secondary Discourse (as found in the mainstream classroom or in the workplace for example). To acquire a mainstream Discourse which may also be a dominant secondary Discourse, can require:

active complicity with values that conflict with one's home- and community-based Discourses, especially for many women and minorities. (Gee, 1996:147)

In my research, Gee's notion of Discourse was key in determining to what extent my research participants who are not first language English speaking students, were able to adapt not only to the dominance of the English language but also in terms of their cognitive academic language proficiency to the 'Discourse' of the Academy itself.

Barton and Hamilton (1998) see literacy as a set of purposeful social and cultural practices, historically situated, which are mediated by different written texts and shaped by different social, political, and ideological contexts. They make visible the daily practice of literacies (both everyday and dominant school-based literacies) in order to expose the misconceptions of the 'oral-literate' divide.

A further educational theorist who I found very helpful to my understanding of the linguistic issues related to my research project is Ken Hyland (2002) who argues that there is an assumption that because writing and speech have distinct functions, that they also have basic differences, in that speech is more contextualized and occurs in 'real-time' and there is an opportunity for immediate feedback. He cites Brian Street's (1995) notion of the 'great divide' which describes the view of there being a clear-cut dichotomy between speech and writing, and that this view does not consider the great diversity of spoken and written genres. Hyland therefore argues that the two modes (of written and spoken language) actually 'overlap and coexist in very complex patterns' (2002:50), and that language should rather be seen as a 'a continuum with 'very spoken' face-to-face, context-embedded, action-related language at one end, and 'very written' reflective, spatially and temporally distant language at the other' (Joyce and Burns, 1992) (2002:53). He points out that writing contains a 'mix' of 'oral' and 'written' features which are just as 'rich' as 'gesture and intonation in conveying meanings non-verbally' (2002:52).

Hyland's (2002) 'continuum' could be applied to the range expressed through 'everyday' or conversational literacies (BICS) to that of 'deep talk' which may take place through structured group discussions. The notion of 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007) mentioned above, can also be used to describe how first year EAL students who are in a transitional developmental phase move along this continuum at different rates towards the goal of the achievement of the mastery of academic literacy.

In terms of my research project, I was interested to explore to what extent the students participating in this study, for whom English is an additional language and whose cultural background emphasizes oral communication over written communication, tended to make more use of these 'oral' modes of expression thus making their meanings in a more lively (if less 'academic') way in their writing.

A further theoretical development with regard to the teaching of academic literacy has been the 'literacies' approach of Lea and Street (1998) who have tried to distance themselves from the skills-based, deficit model of student writing, and rather find a way to take into account the multifaceted ways in which writing is undertaken in the university context. They state that the concept of what it means to be 'academically literate' is a contested term and that this may mean different things in different contexts, genres, fields and disciplines as well as to the

different parties involved (such as the students, academic staff, or administrators). Using the concept of 'academic literacies' as a framework for understanding students' many and varied writing practices, they view literacy from a cultural and social practice approach as opposed to making 'educational judgments' about what constitutes 'good' or 'bad' writing. Lea and Street maintain that their academic literacies model while not replacing previous models completely, builds on their previous insights and incorporates these into 'a more encompassing understanding of the nature of student writing within institutional practices, power relations and identities' (1998:158). Their approach sees literacies as social practices and as such sees academic practices as being subject to the prevailing dominating discourse of the institution in which they take place.

Lea and Street's contention is that a central aspect of students' academic literacy practices is the necessity for them to 'switch practices' between one context and another, and the need to make use of a 'repertoire of linguistic practices appropriate to each setting, and to handle the social meanings and identities that each evokes' (1998:159)

This ideological perspective takes its viewpoint from that of the 'New Literacy Studies' which addresses such issues as a student's personal identity and acknowledges that this may be 'challenged by the forms of writing required in different disciplines' (1998:159), and that what may be seen as problems in student writing by academic staff, may be caused more by 'the gaps' between their expectations of what is considered good academic writing and students' interpretations of what they should be doing in this regard. Lea and Street argue that student writing should be more focused on the 'processes of meaning-making and contestation around meaning' rather than in terms of 'skills or deficits'. In terms of my research project into the written work of first year EAL students, it was important therefore not to focus on the absence of proficiency, but to rather highlight signs of a developing academic literacy.

Ballard and Clanchy's (1988) view is that academic literacy involves learning to 'read' the culture, by 'coming to terms with its distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behaviour' (1988:8) that is needed at tertiary level and that students have to learn to 'crack the code' and realize that the 'academic value system' is 'culturally shaped'. They argue that in order to 'write successfully' a student needs to properly understand and accept 'the linguistic and cognitive behaviour' needed at tertiary level. There are some fundamental criteria, especially in the arts and social sciences, which according to Ballard and Clanchy

inform most academic 'judgments' of student writing. These are: 'relevance and adequacy to the topic', 'evidence of wide and critical reading', 'demonstration of a reasoned argument' and 'competent presentation'. Their view is that for students to be successful in an academic environment, they need to be able to present their views clearly and effectively, with a clear understanding also of what constitutes a convincing argument. They state that learning within the university is 'a process of gradual socialization into a distinctive culture of knowledge, and that 'literacy' must be seen in terms of the functions to which language is put in that culture' (1988:14).

It is obviously important for students to achieve both '*cognitive* competence' in which students learn 'the distinctive mode of analysis' as well as '*linguistic* competence' in which the language of the discipline is learnt, since 'the language informs the knowledge: the knowledge finds its form and meaning within the language' (Ballard & Clanchy, 1988:17). These two competencies can be linked directly to CALP.

Hatch (1992) argues that learners should be given 'a balanced language curriculum' in which they are given opportunities to practice using language along the continua from BICS to CALP. She argues that much learning can take place in a 'cooperative face to face interactive setting' and as such teachers should not under value the language of social interaction in relation to that of written forms of language. She writes that:

teachers should not assign a "good" value to planned, written forms of language and devalue as "unimportant" the language of social interaction, because learning may take place in either mode. (1992: 251)

Similarly, as McCarthy (1991) states, in a traditional classroom setting and especially with large classes, students very rarely get the opportunity to practise a 'range of utterance functions' He argues that:

learners rarely get the opportunity to take other than the responding role, and even in cases where students are encouraged to initiate, the follow-up move is often still in the hands of the teacher, and learners get little or no practice in this particular discourse function (1991:123)

McCarthy argues that the traditional 'talking from the front' style of teaching limits and impoverishes language learning opportunities. My research project aimed to explore to what extent giving students the opportunity to interact in a situation where they could initiate discourse as well as respond to it, might enrich their language development.

In the literature there is also reference to the term 'exploratory talk'. In a particular discourse analysis of a transcript of a discussion which took place between a group of girls in a school in Leeds, Barnes (1971) uses the notion of exploratory talk to describe how the learners explore different ideas to solve a particular problem which has been posed to them. He describes how the children through collaboration in a discussion which has been framed in such a way as to stimulate a deeper level of thinking than that required for a superficial conversation are 'reshaping their thoughts while talking', and 'helping one another'. The analysis of the transcript illustrates also 'how speech can function as an active part of learning' and how 'the talk was being used to organize thought' and that children are 'using language in a more exploratory fashion than often occurs in the relative formality of the full class...questioning, encouraging, surmising, challenging, extending and so on. This is because they have between them taken over control of the learning activity... They have had to collaborate... they have had to set up an appropriate mode of communication as well as deal with the task at hand' (Barnes, 1971).

The above descriptions of what constitutes 'exploratory' talk are closely related to what I term 'deep' talk. Through a dynamic interactive collaborative activity such as a group discussion about a particular topic, the students in my research project, were able to activate their cognitive processes when they used 'exploratory' language (such as affirming, questioning, and challenging) in their 'deep' talk to respond to each other's ideas and to develop their arguments.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

- 4.1. Research site**
- 4.2. Research participants**
- 4.3. Research method and design**
- 4.4. Data collection techniques**
- 4.5. Ethical considerations**
- 4.6. Data analysis techniques**

4.1 Research Site

The research was conducted at the Centre for Academic Development at the University of Johannesburg, Auckland Park. A suitable venue was found in which groups of students were brought together (outside of normal teaching time) in order to voluntarily participate in a teaching intervention.

4.2 Research Participants

The voluntary participants were from a group of first year EAL students for whom English was regarded as an additional language. All of the students were registered for an extended degree program in the Humanities, and as such were obliged to participate in a year-long academic language development course, entitled 'Argument in the Humanities' (AIH), designed by the Centre for Academic Development at the University of Johannesburg, Auckland Park, Johannesburg.

4.3 Research Method and Design

My research design involved a qualitative approach. As is the case with all qualitative research, my research set out to explore and gather an in-depth understanding of certain behaviours. This was chosen because it is an open-ended approach which allows for an exploration of interesting data through which to interpret and find answers to my research question. In my research, I wished to discover the nature of the relationship between 'deep' talk and writing in an academic setting.

I adopted an approach in which elements of the 'case study' research method were used in as much as I focused on a small group of people (my own students from the University of Johannesburg) in a real environment (the university classroom). In this research project, I

wanted to better understand the phenomenon of how students cope with the differences between conversational (BICS) and academic literacy (CALP) practices. The difference in my research project was that the conversations that were held were more cognitively demanding and were the result of specific teaching interventions that I adopted in order to test a theory.

In my research project, three groups of 3 - 5 students participated in the performance of different learning activities (such as reading, talking and writing) either as individuals or as members of a group. Groups 1 and 2 talked, while Group 3 did not. I recorded the group discussions (talk) in order to research how the students interacted and used language to actively engage with each other to express their views and perspectives on a particular topic. I explored how the different groups of students responded to different teaching interventions and was seeking to discover which combinations of teaching interventions best enabled students to begin to present academically appropriate written arguments.

Whereas in the natural sciences one can set up experiments using deductive models to test a theory, in the kind of research I was doing, using human subjects in a specific situation, the method was more that of inductive theorizing in which the analysis was only able to be made after the data from the human behaviour was collected. However my research model diverged from the purely case study research model in that I was not a participant in the research itself. The case study also had an element of artificiality about it, in that it was 'set up' rather like an experiment and was conducted out of normal teaching time, in a seminar room. Furthermore, the topic I chose for the group discussion as well as the background textual information did not emerge directly from the syllabus or curriculum but was selected because of its topicality and potential for stimulating active engagement on the part of the students.

The research method involved the recording of talk in an educational setting. I was not involved directly in the talk that was recorded, other than to explain to the participants what I wanted to do, to divide them randomly into small groups, to set up the tape-recorders in the middle of each table at which each group sat, and to give each group the background texts to read at a particular time in relation to when they were to talk, according to my research design.

I deliberately chose to sit to one side, so that the participants did not feel that they were being overly monitored, although clearly the act of tape-recording their conversations would have given them an expectation that what they were going to say would be listened to at a later stage. This expectation could possibly have led to some extent to 'the observer's paradox' (Labov, 1972) in which the mere act of observing behaviour has an influence on that behaviour. However, in the context of my research project, I judged this potential influential effect to be minimal since in the everyday classroom situation students are accustomed to having their ideas critically assessed by their tutors.

I made audio recordings so that the conversations could be transcribed. The use of transcripts was helpful when analyzing interactive talk as it helped me to identify unexpected 'insights' into my students' understanding and thinking. The advantage of this method was that a detailed discourse analysis could be done. The disadvantage of making audio recordings for transcription is that it is time consuming and can only be done effectively in small groups. However, the smaller groups led to fairly intimate, vibrant conversations which were well suited to my research project. There were also practical advantages to this method of data collection since it was possible to place a tape recorder in the centre of each table and have the participants of each group sit comfortably around it. Although it could have been useful to video record their interactions in order to analyse any non-verbal information such as body language or facial expressions, video recording may also have been more intrusive and may have resulted in a less naturalized interaction than was the case with the less obtrusive tape recorder. Ultimately, despite the fact that there was no visual information recorded, the audio recording indeed revealed many clues beyond the actual words used such as vocal tone, volume and speed of the utterances as well as overlaps and interruptions.

In this research I was particularly interested in what students were doing with the language in the act of making meaning. I used discourse analysis, which derives in part from speech act theory as reflected in the work of Searle (1969) and others to inform my research. Discourse analysis concerns itself with 'the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used' (McCarthy, 1991: 5). It can be used very effectively to describe how language is used in different settings. 'Speech acts' are statements in which an intention is expressed as meaning through the functional use of language (Searle, 1969). In my research I have highlighted the various 'speech acts' that students performed in their conversational

exchanges. I used aspects of both speech act theory and discourse analysis to study the communicative interaction of several small groups of participants in a specific context to try to draw conclusions about how talk stimulates cognitive performance and the development of argument; and how this development can impact on written work in the form of an argumentative essay.

4.4. Data Collection techniques

- The students were divided into three groups of 3 - 5 students
- Each group conversation was tape-recorded.
- Group 1 : (read / talk / write):
 - This group first read some background texts¹ and thereafter discussed the topic pertaining to these texts with their peers, and then each wrote an essay on the topic².
- Group 2: (talk / read / write):
 - This group first discussed a topic with their peers. They were then given some contextualized readings chosen to give further background knowledge on the topic under discussion. They then each wrote a short essay on the topic that was discussed.
- Group 3: (read / write):
 - This group was given contextualized readings but had no discussion. They then independently wrote an essay on a given topic related to the readings.
- Following the group work, all the students engaged in a self-reflective exercise in which they thought and wrote about what they felt they had learnt through the various reading / writing / talking processes to give students a meta understanding of the process.

¹ See Appendix D (p108) for full texts

² See Appendix F1-3 (p115-117) for group tasks

The following types of data were collected:

1. products of writing from all groups:
 - a) essays
 - b) reflections
2. transcriptions of tape-recordings of discussions by groups 1 & 2.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct research was sought from the relevant University authorities before this research study was undertaken. Through the process of informed consent it was explained to all the potential participants that participation in this research was voluntary and that should they choose to participate they would still be able to withdraw from participation at any time should they wish to do so, without being disadvantaged in any way.³

Confidentiality of all participants was ensured by the use of pseudonyms in the research report.

³ See Appendix A (p105) for informed consent forms

4.6. Data Analysis Techniques

- Full transcriptions of the group discussions were produced from which a detailed analysis of students' discourse was made, focusing on the linguistic and cognitive features of the talk to explore the extent to which talk enabled their academic literacy development. Discourse analysis was used as a tool to help discover how students engage in talk with others around a topic to construct their knowledge and understanding.
 - The various *exchanges* that took place through the interactive talk, were analysed closely in terms of what the students were *doing* with the language in functional terms by their various '*speech acts*'. Examples of such speech acts included questions, reiterations, affirmations, contestations, challenges, elaborations, or exemplifications in which the language used performs a certain *act* which evokes some kind of *response* from the listener.
- In view of the limitations of the study owing to the difficulty of students being able to write a fully developed 'academic essay' in terms of time constraints, the written work produced could not be evaluated in terms of ordinary assessment criteria. The essays written by the students in the context of this study were therefore viewed as being at the 'embryonic' stage only, as a rough draft in the process of moving towards a final product with the focus rather being placed on *indicators* that cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) was starting to emerge.
 - The students' essays were analysed with regard to the following indicators of a movement towards CALP:
 - Appropriate academic structure of an argument:
 - Main claim & sub-claims
 - Evidence or examples to support claims
 - Introduction & Conclusion
 - Counter-argument
 - Logical reasoning
 - Coherence and cohesion

- Control of language & register
 - Acknowledgement of sources (from text)
 - Incorporation of information (from text / discussion)
-
- Students' reflections were analysed to explore what kinds of insights into their own learning were made by the students.

CHAPTER 5

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

- 5.1. Group 1 : Read / Talk / Write (R/T/W)
 - 5.1.1. Group 1: Talk
 - 5.1.2. Evaluation of the Talk (Group 1)
 - 5.1.3. Essays and Reflections (Group 1)
 - 5.1.4. Conclusion (Group 1)
- 5.2. Group 2: Talk / Read / Write (T/R/W)
 - 5.2.1. Group 2: Talk
 - 5.2.2. Evaluation of the Talk (Group 2)
 - 5.2.3. Essays and Reflections (Group 2)
 - 5.2.4. Conclusion (Group 2)
- 5.3. Group 3: Read / Write (R/W)
 - 5.3.1. Essays and Reflections (Group 3)
 - 5.3.2. Conclusion (Group 3)

The following chapter describes the findings of the research study in terms of how particular students were able to actively engage with the learning tasks presented to them and how the teaching interventions such as reading and talking informed their writing. This involves a limited discourse analysis of the audio-recordings made of their group discussions as well as a comparative analysis of the transcriptions of their talk and the essays they produced thereafter.

The data that I have collected during the intervention described in chapter 4 comprised transcriptions of talk and writing (an essay and a reflection) of two groups of students, and the writing (an essay and a reflection) of a third group of students. All three groups were given identical background texts to read, but only the first two groups were given an opportunity to talk before writing. The first group read first, then talked, then wrote; the second group talked first, then read, then wrote; and the third group read first, then wrote.

5.1: Group 1: Read / Talk / Write (R/T/W)

In this section I will describe and analyse the talk and writing of the three students who comprised Group 1. This group first read some background texts⁴, then discussed the following topic statement: ***'In this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women'***, after which they each wrote an essay on the same topic they had discussed. I will focus firstly on how their interactions in the

⁴ See Appendix D (p108) for full texts

talk have shown how the students stimulated each other in the development of their argument, and secondly how the interactive talk helped them to formulate their written arguments.

The reading material they were given consisted of three texts which all addressed aspects of this topic but represented different genre types as well as view points. The first text from an internet posting was entitled '*head of household*' and was in the form of a humorous story where the punch line reverses one's expectations and shows how whereas men are supposedly the head of the household (according to religion and tradition) they are in fact dominated by their women. The second text was conversational and anecdotal in tone and written in the genre of a kind of personal message which might be posted in an informal on-line discussion forum, in which the male writer says his ideal living situation would be one that is female-focused, led and directed as well as run, where women are acknowledged as being the true heads of the household. The third text was an example of an academic argument, an extract from an article from the Journal of International Women's Studies (4.1. p 43 (23) Nov 2002) entitled: '*Who will empower the better half? Social dynamics in operation*', in which the two female academics (Debabrata Lahiri and Santanu Mitra) argue for the importance of empowering women and discuss the effects of this on the concept of patriarchy.

I chose a variety of texts which differed in terms of their genre, accessibility and positions, beginning with two amusing and personalized texts, written in a conversational mode close to that of 'BICS' (Cummins, 1996), which it was hoped would stimulate students to argue about the topic and put forward their own viewpoints. The longer final academic text was intended to model the form and structure of academic discourse, and an argument essay.

What follows below is a full transcription of their discussion, in which I attempt a detailed analysis of students' discourse. I will focus on the linguistic and cognitive features of the talk to explore the extent to which talk may enable their academic literacy development. The various *exchanges* that take place through the interactive talk, can serve to inform, reinforce, acknowledge, motivate or challenge the other group members and effectively move the argument forward. It is my hypothesis that through this process, both linguistic and cognitive skills are developed. I will therefore analyze closely what the students are *doing* with the language in functional terms by their various '*speech acts*'. Examples of such speech acts would include questions, reiterations, affirmations, contestations, challenges, elaborations, or

exemplifications in which the language performs a certain *act* which evokes some kind of *response* from the listener.

For reasons of clarity, I will highlight these speech acts as well as the responses they evoke in **bold** typeface.

5.1.1. Group 1: talk

The three students in the first group comprised one female and two males. The female in the group, Nomsa⁵, has shown herself in class to be intelligent and articulate. Although her home language is not English, she had completed high school where the medium of instruction was English and had passed Matric English on Higher Grade. It may therefore seem that she may have had an advantage over her peers in a group discussion situation conducted in English. Her confidence in expressing herself was clearly evident and to a large extent she dominated the conversation. Nomsa **initiates** the discussion as follows:

(1.1) N: What's your view on it Vusi?

Nomsa starts the discussion with a **question** relating to the topic statement (highlighted above) to one of her fellow group members, a male student, Vusi, who had also shown himself to be a fairly capable student in class. By this **act of questioning**, Nomsa **encourages** Vusi to engage actively with the topic and **stimulates** his thinking process.

(1.2) V: Um I think its true, even though I don't really agree with it, that women are actually taking over as head of the household because generally most of the decisions are done by them, the men just work and bring in income and as much as I disagree with it, it's true..

When Vusi refers to women, '*actually taking over as head of the household*', he is **referring** to and **engaging** with the topic statement and the texts that he was given to read. In the extract above, Vusi displays an appropriate 'level of academically relevant understanding' (Biggs, 2003) in terms of which he is **explaining** a concept in its relationship to the topic as a whole, in this case that of women taking over from men as head of the household because of their decision making power in the home. He also seems to display an impartial approach by his comment (above) that despite disagreeing with the topic statement, he thinks it is a true reflection of the status of women.

⁵ I will be using pseudonyms for all the students that participated in this research project

Nomsa responds:

(1.3) N: Ok, I don't actually **agree with that**

Nomsa **acknowledges** Vusi with her opening word '*ok*', and then by using the words '*agree with that*' Nomsa **reiterates** what Vusi has just said when he said at the start of his comment: '*I don't really agree with it*' (1.2) and later at the end: '*as much as I disagree with it..*'. (1.2) In **reiterating** Vusi's words here, Nomsa's words have the effect of **acknowledging**, yet **contesting** Vusi's comment. She **builds** on his argument when she says:

(1.4) N: because I tend to think that in the past, **men did work** and women were not involved in financial matters

Here, Nomsa's phrase '*men did work*', **links** back to Vusi's earlier comment that '*the men just work and bring in income*' (1.2). She **elaborates** when she continues:

(1.5) N: and that discriminates women in a way that if the marriage was to be over, the women had nothing to fall back on, you know?

Nomsa **elaborates** further by providing **exemplification** of the empowerment of women in her following comment:

(1.6) N: and I think right now the *empowerment* that is given to women is just a way of *equalizing* us to the level that men are at because they've been given years and years to develop themselves whilst we're just beginning to develop ourselves and to actually have something to fall back on and, you know, to get positions in economics and other fields that we've not been able to *venture* into...

Nomsa's use of words such as '*empowerment*', '*equalizing*' and '*venture*' shows her growing proficiency in terms of academic language. She is also attempting to use 'academic discourse' by the use of more complex vocabulary as she recognizes that it is an 'academic' discussion taking place in an 'academic' context. This can be seen as an example of what Paxton (2007) terms 'interim literacies'. Paxton develops the notion of 'interim literacies' as a reaction to the hitherto 'deficit' view of English second language speakers to describe how students make meaning by 'reworking past discourses, appropriating and adapting new discourses to make them their own' (2007:45).

The third group member, Msizi, a male, whose proficiency in English was not as developed as the other two members, does not follow on from Nomsa's argument but links back and **acknowledges** Vusi's opening comments when he says:

- (1.7) M: er I agree with Vusi when he say that em women are the head of the household nowadays because like in most womens, women are the one who are the bread winners and responsible for any household like yeh

Here Msizi's initial hesitations signaled by 'er' and 'em' have the effect of creating space and time for him to collect his thoughts before making his point. He **signals his agreement** with Vusi when he says '*I agree with Vusi when he say...*' and his use of the phrase '*women are the head of the household nowadays*' **reiterates** Vusi's words that '*women are actually taking over as head of the household*' (1.2).

Vusi **affirms** the other members of his group by his opening, 'yes', and **reiterates** the argument by linking back to Nomsa's words where she had said: '*in the past, men did work*' (1.4) when he responds:

- (1.8) V: Yes in the past men did work,

Vusi **reinforces, elaborates** and **develops** Nomsa's point that '*the empowerment that is given to women is just a way of equalizing us to the level that men are at....we're just beginning to develop ourselves*' (1.6) when he says:

- (1.9) V: but now it's generally women who are actually *working for themselves* and bringing themselves up the rank, it's not like there's a helping hand for them to actually to get to where they are, they're actually *working by themselves to empower themselves* and thus becoming seen as dominating, and these things...

The phenomenon as indicated above, where one speaker reiterates another's vocabulary or phrases during their turn-taking and thereby develops and expands on a topic, has been referred to as 'relexicalisation' (McCarthy, 1991). According to McCarthy, there is a very close bond between 'topic development and the modification and reworking of lexical items already used' in spoken interaction which helps to develop a coherent conversation. He states that this process is in accordance with an 'ethnomethodological approach to discourse analysis' in which a discussion takes place as a 'joint activity that has to be worked at'. (1991:70)

In the next exchange, Msizi again **adds to** and **develops** the argument by using the phrase '*in addition*' when he **links** his comments to those previously made by Vusi when he says:

- (1.10) M: **In addition** to what Vusi has just said,

and further **elaborates** and **builds** on the developing argument with some new ideas relating to the topic as a whole by referring to a new dimension, i.e. the single mother, when he says:

- (1.11) M: Most, I've noticed that most women are *the single parents* who raise their kids by themselves so it means that men don't usually take responsibility so I can take it that women are the heads of the households.

Here Msizi because he introduces new evidence in support of the general topic under discussion when mentioning a new topic – single parents, displays the beginnings of what Biggs (2003) terms a '*relational*' level of academic understanding. In terms of Bigg's SOLO (Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome) framework in which he describes a hierarchy of levels of understanding which can be gradually developed, whereby the student not only increases knowledge, but also deepens understanding, with each higher level building on the understanding achieved at the level below it. This moves from a *prestructural* level (which is similar to Cummins' concept of 'BICS' and indicative of a very shallow level of understanding) through a *unistructural* level (where more is understood, but much left out), and a *multistructural* level (which goes further but does not address underlying issues), to the *relational* level, where concepts are not just described, but are explained in terms of their relationship to the topic as a whole. In assessing his level of cognitive academic language proficiency or 'CALP' (Cummins, 1996), Msizi's explanation here may also be seen as an example of 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007) whereby the student is making meaning in the context of academic discourse while using some colloquial language in this exchange. In this way students mix together their own 'voice' with that of the academy in a kind of transitional or 'interim' process.

Nomsa, by the use of the same connective ('*in addition*') used previously by Msizi (1.10), **links** and **adds** to the developing argument, and **elaborates** on Vusi's earlier idea that women '*are bringing themselves up the rank*' (1.9) when she says:

- (1.12) N: **In addition** to what you said, right, I tend to think that women, ok fine, women are, like getting high positions, and I think it's because we work hard.

Nomsa has brought in a new idea that women *work hard*. She then **contextualizes** this new idea when she **compares** today's employment and education situation with that of the past:

- (1.13) N: Back in the days, men just finished matric and got jobs, you don't have to go tertiary, get a major education, you could get a very high position in any company,

She then **explains** that women today are working for better jobs and opportunities:

(1.14) N: now women are trying to educate themselves, you know, they're getting degrees and whatnot, just to get better positions and because women are going the extra route of getting the education and what not this leads to better positions for them... so it's just equality at its best, you know? There's no side-lining, ok you're a man and what not, we're all getting to work equally and you reap the benefits of what you put in.

Vusi responds thus:

(1.15) V: Yes...mm

His positive response, 'yes' followed by the **affirming** sound 'mm' signals that he is both **assenting** to and **thinking** about Nomsa's above comments. Here by this vocalization, or what is called a '*back-channel*' response, Vusi makes it clear to the speaker (Nomsa) that he is attending to her message.

Msizi at this point tends to be an outsider to the exchange taking place between Nomsa and Vusi and in his next comment does not respond directly to their developing argument, but instead **reiterates** and develops his own previous argument in which he had mentioned that '*women are the ones who are the bread winners and responsible for any household*' (1.7) when he comments:

(1.16) M: I think there's an error of men being the head of the household, because like men nowadays they don't usually do the most things. They usually like, maybe they have kids and go somewhere for work and then most of them they won't return, like, ya... then it's left for women to take *responsibilities* of all these kids which are left there.

Here Msizi introduces new information to the discussion when he refers to the factor of migrant labour and how this impacts on rural women having to take on the full responsibility for being the head of the household.

Vusi then **acknowledges** and thereby **affirms** the previous comment made by Msizi when he says:

(1.17) V: That's very true,

He then **reiterates** his own words about women '*bringing themselves up the rank*' (1.9) when he continues to develop his argument thus:

(1.18) V: even today women that actually are independent, are actually moving up the rank

and brings in an **example** to support this claim thus displaying his cognitive skills when he says:

- (1.19) V: even in politics women are actually acquiring very high political status like Mantu and even though these days people are trying to take them down, they're still up there, they're still holding high political status and power.

By introducing an example here, '*like Mantu*' which refers to the Health Minister, Mantu Tshabalala Msimang, Vusi is arguing in an appropriately academic manner since supplying evidence to support an argument is considered an important criterion for academic argument. His thinking processes are illustrated by his listening to the others, by engaging with their ideas, by making cognitive links with these ideas and in his repetition of these ideas and by providing an example he reaffirms the ideas for himself. His use of the expression 'like Mantu' is also an *exophoric* (outward) reference which directs the other group members into an 'assumed shared world' (McCarthy, 1991) in which they also have knowledge and experience of the referent (Mantu).

Nomsa replies:

- (1.20) N: *and to add on,*

The above use of the conjunctive '*and*' and the connective, '*to add on*' is an indication of how Nomsa **engages** with and **links** with the previous student's argument to develop her own position with regard to the topic. The use of this type of linking phrase can be seen as an example of what McCarthy terms '*discourse markers*' which serve to organize and 'manage' 'extended stretches of discourse' (1991:49) .

She **builds** on Vusi's ideas when she **elaborates** on the relationships between men and women in the context of marriage:

- (1.21) N: I think this whole empowerment thing for **women**... ok fine, **women** are being empowered but still **they** know their role. If **a woman** is married, especially in a South African context, you know, **you** are still submissive to **your** husband. There is no way that **you** can come to **your** husband and talk to him like **you** talking to **your** child or whatnot you know, **your** respect is still a vital, it still plays a vital role in any marriage, you know, and ok fine, **women** are being empowered, **we're** taking on professions that men are also taking, but, **we're** not forgetting that, ok fine, in any marriage **you** are to respect **your** husband, you know, so yeh, I think that also counts.

In the above extract, Nomsa mixes up her use of the objective form when she speaks about '*women*' and '*a woman*' with the use of the subjective personal pronouns, when she talks of

'you', 'your', and 'we're'. This mixing up of the two types, objective and subjective, is common in the conversational mode, but by signaling a close identification between the generic term 'women' and the personal pronoun 'you' and the possessive personal pronoun 'your' in the phrase 'your husband', Nomsa personalizes the topic since she is herself a female and the suggestion is implicit that she is someone who will one day potentially have a husband.

Vusi's next 'back-channel' response is an **acknowledgement** and signals that he has 'heard' Nomsa's comments and is **thinking** about the new idea she has introduced to the argument when he simply responds with:

(1.22) V: Mmm

Msizi then **reiterates** his earlier claim (1.16) when he uses the words '*head of the household*', and provides an **example** thus **building** the argument further:

(1.23) M: I think men are most of the time are regarded as the **head of household** because most of them are, are good financially, they can support their families, not because they take responsibilities of (inaudible).. they only support financial like yeh.

Vusi then **acknowledges** and **affirms** what Msizi has said and shows that he has been listening to him by his use of 'yeh' when he responds:

(1.24) V: **yeh** so overall, women know their position at home...

And then Vusi by his use of the conjunction 'yet', indicates an *adversative* relationship or alternative argument to the discussion or debate:

(1.25) V: ...and **yet** they go outside and make something of themselves which in the end benefits the whole family...

Vusi then searches for appropriate vocabulary ('um.. *what's the word..*')

(1.26) V: and it is seen as something that is .um. what's the **word**, strong and dominant.

Vusi's struggle to find the correct word, and then his use of the two words '*strong and dominant*' in its place, may be an indication of how students intersect 'academic discourse' and their own voices to create 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007).

When Nomsa speaks again, she **re-iterates** her personalization of the topic with reference to the relationship between men and women in a marriage when she **challenges** Vusi:

(1.27) N: And like, ok, to put in a personal point of view, how would you take, a woman, like if you were in a marriage, a woman being in a higher **rank** than you?

Her use of the word '*rank*' here echoes Vusi's earlier references to women '*bringing themselves up the rank*'. (1.9) To which Vusi replies:

(1.28) V: I wouldn't like it that much cos..

and is supported by Msizi who **completes** Vusi's sentence (and thought) when he says:

(1.29) M: it's **unfair**...

The above exchange illustrates how in turn-taking, different speakers can often predict one another's utterances and complete these for them. (McCarthy, 1991:127) Vusi responds positively to Msizi's completing of his utterance, thereby **acknowledging** and **affirming** Msizi's point:

(1.30) V: Yes... so **unfair**,

Vusi's repetition of the word '*unfair*' **links** with Msizi's comment (1.29) and Vusi now **builds** a further argument which he **illustrates** with an **example** from his own life:

(1.31) V: my whole life, my father's been the **dominant** one in the family, I'm sure my grandfather must have been the **dominant** one in the family, so its only fair that I also become the **dominant** one in the family,...

Nomsa **echoes** Vusi's repeated use of the word '*dominant*' and **follows-up** with the following **question**, slightly developing the meaning of dominance to focus specifically on the financial angle. This introduces a new phase in the argument, showing cognitive development. She also **challenges** Vusi to respond to a specific scenario on a personal level as a man and a future potential husband:

(1.32) N: If she is the **dominant** one, financially that is, how's that gonna deal, how you gonna deal with that?

to which he **responds**:

(1.33) V: I..., I wouldn't like it that much, but it's something that's there which you cannot demand, which you...

This response in turn **stimulates** new thinking on Nomsa's part who introduces a different aspect of the argument when she highlights the different roles that men and women have been '*created for*':

- (1.34) N: I just tend to think, I mean, you as a man, you've been *created for* a certain role that you're only one that can achieve it, and as a woman I cannot step in your shoes, you know, there's a lot of things that women can do, **but** I cannot be a man, you know, there's certain things that you can do that I cannot do, you know...

In the above extract, Nomsa attempts to **explain** and **illustrate** emphatically (signaled by the use of the adversative word, '**but**') the division of roles between men and women.

She **concludes** from her claim outlined above the following:

- (1.35) N: ...so I just tend to think that the whole financial thing that people tend to associate women empowerment with, is just a blurred vision, you know, it's being narrow minded and we not taking into consideration all the aspects, you know? Yeh.

Nomsa seems to '**enable**' the other students in her group to think further about the claims she makes. For instance, although Nomsa does not fully articulate the division of roles between men and women in the above extracts, she indeed **stimulates** Msizi to **articulate** and **name** the role of men as '*provider and protector*' which he relates to the level of respect they earn as a result, to the developing argument:

- (1.36) M: I think most men are **respected** in their families because they can be the *provider and protector* of their families, so if the women earns a lot of money than a man then the **respect** for the man will be less, you know, he wont be **respected** that much, ya.

The fact that Msizi, whose language proficiency as had been demonstrated in his general classwork was weaker than that of his peers in this particular group discussion, was able to clearly articulate his ideas as shown in the above extract, may be seen as an example of Vygotsky's (1978) 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD). ZPD is an observable occurrence in which cognitive development takes place as a result of social interaction and social learning in which the gap between what is known and what comes to be known is bridged. In this case Msizi bridged the gap and effectively performed a cognitive task through the collaborative use of language in the talk. It could be argued that this learning would not have taken place had it not been for the stimulation of the interactive talk with his other 'more capable peers'.

Nomsa then **reiterates** Msizi's use of the word '*respect*' in her counter-argument, when she **links** her response to Msizi's claim and **develops the meaning** regarding the connection between the respect afforded a man and the amount of money he is able to earn in order to provide for his family:

- (1.37) N: But, ok if, I mean, if you play your role, and you're responsible, I think **respect** is due to you, because you are doing your part, you know, and I mean it would be very shallow to actually determine how I **respect** you by the size of your financial status... honestly, so I just think that is just a silly excuse...

In turn, Msizi **opposes** Nomsa's counter-argument with the word '*no*', and continues to **justify** his opinion by giving **examples** from his observed life experience:

- (1.38) M: **No** its because traditionally, most men, oh, for the housework, it's the women who who who do the cooking and most of these things, but I've noticed that in these families in which the father is not working, it's the father who wash the babies, do the cooking, do all these things, so that's why I say **respect** is less...

While Msizi's slight stammering when he says 'who who who..' may signal that he feels **challenged** by Nomsa's position, Msizi provides specific **examples** (or evidence) to illustrate his view, which is an important criteria for academic argument. He clearly **restates** his point of view and the **repetition** of the '*respect*' in his closing lines serves to **re-emphasize** his main claim at this point in the argument.

In the following extract, Vusi's use of the word '*finance*' **reinforces the link** with Nomsa and **reiterates** Nomsa's earlier comment about determining how much respect a person is due in terms of their '*financial status*' (1.37) when he says:

- (1.39) V: I know that its true that you can't actually judge a person with their **finance**, but still a guy will feel that that he, ah what's the word.. ah

Here Vusi again struggles to find the appropriate word to express his meaning, and Nomsa attempts to **complete his thought** for him by supplying a word in her comment:

- (1.40) N: Will feel what? Disempowered?

Here Nomsa is **questioning** Vusi, thus **forcing** him to examine and **justify** his argument to the other members of the group. In the next few interactions which begin with Vusi repeating '*no no*' as he attempts to **resist** Nomsa's assertive questioning it can be seen that this repeated questioning has the effect of **motivating** Vusi to finally adopt a firm position:

- (1.41) V: **No no** it's just that when he brings in something it feels like he's doing his family, ah.. (laughter)
- (1.42) N: Just because he's bringing in a bigger salary..?
- (1.43) V: He can get whatever his family wants, he's the one whose supporting, that's what makes him feel like, he's **the head of the house** instead of having the wife do what he's supposed to be doing.

Here Vusi's mentioning of the phrase '*the head of the house*' **re-establishes** the argument in terms of the topic statement that is under discussion. There is an identity struggle taking place in this interaction where the male and female roles are being debated. The male socialization issue plays an important role in this discussion. In the above extract, Vusi **summarizes** and **affirms** his position with regard to the male role. This **challenges** Nomsa who responds firstly by her **reiteration** of some of Vusi's earlier comments about the traditional dominance of men in the household:

- (1.44) N: I think, ok, honestly that this is just the mentality that most have... because you, you were raised up in a household where your father was most probably the **dominant** figure and your mother was **submissive** and I mean in this day and age, I, I as a girl, I tend to think I am **submissive** to most male figures,

In this above extract, Nomsa introduces some *lexical cohesion* with her **repetition** of the exact word '*dominant*' which Vusi had used earlier with reference to his father and grandfather (1.31), and in so doing also **acknowledges** Vusi's argument. Nomsa then linguistically **develops** her own argument and **reasserts her meaning** by including its antonym, the word '*submissive*,' with regard to Vusi's mother. She also personalizes this in which she includes herself as a female who tends to be '*submissive to most male figures*'. Here Nomsa exhibits some language development in her sophisticated use of words and her juxtaposing of the antonyms '*dominant*' and '*submissive*' in her above response.

Having conceded this aspect of the argument, Nomsa then shows an understanding of *appropriacy* in structuring an academic argument when she **re-affirms** her position with regard to the topic. She starts her **re-statement** with an emphatic '*but...*' followed by an extended pause for maximum effect. The word '*but*' is repeated again to re-emphasize her point that women are increasingly economically empowered and not dependent on men for their financial well-being in the following extract:

- (1.45) N: ...*but...* I also have my stand, you know, and you bringing something is nice, *but* I won't

expect you to always do that, especially if I'm the one that is gonna be making most of the money, which I am gonna be doing in the near future!

5.1.2: Evaluation of the talk (Group 1: R/T/W)

In the above analysis of group one's discussion, I have tried to show how these three students were able to engage with each other in an interactive manner in terms of '*speech acts*' in which they responded to each other's ideas; made links with each others' ideas and used these to develop their own positions in relation to the topic; questioned one another to push the argument or the other person a little further; added to another's point or elaborated on it to develop the argument; and also opposed each other's argument, finding ways to justify their own positions in relation to the topic being discussed.

In this interaction it can clearly be seen how talk has stimulated the students' thinking (cognitive skills). When students struggle to find the 'appropriate' language to correctly express their meanings, I would argue that through the group talk, individual students are forced to think more deeply about making their meanings clear to one another. When they interact in a structured situation where talk is at a 'deeper' level than that of everyday conversation, the various 'speech acts' through which they try to effectively communicate meaning using language which is not completely familiar to them 'stretches' their creative and cognitive ability. Through 'deep' talk, some of the requirements of academic discourse begin to be developed. The concept of 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007) is useful here in that it helps to show how through talk students create a transitional space between their everyday conversational exchanges (BICS) and the language of 'academic discourse' in which a more cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) is required.

5.1.3: Group 1: Essays and Reflections

In the next section I examine the writing (essays and reflections)⁶ of each of the participants in discussion group 1 to discover if and how the talk (and the reading prior to the talk) informed their writing.

⁶ See Appendix G (p118) for copies of their original writing

5.1.3.1. Vusi's essay

The construction of Vusi's essay shows an understanding of some of the cognitive criteria for academic literacy that have been established by Ballard and Clanchy, (1988) since he attempts to present his argument in 'a *well reasoned way*' by including '*relevant information*' to '*support his claim*'. This shows the beginnings of an understanding of this important academic requirement. He writes in the opening paragraph of his essay:

- (1.46) *In this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women. Women are gradually **climbing up the ranks** in terms of job accumulation and that is a fact that cannot be side-lined. Women are indeed taking control of activities that take place in the household and in the corporate world as well.*

This opening claim that Vusi makes in his essay directly links to the claim he made in the discussion that women are '*independent and actually moving up the rank*'. (1.9) In the *discussion* phase Vusi had shown an understanding of the requirements for academic argument when he illustrated his claim with a supporting example when he said (1.19):

...even in politics women are actually acquiring very **high political status** like Mantu and even though these days people are trying to take them down, they're still up there, they're still holding **high political status and power**.

In his essay, Vusi refers to the above example from the *discussion* in the following way:

- (1.47) *Today, women are financially stronger than their counterparts. Women are getting better jobs and better positions. Furthermore, they are also accumulating **high political status and power**. If we had to look at Manto Tshabalala for instance, she is a strong woman, she has political influence and power.*

In his writing Vusi also exhibits some degree of linguistic competence in his use of linking words and signposting to signal in which direction his argument is moving. With '*furthermore*', he signals elaboration of his argument, with '*even though*' and '*whereas*' he signals a contrasting aspect to the argument:

- (1.48) ***Furthermore**, household activities are generally controlled by women, decisions on what is best is done by the female. Over 80% of the things found in a married couples house are chosen by the female **even though** they were not necessarily bought by the female. Even the gardens these days are being done by the female **whereas***

in the past the garden was a male's responsibility. Women are generally getting stronger in almost everything that men can do.

Vusi's use of the *connectives* in the above extract act as *signposts* to help signal to the reader in which direction his argument is moving. This helps to create a well-formed text. His argument is 'well-reasoned' and shows 'relational thinking', both of which are important criteria for argument in an academic context. Relationality is an aspect of academically relevant understanding, where concepts are not just described, but explained in terms of their relationship to topic as a whole (Biggs, 2003). Vusi also exhibits a degree of higher order thinking in his essay when he is able to elaborate on and explain some concepts such as the disempowerment of men by women. While he does not present a clear counter argument in his essay, in the *talk* he did in fact express 'disagreement' with the topic.

It is interesting to note that Vusi uses similar phrases in his *essay* to those that he used previously in the *discussion* which did not appear anywhere in the texts, such as when he referred in the *talk* to the fact that

(1.9) now its generally women who are actually working for themselves and bringing themselves **up the rank**

and in his *essay* he writes:

(1.49) *Women are gradually climbing **up the ranks** in terms of job accumulation*

This echoing of the term 'up the rank/s' indicates the thought process that has taken place from the time Vusi *talked* until the time he *wrote* his essay. Talk, in this case served a useful purpose as a kind of 'sounding board' for his ideas. When Vusi's notion about women moving 'up the ranks' (1.9) which he contributed in the group discussion was not contested, this notion could be confidently used and elaborated on in the formal part of the process, as he did when he came to write his essay.

In his concluding paragraph, Vusi writes:

(1.50) *In today's fast life, there are a lot of **single mothers**. Even though there are those who are struggling there is still a large number of independent single mothers who do not need a male figure in their lifes, so it just goes to show that women do not need men anymore.*

Vusi's reference in his essay to '*single mothers*' can be related directly to a point that Msizi had raised in the discussion when he said (1.11):

most, I've noticed that most women are *the single parents* who raise their kids by themselves so it means that men don't usually take responsibility so I can take it that women are the heads of the households

The fact that Vusi incorporated the ideas of another student as well as his own ideas into his essay showed that the *talk* was an effective means of focusing his thinking into writing.

Vusi's main claim in his introduction (1.46) was that:

'women are indeed taking control of activities that take place in the household and in the corporate world as well'

His final conclusion is a re-statement of this main claim:

(1.51) *So to conclude women are indeed taking over the corporate and political world and also the household.*

By linking his introduction to his conclusion, Vusi is using 'correct' academic structure when writing an argument essay. Students were taught in their academic literacy development course at UJ that an important function of the conclusion of argument essay in an academic context should be the re-emphasis of and linking back to the main claim which should be clearly stated in their introduction.

5.1.3.2. Vusi's Reflection

Vusi wrote in his reflection that he felt that his essay was more strongly based on the reading rather than the discussion itself. He also felt that reading first before talking was helpful because he '*first got an insight on what our discussion would be about*'. He writes:

(1.52) *Even though the discussion helped me to see the **different side** of the statement I still found that I kept referring to the reading.*

Vusi here has shown an ability to engage in 'meta' reflection in which he is actively thinking about his process of learning. It is significant that he mentions that the discussion helped him to see '*the different side*' of the topic as the exposure to varied opinion is an important and fundamental aspect of academic discourse.

5.1.3.3. Evaluation of Vusi's writing in terms of my research question

It may be that in Vusi's case, although he found the talk helpful as he mentioned in his reflection, the fact that he felt that he tended to refer to the texts more than what had emerged in the discussion, may lead to an assumption that the talk has perhaps not impacted very greatly on his ability to write an academically appropriate essay. However, there were indeed several examples (as mentioned above in the analysis of Vusi's essay) where specific ideas that he formulated during the talk phase were used very effectively in the writing phase. I would argue that talk has in fact positively informed much of Vusi's writing.

5.1.3.4. Msizi's essay

In his essay Msizi incorporated some of the views expressed by others in the group in particular, the other male member, Vusi. For Msizi, talk has greatly impacted on his writing. Some elements of CALP can be seen in his writing which appear to be a direct result of the discussion that went before.

For example: in his essay he writes:

(1.53) *Because we now living in the 21 Century, women are also economically empowered and have high positions politically*

In which he was clearly influenced by Vusi's remarks (1.19) during the discussion:

That's very true, even today women that actually are independent, are actually moving up the rank even in politics women are actually acquiring very **high political status** like Mantu and even though these days people are trying to take them down, they're still up there, they're still holding high political status and power

Msizi's essay was very short but he did exhibit a degree of 'relational' (Biggs, 2003) thinking when he analysed a situation that has led to women taking on the prime responsibility for their families in the rural areas due to the migration of men to urban areas in search of employment. His essay directly reflected his own comments in the *talk* (1.16) when he had said:

I think there's an error of men being the head of the household, because like men nowadays they don't usually do the most things. They usually like, maybe they have kids and go somewhere for work and then most of them they wont return, like, ya.. then it's left for women to take *responsibilities* of all these kids which are left there

In his essay he writes:

- (1.54) *Men were made to be the **spiritual leaders in their families**. **However**, women are the head of the household in most families. The majority of women have courage for their families, **because** they are the bread winner, look after the children and also do the cooking. In the past men used to leave rural areas to urban in search for a job, but after getting a job they do not think about returning home, also forget that he left a wife with children. **Therefore**, a woman starts from there to take responsibility of a family.*

In the above extract Msizi has used connectives such as ‘*however*’, to signal a contrasting statement; ‘*because*’ and ‘*therefore*’ to signal a causal effect. He has used these linking devices in an academically appropriate way creating a well structured, cohesive and coherent paragraph. By writing in a cohesive way, Msizi is exhibiting relationality, which is an academically relevant form of understanding (Biggs, 2003). It is interesting to note that Msizi’s writing here exhibits more fluency than that of his talk.

In the above extract he used the phrase ‘*spiritual leader in their families*’ which phrase closely resembles a phrase from the first *text* that he was given to read.:

God said, "You men should be ashamed of yourselves. I created you to be the head of your household. You have been disobedient and not fulfilled your purpose. I told you to be the **spiritual leader in your family**. Of all of you only one obeyed.

Although Msizi has not actually cited the source of this phrase, (an error of omission that is common to first year university students), by using the actual words of what might be perceived to be an authoritative text, a student may mimic the discourse of the academy in order to gradually adapt his identity to it. Angelil-Carter (2000) argues that rather than portraying this kind of student activity as a form of plagiarism, imitation is actually an important part of the learning process. This can be likened to what Gee terms ‘mushfake discourse’, where if full fluency in a Discourse is not possible, then ‘partial acquisition coupled with meta-knowledge and strategies to ‘make do’ ’ must suffice (Gee, 1996:147).

Although expressed very simply at a basic level of discourse (BICS) with his own ‘voice’, and despite the understandable limitations of his academic language proficiency as an EAL student, Msizi was still able to illustrate, in this extract (above), a practical understanding of the concept of feminism and the gradual disempowerment of men by women. In this way, this student could be said to have expressed himself at a ‘relational’ level in terms of Bigg’s SOLO

taxonomy, (Biggs, 2003) which is at a level of academically relevant understanding in which concepts are not just described but explained in terms of their relationship to the topic as a whole. During the talk phase, Msizi was clearly able to find his own 'voice' in relation to his position on the topic under discussion, as can be seen in the section above where I have analysed the group talk and he has been able to effectively communicate this in his writing.

5.1.3.5. Msizi's reflection

Msizi shows some meta-understanding of the process of talking before writing when he writes in his reflection:

- (1.55) *I have learnt that when working with a group, you must respect other people's ideas and take them as important as yours. The writing was more challenging, but we had enough time to write.*

Msizi felt that he benefited from participating in a group discussion. His attempt to find an appropriate academic term to describe how he felt has led him to use a hybrid form of the words 'benefit' and 'beneficiary':

- (1.56) *It was **beneficiary** to work with a group, as it has put me on a huge context, for example knowing how other people feel about the topic because we all have different views.*

This attempt, rather than being seen as a 'lack' of proficiency, can on the contrary be seen as an indication that his linguistic competency is actually increasing and developing. As an EAL student, Msizi is in this extract attempting to use the more formal term of a word to suit the academic discourse in which he is gradually becoming enculturated. Neville (1996) writes about a 'literacy culture shock' that first year university students experience. It is Neville's contention that students gradually develop this new kind of identity and academic literacy as they are 'enculturated' into the academy and into their specific fields of study. It is also an example of how a first year student's identity begins to change in terms of their ability to adapt their primary discourse to that of the secondary (academic) discourse expected in a university context. (Gee, 1996). Paxton's (2007) notion of 'interim literacies' which describes the 'transition process' that first year university students experience from school and home to academic literacy may help to explain what may be happening here.

5.1.3.6. Evaluation of Msizi's writing in terms of my research question

This student's writing clearly was influenced by both the discussion and the reading. He was able to incorporate in his essay the arguments he developed in collaboration with his peers as well as some of the ideas he gleaned from the readings. He elaborated, using examples from his own experience on factors which came from the readings as well as those which arose in the exchanges during the talk. I would argue that this student was able to find his

own 'voice' through the process of 'deep talk' which enabled him to express himself more positively in his essay.

5.1.3.7. Nomsa's essay

In the introduction to her essay Nomsa started out by saying she was '*against the topic*', which was: 'in this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women'. She agreed that feminism was empowering women, but she saw this as a way to *equalize* the genders and not to make women more dominant over men. She writes in her introduction:

(1.57) *The popular view from men is that they are being overpowered and made to feel inferior **whereas** women feel elevated to also be **dominant** figures in society.*

This comment is an acknowledgement of a counter-argument and Nomsa's use of the connective, '*whereas*' signals the refutation. The use of the linking word to signal a contrasting idea creates a coherent sentence. Her comment and the use of the word '*dominant*' here **reiterates** the point of view expressed by Vusi in the discussion held previously when he said (1.31):

my whole life, my father's been the **dominant** one in the family, I'm sure my grandfather must have been the **dominant** one in the family, so its only fair that I also become the **dominant** one in the family

as well as Vusi's comment about women today (1.9):

..they're actually working by themselves to empower themselves and thus becoming seen as **dominating**..

Nomsa's reiteration of the word '*dominant*' as well as the re-working in her essay of Vusi's argument (above) from the *talk* shows that she has found the talk useful in helping her to formulate her argument for her essay. She also found the reading useful and shows a development of academic literacy in terms of the referencing aspect, when she quotes the following line from the journal extract:

"women empowerment is the acquisition by an average woman of the capability to actively participate in decision making"

and goes on to comment in her essay that

(1.58) *this quote is so relevant because for years women didn't have a **voice** - they were abused, misused and taken advantage of.*

Here Nomsa is showing evidence of the development of academic literacy in her choice of a relevant quote from an academic text to support her argument. In her essay she has also shown a 'relational' level, in which 'academically relevant understanding' (Biggs, 2003) is exhibited where a concept, in this case, feminism, is explained in terms of its relationship to the topic as a whole, in this case, the issue of disempowerment of men by women. Her metaphorical use of the word 'voice' in the above extract also shows Nomsa to be developing linguistic proficiency.

Nomsa refers back to the topic statement regarding men being the traditional head of the household and also gives some historical context to her argument. As part of their academic literacy development course at UJ students were taught some important features of how to structure an argument essay in an academic context. One of these features was to provide background information to place the main argument in its wider context. Another feature was to state the claim clearly in terms of its relationship to the main topic statement. Nomsa fulfills both of these academic criteria when she *contextualizes* her claim by the following statement in her essay:

(1.59) *Now laws have been put in place to protect women especially from men who overused their **traditional heads of the household** position. Before any laws were put in place women were seen as inferior and their purpose was for breeding.*

Her conclusion links with her main claim made in her introduction in which she wrote that men felt they were '*being overpowered*' and made to '*feel inferior*' by women becoming '*dominant figures in society*'. By linking the conclusion to the introduction, Nomsa exhibits yet another important feature of an appropriately structured argumentative essay.

In both in the discussion and in her essay, Nomsa referred to the relationship between the '*empowerment*' of women and the '*equalizing*' of men and women. Nomsa was able to acquire and develop this concept from the reading as can be seen in the following quote from the journal extract she was given to read before the discussion:

"(Her) **empowerment** is complete when she participates on **equal** terms with her male counterpart."

In the conclusion to her essay, Nomsa reiterates her argument that the '*empowerment*' of women is not to be seen as making men feel inferior, but has rather been a process of equalization of a previous imbalance in society. She writes:

(1.60) *empowerment has equalized all genders placing all people in the same position. Men and women now have to work hard and get qualifications for whatever field of work they would like to venture into*

This links back to her earlier claim made during the *discussion* phase when she said (1.6):

And I think right now the **empowerment** that is given to women is just a way of **equalizing** us to the level that men are at because they've been given years and years to develop themselves whilst we're just beginning to develop ourselves and to actually have something to fall back on and, you know, to get positions in economics and other **fields** that we've not been able to **venture into**..

These two extracts, one from the transcript of the talk phase, and the other from her essay, which both make mention of the relationship between the empowerment of women and the equalization of the genders, as had been mentioned in the journal extract, illustrate Nomsa's understanding of the meaning of the academic text, as well as her ability to incorporate this complex idea into her argument both in her talk as well as in her writing.

5.1.3.8. Nomsa's reflection

In her reflection Nomsa exhibits meta-reflective ability as she is able to highlight five different and relevant points about her own learning through the process of reading, talking and writing. She writes:

(1.61) *when reading about a certain topic you acquire relevant information about the topic*

Nomsa realizes that the acquisition of '*relevant information*' is important in order to 'inform' the discussion. In this way, armed with some knowledge on a topic, the group can talk 'deeper' than may have been the case if they had not read first before talking.

The second point she makes is that by reading first, one

(1.62) *...can have a substantial argument regarding the topic, and later discussion.*

Nomsa again shows insight into the fact that once you have information it makes your argument more '*substantial*' and as a consequence 'deeper'. Knowledge about the topic helps students to move from the BICS level of communication towards CALP.

Nomsa's third point is that

(1.63) *After reading and then sharing viewpoints and ideas with people it expands one's knowledge.*

Nomsa here reflects on how the act of reading and then talking, in that order, can broaden the learning experience. She highlights how this learning takes place due to

(1.64) *the different opinions that people share regarding the topic.*

Nomsa again shows insight into her own learning process in an academic context by her understanding of the importance of exploring 'different opinions' (claims and counter-claims) on a particular topic. The interactions and sharing of ideas that took place during the discussion have been felt by this student to be beneficial. The exploration of differing viewpoints is fundamental to the development of an academic argument.

Nomsa's final point is that:

(1.65) *I personally learnt that woman empowerment is relevant to bridge the discrimination gap experienced by women from several years.*

Here Nomsa comments on how the particular topic has helped her acquire new knowledge. The process of reading, talking and writing has helped her to form an argument which she could support with evidence in an academic context. This reflection in which Nomsa elaborates on the various ways in which she has learned from the process shows a meta-cognitive process in that she has been able to link her experience specifically to the processes of reading, talking and writing.

5.1.3.9. Evaluation of Nomsa's writing in terms of my research question

This student was able to engage with the written text and incorporate ideas gleaned from it into her talk and her writing. Through the process of reading the contextualized text first, the talk which followed became 'deep' and not superficial. Nomsa interacted with her fellow group members in a dynamic interactive process of 'deep talk' which helped her to build her argument. This argument was expressed clearly in her essay, with due regard to the academically appropriate structures as taught in the academic literacy programme. It is my contention that talk has been of great value to this student in helping to develop 'higher order thinking'.

5.1.4. Conclusion (Group 1: R/T/W)

- These three students were able to actively engage with each other in a dynamic interactive process.
- Their prior exposure to some background reading material which gave them ‘relevant information’ enabled their group talk to go ‘deeper’ than that of a superficial conversation.
- The process of talk itself through their various ‘speech acts’ helped them to develop their arguments which they could then express more clearly in their writing.
- The limited discourse analysis of these ‘speech acts’ showed how they were able through using language in certain ways, to move the argument forward, to challenge, affirm, and motivate each other intellectually.
- Through this ‘deep talk’ one can see evidence of ‘interim literacies’ (Paxton, 2007) reflecting a transitional phase between their primary and everyday discourse (BICS) and the achievement of proficiency in a secondary (academic) discourse (CALP).
- “Deep’ (or ‘exploratory’) talk enables groups of students to develop their thinking and learning further through a collaborative and interactive process.

5.2: Group 2: *Talk / Read / Write* (T/R/W)

In this section I describe and analyse sections of the talk and writing of the four students who first *talked*, then *read*, and finally *wrote*.⁷ All the groups were given the same readings⁸ and topic to discuss⁹ as mentioned in the section on Group 1. In this section, as in the previous section, I will focus on the interactive aspects of the talk and will highlight any examples of speech acts as well as the responses evoked in **bold** typeface. I will then focus on their writing to discover in what ways the talk has informed or influenced it. Since this group talked first before reading and finally writing, I will also focus on whether the order in which these

⁷ See Appendix E2 (p112) for full transcription of their discussion

⁸ See Appendix D (p108) for background readings

⁹ See Appendix F1-3 (p115-117) for details of topic statement

activities took place seems to have had any impact on the nature of the talk or the writing that followed.

5.2.1. Group 2: Talk

This group comprised three females and one male. Bontle, a female, **initiates** the discussion by introducing the topic:

- (2.1) B: We are discussing *feminism* and how men are becoming disempowered by women, ja, right now, my name is (Bontle) and I think that this is a very true statement because we are driven right now and men seem intimidated at the moment, and facts really do show that mostly women do **further their careers and studies** and ja and guys really do get intimidated.

This introduction prompts each of the other three students to **respond** by the **reiteration** of Bontle's utterance by similarly identifying themselves by name and stating their own position in relation to the topic. In all the groups the presence of the tape-recorder may have increased the level of formality with which the students first approached the talk. They were also asked to identify themselves by name before speaking.

Thandi, a second female, **supports** Bontle's statement and **expands** on it by introducing a practical example to illustrate her position:

- (2.2) T: Yes I'm (Thandi) and I think that I support (Bontle's) statement that a lot of women are starting their own businesses today and sometimes women have to work at home and then get at home and do their housework so I think they are more powerful than men.

Lindiwe, the third female, **supports** Bontle by **reiterating** her claim that '*men are being disempowered by women*' (2.1) and that women '*do further their careers and studies*' (2.1) when Lindiwe makes the substantive comment:

- (2.3) L: I'm (Lindiwe) and I agree to the topic because women now have the **top qualifications and men under them**,

She continues with a rhetorical question:

- (2.4) L: ... and at home men when they need advice they go to who? Their wives of course...

Her use of rhetorical questioning with the immediate provision of the answer in the above extract could be an example of how a second language English speaker may derive stylistic features in argument from their traditional oral literary language and culture. This particular characteristic of rhetorical questioning found in the literary discourse of many African

languages was identified by Paxton (2007) as an example of how students merge their own spoken discourses and genres from a more oral tradition with that of the academy to form 'interim literacies'.

After the initial introductions and statements of position, Thandi begins to develop the argument by introducing a new claim regarding the constitution and the rights of women to be recognized as leaders:

- (2.5) T: I think that **women** are recognized because **we're** in the constitution, **women** have rights today and a lot of **women** are **leaders** in terms of politics so I think **women** should be recognized

In the extract above, Thandi repeats the word '*women*' several times and shows her strong identification with this group by her use of the personal pronoun '*we're*', in '*we're in the constitution*'. Her reference to the constitution here is also an exophoric reference which directs her listeners (the other members of the group) into an 'assumed shared world' (McCarthy, 1991), with which they are all familiar.

This prompts Sipho, the only male in the group, to **respond** to her claim with his own counter-argument:

- (2.6) S: Ok, they might be **leaders**, ok for just you know, simple positions because they cannot handle like higher positions like in terms in the case of our deputy president and everything and Manto Tshabalala Msimang and the other one whose been fired recently so you see that women are not doing much about, you know, the leadership and stuff.

Sipho first **acknowledges** Thandi's remark by his use of the word '*ok*' which he uses twice, framing his first utterance '*they might be leaders*', in which he **re-iterates** Thandi's reference to '*leaders*' (2.5) and then goes on to **counter** her claim. He **supports** his argument with exophoric reference to '*Manto Tshabalala and the other one whose been fired recently*'. These exophoric references as with the previous ones mentioned assume a shared world with his fellow group members. Sipho also uses colloquial language which is an example of how students are using 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007) to express themselves in an academic context.

Bontle then **disagrees** with Sipho and **develops** her own argument by **disputing** his generalizations about women:

- (2.7) B: I totally disagree because the efforts of one woman you cannot simply say that the rest are

doing the same.

She goes on to **expand** on her argument by also giving an exophoric **example** regarding the fact that a man's position is a result of being raised by a woman, and at the same time **challenging** Sipho directly as a male:

- (2.8) B: It all starts at grass roots so if you had as a child been **raised by a woman**, how come you didn't go wrong?

She concludes her argument here by referring again to '*feminism*', **reiterating** her opening statement where she introduced the topic under discussion. She identifies herself with it by the repeated use of the personal pronoun '*we*':

- (2.9) B: So feminism is quite... **we** are following it and **we** see it and **we** recognize that **we** are a factor that actually improves lives **we** know about, **we** recognize ourselves and **we** put ourselves first in everything and by doing that **we** do not lower other people unlike men normally do.

Sipho **re-states** Thando's phrase '*raised by a women*' (2.8), but **subverts** Thando's meaning when he says:

- (2.10) S: Yeh you know I like the point that you say you know that we get to be **raised by women** because their place is in the kitchen, it's what their job is you know, get raising the children and teaching them the way of life and everything.

This utterance **provokes** a strong **response** from Bontle who says:

- (2.11) B: That's just stereotypical and just hyp—o--critical ...

Bontle uses complex vocabulary with the words 'stereotypical' and 'hypocritical' which is an attempt to keep the talk at a 'deeper' more 'academic' level. She stumbles over the word 'hypocritical' which comes out like 'hyp...o...critical' as she tries to get it out, which indicates that she feels strongly about the issue. She **asserts** her position, **questions** and **challenges** Sipho's reasoning when she says

- (2.12) B: ...and it just doesn't make sense to me 'cause I mean we're living in, times are changing, we living in the 21st Century, do you think we are going to do what cave men used to do? I don't think that ...

Thandi then **reinforces** Bontle's argument, **reiterates** the earlier discussion regarding the raising of children (2.8) (2.10), and **builds** on this by introducing a new angle regarding men's role in child-raising when she says:

- (2.13) B: And men are also capable of **raising** their children they should also have put their foot down in the family and **raise** their kids, it's not a woman's thing only...

She also responds to the previous remarks made by Sipho about women not being good leaders (2.6) when she continues:

- (2.14) B: ...and also we can see that Priscilla is a **leader**, she's a political **leader**, she's been a political **leader** for years and she has had success and she has never been fired and her reputation has not been damaged, that shows that women can be good **leaders** and that they're overpowering men.

In the above extract, Thandi shows some development of language proficiency in the way in which she builds her argument. She starts with the phrase: '*Priscilla is a leader*' which she then repeats, replacing '*Priscilla*' with the personal pronoun '*she*' and develops the idea by adding the adjective '*political*' in the phrase: '*she's a political leader*'. Thandi further expands on this idea by changing tense from the present to the past by adding the words '*for years*' in the phrase: '*she's been a political leader for years*' (Here this student is probably referring in error to 'Priscilla' rather than 'Patricia'¹⁰). I would argue that this fairly sophisticated layering and developing of her point to express a reasoned argument would indicate the development of 'interim literacies' in a process of transition towards academic literacy. Paxton (2007) mentions this kind of 'clause chaining' and 'repetition' as illustrated above as being a feature of an oral tradition such as praise poetry and story telling which is typical of many African languages, which may stylistically influence the development of academic proficiency in second language English speakers.

In the next exchange, Lindiwe introduces exophoric references when she **interrogates** Sipho about his personal life and relationship with his mother. Sipho **defends** his own position with regard to his relationship with his male relatives:

- (2.15) L: I've got a question for you Sipho, for when you've got a problem at home, who do you go to, your mother or your dad?
- S: I go to my brother... I don't go to my mom or my dad...
- L: You're lying
- S: I'm serious
- L: Don't you have like a good relationship with your mother?

¹⁰ Patricia de Lille is the leader of the Independent Democrats

S: I do have a good relationship with my mother, but you know I don't talk about stuff to my mother, I only talk to my dad you know when I have problems and everything...you know, so the one person I can talk to is like my father because he understands me better than my mom does.

Sipho initially responds to Lindiwe's question as to whom he goes to when he has a problem at home by saying: *'I go to my brother... I don't go to my mom or my dad...'* Soon after this he contradicts himself when he remarks that he only talks to his father when he has problems *'because he understands me better than my mom does'*. This exchange does not help to develop the argument but does in fact **stimulate** a strong **response** from Bontle who **asserts**:

(2.16) B: I think you're brain-washed... It's just an opinion, but I really think that you're brain washed to actually think that within our times of living, women still have no place and they're not regarded as, human beings and cannot be superior...

Bontle now **supports** her view with evidence:

(2.17) B: If you get to check, most of the time.. I mean, women now drive and they're moving up and just to clearly show how women have achieved success, I have never seen a guy win 'The Apprentice'¹¹ in South Africa, if you watch TV.. we have, we can actually put out an idea for anybody to understand... you guys you just don't...

She shows she is mindful of the importance of keeping to the topic in an academic discussion when she says:

(2.18) B: I mean, and really, *sticking to the topic*, we do disempower you guys.

Later in the discussion Thandi introduces a new angle and **example** to support her argument in the following utterance:

(2.19) T: If you look at, if you read magazines you can see that um women are editors of magazines, they run the company smoothly and there is no problem with that, so that shows that women can run their business and can be successful just as men

In the above extract, Thandi demonstrates an attempt to argue in a logically cohesive manner by progressively structuring her argument. She first **states**: *'if you read magazines you can see that... women are editors of magazines'*; she then **elaborates** on this point by stating her 'evidence' which is that *'they run the company smoothly and there is no problem with that'*; and from this she then **concludes** that *'that shows that women can run their business and can be successful just as men'*.

¹¹ The South African version of 'The Apprentice', is a reality television show in which contestants compete to win a top position in the company directed by the show's host, well known businessman, Tokyo Sexwale.

Sipho **acknowledges** and **responds** to Thandi's argument, by referring in his response to 'women' and 'magazines' in order to **oppose** her view:

- (2.20) S: About the **magazine** things and everything, because its just they're the only things that **women** you know like *gossiping* and talking about you know, stuff and everything and that's why they end up writing **magazines** you know.

Sipho uses colloquial language, like '*things and everything*' and '*stuff and everything*', as well as 'gap fillers' such as '*you know*' to make his point about why he thinks women '*end up writing magazines*'. In the context of this discussion, Sipho's command of language is limited, yet his meaning is clear to his fellow group members.

Sipho bases his counter argument on an exophoric reference to women's magazines which leads his group members to focus on the assumed shared knowledge that because the content of these magazines generally consists of '*gossiping*', they are of no merit. Sipho ignores the point that Thandi made about women editors being as successful in business as men (2.19), and **redirects** the focus of the group to a judgment about the frivolous content of women's magazines.

In the following extract it can be seen how Sipho's approach serves to **provoke** a negative reaction, which results in a quarrel rather than an academic argument. This potentially negative result due to emotional aspects arising from the talk may be a factor of individual personalities rather than a particular characteristic of group talk itself.

- (2.21) L: You mentioned the part where you said the rights about women... the last time I checked **the new constitution** they said that every human being has the right to be, to have like, be equal to everyone, anything like the workplace and everything else, '*wena*' it seems like you are against that whole thing, I don't understand...

S: I'm not against anything.

L: Well it seems like it you are...

Lindiwe's mentioning of '*the new constitution*' **reiterates** Thando's earlier reference to '*the constitution*' (2.5) and is a substantive comment in terms of the topic under discussion. Her elaboration in terms of the equal rights of '*every human being*' under the new constitution is another example of exophoric referencing to factors in an 'assumed shared world' (McCarthy, 1991). She cites the new constitution as a source to **support** her own argument. Her use of

the vernacular, 'wena'¹² here is used to emphasize her point and also indicates heightened emotions.

Sipho **responds** to Lindiwe's rebuke and **defends** his position by introducing an example of the traditional relationship between men and women cited from a biblical story in the following exchange:

- (2.22) S: All I'm saying is that you know, women will never over power men you know, like you know even in the case of the bible you know, you will expect that the men will always be the head and the women always be the neck...
- L: Ja, but...
- S: You don't put it visa versa, you won't put the neck on top of the head and the other way around you see...

Sipho later elaborates on his use of biblical / religious references when he says:

- (2.23) S: Just for a few seconds, just imagine if Jesus was a woman you know, what would have happened?

His use of the rhetorical question here as noted with students in the previous group, may reflect an aspect of 'interim literacies' in which he uses some of the stylistic features (such as rhetorical questioning) typical of the literacy of a more oral tradition as found in African languages to emphasize his point (Paxton, 2007). His exophoric reference to 'Jesus' (believed by followers of the Christian religion to be the 'son of God') is an attempt to **support** his argument for a traditional view of the ascendancy of men over women. He concludes the discussion and sums up his own argument when he says:

- (2.24) S: I just want to bring women to the level of human being, like having power or being in that class whereby they can do things for themselves, **but** at the end of the day, the men will always be the most powerful people, being the power in the planet.

In the first part of his utterance (above) Sipho begins to **respond** to Bontle's earlier statement (2.15) in which she stated he was '*brain-washed to...think that...women still have no place and...are not regarded as human beings and cannot be superior.*' In the second part by the use of the adversative '*but*' he then **re-iterates** his **opposing** view that men will always be '*the most powerful people...(on) the planet*'.

¹² 'Wena', literally translates as the word 'you', and is usually used for emphasis, such as in the English expression 'hey you!'

5.2.2. Evaluation of the talk (Group 2: T/R/W)

As was the case with Group 1, the four students in Group 2 also engaged interactively with each other and used language to respond to each other's ideas. In both groups the speech acts performed various functions such as when the students challenged, opposed or questioned each other's views. The interaction in Group 1 seemed to be more focused and 'academically appropriate' than that of Group 2. Whereas Group 1 developed their arguments by acknowledging each other's ideas and building on them, or else countering them by introducing facts or examples to support an opposing viewpoint; by contrast, Group 2 became polarized between the sole male, Sipho on the one hand, and the three other female members of the group on the other. Sipho tended to provoke the females by the adversarial remarks he made regarding women's place in society which reflected a conservative and traditional approach to gender roles. Although the two males (Vusi and Msizi) of Group 1 held similar views in terms of the traditional role of male dominance in society, unlike Sipho (Group 2), their exchanges with the female group member (Nomsa) while challenging, and often in disagreement were respectful and not provocative. At no time did Group 1's discussion degenerate into a quarrel, as was the case with the students in Group 2.

It may be argued that since Group 1 was exposed to some background texts prior to the talk, they were able to extract important information which could then inform the discussion that followed. The reading prior to the talk may have enabled them to talk at a 'deeper' level than the talk which took place in Group 2 who talked first and only read the texts after the discussion. With Group 2, much of the talk was directed at a personal level with some of the students becoming quite emotional. As mentioned before, this somewhat negative aspect of the result of talk may have been caused by a simple clash of personalities rather than due to the act of talking itself. In addition, the choice of topic itself could have been responsible in part for the overly emotional responses of some students during the discussion.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that group two's discussion was not as cohesive as that of group one, there were many instances of their use of 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007) and an attempt to mimic the discourse of the academy (Gee, 1996). An example of this could be seen in their citing of 'authoritative' sources such as the bible (Sipho) and the constitution (Thandi and Lindiwe) in order to give credence to their claims. These first year EAL students

demonstrated an understanding of the importance of citing 'authoritative' sources to support an argument (which is emphasized in their academic literacy development course).

5.2.3. Group 2: Essays and Reflections

In the next section I examine the writing (essays and reflections)¹³ of each of the participants in discussion Group 2 to discover if and how the talk (and the reading after the talk) informed their writing.

5.2.3.1. Bontle's essay

As she did in the talk, Bontle begins her essay by introducing the topic. She begins by giving the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of feminism. This definition of a key term is something that has been taught to these students as part of their academic literacy development course at UJ, and it was quite resourceful of Bontle to consult the dictionary, which she must have had in her possession since they were not given any other texts to read besides the handout.

In this essay, Bontle attempts to incorporate some elements that she has been taught are required in academic writing, such as the importance of providing some background information to contextualize the topic. She mentions what has been the general or popular view in the past when she writes:

(2.25) *Women - before, were seen as "slaves" who lived under dictative (sic) ways of men but this is no more. We have "woken up and smelled the coffee" in terms of different factors in our lives but mainly academically*

Here Bontle also shows an understanding of the difference between what might be termed colloquial and what constitutes academic English by using quotation marks for the colloquial phrases. Firstly she indicates that the word 'slaves' is not meant literally, but is a colloquial way of describing people who have no say over their own lives, and secondly that 'to wake up and smell the coffee' is a colloquial expression which indicates a change in which someone becomes more aware of their situation and does something about it. Bontle's incorrect usage of the word 'dictative' instead of 'dictatorial' indicates an attempt to use a complex word with which she is obviously not familiar, to express a particular meaning, while perhaps modeling

¹³ See Appendix G (p118) for copies of their original writing

this on the form of the word such as 'authoritative' which is related to the word 'authority'. I see this attempt as one in which an EAL student despite an apparent lack of correct vocabulary knowledge is nevertheless attempting to push the boundaries of her language proficiency in order to express herself in conceptual terms in an academic context. It is also an example of Paxton's (2007) notion of 'interim literacies' in which students in transition towards academic language proficiency or academic discourse attempt to find their own voice by 'adapting new discourses' and 'reworking' those discourses from their past and present (Paxton, 2007:45).

In her essay it would appear that this student already had prior knowledge about the topic and quite strong views which she was able to express in a more formal style in which she presented some historical facts to support her view. In the following paragraph, Bontle then provides an example from history to support her argument. She writes:

(2.26) *It begins with great historical events that were obviously initiated (sic) by women such as the march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in order to give a mandate to have the "dom pas" banned or stop being used. From then on women have taken stride by stride to better themselves and the lives of those around their communities*

Bontle here is using her prior knowledge to give evidence to support her argument. This lends credibility to an argument and is yet another key element in academic writing. She goes on to mention the fact that South Africa even has a woman as deputy to the president and that:

(2.27) *the cabinet as a whole is **flanked** by a majority number of women in charge of high portfolios.*

This use of the word '*flanked*' here shows an attempt at using a more complex word to describe how women are not only represented in the cabinet, but theirs is a powerful and protective position in which they are guarding the various governmental departments. This reference to political office (as members of '*the cabinet*') refers to points made during the talk by another female member of her group (Thandi) who stated in (2.5) that:

women are leaders in terms of politics

Bontle also shows some development in vocabulary by her use of the words '*high portfolios*' rather than simply describing these women as leaders.

In the next paragraph, Bontle brings in a counter-argument and in this she mentions the difficulties that a working mother may have when she writes:

- (2.28) *The mother-figure will not always be there for her children when it matters and this leads to having destructive and disobedient children merely because the mother was not there to instill what are to be regarded and seen as her duties as a parent*

This counter-argument seems to be an acknowledgement of the opposing view point that was given to feminism by Sipho in the talk when he stated in (2.10) that:

We get to be raised by women because their place is in the kitchen, it's what their job is you know, get raising the children and teaching them the way of life and everything

Bontle concludes her essay by reiterating that women are '*hardworkers in all aspects*' and writes

- (2.29) *If men are intimidated by women's efforts, one thing they should keep in mind is that it is not our intentions. Women are merely fulfilling their dreams and not ready to give up as yet.*

Here Bontle links her written argument to her opening view in the talk (2.1) when she referred to the fact that men seem intimidated by women at the moment.

5.2.3.2. Bontle's Reflection

The students in group two were asked to write a letter to me ¹⁴ in which they described what their feelings were about doing the tasks. They were asked to tell me if they thought they learnt anything through the process of first discussing the topic and then reading some texts before writing their essay. In Bontle's reflection she mentions that she found the topic easy to relate to and easy to expand on. She writes that she was:

- (2.30) *Shocked at ... the (fact that) some of the people taking part were still stuck in the past and it was very good that we got to share views and understand one another's point of view*

Bontle reflects on the experience of talk before writing and finds it '*very good*' to '*share views and understand one another's point of view*', despite being '*shocked*' that some participants were '*still stuck in the past*'.

¹⁴ See Appendix F2 (p116) for instructions for tasks for the participants

5.2.3.3. Evaluation of Bontle's writing in terms of my research question

In her writing, Bontle was able to extract from the talk those aspects that she agreed with in order to reinforce her own viewpoint, while using those views from the talk with which she disagreed in the counter argument of her essay. Despite the temptation on many occasions to react on a personal level during the talk, Bontle was able to balance this with an effort to maintain the appropriate level of respect and decorum expected in an academic context while still making her points quite assertively. In both the talk and in her writing, she showed an awareness of what is 'academically appropriate' while still maintaining a lively energy in her mode of expression. In my view, Bontle derived value from participating in talk prior to writing her essay.

5.2.3.4. Lindiwe's essay

Lindiwe begins her essay by stating her main thesis, that men are becoming weaker while women are becoming stronger.

(2.31) *Men choose to loose (sic) their power, therefore they let their weakness to take control of their lives. **Therefore** women have strong feminine instincts and do not let anyone, specifically women to take over their lives. **Therefore** women are taking over in the workplace and at home.*

It is probable that she meant to write 'specifically men' rather than 'women' in the above extract, since this makes more sense in terms of her reasoning. Lindiwe makes use of cause /effect connectives in the above extract with the use of the word '*therefore*' which is repeated. This creates cohesion and shows the development of a well reasoned and logical argument, two of the criteria for academic literacy (Ballard & Clanchy, 1988).

Her next paragraph refers to the fact that women now have

(2.32) *'top positions, because women are really hard-workers'*

This re-iterates a comment made by her group member, Thandi (2.2) in the discussion in which she said:

A lot of women are starting their own businesses today and sometimes women have to work at home and then get at home and do their housework so I think they are more powerful than men

In her essay Lindiwe refers to comments made by Sipho regarding biblical references about the relationship between men and women which related to the following exchange (2.22) between herself and Sipho which took place during the talk:

S: All I'm saying is that you know, women will never overpower men you know, like you know even in the case of the Bible you know, you will expect that the men will always be the head and the women always be the neck...

L: Ja, but...

S: You don't put it visa versa, you won't put the neck on top of the head and the other way around you see...

In the above extract from the talk it can be seen that Lindiwe was unable to respond properly as Sipho cut her off. It is in the counter-argument of her essay that Lindiwe is able to express her views about the 'neck / head' relationship when she writes:

- (2.33) *Men like to refer to the bible by saying that God said that men were the heads and women were the necks. In which it is true but for the head to function, it needs the neck. Therefore men do need women to **function** and make good decisions.*

Lindiwe then goes on to say that in the case of the household it is the women who decide what groceries to buy and

- (2.34) *'which place to go when the family wants to go on vacation?'*

In this part of her essay Lindiwe draws on some of the textual information she was given to read. She has even kept the question mark. In the second text entitled *Female Head of Household* (posted online by anonymous male writer Jan 19, 2006) the writer asks

Who decides what house to buy? Who decides what food to buy? Who decides where to go on vacation? Women make all these decisions and a lot more – whether they're willing to come to terms or not. Women rule the roost and the men who live with them. Women may not find the label as 'head of the household' appealing – or even acknowledge the truth in it; but they are.

Lindiwe paraphrases the above text in her essay when she writes:

- (2.35) *On the one hand women may seem that they do not have the status of being called the "head of the house". But they still run all the activities in the household...The women might not have the title of being called "head of the household", but they still have the upper-hand in the work, and at home as well. For men to be able to function, they need women, but women are able to function, all by themselves.*

In the final sentence in the section quoted above, with which Lindiwe concludes her essay, she **reiterates** the point that she was not given a chance to make during the talk, that is that whereas men need women to function, women are strong and independent. This **echoes** the 'neck-head' functionality argument that she made earlier in her essay (2.32). Her paraphrasing of the text is an indication of a developing academic literacy since this is an important skill that is achieved through practice in writing in an academic context.

5.2.3.5. Lindiwe's reflection

In her reflective letter, Lindiwe writes that the discussion was:

- (2.36) *eye-opening on how other individuals think of the characteristics that both parties of men and women seem to have. It showed me that every person has their own opinions and at the end of the day we learnt something from each other...I really enjoyed it (the*

project) and especially the texts that were given to me. They helped me to somehow understand the topic at hand.

Here Lindiwe echoes the sentiments expressed by Bontle in her reflective letter. Both students found the tasks to be interesting. Lindiwe found it ‘*eye-opening*’, to discover how other people think, while Bontle said the tasks were ‘*interesting and insightful*’. Both students found it worthwhile to be able to share and understand the differing views expressed by the other group members, while Lindiwe particularly felt that the texts helped her ‘*to somehow understand the topic at hand*’.

5.2.3.6. Evaluation of Lindiwe’s writing in terms of my research question

It was evident from her essay that Lindiwe was influenced both by the talk and the reading which took place prior to writing. Her main argument was developed directly as a result of points raised in the talk by her fellow female group members, and her counter argument acknowledged the perspective raised by the male group member. She also incorporated ideas contained in the text in her essay. I would argue that Lindiwe’s writing was influenced positively by the fact that she participated in talk, but that her argument was equally ‘deepened’ by the readings.

5.2.3.7. Sipho’s Essay

Sipho used an aphorism to introduce his essay:

(2.37) *There is a saying that says ‘ the woman place is in the kitchen’. This simply means that the woman take care of everything concerning the house like cooking, cleaning, and raising up the childrens*

He continues along the same lines in the first paragraph of his essay when he writes:

(2.38) *The hand that rocks the cradle should not rule the world. Traditionally speaking in every culture in the world men are the leaders of their family. It is well known that they are finicialy providing and every disicion taken by a woman in the house need the final say of the man. She may decide what house, food, furniture to buy or how to decorate the house, but if a man puts his foot down or disagrees with all the decisions and non of those things are going to happen.*

In the first extract, Sipho puts the saying ‘*the woman (sic) place is in the kitchen*’, in inverted commas which is appropriate to academic discourse to indicate that this is an idiomatic expression. However, in the following paragraph he does not do so when he writes ‘*the hand*

that rocks the cradle should not rule the world'. By the omission of the inverted commas, in the second instance Sipho seems to treat this saying as a fact of life and not something that can be debated. He does not debate the traditional view but supports it as being something that is natural and acceptable simply because that is the way it has always been in every culture in the world.

In the following paragraph, Sipho makes his second claim in which he disagrees with the topic statement by looking at it from a religious point of view when he writes:

(2.39) *When God created a man he told him that he will control everything on the world. Then after wards a woman was created and told that she would assit in every disicion a man takes. It was even said in the bible that a man is the head and a woman is the neck, imagen putting this thing the other way around. So it simply shows that woman will never disempower man.*

In his essay, Sipho has made claims in terms of the traditional and religious background of most cultures of the world, which he uses to support his main claim that men are not being, and can never be disempowered by women. By making claims and using them to support his argument, and by contextualizing the topic in terms of these two aspects (tradition and religion), Sipho is starting to show a rudimentary understanding of how to create an acceptable academic argument. This reference to the relationship between a man and a woman as being expressed through the biblical metaphor of the relationship between the head and the neck on a human body was one that Sipho used during the group discussion (2.22). Sipho's use of the same example in his essay confirms his confidence in its efficacy as a valid argument to support his main claim. This support for a claim by providing a convincing argument also fulfills one of Neville's (1996) criteria for academic discourse.

Sipho then turns his attention to the present when he writes:

(2.40) ***Firstly** lets us look at how many countries have presidents as men and contries ruled by women. It simply prove that men are the the head of the household, even when we look on the countries economy, politically even social factors.*

Here Sipho does not fully observe appropriate academic procedure in terms of providing valid evidence to support his claims, as he makes a generalized statement on which he bases an unfounded assumption. Although his logical reasoning in the above statement is faulty, given

the time constraints of the intervention and the limitation of access to evidence and research, it does nonetheless appear that he is attempting to build an academic argument by his reference to the various factors (economic, political, social) that might be relevant to the topic.

Even though the percentages he quotes below do not reflect any valid research, Sipho does nevertheless show an understanding of the importance in academic writing of 'hard evidence' to support a claim when he tries to give the impression of 'scientific fact' by creating some 'statistics' to support his views in the following extract:

(2.41) *when a woman is left alone by the man while pregnant there is 60% chance that the woman would kill the baby or throw the child away. If she decide to keep the baby there is an 80% chance that she can go for prostitution so this simply means that a woman can't handle the household without a man leadership.*

Sipho concludes his essay by referring to his earlier assertion in the group discussion about the inability of women to adequately fulfill leadership roles (2.6) when he writes:

(2.42) *we have seen in the case of South Africa, how many women have miss led their position. People like Manto Tshabalala, the deputy president and many more. So this show that en will always be the head of the household in every way.*

In this essay Sipho has not changed his position or conceded any aspects of a counter argument which was made either during the group discussion or in the texts he was given to read. He also makes sweeping generalizations which he uses as a basis for drawing unfounded conclusions and making assumptions, all of which is unacceptable in academic argument. The fact that this particular student (as seen by his very low term mark) had a poor attendance record may have bearing on the fact that he has not internalized some of these particular criteria for academic argument such as the fact that one should avoid generalizations to reach unfounded assumptions.

5.2.3.8. Sipho's reflection

In his reflection, Sipho did not express how the experience affected him in terms of his learning about the views of others different from his own. He used his reflection rather to reiterate his views on the content rather than the process of the discussion itself. He wrote:

(2.43) *This ... taught me that every woman in the world is fighting for the leadership position. It has shown that woman have the capability of*

fighting for leadership even if they don't qualify. I have learnt that every woman believe in leadership. But I also learn that in everything that need to be decided a man will always be in control of everything that has to do with the household.

5.2.3.9. Evaluation of Sipho's writing in terms of my research question

Sipho's central argument contained in the body of his essay was directly influenced by the argument he developed during the talk. His writing did not reflect any real engagement with the readings, but was rather a re-statement of his position as illustrated in the talk. I conclude that while the talk greatly informed Sipho's writing, the adversarial nature of the group discussion combined with his tendency to make sweeping generalizations and his lack of engagement with the readings undermined the efficacy of his written argument.

5.2.3.10. Thandi's essay

In her essay (as was her style in the talk)¹⁵ Thandi tried to think of many different examples to support her thesis that women can be as successful and powerful if not more so, than men. She wrote:

(2.44) *'women are getting empowered year after year' and they*

(2.45) *'play a role in the decision making in a family'.*

She wrote that women are:

(2.46) *'taking high positions in the work environment... from being directors, executives, managers or editors'.*

Thandi further develops some of the points she had made in the talk (2.2)

Yes I'm (Thandi) and I think that I support (Bontle's) statement that a lot of women are starting their own businesses today and sometimes women have to work at home and then get at home and do their housework so I think they are more powerful than men.

when she writes:

(2.47) *Women work hard because they have to perform to the best of their ability at work and meet the right deadlines and still take care of the cooking, laundry as well as the cleaning at home, they also make **household decisions** like clothing, shopping etc, while men even after they have come back from work, do not perform such tasks.*

¹⁵ See Appendix E2 (p112) for full transcription of the group discussion

In the above extract, Thandi echoes the word '*decisions*' from one of the readings in which it was written:

Women make the majority of buying **decisions** – from cars to laundry detergent – women decide. Some make these **decisions** because they're in single adult households, yet even in cohabitation and marriage; women pretty much call the shots.

Thandi 'mimics' academic discourse (Gee, 1996) when she writes:

- (2.48) *Studies have proven also that even though there are quiet a number of single mothers, they are still able to perform tasks they would have done even when they were married. Many males do not persue in caring for their children after they have impregnated their girlfriends and mostly deny their own children. Single mothers still go to work and take care of their children in the best possible manner.*

Although the above extract contains generalizations, since the student did not have access to research material which would relate to the 'studies' she mentions, and the evidence she uses to support her claim is most likely to be based on the student's prior knowledge and observed experience rather than on any credible research that she may have read about. However, it does show an attempt on the part of the student to write in a style suited to the academy. In her essay, Thandi mentions many and varied examples of how women are being successful in the world of politics and business, and refers to Siphos remarks from the talk

(2.10)

Yeh you know I like the point that you say you know that we get to be **raised by women** because their place is in the kitchen, it's what their job is you know, get raising the children and teaching them the way of life and everything.

when she writes:

- (2.49) *Many females who can be seen as scientists, mine engineers and technology advancers have proven the statement of belonging in the kitchen wrong.*

She develops this refutation of the counter argument further in her conclusion in which she attempts to summarise the various areas of expertise in which women have been successful:

- (2.50) *Females have had their role in many programmes, sports, health, transport as well as education and have put their diligence, skills, profession and ability to use. Women should not be criticized for their input because they are mothers, motivators, as well as initiators. Their taking part in world events have had a great*

impact in the lives of many and they should be supported, encouraged and congratulated for their input.

5.2.3.11. Thandi's Reflection

Thandi did not reflect on the effect of the readings but her reflection on how she felt about the process of talk, gives an indication of how she is starting to view herself in the context of the academic environment. It is in this context through group discussion in which there is exposure to a diversity of view points which she feels can help in the development of knowledge (*'to come up with ideas I never thought of before'*) and *'to understand the world better'*. She wrote:

- (2.51) *By discussing the feminism issue with my colleagues I have come to realize that people have different view points and because we are **diverse**, we usually do not look at the world in the same way and should understand how each of us looks at the world. I have been able to come up with ideas I never thought of before and to **understand the world better**. This (process) helps you to **communicate effectively with others** and is beneficial when it comes to **listening skills**. We also learned a lot from others and listen to the views of others.*

Thandi's reflection demonstrates meta-reflective ability in that she has thought about how the process of talk has helped her learning. She reflects that she has learnt how to *'communicate effectively with others'* and that it has helped her *'listening skills'*.

5.2.3.12. Evaluation of Thandi's writing in terms of my research question

Thandi's essay was directly influenced by the ideas gleaned from the interactive talk with her group members. Her main claim, counter argument and refutation of the counter argument all have their origins in what was discussed in the group. Although her use of the word *'decisions'* came directly from the text, the heart of her argument was one that was developed in the talk. Thandi's written argument was derived largely from the talk. Her main claims reflected the views of the females in the group, while the counter argument reflected the view of the male group member. She was able to develop quite a strong argument based mainly on the position that developed through the talk. I conclude that Thandi's writing was greatly informed by the talk and to a much lesser extent to the reading.

5.2.4. Conclusion (Group 2: T/R/W)

- In the talk, the four students in Group 2 engaged interactively with each other and used language to respond to each other's ideas
- The process of talk through various 'speech acts' such as when the students challenged, opposed or questioned each other's views helped them to develop their arguments which they could then express more clearly in their writing.
- In the talk, this group became polarized between the sole male, Sipho, on the one hand, and the three other female members of the group on the other.
- In the talk, Sipho tended to provoke the females by the adversarial remarks he made regarding women's place in society which reflected a conservative and traditional approach to gender roles.
- With Group 2, much of the talk was directed at a personal level with some of the students becoming quite emotional.
- A negative aspect of the talk in this group may have been caused by a simple clash of personalities rather than due to the act of talking itself.
- The choice of topic could have been responsible in part for the overly emotional responses of some students during the discussion.
- Talking before reading caused the discussion to be less 'informed' than that of the group that read first before talking.

5.3. Group 3: Read / Write (R/W)

In this group, the five students from the 'control group', who were not given the opportunity to talk to each other, were given 40 minutes to read the background texts, 40 minutes to write a short essay and 10 minutes to write a reflection on the process.¹⁶ This group comprised five females and one male. Their English language proficiency as defined by the Faculty of Humanities in terms of which they were admitted to the extended degree programme, was roughly at the same level as that of the students in the other two groups. In the section that follows I describe and analyze some of their essays and reflections, taking into consideration that the only 'input' each of these students received which could 'inform' their writing on the given topic was limited to the same three background texts that the students in Groups 1 and 2 were given to read.

5.3.1. Group 3: Essays and Reflections

In this section I will focus on the writing and the extent to which academic literacy is demonstrated. I will examine the interaction between the reading and the writing, and speculate on the effect of the absence of talk by a comparison with the findings from the previous two groups who participated in talk.

5.3.1.1. Kabelo's Essay

The student has demonstrated some aspects of academic literacy in his essay. This can be seen for instance in his opening sentence where Kabelo clearly states his main claim:

(3.1) *Men are not disempowered by women, because women are still under the rule of men.*

He then **elaborates** on this claim by giving an example of how women are still "*under the rule of men*":

(3.2) *On the one hand women cannot take decisions on their own instead they ask help from the men.*

He uses the linking device of "*on the one hand*" and "*on the other hand*" to indicate contrasting ideas. It is interesting to note that even though Kabelo neither discussed the topic with his female group members, nor did he find it in any of the given texts, he nevertheless

¹⁶ See Appendix F3 (p117) for instruction sheet

puts into quotation marks an imagined utterance by “women” who are “in the democratic world” when he writes his counter-argument as follows:

- (3.3) *On the other hand, especially in the democratic world women disobey men because they say “ gone are those days where men are used to go out and bring food on the table ”..*

He provides support for his counter-argument as follows:

- (3.4) *Firstly, the contemporary world proves it that women are becoming more powerful in finance than men.*

Kabelo then elaborates on this statement by giving the following explanation and example:

- (3.5) *But the reason is that women have many opportunities than men. For example if a male and female are going in an interview obviously women already have 5% free.*

The phrase ‘women already have 5% free’, seems to be a colloquial way of expressing that women have an unfair advantage. This is an example of a student using informal and familiar language because he may not have sufficient language proficiency, in order to express a particular concept in a formal mode.

In his next paragraph, Kabelo quotes directly from the second text¹⁷

Who decides what food to buy? Who decides where to go on vacation?

when he writes:

- (3.6) *Women can decide what to buy? Or where to go to a vacancy? But it does not mean they have power upon men.*

Here Kabelo confuses the word ‘vacation’ as it appears in the written text with the word ‘vacancy’. This error in vocabulary is an indication of the fact that he is a student for whom English is an additional language. Kabelo starts to build his argument by engaging with the written text as shown in the above extract. Kabelo does not acknowledge or cite the source of the quotation, which is a common error made by students when they are in the process of learning academic discourse. However his incorporation of information from the text in order to build his own argument is an indication of a developing academic literacy. He elaborates on his argument with an explanation of the reason why men ‘listen to their wives’:

¹⁷ See Appendix D (p108) for text 2 entitled: ‘Female head of household’, 2nd paragraph.

- (3.7) *In addition, men just love their wives that is why they listen to their wives in order the family bond to be strong.*

In the extract above, in which Kabelo tries to justify male behaviour in relation to their wives, Kabelo appears to be responding to the information he gained from one of the texts with regard to men listening to their wives. In the first (humorous) text¹⁸ the only man found standing in the line of men who were not dominated by their wives, when asked how he managed to be the only one in the line, replied:

“I don’t know, my wife told me to stand here”

Kabelo’s next statement in which he attempts to differentiate between the general characteristics of men and women is an example of faulty reasoning in which a sweeping generalization has been made to justify a false conclusion:

- (3.8) *Even though men depends on women it is a sign that shows women are raised well mannered than men.*

It would perhaps have been interesting to discover what kind of response the above statement would have elicited from his peers had Kabelo expressed it in a group discussion.

Kabelo seems to lose the thread of his argument as he now contradicts his clearly stated main claim from his opening sentence (3.1), and what appeared at the outset to be a counter-argument, has now become his main claim when he writes:

- (3.9) *The **disempowerment** of men by women is the sign that **pervades** the **inequalities** of the human rights between the two.*

His use of the nominalized form of the verb ‘disempowered’ (from the topic statement), when he writes of the ‘*disempowerment of men*’ and his use of the phrase ‘*pervades the inequalities of the human rights*’ is an example of ‘interim literacies’ (Paxton, 2007) where the student is attempting to ‘mimick’ (Gee, 1996) the discourse of the academy, using formal and more complex vocabulary, from a position in which academic discourse is still in the process of being achieved. He continues to elaborate his new (contradictory) claim as follows:

¹⁸ See Appendix D (p108) for full text

- (3.10) *For example, in South Africa women are treated nicely than men.*

Despite the inappropriate use of the informal word 'nicely', Kabelo gives an example to support his claim in an attempt to explain why he sees that men are being disempowered by women in South Africa today. He attempts an elaboration in order to clarify his meaning when he writes:

- (3.11) *i.e. the South African Government is over protective towards women.*

Kabelo has completely contradicted his stated main claim (3.1) and concludes his essay in the following way:

- (3.12) *Comparing between the past and present, there is a proof that makes men to be disempowered by women. In conclusion women takes advantage because they know that they have more rights than men.*

While Kabelo changed his position on the topic from his opening statement (3.1), and his main claim seemed to be superseded by his counter-argument which he introduced early on in his essay(3.3), nevertheless his attempt to provide evidence to support his argument fulfills one of the criteria for academic argument. (Ballard & Clanchy, 1988); (Nevile, 1996).

5.3.1.2. Kabelo's Reflection

The students were asked to write a reflection to me in the form of a letter expressing how they felt about the various tasks they were asked to perform.¹⁹ As the following two extracts from his reflection indicate, Kabelo misunderstood what was expected of him in terms of reflecting on the *process* of learning. Instead, his statements in his reflection deal only with the *content* of the topic, especially as it affected him in terms of his gender:

- (3.13) *This task is so much important and it helped me to realise that women have empowerment upon men.*

- (3.14) *This task was so challenging for me as a male because I realise that women have overtaken us long time ago.*

He did however note that he would have found it helpful to have been able to discuss the topic with his group members:

¹⁹ See Appendix F1-3 (p 115-117) for details of the task sheets given to each group

- (3.15) *This topic was going to be helpful if it was discussed, because it makes you see how other people feel about this disempowerment of men by women.*

5.3.1.3. Evaluation of Kabelo's writing in terms of my research question

While Kabelo was able to demonstrate a rudimentary understanding of what constitutes 'academic' writing in terms of his use of certain of the criteria required, such as having a main claim with supporting evidence and a counter-argument, his reasoning was faulty and based on generalizations leading to a false conclusion. He changed the focus of his essay so that he lost the thread of his argument and his counter-argument took the place of his main claim. It could be speculated that had he participated in a group discussion, his reasoning would have been challenged by his fellow group members, and as a result he may have been able to develop a stronger argument which would in turn have helped him to clarify his arguments in his essay. In Kabelo's case I would therefore argue that participation in talk could have been of value in enabling an increased development of cognitive academic language proficiency in his writing.

5.3.1.4. Phumzile's essay

This student also showed some ability to write using the appropriate structures of an academic argument essay. She also engaged with the texts she was given to read and has managed to extract information from them which she has incorporated into her essay.

In her opening sentence Phumzile presents her position by stating her main claim:

- (3.16) *Women are overpowering men as they are the heads of households.*

She follows this with a statement indicating this is a debatable issue (i.e. that people differ in their views). Students at UJ were taught that in an academic argumentative essay it is important to acknowledge that there are differences in opinion:

- (3.17) *Others say women are weak, however others argue that women are the strongest.*

She then re-affirms her own position, and goes on to develop her argument by giving an example of an idiomatic expression that she has heard in terms of her own culture and in her own language when she writes:

(3.18) *There is a saying that “mosadi o tshwara thipa ka bogaleng” meaning the women hold the sharp point of a knife. Now the question of why not man arises.*

The quotation from common experience within her culture functions in her essay as an ‘attention-grabbing’ technique, and this popular saying is an effective way of illustrating Phumzile’s main claim that in practical terms women can be seen to be the stronger sex. Phumzile builds her argument around the difference between the traditional and ‘literal’ understanding of what it means to be the ‘head of the household’ which she has gleaned from her reading of the texts. She writes:

(3.19) *Literally the women are the heads of household because they decide everything that takes place in the house while the men just bring in money.*

In her following paragraph, Phumzile gives exophoric examples (from her own prior experience) to further substantiate her main claim:

(3.20) *Think of a house where there is no wife or the wife just passed away. The man will not cook, not clean and I am sure one have seen such a situation.*

She refers directly to the background text²⁰ in which it was written:

In many respects, women already are the head of the family....women make all these decisions....

when she writes:

(3.21) *At first, yes men were considered heads of households, not because they were but because that is how everyone knows it. If you look at the first text, you are made aware that women really do make all the decisions regarding their households.*

The language of the above two extracts is closer to BICS than CALP (Cummins, 1996) with conversational indicators such as *‘think of a house..’*, *‘I am sure one have seen..’*, *‘yes’*, and *‘if you look at the first text’*. In these extracts (3.20) (3.21), Phumzile writes in an informal

²⁰ See Appendix D (p108) for full texts

register such as might be expected in a conversation about the topic. She mentions *'the first text'* (from the readings they were given) without citing specific examples from it or referencing it in an academically appropriate manner. Here Phumzile is engaging with the topic, using a discourse that is close to that of a more familiar 'spoken' discourse rather than a more formal, and unfamiliar 'academic' discourse. This is typical of EAL students in the early stages in their academic development, and can be seen as a further example of 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007).

While Phumzile's essay has a generally conversational tone rather than an academic one, she has however written it in terms of an appropriate academic structure by dividing it into a brief introduction highlighting her main claim, followed by several paragraphs in which she elaborates on this claim with examples to support it, and finally a conclusion in which she re-states her main claim. These specific academic literacy skills with regard to appropriate structure, had been taught to these students in the course of their academic development programme, 'Argument in the Humanities' (AIH), at the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

While Phumzile does not include a very strong counter argument, which diminishes her 'argument' in the academic sense, she does incorporate it to some extent in her introduction where she does acknowledge differences of opinion:

(3.17) *Others say women are weak, however others argue that women are the strongest.*

In the extract below, Phumzile makes use of the linking phrase *'in addition'* which adds cohesion to her writing. She uses comparison and contrast with her reference to the past (*'back then'*) with the present (*'today'*) to show how things have changed for women:

(3.22) *In addition, back then men were seen as heads but today women are empowering themselves. They are **running** their own businesses, while at the same time **running** their households. They come back from work and still make sure their husbands and children go to bed in a full stomach. A man will not do that but expect to eat before they go to bed.*

She uses the pronoun *'they'* correctly to refer to *'women'* and the repetition of the word *'running'* to describe *'their own businesses'* as well as *'their households'* emphasizes her view. Phumzile's use of repetition of the word *'running'* to create emphasis here gives her writing a certain 'orality' which may be an example of how students find a voice for

themselves in the academy by drawing on the oral traditions of their embedded cultural background.

Phumzile concludes her argument with a strong re-statement of her main claim:

- (3.23) *I will conclude by saying that men are disempowered by women and it is not because of the age of feminism but because it has always been like that. If men help in the household, maybe the stereotype would or will change.*

Phumzile's argument is that although women are 'empowering themselves' today (3.22), in terms of the business world, they have always actually been the true 'heads of the household' in their daily lives in their homes because of the fact that men do not participate in the actual running of the household.

5.3.1.5. Phumzile's reflection

Phumzile expressed the feeling that at first she was not motivated to write an essay, but after reading the background texts she changed her mind:

- (3.24) *At first when the (sic) heard you talking about writing an essay, I was turned off. However after going through the given text, I relaxed. I'm glad I took part.*

She found the readings helpful in giving her some insight into the topic on which she would be writing an essay:

- (3.25) *I must say I learned through the background text. If I was not given the text, I would not have considered the literal but figurative way of the topic. More so, I was also given a lot of examples in the text that made me aware that women are really the heads of households and therefore disempowering men.*

Phumzile however did feel that a discussion with her group members would have helped her to write an essay which may have taken into consideration different views and opinions:

- (3.26) *On the other side, I think it would have been better to get an **insight** from peers before writing the essay. That way **different views and opinions** of people are **considered** and can change one's mind about something.*

Here Phumzile shows an awareness of her own process of learning, and seems to realise that interaction with other people's differing perspectives could have helped her essay to be more insightful.

5.3.1.6. Evaluation of Phumzile's writing in terms of my research question

Phumzile's essay demonstrates an ability to write in terms of appropriate academic structure as had been taught in the 'Argument in Humanities' (AIH) programme. A weak area however was the fact that her counter-argument was not developed sufficiently to provide a balanced perspective. I would argue that had this student participated in a group discussion she may have been exposed to different points of view which could have helped her to consider her counter-argument in greater depth. Her own strong position, as she has expressed in her essay, could have been used through interaction with her fellow group members to help enable them to build stronger arguments.

5.3.1.7. Oratile's Essay

Like Phumzile, Oratile has incorporated information from the reading into her own argument. She also has demonstrated the ability to write using appropriate academic structure. She starts her essay clearly stating her position on the topic:

(3.27) *I agree with the topic at hand, women are disempowering men.*

She continues to justify her claim and contextualizes the topic in terms of the present situation compared with that of the past:

(3.28) *We are living in a modernized society, where **everyone** enjoys equal rights and **everyone** is protected by these rights. In the old times, **women** were considered inferior to men, **women** had no say in business or politics. "**Women** belonged in the kitchen". They were just good for cleaning, cooking, nurturing the children and entertaining their husbands. That's all **women** ever did **but** that was not the only thing **women** were good for and over the years **women** around the world fought for equal rights and freedom, and they obtained this.*

This opening paragraph shows a gradual build up of the argument. Oratile begins her argument by writing in general terms about the fact that 'everyone' today enjoys and is

protected by ‘*equal rights*’. This reference to equality is possibly influenced by the reading of the journal extract²¹ in which it was written:

...empowerment is complete when she participates on **equal** terms
with her male counterpart

She uses ‘clause chaining’ for emphasis in the first part of her statement:

“where everyone enjoys equal rights”

followed by

“and everyone is protected by these rights”

Oratile then moves from the general term “*everyone*” to her particular emphasis on “*women*” and how they were treated in the past, compared with the present situation. She repeats the word “*women*” throughout the paragraph to create further emphasis. She completes her paragraph with a reiteration of the phrase “*equal rights*” mentioned at the start of the paragraph, but this time it has the additional word “*freedom*” attached to it. She writes that “*women around the world fought for equal rights and freedom*”, which links back to the politicized aspect of her earlier statement that “*everyone enjoys equal rights and everyone is protected by these rights*”. In this introductory paragraph, through the use of linguistic devices such as clause chaining and repetition, Oratile’s argument gradually builds and strengthens. As seems to be the case with many students whose first language is an African language, these kinds of linguistic cues seem to signal some links with a more typically oral cultural tradition.

In her introductory paragraph, (3.28) Oratile incorporates the counter-argument in the following sentences:

*In the old times, **women** were considered inferior to men, **women** had no say in business or politics. “**Women** belonged in the kitchen”. They were just good for cleaning, cooking, nurturing the children and entertaining their husbands. That’s all **women** ever did..*

She then signals her refutation of the counter-argument, by the adversative word ‘*but*’.

***but** that was not the only thing **women** were good for*

²¹ See Appendix D (p108)

Oratile writes:

- (3.29) *Since democracy and human rights were implemented, all has been made possible for **women**. **Women** can be anything and everything, **we** can be good mothers, friends, entrepreneurs and excellent wives all at the same time. **Women** are educating themselves so that **we** can be financially independent.*

Oratile interchanges the word “women” with the word “we” showing her personal identification with the topic. In this way, the writing becomes less objective as would be more appropriate with academic discourse. However, there is a vibrancy in the writing as expressed by the repetition of the sounds in the phrase “**anything and everything**”, as well as the alliterative features in the repetition of the letter “e” in the words “**entrepreneurs and excellent wives**” and “**educating themselves**”.

She continues in the same vein with her concluding paragraph:

- (3.30) ***Women** can make their own choices, **who** to marry, **what** to study, **where** to live and so on. **When** it comes to family, **we** are (most times) the ones who know best. **We** know what colour the children's rooms should be, what children should eat etc and it's because, **women** (mothers) are natural nurturers.*

The use of the words “who”, “what”, “where” and “when” above, give a lively sense of orality to the writing. Oratile in the above extract also shows some engagement with the background reading since she seems in some ways to be answering the series of questions posed by the anonymous writer in the second text ²² when he wrote:

Who decides what house to buy? Who decides what food to buy? Who decides where to go on vacation? Who decides how to decorate the home? Who decides how many kids to have?

In her final paragraph, Oratile concludes that:

- (3.31) *Men cannot control women anymore, they are NOT the only people in the household that put food on the table and they are not any more special than women. We are all **equal** but women have the upper hand and it's true women are taking over and conquering men.*

²² See Appendix D (p108)

In her closing statement Oratile re-iterates her earlier theme about equality, and re-states in different words, her main claim with which she began her essay. By linking her introductory statement (3.27) '*women are disempowering men*' with her concluding statement '*women are taking over and conquering men*',(3.31) Oratile is also attempting to write appropriately within the accepted framework of an academic essay as was taught in the AIH classes.

5.3.1.8. Oratile's reflection

Oratile gave some thought to her evaluation of the process in terms of how it helped her to think and write:

(3.32) *I think the task given to me was helpful. Reading the background info really helped me. It gave me things to think about and write about, and there are some ideas that rose as I continued on reading.*

As has been the case with most of the other students in this group, Oratile expressed the opinion that a group discussion would have been beneficial before writing the essay:

(3.33) *I do think it would have been more helpful to discuss the topic with other group members before writing the essay. This would've made my options more open and I would have more ideas as there would be more people discussing the topic.*

5.3.1.9. Evaluation of Oratile's writing in terms of my research question

Oratile made good use of the background reading which she was able to incorporate into her argument when she wrote her essay. She demonstrated an ability to write in terms of some aspects of academic literacy that she had learnt in the AIH course. She engaged well with the background reading and in some ways tried to answer a series of rhetorical questions posed by the writer of one of the texts as shown above (3.30). Her writing demonstrated a lively orality in which her position on the topic was clearly expressed. This leads me to argue that it is very likely that this student could have made a significant contribution to a group discussion on the topic given her ability to develop a coherent argument.

5.3.1.10. Dineo's essay

This student demonstrated the ability to write in an academically appropriate manner as taught in the AIH course, in as much as she clearly states her position in her main claim, tries to give evidence to support this claim, considers a counter-argument which she then refutes, and in her conclusion re-iterates her introductory statements.

This student engaged to a limited degree with the texts, preferring rather to develop her arguments based on her own ideas. Dineo, like her female counterparts in this group begins her essay by agreeing with the topic statement:

(3.33) *It is true that women have taken over as heads of the household, even though the women have since the beginning of time made all the important **decisions** that affected the men.*

However, the above statement regarding the '*important decisions*' that women have always made '*as heads of the household*' may refer to the following from the written text:

Women make all (these) **decisions** and a lot more...women may not find the label as 'head of the household' appealing – or even acknowledge the truth in it; but they are.

Dineo, as is appropriate in terms of academic discourse, elaborates on her opening statement by giving some 'evidence' from what she may deem an authoritative source (in this case the Bible) to support her claim when she writes:

- (3.35) *To prove the truth of this statement, in the bible Eve made a decision that affected her and her husband Adam and that decision was for them to eat the forbidden fruit. Although the result was a negative one, this shows that women have always headed their houses or homes.*

Dineo, as is also appropriate in terms of the 'correct' structure of an academic essay then considers the counter-argument to her main claim when she writes:

- (3.36) ***Even though** we might think that in the olden days especially in black cultures men were regarded as head of the house because they used to intimidate women and they were the only bread winners in the house.*

She refutes the counter-argument, again writing in accordance with an appropriate academic essay structure in her following paragraph:

- (3.37) ***In addition** in modern times women are now breadwinners not forgetting that they are the ones who take care of families, making sure they don't go hungry, they have clothes on their backs and a roof over their heads. A woman is **also** the one you go to for advice, she becomes your pillar of strength and a shoulder to cry on.*

Dineo uses the linking devices, 'even though' (3.36) 'in addition' and 'also' (3.37) to add cohesion to her writing. The writing in the above extract is informal and characterized by colloquial expressions and idiomatic phrases such as 'clothes on their backs and a roof over their heads' and 'pillar of strength and a shoulder to cry on'. As an EAL student who is attempting to write in appropriate academic language, this can also be seen as an example of 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007) in which the student falls back on familiar terms or 'catch-phrases' to explain a concept in the context of a formal piece of writing in an academic context.

Dineo uses humour in her following paragraph when she writes:

- (3.38) *The role of the men is unclear in modern society but men would argue that they bring safety and security in homes but women can also argue that if they needed safety and security they would install alarm systems.*

Although Dineo was in the group that were not given the opportunity to discuss the topic at all, in the above extract she seems to imagine what arguments men would possibly put forward as well as how women could counter those possible arguments.

When Dineo uses the cohesive linguistic marker, “*finally*” she signals that this is her conclusion. She then re-states her main claim from the introduction as follows:

- (3.39) *Finally this essay have proven that without women the world would come to a stand still but without men life goes on. Therefore the women have always been and will always be the head of the house.*

5.3.1.11. Dineo’s reflection

Dineo wrote:

- (3.40) *I enjoyed writting the essay and reading the texts but mostly writting it because I could really write my opinions without the fears of being judged.*

Dineo here expresses the perspective of a student who lacks the confidence to ‘speak out’ in class or in a group situation. With this kind of student, the opportunity to write an essay on a controversial topic affords them a platform from which to freely express themselves without the fear of ‘*being judged*’ by their peers. It is perhaps also important for educators to consider the socio-cultural factors that may impact on individual students whose past education or even home background may have been such that opportunities for expressing their opinions may have been suppressed.

She also wrote:

- (3.41) *I have learnt a lot about the females and how powerful they really are. Yes it would have been nice to hear other peoples view about this topic but I am the kind of person who doesn’t really like to talk so therefore I was happy when you assigned me to (this) group.*

5.3.1.12. Evaluation of Dineo’s writing in terms of my research question

This student seemed to find a platform to express her own ideas on the topic through the writing. She included many ideas in her essay which did not appear to have been informed from her readings but were her own thoughts on the topic. Although an introverted student like Dineo was less threatened by not being assigned to a group that was asked to talk, this may not necessarily mean that she would not have benefited by being placed in a situation where group discussion was encouraged. Dineo herself admits in her reflection that ‘*it would*

have been nice to hear other peoples view about this topic’. Even if a student does not particularly like to talk themselves, participation in group discussions as an active listener can also stimulate cognitive and linguistic skills.

5.3.1.13. Nomonde’s Essay

While this student expressed many of her own ideas on the topic she did also show an ability to integrate the readings from the texts and incorporate the information into her own argument. In accordance with the criteria for appropriate academic structure as taught in the AIH classes, she makes her position with regard to the topic clear and elaborates on this by giving many examples from her own experience.

Nomonde begins her essay by writing the following:

(3.42) *Women are very important not only in the household but in society. It is said that “women, without her, man is nothing”. Gone are the days when women were stuck in the house, left there to look after the children and prepare supper for the family. Women have now stepped up and are showing their worth and usefulness.*

Nomonde does not state her main claim clearly from the outset but rather contextualizes the topic in terms of how the role of women has developed. She uses a conversational tone in her use of colloquial expressions such as “*gone are the days when women were stuck in the house*” and “*women have now stepped up*”. This use of informal language is typical of students who are still acquiring academic discourse.

In her second paragraph, Nomonde elaborates on her theme giving examples of how women are becoming more empowered in today’s world:

(3.43) *Women are not afraid to be seen nowadays. They are voicing out their opinions and are taking over in the business world. One will no longer find men alone in the parlaments, hospitals (as doctors) or even in engineering. Women are proving to the world that they too can work as hard as men and can also provide for their families.*

Nomonde’s thesis is that even though women are becoming more empowered in today’s society, it does not mean that men are being disempowered. She therefore introduces her counter-argument as follows:

- (3.44) *Men **however**, are not seen as 'weak' or being disempowered now. Men are still the hard workers and we still respect them **but** a woman is not to be underestimated or not be taken seriously because of the stereotype that women belong in the kitchen.*

Although she argues that men are not being disempowered by women, she signals a contrasting idea with the adversative word, 'but' and reiterates her opening statement regarding the importance of women in society (3.42). She further elaborates on this when she writes in her conclusion:

- (3.45) *A woman in this day and age is just as important and **equal as a man in society**. Women are strong beings as they can raise up their children as single mothers with pride. Women will not only take care of their homes and families but they take care of the nation as well.*

The linking of the conclusion to the introduction as she demonstrates in the above extract, has been taught in the AIH classes to be an appropriate convention in academic essay writing. Nomonde's arguments are drawn mainly from her prior knowledge and based largely on personal experience. However, Nomonde's above statement may have been influenced in part by a notion contained in the journal extract²³ that womens' 'empowerment is complete when she participates on equal terms with her male counterpart'. Nomonde's ability to synthesize an idea gleaned from the reading of the text with her own argument, and using her own words, in the extract above, shows a developing proficiency in academic discourse.

5.3.1.14. Nomonde's reflection

Nomonde reflected that she found the essay very easy to write:

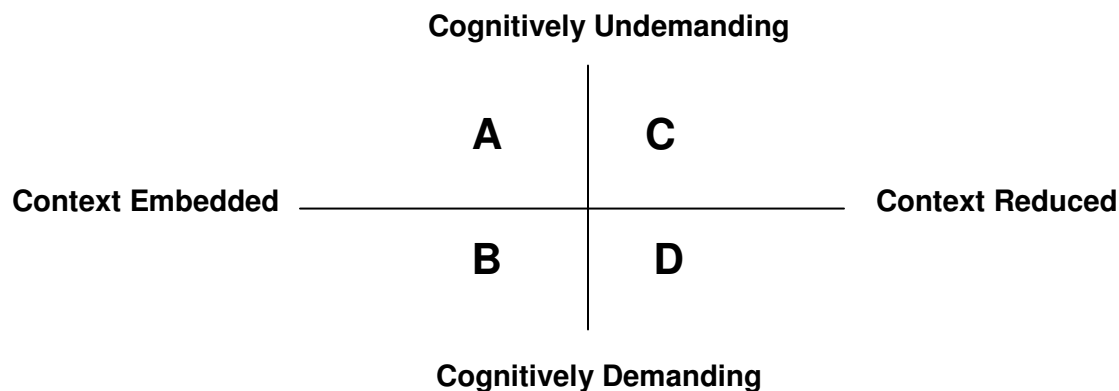
- (3.46) *Writing the essay was no effort at all. I had an opinion about the topic as soon as I read what the topic was about. Being a woman myself, I was for the topic and I would have known what to write even if there was no reading for me to do.*

She was able to reflect on her own process of learning from the readings:

- (3.47) *The extract from the journal article had to be read carefully though. I read it twice so that I could understand it properly. There were a few words that I did not understand but I was able to figure out what they meant by continuing to read.*

²³ See Appendix D (p108) for full text

By the above statement it can be seen that Nomonde is beginning to position herself in terms of her new identity as a student in an academic environment (Gee, 1996). She shows a maturity towards the task of understanding the difficult words and concepts contained in an academic text, and has applied her mind in order to make the necessary connections required for understanding the meaning. In this case, the more cognitively challenging text has helped to stimulate a growth in her academic literacy. This could be seen as an example of the acquiring of a 'new literacy identity' (Neville, 1996), as well as illustrating how Cummins's (1996:57) conceptual framework of intersecting continua²⁴ (as illustrated below) can work in practice.



In this situation, through engaging in the challenge of a cognitively demanding task, in which the context is embedded (Quadrant B), the student moves in the direction of achieving cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in which the activity, while cognitively demanding becomes more conceptual (Quadrant D). It was Cummins' view that teachers need to find ways to activate the prior knowledge of their students, to give them cognitively challenging input while giving them contextual support. Nomonde was able to overcome the cognitively challenging, context embedded text through activating her prior knowledge, in order to achieve conceptual understanding. This act of meaning-making is an important part of developing CALP.

As was the case with the other group members, Nomonde felt positive about the possibility of talking about a topic with others before writing about it. In her case, she differentiated

²⁴ See Chapter 3: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework (p 9)

between what the men might have contributed to the discussion and what she assumed she already knew of what the women would have said.

She wrote:

(3.48) *It would be interesting to hear what the men had to say about this topic but I think I know what most women would say (they would obviously be for the topic).*

5.3.1.15. Evaluation of Nomonde's writing in terms of my research question

Nomonde expressed a great deal of personal opinion in her essay, and gave examples based on prior experience to support her position, although she did gain some insight and deepened conceptual understanding from the readings which she was able to incorporate into her own argument. Her strong views on the topic were expressed enthusiastically in her writing. Nomonde's confidence in expressing herself about this particular topic raises questions about the extent to which she may have stimulated thinking among her peers had she had the opportunity to discuss the topic with them.

5.3.2. Conclusion (Group 3: R/W)

This group could be viewed as the 'control' group, since the members of this group were the only students that were not given an opportunity to talk to each other prior to writing their essay. To a certain extent, some of my conclusions are based on speculations on what influences may have been *missing* from their writing due to the fact that these students did not interact with each other as did those students in Groups 1 and 2.

- In most cases their essays were very short, and in several instances the students' writing reflected a kind of 'orality' in terms of the way they used the language. For instance, Phumzile (3.22) makes use of repetition to create emphasis, while Oratile (3.28) uses clause-chaining and repetition to build up her argument. It has been argued that linguistic features such as these may reflect something of an embedded oral tradition typical of the spoken discourse of African languages (Paxton, 2007).
- I would argue that given the socio-cultural background of the majority of these students, wherein the oral tradition is so strongly emphasized, and judging from the reflections, perhaps the opportunity to talk in groups, to share ideas and move their

arguments forward through interactive and dynamic discussion could have been of significant assistance in the development of an interim academic discourse.

- In the reflections of all of these students, mention was made of how they felt they may have benefited from a discussion with their peers before they wrote their essays. Kabelo (3.15) thought it would have been good to *“see how other people feel”*, while Phumzile (3.26) felt that exposure to the *“different views and opinions of people”* could be *“considered”* and that as a result one *“can change one’s mind about something”*. Oratile (3.33) felt it would have *“made my options more open”* and that she would *“have more ideas”* as *“there would be more people discussing the topic”*. Dineo (3.41) also felt it would have been *“nice to hear other peoples view”*, while Nomonde (3.48) felt it would be *“interesting to hear what the men had to say”* since she said *“I think I know what most women would say”*.
- It is difficult to evaluate whether or not the final written work of these students may have reflected more cognitive academic language proficiency had they been given the opportunity to talk to each other first. However, since it was evident from my analysis of Groups 1 and 2 that did talk, that both of these groups engaged interactively with each other and used language to respond to and deepen each other’s ideas, I would speculate that Group 3 were thus deprived of this potentially enriching learning experience.
- Compared with most of the essays produced by students from Group 3 (the ‘control’ group), there seemed to be a more energized response to the topic statement in the way in which students from Groups 1 and 2 approached their essays. There was a lively sense of ‘debate’ in the way that the students that talked, wrote their essays. There was a sense that many of the ideas that were developed in the discussion were still fresh in their minds when they came to write down their arguments.
- It was evident that with Groups 1 and 2 the process of talk through various ‘speech acts’ such as when the students challenged, opposed or questioned each other’s views helped them to develop more substantive arguments which they could then express more clearly in their writing. It could therefore be argued that since Group 3 was not given an opportunity to interact with each other, they were therefore not

subjected to any challenges nor were they able to gain any insights from their peers and were thus limited in their perspectives on the topic to the background information gleaned from the texts and their own prior knowledge and experiences.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Types of Interaction

6.2. Language / Academic Literacies

6.3. Evidence of Cognitive Processes in talk and /or writing

6.4. General conclusions

The research project took the form of a teaching intervention in which different groups of students participated in the performance of learning activities such as reading, talking and writing. In this intervention the students were asked to perform these activities in different combinations and in differing orders in order to discover which would be more effective in helping students to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

In view of the limitations of the research study owing to the difficulties of students being able to write a fully developed 'academic' essay in terms of time constraints, the written work was difficult to evaluate in terms of ordinary assessment procedures. The essays written by the students in the context of this study were therefore viewed as being at the 'embryonic' stage only, as a rough draft in the process of moving towards a final product. The analysis focused on *indicators* that cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) was starting to emerge.

In this chapter I shall review each of the research interventions which were introduced by comparing and juxtaposing the outcomes from each of the research groups. In doing so I shall reflect on the extent to which the research project answered the main research question (see Chapter 2.2) 'Talk 'deep' to write deeper: an exploration of the value of talk in developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)'.

For ease of reference each research group will be described as follows:

Group 1 (R/T/W) - who read first, then talked, then wrote

Group 2 (T/R/W) - who talked first, then read, then wrote

Group 3 (R/W) - who read first, then wrote

There were various features indicating a developing academic literacy that were identified in the research findings. While there are several overlaps in terms of the categories of findings, I have divided these up into three main aspects:

- 6.1. Types of interaction
- 6.2. Language / academic literacies (writing)
- 6.3. Evidence of cognitive processes (talk and / or writing)

6.1. Types of interaction

The research showed that the students from both Group 1 (R/T/W) and Group 2 (T/R/W) actively engaged with each other using language to respond to each other's ideas; they were able to develop their own positions, question, agree with or oppose another's viewpoint. This helped them to build their argument and debate the topic from different perspectives.

In Group 1 (R/T/W), the nature of the interaction between the individual group members (one female and two males) was respectful. Students put forward their own ideas, acknowledged and elaborated on the ideas of their peers and introduced new ideas to the developing discussion. By contrast, in Group 2 (T/R/W), given the controversial nature of the gender debate topic, and the gender composition of the group, the talk became fairly emotional and adversarial with the three females opposing the opinions of the one male. Whereas in Group 1 (R/T/W), prior exposure to some background reading material seemed to have helped to 'inform' the talk of this group enabling them to go 'deeper' than that of a superficial conversation; in the case of Group 2 (T/R/W), their talk depended solely on prior knowledge and experience since they did not read the background texts prior to the talk.

Group 3 (R/W) did not talk to each other, and the only form of interaction that took place was limited to the background texts. However, only two of the five students in this group made substantive use of the texts in their essays.

6.2 Language / academic literacies (writing)

All of the essays were examined using the following features as criteria to indicate a movement towards CALP:

- Appropriate academic structure of an argument:
- Main claim & sub-claims
- Evidence or examples to support claims
- Introduction & Conclusion (linked)
- Counter-argument
- Logical reasoning
- Coherence and cohesion
- Control of language & register
- Acknowledgement of sources (from text)
- Incorporation of information (from text / discussion)

While there were students from all three groups that demonstrated some or other of the above features in their essays, it was noticeable that two of the five students from Group 3 (R/W) that did not engage in interactive talk, did not develop a substantial counter-argument. One student from this group confused the counter-argument with the initial main claim, while the other student made a vague reference to an opposing viewpoint. I would argue that had the students in this group been given an opportunity to interact with each other, they could have gained a greater awareness of different perspectives on the topic which could have then helped the weaker students to develop a relevant counter-argument, and consequently a more balanced argumentative essay.

The research also revealed that only two of these five students were able to incorporate information gleaned from the text into their essays, while a third student used information from the text to draw a false conclusion based on faulty reasoning. There is clearly no guarantee that participation in a group discussion would necessarily lead to a student developing the ability to reason logically or to synthesize ideas gained from a text into written work. However, it is my contention, as evidenced by the research findings, that through a process of dynamic social interaction through talk, through participating in a process in which students are exposed to differing ideas, an increased depth of perspective can be gained. If, in addition, this awareness of diversity of viewpoint is scaffolded with contextualised readings, learning can be enriched.

In terms of the control of language and register, students from all three groups attempted complex forms of words within the limits of their own language resources thus making an

attempt to 'mimic' the discourse of the academy using their 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007). Several students used informal register and colloquial expressions in which certain features typical of a strong oral tradition were demonstrated, such as: clause-chaining, repetition, and rhetorical questioning. This was particularly noticeable in the writing of two of the students from Group 3 (R/W).

None of the students in any of the groups appropriately cited sources of information gleaned from the readings, but instead in most cases used some of the words of the text as if they were their own. This attempt to appropriate the exact words from what is perceived to be an 'authoritative' text has been characterized as typical of first year university students who are in the transitional phase of development of academic literacy. Angelil-Carter (2000) has argued that in the socio cultural context of these particular students, who are in process of adapting their identities to fit in with the expectations of the Academy, this kind of imitation should be viewed as part of the learning process itself and not as a form of plagiarism.

In terms of the criteria used to evaluate the written work of each of the groups of students, it has been difficult to conclude to what extent talk or the absence of talk has led in the direction of CALP. As conceded from the outset of this research intervention, time constraints imposed constraints on the outcomes of the written products. The analysis focused on certain linguistic features which were characteristic of a developing academic proficiency, in terms of a single piece of writing only, and this was perhaps a fundamental limitation of the research design itself.

6.3. Evidence of cognitive processes (talk and writing)

6.3.1. Talk

Through an analysis of the various 'speech acts' highlighted in the talk, the research clearly demonstrated how talk stimulated the students' cognitive skills. Through 'speech acts' such as responding, reiterating, exemplifying, questioning, challenging, affirming or opposing each others' ideas, the students in this research project used language to communicate meaning, and build their arguments. This teaching intervention was a structured situation in which students were grouped together to discuss a controversial topic. The research found that in this context, the nature of the talk was such that it required students to use their thinking

abilities, and to move away from a purely surface conversational level (BICS) towards a 'deeper' level of cognitive engagement.

Students used their prior knowledge and experience to exemplify what they were discussing in terms of the issues raised by the topic of debate. Through the structured research intervention, the students were forced to talk at the boundary of their own language resources, in many cases using familiar examples to explain unfamiliar concepts. Through this enforced 'deep' talk, the research showed that some of the requirements of academic discourse began to be developed when students creatively stretched their own cognitive boundaries. It was demonstrated in the research that when the students engaged in deep talk, a deeper understanding of the issues being discussed began to develop. This deepening of understanding is what Biggs (2003) termed a '*relational*' level of academic understanding, in which concepts are explained and understood in terms of their relationship to the topic as a whole. The relational level is built on a hierarchy of levels of understanding, each of which builds on the previous level that has been achieved. Biggs terms the most superficial level of understanding, the *prestructural*, (similar to Cummin's concept of BICS), and the levels which follow move through what he terms the *unistructural* and the *multistructural* levels. The research highlighted many examples of relationality that were illustrated in the talk, and this was seen to be an indication of a development towards CALP (Cummins, 1996).

This growth in understanding can also be seen as an example of Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) in which, through the practice of social interaction using language, students were able to perform cognitive tasks more effectively than if they had been working alone. Using their 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007) students in this research project created a transitional space between the language of everyday conversational exchanges (BICS) and the language of 'academic discourse'.

6.3.2. Writing

The research found for the most part, that those students who had engaged in talk managed to develop a reasonably balanced perspective in their argumentative essays. The research found many instances of how the talk informed the writing of the students from both Group 1 (R/T/W) and Group 2 (T/R/W). The research did however also find that the essays written by students in Group 1 (R/T/W) incorporated more information gleaned from the texts than was

the case in most of the students in Group 2 (R/T/W).

The reasons for this difference are twofold. I have argued firstly that Group 1's prior exposure to readings enabled them to go 'deeper' in the talk as they were more informed on the topic under discussion, than was the case with Group 2. This resulted in Group 1's talk being more 'academically appropriate' than that of Group 2, with the result that their essays reflected a deeper understanding of the topic. Secondly, I have argued that Group 2's talk relied solely on their prior knowledge and experience which caused the talk to become overly personal and emotional. When they came to do the readings, it is my contention that the members of Group 2 (T/R/W) were still feeling so energized by the talk (which had become quite animated), that they found it difficult to settle down and concentrate on the readings which followed. Their essays as a result were more 'informed' by the ideas developed in the talk than those contained in the readings on the topic.

I viewed Group 3 (R/W) as the 'control' group, since they did not interact through talk prior to writing their essay. I have therefore speculated on what influences may have been *absent* from their writing as a result of the *lack* of talk:

Two of the five students from Group 3 (R/W) wrote essays in which the counter-argument was either under-developed or confused with the main claim. In both cases, the research suggests that had these students been exposed to alternative views around the topic through a group discussion, their arguments would have become more well-defined with a more balanced perspective.

Three of the five students from Group 3 (R/W), drew mostly on personal opinions, prior knowledge and experience in the formulation of their arguments, with very little reference to or incorporation of the ideas from the texts. I would argue that in the case of these students, given their lack of engagement with the written texts, a group discussion because of its dynamic and interactive nature may have stimulated them to achieve a deeper cognitive engagement with the topic than was the case with the readings.

There were two students from this group that did actively engage with the texts and were able to incorporate ideas from the readings into their essays. One of these students in particular, demonstrated a lively 'orality' in her writing, while the other student expressed strong

personal views. This led me to speculate that had these two students been given an opportunity to talk, they could have made a significant contribution to a group discussion which could have greatly 'enabled' their peers.

6.4. General Conclusions

This project set out to explore the value of talk in developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The research showed that the process of talk itself enabled students to cognitively challenge and engage with each other's ideas to develop their own arguments. In doing so, students began to 'mimic' academic discourse, using their 'interim literacies' (Paxton, 2007) to explore the continua from what Cummins (1996) has termed 'basic interpersonal communication skills' (BICS) in the direction of CALP. The research found that it was important to give students support in the form of readings which contextualized the topic under discussion. More specifically it was found that it was more effective, in terms of the nature of the talk, to provide readings *prior* to the talk, rather than *after* the talk. The process of talk itself seems to have enabled students to develop strong positions as well as to acknowledge opposing views (counter-arguments) thus strengthening the arguments in their essays. Whereas students who did not talk, but only interacted with the readings before writing were found in three out of five cases to have written essays with weak arguments: one was confused and lacked clarity between what was the main claim and what was the counter-argument; another did not develop a substantial counter-argument, and the third relied on personal opinion only and was not informed by the readings.

My second research question was: "If 'deep talk' can be seen as talk that goes beyond 'basic interpersonal communication skills' (BICS), how can 'deep talk' be developed in an academic literacy programme?" To make 'deep talk' effective in academic literacy programmes the research suggests that first year university students, especially those for whom English is an additional language, and whose language and literacy practices are still in the process of developing towards academic proficiency be given frequent and regular opportunities to learn to build their arguments through interactive and dynamic group discussion. This is especially important given the socio-cultural background of the majority of our students, wherein the oral tradition is so strongly emphasized,

The research also suggests that background reading material be given prior to the talk to help inform and deepen the discussion. Further research into the value of talk in enabling the development of cognitive academic language proficiency with regard to student writing is needed. A more intensive study, with several follow up sessions conducted over a longer period of time with a broader cross section of first year university students may produce even more significant findings that could further enrich the pedagogical practices of those involved in academic development and support for first year university students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Declaration of Informed Consent

DECLARATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

I.....(print first name).....(print surname)

- I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet produced by Delia Layton concerning her educational research project.
- I agree to participate in her research project which is designed to discover which learning activities are most effective in helping students to develop their academic literacy.
- I understand that this research project will be carried out over one or more sessions of about an hour each and will involve my participating in learning tasks that involve reading, talking and writing.
- I understand that extracts of my work may be used for educational purposes or research.
- I understand that I may be asked to participate in a group discussion during which my voice may be recorded on tape for the purposes of the research.
- I understand that my name will not be divulged unless I later grant permission for this to be done.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I am registered in the Faculty, and my student number is:.....

My contact telephone numbers

are:.....(home),.....(cell).

Date:.....

Place:.....

Participant's signature:.....

Researcher's signature:.....

Appendix B: Declaration of Informed Consent to be recorded

DECLARATION OF INFORMED CONSENT TO BE RECORDED

I.....(print first name).....(print surname)

hereby give my consent to be recorded during a group discussion for the purposes of educational research to be conducted by Delia Layton.

I understand that my name will not be divulged unless I later grant permission for this to be done.

I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.

I am registered in the Faculty, and my student number is:.....

My contact telephone number/s are:.....
(home),.....(cell).

Date:.....

Place:.....

Participant's signature

Researcher's signature.....

Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

My name is Delia Layton and I am conducting educational research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree in Applied English Language Studies (AELS) at the University of Witwatersrand.

My area of focus is to discover what learning activities are most effective in assisting students in the development of their academic literacy. I wish to research the role that reading and /or group discussions have on the kind of writing that students may produce, as well as discover how students respond to the different learning tasks.

The research will be conducted over a period of about an hour and a half at the University campus and will involve various learning tasks such as reading, talking and writing.

I wish to focus more specifically on those students for whom English is not their first language, as well as students who are in their first year of tertiary education and who are currently engaged in an academic literacy development programme.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and if you choose not to participate there will be no negative consequences. If you do choose to participate, you can still change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time.

Your name will not appear in any of my published research and if your work is used to illustrate any aspect of the study or in any future publication I will use a made-up name to keep your identity confidential.

If you do choose to participate in the study, please sign the attached consent form.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge about effective learning approaches, as well as help to create strategies to advance the development of academic literacy in second language speakers of English at tertiary level.

With thanks

Delia Layton
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Appendix D: Background Texts

Topic Statement: In this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women

Some Texts to read:

1. Head of household *(Posted by Physics Geek on September 14, 2005)*

When everybody on earth was dead and waiting to enter Paradise, God appeared and said, "I want the men to make two lines. One line for the men who were true heads of their household and the other line for the men who were dominated by their women. I want all the women to report to St Peter." Soon, the women were gone and there were two lines of men. The line of the men who were dominated by their wives was 100 miles long, and in the line of men who truly were heads of their household, there was only one man.

God said, "You men should be ashamed of yourselves. I created you to be the head of your household. You have been disobedient and not fulfilled your purpose. I told you to be the spiritual leader in your family. Of all of you only one obeyed. Learn from him. Tell them, my son, how did you manage to be the only one in this line?"

The man replied, "I don't know, my wife told me to stand here."

2. Female Head of Household *(Posted by anonymous male writer January 19, 2006)*

A couple of years ago I came upon a posting in AOL personals that gave me pause. The ad, from a woman in Los Angeles, advocated a female-led relationship where the head of household would be female. I stopped cold because the idea - while new to me - was both obvious and sensible. Why shouldn't a woman be the obvious 'head of household'? In many respects, women already are the head of the family so why not simply make it commonplace practice.

Who decides what house to buy? Who decides what food to buy? Who decides where to go on vacation? Who decides how to decorate the home? Who decides how many kids to have? Women make all these decisions and a lot more - whether they're willing to come to terms or not. Women rule the roost and the men who live with them. Women may not find the label as 'head of household' appealing - or even acknowledge the truth in it; but they are.

Think about why most advertising is directed towards women: Because women make the majority of buying decisions - from cars to laundry detergent - women decide. Some make these decisions because they're in single adult households, yet even in cohabitation and marriage; women pretty much call the shots.

I'm often describing my ideal living situation as one that is female-focused, led and directed as well as run. I wouldn't want it any other way.

3. Extract from Journal article: Who will empower the better half? Social dynamics in operation (1). Debabrata Lahiri and Santanu Mitra. *Journal of International Women's Studies* 4.1 (Nov 2002): p 43(23).

...At the outset let us clarify a few issues. This will help conceptualize the gender game and the related discussion that will ensue. Firstly, we share the view that women's empowerment is the acquisition by an average woman of the capability to actively participate in decision making activities of her family and community. Her empowerment is complete when she participates on equal terms with her male counterpart. Clearly, empowerment is a positive concept, and should not be confused with a rise in women's happiness, which is a normative concept. Women's happiness is a state of mind, conditioned as it is by historically determined social and cultural norms. Thus, a woman, subjugated and exploited in every possible way, may still remain happy (Sen 1985, p.8). Not only that, she may even profess her brand of happiness to her daughter or daughter-in-law. Our proposition is that human action is shaped not by the objective condition of life, but by subjective evaluation of that condition. Our emphasis on awareness as the prime mover of social change is grounded on this premise.

Secondly, empowerment is a process, namely acquisition of capability. Hence, lack of empowerment does not imply a state of absolute powerlessness. It merely implies that the process of acquisition of power is not at work. In every society women do have certain capabilities. Such capabilities might not have been won by women. They might have simply resulted from the need of self-perpetuation of the patriarchal order. It is found in most societies that routine household decisions are mostly taken by women though the strategic decisions are taken care of by male members.

Thirdly, patriarchy by its very nature is an antithesis of women's empowerment. Family is a seat of cooperative conflict (Dreze & Sen 1993, p.11), but the institution of patriarchy ensures that the breakdown position weighs so heavily against women in intra-family distribution that they have to cooperate more and get less. Dominance is bolstered by marriage and property norms and manifests itself through division of labor into paid and unpaid work. Unpaid work assigned to women underestimates their contribution and in the process makes them diffident to demand their fair share. In the end, they find themselves overworked but undernourished (Young 1993, p.20, Dreze and Sen 1996, pp.140-174, Haddad and Kanbur 1990, pp.866-881). Even when marriage and property laws are matrilineal, decision-making process is largely patriarchal. No wonder, economic and political discrimination against women is prevalent even in these matrilineal societies (Ramachandran 1996, pp.277, 318). As a large body of literature on the impact of women's empowerment on social, economic and political development has evidenced, society can gain immensely by way of better eco-system, better nourished children, more effective human capital, and a world largely devoid of bloodshed and torture of war if women have a say in the society (Sudarshan 2001, p.23, Manchanda 2001, Sen 2000, pp.195-202, World Development Report 2000, pp.118-19).

Appendix E1

Transcription of Group 1's talk

- Nomsa:** What's your view on it Vusi?
- Vusi:** Um I think its true, even though I don't really agree with it, that women are actually taking over as head of the household because generally most of the decisions are done by them, the men just work and bring in income and as much as I disagree with it, it's true...
- Nomsa:** Ok, I don't actually agree with that because I tend to think that in the past, men did work and women were not involved in financial matters, and that discriminates women in a way that if the marriage was to be over, the women had nothing to fall back on, you know? And I think right now the empowerment that is given to women is just a way of equalizing us to the level that men are at because they've been given years and years to develop themselves whilst we're just beginning to develop ourselves and to actually have something to fall back on and, you know, to get positions in economics and other fields that we've not been able to venture into...
- Msizi:** Er I agree with Vusi when he say that em women are the head of the household nowadays because like in most womens, women are the one who are the bread winners and responsible for any household like yeh...
- Vusi:** Yes in the past men did work but now its generally women who are actually working for themselves and bringing themselves up the rank, it's not like there's a helping hand for them to actually to get to where they are, they're actually working by themselves to empower themselves and thus becoming seen as dominating, and these things...
- Msizi:** In addition to what Vusi has just said, most, I've noticed that most women are the single parents who raise their kids by themselves so it means that men don't usually take responsibility so I can take it that women are the heads of the households.
- Nomsa:** In addition to what you said, right, I tend to think that women, ok fine, women are, like getting high positions, and I think it's because we work hard. Back in the days, men just finished matric and got jobs, you don't have to go tertiary, get a major education, you could get a very high position in any company, now women are trying to educate themselves, you know, they're getting degrees and what not, just to get better positions and because women are going the extra route of getting the education and what not this leads to better positions for them... so it's just equality at its best, you know? There's no side-lining, ok you're a man and what not, we're all getting to work equally and you reap the benefits of what you put in.
- Vusi:** Yes...mm
- Msizi:** I think there's an error of men being the head of the household, because like men nowadays they don't usually do the most things. They usually like, maybe they have kids and go somewhere for work and then most of them they wont return, like, ja... then it's left for women to take responsibilities of all these kids which are left there.
- Vusi:** That's very true, even today women that actually are independent, are actually moving up the rank even in politics women are actually acquiring very high political status like Mantu and even though these days people are trying to take them down, they're still up there, they're still holding high political status and power.
- Nomsa:** And to add on, I think this whole empowerment thing for women.. ok fine, women are being empowered but still they know their role. If a woman is married, especially in a South African context, you know, you are still submissive to your husband. There is no way that you can come to your husband and talk to him like you talking to your child or whatnot you know, your respect is still a vital, it still plays a vital role in any marriage, you know, and ok fine, women are being empowered, we're taking on professions that men are also taking, but, we're not forgetting that, ok fine, in any marriage you are to respect your husband, you know, so yeh, I think that also counts.
- Vusi:** Mmm...

Msizi: I think men are most of the time are regarded as the head of household because most of them are, are good financially, they can support their families, not because they take responsibilities of (inaudible).. they only support financial like yeh.

Vusi: Yeh so overall, women know their position at home and yet they go outside and make something of themselves which in the end benefits the whole family and it is seen as something that is .um. what's the word, strong and dominant.

Nomsa: And like, ok, to put in a personal point of view, how would you take, a woman, like if you were in a marriage, a woman being in a higher rank than you?

Vusi: I wouldn't like it that much cos...

Msizi: It's unfair

Vusi: Yes... so unfair, my whole life, my father's been the dominant one in the family, I'm sure my grandfather must have been the dominant one in the family, so its only fair that I also become the dominant one in the family, you can...

Nomsa: If she is the dominant one, financially that is, how's that gonna deal, how you gonna deal with that?

Vusi: I.., I wouldn't like it that much, but it's something that's there which you cannot demand, which you...

Nomsa: I just tend to think, I mean, you as a man, you've been created for a certain role that you're only one that can achieve it, and as a woman I cannot step in your shoes, you know, there's a lot of things that women can do, but I cannot be a man, you know, there's certain things that you can do that I cannot do, you know, so I just tend to think that the whole financial thing that people tend to associate women empowerment with, is just a blurred vision, you know, it's being narrow minded and we not taking into consideration all the aspects, you know? Yeh.

Msizi: I think most men are respected in their families because they can be the provider and protector of their families, so if the women earns a lot of money than a man then the respect for the man will be less, you know, he wont be respected that much, ya

Nomsa: But, ok if, I mean, if you play your role, and you're responsible, I think respect is due to you, because you are doing your part, you know, and I mean it would be very shallow to actually determine how I respect you by the size of your financial status... honestly, so I just think that is just a silly excuse..

Msizi: No its because traditionally, most men, oh, for the housework, it's the women who who who do the cooking and most of these things, but I've noticed that in these families in which the father is not working, it's the father who wash the babies, do the cooking, do all these things, so that's why I say respect is less...

Vusi: I know that its true that you can't actually judge a person with their finance, but still a guy will feel that that he, ah what's the word... ah

Nomsa: Will feel what? Disempowered?

Vusi: No no it's just that when he brings in something it feels like he's doing his family, ah.. (laughter)

Nomsa: Just because he's bringing in a bigger salary..?

Vusi: He can get whatever his family wants, he's the one whose supporting, that's what makes him feel like, he's the head of the house instead of having the wife do what he's supposed to be doing.

Nomsa: I think, ok, honestly that this is just the mentality that most have.. because you, you were raised up in a household where your father was most probably the dominant figure and your mother was submissive and I mean in this day and age, I, I as a girl, I tend to think I am submissive to most male figures, *but*.. I also have my stand, you know, and you bringing something is nice, but I wont expect you to always do that, especially if I'm the one that is gonna be making most of the money, which I am gonna be doing in the near future!

Appendix E2

Transcription of Group 2's talk

- Bontle:** We are discussing feminism and how men are becoming disempowered by women, ja, right now, my name is (Bontle) and I think that this is a very true statement because we are driven right now and men seem intimidated at the moment, and facts really do show that mostly women do further their careers and studies and ja and guys really do get intimidated.
- Thandi:** Yes I'm (Thandi) and I think that I support Bontle's statement that a lot of women are starting their own businesses today and sometimes women have to work at home and then get at home and do their housework so I think they are more powerful than men.
- Lindiwe:** I'm (Lindiwe) and I agree to the topic because women now have the top qualifications and men under them, and at home men when they need advice they go to who? Their wives of course...
- Sipho:** Ok I'm (Sipho), I'm against the topic simply because the only thing that they are doing is stating they want to empower women because they (inaudible) you know, no qualifications and everything so they are doing all this project just to make us to really pick up their level and everything.
- Thandi:** I think that women are recognized because we're in the constitution, women have rights today and a lot of women are leaders in terms of politics so I think women should be recognized.
- Sipho:** Ok, they might be leaders, ok for just you know, simple positions because they cannot handle like higher positions like in terms in the case of our deputy president and everything and Manto Tshabalala Msimang and the other one whose been fired recently so you see that women are not doing much about, you know, the leadership and stuff.
- Bontle:** I totally disagree because the efforts of one woman you cannot simply say that the rest are doing the same. It all starts at grass roots so if you had as a child been raised by a woman, how come you didn't go wrong? So feminism is quite... we are following it and we see it and we recognize that we are a factor that actually improves lives we know about, we recognize ourselves and we put ourselves first in everything and by doing that we do not lower other people unlike men normally do.
- Sipho:** Yeh you know I like the point that you say you know that we get to be raised by women because their place is in the kitchen, it's what their job is you know, get raising the children and teaching them the way of life and everything.
- Bontle:** That's just stereotypical and just hyp—o--critical and it just doesn't make sense to me 'cause I mean we're living in, times are changing, we living in the 21st Century, do you think we are going to do what cave men used to do? I don't think that ...
- Thandi:** And men are also capable of raising their children they should also have put their foot down in the family and raise their kids, it's not a woman's thing only and also we can see that Priscilla is a leader, she's a political leader, she's been a political leader for years and she has had success and she has never been fired and her reputation has not been damaged, that shows that women can be good leaders and that they're overpowering men.
- Lindiwe:** I've got a question for you Sipho, for when you've got a problem at home, who do you go to, your mother or your dad?
- Sipho:** I go to my brother... I don't go to my mom or my dad...
- Lindiwe:** You're lying...
- Sipho:** I'm serious.
- Lindiwe:** Don't you have like a good relationship with your mother?

Sipho: I do have a good relationship with my mother, but you know I don't talk about stuff to my mother, I only talk to my dad you know when I have problems and everything..you know, so the one person I can talk to is like my father because he understands me better than my mom does.

Bontle: I think you're brain-washed... It's just an opinion, but I really think that you're brain-washed to actually think than within our times of living, women still have no place and they're not regarded as, human beings and cannot be superior. If you get to check, most of the time... I mean, women now drive and they're moving up and just to clearly show how women have achieved success, I have never seen a guy win 'The Apprentice' in South Africa, if you watch TV... we have, we can actually put out an idea for anybody to understand... you guys you just don't... I mean, and really, sticking to the topic, we do disempower you guys.

Sipho: Oh, the only thing that they are winning ..(inaudible) and everything but that show is being hosted by a man, you see...

Bontle: And your point would be?

Sipho: My point is men will always be a leader for everything you know, even if they can win everything but the man will always make a decision.

Thandi: If you look at, if you read magazines you can see that um women are editors of magazines, they run the company smoothly and there is no problem with that, so that shows that women can run their business and can be successful just as men.

Sipho: About the magazine things and everything, because its just they're the only things that women you know like gossiping and talking about you know, stuff and everything and that's why they end up writing magazines you know.

Lindiwe: You mentioned the part where you said the rights about women... the last time I checked the new constitution they said that every human being has the right to be, to have like, be equal to everyone, anything like the workplace and everything else, 'wena' it seems like you are against that whole thing, I don't understand...

Sipho: I'm not against anything.

Lindiwe: Well it seems like it you are...

Sipho: All I'm saying is that you know, women will never over power men you know, like you know even in the case of the bible you know, you will expect that the men will always be the head and the women always be the neck...

Lindiwe: Ja, but...

Sipho: You don't put it visa verse, you won't put the neck on top of the head and the other way around you see...

Thandi: On that point it says that the men should be the head of the family, that doesn't mean that men are capable of running a family or running a business in a right way, except they should be the head, so that means that women are also capable of doing what men do.

Sipho: Just for a few seconds, just imagine if Jesus was a woman you know, what would have happened?

Bontle: You can't tell us to imagine that...

Sipho: (laughing)

Bontle: If I just ... that is you know, out of the question.

Sipho: You see, so the whole thing I can say that, you know, the only thing that I do...and I just want to

bring women to the level of human being, like having power or being in that class whereby they can do things for themselves, but at the end of the day, the men will always be the most powerful people , being the power in the planet.

Appendix F1 – Tasks for Research Participants

Group 1 (Please print your names clearly)

Names:..... Group No:

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Tasks for each individual member of group 1:

1. **Read** the background texts (*30 minutes*)
2. **Discuss** the following topic statement with the other members of your group:

In this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women
(*10 minutes*)
3. **Write** a short essay (3-5 paragraphs) putting forward an argument for or against the above topic statement.
(*40 minutes*)
4. **Write** a letter to Delia in which you describe what your feelings were about doing the tasks. Tell me if you think you learnt anything through the process of first reading some texts and then discussing the topic before writing your essay.
(*10 minutes*)

Appendix F2 – Tasks for Research Participants

Group 2 (Please print your names clearly)

Names:..... Group No:

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Tasks for each individual member of group 2:

1. **Discuss** the following topic statement with the other members of your group:

In this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women

(10 minutes)

2. **Read** the background texts *(30 minutes)*

3. **Write** a short essay (3-5 paragraphs) putting forward an argument for or against the above topic statement.

(40 minutes)

4. **Write** a letter to Delia in which you describe what your feelings were about doing the tasks. Tell me if you think you learnt anything through the process of first discussing the topic and then reading some texts before writing your essay.

(10 minutes)

Appendix F3 – Tasks for Research Participants

Group 3 (Please print your names clearly)

Names:..... Group No:

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Tasks for each individual member of group 3:

1. **Read** the background texts (*40 minutes*)
2. **Write** a short essay (3-5 paragraphs) putting forward an argument for or against the following topic statement:

In this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women

(40 minutes)

3. **Write** a letter to Delia in which you describe what your feelings were about doing the tasks. Tell me if you think you learnt anything through the process of reading some background texts before writing your essay. Do you think it would have been helpful to you if you were able to discuss this topic with other group members before writing your essay?

(10 minutes)

Nomsa's Essay (Group I: R/T/W)

In this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women.

In against this topic, yes feminism is increasing but only to empower women from centuries of discrimination regarding education and inflation professions. The popular view from men is that they are being overpowered and made to feel inferior whereas women feel elevated to also be dominant figures in society. In this essay I will raise the issues regarding this topic such as the roles of men and women as well as the outcomes of women empowerment.

"Women empowerment is the acquisition by an average woman of the capability to actively participate in decision making." This quote is so relevant because for years women didn't have a voice - they were abused, misused and taken advantage of. Now laws have been put in place to protect women especially from men who overused their traditional heads of the household position. Before any laws were put in place women were seen as inferior and their purpose was for breeding.

Nowadays women are allowed the right to education, the right to sexual gender equality and occupation growth. Even though women are being empowered men are still the heads of their house holds. Men's salaries are not do not affect their influence on their families.

However the empowerment to women was a step in the right direction for most South African single mothers can provide for their families even when there is no spouse. This act of empowerment has equalised all genders placing all people in the same position. Men and women now have to work hard and get qualifications for what ever field of work they would like to venture into.

NomSA's REFLECTION (Group I: R|T|W)

When reading about a certain topic, you acquire relevant information about the topic and can have a substantial argument regarding the topic, and later discussion. After reading and then sharing view points and ideas with people, it expands one's knowledge and the different opinions that people share regarding the topic. I personally learnt that women empowerment is relevant to bridge the discrimination gap experienced by women for several years. Just like the BEE empowerment, women empowerment will end when the equality has been reached.

MSIZI'S ESSAY (GROUP I: R|T|W)

This essay will be dealing with the statement that, "In this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women". It will elaborate on situation in most families, showing that men not all the time take responsibilities for their families both social and economical.

Men were made to be the spiritual leaders in their families. However, women are the head of household in most families. The majority of women have courage for their families, because they are the bread winner, look after the children and also do the cooking. In the past men used to leave rural areas to urban in search for a job, but after getting a job they do not think about returning home, also forget that he left a wife with children. Therefore, a woman starts from there to take responsibility of a family.

Because we now living in the 21 century, women are also economically empowered and have high positions politically they show more strength of being the head of a household. Things are getting hard for a man earning less than his wife, because he feel inferior like he has no power to veto.

Indeed men are becoming disempowered by women, and women the heads of household.

MSIZI'S REFLECTION (GROUP I: R|T|W)

It was good working with helia on her process, and I feel that I have learnt a lot. I was beneficiary to work with a group, as it has put me on a huge context, for example knowing how other people feel about the topic because we all have different views. I have learnt that when working with a group, you must respect other people's ideas and take them as important as yours. The writing was more challenging, but we had enough time to write.

Visi's essay (GROUP I: R|T|W)

In this age of feminism, even (the traditional divide of the household) are becoming disappeared by women. Women are gradually climbing up the ranks in ~~house~~ terms of job accumulation and that is a fact that cannot be overlooked. Women are indeed taking control of activities that take place in the household and in the corporate world as well.

Today, women are financially stronger than their counter-parts, ^{male} men are getting better jobs and better positions. Furthermore, they are also accumulating high political status, and power. If we had to look at Monto Tshabalala for instance, she is a strong woman, she has political influence and power.

Furthermore, household activities are generally controlled by women, decisions on what is best is done by the female. Our side of the things found in a married couples house ~~are~~ ^{are} chosen by the female even though they are not necessarily bought by the female. Even the gardens these days are being done by the female whereas in the past the garden was a male's responsibility. Women are generally getting stronger in almost everything that ~~men~~ men can do.

In today's post-life, there are alot of single mothers. Even though there are those who are struggling there is still a large number of independent single mothers who do not need a male figure in their lives, so it just goes to show that women do not need ^{men anymore} men anymore.

So, to conclude women are indeed taking over the corporate and political world and also the household.

Visi's REFLECTION (GROUP I: R|T|W)

The task was very engaging, reading just helped me alot because I just got an insight on what our discussion would be about. My essay was strongly based on the reading rather than the discussion itself, so reading just was very help. Even though the discussion helped me to see the different side of the statement I still found that I kept referring to the reading.

Bontle's Essay (GROUP 2: T | R | W)

In this age of feminism, men the traditional heads of the household are becoming disempowered by women. Feminism, as explained in the Oxford English Dictionary (2004), ~~is~~ can be understood as, a movement in support of equal human rights for women. Being a woman myself and supporting the given statement I will look at it in depth in order to give a clear standing point.

Times are changing and the 21st century has offered women so much things in relation to self-improvement or rather development. Women, before, were seen as "slaves" who lived under dictative ways of men but this is no more. We have "woken up and smelled the coffee" in terms of different factors in our lives but mainly academically. Having a good life to us does not only entail being having a family but being able to support and give what we did not have therefore education to women equals a good job meaning a sound family life which will also consists of a man.

Taking Being head of the household does not only apply to families but socially, spiritually and on a governmental level and this is what South Africa as a country has proved. It begins with great historical events that were obviously initiated by women such as the march to the Union Buildings in ~~pre~~ Pretoria in order to give a mandate ~~for~~ to have the "dampas" banned or ~~stop~~ being used. From then on women have taken stride by stride

to better themselves. And the lives of those around their communities. South Africa even has a woman as deputy to the presidents and the cabinet as a whole is flanked by a majority number of women in charge of high portfolios.

Although it is very good to have women empowering themselves and bringing ^{home} a huge amount of money at the end of the day, ~~the~~ adverse effects of being a working mother are sometimes not good. The result being that the mother-figure will not always be there for her children when it matters and this leads to having ~~being~~ destructive and disobedient children merely because the mother was not there to instill what are to be regarded and seen as her duties as a parent.

In conclusion, women today are hardworkers in all aspects and are doing very well and being consultant in their work. ^{Women's} ~~Women are~~ intimidated by their efforts, one thing they should keep in mind is that it is not our intentions. Women are merely fulfilling their dreams and not ready to give up as yet.

BONTLE'S REFLECTION (GROUP 2: TIRU)

The tasks we did today were very interesting and insightful. I really thought with the topic was easy to relate to and easy to expand on.

The only thing I really learnt and was shocked at was the some of the ~~presentation~~ people taking part were still stuck in the past and it was very good that we got to share views and understand one another's point of view.

I really appreciated the new learning experience and goodluck to you.

SIPHO'S ESSAY (GROUP 2: T/R/W)

Topic: In this age of feminism, men (the traditional head of the household) are becoming outnumbered by women.

I totally disagree with this topic under the following aspects. There is a saying that says "the woman place is in the kitchen". This simply means that the woman take care of everything concerning the house like cooking, cleaning and raising up children.

The bond that rocks the crane should not rule the world. Traditionally speaking in every culture in the world men are the leaders of their families.

It is well known that they are forbidden providing and every decision taken by a woman in the house need the kind say of the man. The man ~~also~~ decide what house, food, furniture to buy or how to decorate the house, but if a man put his foot down a disagree with all the decisions and men of those things are going to happen.

Religiously speaking when God created a man he told him that he will control everything on the world. Then after words a woman was created and told that

she should assist in every decision a man takes. It was even said in the bible that a man is the head and a woman is the next, men putting this thing the other way around. So it simply shows that woman will never overtake power men.

Let's put our focus on what is happening in this days. Firstly let's us look at how many countries have presidents or men and countries ruled by women. It simply prove that men are the head of the household, even when we look at the countries economy, politically even social factors. Secondly, when a woman is left alone by the man while pregnant there is a 60% chance that the woman would still the baby or throw the child away. If she decide to keep the baby there is a 40% chance that she can go for postnatal. So this simply means that a woman can't handle the household without a man for leadership.

Thirdly, we have seen in case of South Africa, how many woman have missed their position. Recall the former Thabo Mbeki the deputy president and many more. So this show that men will always be the head of the household in every way.

SIMO'S REFLECTION (Group 2: T/E/W)

I would like to thank you for the good experience you have give me.

This helped me to realise how women fight for their position. I have learnt that even if you are being put down by your gender, you have to fight for you site.

These also taught me that every woman in the world is fighting for the leadership position. It was shown that women have the capability of fighting for leadership even if they don't qualify.

I have learnt that every woman belong in leadership. But I also learn that in every thing that need to be decided a man will always be in control of everything that women has to do with the household.

Thandi's ESSAY (Group 2: T1E1W)

"I am for the top!"

Women are getting empowered year after year. Even though men are ~~be~~ considered heads of the household, women play a role in the ~~most~~ decision making in a family.

In South Africa many women are taking high positions in the work environment rising from being directors, executives, managers or editors.

Women work hard because they have to perform to the best of their ability at work and meet the tight deadlines and still take care of the cooking, laundry as well as the cleaning at home, they also make household decisions like clothing, shopping, etc, while men even after they have come back from work, do not perform such tasks.

Studies have proven also that even though there are quite a number of single mothers, they are still able to perform tasks they would have done even when they were married. Many males do not pursue in caring for their children after they have impregnated their girlfriends and mostly deny their own children. Single mothers still go to work and take care of their children

in the best possible manner.

Many women have also ~~had~~ played a big role in taking care of the political needs of their country. The minister of health for example, is female and has performed her tasks well in facilitating the health needs of our country. Political parties have women as their leaders who have shown success in heeding to the cries of those ^{whom} they govern. Many businesses are controlled by women who can perform the same tasks as men.

Jobs careers like engineering, mechanics were considered as men's tasks but it has shown over the past years that in the work environment women have dominance in performing their tasks just like men as well as making the right decisions. Many females can be seen as scientists, mine engineers and technology advances and through the state ment of belonging in the kitchen wing.

In sports like underwater diving, athletics, rock climbing, weight lifting etc. No studies have shown that women are incapable, in a grade or unskilled to participate in such kind, they have been able to earn respect and to gain from their success.

Females have had their role in many programmes, sports, health, transport as well as education and have put their diligence, skills, ~~para~~ profession and ability to use. Women should not be criticised for their input because they are mothers, motivators, as well as initiators. Their taking part in world events have had a great impact in the lives of many and they should be supported, encouraged and congratulated for their input.

THANIS'S REFLECTION (Group 2 T1P1W)

I really appreciate the hard work you are putting in your research. By discussing the feminism issue with my colleagues I have come to realise that people have different views points and because we are diverse, we usually do not look at the world in the same way and should understand how each of us looks at the world.

By writing my paragraph about the topic, ¹⁰ I have been able to learn something new and come up with ideas I never thought of before and to understand the world better. This programme helps you to communicate effectively with others and is beneficial when it comes to listening skills.

We also learned a lot from others and listen to the views of others.

I wish you the best for your research. I hope we were able to cover all that was required from us.

LINDIWE'S (Group 2: T/R/W)

ESSAY

In this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women. Feminism is becoming a necessity, since men are becoming weaker as time goes by, because things change with regards to men being the heads of the households. Men choose to loose their power, therefore they let their weakness to take control of their lives. Therefore women have strong feminine instincts and do not let anyone, specifically women to take over their lives. Therefore women are taking over in the workplace and at home.

In the recent times, most women now have top positions, because these women are really hard-workers. Men like to refer to the bible by saying that God said that men were the heads and women were the necks. In which it is true but for the head to function it needs the neck. Therefore men do need women to function and make good decisions. Whereas in the case of the household, women are the ones who decide on what should be bought when grocery shopping, which place to go when the family wants to go on vacation?

(1) On the one hand women may seem that they do not have the status of being called the "head of the house". But they still run ^{activities} all the things in the household. At first women were considered to just have only one function in a marriage, in which it was to be a housewife. But since time went by women got educated, in that process of learning, they still go home each, clean and then study. The greatest thing about women is that they are able to juggle all of these activities and at the end of the

day, becoming a success. While men on the other, they wouldn't survive being in the shoes of the women for just one day.

Therefore in this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women. The women might not have the title of being called the "head of the household", but they still have the upper-hand in the workplace and at home as well. For men to be able to function, they need women, but women are able to function, all by themselves.

LINDIWE'S REFLECTION (Group 2: T/R/W)

With regards to your research assignment, I really found it really interesting and I would not mind doing the whole experiment again.

Firstly with the discussion that we had, it was eye-opening on how other individuals think of the characteristics but that both parties of men and women seem to have. It showed me that every person has their own opinions and at the end of the day we learnt something from each other.

I hope that you do well with your assignment, because I really enjoyed it and especially the texts that were given to me. They helped me to somehow understand the topic at hand.

It was a pleasure spending my time on your research and again I hope you enjoyed it too.

KABELO'S ESSAY (GROUP 3: R/W)

In this age feminism men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women.

Men are not disempowered by women, because women are still under the rule of men. On the one hand women cannot take decisions on their own instead they ask help from the men. On the other hand, especially in their democratic world women disobey their men because they say 'give me a voice day' when men are used to go ^{out} and bring food on the table. Firstly, the contemporary world proves it that women are becoming more powerful in finance than men. But the reason is that women have many opportunities than men. For example if a male and female are going in an interview obviously women ahead have 50% free.

Secondly Women can decide what to buy? So where to go to a vacancy? But it does not mean they have power upon men. In addition, men just love their wives that is why they listen to their wives in order the family bond to be strong. Even though men depends on women it is a sign that shows women are treated well manner than men.

The disempowerment of men by women is the sign that provides the inequalities of the human rights between the two. For example, in South Africa women are treated nicely than men, i.e. the South African Government is more protective towards women. Comparing between the past and present, there is a proof that makes men to be disempowered by women. In conclusion, women takes advantage because they know that they have more rights than men.

KABELO'S REFLECTION (GROUP 3: R/W)

This task is so much important and it helped me to realise that women have empowerment upon men. I wish you could help other students about this tasks.

I hope you have worked a lot in order to organise this class. I hope there is more coming and this is just the beginning. I would like to congratulate you with this project. And this task was so challenging for me as a male in because I realise that women have overtaken us long time ago. This topic was going to be helpful if it was discussed because it makes you see how other people feel about this disempowerment of men by women.

I do appreciate having time to help me as 2nd English speaker.

om

PUMZILE'S ESSAY (Group 3: R/W)

Women are overpowering men as they are the heads of households. Others say women are weak, however others argue that women are the strongest.

There is a saying that "mosadi o tshwara thipa ka bogaleng" meaning the woman held the sharp point of a pickaxe. Now the question of why not man arises.

Men are considered heads of households and it has been going on forever now. It has even gone to the extent that women have just there to clean, cook, do the washing etc. Literally the women are the heads of household because they decide everything that takes place in the house while the men just bring in money.

Think of a house where there is no wife or the wife just passed away. The man will not cook, not clean and I am sure one have seen such a situation. A man will not think for a second of buying groceries. The woman thinks about it

and make the husband aware so that ~~they~~ contribute money.

At first, yes men were considered heads of households, not because they were but because that is how everyone knows it. If you look at the first text, you are made aware that women really do make all the decisions regarding their households.

In addition, back then men were seen as heads but today women are empowering themselves. They are running their own businesses, while at the same time, running their households. They come back from work and still make sure their husbands and children go to bed. In a full stomach. A man will not do that but expect to eat before they go to bed.

I will conclude by saying that men are disempowered by women and it is not because of the age of feminism but because it has always been like that. If men help in the household, maybe the stereotype would or will change.

PHUMZILE'S REFLECTION (Group 3: RLW)

The task was not difficult at all and I feel that you gave us more time. At first when the heard you talking about writing an essay, I was tuned off. However after going through the given text, I relaxed. I'm glad to take

I must say I learned through the background text. If I was not given the text, I would have not considered the literal but figurative ~~new~~ way of the topic. Moreover I was also given a lot of examples in the text that made me aware that women are really the heads of households and therefore disempowering men.

On the other side, I think it would have been better to get an insight from peers before writing the essay. That way different views and opinions of people are considered and can change one's mind about something.

DINEO'S ESSAY (Group 3: RLW)

In this age of feminism men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women.

It is true that women have taken over as heads of the household(s), even though the women have since the beginning of time made all the important decisions that affected the men.

To prove the truth of this statement, in the bible Eve ~~decide~~ made a decision that affected her and her husband Adam and that decision was for them to eat the forbidden fruit although the result was a negative one, this shows that women have always headed their houses or homes.

Even though we might think that in the olden days especially in black cultures men were regarded as head of the house because they used to intimidate women and they were the only bread winners in the house.

In addition in modern times women are

now breadwinners not forgetting that they are the ones who take care of families, making sure they don't go hungry, they have clothes on their backs and a foot over their heads. A woman is also the one you go to for advice, she becomes your pillar of strength and a shoulder to cry on.

The role of the men is unclear in modern society but men would argue that they bring safety and security in homes but women can also argue that if they needed safety and security they would install alarm systems.

Finally this essay has proven that without women the world would come to a standstill but without men life goes on. Therefore the women have always been and will always be the head of the house.

Dinesh's Reflection (Group 3: RLW)

I enjoyed writing the essay and reading the texts but mostly writing it because I could really write ~~at~~ my opinions without the fears of being judged.

I have learnt a lot about the females and how powerful they really are. Yes it would have been nice to hear other peoples view about this topic but I am the kind of person who doesn't really like to talk so therefore I was happy when you assigned me to Group 1 and 2.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your research, hope my work helps you and good luck in your assignment.

ORATILE'S ESSAY (Group 3: RLW)

"In this age of feminism, men (the traditional heads of the household) are becoming disempowered by women."

I agree with the topic at hand, women are disempowering men. We are living in a modernized society, where everyone enjoys equal rights and everyone is protected by these rights. In the old times, women were considered inferior to men, women had no say in business or politics. Women belonged in the kitchen. They were just good for cleaning, cooking, nurturing the children and entertaining their husbands. That's all women ever did but that was not the only thing women were good for and over the years women around the world fought for equal rights and freedom, and they obtained this.

Since democracy and human rights were implemented, all has been made possible for women. Women can be anything and everything, we can be good mothers, friends, entrepreneurs and excellent wives all at the same time. Women are educating themselves so that we can be financially independent.

Women can make their own choices, who to marry, what to study, where to live and so on. When it comes to family, we are (most times) the ones who know best. We know what colour the children's rooms should be, what children should eat etc and it's because, women (mothers) are natural nurturers. Men cannot control women anymore, they are NOT the only people in the household that put food on the table and they are not any more special than women. We are all equal but women have the upper hand and it's true women are taking over and conquering men.

ORATILE'S REFLECTION (Group 3: RLW)

Firstly, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to be involved in your research.

I think the task given to me was helpful. Reading the background info really helped me. It gave me things to think about and write about, and there are some ideas that rose as I continued on reading.

I do think it would have been more helpful to discuss the topic with other group members before writing the essay. This would've made my options more open and I would have more ideas as there would be more people discussing the topic.

Nevertheless, it was a great experience for me personally and I would do it again. Thank you once more.

Nonon's Essay (Group 3: RLW)

IN THIS AGE OF FEMINISM, MEN (THE TRADITIONAL HEADS OF THE HOUSEHOLD) ARE BECOMING "DISEMPOWERED BY WOMEN."

Women are very important not only in the household but in society. It is said that "women, without her, man is nothing." Gone are the days when women were stuck in the house, left there to look after the children and prepare supper for the family. Women have now stepped up and are showing their worth and usefulness.

Women are not afraid to be seen nowadays. They are voicing out their opinions and are taking over in the business world. One will no longer find ~~men~~ alone in the parlaments, hospitals (as doctors) or even in engineering. Women are proving to the world that they too can work as hard as men and can also provide for their families.

Men however, are not seen as 'weak' or being disempowered now. Men are still the hard workers and we still respect them but a woman is not to be underestimated or not be taken seriously because of the stereotype that women belong in the kitchen. A woman in this day and age is just as important and equal as a man in society. Women are strong beings as they can raise up their children as single mothers with pride. Women will not ~~also~~ only take care of their homes and ~~family~~ but they take care of the nation as well.

Nonon's Reflection (Group 3: RLW)

Writing the essay was no effort at all. I had an opinion about the topic as soon as I read what the topic was about. Being a woman myself, I was for the topic and I would have known what to write even if there was no reading for me to do.

The extract from the journal article ~~was~~ had to be read carefully though. I read it twice so that I could understand it properly. There were a few words that I did not understand but I was able to figure out what they meant by continuing to read. I didn't really learn much from the texts but I did find them interesting and the first one was amusing.

It would be interesting to hear what the men had to say about this topic but I think I know what most women would say (they would obviously be for the topic.)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to discover the value of 'deep' talk in developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), with primary focus on a group of 'under-prepared' first year university students for whom English is an additional language (EAL), who were registered for an 'extended degree' in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg, Kingsway campus.

The method of research was qualitative and took the form of a teaching intervention in which groups of students voluntarily participated in the performance of different learning activities (such as reading, talking and writing) either as individuals or as members of a group. All of the students were given identical background texts to read. The texts provided contextual information on a topic pertaining to a gender debate. Some students read the texts prior to participating in a discussion on the topic, after which they wrote an argumentative essay. Other students talked about the topic first, and then read the texts before writing their essay. A 'control' group of students did not talk at all, but just read the texts and then wrote an essay on the topic.

The researcher analysed transcriptions of tape-recordings of the group discussions, using limited discourse analysis to highlight various 'speech acts' to assess how the students used language to actively engage with each other and build their arguments. The research findings were also assisted by an examination and analysis of the essays and reflections written by each student.

The research found that the process of talk itself in which the students used language to respond to each other's ideas, helped to cognitively challenge the students in the development of their arguments. The research also found that the cognitive development gained through the talk was helpful in assisting students to formulate their written arguments in their essay. The research found that some contextual support in the form of background readings was also helpful. The order in which this took place was also found to be important. The research found it to be particularly useful for students to be given background reading *before* their talk, rather than after their talk, as this gave students a more informed perspective with which to approach their group discussion. By examining the essays in relation to the transcripts of the talk, the researcher explored the extent to which a more informed perspective on the topic, coupled with the way in which students used language, helped students to develop a more balanced approach in developing their written arguments.